

Connected

Von BlueJey

Kapitel 1: Daybreak's Calm

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Summary: When Oto attacks Konoha, Konoha fights back with all its might. With war raging all around them, their bond seems to fail them. And while Sakura still hopes, Naruto wonders. And Sasuke fears he knows.

Author's Note: One of my older works, I believe, and while I know that my style changed quite a lot, I can only *hope* that my English got better was well... I really kind of like this one though, it's nicely rough and sketchy. Or shady, I should say. I tried to leave as much to your imagination as possible, so let's just see how that worked.

"Could you cut my hair for me?" Sakura asks into the silence surrounding them.

"Cut your hair? It's nice as it is, don't you think?" comes his answer, easy and open-hearted as usual, amused about her sudden question. But she can hear that tinge of something way darker beneath it. She feels him shift and leans her back against his some more, unwilling to let go of his warmth.

"It's too long. It gets in the way when I fight." She knows that at this point, he realizes that she is serious.

"You've been fighting like this for three years...," he states, his voice lower than before, a curious tone to it. "Why is this different?"

"Because I can't risk losing this time," is her answer and she almost whispers it. For a split second, it feels to her like she does it out of fear, fear that their tiny moment of peace might end and reality will come crashing down on them if she remembers that this calm is nothing more than a fading illusion. "If I lose, we will lose. If it gets in the way, I won't get a second chance because no one will be there to save me." She knows she will have to make it on her own this time.

"Why didn't you cut it earlier then?!" He jolts away from her, like he's been hit by lightning, and his surprise is evident in his honest voice. She can't blame him for not

understanding, yet she feels disappointment wash over her like a wave of cold water when he breaks their contact and the warmth of his body is suddenly only lingering in her clothes and on her skin, like an echo of what was not a second ago.

"I don't know... There's always been someone I trusted." She speaks so softly that he has to lean in again to understand her at all. "I never fought alone... I knew someone would save me. And I'm a medic after all, I never fought in the frontlines...."

He is silent after that, thinking about what she just told him. Almost two minutes pass before he starts to smile again - even though she can't see him with her back turned to him, she still knows from the change in his flow of chakra. It's a tranquil and calming smile, without any traces of the uncertainty that is raging inside her own head.

"So you... liked your hair more than your life?" he asks, amused again and then, she can feel his warmth again as he kneels behind her, pulls out a kunai. One of his hands tenderly ghosts over her neck, collects her hair into a loose pony tail and then, the metal blade moves and the first locks start to fall to the ground.

She suppresses a sigh, then leans her head back so that the cut off strands of soft pink hair won't fall over her shoulders and into her collar. She pulls her knees closer to her chest, tightens her arms around them.

"I never thought of it that much, I suppose... Cutting my hair... would have been wrong."

"And why is that?" His voice is an easy brush of air over his lips, almost inaudible and heartbreakingly soft. It touches her, touches some spot deep inside her chest and she's overcome by a wave of affection for her best friend.

"Because... I always thought... he liked short hair," she whispers, fighting back a sob. "When we were young, I would have done so much if it had pleased him - cut my hair, become stronger, be there for him... When he was gone, I couldn't cut my hair... Not when he liked short hair." She isn't sure he is able to understand her - after all, he is a boy and she is a girl and she knows that *she* isn't able to understand *his* logic at times.

But all he says is, "I still don't understand why I'm cutting it then..." It makes her heart jump.

"Because he doesn't matter anymore. He's gone, he betrayed us, he won't come back." It's like listening to her own words enforces her resolve. "Trying to be what he wouldn't like is just as stupid as trying to be what he would like. I understand that now..." She is surprised at how determined she sounds. "If my hair is a hindrance to me, I cut it, no matter whether he likes it or not." And she knows that behind her, Naruto is smiling at her.

He's there for her, he listens to her and she can't say how grateful she is for this moments they spent together, this simple moment of peace that he offers her while around them, outside of her small apartment, Konoha is preparing for the one battle

that will decide the winner of this war. It's either surviving this fight or being erased from history.

The rest of the time he needs to finish his work is spent in almost absolute silence. Around them, the world is quiet enough for her to hear his heartbeat, even and strong, and his calm, unwavering breath. She doesn't fight the feeling of being pulled into something similar to a trance, concentrating on nothing but the reassuring strength he radiates. When he is done, she wishes it would have taken him longer. Forever, even.

But she knows that they have to go.

The last thing he does before his warmth disappears once more is lean in and place a soft kiss on the now exposed skin on her neck.

"I know it probably doesn't mean much, but I think you're beautiful regardless of your hairstyle," he smiles and she wants to cry because she knows he means it just as he says it. "Whoever says anything different isn't worth the air they breathe."

And with that, he slowly stands up, stretches his muscles and cracks his knuckles before offering her a hand to pull her up as well. Sakura allows him to do so and for a moment, she fails to suppress her desperate wish that this connection will survive the night.