

Connected

Von BlueJey

Kapitel 3: The Darkness Within

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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.

"You will be his ruin," Orochimaru laughs in his disgustingly soft voice. His hands, slender and fragile, yet unmistakably male, move in slow, careful motions and Sasuke wants to scream and *stop* him.

"He will not fall for your tricks," he spits out, not bothering to hide the despair in his head. He's forcing himself to cling to childish hopes, to wishful thinking they both know to be at least unlikely. Yet, he does. He knows this is bordering insanity – that *he* is.

"You still have so much confidence in someone who failed to save you so many times?" Again, there is the snake's sick amusement and he wants to bang his hands against a wall until they're bleeding and he can't feel them anymore. But he can, he can feel *his* hands and they're calmly applying black paint to his fingernails.

"He never failed," he almost hisses, defending a dream he knows to be unreal, yet true. "It was my fault to underestimate my own stupidity." There is so much bitterness in his voice that he wonders why no one hears him.

"He will not save you." He detests the Sannin's twisted humor with just as much passion as he once hated his brother, but this time, the passion is born from pure defencelessness. Itachi was someone he could fight, someone he could *touch*. Orochimaru is so far out of his reach, so far out of his world that it drives him crazy.

He's given up on trying to fight months ago.

"He will protect Konoha," he still says, more to himself than to the old man who is just finishing his manicure, because if he didn't say it, he might actually stop believing it. But this is not his secret - in fact, nothing is - and he knows this will make him lose his mind - this helplessness, nakedness, everything.

Orochimaru laughs, sickeningly enthusiastically.

"Keep believing, hold on to this unshakable faith of yours, so it will be even more of a pleasure to crash all of your hopes at once," he then answers, sounding as close to happy as it gets, obviously still not tired of Sasuke's agony.

"He will not fall for this!" Sasuke almost screams, because sometimes, it almost feels like he can block out Orochimaru's voice if he just screams loud enough. But it won't work this time and somewhere deep inside, he knows it never will.

"You are his weakness and I will shamelessly take advantage of this pretty face of yours," the old man smirks, traces one of his freshly painted fingers down Sasuke's cheek, lets it come to rest on his lips. His tongue darts out to lick them as soon as he removes the digit. "Konoha will fall along with everyone within its walls."

Then, his grin grows even wider, and he stands up with all the grace of a cobra, a smooth, determined movement.

"And here he comes. Let's go welcome him, shall we?" he says in a voice so sweet Sasuke feels like throwing up and then, Orochimaru laughs - a different laugh. A laugh Sasuke recognizes as his own. A laugh Sasuke realizes Naruto will recognize as his.

Then, he leaves his tent, leaves the little camp and heads straight into the direction of Sasuke's last hope.

When Sasuke's eyes finally make contact with Naruto's, he knows his heart would have stopped if he were still in control of his body, knows he wouldn't have been able to keep standing for another second if his legs were still his own.

Naruto's eyes are seemingly endlessly deep and Sasuke knows that he is falling, that he is losing himself. And Naruto's eyes are clear and serious, without the slightest trace of hesitation or of the hatred he had feared to see. They are bright azure, more honest and open-hearted than he has ever seen them and he wants to scream his lungs out until Naruto hears him.

And then, Naruto takes a step into his direction, his posture so goddamn trustful it breaks whatever sanity Sasuke managed to keep through this hell, and moves his lips.

"Sasuke, there is still a chance," he says and it's the truth - *it would be the truth* - and Naruto is *begging* him to realize that fact. "I won't let you go on like this!" His eyes are burning with determination and even though he wishes he couldn't, he can see the pain and the despair that this determination is made of.

And there, in this moment, his control slips and he desperately wonders whether their connection could have survived. But deep, deep, deep down, there is a voice that tells him, "No".