

Naruto's Legacy

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Naruto goes with Jiraiya for 3 years and comes back stronger, mature and taller!^-^

[NaruHina] If you don't like the pairing, don't bother reading.

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Chapter 1 - The Journey Begins	2
Chapter 2 - To the Monastery	5
Chapter 3 - Moving to To the Western Monastery	8
Chapter 4 - Preparations	10
Chapter 5 - The Coming of Uzumaki Naruto!	12
Chapter 6 - Training for The Chuunin Exam	15
Chapter 7 - The Chuunin Exam	21
Chapter 8 - The Final Test	28
Chapter 9 - The Second Battle	30
Chapter 10 - More Training!	39
Chapter 11 - Bloodline Limit Complete	48
Chapter 12 - The Mission Begins	53
Chapter 13 - Into the Sound	64
Chapter 14 - True Power	69
Chapter 15 - Revelations	77
Chapter 16 - Time for a Change	84
Chapter 17 - The Jounin Exam	90
Chapter 18 - The Power Within Naruto	104
Chapter 19 - Mysteries Revealed	112

1 - The Journey Begins

Chapter One: The Journey Begins

Naruto watched as Sakura winked at him. Next time, we'll do it together, Naruto! she said and ran off. That definitely cheered him up.

So, what are you gonna do? Shikamaru asked.

Huh? he snapped back into reality.

Sasuke's gone. He's with Orochimaru. What are you going to do? You're staying here for at least another day. What are you going to do once you're out?

Naruto's closed a bit and softened. I don't know...

There was a long and uncomfortable silence between.

I'm sorry. Naruto suddenly said.

Well isn't that out of character... What do you mean?

Your first mission... You picked me... Everyone did their part... Everyone sacrificed to lead to my part... And I choked... I had a chance to knock him unconscious... But I didn't... I was too soft... To-Too unwilling to let go... And in the end, I lost him... I'm sorry... I guess because of me your beginning as a chuunin didn't turn out too well.

Shikamaru chuckled. If we hadn't lost, I would have never learned how to manage a team properly. I would have never faced such an amazing battle. I would have never learned to take risks, to believe the impossible... and to *trust* my teammates. I should be thanking you. he said.

Naruto managed to smile back, though it still hurt.

Oy, Naruto.

Yeah?

One more thing before I leave. You're an excellent fighter. Strong stamina, crazy powerful moves, good last minute thinking. But it would make you ten times stronger if you had a plan, controlled your emotions, and stayed hidden.

Naruto sighed. It sounded like something Iruka sensei would tell him. Only now, it meant much, much more. Because, for the first time, Naruto realized, it wasn't just a stupid lecture... It was true. And it would have helped their mission... *all* their missions so much more...

If you can learn to not show your opponents all your moves and brag, you could be really, *really* useful. Shikamaru advised. But, thanks man.

Spoken like a true leader. Naruto replied faking a smile.

Shikamaru gave him a chess book.

Nani! What's this? Homework?

Read it. It'll help you. he said.

Naruto sighed grumpily but stuck out his clenched fist anyways.

Shikamaru raised an eyebrow.

Naruto took Shikamaru's hand, made it into a fist, and put it on top of his. Down, up, sideways. They did the 'handshake'. See ya man. he said.

Shikamaru nodded and left.

In truth, Naruto felt worse than ever. *All those years at the academy... If only I had taken that seriously... I have such a good stamina, such good jutsus... Just a pathetic, loud mouth brain...* Now the voice of Sakura sayind, 'Shut up Naruto! You're so annoying!' came into his mind, and Naruto felt worse than ever. *shoot...*

Suddenly, there was a loud thump outside. The next thing he new, Jaraiya entered.

Ero-se --

Nice to see you, too, kid. he interrupted. Stop calling me that.

What do you want? Naruto complained. He didn't want a lecture on how bad he did he felt bad enough as it was.

Jeez, kid! That isn't a nice way to treat your new sensei.

SAY WHAT?

Yup! I've decided to take you on as my student. You, me, and bunch of stip --

Get to the point!

for the next three years. Jaraiya finished.

Naruto thought about it. The last student of yours was Yondaime...

Jaraiya nodded solemnly. *And kid... You're gonna shine just like him...*

Naruto, for the first time in his life, sat down and thought for a while.

Jaraiya raised his eyebrows. You're thinking? Wow, do you have a fever or something? he asked.

Naruto ignored him. He told what Shikamaru told him previously, and how he felt. I feel damn useless, and I'm wondering if becoming your student will help.

Jaraiya chuckled. Trust me. You become my pupil, and you'll be as useless as the rasengan. he stated coolly.

This naturally perked up Naruto's interests. Seriously?

It all depends on you... We'll have near death situations, face dangerous enemies... And you'll be training in one way or another 24/7 with barely any sleep of food sometimes to train your body... And I'll require you to memorize around 3,000 jutsus... If you're good enough... Yondaime did about 3,000... he said.

I'll do it. was the answer in less than half a second. But as Jaraiya turned to go, Naruto spoke, Wait... What about Sasuke? he asked.

Jaraiya winced. He had been hoping to talk about it during their travels once Naruto was more mature. *O well, no avoiding it...* Forget about him, kid. He chose Orochimaru on his own... He's not coming back... And don't worry, Orochimaru only does his jutsu once every three years. He can't do it any more often. And guess what, he's going to do it a month from now to another guy to switch bodies. Then, for three years he'll train Sasuke. Then it'll happen. By that time, you'll be done with your training. After that, what you do is not my choice.

Naruto nodded.

But I do repeat myself. I know how it feels. Forget about him. If you don't, you'll only have more pain. Naruto shook his head. I would never abandon my friends... Besides, I already promised Sakura-chan... And I don't go back on my word. That's my ninja way. he stated with a fox grin.

Jaraiya shook his head. Fine. Get ready, cuz tonight, we're leaving.

Naruto nodded. After Jaraiya left, Naruto strained and got up. He soon got used to it and was able to walk quite comfortably. Of course, it was only the kyuubi chakra which made this all possible, but Naruto didn't think about that. He went out of the hospital, walked home, and packed his stuff.

The bell rang. Opening the door, Naruto was surprised to find Hinata.

Hinata? What are you doing here?

O-Oh, well, you s-see, I s-saw you p-packing, and I-I realized I-I wouldn't s-see you in a w-while, so I --

Come in, come in! he said smiling and sat down next to her on the sofa.

Hinata blushed heavily and was getting very hot. N-Naruto-kun, I-I-I brought you a p-present b-because you're g-going a-away... S-So -- she held out a small box.

Opening it, Naruto found a necklace with a small card case at the middle where he could put two photos. Smiling, he looked at the small, beet red girl next to him, hugged her, and said, Thanks Hinata-chan! I

love it!

This was too much for her. Not only was her Naruto-kun hugging her, but he called her 'Hinata-*chan*'. She did what every logical, cool headed, sophisticated girl of her age would do she fainted. Waking up, she was about to faint again realizing she was on Naruto's couch, but Naruto looked at her.

Sorry I made you faint... I didn't know I hugged you that hard... Heh... he said placing an arm behind his head and giving a nervous grin.

N-No, i-it's not y-your fault... I-I have to g-go... B-Bye... she said and quickly went out.

Well that was rather strange... O well! In one end of the picture case on his necklace he put a picture of team seven (centralizing on Sakura's face, of course,) and on the other he put a picture of his graduating academy class which had all of his friends as well as Iruka-sensei. Packing up, he headed to Jaraiya.

Quiet. Jaraiya whispered. We don't want attention. Let's go quickly.

Naruto frowned. *Why? Probably running from Granny Tsunade as usual, the pervert...* Some lights were on now, and the sun was long gone. He had one last glance at his village, and looking at the hokages' statues one last time, he looked at Yondaime, and thought, *My face is going up on that wall.*

2 - To the Monastery

Chapter 2: To the Monastery

So, where are we going?

To a monk training ground. We'll reach there by dusk. his teacher said.

A monastery? Naruto raised an eyebrow.

Sort of. Only they train, too.

What kind of --

You have to have faith in me. Or should I just send you back?

Naruto grumbled and walked along.

By dusk they had finally reached it. It wasn't a monastery it was a palace! It was huge! Naruto's jaw dropped. The tops were fully hand carved mahogany wood, and it was a Tibetan style building.

Jaraiya knocked the door, and then lied down and fell asleep.

WHAT THE HELL! GET UP! Naruto screamed.

Shut it, kid. Wait till they open the door. Do some push-ups or something... and fell back asleep.

What! My training awaits, and this pervert goes to sleep? Nani! Having nothing better to do, Naruto decided to do push-ups. He was on 3,000 (using the kyuubi chakra, and tired to hell!) when the door finally opened.

Jaraiya yawned and got up.

Welcome, Jaraiya. Please, come in.

Thanks, R. Say, can a friend of mine come in, too?

Of course.

Naruto looked at the old monk and frowned. *This was one of the great training ground's inhabitants...? Seems pretty weak...* But nevertheless, Naruto walked in. Coming inside the largest building, Naruto found a large statue of Bhudda. Naruto decided it would be best to keep his mouth shut, for once.

Jaraiya... Brought another pupil, have you? said an exceptionally old monk in front of the statue. He was in a meditative stance, and his eyes remained closed.

Yes, sensei. Please, I want him to take the six courses.

Six? You seem to have much faith in him.

Yes... His name is Uzumaki Naruto...

The monk's brows came together a bit. Uzumaki, you say? Has he ac --

Naruto, please leave this building. Go with R, he'll show you to your temporary room. Jaraiya interrupted firmly.

But Ero-senin --

Ero-senin? He has a great deal of respect, I see... the monk said.

Naruto, out! Jaraiya seethed.

Naruto had never seen Jaraiya like this, and he got the hell out of there!

Coming to his room, he saw there was only a mattress on the floor.

This is it? he wondered.

We monks believe simplicity is the key to virtues and humility. Thus, we allow ourselves to grow stronger with obedience and virtue. the man called 'R' said.

I see... Naruto said rubbing his head. *I What the? Oh, well. I'll have to make do with what I have here. /I* With that he unpacked his materials and set up his 'temporary' room.

Has he activated his ability yet?

No... But he's begun it. That's when I decided to teach him the rasengan. He learned it in a week. He's on the third level right now.

My, my... Just like Arashi, isn't he?

More than you know... He's Arashi's son. Jaraiya said. And, also... He's a jinchuuriki...

For which bijuu?

The kyuubi...

The monk remained meditating for a bit. Why do you want me to train him, Jaraiya... In all six courses?

Sensei... You once told me, it is not necessary to be forgiven. However, one must try and recompense for his actions... Well, this child, who saved the village by accommodating the kyuubi in himself, has been treated like nothing but trash by the villagers. You should hear him talk. Ask him about his life story, and what he wants... You will see he sounds just like you... Only, more rowdy and childish... He is amazing. He can forgive anyone, and anything, if you just say sorry. He will trust you. And, also...

There is the matter of Akatsuki.

Jaraiya nodded. Yes, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. There have been two people so far who have survived all six courses... No one but you, have done the seventh... This boy, his ability is stronger than any of his clan before him... His ability almost matches your own, sensei... Not only that, but he is a jinchuuriki... Much like yourself... He wants to crush Akatsuki... His best friend, was Uchiha Sasuke, who has now betrayed the village, betrayed his team, and betrayed him, and run off to Orochimaru for further training... Nevertheless, Naruto treats him like a brother, and still waits for him... I believe he can fix your past mistake, sensei.

The monk shook his head. I will not give him all six courses...

Sensei... The scrolls...

The three scrolls have not been mastered by anyone but myself... No one has had the patience to master all of the jutsus so far... Even I, have gone on to meditation... No one has had the determination... I am sorry, Jaraiya, but after Arashi, my hope has been lost.

Your first pupil... was not right... You and I both know that... Your second, had not enough patience, and went on to become hokage... But this boy... He does...

You're being a fool, Jaraiya. I will teach him four courses. No more, no less. Bring him here to talk with me. I request you to leave for another two years. The third year I will give him back to you.

Understood, sensei. Jaraiya said smiling. *I Well, Naruto... The rest is up to you... /I*

Naruto went to the old monk. Hi...

Uzumaki Naruto of Konoha... Tell me your name, where you were born, and what has happened in your life...

Nani! You just --

SILENCE... One must have trust in a teacher... In the monastery, there will be no perverted thoughts, or actions... There will be no foul language, and there will be utmost respect. Understood?

Yes, I *sensei /I* ...

Good. Now continue.

My name is Uzumaki Naruto, and I was born in Konoha... Naruto thought this was going to be really stupid. He continued anyways...

THE NEXT DAY...

Do chores!... Study about nature?... MEDITATE? What kind of schedule is --

WHACK.

A dazed Naruto looked up. *Wh-What happened?* He could barely do that. Examining his body, he found he was bleeding all over.

If there is one thing you are going to learn here, it will be to control that aggressive temper of yours, and learn trust. Next time, I will break your bones. Do not worry, you will not fall behind you have plenty of

work here that does not require movement, believe me.
This, was going to be a long, long three years...

3 - Moving to To the Western Monastery

Chapter 3: Moving to the Western Monastery

Jaraiya knocked on the monastery door, and fell asleep. Waking up after a nice nap, he said, Hey, R. So, how is he?

The monk simply chuckled.

Having a rough time, eh?

The monk shook his head. He's done all six courses, woken his ability to the first level, and mastered four-fifths of the jutsus in the sacred scrolls.

Jaraiya smiled. He was surprised, yes, but he had expected such results. But does he know about his ability?

The monk shook his head. No, he simply believes it came with meditation.

Jaraiya nodded. *That's typical of sensei...* All that's left is the western monastery, eh?

The monk nodded. His chakra efficiency is up to eighty percent... Sensei has agreed to teach him the seventh course... If he passes, he will be higher than you... the monk said.

True, but not a better fighter... Jaraiya said smiling.

Yes, but by the time his training is done, he may equal three fourths of you.

May...

Yes, but anyways, do come in.

Jaraiya walked in to find his old student meditating. *Finally gotten the hang of meditating, eh, Naruto... Must of gotten a dozen bruises by now from not meditating properly...* Jaraiya chuckled. *I remember my first time...*

So, sensei, how is he?

Jaraiya, you will take him to the western monastery. He will finish the seventh course there... And, he will use the TranserFuunin jutsu there.

Jaraiya's jaw dropped. Sensei, I know you're trying to help, but --

Jaraiya-sensei. A loud, yet somehow deeper and humble voice spoke now. Naruto came now. Sensei is right. It is the only way to help me. If not, I will only hurt my friends. During meditation, I came in contact with the kyuubi. The seal is weakening... In another year, it will weaken to a point where I will no longer be able to tell my friends from my enemies. Also, I hurt R because I could not control my emotions... It happened early on, and we have fixed that problem... I cannot risk that again, and so, I must. The western monastery has more resources, and they will have the proper grounds to do it, so my risk will be less. It will be a one in ten chance that I will die, instead of a --

one in fifty... Jaraiya finished. He turned to the old monk. You realize, that if it fails, all this time, this *one* opportunity, will be gone...

The monk laughed. Jaraiya, he is the third one who I have agreed to teach the seventh course. And one of the three was I. I have faith in my student, and, if fate allows, he may correct my past error as well.

Naruto patiently waited for his sensei to finish. Jaraiya-sensei, if I die, Akatsuki will not get the kyuubi. It is a win/win situation. Please, I must go.

Jaraiya sighed... So it's all set, then... *Sensei, I hope you know what you're getting Naruto into...* Inside Jaraiya's heart, was, perhaps his own almost grandfather-ish worry for protecting Naruto, rather than a true sensei's.

Approaching the monastery, Naruto knocked the door. Jaraiya fell asleep, but Naruto simply meditated. Opening his eyes, Jaraiya noted the changes in Naruto. *His training is only two-thirds done... He will*

change even more... But last stretch cannot be taught... He will have to meditate and arrive at it with his own wisdom... That is what makes a true hokage.

Opening the door, the monk looked at an old man sleeping, and a younger boy meditating. The man patiently waited for them to finish. Once Naruto was done, he got up and bowed to the monk. Welcome. The eastern monastery has told us of your arrival.

Thank you, Naruto simply said.

Jaraiya woke up, bowed, and walked to Naruto.

Following the monk, they went into a room. Jaraiya waited outside. What was to happen, only God could tell.

Naruto went inside, stripped off his clothes except for his undergarments, placed the appropriate seals in the correct places, and lied down in the middle, placing his full trust in the monks. He began meditating and came in contact with the fox.

So, you think you can get rid of me, eh... Hahahaha...

I cannot. From the minute you were sealed into me, we were bonded... And you will always reside in me... However, I am planning to do something else...

And what would that be?

The transferfuunin jutsu. I'm sure you've heard of it. You will lose all consciousness, and you will die. However, remnants of you will remain in me... For instance, your large amount of chakra, your aggressiveness which, of course, I will tame my whiskers, and my sharp teeth... However, you will lose your ability to control me, and thus, I shall not harm my friends.

Now for the first time the kyuubi spoke without any hatred in his voice he knew it was the end; there was no point in resisting it. He simply flashed an image in Naruto's mind. It was a girl... A beautiful girl with caressing lavender eyes surrounded by a creamy whiteness. Her skin was soft; Naruto didn't touch it, but he somehow knew it was. She had long, flowing hair which fell on his bare shoulders. It was tender and silky. He felt her flawless skin with love.

Then the image was over.

Naruto was disappointed. *Why'd you stop?*

You've memorized every detail of her, right?

How could Naruto forget that. *Of course...*

She was the one I was in love with... I am going away... Please, tell her... Tell her I've gone...

Naruto didn't refuse it was a dying creature's wish. *I will not die until I do tell her...*

The kyuubi made a deep chuckle. **For a baka, you're not too bad... And one more thing; there was one more person in the entire history who took a seventh course and he had an advanced bloodline limit... He works in that organization, Akatsuki... He will kill you... Be careful, baka. I've grown quite fond of your idiocy... Make sure you don't die...**

Naruto couldn't help but smile. *How do you know this?*

Know you're a baka? Fifteen years of experience.

No not that! How do you know about this person?

He killed... And the voice died there.

Naruto sighed in his thoughts. He realized the jutsu had been a success... Vital information was lost, and one of the wisest and most powerful demons in the world was gone... He couldn't help but feel sad. It had become a part of him, though it caused him so much pain...

4 - Preparations

Chapter 4: Preparations

Tsunade noticed a shadow outside her office. Sighing, she said, Yes, Sakura. Come in. Sakura came in. So, Naruto's coming back soon?

Yes, he's coming back in two weeks...

Two weeks? Sakura questioned.

Yes, that's what Jaraiya told me. Tsunade said, eyeing the stack of paperwork, and sighed exasperatedly. Ever since the news came Sakura would bother her. She didn't blame Sakura, after all, she was excited the short brat would come back herself, but it was so annoying!

A sudden silence fell. ... So... Two weeks, was it? Sakura asked finding nothing better to do to waste time.

GET THE HELL OUT OF MY OFFICE!

Did you hear?

Yeah, the loud brat from the chuunin exam a couple years ago is coming back.

Wait, the one who beat the crap out of that Hyuuga prodigy?

Yeah, that's the one.

Oh, he's the same guy?

Hey, Ino-pig. Did you hear?

You bet, forehead girl!

Hear what? TenTen interrupted.

Naruto's coming back in two weeks! they sang in chorus.

Hey, Kiba.

Yeah, Shino?

Naruto's coming back in two weeks.

Akamaru skidded to a halt and barked. Yeah, I was thinking the same thing! Kiba said. We should get him a homecoming present! As well as a little pay back, eh, Akamaru?

That would be good. Shino nodded.

Kiba looked at him curiously. Wanting revenge, too, eh?

Shino sighed. I meant the idea of a present.

Hinata stared at the empty sky. *March... Summer... Flowers...* Flowers were blooming all around her.

There was a water droplet on a rose, and she looked at it sadly. Then, on a lone spot, there was one lady bug. It was trying to find a second one. *You understand how I feel, don't you...* The world was so empty now.

Hinata. a voice suddenly said behind her.

She turned around, panicking, only to find Neiji there. Sighing, she said, Yes, Nii-san?

I, um... Know you like that Naruto kid.

Hinata's heart nearly stopped. O-Oh, u-um, w-w-who t-told you t-that I-I-I I-li --

He's coming back in two weeks... I just thought I'd tell you that... and he quickly left as soon as he came.

Hinata was beaming. She would get a chance to see him again! Then, as soon as she was happy, a thought came into her mind. *How much has he changed...* And things went down hill from there. *Will he notice me? Will he be himself? Will he be really strong? Will he hate me? What if he* And so on and so forth. Turning to see that lady bug, she didn't find one, but two. They flew off together.

All of his friends gathered there.

Okay, we all know Naruto is coming back in two... Well, one and a half weeks.

They all nodded.

Our beloved comrade is coming back! I cannot wait to spar him! Lee said exuberantly. They all rolled their eyes.

Anyways, so I suggest we throw a party for him. Sakura said.

They all nodded.

All right. But we should include some ramen. We all know he's crazy about it, and after three years of being away, I'm sure he'd love it. Shikamaru suggested.

Just... um... Make sure... There's lots of food... ummm... Chouji said munching on some chips.

All right, so it's settled. Sakura gave a list of what everyone should bring. *Naruto...* She thought.

Suddenly, she realized she was missing Naruto a bit too much and slapped herself back into reality. She then shrugged. *It's only Naruto... right?*

5 - The Coming of Uzumaki Naruto!

Chapter 5: The Coming of Uzumaki Naruto!

You know, kid. I never thought I'd see the day that you'd finally change...

Naruto smiled his fox grin. Man, I'd missed this place. I can't wait to see how much the ramen stands have changed!

Then again, something never change... Jaraiya thought chuckling.

Naruto poofed away and was on top of a hill, looking at the Hokage monument. Now Tsunade's face was added. *I'm back...* He said looking at Yondaime. Somehow Yondaime struck him more than any other Hokage. May be it was because Yondaime put the kyuubi inside him; may be it was because he was supposed to be the most powerful Hokage. Either way, he didn't really know. All that mattered was that he *would* be Hokage someday.

Yo! A familiar voice said.

Turning, Naruto saw Kakashi. Kakashi-sensei! Naruto said, and poofed next to him. I brought you a present. Naruto gave Kakashi a special kunai he found on one of his many travels during the last year of his training.

Woah! A legendary Western Juraoh Kunai! No way!

Yup! Thought you'd like it.

How'd you get it?

Like all others. A tournament, of course! Naruto smiled. Kakashi stood up, and found Naruto was as tall as him if not one or two inches taller.

Chuckling, he said, You've grown, Naruto. You've grown.

Naruto smiled and poofed away.

Tsunade heard a knock at her door. SAKURA YOU BETTER GET YOUR @\$\$ AWAY FROM HERE OR I'M GONNA MAKE YOU, YOU LITTLE dog! Tsunade had had more than enough of her share of Sakura for the past two weeks.

My, my. That's not too welcoming, especially when you're meeting someone for the first time in three years. Naruto said. I haven't been really looking in a mirror much, but the last time I checked, I wasn't a girl much less a dog... and he shook his head. Feel free to correct me if I'm wrong. he added flashing his fox smile.

The next thing he knew he was in a big hug by Tsunade. Naruto! You little brat! You've grown so much! It was true; he was now 6' 3". He was taller than most he had been a late bloomer. Obaa-chan! I missed you!

Tsunade kissed him on the forehead. I missed you, too, you little brat! Jaraiya! Get your perverted @\$\$ up here!

Jaraiya soon came with lowered shoulders. See, Naruto. You see how well-loved I am... he said shaking his head.

Tsunade ignored him. Kay, Naruto. I'm giving you a new house. Here are the keys. It's right next to a ramen stand... I forgot the name... Ichiratu? Something like that.

Ichikaru! Naruto said beaming. He grabbed the keys, jumped out the window, and ran to his new house as fast as he could. Suddenly, he stopped and poofed back to her office. Forgot the address... he said sheepishly and placed his hand behind his head.

That's cuz I didn't give it to you... You didn't give me enough time... Here. she handed him a piece of paper.

Thanks Obaa-chan! he hugged her and he was gone.

Wonder how his friends throwing that party are going to react... Tsunade thought...

Humming a song, Naruto walked to his new house. However, he sensed a lot of chakra signatures inside. Silently, he made a kage bunshin, went to the side, and placed his ears on the wall. He could tell the people inside were having a highly philosophical, deeply intellectual, and most of all sophisticated conversation :

My present is the the best.

Is not.

Is too.

Is not!

Is too!

IS not!

IS too!

IS NOT!

IS TOO!

IS

Um, if you don't mind me disturbing your wonderful conversation, I would like to tell you a chakra signature is here... And it might just be Naruto's. So... He was surprised to find it unlocked. *For bandits or criminals these guys don't take much precaution...* He thought to himself. Opening the door, he found a paper blow into his eyes. Frowning, he took it off. It read, '*Welcome Back, Dobe.*' And the lights went on, and his friends yelled, WELCOME BACK, NARUTO!

He stared at his friends, jaw dropped. Akamaru had grown to be four times bigger Kiba could ride on him now! Most of his friends were all ripped now (the boys, that is,) and they reached his forehead or lower. Neiji was equal to him in height. They had grown... a *lot*... When he stared at the girls, his breath went away. Ino was the tallest out of them, followed by Hinata, with Sakura not too far behind, and, lastly, TenTen. Their... *bodies*... had grown extraordinarily, and now, hormones or not, Naruto couldn't help but stare at their... rather large breasts. Either they, he, or all of them had grown in more ways than one. But what was truly amazing, was that, they were staring equally, if not more, with shock at him! Naruto was now one of the tallest of them; before, he was around 4' 5"! Now, he's 6' 3". Also, his muscles were now completely showing off, involuntarily, of course, and he was looking pretty ripped! Naruto didn't know this, as he hadn't seen himself in a mirror for over three years. However, his whiskers were a little bit smaller, and his teeth were a little sharper. His blond, spiky hair had become much longer now, the tips had barely a hint of red, and the strands extended past the worn out headband. Naruto, not preparing for anything special, was in a tight, black undershirt which curved to every part of his skin and bluged where his muscles were, and wore a black and blue baggy pant. He looked very much like a hot gangster, and the girls were dazzled. He had his fox smile, which radiated a somewhat cooled happiness, showing Naruto had become humble and learned to control his emotion (after many broken bones,) yet still had that sparkle in his eye. Wherever he walked the place almost instantly became a brighter, happier place, and Naruto was smiling his trademark grin.

Naruto looked at Kiba, who was also smiling ear to ear. What? he said.

At this, Kiba's smile grew even bigger.

Oh no...

DOG PILE!

But it was too late for Naruto. Kiba was the first on him, followed by Lee, Shikamaru, Chouji (*really* ouch there,) Neiji, and lastly Akamaru who landed with a thud. Gerroff of me! A tiny, deep voice underneath the pile said. After they dispersed, Naruto wearily stood up and smiled.

Saskura and the rest of the girls were extremely angry. (Inner Sakura: How dare they hurt this hot

hunk!)After that, everyone gave Naruto a present. Hinata, along with all the girls, stuttered. However, she alone fainted. After she recovered, they all talked for a bit, and Sakura whipped out her camera and took pictures. She instantly brought them back in all sizes with numerous copies for everyone. Soon everyone talked, sparred, played, and had fun. Silently, he went to Shikamaru, and said, I took your advice.

Shikamaru nodded. He knew Naruto would be a much better ninja now.

So, Naruto. Glad to be back? Sakura asked.

Of course! I missed everything about this place. The ramen, the people, and you, Hinata-chan!

Sakura blushed. *Why the hell am I blushing? It's just Naruto... right?* I-um, I got to go... Bye, Naruto!

Along with her, a bunch more left until only he and Hinata were left.

He went to Hinata. Say, Hinata?

H-Hai?

Do you hate me?

N-No! I-I would never h-hate y-you, N-Naruto-kun...

Oh... Okay, cuz I was just wondering... Cuz you always seem to be nervous around me, and always faint around me, you know... So, yeah... But it's cool! he said and put an arm around her.

Hinata blushed terribly. A-Ano, N-Naruto-kun?

Yeah, Hinata? he switched on the T.V.

D-Do y-you hate m-me?

What? No! Of course not. Why would I hate you? It was you who let me beat the... brains out of Neiji during the Chuunin exam. He had been taught to not curse, and he intended on keeping to the teachings.

A-Ano, how?

Well, I was really angry about the fight between you and Neiji... About how he kept calling you weak, and how he said you had to lose because it was destiny. And even though you kept standing up and proving him wrong every single time, he still called you weak... I was really angry. I swore on my blood then that I would beat him... And I did! he said giving his fox grin.

F-For me?

Naruto gripped her tighter. Yup. and went back to watching the T.V.

Hinata blushed even more. She looked at him, and her breath went away. He had changed so much; he was even more handsome now, than before, and he had matured, and grown really strong.

Say, Hinata? Naruto suddenly said turning the T.V. off.

H-Hai, N-Naruto-kun?

Have you become a chuunin yet?

She looked down. She was still weak... She was hopeless... N-No... I d-didn't take t-the t-test again...

That's great!

She looked up at him curiously.

I mean, it's not great that you didn't pass, but now we can take this next one together! You and I can train, and we'll be unbeatable now! I mean, we're not rookies anymore, so what do you say?

O-Okay I --

Naruto hugged her tightly. ALL RIGHT HINATA-CHAN! WE'RE GONNA KICK BUTT THIS TIME!

Hinata struggled not to faint.

All right! Bye Hinata-chan.

As soon as Naruto closed the door, she sat down and simply day dreamed. *He hugged me... He called me Hinata-chan...*

6 - Training for The Chuunin Exam

Chapter 6: Training for The Chuunin Exam

Naruto wandered across his house and searched what there was. There were three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and one kitchen. It was incredibly dusty. Naruto grinned. *Looks like the monastery jutsus pay off.* Cleaning Genie no Jutsu!

After his entire house was immaculately clean, which didn't take too long, Naruto picked the smallest bedroom, unrolled his mattress, which was by now one of his only belongings, and sat down. He unpacked his other clothes and weapons and laid them out. Making his room, changed into his pajamas, cleaned his clothes using various jutsus, stacked them on the shelf, and went to bed. His entire assets were only his mattress, his clothes, and his weapons. What could he say? Living in a monastery for three years had changed his lifestyle a bit. However, he was still that same, annoying, loud-mouthed Naruto he was during social events. He had learned to get serious during missions and other times, and he had learned to predict what people were feeling and even thinking by their actions. The seventh course would seem like learning how to read minds, but it was actually based on their own actions. Naruto, of course could never tell anyone this. He remembered one of the first things his new sensei had said:

*We monks follow what is called The Way. You need not follow it completely, as it requires Buddhist practices, but you must follow some rules. You swear utter secrecy of this way, and not to disclose it to anyone but the one you love. That is one person who you may tell it to; however, she... or he... may not tell anyone. Also, you must practice the rules we have enforced in the monastery which won't be too hard, considering you love to follow them: humility, respect **to everyone**, and the virtues we enforced. These rules alone you must follow always, or your power will dwindle. So, for your sake and mine, do follow them. Without these practices, meditation is impossible, and you know why your power will decrease from there on...*

Naruto sighed. Yes, it was true. He had to meditate for at least an hour a day.

For the first week he went around the town talking to people and simply getting to know them. The hokage had given him one month off, and he decided to see how much his home had changed. He went to the Academy firstly.

Iruka sensei!

Naruto! How are you? You've changed so much!

Yes, and hopefully for the better.

Iruka cleared his throat. Everyone! I'd like you to meet a former student of mine; his name is Naruto.

Hello, Naruto. The class monotonously moaned.

Let me just sit and watch. Naruto whispered in his ear.

Iruka got the flow. Yes, and he is one of the hokage's most trusted Anbu members. He will be watching for good behavior. I suggest you keep it... Or... well, let's just say you'll find out...

And with that, Naruto, smiling at this wonderful opportunity, made shadow clones which watched inconspicuously from the shadows. Naruto himself simply took out a book and began reading to fool the students.

Look at him... How pathetic! He's reading... Jeez... one child whispered to his friend. The other nodded.

Plan A4. he whispered back.

The child grinned with delight; it was the ultimate, unstoppable, lugi spitball of doom. That would get him for sure. They both pooled their spit, rolled up a wad of paper, and put it in a straw.

Wait... the other child said. He's an Anbu. Don't you think he'd notice?

He's reading a book! How can he?

He can if he's right next to you. Naruto said. One of his shadow clones had informed him, and he instantly transported there.

How did he do that? I didn't even see him! The child whimpered.

Yes, well, if you *had* been paying attention to Iruka-sensei, then you might have learned a thing or two about spotting, and you might have seen me.

The child looked ghost white.

Iruka himself was rather amused. He hadn't seen them, but Naruto had. *I wonder how much he's improved.* But Iruka knew Naruto would never punish these children, having been a great prankster himself... would he? No, of course not.

Can you read minds or something?

It doesn't matter. You two are coming up in front of the *entire* class for your punishment.

No... Naruto wouldn't... Iruka thought.

Naruto stressed 'entire' in such a way that it wasn't obvious, but they realized how embarrassing it would be. Naruto put on his most deadly face, grabbed the two, and brought them to the front.

One had tears in his eyes. Please mister! I won't do it again! Please!

Hmmm... You laugh about me, almost throw a spitball at me, and insult Iruka sensei... I should spare you? Naruto powered a small amount of chakra and began doing a fake jutsu. The children had terror in their eyes. **FAKEASS YOU GOT SCHOOLED JUTSU!**

The children ducked. It was only later that they realized what Naruto had yelled. What the hell? and they got up to see Naruto on the ground up to tears in laughter.

Did you see your face! Hahahaha! And I mean, seriously! 'Fakeass you got schooled jutsu!' Hahahaha! You should have seen the look on your face. Naruto finally finished laughing and calmed down.

Iruka sighed. *Naruto scared the hell out of me... So much chakra...*

Ha! Got you sensei, didn't !! I scared you like crazy! You must have thought I was going to kill these two with all that chakra! Hahahaha!

Wait! What the hell is going on here? the kid asked.

Kid, Naruto faced him. I'm a prankster myself. Do you think I would hurt my fellow pranksters who keep up the noble deed of pissing off Iruka sensei? I used to be ten times the amount of trouble you guys were in class, okay. And I stayed here for three years! I must pissed of sensei so much. Not to mention right now, huh!

Naruto... Grow up... You scared the hell out of me...

Naruto laughed even harder.

So... All of this was just a joke?

Naruto nodded. Oh, and by the way, kid. It's better if you put the spit before you put the paper in the straw... More spit on the paper that way. he advised.

Of course that's genius!

He gave them a high five. Keep up the work, my fellow pranksters. and with that he disappeared. Instantly, every single child in the academy had accepted him, if not befriended him. They all laughed at Iruka sensei. He would talk to the adults now and again, too, and even advise them on their problems in not getting enough customers, or thieves, and common problems for merchants. Overall, (as the monks predicted,) with his new humbler attitude, everyone in the entire village had accepted him. A month passed like this, and he simply talked to people, trained, and worked on new jutsus.

Hey, Obaa-chan! You called me?

Yes, Naruto. You and Hinata are the only ones from your class who have not become chuunin. So, you both will be a team in this upcoming one.

That's great! I've already talked to her about it, and she's agreed.

You... Already talked to her about it?

Yeah, I talked to her.

I see. There should be no problem then. You and Hinata will train, and do your stuff. she said.

Wait... Don't we need three people?

Tsunade chuckled. Don't think it'll be so easy. We've changed things quite a bit... But I'll save the surprises for later.

Yup.

Oh, and, Naruto?

Yes? Do your best not to fail this one. she said. We need you for some crucial missions. she smiled.

Turning around, he waved and said, You got it. He poofed to Hinata's house.

He looked at the white eyed guard. What do you want?

May I see Hinata-san?

No.

Why?

Because she is being moved to the branch house today. It is the ceremony. Now leave. he said sternly.

Naruto's eyes had a fire in them, but he remained calm. He knew the Caged Bird Seal. It would haunt Hinata for her life... He was not going to let this happen. His eye began glowing blue, and the next instant the guard was knocked out. Naruto ran inside the building, went through the crowd, and saw Hinata there at the center, kneeling in front of her father, who was in a special robe.

Stop! he said so loudly a deadly silence descended upon the place.

You, Uzumaki! Who let you in here?

No one. he stated calmly.

What gives you the rights to be in here?

My being a friend to Hinata.

Her father glared at her. You are still his friend?

Hinata began crying.

Her father did nothing. He simply said, All the better then. You no longer are part of the main house.

You're right. Naruto added.

Her father looked at her.

Hinata looked at him with increasing tears. *Even Naruto-kun doesn't think I'm good enough...*

Why bother putting Hinata in a house where no one loves her, and everyone treats her like trash. Hinata doesn't need that. She's too good for you, for this house, and for this pathetic clan. Hinata is better than you all. She doesn't need the main house her standing up to you is something you would never understand. Naruto said bitterly.

Hinata stopped crying and looked up at him.

That is enough. her father said.

I don't even understand how you can call yourself her father.

What would you know about the Hyuuga? You don't even have a family, much less a clan! You carry a... and he calmed down. You know nothing.

Maybe I don't know anything about a clan. But I do know family. I know how it feels when everyone hates you. And Hinata doesn't deserve it. She doesn't need you you're only hindering her growth.

Hiashi laughed. What growth?

She has grown. You're too blind to see it.

That is enough! he made some hand signs and made a barrier in the room so no one could come near he or Hinata. Then, slapping her, he forced Hinata to lie down on the ground.

Naruto saw the slap and winced. Looking at Hinata's face, he saw blood streaking down. That was it...

Naruto's eyes began glowing again, and his fists were clenched.

Hiashi was about to make another slap at Hinata's body when, suddenly, Naruto stood there lifting carrying Hinata. Hiashi was so stunned he couldn't react. *That Uzumaki trash can go through the barrier?* Naruto kicked him in the stomach.

Naruto lifted Hinata and disappeared.

Hiashi looked at the surrounding Hyuuga members who shook their heads quietly. How could he do that to his own daughter? someone whispered.

I'm personally glad the kyuubi boy came. Another said.

Maybe he's not so bad after all. said a third.

Naruto carried Hinata into his house, placed her on the biggest bed in the largest bedroom, and tended to her wounds. Hinata was still crying terribly. Then, using a jutsu, Naruto healed her completely. Sitting next to her, he placed an arm around her. He looked at her. She had her face in her knees, but tears were gushing out. Her hair was neat but she seemed so sad. Naruto's eyes softened a bit. Placing an arm around her, he squeezed her to him. He felt her hair, and it was surprisingly soft... almost, angelic. He placed his palm on her head and gently stroked down her hair, whispering, It's okay. It'll be all right. You're safe now, with a friend. It's okay. It seemed to be working, but at a very slow rate. Naruto didn't blame her, after all, she just lost her entire family and isolated herself from her clan. Naruto stared at her, and thought, *She's pretty...* He kept stroking her hair. She then, hugged him, fell into his chest, and cried her heart out. After she was done, he cupped her faced, looked into her eyes, and said,

Hinata-chan, it's okay. You'll be fine. You will get back with your family. Don't worry. Smiling his fox grin, he said, Trust me. We'll ace the chuunin exams, and you'll show everyone how strong you are. But, I need your help. Will you help me? She nodded through her tears. All right. he said hugging her. It'll be okay.

Hinata-chan, you can live here for a while. I have three bedrooms, and I don't really get too much company, so you can live here! he smiled.

She nodded.

You can have this room it's the biggest, so, yeah.

What about you?

Me? Nah! I don't need this big a thing. I'm in the smallest room. Want to see?

She nodded she was curious to how her Naruto had changed over the years.

He took her to his room a small and cozy room with not much in it. I like it. Small... Cozy... Perfect for me. he smiled.

I like it, too, N-Naruto-kun.

Thanks! Hinata, I'll be right back. I'm going to get your stuff from your room. I'll be right back. Okay?

At this she burst into tears again. Don't go!

Hinata, I have to. You don't have anything here, and I can't afford to buy all your stuff. I promise I'll be right back.

Promise?

He hugged her tighter. Promise.

She nodded. Okay...

They stayed like that for a while, and Naruto said, Hinata?

Yeah?

I would love to stay like this, but I can't go if I'm still hugging you.

Oh. and at that, she blushed horribly and let him go.

It's okay. he smiled and disappeared.

Reappearing in Hinata's room at the Hyuuga foundation, he said, Invisibility jutsu. He made himself invisible with some basic genjutsu, grabbed all her stuff, packed it, and reappeared in his house.

Releasing the genjutsu, he yelled, Hinata! I'm back! I told you I'd only be gone a second!
At this Hinata rushed in and hugged him. He moved all her stuff to her room, helped her unpack and set up her room.
Where do you want this to go? he asked showing her a picture of a woman.
I-Is it okay if I put it above my bed?
It's your room, silly! You choose!
She hesitantly nodded and placed it there.
After they were done, Naruto asked, Hey, Hinata?
H-Hai?
Can I sit on your bed?
N-Naruto-kun, it's your house.
Well, yeah, but I said it was your room, and so, it is *your* room.
S-Sure.
Thanks.
Hinata sat next to him.
Hinata, can you tell me a little about your past? If it's not too personal. He quickly added.
Hinata nodded. I remember my mother... She died shortly after Hanabi was born. I loved her... She was so kind, bold, daring, loving... She was like an angel, and she loved me so much... I loved her. She was motherly in every way. Every time my father went on about duty, my mother kissed him, and said, 'Let her enjoy life, Hiashi.' I smiled whenever she did that. I used to wonder how she did it all... Taking care of me, managing the family, cooking, everything. I used to awe at her. She laughed with tearing eyes. I wanted to be just like her... I used to play all the time with her. I was always behind her, helping her cook, take care of people...
Naruto looked at her and saw she was crying. He put an arm around her.
Anyways, one day she died... Soon after Hanabi was born... I think two months after... of a fever. Then father went on about the duties of a Hyuuga... I tried my best... Day after day training, but I never could get it. He was so cold, so harsh. I tried my best to please him, but... No matter what, I just couldn't do it... I wasn't good enough... Failure after failure...
Naruto put his fingers to her lips and cradled her. So now all you have are her memories... he said quietly.
She nodded.
Hinata, Naruto said looking at her with a smile. You will make your mother proud. One day, you will become the leader of that clan, and you will fix all the wrongs you have seen... And we'll start, he said, his smile getting wider, with the chuunin exams.
Hinata shook her head. I... I can't do it...
Of course you can! Come on! Let's go! It's only afternoon! We can! He grabbed her, pulled her up, and walked to the training grounds. Okay, we have two weeks before the chuunin exams. I say we work on your techniques for the first week, and on the second, we work on team strategies. Okay?
Hinata shook her head. I can't... I'll fail... I --
Hey... You can. You *will*. Think about the person you love most.
You, Naruto-kun.
Focus on that person.
I have my entire life.
And make that person proud.
I can... I will!
Now, he paused, Let's rock.
For the next week they got up at six and practiced on taijutsu, the use of Hinata's byakungan, and

Hinata's speciality, genjutsu.

Okay, Hinata. We're going to spar, all right? You have to use your byukengan to get me. I'll be at a long range distance, putting you at the advantage. But you won't get me either if you don't use your byukengan. It'll be like this during the second test, I'm guessing, and we can worry about short range later. Okay? he said smiling.

That brightened her day. Okay. she nodded.

Naruto disappeared. He decided not to make shadow clones. He simply wanted to catch her off guard but not hurt her. Suddenly, he appeared behind her and kicked her lightly. She fell to the ground. She had realized it, but she couldn't react in time.

She began crying again.

Hinata, I'm really sorry if I hurt you badly. We can stop if you want.

Hinata shook her head. I failed... I failed...

Naruto sat down next to her and looked at her. *Her eyes... So soft... so caressing...* Naruto snapped himself out of this. Hinata, you'll only fail me if you quit. As far as I'm concerned, we've succeeded. We've found your weakness, and now we can fix it. Before we didn't even know your weakness. Hinata looked up at him. He put things into a completely different perspective. She got up, actually eager this time.

They also inserted a bit ninjutsu. Naruto taught her a style based on flexibility, taught her to maximize her chakra efficiency, and taught her, most of all, self-confidence. By the end of this weeks, after numerous failures, and numerous more victories, Hinata's stutter was gone.

Okay, now we work on our teamwork. We have a team of two, so I suggest we either do half and half, or we do one person offense, one person defense. You have an excellent defense as well as a byukengan to power that up. So, with that, we can make an absolute defense. You can do the Heavenly Spin like Neiji, right?

She nodded briskly.

Good. So, first, you analyze with byukengan, and you are our defense in the forest and in the night. Then, once we find the guy's location, for longrange and extreme close contact, it'll be me to take out the guys, as well as short range defense. For medium, you use your Hakke, and the rest of defense you cover. Got it?

She nodded.

They went over various tactics for the specific areas of the test, and by the end of the week, they felt they could handle anything this test would dish out.

7 - The Chuunin Exam

Chapter 7: The Chuunin Exam

Naruto. Jaraiya's voice suddenly echoed through.

He woke up to find his sensei next to him standing. Yes, sensei.

There are ten sound ninjas this time in the exam. One of them could be Sasuke in disguise. I suggest during the first two tests you not use your --

Sound Barrier no jutsu!

I already did that. Anyways, do not use your bl... um, your meditation skills. Okay? I don't mind in the very last test because you're gonna need it if Sasuke is there. But do *not* use it before that. Got it? Naruto nodded.

And this time, the third test isn't going to be a month away. It'll be the very next day. Jaraiya said gravely.

Understood.

But as long as someone like Gaara or Sasuke doesn't show up, Jaraiya smiled now, kick their asses. This should be cake.

Naruto smiled back. You know it.

Releasing the jutsu, Jaraiya went out. Naruto released his own, freshened up, and went into Hinata's room. She looked so peaceful. Her black, smooth hair was spread across her pillow, and her white, soft face seemed so peaceful. *She's beautiful...* Naruto thought. Placing his hand on her hair, Naruto thought this was paradise. He sniffed and smelled a fragrance of lilacs and slight jasmine. Placing his hand on her face, he lay his head down beside her so their cheeks would touch. He lay there for a few minutes and realized what he was going. Immediately he got off and mentally killed himself. *DARN IT! WHAT ON EARTH WAS I JUST DOING? DAMN IT! I'M BECOMING LIKE JARAIYA-SENSEI! UGHHH!* Hinata? he softly said.

She stirred and woke up.

He smiled. Rise and shine, sleepy head! Today's the chuunin exam!

She smiled back.

He went out of the room and made breakfast. She soon joined him. How do you like it? he asked slightly nervously.

She hugged him smiling. It's delicious!

Naruto inaudibly sighed.

Reaching the entrance hall, they placed their forms and sat in the hall before the first test. Looking around, Naruto saw mainly leaf ninja about 80 of them. Then there were 10 sound, just as Jaraiya said, 20 grass, 15 sand, 3 lightning, 5 stone. Naruto frowned seeing the sound, but didn't show any emotion.

Many of them were staring at him after all, 6' 3" muscular guy seemed intimidating.

The same proctor as before came and announced himself. Naruto and Hinata got their numbers and sat down in their appropriate seats. They were right next to each other! Naruto hugged her quietly, sat down, and began. Hinata started off with her byakungan and soon found a chuunin; it was Shino in disguise. Shino seemed to be the perfect choice, as he covered most of his body anyways. Hinata wrote on her paper, 'found him,' dropped her pencil so that Naruto could see, and came back up. Naruto followed her arrow until he, too, found him. Naruto used a shadow copy jutsu to copy Shino's movements. Then, right after the first jutsu, he used a shadow link jutsu to chain his hand to Hinata's. Soon both of them were done. They moved on to the second test.

Hinata sighed once they were out of the building.

You weren't nervous, were you? Naruto asked.

I was...

Naruto gasped and acted as if she had committed a sin. Hinata? I can't believe you! he added with extra dramatics.

Hinata couldn't help but smile.

Naruto took her hand and squeezed it. We'll be fine. he said.

She nodded.

Naruto went to take the scroll. It was an earth scroll this time. Anko went over the rules, and Naruto and Hinata headed for their gate. There were forty teams left. There would be at best twenty for the third test. The second test had begun.

Hinata led the way. Their plan was to approach the tower there, once more teams came, they could then fight for the scroll. It would be better if they got there first though. Suddenly, as they approached, the temperature on the ground rose. Suddenly, the ground fell away. Naruto was just able to grab Hinata and use a Body Flicker jutsu to get on top of a branch. There was lava on the ground; in fact, the lava now was the ground. It covered the entire place, and soon the trees began to burn as well.

Uh oh... Naruto said.

What do we do?

Hinata, find the source of this.

Hinata activated her blood line limit. It's coming from a ninja about two hundred yards ahead. His chakra is extremely high!

Naruto simply chuckled. It was a ninja then. That was much better and easier to handle than. Naruto charged his chakra to his hand, made some signs, and said, TUNDRA GRAVE! Suddenly, the lava froze. Naruto simply hopped down and walked towards the source. When they reached the destination, Hinata examined and found the ninja was barely alive. Naruto kicked him and the ice broke. The ninja was a sound. Naruto took the scroll he had an earth scroll, but Naruto figured it would eliminate more. Then, turning to the ninja, he said, Seven seals imprisonment no jutsu! and the ninja was immediately frozen in a seal.

Will he live?

Yeah. He'll have enough chakra for ten days, so he'll survive. If he can't get out by then, he'll die.

Ten days? He'll live for sure.

Naruto nodded. But he can't do anything but breathe for the first three days. The seal will weaken after that rapidly. And we'll be long gone.

The sun was getting low now, so they decided to go up the trees to sleep instead of down on the ground. At the rate they were going, they would reach the tower by early tomorrow. Hinata used a genjutsu on the area to make them invisible, and made a chakra shield as well. Just to make sure, Naruto used a Lightning Imprisonment seal on them.

Why did you imprison us?

It's not really imprisonment. You see, I've made a shield. Nothing can get in, nothing can go out. So we're safe. And I can take it away whenever I want. he smiled.

I see. That was rather smart. An ultimate shield. They could sleep in peace... and wake up to find themselves in one piece now.

They slept on the branch, but it soon got very cold. Naruto woke up to find Hinata shivering. He looked at her. Using a jutsu, he made it warmer, but she still had a disturbed look on her mind. *O who gives...* And with that, he pushed away the sick thoughts in his mind and lied down next to her. She unconsciously snuggled up to him, and he put an arm around her. She had a happy look on her face now, and she had stopped shivering. Somehow Naruto couldn't bare to see her unhappy, and he obliged

her wish and snuggled up even closer to her. Waking up, he found her right next to him breathing in him. She had that wonderful fragrance with her. Naruto inhaled it and stroked her hair. Hinata, he said softly. She said something in her sleep, smiled unconsciously, and went closer to him.

Hinata, it's time to wake up. he said and gently shook her.

She opened her eyes and remembered where they were. Okay... she said sleepily.

Naruto helped her up, released the seal, and they proceeded. When they finally reached the tower, they saw three other teams right there. Two of them, Naruto and Hinata included, were leaf. One was lightning and another was stone. The other leaf team simply made a break for it and ran into the tower. However, the stone spoke.

We have a heaven scroll with us. What do you have?

The lightning replied, We, too, have heaven.

Naruto silently made a shadow clone a few yards away so no one saw. We also have a heaven scroll with us. he lied.

Their teams looked at each other.

Suddenly, one of the lightning ninjas said, They're lying! They have an earth!

Instantly, Naruto and Hinata had the disadvantage. Four on two. Naruto didn't waste time. He and Hinata went into battle, but these guys weren't rookies. They were experts. The battle was rather tiring, and Naruto didn't want to use full potential. Suddenly, Naruto said, That's enough. We'll lay the earth scroll here. Please, just leave us.

Hinata, still having her byakugan on, looked at him in awe. Naruto *never* gave up. Suddenly, she realized. *Oh no...* She ran the opposite direction as fast as she could and found shelter.

Let her go. One of the stone ninjas said. It's this boy who has the scroll.

Then, Naruto appeared next to Hinata. He wrapped his body around Hinata in a tight hug, to protect her. He suddenly felt that instincts which guided him to save her, to make sure she didn't get hurt. Using his chakra, he made a strong shield. Hinata, I need your help. He whispered.

Hinata fed her chakra into it, too.

Hinata thought about his genius plan. It was in fact the shadow clone which was back there. By acting out of the ordinary, he caused Hinata to look at him. Since she had the byakugan on, she saw his chakra inside, and so, he signaled her to run without telling everyone else. Inside, was a huge amount of chakra, contained in a very small space. The clone would explode.

Seconds later, a huge explosion was heard. The chakra rushed past them; luckily, their shield was barely strong enough. The explosion lasted five seconds, and it burned everything within a three hundred yard radius. Walking there, Naruto saw that they were dead. Suddenly, tears came to his eyes. He hadn't expected them to stand there he thought they would run, and they would escape in time... Hadn't they detected his massive chakra? He had killed... Killed for his first time... And he couldn't help but cry. He leaned on a nearby tree and cried. Suddenly, motherly instincts came over Hinata. Her Naruto-kun was hurt, and she would protect him. She came, wrapped him in her arms, and let him cry his heart out.

He buried his face in her chest and cried. It's okay. It's okay... was all he heard as he was rocked back and forth. Hinata stayed with him that day, consoling him. She patiently heard all his guilt and told him it wasn't his fault. At the end, he was very glad Hinata was there. She had helped him deal with it.

Thanks, Hinata-chan.

She hugged him. Anytime, Naruto-kun.

They picked up both heaven scrolls and walked into the building. They summoned a different chuunin.

Very well, you may proceed. the chuunin said.

Naruto and Hinata bowed, said, Thank you, and went into the hall. There they rested, ate, and recovered. At the end of five days, 10 leaf teams passed, 1 sound team, 2 stone, 4 sand, and 3

lightning. Again, there were way too many contestants; they had preliminaries. However, this was the part that was different. It wasn't like an ordinary one on one fight; it wasn't even team fight... In fact, it was a one on one fight... only, the one they would face was a chuunin.

Oh no... Naruto thought.

Naruto didn't watch the others' fights he only kept track of who fought who... And the problem then came. The one he fought... was Sakura. Naruto came down.

Sakura-chan... I love you, and you are my teammate... I cannot... *will not* not fight you.

But Sakura had different thoughts. She had been missing Naruto too much may be even longing for him, and she wanted to prove to herself that he was a weak, puny, pathetic little punk who could not beat her, and that way, she had not reason to love him... She never did have a reason to love him...

Right? Yes, of course. What was she thinking, loving Naruto... Yeah right!

Naruto couldn't fight Sakura!Hearing the hokage's rules, Naruto heard that he didn't have to win... Just do well show competency. He then realized Tsunade was testing him. She put him up against her own student to see how well he had learned. Also, he inferred, there was a little bet of \$5000 to the winner. Naruto sighed. *Gambling on the relationship of two friends...*

Hearing Naruto's words, Hinata could not do anything but sigh. She held back the tears... Seeing as she could not, she went to the bathroom. She couldn't... Of course... How could she even believe she could compete with Sakura, apprentice of Hokage-sama herself... She couldn't... And she never would, would she? No... She wouldn't...

One of the sound nins looked with a smile on his face. *This... Should be interesting... It will settle once and for all, who was the strongest... of the three...*

A sand ninja stolidly looked upon the two fighters. His partner bumped him on the shoulder, but the ninja showed no expression whatsoever. *The time... will come... Naruto...*

Naruto suddenly gripped himself... It was the opportunity he was waiting for. He would show Sakura-chan how strong he was. He would show her he was worthy... He would show her he was damn better looking than Lee for sure! But on his face was look of deep, humble sadness.

Very well, Sakura-chan. Since *you* have wanted this fight to prove you do not love me, we shall fight.

Sakura looked shocked. He had read through her like glass. *Can he... No, of course not... No one can...*

But do remember, you are a medical nin. Thus, you will not die, as you can heal yourself. So, I will not hold back. And... As I told to Kiba, 'If you get in my way of becoming hokage... I will whip you like a dog.'

Sakura laughed. Cocky as ever, Naruto. Weak little annoying brat.

Naruto simply shook his head. Let us begin.

Sakura's smile went away. This was not Naruto. Naruto retaliated at even the slightest insult...

Something was wrong... horribly... wrong...

BEGIN! Tsunade yelled.

Naruto made shadow clones and hinged them into pebbles at such a fast speed, it appeared that he only made the pebbles around him move.

Kakashi was looking with his sharingan, and he was impressed. His sharingan was barely keeping up with his jutsu speed; it was impossible to see with the untrained eye.

That's it? Making pebbles move? My turn! Sakura yelled. She pounded her fist into the ground a huge fifty foot of rock and earth was uplifted. Naruto simply jumped out of the radius, unimpressed. Everyone else's eyes were nearly popping out of their heads. It was incredible.

However, Naruto had been trained to sense even the slightest bit of chakra, and he realized all she had done was power her chakra to her first truly remarkable due to the amount of control it needed, yes but rather simple nonetheless. It was like Naruto's shadow clones only showing off, and having no real use. He had learned that long ago.

That's it? he said appearing behind her. It was not him; only his shadow clone. He himself had hinged into a pebble; so, it appeared that he had traveled at an incredibly fast rate. Naruto still wasn't trying his hardest. He punched Sakura without hesitation on the head; she healed herself immediately as she landed on her feet ten feet away.

The next thing she knew, she was on her knees, struggling to get up. Naruto stood in front of her. Game over. he said. You've been sealed. You cannot move. he smiled. Lifting her chin so that she looked at him, he said, Good match.

What are you talking about! This isn't over!

I'm sorry. I would say 'I give up,' but, seeing as my sensei's \$5000 depends on this match, I cannot. Forgive me. and with that he walked behind her calmly, placed his hand on her neck, and knocked her out. Carrying her to Tsunade, he gave Sakura to the hokage. Please, make sure she's all right. I may have gone too far.

It's okay, Naruto... She's fine... I on the other hand... she moped about her \$5000. Sakura soon woke up to find herself next to her sensei. *Naruto... I... I am... truly sorry...* YOU COST ME \$5000! \$5000! TO THINK I TRUSTED YOU... I CANNOT BELIEVE IT... She went on with her moping, but continued her announcements.

Hinata turned around to find Naruto behind her.

N-Naruto-kun.

Hinata? Are you all right? Your stutter is back!

T-This is the g-girls r-room.

He went closer to her. That's not what's bothering you.

Like you care...

He hugged her. I do care. When you're not happy, my world is darker. I'm not happy, and it bugs me so much. Whenever you feel sad, I don't know why, but you're always in my mind. I do care. Now tell me, what's bothering you?

I-Is Sakura-chan a-all right?

She's fine. I won. Hinata, stop beating around the bush. What's wrong?

I love you... That's what went wrong... The sad thing is, I will always continue to love you... Nothing... she said, and walked away.

Naruto, for the first time, couldn't read her face. He had a slight hint it was something about love but he had no clue what. *Does she nah, yeah right! Like that could ever happen.* Naruto shrugged off the idea and walked off.

Hinata had to fight some inexperienced chuunin who actually only became chuunin one year ago. Hinata easily won, only with one or two bruises, and she moved on.

In the end, 3 leaf teams passed, 1 sound team, 2 sand, and 2 lightning. There were four teams; thus, two rounds would be team battles, and at the end, there would be regular one on one fights. It would take place the next day as Jaraiya had said.

Naruto and Hinata went back home. Hinata and he took a shower, changed into night clothes, and readied themselves. Coming out, Naruto saw Hinata. She was *gorgeous*. Naruto's eyes widened. He couldn't stop thinking about her all of dinner, and stared at her.

What? she asked.

Nothing... he mumbled. After that, he meditated, but he found he couldn't he kept thinking about her the whole time! What was wrong with him? Then Jaraiya came. He explained the situation privately to him.

Jeez... Just when I thought you were smart...

What is it then, Sherlock?

You're in love you idiot! and then he left Naruto to ponder this.

But I love Sakura-chan!

Do you know what love is? Jaraiya asked him.

Of course! It's...! It's... It's...

Jaraiya disappeared.

The problem was, that the more he thought about it, the more his feelings for her consciously grew. Could that pervert be right for once? He shook his head, but he couldn't get her out of his head. He looked at the clock. It was nine. She couldn't be asleep. And then he realized it. *It's my feeling for you.* He had to tell her.

Going to her door, he knocked.

Naruto-kun?

Yeah... Hinata-chan, can I come in? I need to talk to you.

Yes, Naruto-kun.

She was reading a book on her bed. She put it down as he came in and sat next to her. Hinata-chan...

It's about the chuunin exam...

Yes?

Why... Why did you help me when I killed those people?

For the same reason you helped me when my father was about to put the seal on me. she simply said.

But... Did you know what that reason was?

No... Like you don't know my reason...

This frustrated Naruto, and it wasn't making his confession any easier. But Hinata saw through him like glass.

Naruto-kun, what do you want? 'Stop beating around the bush.' she quoted him.

Naruto realized something was wrong. Hinata was usually not like this. She seemed... unusually sad. Her voice had no malice in it, just pure sadness. Um... This isn't really easy to say, and, let me just say before hand that if you hate me for this, or if you want to get away from me, or if you don't feel the same way, I'm sorry, and I forgive you. *I know you're sad... And so... I know you'll hate me...*

Hinata tilted her head slightly wondering what could be so bad.

Hinata... I... he sighed. He couldn't do it. Hinata, I love you. There, he said it. He braced for a slap, or a scream, or a girl running away from him, but nothing like that happened. When he opened his eyes, he saw a crying Hinata. Hinata I am so sorry! I knew it was a bad idea but --

Hinata lunged at him and kissed him.

Her lips were so, so soft and tender. Naruto realized that she was his heaven, his paradise, no... She was his very life. He *needed* her. She wasn't just some fun thing he could go to every now and again. No, he had to have her. Without her, he was like a plant without water. Naruto pulled her to him, and she willingly went. They were now against each other, and Naruto was still squeezing her. He kissed her lovingly, and she kissed him back.

When they finally let go, she said through teary eyes, I love you Uzumaki Naruto. I have always loved you, I love you, and I always will love you.

Even at the academy?

She nodded. Even at the academy.

Naruto placed her right next to him and kissed her again. He nudged her on her neck, hurtin her a bit, and kissed her there to heal her. Then she poked him, and they went on and on switching roles in this game. All the while, Naruto looked at Hinata, and now, in her eyes, Naruto saw a bit of lavender... And it grew... And grew... Until her eyes were lavender up till her irises. Naruto kissed her again.

What about Sakura... Hinata looked at him worriedly.

That's what had been bugging her... Of course! Was he an idiot or something! He had the idea that she loved him but shunned it away thinking it couldn't be possible.

Naruto smiled, squeezed her hand, and said, Hinata, I didn't even know what love was... Until I met you... And I will never leave your side... Never... And that's a promise.

And we don't ever go back on our words, do we... Because that's our ninja way.

Naruto seemed a bit startled that she said 'we', but he smiled, loving it, pulled her closer to him, and said, Yes... Exactly, and kissed her. He fingered through her soft hair, as so toyed with his. He let her kiss his cheeks, nuzzle his neck, and whatever she wanted. He was simply enjoying being with her. Waking up, Naruto found himself right next to her. He snuggled himself closer, wanting to simply remain with her forever. He inhaled her soothing scent, containing of lavender and a bit of jasmine, and kissed all over the back of her neck. He placed his hands around her hips, kissed her neck again, and woke her. She went closer to him, wanting to surround herself completely in him. He began nibbling her ear, and she moaned with joy. Suddenly, he remembered it was the final test of the chuunin exam. He frowned, and she sensed it.

She turned and faced him. Then, resting her head on his neck right underneath his head, she kissed him, and said lovingly, "Come on, Naruto-kun. Let's go."

"I don't wannoo..." he mumbled, closed his eyes, and simply lay next to her kissing her head every so often.

"Naruto-kun..." she whined. "All right, it's time to go." and she got up.

But he simply remained in bed.

Then, grabbing him tightly, she kissed him on the lips as hard as she could.

Naruto sighed when it was over and got up.

"Finally! Am I going to have to do this every morning!"

He kissed her on the cheek. "I wouldn't mind." he said smiling.

"I love you." she said.

"I love you, too." he replied with one last hug.

The 'I love you's were now their morning greeting. They got up, prepared themselves, and got ready.

With high hopes, they set off for the final test of the chuunin exam.

"Are we ready?" a pair of red eyes glared at the man.

Shifting his glasses carelessly, he simply said, "We're fine. We've been through the review already. Let's go."

The red eyes glowed for a second, and the man was on the floor dead. *Today... Is the day I test my strength... Today... I will fix the past wrongs...*

The sun came up as it approached seven o' clock... The chuunin exams would begin in one hour...

8 - The Final Test

Chapter 8: The Final Test

Approaching the stadium, they saw Tsunade, along with Gaara, the current Kazekage, and the Raikage. Tsunade announced the rules, and they began immediately.

The first match was a sound team against a sound team against a sand; surprisingly, the sand won. The sound nins were completely out; it seemed Orochimaru had no plans for Naruto and Sasuke this time.

The second match was a leaf team against a Lightning, and the lightning won.

The third match was the other leaf team, Naruto and Hinata, against the other lightning team. This fight wasn't much of a challenge.

Naruto started with the old faithful kage bunshin three of the clones were visible; one, however, was hidden underground. Hinata used genjutsu to trap one of the members. Hinata wasn't trying to succeed in the genjutsu; just get them off guard for one second. And one second was all that Naruto needed. With a kunai, the member was knocked. From there on it was easy. The ninja made a lightning shield which protected him, but Naruto's shadow clone came in from underground and knocked him out. That was the end of that.

They had reached the half way point one lightning, two sand, and two leaf teams. From here on out, it would be individual matches, one on one fights instead of the regular team battles. The next match was between a sand and a leaf; the sand won. The fifth match was between a lightning and a leaf; the lightning ninja lost. The sixth match was between Hinata and the remaining lightning.

Hinata crouched down into a fighting stance. Activating her byakugan, she analyzed the opponent's chakra patters. She found the opponent was making a shield. This wasn't good. Now she couldn't see what her opponent was going to do. Using normal chakra to cover her genjutsu trace, she made it look like she was simply attacking with chakra. Once the chakra got close enough, the opponent was about to defend. Big mistake. It was an area genjutsu the entire area soon was trapped in it, and the chakra shield dissipated. Now he was trapped in the genjutsu. Hinata threw a kunai at him, pinning him down, and used the 64 hand Hakke. He collapsed on the floor.

Naruto was waving from the stands. ALL RIGHT HINATA-CHAN! WOOO!

Hinata's father was there, too. He had a frown on his face, but Hinata didn't notice. She had won... She had won! She gladly accepted a kiss from Naruto. Good luck. she whispered to him.

Naruto nodded, and went off. The final match of this round Naruto against a sand ninja.

Naruto simply rushed this time at his opponent. It turned out his opponent was a puppeteer. It didn't matter. Naruto used a rasengan and broke the puppet in two. Then, using his now elevated chakra, Naruto kicked the sand; one kick and it was over. Naruto wanted to conserve energy.

The final match was between the two sand. One, obviously, lost.

The round was over: the lightning shinobis were completely out, three sand were left, and three leaf ninjas were left. Naruto gulped and prayed he wouldn't have to fight Hinata.

The first match was between a leaf and a sand; the sand won. The next was between another leaf and another sand; the sand lost. So far it was even between the two countries. The next fight was between Hinata and another puppeteer.

Hinata knew Kankuro, and so she understood the concepts. She soon figured out, using her byakugan, that the puppet was actually fighting, and the real person was inside all wrapped up where the puppet was supposed to be. *Trying to trick me...* Hinata acted fooled and attacked the puppet. But when she got to close combat, she took out her kunai, chopped off the puppet's right arm, and used the Heavenly

Spin so that the user wasn't protected anymore. The real ninja got the full blow of it and he was knocked out.

The next battle was between Naruto and the remaining sand. Naruto went all out on this one he ran as fast as he could, disappeared, reappeared from underneath the ground and knocked the sand out in much the same way he had done to Neiji three years ago, only he didn't use shadow clones.

Three-fourths the test was over, and there was one sand, and three leaf ninjas left. And Naruto was afraid... He might have to face Hinata. He couldn't bare the thought he would have to fight the one he loved... He couldn't do it... *Calm down, Naruto...* He thought to himself. Luckily, the next match was between he and the other leaf. Naruto used his bloodline limit and finished it in one jutsu. He was nervous he had to not fight Hinata...

Hinata had to face the sand; and the sand was eyeing her in a very scary manner. The match began, and the sand disappeared. Hinata activated her byakugan to find out where he was, but he disappeared. Suddenly, he reappeared and hit her. He had vanished to that one degree blind spot her byakugan. *But how was he able to figure out where my blind spot was so quickly... He sees every detail... Usually a person needs around an hour to find out... And that wasn't just luck...* Another disappearance. Hinata turned her head and saw him too late. From underneath the ground, he punched her. Then, he hit her with five kunais. *A sand using kunais?* Something was strange here... Something was not normal. True, it had been done before; nevertheless, it was not normal. He was supposed to be a sand ninja, yet he had a leaf fighting style... It chilled her to the bone. Suddenly, he got her from behind. He was fast... As fast as Lee... Maybe faster. Suddenly he had her on the ground. He walked up to her, and looked her in the eye. She saw red, bloodthirsty eyes.

Then he took a kunai and stabbed her in the stomach.

Her world went black.

Naruto stared at that ninja. He felt it, too. Something was definitely wrong. He was about to get very angry when he remembered the monks' teachings. He calmed down, analyzed it, and decided to investigate further... One thing was for sure, though. He would kill that sand ninja, that much was for sure.

Naruto wasn't afraid of the kyuubi chakra anymore. The merging had been successful the kyuubi's chakra was now his own to use at anytime he wished. The kyuubi was now gone; leaving some traits of its behind, but it would no longer bother him. He no longer had the kyuubi, and Akatsuki could no longer get it. He had a massive amount of chakra enough to keep him alive for a month on chakra alone, and a bloodline limit (though he didn't know it,) which let him access an arsenal of jutsus. But something didn't feel right. He felt he had seen that style before... At least remotely...

Naruto jumped down for the final fight. He activated the his bloodline limit, and his eyes began glowing again. He stood in a fighting stance, and was ready. As soon as Tsunade said Begin, Naruto would show this guy just who he was messing with...

Little did Naruto know that 'this guy' knew exactly he was messing with... It was Naruto who didn't know... *And that would be his downfall...* thought the sand ninja.

9 - The Second Battle

Chapter 9: The Second Battle

Naruto looked at the ninja in front of him. He was a bit shorter than he. About 6' 0". Staring at the reds of his eyes, Naruto saw the blood thirst. Naruto had seen worse. Instead, he stared deeper into the eye, and his eyes began to glow violently. He had seen those eyes before somewhere... No matter, he was going to give this ninja some blood thirst. *You want blood lust... You want monstrosity... I'll give it to you!* Naruto stared so that he would see the core of that ninja, and the ninja broke away from the stare, stepped back, and panted.

Up in the stands, an old ninja with a hat covering his face looked at the battlefield curiously. *Rush?* he thought curiously. *Then this should be more fun than I thought.* He glanced sideways to a man in an anbu mask. The man pretended to pick up something, but in the middle, there was an unmistakable nod. Naruto's eyes now began to glow a flickering silver.

Take all your rage... All your emotions... And kill it...

Naruto calmed down, and his eyes glowed a pure silver.

Analyze the field... Maximize your efforts... And protect your loved ones... If they are already dead...

Then, calmly... coolly... Without showing emotion to cloud your judgment and fighting capability... KILL HIM!

Naruto's eyes began shining brightly now, and the whole stadium was wondering what that was.

The Uzumakis are said to be the masters of seals and jutsus... Their bloodline limit allows them that... And from the dawn of man they were... Kisame growled.

Indeed... They have three stages of it... The first allows them to detect any jutsu or seal at a single glance. The second goes even further know how it's used, how to use it in battle, its strengths, and its weaknesses. It's like a deciphering code. That is why they can make their own jutsus and seals effectively... The second takes over with experience... Once you have the second, the first combines into it, and only the second will show... Itachi stated calmly.

Yes... Sasori growled grabbing the scroll. They can memorize it at a single glance... And the third masters the jutsus... They can use any jutsu they see with expert skill though it is their first time... he said in a deep voice.

All in a single glance... Tobi said.

That's kinda dangerous, isn't it, yeah? Deidara said.

They all remained silent.

What?

Shut up, Deidara. Itachi said emotionlessly.

It seems our opponent will be more challenging than we thought... But he's worth it... After all, the kyuubi is a great creature... Sasori said.

Should we tell... him? Kisame asked.

They all shook their heads immediately.

Itachi silently looked out side. *The kyuubi, is no more...* He thought. *Thank you, Naruto-kun... Now... My chance is here...* And on his lips, may have been, only a flicker, but nevertheless a resemblance to a smile...

Naruto used kage bunshin; the bunshins were underground... Or at least most of them were. Others were hinged into pebbles, and some were shadows.

The ninja quickly analyzed it and silently made some signs.

Naruto's eyes analyzed it. Groudon no jutsu: advanced fire technique; powerful, takes little chakra, but easy to evade. Naruto frowned. A fire jutsu... The last person who used that was Sasuke... Naruto simply sidestepped it the large beam of fire. But right after it passed the ninja was above making a punch. Naruto knew this ninja was at least a chuunin. The direct attack was not his plan. Naruto disappeared and reappeared at the end of the stadium.

The ninja simply dusted himself and said in a bloodchilling voice, 'Let's not hold back anymore, shall we?'

Naruto didn't seem to be moved. Instead, his eyes began glowing more powerfully.

The ninja smiled. 'I've been looking forward to this. Three years of training, Uzumaki Naruto... Don't disappoint me...'

Naruto simply stood there.

'I'll take that as a 'yes.' The ninja stated, and disappeared. There was a note. It said, *Meet me at the statues... We can't fight here properly...* Naruto burned the note with pure chakra and disappeared.

Naruto stood on the same statue where he stood when he fought Sasuke.

The ninja there stood on the opposite statue with his back turned to Naruto. Turning around, Naruto saw it was none other than Sasuke himself.

Naruto nodded. Everything fit into place—the red eyes, the fire jutsus, the previous stance he had seen, the same attitude and voice... It all fit now. Why would Orochimaru make Sasuke a sound nin? It would be so obvious... Of course it was Sasuke... This was his second fight with Sasuke... And he would not have mercy this time. He would bring Sasuke back to Konoha... And Team 7 would be one again... For sure. But he would give Sasuke the beating of his life. He thought of Hinata, and his determination soared.

'You must place mental barriers,' the monk had said. 'This way, you restrict yourself from giving full potential. Then, when you manage to break it, you'll be breaking mental restrictions... The brain is powerful; it can fool you, and it can fool itself.'

So in a real fight, when I'm giving it all, and I think I can't do it, my brain will think it's just another mental barrier... Even though all mental barriers are gone... And I'll flare and my powers will increase...

The monk had nodded. Also, it is useful for controlling your emotions, it is good to hide your full potential... And it is good for meditation.

Naruto focused on his mental barriers, and they busted open under his force. His chakra now flared. His body was roaring to get at his opponent... He wasn't going to deny himself that opportunity.

Naruto jumped at Sasuke with incredible speed, punched; Sasuke ducked, kicked Naruto; Naruto balanced his body on Sasuke's leg and made a kick, only to find Sasuke dodge it. Naruto jumped off Sasuke. This sequence happened in a little less than a second. Both were going at incredible speeds. Sasuke may have activated his curse seal. Naruto didn't know anymore. He was focused on bringing Sasuke back; and to do that, he would have to beat the hell out of Sasuke. Naruto used various jutsus, but Sasuke dodged them. Naruto closed his eyes. He would have to use the scrolls' jutsus... It was only meant to be used after he had fully awoken his 'meditation abilities', but Naruto decided he had no chance. Naruto made some signs, and thought, *FIRESTORM TORRENT JUTSU!* A huge hurricane of fire spread out to get to Sasuke; Naruto knew he would dodge, one way or another. But Sasuke simply activated the next level of the curse seal and flew away. It was then that Naruto jumped at him—with in his hand nothing but the very same technique that Sasuke used against him. Naruto would knock him out... May be even bring him close to death... But he wouldn't kill Sasuke... Naruto jumped towards him with a Chidori in his hand. But when Naruto reached Sasuke, it was only a log. *A replacement jutsu...* Naruto thought as he landed on the ground, only to disappear. Naruto had brought his previous shadow clones with him, and one had found him.

His shadow clone dodged a punch and threw a kunai at Sasuke. Sasuke charged a jutsu and silently

thought *Lightning Thrust Jutsu!* A huge fist of lightning came at the clone when five Naruto's came from the side each with a Rasengan in hand. They collided, but Sasuke used a Lightning Sphere Imprisonment Jutsu to make a sphere of lightning which blocked all the hits. Releasing the sphere, Sasuke found an unconscious Naruto on the ground. Sasuke didn't hesitate. He took out a kunai and brought it down, only to find that body poof away. *I knew it wasn't over yet!* Sasuke said almost panicking as he turned around.

In his face, Naruto landed a level five rasengan a small spear of chakra which sent him flying fifty feet. Sasuke landed at the head of the statue he previously fought on. Naruto used a Disintegration Jutsu to crumble some stone forcing Sasuke into the ravine. Naruto jumped after him only to find Sasuke disappearing. Naruto analyzed it as a Body Flicker, meaning Sasuke couldn't be too far away. Out of the water Sasuke jumped at him only to find a clone. Sasuke was on top of the statue head searching. It was then that a shadow clone grabbed him and used a Shadow Bind on him. Naruto instantly reappeared in front of Sasuke with a rasengan in his hand and forced it down. Suddenly, the bind was broken and Sasuke kicked Naruto's arm knocking the rasengan a tad bit above the target right into his heart. Or so he thought. A level six rasengan, a tiny drill like point of energy and a rather shocking state, would rammed into Sasuke's heart and Sasuke's body heart down would be almost instantly paralyzed. Naruto analyzed he would have about five minutes of life left. Suddenly, a vortex surrounded Sasuke and he disappeared, only to reappear in a man's arms. The man smiled; it was Kabuto. Next to him Orochimaru came. They disappeared with Sasuke. *Orochimaru... Orochimaru had saved Sasuke before the blow had connected.* Naruto sighed. *I can't believe it... But... Thank you...* Naruto knew that Sasuke would have died if that blow had connected.

Naruto knew it was pointless to tell where they went; they went away with a seal, not with a jutsu, and so they distance was unlimited. Tiredly, Naruto poofed back to Konoha. But what really scared him, was that he had lost control of his emotions just for about three minutes before he activated 'rush', but he had lost control nevertheless. He sighed, realized the kyuubi was no longer alive. But he still could have done many foolish things... He fought his tears and walked into the stadium.

Tsunade instantly came to him and pinned him to a wall. **WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU? THE CHUUNIN EXAMS HAD TO BE CANCELED BECAUSE OF YOU!**

It didn't matter anyways because that boy was --

WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT DIDN'T MATTER? THE CHUUNIN EXAMS WERE CRUCIAL TO KONOHA'S WELL BEING. YOU BETTER START EXPLAINING OR I'M GONNA KICK YOUR @\$#!

Naruto sighed. It didn't matter because that boy was O --

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN IT DOESN'T MATTER?

The Chuunin exams wouldn't have counted anyways because --

WHAT? WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEANT THE CHUUNIN EXAMS WOULDNT HAVE COUNTED?

That was it. Naruto could understand that Tsunade was embarrassed in front of two other kages, the Chuunin exams were interrupted, and she still had a hell of a lot of work that was now postponed because she had to keep things in order, but Naruto was pissed. **SHUT UP WOMAN AND LET ME TALK!** he said scaring her. **THE DAMN EXAM WOULDNT HAVE COUNTED FOR shoot BECAUSE THE frackING BOY WAS SASUKE AND KABUTO AND OROCHIMARU THE BASTARD WERE THERE! SO frackING SHUT UP, WILL YOU? YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH WORK HERE, OKAY!** He rubbed his temples and calmed down. Do you really think I'm so irresponsible that I had no idea of the situation. Did you really think I just rushed into fighting without realizing that there were two kages... Did you really think I didn't care about the village? He left her and walked off to Gaara.

Gaara-san. Naruto sighed.

Naruto-kun. What happened?

I'll explain it to all the kages and everyone at once. He called some of the Anbu, the jounin senseis, Jaraiya, and the Kages. That sand ninja was a man named Uchiha Sasuke. Gaara's eyes widened. Yes, the very same Uchiha Sasuke that Gaara-san here fought during the Chuunin exams three years ago... He was a member of my genin team... Naturally, he and I share any experiences, and I know his fighting style... Or at least, how he used to fight. Anyways, when I saw sharingan, fire jutsus, his style, and heard his voice, I was sure it was him. So, I left to make sure to knock him out before Orochimaru and his right hand man Kabuto could find us. Sasuke had left the village three years prior to this in order to get stronger... I wanted to bring him back, and so I left immediately to defeat him before Orochimaru could get him. You all know Orochimaru, correct?

They all nodded.

Well, he wanted Sasuke's body for the sharingan of course. If we got Sasuke, we would have gotten a chance to get Orochimaru as he would have come for Sasuke, and we could have had a battle with him then with all our forces instead of randomly searching and hoping and deal severe damage to the Sound... After all, he leads it, and with him out of the way, war would have been out of the way... I weighed this against two hours of anxiety, and decided to take it. Please, forgive me for any trouble I might of caused.

The Raikage spoke now. You have acted like a true leader thinking about others before yourself. I suggest we all have an alliance now and deal with the Sound before their power grows any further.

I will be honored to help against Orochimaru. Gaara said, agreeing.

And I'm sure the leaf would love your alliance. Naruto said looking at his two senseis. They both nodded vigorously.

Then it's settled. Tsunade now came.

Yes, and if you'll excuse me, I have to go home.

And miss battle plans? the Raikage now spoke up.

Naruto smiled. Who needs me when there are ten Anbu, four jounin, two senin, and three Kages here? Forgive me, Naruto said and disappeared.

Spoken much like Sarutobi. the Raikage said.

You seem to like him, Raikage-sama. Tsunade said smiling.

The kage shrugged. What can I say? He seems very much like his father.

The Hokage nodded. But in her heart, she felt remorse beyond words. To her, Naruto was her son... Her only son... And probably the only one she would ever have despite the blood relations. Truly, Tsunade felt like fainting when Naruto ran away. She nearly had a heart attack, and the memories of her loved one, Dan, and of her brother came flooding back to her. Naturally, when Naruto came back, she was happy, worried, pissed, annoyed, and scared. All of the emotions mixed together resulted in just plain out yelling. She sighed, and thought, *I'll have to deal with him later... At least he's safe now...*

Naruto rushed to the hospital. It seemed Hinata had been healed by Tsunade herself and was fine; she was already out of the hospital back at his house resting (doctor's note, and as a rule of thumb, when Tsunade says you should rest, you better get your @\$ in the bed, or else...) Naruto sighed audibly with relief and decided he needed to be alone. Now that everything was taken care of, why bother going home? He ate some ramen and lied down underneath a tree, closed his eyes, and thought about what just happened.

He had failed a second time... Naruto would have brought Sasuke back... But Orochimaru had come... And Naruto had failed... Team 7 seemed like a distant thing in the past. Naruto reached for that image in his mind, but the more he reached, the more it seemed to slip out of his grasp. He set his mental barriers again feeling tears in his eyes. *I won't cry... I won't cry... I won't cry... I WON'T CRY!*

Suddenly, a voice said, I know you won't cry.

Naruto looked up with teary eyes to see Hinata. Hinata-chan... I was just... But there was no use in

lying to Hinata.

Hinata sat him down next to her, placed the back side of his head on her shoulder, hugged him, and comforted him for a while. She kissed the top of his head, and repeated, It's okay... Finally, after he had calmed down, she said, Now what happened? She unconsciously began playing with his blond/red hair and kissing it.

Naruto didn't mind; in fact, he loved it. It soothed him. Naruto began to retell the story. And so, I was really mad... Mad that he hurt you, mad that you had to go away from me... Mad at everything. I calmed down and focused on a technique called Rush... So I went at him... I saw his red blood thirsty eyes, but I was unmoved. My anger was ten times greater than his blood thirst, and I showed it to him. I scared the hell out of him, too. We exchanged a few blows... And he used a fire jutsu... And then, he disappeared... Leaving a not behind... Next he repeated the explanation he gave to the Hokages... and then told her exactly what had happened between him and Sasuke. I... I failed... I'm a failure... Not once, but twice... I promised... I promised I would bring him back... But no matter how strong I get... How good I get... No matter what I do!... I failed... I failed... he said repeating it like a mantra.

Inside Hinata's heart, she felt anger at Sasuke. It was something she had felt for the first time in her life. Sasuke was causing Naruto so much pain, she she hated him with all her heart for it. No, no you're not a failure.

I am...

No you're not! Say it!

Naruto shook his head.

Hinata grabbed him and kissed him with all her heart. Then, wiping his tears, she said, You're not a failure... You're telling me I'm so pathetic that I'm in love with a failure? You're Uzumaki Naruto the future Hokage! Remember it! She quoted his past lines from when he was a kid and giggled. You were so cute back then...

At this Naruto couldn't help but smile. And I'm not now?

Hinata kissed him on the cheek. Now, you're handsome. No longer cute.

Naruto made a pouting face. Awww... I wanted to be cute. and he smiled.

Naruto-kun... Can you please tell me what happened during the three years of your training... I would like to know... I want to know you better.

Naruto thought about the rules. Then he remembered he had already told her about 'rush.' In fact, he had told her a lot! He remembered the exception he could tell his lover... actually, his wife, about it.

Naruto frowned... Was Hinata his wife? No, of course not! Would she be? ... He hoped so... And he told her the rule.

Hinata smiled. Naruto-kun, do you want me to be your wife?

Well, um... Yes... he said embarrassed.

I have always wanted to be your wife... It's only happened in my dreams... And I would love to make it a reality.

Naruto thought this was good enough he loved her, and although he hadn't asked her the question, he figured it was good enough... And so, he began to relate his past incidents at the monastery.

FLASHBACK

Naruto sat down in the meditating position. *Try to think of nothing... Try to think of nothing... Damn it! How the hell am I supposed to think of nothing? I'm thinking right now! Nani!*

WHACK! You are not meditating properly, Naruto-kun. R said.

Naruto cursed under his breath. *How the hell would he know what I'm thinking?*

WHACK! I would know you're thinking because you're not meditating.

I hate this guy... Naruto decided to actually try harder this time. Naruto concentrated on nothing but what his body felt. His body felt the floor, his skin felt the clothes on him, and he felt hot air around him...

WHACK!

Damn it! How could I fall asleep! shoot...

It was time to begin the first day of classes. Naruto walked up to the old monk.

Naruto... Your sensei has asked me to train you in the six courses we provide. Each course is based on a country. Naturally, the courses are --

But there are only five countries!

The monk remained silent.

Why aren't you answering!

Well, I felt since you believe you are so important that you can interrupt me before I explain, you must know more than I. So, why should I explain something you already know? That would only bore you, Your Highness.

Naruto hung his head. It was another way for saying 'Shut the hell up and wait till I'm done.' Sorry...

No reply.

Sorry, *sensei*.

Hmmm... Anyways, there is water, stone, fire, sand, and lightning. Stone is calm and stable; this course specializes in defense. Sand provides a great defense, as well as a good trap for enemies. Naturally, this course is a higher class of the same defense. You will learn absolute defenses in this class. Fire proves to be dangerous; it spreads quickly and consumes all in its way. This is a basic offense course. Lightning is even more dangerous as it not only causes fire, it is more powerful. This is an advanced offense course where we will talk about bloodline limits as well as Unavoidables.

Naruto opened his mouth to ask what were Unavoidables, but remembering his last interruption, he decided to keep quiet.

Water is cool and refreshing. It is like chakra. In this class we will talk about chakra control as well as chakra efficiency. The sixth course is something we offer by ourselves. It is based on The Way. It is the way of the monks. We practice meditation, virtues, and discipline. Any questions?

Yes, sensei... How do you meditate?

That is something that *should* not be taught, only learned. If we teach you, then you will not learn by yourself to focus. All short cuts will only cause further damage. You will have to re-learn, which will take much longer. I suggest you get a few broken bones from R and find out.

Naruto groaned. Yes, sensei...

With that, Naruto began his classes; he actually got no sleep whatsoever. The classes were divided into four hour long classes taking up all twenty four hours of the day.

Well if I don't sleep how am I supposed to be ready for the next day?

Meditation actually gives three times the amount of energy and calmness than sleep does. If you learn to meditate four hours of deep meditation will keep you running for about a two days.

Great... Naruto sighed... *I hate this place...*

WHAT! I GET THIS FOR FOOD! DON'T YOU GUYS HAVE RAMEN OR ANYTHING?

Well, since you don't like it, you can just skip your one meal in a month.

IN A MONTH?

The monk nodded. These beans provide an immense amount of energy. They'll keep you running for a month.

I TAKE IT BACK! I'LL EAT THEM I'LL EAT THEM!

Good. You have five minutes.

FIVE MINUTES!

Well, actually, four minutes 32 seconds and counting.

NO WONDER JIRAIYA SAID NEAR DEATH SITUATIONS! THIS IS KILLER DUDE! I'M NOT GONNA LAST IN THIS PLACE!

The classes proved to be rather hard as well. Four hours of nonstop training for every class! By the end of the day, when it was time for meditation, Naruto would often times simply fall to the ground asleep. He would wake up with broken bones three seconds later. Naruto was indeed progressing in his classes, but at this pace it would take about ten years to finish the classes. Naruto had three. It was only four months later that he actually got the hang of meditation.

He had a rubber band on his hand. All he did was focus on the rubber band; he was awake, but thinking about nothing but how his skin felt when the rubber band touched him. It brought him a new level of consciousness. Soon, he could let go of that idea, too, and think of absolutely nothing. He remained like that for four hours, without having R whack him once.

At the end of it, R said, All right! Time to go to the next course.

I don't want to! Meditating is so cool! I mean I can finally do it! I feel so energetic! I'm not even tired! Man this totally rocks!

R raised an eyebrow. At first you didn't even want to meditate; all you wanted was sleep. Now, you don't want to even train; all you want to do is meditate?

Well that's cuz I can actually do it now!

Did you know meditation brings in new powers?

Huh? this naturally perked up Naruto's interest. What do you mean?

Well... R turned his back to him. When you train, you'll see what you can do now. But I suppose you can skip training. Turning around, he saw a small Naruto running off in the distance to his next class. R chuckled. You're a funny guy, Naruto... You're a funny guy...

Indeed R had not been lying. Naruto was now aware of every movement no matter how small he or his opponent in sparring made. He was perfectly aware of his surroundings, and all his senses were incredibly sharp. Naruto soon became curious as to what new powers would come with further meditation.

His classes were going well now, too. In the water course, he had to do many exercises similar to the tree climbing exercise. Only they were much harder. He had to do rock climbing, walking across a water fall (by pushing his chakra in the opposite direction he could stay in the same place but Naruto had to lunge an enormous amount of chakra to actually move,) and many more.

In his offense classes, Naruto now had enough energy to make series of attacks. He learned many sequences and learned to string them together to make strong, unwavering attacks.

In his defense classes, he learned about proper taijutsu, ninjutsu, and genjutsu defense. Although he couldn't use genjutsu to a great degree, using chakra he could still defend against it. He also learned about 'absolute defenses,' and that they actually had weaknesses. He learned to make up his own 'absolute defenses,' and how do break others'.

But through and through in his classes, what really changed him was that he had to be humble, respectful, and virtuous, yet determined to win at the same time. Naruto, by the end had changed completely.

END FLASHBACK

But Naruto-kun, you said there were seven courses.

The two had moved the conversation to his house.

Naruto chuckled. Yup. Say... Hinata?

Yes, Naruto-kun?

Can I... um, can I talk to you about this tomorrow?

Of course, Naruto-kun.

He kissed her. Good night.

Good night.

Jaraiya now appeared. So... You told her...

Yes... But I haven't come to the kyuubi yet... Or the seventh course.

Jaraiya glared at him.

Hinata lied down in bed. Suddenly, a question came to her. *Why does Naruto get all this special training... I don't understand... His sensei could have taught him this... I mean, clearly Jaraiya-sama was a graduate, and from what Naruto said, graduates can teach The Way... Jaraiya-sama could have gotten permission, come back to Konoha, and then taught Naruto-kun... Why did they keep him away for three years... Was it... To protect Naruto-kun?* Hinata wondered about this. Soon she got scared. *Why would Naruto-kun need to be protected? Who's after him?*

She quietly opened her door.

You haven't told her? You're in love with her! What the hell were you thinking! Do you even realize that this is important? She's in love with you and you can't trust her this much? Instead of telling her the crap about your training, you should have told her this!

Sensei, I know... That's why I wanted to talk to you... I told her I'd finish up the story tomorrow... I don't know... What if she... I don't... She'll --

You and I both know she'd approve... You love her yet you don't trust her this much? I cannot believe you are my student... I am ashamed.

Naruto's restraint broke right there. Well -- he caught his tongue. *I can't lose control again...* He was about to say 'Well what would you know? You're just a pervert!' But he knew if he said that, it would be over for him. Though Jaraiya acted like a pervert, he actually had a whole different side of his life... And if he, Jaraiya's student said this, it was over for him. They heard a door slam and they felt chakra activate.

You didn't make the sound barrier, did you? Jaraiya said in a low voice.

I thought you did! Naruto said frantically.

Sort this one out for yourself... You've screwed up big time, Naruto. and he disappeared.

shoot... he's right... Naruto traced the chakra to the forest. *What the hell is she doing there?* Naruto quickly followed. She was outside the forest, running to her house. *Oh no... Oh no she can't be* Naruto ran after her as fast as he could He soon caught up to her. Hinata! Hinata wait!

Tears were streaming in her eyes. Then, she tripped.

Thank God... Naruto picked her up and used a jutsu to poof both of them to the forest.

Covered with tears, she shook her head, threw his arm off of her, and attempted to run away. But Naruto caught her arm and brought her towards him.

He sat down, and sat her down on his lap. Wrapping his arms around her waist, he said, I'm sorry... I was going to tell you tomorrow...

It's okay, Naruto-kun... I know... You don't trust me... And I don't deserve to be your lover... Good bye, Naruto-kun... She wanted to get away from him, but he didn't let her.

Hinata, please. he pulled her closer to him and kissed her on her neck. I love you... I promised I'd always be with you, remember? That's *our* ninja way.

Well, I no longer hold you responsible for your promise.

Hinata, please, just let me explain... After my explanation, if you want to go back to your house, become a branch member, or leave me, I don't mind... But please, just listen to me...

At this, more tears came, but she nodded.

He hugged her tightly. Thank you. He whispered to her ear. The reason I didn't tell you the full story... was because if I thought if you knew... I thought you would hate me... and leave me...

She turned and faced him, crying even more. Naruto! How could you believe that! Do you have so little faith in me! So small an amount of trust to believe I would leave you?

That's what most of them say before they hear it... Hinata... Do you remember the story of the kyuubi? She nodded and hugged him, keeping her head next to his. The kyuubi, the nine tails fox, attacked the

village sixteen years ago. The Yondaime sacrificed his life and killed it...

Yeah... Well... That's not completely true... The Yondaime did sacrifice his life to save the village... But the fox didn't *die*... It was sealed away... The day I was born...

Hinata's eyes widened; she was understanding now where this was going.

The Yondaime needed a container to seal away the kyuubi in... And... it was me... I have the kyuubi... I am the kyuubi...

She sobbed at this and hugged him even tighter. Oh, Naruto! You're not the kyuubi! You're so kind! You are Naruto Uzumaki! I love you!

Yes... But... That's not all of it...

She looked at him, eyes wide, wondering how much worse it could get.

The monks told me, the seal was weakening... So... I went to an eastern monastery to do a TransferFuunin jutsu... It doesn't kill the kyuubi, but it transfers it to a different dimension. Then, I get all of its abilities... It's chakra... It's red hair... Permanent whiskers... Agressiveness... So now... disregarding what I was before... Now, the kyuubi is a part of me... I *am* the kyuubi... At least partly...

Hinata looked at him he was a blurry image. Wiping her eyes, she saw the tips of his hair red. She saw whiskers as well as sharp teeth. She fell into him and hugged him as tight as she could. No... No... No! No, no, no, no, no! she sobbed for him.

I'm sorry, Hinata... I enjoyed all the time we spent together. Naruto wanted to stand up, but Hinata kept hugging him.

I refuse to not love you! You showed me my strength... You showed me myself for the first time... You gave me hope, courage, and the will to stand up to my father... You brightened my life... I will always love you! she kept sobbing for him. She kissed him on the neck. If only I knew... All the time... They hated you so much... I could have been there for you... I could have helped you... I'm so sorry, Naruto-kun... Naruto's happiness soared. He did have Hinata. Not only that, she loved him so much she was sad that she couldn't help him before. Naruto cupped her face, looked at her, and said, You're with me now, and you've helped me now. I love you, and I always will. He pulled her into a deep kiss. He felt her tender, loving kiss. Her lips were slightly salty because of her tears, but Naruto loved the taste even more. Taking his tongue, he licked her lips dry of the tears. Then, gently, he bit her lower lip, begging to enter. She moaned in ecstasy. She left her mouth open to him, giving him his chance. Naruto's mouth thanked her with another bite, which resulted in a greater moan, and Naruto let his tongue into her mouth. He tasted all the sweet fluids and explored her completely. His tongue entwined with hers, and she came closer to him. Both were in heaven. Who knew so much pleasure could be derived from a kiss?

When he finally let go, Hinata felt his warm, loving lips kiss away her tears. She looked at him, and kissed his cheek. She felt herself be picked up by Naruto, and she snuggled against chest. Keeping her head there, she looked at his strong, determined, and most of all happy face, and smiled. She kissed his shirt, making him smile.

Back at his house, he explained the seventh course, too. As a special treat for her, he made dinner. Surprisingly, it wasn't ramen! Instead, it was her favorite sushi! Naruto sat next to her on the dinner table and put an arm around her. So? How is it?

She kissed him.

I'll take that as good.

She kissed him again.

It's great then? All right!

She nodded.

10 - More Training!

Chapter 10: More Training!

Hey... Naruto walked up to the Hokage glumly.

Hey... the old lady replied.

I'm sorry... the next thing he knew he was in a great hug with Tsunade.

I'm so sorry, Naruto... It's just... You're my son... Despite blood relations, I believe you are my son...

And... just the thought that you had gone off by yourself to fight Sasuke... Possibly with Orochimaru there... I thought you would have died...

Naruto smiled. So, what now? I'm supposed to Mom now?

She kissed him on the forehead again and hugged him tightly.

Mom... suffocating... can't... breathe...

Sorry. Tsunade quickly let him go. Naruto, I wanted to make it up to you... Jaraiya... has told me about your kyuubi situation. So, I believe it is safe for you.

To go after Sasuke?

She nodded.

Thank you so much!

Be careful. There's three months left before the ritual can be performed.

Naruto nodded. So who's in my team?

I've decided a five man team might be better for safety's sake. It's gonna be you, Kakashi, Sakura, Hinata, and TenTen.

Naruto remained quiet about Hinata he didn't care; he was just happy she could go with him. But TenTen... What about TenTen's team? Aren't they busy?

They're not operating anyways. Kurenai's with Gai and Asuma on a mission; Neiji's busy with... *family* matters, and Lee is in the hospital recovering from a mission. Anyways, long story short, everyone else is busy. Besides, I know about the little love story between you and Hinata. she smiled.

Naruto blushed. That has nothing to do with TenTen!

Relax! She's a great girl, and I approve. Go get her. Tsunade smiled.

Thanks, Mom. Naruto was still getting used to calling Obaa-chan 'Mom,' but, hey, he loved having a family. Naruto ran off.

Naruto, Jaraiya said.

Yes?

Listen. I have to tell you this now that you've got this mission ahead of you. You have an advanced bloodline limit. And so, Jaraiya explained to him everything about Naruto's bloodline limit.

Why didn't you tell me this earlier?

Would it have made a difference? You used it anyways.

I suppose not. Naruto shrugged it off.

There's three stages. You're about to get the third stage. The first is recognizing any jutsu. The second is pinpointing its weaknesses and strengths. The third allows you to master it.

That means... All those scrolls...

Jaraiya nodded. Yes. You will be able to master every jutsu you memorized on those scrolls. And because of your bloodline limit, you memorized everyone. Meaning --

I'll be able to master every single one... In just one usage of it...

Jaraiya nodded. Now you see how powerful it is. Not only that, but when you've reached the third stage,

your eyes don't change. Meaning your opponents won't know when you're using it and when you're not. Naruto smiled. Awesome. Yes, well, that also brings in problems. You have one of the most powerful advanced bloodline limits... And Orochimaru saw this at the chuunin exam. Meaning --

He'll be after my body. Naruto finished.

Jaraiya nodded. Now you understand the seriousness of this. You have to unlock the third stage, or you'll get defeated... And that'll be the end of you as we know.

Naruto nodded.

Back at the training grounds, Kakashi, TenTen, Sakura, and Hinata were waiting. Kakashi was reading his book; Hinata was simply looking around, and Sakura and TenTen were whispering to each other. Naruto finally came.

YOU'RE LATE! Sakura yelled.

Sorry, I got lost daydreaming about your beauty.

Sakura blushed, mumbled, Shut up, and kept quiet after that.

May be I should try that, Naruto. Kakashi said.

Hinata and TenTen giggled.

Kay guys. I'm sure we all know the specs of the mission, correct?

Yes, sensei. they all said.

Good. So, we'll revise a good plan once we're near the Fire country's border. Right now, I need to know how much you've improved. So, for the next three days, it'll be you, me, and training.

They all nodded.

Okay then. First training portion will be to have you face each other! So, we'll have a little tournament. Naruto will face Sakura, and Hinata will face TenTen. All right? Kakashi was grinning underneath his mask. He was hoping to destroy some love and get Naruto and Hinata to fight; yes, he was evil. All right! Let's go.

Naruto... About the last fight... I was --

Hey, it's okay. I know, you were too jealous of my outrageous looks, right? Naruto grinned.

Naruto! I'm trying to --

Okay, I'm sorry. Continue.

I was... just a little bit jealous of you having grown so strong... I guess I wanted to pound you back to being an idiot... I'm sorry.

No problem. But shall we get the rematch on? I'm sure you want to get even, as I want to nail you 2 and 0.

You bet. she grinned.

Naruto had a feeling he would like this fight more; the attitude of both were better, and he would hold back this time.

You ready, Hinata?

Hinata was panicking. TenTen had been her advisor for quite a bit helping her get stronger. It was like facing Kurenei sensei... Impossible to win. Y-Yes...?

It sure don't sound like it.

Hinata! Naruto called.

Come on! Have some confidence! You can do it!

Hinata decided to try for his sake, but she felt he didn't understand. She was so much better than Hinata... How could she win against TenTen? It was like Naruto winning against Kakashi-sensei...

O-Okay... she said unsurely.

Naruto walked up to her. You win, and you get a kiss.

Hinata nodded solemnly.

Oh, and here's some confidence for ya. and he kissed her on the cheek. Now go and kick @\$\$.

Hinata smiled. *You don't understand... There's no hope... But for you... I will try anyways.* Hinata quickly took out her kunai.

Now that's more like it! TenTen said.

Guys, you're getting way too revved up! This is just a sparring session. Don't go too hard... Please? All of them groaned.

All right fine! It's probably better anyways, cuz I'll get to see your full potential. He chuckled to himself.

How bout we make things interesting? The winner will face me tomorrow. Okay?

They were all thrilled.

His fight with Sakura began. Naruto's agility had increased tremendously, as had his jutsu and chakra power. However, his raw strength was rather unchanged, or barely gotten better. He would use taijutsu techniques which required little effort but caused deadly damage.

He instantly made a shadow clone, which Sakura fortunately missed to see, and substituted the shadow clone for himself. Instantly, the shadow clone was caught in a genjutsu; the real Naruto came behind Sakura and punched, but Naruto simply went through her. *shoot! She used two genjutsus to fool me... An area trap... of course... How could I be so careless! Crap.*

Too late. Naruto was caught in Sakura's hit; but it didn't mean he didn't have an absolute defense up his sleeve. As soon as she hit him, the exact same force rebounded back to her knocking her back forty feet.

Kakashi was watching with his sharingan out. *Is that... Now way... Temptation? It's a technique which you use to make your opponents attack you; by powering chakra to the exact spot; only, this chakra is charged with intensity. Then, when the opponent attacks you, you let it go; chakra doesn't move on its own. So, when the opponent hits you, he/she actually hits the chakra. But it's been charged in the opposite direction. So, using the opponent's energy, and the direction of the charge whatever it may be it goes right back at the enemy... But to be able to charge it so such a high degree so quickly... It's an absolute defense which requires a lot of chakra; but every absolute defense does... And Naruto has more than enough chakra... So it naturally gives him the advantage... And Naruto uses it to give it back to the enemy instead of plain old deflection... Smart...*

What the hell? Sakura thought. *I thought I got him!*

Naruto's face was emotionless. He was used to getting serious during missions. And as far as he was concerned, this was a mission. Naruto instantly used Shadow Warp jutsu to warp right into Sakura's shadow. Emerging, he was about to kick her when she noticed and backed away from him.

Here already? Wow... You must be eager.

Naruto didn't say anything. Instead, he made shadow clones surrounding her. Instantly, he jumped at her. She jumped up and punched him in the stomach; he simply deflected it, but away from her so she wouldn't notice. He didn't charge as much chakra, and so, he took some damage, appearing as he had been hit with the full blow. *O well, everything has a price...* Naruto knew simply giving it back to her would have been a waste of an opportunity. No, he had something much bigger planned. Instead, all five of his shadow clones came with rasengan's in their hands. This would deal much more damage than reflection of her attack. Since she was in mid air, she could not move. All five collided into her. She had enough healing for the first three; but she took two full rasengan's unblocked, and that was more than enough. She was knocked out immediately. Kakashi came, picked up her body, and set it aside, letting it heal. Two full rasengans? Was that necessary?

Naruto shook his head. They weren't fully charged. It would have been fatal if they were.

I realize that, but wouldn't one have been enough?

Naruto shrugged. So I like overkill when I'm fooling around. She'll wake up in half an hour anyways.

Kakashi sighed and moved on to TenTen and Hinata's fight as did Naruto.

Hinata activated her bloodline limit. However, TenTen had simply taken out a kunai and thrown it. Hinata

stepped back and dodged it; however, she had stepped into a trap four more kunais were thrown right at her. She performed the heavenly spin targeted at a rushing TenTen and not only deflected the kunais but had hurt TenTen, or so she had thought. Landing, she had found another trap which did not actually hurt her... directly. The trap set off three other traps which sent various weapons of sorts at Hinata. Hinata performed the Heavenly Spin again, but it only lasts for so long; Hinata ended up beaten and bruised.

Kakashi was amazed. His sharingan caught every detail, and he was surprised with the complexity of it. In fact, less than a quarter of the entire trap had been revealed, but Kakashi would save it and let Naruto be surprised. He ordered a one hour break time for the four to recover. Naruto went to Hinata and treated her wounds.

You okay? he said placing a hand on her cheek.

Hinata nodded and sighed.

Good job, you fought well. and he kissed her on the cheek.

Hinata looked at him, tiredly, and smiled. Naruto set her on her lap as she fell asleep. Naruto had missed over half their fight, and so he figured Hinata had exhausted herself when he wasn't watching. If only he knew what a fight she had put up...

Soon TenTen and Sakura joined him, and the three talked.

Naruto, why are you having Hinata on your lap?

Naruto didn't have to hide it. He kissed her on the cheek. Because I love her. he continued to stroke her hair.

Finally! TenTen shouted. Man she's been crushing on you since god knows when! It's about time! Naruto chuckled, but Sakura agreed with TenTen. It's true, Naruto. Even at the academy. She always looked up to you.

Naruto pulled Hinata closer to him protectively and placed her head on his shoulder. Looking down at her, he said, Yeah... I was an idiot not to realize it before... Anyways, isn't an hour up? I think it's time TenTen kicked my butt, ne?

You got that right, Naruto! TenTen grinned.

Overconfidence... Hinata. he said softly and lovingly. Hinata, wake up.

Hinata opened her eyes, hugged Naruto tighter, and went back to sleep.

Naruto suddenly carried her, stood up, and threw her in the air and caught her.

Hinata was wide awake and clung onto his arms.

That's what you get for not waking up. and he kissed her on the cheek. Putting her down, he went to the training ground to prepare for the battle with TenTen.

Let's go. Naruto said.

Oh one of us will go after he gets his @\$\$ kicked, all right.

Then show me your strength. Naruto said in a calm, cool manner.

It was the first time Sakura was watching Naruto fight. He had a certain manner of calm, collective coolness about him. His hair flew in the breeze that came, and she sighed, staring at him watching him do what he did second best. (First was obviously eat ramen.) She then saw his hand barely flicker, just barely, and she wondered what it could be.

TenTen saw the calm figure in front of her, and she was fine with it. In fact, 'TenTen' was merely an illusion. The real TenTen was setting up traps. Suddenly, she saw Naruto in front of her.

Illusions... Not too good, you know. he said.

She stared at the figure in front of her, her rage growing. We'll see then! Her traps had just been finished, and she was ready now. She rushed at him, only have him disappear...

Why is Naruto just standing there? Sakura asked. It had been nearly a minute.

That's not Naruto-kun. His chakra signature is different.

Yes, that's a shadow clone.

I see... Sakura said. That was what the flicker of the hand was. *Has he really gotten so fast in his jutsus?* Sakura remembered her first test. Naruto would charge for about ten seconds in an obvious pose and shout as loud as he could 'SHADOW CLONE JUTSU' letting everyone within a one mile radius what he was doing. Now, it was barely a flicker of the hand. She sighed again and stared at him. His features were... good... handsome... The way his golden hair with red tips danced upon his face, going between his eyes now and again. His forehead protector was now half covered; yet, it suited him, that's Sakura thought. It made him look cooler. Naruto's eyes radiated with kindness, and yet he could be serious when needed. His muscles were amazingly large and developed, but he could be as gentle as a baby when needed. He was all encompassing in emotion, and now understood people perfectly. He could cheer up people, befriend people, and change people altogether. That was his special power, and she admired him for it. *No wonder Hinata loves this guy... How could I not see it before...* Suddenly, she snapped out of the day dream realizing that she had been staring at *Naruto*. She felt disgusted at herself. Staring at Naruto! No way! That annoying, short little... And then it hit her. He was none of those things anymore. In fact, almost every girl in town was swooning over him. If Naruto like you, it was almost an honor now. She made up another excuse to convince herself not to like Naruto. *He's taken. He loves Hinata... Besides... I love Sasuke... I always will...*

He appeared behind her, and punched; but she was prepared.

After all, my trap is all encompassing... Especially for jutsu users. Suddenly, he felt chakra charge into him.

shoot... He realized it. It was electricity, and that meant only one thing. It was a famous trap:

INDIGNATION... He thought as he was binded down with electricity.

Kakashi had been watching. He chuckled. *So, even Naruto fell for it, eh?*

However, this wasn't the same indignation trap she used on Hinata; no, she had gone easy on her, because Hinata was a friend. However, Naruto would not get any mercy. She had prepared all her traps for this, her trump card. In fact, she had expected Naruto to use his famous kage bunshin and confront her. That's where she set up her traps. If he used any jutsu within a five hundred yard radius, the chakra kunais would locate it and go after him -- and they were nearly indestructable. Thus, he was trapped there. If he moved, or used taijutsu, chakra drain traps were waiting for him. They would activate like a mine, when stepped on. Thus, his movement was restricted. In fact, she had memorized exactly where there weren't any traps, and the only area was where she was standing. And if he attacked with plain chakra, there would be chakra shockers which used his own chakra to hurt him. The only way he could avoid this, would be to not come within a hundred yard radius of her. *But, if he's still the same Naruto he was before, then he couldn't refuse.* She had thought. Not only that, once Naruto was caught in one trap, they were set up so that it would automatically trigger the INDIGNATION. The best part was, all the traps only reacted to the chakra signatures; and shadow clones didn't have chakra signatures. That's why they used the user's chakra for all jutsus.

Naruto was electrified. He lay on the ground, panting. Then, the INDIGNATION began, and Naruto knew this. But he was too tired to do anything. He couldn't dodge, as that would only off set more traps but he *had* to do something. One hit of INDIGNATION, and he would be out. That much was certain. *That's it! One hit... That's all I need.* Suddenly, Naruto jumped, avoiding another chakra mine. Landing right next to TenTen, he took note of the kunais that were chasing him. He ran around some more, triggering shuriken, more kunais, and even attacks that were based on his own chakra. All of the attacks were following him as he went. Then, he ran after TenTen. TenTen ran away, but Naruto used chakra to catch up to her, triggering more traps along the way. Suddenly, he whooshed past her all the attacks wanted to go to him, but TenTen took all the hits. TenTen couldn't move; she was bleeding, paralyzed, and electrified. And as the traps hit, they triggered the INDIGNATION. Naruto himself used a paralysis jutsu

on her and ran away as fast as he could. He saw it. Three bolts came at her. One entered her right leg and cut through completely, absorbing all of her chakra and defenses. The next one went through her arm, absorbing most of her energy. The third one went through her side dealing unblockable damage to the now nearly dead TenTen. As it went through, blood gushed out; this rod was shaped so that it would deal the maximum damage. It rotated as it went, tearing the bones and muscles. It had blades on its sides to do more damage, and it electrified her to an incredibly high voltage as it went through. Then, the last part of it was coming; and this one would kill her. Four large spears came at her. She closed her eyes and thought, *I love you Neiji*. It would be her last thought of life. The hit never came. Opening her eyes, she saw Naruto in front, using all the chakra he had. The four spears had combined into one beam, and it was pushing Naruto back. Because Naruto was using his chakra, the rest of traps were coming at him, too. But Naruto blocked them off with more chakra. When the traps had exhausted themselves, Naruto could focus on the beam. His hands were getting bloody now. He was gripping the beam, pushing it back with chakra, but it wasn't enough. Suddenly, his eyes turned golden. Using one hand, he yelled, OBLIDERATION SABATOGE NO JUTSU! The beam died right there.

Naruto carried an unconscious TenTen back to his teammates.

When he arrived, they were horrified. TenTen had three holes in her body, had lost a massive amount of blood, and her internal organs were almost completely obliterated.

Naruto's hands had almost everything broken in them, he had used up every last bit of chakra he had, and his body was completely beat up.

They didn't say a word. Sakura immediately began working on TenTen, as Hinata did on Naruto. Sakura would have liked to work on Naruto, but she was the better medic, and TenTen was in worse condition. Besides, Naruto healed fast anyways. He didn't look too bad.

Kakashi, meanwhile, ran for Shizune and Tsunade. When the three arrived, they were horrified. Shizune and Tsunade joined Sakura and began working. They had brought kits containing blood and tools to help TenTen. After two hours, Naruto had been healed, and all he needed was rest. Meanwhile, TenTen was doing better. They had managed to fix her internal organs; by now, Sakura's chakra was completely exhausted, and Shizune and Tsunade were nearing their limit, too. Sakura passed out. They weren't worried; it was a simple faint from using too much chakra. They had completely fixed her internal organs and got her blood supply back up when Shizune passed out, too. Then, Tsunade fixed her skin and finished the healing process. Tsunade lied down and rested while Hinata, who had plenty of chakra left, finished the final basic touches of TenTen's healing. All this took four hours, and they were all exhausted.

Kakashi felt extremely guilty. *Damn it... This is what I wanted to prevent... Although damage wasn't too bad, they needed three of the best medical nins in the world to heal them... Jeez...*

Tsunade and Shizune left, leaving the five at the training grounds. Naruto was the first to wake up, feeling as good as new. Soon after, Sakura woke up, feeling great, too. They all huddled around TenTen in fear. They had done all they could; now all they could do was watch. None of them spoke a word. It was Naruto who had disrupted the silence. I'll take her to my place. He quietly said. Hinata lives there anyways, and she can take care of TenTen during the night. After all, we've done all we can. They all agreed.

Naruto carried her gently to his house and set her down in his room. Meanwhile, he cleaned up the third bedroom. After it was cleaned, he took some of her things and moved them to his house. After all, she was going to stay for about three days; might as well be comfortable.

Then, carrying her gently, he walked to the second bedroom.

TenTen woke to find herself being carried gently by Naruto. N-Naruto? she said tiredly.

TenTen. he smiled. How are you feeling? he asked putting her down on the bed.

I-I'm all right... My body's completely stiff though.

Naruto nodded. Good. That means you're healing. You'll be in tip top shape in two days. We'll start when you're better

She smiled. Thank you, Naruto.

For what?

For saving me... I saw you there...

Naruto chuckled. You don't need to thank me for that. Anyways, you're in my place. I've moved some of your stuff here cuz you're going to be here for about three days, so make yourself comfortable. Hianta lives here, too, so we figured it would be best, as she could take care of you.

M-My parents --

Already told them. They've agreed. I couldn't get you to your house because it was at the other end of town, and I figured this is just temporary anyways, so it was fine.

TenTen tried to nod, but she couldn't.

He placed his arm on her shoulder. Don't try to move. Then you won't be awake when Neiji or your parents come.

She had a curious look on her face.

Come on. I know you love him. I asked him to check up on you. Your parents... well, they're your parents. Although it would be best if you rested, I felt they had a need to know. After all, you're not in critical condition.

Th-Thanks, Naruto.

No problem. Just do me a favor don't tell Tsunade I let visitors *disturb* you. She'd kill me. he smiled and left.

It was my trap... Why'd he risk himself to save me? I would have killed him... Yet he blindly puts himself there to save me...

Coming down stairs, he saw Hinata was cooking. She was in a white kimono laced with lavender, and had lavender earrings and a lavender necklace on. She had taken a shower and prepared herself. The dress completely suited her, and it matched her beautiful eyes perfectly.

Naruto saw her and couldn't help it. She hadn't seen him yet. He snuck up behind her. Suddenly, he grabbed her, turned her around, and gave her a deep and passionate kiss. She fell into it and placed her arms around him, bringing him closer.

When they broke apart, he said, You look beautiful

She blushed a little bit and kissed him on the cheek. Thanks.

Hey do I get a kiss every time I say that?

She slapped him and sent him off. Returning to her cooking, she decided to treat him with his favorite, ramen.

Soon Neiji and TenTen's parents came and visited her.

TenTen's mother fell into his arms and cried. Thank you so much for saving my daughter! and she weeped for a long while.

Ma'am... Ma'am! It's okay, really; it was nothing.

If it wasn't for you my little TenTen would have gone! Tsunade-sama told me the whole thing! Thank you so much!

Um, if it wasn't for me, TenTen kinda wouldn't have been in danger.

Nevertheless, her parents thanked her profusely. Neiji, too, walked with him outside and thanked him.

Thank you for letting me see her.

Nonsense! She loves you. It's the least I could do.

She... does?

Whoops... Um... Well, since I've already told you. Before she was going to die, or at least she thought

she was going to die, she whispered, *'I love you, Neiji.'* That's some pretty deep love, if you ask me. Neiji nodded.

Let me guess, you haven't told her your love, yet, have you?

He shook his head, embarrassed.

Well what the hell are you waiting for? She loves you, you love her! End of story! Get the hell in there and tell her!

But her parents --

No butts! Get your @\$@ in there! Why else did I call you over? Naruto shoved Neiji inside TenTen's room and locked the door, saying, I'm only letting you out when I hear the words, *'I love you, TenTen,'* coming out of your mouth, Neiji.

TenTen's parents soon left, and Naruto heard kissing from TenTen's room. He unlocked the door, came in, and said to Neiji, All right, Romeo, that's enough, out!

You're the one who convinced me to do this! Neiji said.

Hey, you've kissed. Besides, if it were up to me, I'd lock you two in there. But I'm under strict orders from Hinata-sama.

She bribed you with ramen, didn't she?

Haven't been on a mission in a long time, eh, Naruto? Sakura said.

Yup... I kinda miss it, you know.

You're gonna be a bit rusty, then, aren't you?

Yup! And a kiss.

Neiji sighed, giving up. Giving TenTen one last, passionate kiss, he said, Good bye, TenTen.

She giggled, blushing heavily. Bye, Neiji.

Naruto came down with successful news and was rewarded a kiss as well as his dinner. Hinata, meanwhile, fed TenTen. Afterwards, she ate. Then, she began writing. Naruto lied down, placing his head on her lap, and fell asleep.

Every so often, she would play with Naruto's hair and kiss his cheek.

Next morning, he found himself being awoken by Hinata.

Huh? Wazzup... he sleepily said.

She kissed him on the cheek. Today's your big fight with Kakashi-sensei. Come on! You need your energy.

He simply fell back asleep mumbling something.

Come on. Even TenTen's awake. She's already ready! She wants to see your big fight. Let's go! Hinata said.

Naruto didn't do anything.

Do I have to feed you breakfast?

That would be nice... Naruto mumbled.

Great... Now there's two in the house I have to take care of. One's a dear friend, and one's a BIG FAT BABY WHO WON'T GET UP!

He kissed her and got up. Getting ready, they all made way to the training grounds. TenTen was carried by Naruto, having no other choice, and they all assembled there.

All right! Naruto, it's me and you. Let's go. Kakashi said revealing his sharingan. Let's see if you deserved to win that tournament.

Naruto nodded.

In this fight, agility would mean almost nothing; Kakashi had the sharingan, which would record every detail. *But it doesn't mean he can react.*

Naruto took off his mental barriers. Now everything of his was better. Training under mental barriers increased his abilities when he was without any barriers.

Ah, that's right! Naruto, Tsunade-sama told me to tell you that you've become a chuunin, despite that you cost her \$5,000. Kakashi interrupted.

Naruto nodded. Thank you.

Sakura and Kakashi were thinking the exact same thing: *Since when has become so cool headed...* Either way, the fight had begun.

11 - Bloodline Limit Complete

Chapter 11: Bloodline Limit Complete

Naruto started off with activating his bloodline limit. This was his last chance at getting it to full before facing Orochimaru, and he was going to make the most of it. Not caring at what the others thought, he activated it to the second level it was glowing golden now, indicating that he would soon have it to the final level. He rushed at his sensei right after trading places with a shadow clone he made. His sensei immediately jumped over the shadow clone and went for Naruto. However, the shadow clone wasn't going to give up so easily.

Energy Beam no jutsu. a beam of blue energy ran after Kakashi. Kakashi jumped to dodge it, but the beam followed him. He was forced to. Charging chakra to both his hands, he yelled, RAIKIRI! a golden chidori appeared in both hands and, with much difficulty, it disappated the beam. Naruto's shadow clone got him from behind, but Kakashi, too, poofed away. It had been Kakashi's shadow clone. Then, from behind, Kakashi came and got Naruto, but it had been Naruto's shadow clone. From then on they didn't fool around. They were using taijutsu incredibly fast.

Sakura had seen Lee, who was much faster, but nevertheless, she could barely see them move. Suddenly from behind came Naruto who kicked Kakashi in the head. But Kakashi flipped him and rammed him into the ground, only to find a shadow clone.

shoot... He's faster than me at everything... I may be stronger, but he's faster at both jutsus and agility.. Plus his shadow clones are equally as fast. This is bad... Looks like I'll have to use it, eh? Making his own shadow clones, Kakashi managed, with much of a loss, to isolate Naruto alone. Kakashi was all bruised everywhere, but he figured it was worth it.

Suddenly, Naruto felt his sensei use a *ton* of chakra. Looking into Kakashi's eyes, his own eyes analyzed: *Mengekyuou sharingan. Power 130. It consumes of opponent's chakra. Then I can't dodge it...* *shoot...* Naruto looked straight into his eyes, praying. He felt his world go red. Suddenly, everything turned out to be fine. True, he had tried to use his absolute defense and powered it to his eyes, but he thought it would have been in vain. Then he went into the other dimension again. *What the hell just happened?* Then Naruto realized it. By powering his chakra to his eyes, he had enhanced them. Thus, the had unlocked the third stage. Naruto smiled, through his pain of the jutsu. Now, he was ready to rock. The jutsu in itself was rather ineffective as Naruto, too, had a bloodline limit, and, thus, only of the damage would be delt. Nevertheless, it was a damn lot of pain! Naruto grimaced as pain seared through his arm. Then, as soon as it came, it was over.

Kakashi looked at Naruto. *He's barely phased, though it did bruise him a little. What on earth is going on? And not only that, his eyes are back to normal.*

Naruto looked at his opponent. *What the hell?* Naruto thought. His eyes immediately analyzed: *Kakashi threat level 9. Attacks Raikiri; Mengekyuou sharingan; Tundra Lightning Smasher* His eyes were analyzing more than he had bargained for. Naruto inwardly grinned. *Cool! So they can even do more... All right then!* Suddenly, Raikiri, water clone jutsu. and even Mengekyuou sharingan registered in his mind. It was the effect Jaraiya said. But could he use the shringan? Well, he would find out now. Recalling it, his eyes transformed and he used it back at Kakashi! Kakashi grimaced as the pain came. However, as he had the sharingan and he had trained himself to withstand it ever since the incident with Itachi, he had become resistant to it, too. Naruto then realized he could use the Mengekyuou, only it would take about twice the amount of chakra to use it! He felt a bit low on charka. About one fourth was gone. Luckily the kyuubi wasn merged with him; otherwise he would have been out by now.

Interesting ability, Naruto.

Thank you, sensei.

And the fight continued. Suddenly, Kakashi stopped. Enough. I suggest we not hurt anymore teammates or hurt me, as we need to go in two days. I have seen enough of your skills, and I will make plans for us. All right?

All the students nodded. (Except for TenTen, who simply said 'yes.')

Naruto, may I speak to you privately?

Sensei, I would want to, but can you talk to Jaraiya-sama. He would explain it better than I. After all, sensei only told me today, and I would not be able to satisfy your curiosity.

Kakashi nodded. Very well.

The truth was, Naruto was extremely excited himself like a kid with a new toy. He practiced Raikiri and found the movements come to him naturally. He had truly mastered it. Then, there was the next part the part about being able to analyze people. *Why had I been able to do that? How was I able to do that? Why doesn't Jaraiya-sama know I could do that? Do the monks know?* He plagued himself with questions and doubts. He quickly and curiously analyzed his friends. He truly wanted to see how they would do in his little 'test' and what his eyes would say.

Sakura

Threat level 7

Jutsus: Medical nin; Advanced genjutsus

Hmmm... She probably only got so high because she's a medical nin, therefore making her more useful. In actual battle, she'd be lower on the scale. Naruto supposed.

TenTen

Threat level 6

Jutsus: Cyclone Rectification; Various Traps; Indignation

Hinata

Threat level 5

Jutsus: Byakungan; Hakke; Kaiten

Why does it always say 'threat level'? Can't it base itself on friendship and say strength or something?

Why does it automatically go into battle mode... Strange...

Immediately, the hokage summoned him.

Yeah Mom? Naruto's curiosity soared.

Tsunade

Threat level 12

Jutsus: Medical nin; Summon; Demolition Jutsu

Yup, that explains it. Being a medical ninja up's your threat factor... I wonder what mine is... Unfortunately, no one else had his bloodline limit.

Naruto, Jaraiya has told us about your bloodline limit.

Naruto looked at Jaraiya.

Jaraiya

Threat level 13

Jutsus: Summon; Rasengan; Annihilating Blast Fire jutsu

Woah! Go Jaraiya-sensei! Incredible! And he's not even a medical ninja! If he was he'd be like sixteen or something! Now way! Unbelievable!

Naruto remembered to nod.

Kakashi had come up with plans, and you are to leave in two days, understood?

Yes.

Dismissed.

For a mother, she didn't seem very motherly today.

On the way out, Jaraiya came. Did you get the third part out?

Naruto nodded.

Jaraiya smiled. Good job. Now you'll do fine.

Jaraiya turned to leave, but Naruto stopped him. Sensei?

Yes?

Are there any... other powers to this thing?

No... Why?

Well it's just that this thing has three stages to it; I just wanted to see if it might have had more, that's all.

Thanks sensei.

Jaraiya smiled. You wanted more, didn't you, you greedy little pig!

Naruto pretended to smile sheepishly. *Phew. Thank God he didn't catch on.* See ya. and Naruto disappeared.

Naruto went to his house to find all his friends there, too.

Naruto... We need to talk. Sakura said.

Yeah? What's sup?

TenTen could walk now; her body had healed considerably. We... feel you've been hiding things from us.

Huh? Like what? Naruto was getting a bit tense now, but he didn't let it show.

N-Naruto-kun, your e-eyes were g-glowing... Hinata said.

Hinata! Your stutter is back!

Answer the question, Naruto! Sakura growled.

I wish I could, but you didn't ask any question.

Yes we did! TenTen joined in, too.

Then what was it?

We asked...

Um...

All you said is we need to talk. I don't see the question.

Well we'll ask it now, then! Why the hell were your eyes glowing? TenTen shouted, her anger rising by the second.

I dunno... Jutsu's side effect, I guess.

You guess? Sakura was getting pissed.

In all honesty, I don't know... But hell, it's really cool, right?

Naruto... she growled.

shoot... This distraction thing isn't working. Um... I... gotta... do that thing, in the thing, so uh... um...

bye! he quickly used his bloodline limit to use the teleportation jutsu. It leaves no chakra trace

whatsoever, and, more importantly, he could go anywhere he's already been to with it. *Thank you*

scrolls... Only... Now, the mission is going to be hell... shoot...

Naruto... I feel hurt that you couldn't trust us... Sakura thought.

Damn Naruto! How the hell are we supposed to be a team if he keeps hiding things from us... This mission is gonna suck like hell... TenTen seethed.

Naruto... Hinata felt sad for him. She had used her byakugan right before he went to see what he was doing, but the jutsu apparently left no trace. Now she couldn't follow him.

Funny seeing you here.

What the hell am I supposed to do Kakashi-sensei? They're onto me... Luckily my eyes won't glow anymore, but... Dang it...

Hell I ain't gonna say anything; it's your bloodline limit... But... You should probably tell them the truth...

What am I supposed to say? Hi! I'm Naruto Uzumaki, I have the kyuubi inside of me, which I've hid from

you all for sixteen years, I have a bloodline limit, and I'm stronger than all of you combined! Isn't that swell! I'll get a kick in the @\$\$... I can't tell them... Damn it...

Well, in any case, you should tell Hinata... She has a right to know. Plus, she'll probably help them accept it that you *won't* tell them.

Yeah...

Naruto?

Yeah?

Are you really that strong?

Sensei take a joke! and he disappeared.

Kakashi sighed. *Man, I might lose my job because of you. Thank God. Jeez...*

Naruto poofed a lake outside Konoha. It was in the middle of the forest, and there were no people around whatsoever. He looked at the peaceful land around him. The water wasn't moving, and the air was cool. It was a perfect night to go outside for a stroll. There was full moon above the trees which provided plenty of light. A breeze against his face felt great, and closed his eyes enjoying the coolness. He lied down on the slightly damp grass and simply lay there with his eyes closed. Suddenly, he sensed a chakra signature. Opening his eyes, he saw it was Hinata. *Great... Just damn perfect...*

She lied down next to him and placed her head on his chest. Can I lie down with you? she asked gently.

You already have... he said feeling annoyed.

Naruto-kun what's wrong?

Nothing, Hina-chan... Nothing...

Lies. I know you're troubled, and I don't need the byakungan to see it. What's wrong? she asked.

I just don't understand why the hell I am not allowed to have secrets. Everyone else can, but if my eyes glow once, it's the end of the world! 'Oh no! Naruto's eyes glowed! It's time for us to bug him until he damn gives us an answer!' Why the hell...

Hinata saw he was grumpy and decided to leave it at that. Taking out something from her pocket, she put it into Naruto's mouth. Frowning, Naruto tasted it and realized it was ramen. You... Forgot dinner...

Thanks... he said cooling down a bit.

She fed him dinner, despite the fact that he had said multiple times that it was unnecessary. He didn't know what was wrong with him; may be something was wrong with Hinata, but every time she would do something for him he would get happy. She knew just how to calm him down, she knew just what to do when he was in pain. May be something was wrong, but, hell, he didn't care. He fell into her devious trap which would supposedly cause him certain doom: he let her feed him. She would gently tuck the spoon into his mouth and take it out lovingly; he didn't know how she did it, but she did. Every time a bit would miss his mouth, she would take her finger and put her finger along with the ramen piece in his mouth. Eventually, Naruto cooled down completely by the end of dinner.

He sighed. I have an advanced bloodline limit... he began.

Hinata looked at him attentively with all her cuteness.

He recited all that he knew about it. I just wanted some cool secret that I could keep to myself...

Something which would give me an edge, just like the hyuugas have theirs, and the uchihas, and Sakura-chan's the only medic of her level in almost the entire Konoha... TenTen's the only weapon master aside from her clan... I wanted something... And I got it... Then, all of a sudden, everyone wants to know... I just guess I acted really immaturely; I got a new toy, and I didn't want to share it until I was ready... I'm sorry.. he said sighing.

She hugged him. It's okay. Everyone has some bad days.

Thanks, Hina-chan. If you don't mind, can we not tell them?

Of course.

Let's go back, Hina-chan.

Sure.

They went back, arm in arm, to Naruto's house. It was late one o' clock, and Sakura had left, while TenTen was asleep. Naruto kissed Hinata good night and went to bed himself.

Hinata and TenTen awoke to the delicious smell of something cooking. They both got ready immediately and came down. They were rather surprised to find Naruto up and making breakfast.

Hey, guys... I wanted to say sorry, so... yeah... How is it?

Mmmm! It's great! TenTen said.

I love it, Naruto-kun, Hinata said.

Naruto smiled nervously. Uh, thanks... Is it all right if I don't answer your question, TenTen?

TenTen looked up for a minute, obviously thinking. After some thought, she said, Isn't this the same recipe Jaraiya-sama once used?

TenTen!

Huh? Oh, what?

Is it all right if I don't answer your question from yesterday?

Oh! That's okay! Hinata explained everything... Tsk, tsk, tsk. Getting your @\$ whupped by such a basic genjutsu from your own sensei. Shameful!

Naruto caught on. Hinata! How could you tell.

Hinata pretended to giggle. I'm sorry, but it was funny.

He mouthed 'thank you so much!' to Hinata.

She nodded and continued eating.

Soon the news passed on to Sakura, too, and they continued the day shopping, talking, and spending time together. At the end of the day, they all packed their belongings and went to bed early. They got up at six o' clock and headed out to the North Gate.

Surprisingly, Kakashi was early. They all nodded silently.

We'll get near the borders first and then we'll make plan; it's useless now, as we're safe in the fire country.

They all nodded as they set off on the mission that would change their lives... and, Naruto hoped, Sasuke's as well.

Hey guys! Thanks for the reviews! Sorry, I was a bit busy, and this was long, so I couldn't really update it as fast. But anyways, to the chapter preview, and beyond! Away!

Anyways, almost no NaruHina fluff in this chapter, but there'll be massive stuff at the end of the story, I promise. Yeah, I'm thinking this story could last maximum 10 chapters... Yeah, so anyways, mission, starts, yada yada yada... Oh, yeah, and did I tell you, they meet the bastard I hate so much Orochimaru. yeah, that's it.

12 - The Mission Begins

Chapter 12: The Mission Begins

The five set out on the path simply walking. Naruto and Kakashi talked, and the girls were in one group behind.

Naruto, can you copy bloodline limits?

I suppose. I mean I copied the Mangekyou, only mine takes twice the amount of chakra and goes away right after I use it. You can control when you put your Mangekyou away and revert it to just a plain sharingan. For me it disappears. I suppose if I copied a sharingan, it would disappear in about a second as well, but I'm not too sure.

Hmmm... You're extremely lucky to have such a powerful bloodline limit.

Yeah, I know. Say, sensei?

Yeah?

I thought Jaraiya-sensei told you about this stuff. Why are you asking me?

He's gotten quicker, all right... But not quick enough... Well, I simply wanted to stress the fact that you had a *bloodline* limit, and so in order to have that you needed to have a --

Bloodline! Meaning I had to have a family at some time! Of course...

Yes, and I wanted to find out a bit more about this thing. Do you know what it's called by the way?

I think it's called the Ryoushagan... That's what Sensei told me...

The Ryoushagan... Who knew the Uzumakis had an advanced bloodline limit...

Yeah... It took me by surprise as well.

Hey, sensei?

Yeah?

Can I test something?

Sure, what?

Naruto activated his bloodline limit. Wait... How long will it be before we actually face action?

About a week.

Will you recover from using the Mangekyou by then?

I don't see why not.

Can you activate it but not use it? I want to see something.

... Sure, but I want a *full* explanation after this...

Naruto nodded.

Kakashi revealed his sharingan, but his stats remained the same as before. Then, he activated the Mangekyou.

Kakashi

Threat level 10...

That was the only change. Holy shoot! That means this thing doesn't actually find the end threat level! Meaning... Anyone can hide their true potential... O boy... Well, at least I'll be able to see it if they change.

He then sat down and explained the statistics to Kakashi.

And you're saying you don't know why...

Yeah... I really don't know...

Kakashi thought for a bit. Are you sure I'm only a threat level of ten?

Sensei!

Sorry... It just kinda bummed me out... Well, in either case, I don't know either.
After that they kept talking about battle tactics, strategies, and famous ninja fights.

So? TenTen asked.

So what? Hinata said. Her confidence had returned soon after Naruto's confession, and she felt great because she would get to spend more time with him.

So how *is* he?

He's fine. He's nice, kind... loving...

TenTen groaned.

Sakura felt strangely uncomfortable. TenTen, I really believe it's none of our business '*how he is.*'

Hinata kept quiet.

TenTen's jaw dropped. Usually Sakura would jump with unmatched enthusiasm at these questions, but today she was acting plain weird!

Things continued downwardly from there. Soon the three girls split up: Hinata obviously went to Naruto; TenTen conversed with their new sensei, but Sakura simply walked behind them wondering.

Well, it's no wonder... After being mean to him all these years... She sighed.

All right peoples! Time to set up camp. We go any further we'll get lost.

They all nodded.

Naruto, you cook.

They all groaned.

Hey, we're going on a shift basis here. TenTen you get the firewood. Sakura and Hinata try and gather some food from the surrounding forest; we won't have enough to make an entire meal. I'll scout ahead for tomorrow's journey. Meet back in an hour.

They all nodded.

Sakura and Hinata left the camp site together.

Well, Sakura-chan? Which direction do you want to go?

I'll go north.

Okay. Hinata said cheerfully and went south to gather.

Naruto... You've gone off with your own dreams... Too busy to even think about me... I used to be the center of your life once upon a time... Only now Sasuke's gone off, too... Sakura began getting fruits and berries. She took out a picture of Team 7. Those were the good days... Now I'm stuck... Without a dream... and without anyone... Sakura continued to half heartedly gather food.

They all came back to camp in one hour. TenTen came with firewood and they started a fire. Sakura and Hinata gave their materials to Naruto. Kakashi came and talked about what lied ahead.

Naruto cooked busily but listened.

All right guys. We're continuing on track. If we continue like this, we'll reach an inn by tomorrow, and we'll reach the border by the day after. Then, in a week we'll have reached the sound country. But be careful of this city. While we're inside don't mention anything patriotic because this city is very close to the Sound Country, meaning more spies. Got it?

They all nodded.

All right. But other than that we're going at a pretty good pace.

The camp soon smelled something delicious, and they were starving. They hadn't stopped for lunch and hadn't had breakfast either. Their only meals would be dinner, and so Naruto made a hearty meal.

Kakashi raised an eye brow. Naruto... That doesn't smell like any ramen I've ever had... he said surprised.

I didn't know you had eaten ramen, sensei.

Just because I moderate doesn't mean I haven't eaten it.

Well, in any case your nose is right. It isn't ramen.

All of them (except Hinata,) dropped their jaws. Say what? they all yelled.

Quiet! I mean jeez, do you want everyone to know we're hear? Isn't fire a good enough signal, or you do have to yell it, too. Jeez...

Sakura was suddenly interested. Everyone rushed and ate three servings of everything. Afterwards, everyone lied down.

That was awesome Naruto! Sakura shouted.

Who knew you did cooking? Kakashi said quietly.

You should cook everyday. TenTen commented.

They all went to their respective sleeping bags and crashed.

The moon provided plenty of light despite the fact that it was a thin crescent moon. Naruto sat down and watched the fire dance.

Naruto-kun?

Hey, Hinata. How was the food?

It was great. She rested her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

That's great, but shouldn't you be asleep?

But you're awake.

That's because I am doing the night watch for the next four hours. So go to sleep. he said and kissed her on the cheek. I'll join you soon.

She nodded. The sleeping bag felt empty without him with him in it with her. Nevertheless, she went to bed.

After four hours passed, he went to Sakura. Placing an arm on her, he gently shook her. Sakura...

Sakura, wake up. Unconsciously she snuggled with the warmth of his arm. Sakura. he shook her a bit more violently.

She woke with a sudden start.

It's okay, it's just me. It's time for your shift.

Sakura nodded, her eyes still closed.

Naruto chuckled and shook his head. Gently, he placed her head back in the sleeping bag and zipped her up. Going back to the fire, he decided to meditate. After meditating for an hour, he went through all the jutsus he had seen the monks do at the monastery. He had now mastered all of them. However, it was only three-fourths. The remaining one-fourth were the most complex and powerful jutsus. He would have to go back there sometime and master all of them, too.

You're not back yet. a soft voice said.

I know... Sakura was too sleepy, so I'm going her shift for her. You can stay with me if you want. he added seeing her evident sadness. She quickly brought a blanket and snuggled up to him, only to fall asleep.

Once morning came, Naruto woke everyone up.

Stretching, they began on their journey once again. Kakashi spoke to him quietly. Were you up the whole night?

Heh. Yeah, Sakura-chan was too sleepy so I did her shift for her.

That's not good. You could have woken me up. Now you're going to be too sleepy to operate fully.

Naruto shook his head. He had meditated for about five hours five times the amount to keep him going for a day. I'm fine never better. \

They continued on for the rest of the five days until they reached the border. Kakashi led the group with Hinata and Naruto right behind him, and the other two girls last. Suddenly, Naruto stopped. He felt unfamiliar chakra signatures. Not to mention fairly powerful ones. There were eight of them. Naruto instantly increased his mental barriers drastically to hid his chakra signature. He couldn't be sensed now. He told his team.

Kakashi nodded. *It could be them... but we can't take chances. Besides, if it's really them, Naruto would recognize and stop. But we can't take chances.*

They went into battle phase. Kakashi sent Naruto to scout. Naruto activated his bloodline limit. He sensed the eight chakra signatures there. Going forward, he read from his eye:

Temari

Threat level 10

Jutsus: Summon; Cyclone Raze jutsu; Eclipse jutsu

Kankuro

Threat level 9

Jutsus: Puppet Revitalize; Summon; Damnation (Puppet Style) no jutsu

Threat level 7

Jutsus: Summon; Puppet Revitalize; Puppet Slash no jutsu

Another puppet user... He has similar jutsus to Kankuro.

Threat level 8

Jutsus: Summon; Desert Grave no jutsu; Ragnarok

Isn't that Gaara's move... Seems like these guys have apprentices or something...

Threat level 11

Jutsus: Indignation trap; Summon; Lightning Rain no jutsu

Someone from under the Raikage? This must be the alliance... I see, we were going to get more people and then attack Orochimaru... That makes more sense. Nevertheless, Naruto wanted to analyze the remaining three people.

Threat level 10

Jutsus: Lightning Assault no jutsu; Rapid Shockwave no jutsu; Summon

Threat level 6

Jutsus: Lightning Assault no jutsu; Summon; Shockwave no jutsu

Threat level 9

Jutsus: Deadly Lightning Jab no jutsu; Medical ninja; Shockwave no jutsu

This one's clearly an apprentice. Despite his strong urge to go out and meet his long time friends from the sand, he reported to Kakashi first.

Eight people; Temari from the sand level 10; Kankuro from the sand level 9; some other sand dude level 7, I feel this one might be Kankuro's apprentice the person is also a puppet user; the last sand guy level 8, he has one of Gaara's moves, he, too, might be a student. Then there's four people from lightning: one guy's a level 11, has the same trap as TenTen; another guy's level 10; the next guy's level 6 he has many of the same jutsus as the level 10 guy, making me believe he is also an apprentice; and lastly a level 9 dude this dude's a medic.

Kakashi was amazed. There were five out of eight people who either equaled him without Mengekyuou or were stronger than he. However, Konoha had two medical ninjas Hinata and Sakura.

Sensei, I'm guessing these are the guys we're going to be allying with?

How'd you know.

Once I know someone, my eyes will record it so I'll recognize them no matter what. I saw Kankuro and Temari, and so I could figure it out.

Kakashi nodded. Yes, we are. So, let's give them a welcome.

Can I give it to them my style?

All right.

Yes! and Naruto poofed away.

Naruto appeared behind Temari.

Sensei! Look out! Ragnarok no jutsu!

Naruto's eyes recorded it, and he simply dodged.

Damn it! Gust no jutsu! Temari simply said.

However, the attack simply phased through Naruto. Naruto's eyes recorded this, too. Genjutsu. You couldn't recognize it?

Who the hell are you?

I'm one of the guys from the leaf. I'm going to be allying with you.

Wait... This little brat... I've seen him before... Damn it... The Chuunin exams! Kankuro exclaimed.

That's where I saw you! You were that annoying brat...

Naruto? Temari exclaimed.

Naruto laughed. Finally! Got you guys pretty good, huh?

You little brat! I'm going to pound the hell out of you!

Naruto laughed more and more. Soon, he came out of the bushes. 'Sup Temari, Kankuro. Temari *stared* at Naruto. He was looking hell hot! No more like that short little twerp they knew long ago.

Yes, I know I'm very beautiful, but can you not stare?

Temari came back to reality. Sorry, she said.

Kidding! Jeez, take a joke. He turned the younger children. So? Who are you dudes... and dudett. he added seeing the girl.

I'm Rin. I'm Kazekage-sama's student.

Naruto raised his eyebrows. Gaara took this little girl as his --

I'm not little! I'm... compact...

Of course you are. And you? he turned facing the boy. I'm guessing you're puppet boy's student, right?

Kankuro-sensei is not a puppet boy!

Kankuro-*sensei*?

Shut up. You may look different but you're still the same pathetic guy in battle.

And yet I was able to fool you all, huh.

Before they could answer Naruto's team had reached. They all got acquainted, and Naruto went off to *greet* the other four.

There were two boys and two girls. The woman was the level 11, and the man was the level 10. The other boy was level 6, and the other girl was level 9. Naruto walked up to them.

You... You're from the leaf, correct? the woman said.

Naruto decided to put on his serious face for this prank. Yes... Perhaps I am... Naruto took out his kunai.

The younger boy immediately shouted, LIGHTNING ASSAULT NO JUTSU! A long electric spear was sent at him. Naruto barely managed to dodge it.

Yashi! Don't be so hasty. He may seem to have a low amount of chakra, but it is a trick. Don't jump in so early.

Naruto's eyes recorded this. Naruto knew he was clearly outmatched, but he decided to have a little fun anyways. He came up right behind the boy and kicked him. The adults didn't seem to be getting into the fight at all. They simply watched, apparently allowing their pupils to learn.

The boy was now scared. Naruto beat him up just a bit, about two or three blows, just to scare the hell out of him. Then he dropped dead and began laughing. He couldn't help it; the boy had a terrified expression on his face, and he was sweating tremendously. It was hilarious. HAHHAHAHA! I GOT YOU SO BADLY! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN YOUR FACE! IT WAS LIKE 'ah! help me!' HAHHAHAHA!

What the hell is going on here? the younger girl shouted. This is not funny!

HAHAHA!

Myoko, calm down. He's not going to hurt us. the leader said.

Naruto stood up. What gave it away?

It wasn't your fault, really. You were going a splendid act. the man said.

But as soon as I saw Kakashi, I knew it was a hoax.

He turned behind to find his sensei and wilted. *Sensei!* Why'd you have to go and ruin it! I was scaring the hell out of him! Come on! Jeez, you're no fun, you know that.

I came because we have more important things to do than stupid pranks. Anyways, let's go. The sand have arrived as well. The rest of my team is with them. he said to the adults.

Agreed. the lady nodded.

They boy and the girl walked up to a smiling Naruto. Naruto put out his hand. Hey, I'm Naruto.

You are so mean! What did you think you were doing! If we weren't allies I would beat the crap out of you! the girl said.

Jeez she's just like Sakura! Medical nin, anger management problems... My God! he said turning to Kakashi.

Well, it's good we have another medical ninja, even if he's pathetically trained by Rain... Kakashi commented.

The boy rolled up his sleeves.

Oh, please. Stop acting all tough. Where was your guts a minute ago? and Naruto went back to his team.

Hey peoples! What's up? Naruto cheerfully said.

Is he always like this? Temari asked Kakashi.

Yeah, pretty much.

Kakashi sensei why didn't you tell us we'd be teaming up?

Kakashi shrugged. Guess it slipped my mind.

IT WHAT? TenTen and Sakura screamed.

Guys, the odds that we'd be faced against someone was rather high; if sensei didn't tell us anything, then no matter what genjutsu they use on us, no information regarding the plan would be leaked. The only person who would have the information would be sensei, who has a smaller chance of getting caught than we do. That's why. Naruto said.

So you have grown sharper, Naruto...

Oh... they both said.

The sand boy sighed. Are all leaf stupid or something?

Please don't insult the leaf *ever* again. Naruto said in a deadly quiet voice.

There was an uncomfortable silence after that.

Okay, Kakashi said breaking the silence. we need plans. Us three will make plans, and we'll all leave tomorrow. You guys just... I dunno, hang out or something.

What? What are we supposed to do?

I dunno. Meditate like Naruto, I guess.

They all looked at Naruto. Indeed he was meditating.

Why are all your students wierdos, Kakashi?

Kakashi raised an eyebrow.

Sorry, I forgot, how silly of me. You're the lord of all weirdos, so of course they'd be, too.

And this is coming from the Rotund Majesty of Fitness, eh?

All except for Naruto went into a group.

Hey! Why don't we make a tournament?

They all seemed to agree when suddenly the level 10 lightning ninja pointed out, We can't. We're four days away from breaching Orochimaru's fortress. I we get hurt, then we're all screwed.

There was a murmur of agreement.

Well, I guess all we can do is get to know each other better. Sakura said.

Yeah, I suppose so.

HEY NARUTO! GET YOUR FAT @\$\$ OVER HERE!

Grumbling, Naruto got up and came. Now what?

We're getting to know each other better.

Okay, well, I'm Uzumaki Naruto; the things I like most are Hinata and ramen; my dream is to become Hokage someday! Who's next.

What the hell is Hinata?

Who's Hinata. Naruto corrected. He hugged her. Say hi!

Hi, I'm Hyuuga Hinata. I like Naruto-kun. At this she giggled a bit. My dream is to be with him, and to lead my clan... someday.

Kay, I'm Sakura. I like beating the crap out of Naruto when he does something stupid, and my dream is to be the greatest medical ninja ever.

My name is Kankuro. I like beating the crap out of... everyone in battle. My dream is to be the greatest puppeteer ever.

My name is Rin. I like being a ninja, and my dream is to make Kazekage sama happy. *Someone's got a crush...* Naruto thought.

My name's Horace. I like chips, and... I don't really have a dream, I guess.

My name's TenTen. I like my weapons, and... I've already accomplished my dream. she smiled.

Getting Neiji to kiss you? Naruto asked.

She nodded.

They all burst out laughing at this.

My name's Yashi. I like to kick this Naruto's @\$\$, but before that, I liked my teammates. I don't want to say my dream.

Man... How many people hate me! Looks like I won't be able to have a moment's peace... or I might die... or worse I won't be able to eat ramen!

They all burst out laughing.

Yashi got really pissed off. He wanted to scare the hell out of Naruto, who made a fool out of him, but instead he got turned into the fool... again...

My name's Mithos. author's note: I take no credit for this name whatsoever... yeah... I like to watch my students grow up and become mature, and I like being a jounin teacher. My dream is to be the greatest teacher I can.

He's a nice guy... Naruto thought.

M-My name's Heather... I-I like my teammates, and I want to be a great doctor so I can h-help people. *She has a crush on him...* Naruto marveled as to how she put it the exact words in a subtle manner.

Come on Heather! You're a great doctor! Be self-confident!

How would you know? You've just met her. Yashi said.

The doctor is supposed to cure a person, right?

They all nodded.

Well, he *has* to do that all doctors can, and so it isn't a big deal. But the great thing about a doctor, is that you come in with all your problems, your stomach ache, you broken bones whatever but you leave that place, with a smile. That's what makes the difference between a good doctor, and a great one. A great doctor has a smile on, has a good atmosphere, and makes you feel at home. Heck, I feel pretty comfortable with Heather around! And so, that's why I'm sure she's a great doctor. Any doctor can cure a patient but very few can make the patient *feel* good. And that's something that can't be taught. Once you've got that, heck you can rock out every other doctor out there. So go and get em Heather!

Heather smiled. Th-Thank you, Naruto-san

Heck you can call me Naruto! None of this formality crap about the whole -san, -sama stuff. They all felt comfortable with him after that.

I trust him... He's a cool guy... Ran through all of their minds. They all retired for the night.

They all gathered in front of the jounin leaders: Kakashi, Rin, and Temari.

We're very near the Sound Border now. From here on out, we'll have to switch to stealth mode. Naruto, please organize us in order of strength.

Naruto complied. Okay, from strongest to... not strongest. They all smiled. Kakashi-sensei and Rain-san.

Hypocrite. You said you didn't care about the endings. Yashi said.

What is his problem? Everyone thought.

But Naruto smiled. Yes, I didn't care about it. Nevertheless, I cannot deny the respect of someone else. I can make a choice for you to call me something, and that is my personal choice. However, I cannot intrude on someone else's rights and deny their respect. he said coolly.

INNER SAKURA: YEAH NARUTO SERVED YOU, YOU BASTARD!

Anyways, Kakashi-sensei and Rain-san tied at the top. They stood side by side. Next, Temari-san and Mithos-san tied. They, too, went side by side behind Kakashi and Rain. Everyone began getting tense. It was the first time their strength was being evaluated in front of their friends. After that comes Kankuro-san and Heather. See, Heather, you're pretty strong! Kankuro shrugged and got in line. Heather was beaming. Followed by Rin! Rin alone stood behind now. Then, Sakura-chan and Horace-san. Wooh! Go Sakura-chan! The two took their place. Then comes Yashi and TenTen. Yashi was gripping his knuckled. What the hell! I'm not behind all these weaklings! Who the hell are you a pathetic leaf to tell me how strong I am! I'm not behind Heather! Sakura? I'm losing to these pathetic imbeciles?

Uh oh... Kakashi thought.

The groups stared at Naruto and Yashi. Naruto suddenly radiated with chakra. They were amazed at how much was gushing out. Instantly, before most of them could even see a flicker, Naruto was behind Yashi with a kunai at this throat. Yashi's body paralyzed, most chakra had disappeared from his body, and he had barely any energy. He simply stood there, a limp body. Naruto's hand was shaking violently.

Naruto, easy. Kakashi said. Despite the fact that he's a fracking bastard, he's still useful; and you know this. *After we finish the mission, you can kill him. Seriously.*

Rain glared at Kakashi. Kakashi whispered, It's just to calm him down. Once he's himself again, he won't kill him.

Relaxing himself, Naruto took a deep breath and calmed down. He stood in front of Yashi and slowly released all *seven* seals he placed on him. I'm sorry, Yashi. I shouldn't have lost my temper... Turning to everyone, he said, I'm sorry, to everyone... I know... My actions were immature... Getting a hold of himself, Naruto said, Yashi, please take your place.

Tears were in Heather's eyes.

Then comes Hinata. Hinata took her place. Walking behind her, he said, And finally me. That's the order. Kakashi wrote this down and went with the three jounin to formulate a plan.

Naruto... Kakashi sighed. *You've got to be one of the nicest guys I've ever met.*

To be able to forgive in such a situation... Dear Kami-sama...

Heather ran off with tears in her eyes.

Naruto told Hinata and went to Heather. She was sitting below a tree, crying.

I could understand alone time, but bit far away from camp, isn't it? Naruto said with a smile.

She got up and wiped her tears. S-Sorry... I'll go back.

Then again, letting your emotions out isn't too bad either. Sorry about making breakfast so bad; I didn't know you would cry... just thought everyone would like sushi...

Naruto it isn't --

I know, I'm joking. Look, let's sit down and talk.

She quietly nodded and sat down.

About this guys Yashi.

Her face immediately paled at this. Naruto I --

Calm down, you can trust me. I know, you love him. And he's fine, I didn't hurt him... too badly... he chuckled.

She remained silent.

Heather, do you love him? he asked looking into her own blue eyes.

I... I think so...

Naruto chuckled and looked up, leaning against the tree. Funny thing about love... You don't really know what it is, and no one can teach it to you. Worst of all, love is different for everyone I am not the same to Hinata as Yashi would be to you... Everyone shows and expresses their love differently... Worst thing is, you don't really know what's love, until you're already in it... It's so damn hard to understand. He said looking at her and smiling.

But I --

Now I'm not saying you don't love him... Because I know you do. But the thing is, I had no family. Or at least I never knew them. And to me, my teammates and my friends have become my family... And so, I love Sakura-chan... I love her as a sister, and as a friend... I love Kakashi-sensei, and I love Hinata. Similarly, I'm sure you do love Yashi... But do you really want to spend the rest of your life with him? Do you really want to share every emotion and feeling and thought you have with him? Do you trust him enough, and does he make you feel comfortable? I, too, had a childhood crush... he smiled now. It was none other than Sakura-chan!

Sakura-chan? her jaw dropped.

Yup... Man, I used to think she was the greatest... So hot, so pretty, so wanted... But in fact, I never used to talk to her... I never could... And despite the fact that I wanted to be in love with her, I had to realize that I wasn't... And that hurt me more than anything... I wanted to lover her so much... I felt like I needed her but that's just the thing; I didn't... But I *do* need Hinata... And love will make it like that. I can't really say if you love Yashi or not all I can do is give you guidelines... But if you really do love him, then go to him this very minute... He's crying; he just took a severe blow to his pride, and that's for anyone... He could use a kind friend to help him... So if you do love him, then go. Remember, love is *never* a choice. You never get to choose who you fall in love with; it just happens... I *chose* to crush over Sakura, and it turned out devastating... But that's a realization you have to come to. He looked at her, patted her on the back, and got up. Smiling at her, he said, Good luck. and he left.

Heather sat there, thinking, wondering, about this strange, strange thing called love.

Above them, Kakashi and Rain sat there watching.

... He's a good guys, that Naruto... Rain finally said.

Kakashi nodded.

He almost has a strange powers to make you trust himm.

That he does... Kakashi agreed.

Returning to Hinata, he explained what he said. For his efforts, he received a kiss on the cheek. Nauto smiled. You think she'll make the right choice?

I hope so...

He and Hinata sat next to each other watching the sunset and simply talked. They hadn't spent time like this in about a week, and for them, it seemed an eternity. Both enjoyed it, and the happiness was broken by the fact that it was Naruto's turn to do the shift. Because there were so many people, three people were required to watch: Rain, Naruto, and Temari.

The three sat around the fire, and Naruto had Hinata in his lap soundly asleep. He had his arms wrapped around her, and she, naturally, had a smile on her face.

You always have some girl with you when you sleep? Rain asked.

Well, I'm sure you'd have someone with you if you got the guts to tell Kakashi-sensei how you feel. At this she remained silent for a while. How'd you know?

Naruto shrugged. It's more obvious than you think.

... You think he feels the same?

I can't say... Kakashi-sensei is one of the few people who can hide their emotions well. He only reveals his emotions on the most dire missions. But it's a risk you, and only you will have to take. Besides, he's remained single all these years for a reason. But, hey, not my life.

Moving on... Temari said, bored.

Naruto shrugged, kept his chin on Hinata's head, and closed his eyes.

Don't fall asleep! Temari said.

I'm not...

Naruto, you really think he likes me?

I don't know!

When should I tell him?

Jeez people's love lives these days! You're the sensei! Don't ask me. and with that he turned to Temari. How's Gaara-san?

He's well. The country has gone up in economy and status since he took over.

Naruto nodded. Good...

But he has a huge fan club now... I barely get to see him anymore...

Naruto chuckled. I'm sure any kage would, right? I mean, they're the leaders. A lot of people admire them.

She nodded.

Suddenly, they all sensed something.

Naruto activated his Ryoushagan. Go and wake everyone. he whispered to Temari. She quickly went, and he and Rain went into battle stance.

Lightning imprisonment jutsu. they both said.

You know it? Rain asked.

Naruto shrugged. Guess so. Sound Nullification Barrier no jutsu.

What does that do?

They're sound ninjas. They manipulate sound. Now they can't do that.

Soon everyone was awake.

Naruto. Status?

Naruto looked:

Threat level 9

Jutsus: Sonic Pulse no jutsu; Sonic Wave no jutsu; Sound Barrier no jutsu

Threat level 11

Jutsus: Medical ninja; Sonic Thrust no jutsu; Impact Barrier no jutsu

Two of them. One Kankuro-san's level; another Rain-san and your level, sensei.

Not too tough then.

May be, but the fact that Orochimaru sent them all the way to the border to scan means something...

Mithos pointed out.

No, we can't let them go. They weren't meant to kill us, only as a confirmation. I'm guessing they're fast.

We have to kill quickly. Let's go. Kakashi said.

Let's go. Rain said.

They set out after the sound ninjas in groups of two so they wouldn't hear them, and so the chakra signatures would be distributed. Sakura went below and made a fake direct confrontation. Meanwhile, Naruto was preparing a one time finisher. Also, he wanted to study them; if he learned sound moves, it would help greatly.

His eye recorded the Sonic Pulse jutsu as well as the Sonic Rush jutsu. Then, he decided, it was time to end this. He quickly made a shadow clone and came after them. One of the two made an Impact Barrier a barrier was made and Naruto couldn't get in. Naruto recorded this. Kakashi broke through with a chidori followed by rain who used Lightning jab to kill one. Soon after, Temari came and used her summoning inside the dome shaped barrier to cause a huge gust. Luckily, the air only came out of the whole, and much was retained. The sound ninja died, and luckily no one noticed the reduced cyclone caused by Temari.

Coming back, they all went back to their shifts. Hinata fell asleep on Naruto again and they spent time talking.

I didn't think it'd be so soon. Naruto said.

Yeah, we just got into the border. Temari agreed.

Perhaps... But it was just a reconnaissance mission after all. And now that they're not coming back, he'll know for sure. Rain said.

Yeah... But at least it will have delayed him a bit from getting the news he won't know if they died or they're late. Naruto commented. Seeing the sun, he kissed Hinata on the cheek and woke her up. They all got a move on. From here on out, they knew it would be more and more risky.

We're going out in teams of two and three, got it. We have to hide our chakra signatures. We'll meet in Orochimaru's place. with that, Kakashi handed them all directions.

Naruto Hinata, and Sakura.

Kakashi Heather

Rain Horace

Temari Kankuro, and Yashi

Mithos Rin

13 - Into the Sound

Chapter 13: Into The Sound

Okay guys. I want you to exercise as little use of chakra as possible, okay?

Sakura and Hinata nodded.

That way, obviously, they can't sense you. Okay, let's go. Our route is just to the right Kakashi-sensei's and to the left of Rain-san's. Let's go.

And with that they set off. Jumping on the branches of the trees, everything seemed like a blur. They would stop at night, but only with the protection of Naruto's jutsus. The only time they would eat is on the move. The last one hour before sunset the three would gather enough food to eat for the day continuously as they ran. Three days passed, and they rested as Naruto set up his usual jutsus.

Naruto sat in front of the two.

Okay guys. What are our plans?

You're the leader!

Naruto chuckled.. *Leader, eh...* Yeah, I just like making you say it. Anyways, dobes, I suggest we --

Naruto?

Yeah?

You never say dobes...

Naruto shrugged.

Something's wrong with Naruto-kun... He doesn't feel... Byakungan! and immediately, Hinata threw a kunai at the figure of Naruto.

Sakura immediately joined in and punched the ground making a huge crater which consumed the man.

Let me guess. That's not Naruto, is it?

Hinata shook her head.

Thought so.

Hinata suddenly gasped.

What?

There's no chakra signature down there anymore!

Say what?

They both jumped down there to not only find no chakra signature there, but there was no body, too. shoot!

Now, now! It's not nice to curse! Missing me already, eh? Naruto said smiling.

Naruto-kun! Hinata jumped but she couldn't get out of the whole.

Naruto made a human chain with he and his shadow clones. Sakura got up. As Hinata was getting up, she kissed each shadow clone on the cheek, and she kissed Naruto on the mouth.

Don't you ever scare us like that again! Where the hell were you?

Sorry, got lost! Jeez... Anyways, just wanted to say we're going directly east and go past Orochimaru to the meeting point. Then we'll double back around him to fool him. Kay?

They both nodded.

But how do we really know it's you?

I swear upon all ramen that is delicious that I am Uzumaki Naruto.

A fake Naruto wouldn't care about ramen!

Naruto gasped. Sakura! Everyone cares about ramen! No one is immune to its deliciousness. I can't believe you would say such a thing!

Sakura-chan, it is Naruto-kun's chakra signature. Hinata said with her byakungan. Hugging him tightly, she said, Thank God it is...

But who was the other one?

Sakura-chan, you and I only know one person who says 'dobe.' But if it was him, he wouldn't have come out in the open like that... It didn't seem like him. No, I'm sure it was a trick to make us think that it was Sasuke...

She nodded. Doing that wasn't his style...

The next day they met at the meeting point.

So, what's the plan?

We're going to go and invade Orochimaru's fort. We have evidence that he resides underground below a cave. Kakashi said. The thing is, we aren't aiming to kill him... I doubt all of us can kill him. So, we're going to do as much damage as we can. We're going to kill all the people close to him, and especially Kabuto that will be a major damage. We are going to be faced with war soon, and there's a very high possibility that Orochimaru will team up with Akatsuki again. And so, we're going to go in. Kakashi finished.

Naruto didn't like it; not only was the mission starting to sound like people simply running out and sacrificing themselves, but it began to seem that there were more and more holes in the explanation. *Why not aim to kill him? Why did we bring thirteen people here then? Just to waste time?* Something was missing, and, yet, Kakashi was the one who said it meaning no one could tell what emotion he had.

Let's go.

Naruto didn't like the sound of this. Naturally, he put on his mental barriers again and moved with them. Silently, they reached the cave where Orochimaru was supposed to be hiding. Four sound jounin ones with curse seals were guarding the cave entrance. They all fell dead after a few blows; the usual run out in the open while someone makes the real attack plan. Hinata used her Byakungan to see what was going to happen, but it seemed that there was a chakra shield. Naruto made a shadow clone and the clone went inside; opening the trap door, the real Naruto stood above it to minimize light entry. Falling down, the clone saw it was pitch black. Apparently, the clone had landed on something solid. The substance was icy cold, and it had an aura of evil to it.

Naruto signaled the others, and the clone poofed away. Entering, they, too felt the substance. Suddenly, two torches, on on each side was lit. Then another came, and they kept increasing until they went off to about fifty torches. It was a straight path with no turns or deviations. At the very end, some thirty large torches on the bottom all in one row lit up to reveal a large statue of a snake. Silently, they walked up. Hinata used her byakungan. Apparently, there were seven levels to this thing. They were on the first. The farther down they went, the closer to Orochimaru they got. Naruto didn't like the sound of it; if he knew Orochimaru, the further they got, the harder it would get... Not for him, but for his friends. After all, Orochimaru couldn't steal a dead Naruto's body, could he. His friends would be in danger not good. He took Hinata's hand and squeezed it.

I'm not nervous. she said.

Naruto quietly chuckled. I am...

She kissed him on the cheek. Don't be.

He sighed. You're right... There was no need to worry. His friends wouldn't die because he would protect them. There was no way he would experience the same pain again he wasn't going to let it happen. It didn't matter if Orochimaru was level 20! He would kick his @\$@ if he got near any of his friends that, was a promise.

There was a seal blocking the entrance. Amazingly, the seal was deactivated.

They've been expecting us to come... Kakashi said.

Meaning there can only be a trap ahead. Mithos added.

Indeed, but we cannot simply wait here. We must go onward. Horace said.

Hinata used her byakugan again. There are about five people in there.

They nodded and went in. Kakashi adjusted his forehead protector to reveal his sharingan before entering.

Instantly, three kunais were thrown at them. Kakashi, able to see them with his sharingan, blocked them with his own kunai. Hinata located them the five sound ninjas had them surrounded. The entrance actually went down and came up into the middle of a large stadium-like structure. The sound ninjas obviously tracked them by sound and chakra.

No sight, eh? I'll fix that. Solaric Light. Naruto whispered and a huge amount of light radiated the area. The group soon set off to get them after their sight was restored.

Shadow clone jutsu. Kakashi barely whispered and set off after them. Using an earth jutsu he got one off guard.

Sonic Pulse Wave no jutsu! But it was too late.

Kakashi got him with a kunai from behind.

Rain made explosive clones to get one, but he ran out of the way very quickly. Unfortunately, he ran right into Horace.

Ragnarok no jutsu! A large sword shaped mountain of rock was hurled at the sound ninja, but the sound nin dodged it.

Sound Lense! Now, the acoustics in the location had drastically increased, allowing the sound nin's jutsus to be more powerful.

Puppet Assassination! Kankuro said and 'ended the performance.'

The next sound ninja was a girl. Sonic Wave! she screamed, and instantly all of them were effected by a supersonic wave which knocked them unconscious. Instantly, Naruto used the 'Sound Nullification jutsu to cancel it, and they were back on their feet soon. While they were getting up, Naruto used his Shadow Transportation jutsu and killed her.

Once they were up, they broke off to hunt the remaining two. Naruto used rasengan, but the nin dodged. Rain charged up her attack, but the nin simply used a seal and vanished.

WTF? Naruto thought.

With that they opened the door and moved on to the next level. The next four levels were very similar to this one, only the ninjas got more and more difficult, and the groups was starting to get tired by now. When they reached the sixth level, what they found rather startled them. They found living quarters! It seemed Orochimaru had people living there with him, and by the looks of it, there was room for about fifty. Of the fifty, they guessed about half were in the levels that they had passed about twenty five or so. Going to the next door, Hinata didn't sense anyone in the vicinity, and far beyond on three sides there were chakra shields preventing he view. She told them about what she found, and they decided they had to go in anyways. Coming in, they saw in the middle a large chair surrounded by an ominous black aura no doubt the chair where Orochimaru sat. Beyond that, straight ahead there was blackness; a similar blackness was found in both the right and left sides. This room was the largest room yet. They came together at the center wondering where on earth Orochimaru could be. Suddenly, a great rumbling occurred. Then, as the huddled together, three snakes appeared. Two were large, but the one in the center was *huge* the Manda.

Instantly, the snakes lunged at them, stretching their long bodies. They had barely been able to dodge; the snakes made huge holes in the wall. A point of blood appeared on Naruto's thumb as he took out his scroll.

Summoning no jutsu!

Gama-Bunta immediately appeared. He and Naruto tackled the Manda. The snake lunged at the frog

leader, but the leader jumped and whacked it down with its pipe; while it was on the ground, still recuperating from the toad's blow, Naruto rammed it with an Odamma Rasengan. However, the blow seemed to do little damage. He decided something else charging most of his chakra, he looked the snake directly in the eye.

Mengekyuou Sharingan! he shouted, and the snake soon after came back to this world panting heavily. But it still had energy.

It lunged at Naruto, catching him off guard; luckily, his partner kicked the snake, but it was a little too late. The snake's fang barely touched Naruto causing a five inch long scar to appear on his thigh. But it was not time to worry about it now. Gama-Bunta took his pipe and made the finishing blow and the snake disappeared.

Meanwhile, the group was rearing at its fullest. Temari summoned her tiger which made a cyclone, but the snakes simply shifted to a defensive state, remaining unmoved. While they remained crouched together, Sakura came and made her blow, aided with Kakashi's chakra. A ten wide hole appeared in both snakes as they soon collapsed as well.

The groups came together as Naruto limped and sat down.

Boy, have the girl heal it immediately.

Sakura set to work on Naruto. She pushed his pants up so that she could have direct access to the skin. Then, using chakra, she connected to Naruto's insides. Naruto shivered it felt like someone's soul going inside you. She examined his muscles and reported that they were fine. However, his blood had been infected with an unknown poison that she could not cure. She whipped up a temporary medication with what she had.

It's isolate and stop the poison for about three days. Within that time, I'll be able to get more medication, and that should last until we get to Konoha. Sakura said.

Naruto nodded. It was no big deal they had to get to Sasuke, *now*.

Let's check to make sure everyone's here. Then, we'll set out through this exit in the back and try to find Sasuke. My guess is Orochimaru just left. Kakashi said.

Naruto. Here. Rain. Here. Rin. Here. Sakura. Here. Hinata. Here. Heather. Here. Mithos. Here. Kankuro. Here. Temari. Here. Horace. Here. Yashi. Silence followed. shoot Yashi's missing! Rain shouted in panic and anger.

Let's set out for Orochimaru.

NO! I AM NOT LEAVING WITHOUT MY STUDENT!

Fine, your team stays to find him. If you do, come after us. We're going after Orochimaru.

She nodded.

With that, they left the Lightning team and set off through a trap door which led to light. Once their eyes adjusted, they set off. They all followed a strange chakra trail. There, at the very end, they saw four people; Naruto analyzed them:

Yashi

Threat level 6

Jutsus: Lightning Assalut no jutsu; Summon; Shockwave no jutsu

Kabuto

Threat level 12

Jutsus: Medical Nin; Sonic Shockwave no jutsu; Purgatory Seal

Sasuke

Threat level 12

Jutsus: Sharingan; Raikirj; Summon

Orochimaru

Threat level 15

Jutsus: Immortality no jutsu; Godly Thunder Seal; Summon

So, you've caught up. I thought for sure I had prepared enough in advance.

Naruto turned to Yashi. So you were his source of information, eh?

May be I was. Does it matter?

Yeah, it does! You betrayed your friends! You betrayed your country! You betrayed the girl who loved you! All for shooty power...

I told you I would become strong.

You don't know what true power is... Naruto said gripping his hands. You, too, eh, Sasuke? Doing all this for some damn power...

Yes, Naruto. I am. Deal with it. Sasuke said.

This isn't good... We're all tired by now... shoot... Kakashi thought.

Kabuto chuckled. Naruto-kun. Long time no see... Let's see how much you've grown. But you must be tired, after all that fighting.

Naruto closed his eyes. *No more... No more betrayals... I've had enough... Orochimaru dies...*

TODAY! Naruto's voice turned a deadly calm. You want to know what power is? I'll show you, then. Get ready.

14 - True Power

Chapter 14: True Power

Rin, go tell the others. Kakashi said.

Rin nodded and soon disappeared.

Naruto went inside inside his mind. Numerous chains appeared. Naruto appeared emotionless, but instantaneously all the chains crumbled. Naruto didn't break his mental barriers; he *obliterated* them. However, he didn't waste time showing off and flaring his chakra. He didn't even go for Orochimaru. He would leave Yashi, for that wasn't his business; it was Heather's... No, his business was Sasuke, and this time, he would win...

Naruto made a shadow clone which was behind Sasuke and pretended to do a jutsu slowly. But Sasuke wasn't fooled. He knocked out the shadow clone.

Naruto! Stop fighting by yourself and work as a team! We all want Sasuke back just as much as you do, but that can't happen without teamwork!

Just then the lightning team came.

Yashi? No, no! It can't be! Yashi were you --

With Orochimaru the whole time? Of course. He promised I would become more powerful... Power you simpletons would never achieve with your simple training methods... No, I needed real power.

You forsake everyone you know and love for power? You give up your emotions? You give up what it means to be human? All for the sake of power? Rain asked.

Yes.

Yashi! Please! Don't do this don't... Don't...

Don't what? Don't stay with you on this stupid team doing C class missions? Getting beaten up by the sensei every time like the stupid bell test? Stay with a stupid country like Lightning? Be led by a damn old man who loves peace? Be friends with pathetic Lea --

Naruto didn't hold back this time. Enough was enough. SHE LOVED YOU DAMN IT! YOU SELFISH FRACKED UP BASTARD! ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS YOURSELF! YOU AND SASUKE BOTH! SASUKE YOU DITCHED YOUR ONLY FAMILY FOR POWER! FOR WHAT? TO AVENGE YOUR FAMILY! FAMILY DOESN'T MEAN BLOOD RELATIVES, DAMN IT! MY FRIENDS, KAKASHI-SENSEI, AND YOU! YOU'RE MY FAMILY! AND WE WERE YOURS... AND YOU KILLED IT... YOU KILLED US! ALL THE FUN, ALL THE FRIENDSHIP... YOU KILLED IT FOR POWER! YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT THAN ITACHI! I DON'T SEE ANY DIFFERENCE! NOT JUST EMOTIONALLY, BUT PHYSICALLY! LOOK AT YOU, SASUKE!

Sasuke's hair was longer he hadn't cut it; he didn't care, all he wanted was to train. It was shorter than Itachi's, but it was in a ponytail nevertheless. He wore a cloak to avoid being noticed when performing his jutsus it was a black cloak which he liked because it matched his personality. He had the same red eyes. The only thing that was missing was the Mengekyou.

I've... I've had enough, Sasuke. You don't have to come back, right? I tried to hope, tried to pray... But I kept putting my family in danger every time I went out hunting for you. You... You're no longer part of my family... Uchiha Sasuke died the day he left the leaf... The day he gave up being human... The day... The day he killed his family. You're not Sasuke... Today, I aim not to kill you, not to bring you back, not even to kill Orochimaru... No, today, I have no vengeance in my heart. Dreams will always collide... No matter what because people are not all alike... And it's time I grow up and accept that... No, today, I fight to protect my family. '

Could you have made a cornier speech? Kabuto said.

At that instant Naruto poofed away.

shoot! It was a shadow clone! The speech was a distraction! He had just enough time to gather chakra to shield himself when a Naruto came behind him not to get him, but to get Yashi.

Yashi died at the instant the rasengan connected.

His team was crying, but they were angry as well.

At the horizon, the rest of Orochimaru's squad twenty others came. But Naruto had seen them coming from far off. They made numerous jutsus, but none of them seemed to work. Finally, Naruto made his explosive clone at the far end, killing fifteen. The others managed to get to close range, and Naruto knew he couldn't afford another such clone.

They broke off into teams: The Sand team minus Rin went after Kabuto; the lightning team, having less members, went after the incoming sound ninja. Rin and the leaf team went after Orochimaru and Sasuke. Naturally, Orochimaru was guarding Sasuke.

Itachi, it seems they have reached Orochimaru... Sasori reported.

Indeed...

Not good... If Orochimaru kills the boy now, there's no chance. We need to save the kid. Plus, I sense he's been poisoned by the Manda... shoot... Looks like a little intervention would be necessary. Plus, you could sneak in some brotherly love while we're there. Kisame joked.

Itachi, you're the third strongest of all of us. Only the leader and Rukori. Deidara commented.

Itachi remained silent.

Meaning you'll have to train the kid... After all, from what you've told us, he's no longer a jinchuuriki, is he. Deidara finished.

Let's go. Itachi said laconically. Before Tobi notices the deaths.

They all nodded and left.

Rain paralyzed one of the five, but it was only an illusion. The real one came from behind, but, luckily, Mithos managed to save her by kicking the ninja away. Right after, however, three came onto them. One was sent off by Heather's Shockwave jutsu, but the other two landed direct hits. Rain and Mithos were sent flying back. They managed to land on their feet only to find another one coming after them. Sensing it was genjutsu, Rain rushed past the image to protect Heather.

Three people were on Heather, and right before they landed a blow to the head, Rain blocked it and used Lightning Shockwave jutsu to send them all flying. Meanwhile, Mithos was fighting a losing battle; two on one, the sound ninjas were doing pretty good. Rain set up Indignation while she had time, and caught three of the five in it. However, the sound ninjas didn't care for their comrades they went for Heather. Heather, on the other hand, was, as Rain had instructed, running as fast as she could away from the colossal trap. The sound approached her from the side. As they came at her, a body suddenly came in front of her. A kunai appeared in one of the sound nin's heart, but a hand came through the body in front of her. Her body was in a daze she had seen blood before, but never to this extreme. Blood gushed out like a fountain from hell. Everywhere around her there was blood; and then the worst news registered. That body in front of her... was Mithos. It was the first time she had seen her comrade die, and she wasn't taking it too well. She fell down, sobbing incoherently. Soon after, another body appeared beside her. It was Rain holding a the dead sound ninja. Both of them sat down, dead tired, and so, so sad. Rain had seen her own friends die before, but her student hadn't. She knew how to handle it, but her student didn't; and that was why she felt sorry. She knew that this mission would be dangerous, but she hadn't mentally prepared her students. She had failed as a teacher and thinking about Mithos made her more guilty. Mithos had idolized her as *the* greatest teacher ever... He had wanted to be just like her, and, yet, here she was, in a losing battle, losing the trust that her teammate had put in her.

Meanwhile, the sand team was having it *real* easy. Kabuto was level 12, yes, but Temari, level 10, Kankuro, level 9, and Horace, level 7 could easily take him, one person, on. Temari summoned and caused a cyclone, causing him into a defensive state and blinding him with all the dust that arose. While he remained like that, Kankuro and Horace set off to kill him. The storm lasted quite a while, giving them ample time to prepare any chakra necessary. Before the storm died, Kankuro and Horace launched their attack. A box surrounded Kabuto; then, their puppets combined, launched electrically charged knives and blades into it making sure *not* to hit vital spots. Kabuto would be trapped there, using up chakra to heal for a limited time, but as soon as it ran out, he would die a slow, painful death from blood loss. And the best part was, according to Kankuro, he would be awake to the very end because of the electric shocks. They stayed there, until the end, watching him die. Finally, they turned to go and help their allies.

In another corner, Orochimaru and Sasuke were doing fairly all right, as was the leaf nins plus Rin. They had split into two teams in themselves: Kakashi, Sakura, Rin, and Hinata against Orochimaru, and Naruto against Sasuke. (Naruto wanted it this way, and Orochimaru was much stronger.)

Naruto faced Sasuke; they were fairly deserted from everyone else. Naruto used his shadow transportation jutsu to come behind Sasuke and kick him; however, Sasuke saw this coming and barely dodged. Naruto was *much* faster than Sasuke at using jutsus and taijutsu, but Sasuke was stronger at taijutsu and was *much* more experienced at genjutsu though Naruto knew how to block basic ones. Sasuke didn't waste anytime this time. He immediately activate the curse seal to level two. Strangely, Naruto's thigh began throbbing incredibly. But Naruto simply put a mental barrier on his touch sense in his thigh to seal away the pain. Naruto and Sasuke exchanged a couple blows, but Naruto instantly realized that there was no point using taijutsu against Sasuke.

Making a shadow clone, Naruto approached Sasuke to 'exchange a couple more taijutsu sequences.' But Sasuke realized it was only a clone, killed it, and began using genjutsu to get Naruto.

Sleeping Poison (Genjutsu) Level 3/3 puts user in paralysis state so it appears as if one is sleeping; very strong, very effective; takes little chakra; nearly impossible to dodge; inflicting pain on one's self will awaken.

His eye read. Naruto released the mental barrier in his thigh revealing a tidal wave of pain. Naruto panted due to the pain. As he got away from Sasuke, the pain decreased. *What the hell?* But Naruto wasn't going to run. He came from behind Sasuke with an odamma rasengan to get him, but it turned out to be only a genjutsu. The real Sasuke came and attacked Naruto, but 'Naruto' was only a shadow clone. Naruto came from behind and kicked, but Sasuke dodged and attacked Naruto with a kunai. Naruto used his absolute defense and repelled the kunai, but the pant leg was torn off completely knee down. Sasuke was knocked back.

What the hell was that? His chakra repelled it? He has an absolute defense! That means I can only get him with genjutsu... shoot... Sasuke's arm was hurt with his own kunai. Quickly, he set his sharingan in motion.

Sharingan (genjutsu) level 2/3 chakra fusion puts target in a state of nullified chakra; very effective; extremely powerful; takes up a lot of chakra; success rate average

His eyes scanned. As the genjutsu was activated, Naruto flared his chakra to full and cut it off completely so as to break away from the genjutsu. Sasuke froze in curiosity and wonder. He had felt something while Naruto flared his chakra after all, both of their chakras had mixed in the event, and Sasuke had felt something he hadn't felt in too many people other than himself. He had sensed a dark, dark evil darker than his own, in fact... The evil he had received from Orochimaru was nothing compared to this.

He has... The Manda struck him, I see... Unbelievable. Sasuke smirked. There was the victory; the pain Naruto's new curse would cause him would rid him of his life. *Good bye, Naruto.* Sasuke scrutinized

Naruto with his sharingan; he was leaning to the left, meaning his left foot was injured because he didn't want to put pressure on it. It was just barely, but Sasuke still saw it. Sasuke targeted his curse seal's powers towards that leg. Naruto screamed in pain. Inside his mind, all he could see were his worst nightmares coming true; his mind was filled with hot, searing pain, and Naruto fell to the ground.

So, this ends the great Naruto, eh? Pathetic...

Naruto suddenly got up one thing, and one thing alone was driving him now: *I have to protect my family... I have to protect my family... I have to protect my family...* He recited it like a mantra, over and over in his mind to remind himself of why he fought. Suddenly, adrenaline rushed to his body. He rushed at Sasuke, using Katon, Sasuke's own jutsus. Sasuke dodged, but Naruto kept coming; move after move, hit after hit, Naruto kept throwing at Sasuke and the more Sasuke activated his curse seal, the more Naruto fought back.

How can he fight like this? I've never seen him like this... He was nearly out of chakra when he started the match, and, yet, here he is using more chakra in one blow that I have used so far in this entire fight! Naruto used every powerful jutsu he learned from the monks, and he noticed Sasuke was getting tired; Sasuke's dodges were getting more close shaved; his hits were getting choppy, and he wasn't noticing everything, anymore. But Naruto just kept going. In fact, his blows increased.

Naruto jumped at Sasuke with a rasengan in his hands. Sasuke was dead tired by now, but he forced himself to dodge.

Naruto... How the hell can you keep this up?... It's inhuman!

Naruto landed a blow to Sasuke's stomach. It's because I'm human that I can do this... You, who have ridden yourself of all emotions but anger and lust for power, you cannot win this... It is my emotions that drive me to do this the love for my friends, my anger at Orochimaru, my determination to win... If I didn't have these... There was no way I would be standing right now. He landed a rasengan into Sasuke's stomach. You wanted to know what power was, Sasuke? True power is what allows me to protect my friends... True power is the ability to stand up in a losing battle and believe... and hope.. and win... That's what true power is! You, who've ditched everything looking for power, will never find it... You want to see what true power can do? I'LL SHOW YOU! Naruto began making seals very rapidly. This would most likely almost kill him it took a huge amount of chakra.

Naruto pinned Sasuke down with another rasengan and looked at him in the eye one last time. Naruto looked at Sasuke. On the surface, he saw fear, anger, and frustration. Going deeper, he saw those things subside, and he saw a strange peace that he never saw in Sasuke before. Going deeper, the peace increased so much that it enveloped him, and, soon, he saw happiness... satisfaction... and gratitude... Sasuke's eyes radiated with this emotion inside so much... It was a real pity that Sasuke, being consumed by his outer emotions, didn't realize this sanctity inside him... Perhaps that would have stopped him from going off to Orochimaru... Perhaps that would have made him feel like his mission in life was complete... Perhaps that would have revived Sasuke as a human... But Sasuke made a *choice* to go with anger, and such choices have consequences.

Sasuke stared into Naruto's eyes, afraid, angry, and frustrated. Soon, he calmed down... and almost meditated... He felt a strange calmness which brought him warmth and happiness. Sasuke mentally shivered; he wasn't accustomed to this... but he soon grew into it... and actually liked it. He felt *happy*... Something he hadn't felt in a long time. Looking into his would-be-killer's eyes, Sasuke saw not vengeance, not anger, and not satisfaction. Sasuke saw a friend, trying to reach out to him trying so hard, and, yet, realizing his duty. Sasuke saw the very same Naruto he had known for so long, looking at him with pity. Sasuke had always shook his head at Naruto, pitying his idiocy, laughing at him, teasing him, and putting him down. And, yet, after all of that, that very same Naruto now stood before him, offering pity, and giving him forgiveness.

Naruto... I'm sorry...

Naruto sighed. I'm sorry, too... Sasuke... *MENGEKYUOU SHARINGAN*... Sasuke realized what this was, but he openly fell into it literally embracing death... Embracing his victory against Orochimaru... No, Orochimaru would never have his body now.

... Brother...

Naruto took Sasuke's body and carried it to where his team was fighting.

Meanwhile, Kakashi and the others were facing Orochimaru.

You thought you could beat me before, Kakashi. What makes you think so now?

Yes, I can't beat you... But we can. I have a team now.

What, some chuunin and you are a team? My, my...

It had been a distraction. Sakura came at him from behind to plow him down, but Orochimaru simply activated the seal behind him knocking her back. Kakashi knew he had to stall in order for Rin to activate Gaara's move. Although she had learned it to the highest level, she still couldn't do it as fast as Gaara. While she was charging her chakra, Kakashi ran at him with a chidori. Out of Orochimaru's mouth came a huge sword that pierced Kakashi, but 'Kakashi' had been a shadow clone. Hinata looked at her opponent and realized it with the help of her byakugan.

That Orochimaru's a fake! It's not his real body! she yelled.

They all looked around, wondering where on earth the real Orochimaru could be but it was too late.

The fake Orochimaru activated a seal which spewed tiny, leech-like snakes out of his mouth. The creatures rushed towards Rin. But Rin managed it just in time.

DESERT GRAVE!

Out of the earth, she accumulated a huge amount of thick, rock-like sand which encased the fake Orochimaru; it crushed him and destroyed all the seals that was around the body. Sakura had managed to destroy the snakes before they reached Rin. Meanwhile, Kakashi and Hinata were looking around for the real Orochimaru.

shoot... This isn't good. If we can't find him, who knows what's in store for us... Kakashi thought, but right then he saw a blur. A huge snake rushed towards his hear. Kakashi tried to duck to dodge it, but he couldn't react it time it hit him on the shoulder spraying blood everywhere and injecting the poison into his bloodstream. Looking up, he saw Orochimaru standing there with the snake coming out of his arm, smiling.

Well, Kakashi, I can't let that girl cure you, now can I? No, looks like you'll have to die. Seeing Kakashi's eyes widen, he quickly added, Oh, no! Don't worry, I'm not going to kill you. I don't have to. No, the poison will do its job. It'll kill you... But... Perhaps not in the way you might think. Good luck you'll need it. and with that, he activated a seal which transported Kakashi away from the battle. Reappearing, he saw dead bodies all around him. He soon realized he was in the other end of the battle field from which Orochimaru's men had come. *shoot... I can only hope that they saw him...* he thought as he fell into subconsciousness.

Orochimaru's somewhere over there! He did something to Kakashi-sensei! Hinata informed. They three of them huddled together. *Where is TenTen-chan?* Hinata wondered.

Suddenly, a scream appeared not a human scream, but a sort of shriek combined with a growl. Then, a girl came next to them. It was TenTen.

Guys, I finished setting up the Indignation, and it seems to have taken its toll. Orochimaru's snake is gone... Now we only have to deal with him... I hope.

They felt a little relieved that she was all right, but they were still dead nervous. They huddled together, Hinata scanning, TenTen setting up traps, Sakura healing everyone, and Rin gathering chakra for defense..

Damn it... Naruto had been running purely on adrenaline... And Sasuke's body was getting really heavy. He dropped Sasuke down and decided to make a grave for him. Using a jutsu, he made a golden/amber

box in which he placed Sasuke's body in. Sasuke's body wouldn't rot there the jutsu made of it. Then, making a seal, he transported it the area where he and Naruto fought. He decided to finish the grave later once he got back to Konoha his friends needed him now, but he was out of chakra. Forcing himself, he limped back to where Orochimaru was. As he got there, the pain in his legs increased more and more. *shoot!* He only hoped he could make it there in time...

Rain got up. Come on, Heather... It's time we avenge Mithos...

Heather, too, got up. But this time, she wasn't the same old nice girl. For the first time there was fire in her eyes; there was passion. Now, Heather had a reason to fight, and that would take her all the way..

Come on. Let's go get snake bastard. Temari said.

Kankuro and Horace grunted and followed her.

Orochimaru's head extended and went for the girls; however, TenTen's trap was set into motion. All her weapons were sent after Orochimaru. Orochimaru chuckled to himself. *They thought they could get me with such a basic trap?* Demonic Reversal! All the weapons flew back at the girls but they never connected. Temari stood there with all the weapons neatly aligned on the ground in front of her. Kankuro and Horace stood beside her, smiling. The leaf team and Rin sighed. Rin smiled her team was back; *now*, the fight would get going.

But that was just a clone; the real Orochimaru came from behind and knocked out Sakura and Hinata instantly. *Good bye medical ninjas.* Then, he disappeared once again. Orochimaru's style was very much like a snake; he would disappear, come out of nowhere, kill, and disappear. Only this time he didn't kill.

As he came once again, Temari made a huge gust, blowing him away. Kankuro then came after him.

Puppet Seizure! The puppets attacked next, but Orochimaru simply used his sword to block. *Everything according to plan...* He thought. Similar leach-like snakes now came out of the ground. Soon after, another Orochimaru came out of the ground and knocked out TenTen and Rin. The snakes went after Horace; they would drain all chakra, then energy, and then blood leaving him as nothing but a bag of skin, bones, and muscle. After that, they would go inside him and devour him. Too bad they never made contact.

As they approached, THUNDER GOD STRIKE NO JUTSU! was heard. Rain appeared in front of Horace soon followed by Heather. Where's Kakashi? she asked. They all didn't know. Waking up Hinata, she told them what had happened. Heather, go and find Kakashi, heal him, and bring him back. Take Horace with you. Both nodded and set off.

Getting a bit difficult now... All right. No more fooling around. He made some hand signs and said, Hellish Embodiment no jutsu! Now, Orochimaru completely disappeared.

Sakura woke up now. U-Ugh... W-What happened?

You got knocked out. Now get up, we could use you.

Sakura got up, but suddenly punched Rain a blow which caused her numerous broken bones and instant unconsciousness.

WHAT THE HELL, SAKURA? they all yelled.

Stop. Temari suddenly said. That's not Sakura; it's Orochimaru. That jutsu allows him to be inside another for a limited time.

My, my. Aren't we the bright one.

It's at first a genjutsu. If you don't stop it at that stage, it'll work for sure. Then it transforms into the real deal; it's a two phase jutsu.

Hellish Embodiment no jutsu!

shoot! Now we don't know who he's in! Crap! Kankuro began to realize the gravity of this situation.

Suddenly, Temari summoned a huge gust of wind, but it was immediately quenched. In front of them, none other than Uchiha Itachi, missing nin of the leaf, stood.

Orochimaru... Get out of there, or I'll make you get out.

Orochimaru soon appeared in front now. As if on cue, Heather and Horace came back with Kakashi. I managed to heal him. she reported to Kankuro and Temari. Heather began reviving everyone immediately seeing Itachi in front of her.

Don't bother hiding it; I'm on your side... For now. Itachi said.

With Temari's acknowledgement, she began healing everyone openly. Soon, everyone was up, and Sakura switched places with Heather. Now, everyone except Naruto was there in a dire situation, but living and conscious nonetheless.

Itachi... What have I done for you to... grace me with your presence?

Sasori, Deidara, and Kisame now came behind Itachi.

Ah, my old... friends. Orochimaru was now worried; he secretly prepared a jutsu to escape. Soon, all of his chakra was paralyzed.

Don't bother. Itachi said. Now, we have a proposition.

Wait. What about these? Sasori said pointing to the allied forces. Should I send them away, or rid them of this earth?

Don't kill them. They could come in useful in the fight to come. Kisame pointed out. Though they're weak, they could still do quite a bit of damage. After all, they weakened Oro here to this state.

Deidara agree. Yeah, yeah! Let's send them back to the leaf. They'll take care of them. Then, we can discuss this matter in private, yeah!

Itachi nodded. Kisame had begun making some hand signs when Itachi said, Wait. Where's the other one? The... jinchuuriki.

Yeah, where's the jinchuuriki? Deidara said. *Best not to give anything away, yeah. If they find out he's not a jinchuuriki, they'll get us for sure, yeah.*

Naruto dragged his feet; he was dead tired, all out of energy, his bloodline limit no longer activated, and all chakra used up. But he had to go. He couldn't even think properly anymore all he could do was keep walking. Soon, he came upon his friends.

Naruto! Hinata ran to him, took him into her lap, and let him rest. What else could they do? With four Akatsuki members and Orochimaru against them, they didn't stand a chance. Plus, all of them were tired. All they could do was sit and watch. Naruto rested in Hinata's caring arms, embraced in her love. *Interesting... I thought the kyuubi would forbid love considering it was in love before... Meaning, they must have used the Transfer Fuuin Jutsu to nullify it... Interesting... I thought Jaraiya...*Itachi thought.

We'll keep Naruto.

At that, all of their hearts dropped. Orochimaru's because he wouldn't have a great body; the allies' because Naruto was their friend; and Akatsuki members' because they would have *yet another* person joining them.

No! Please... Hinata pleaded

Itachi walked up to them, and all of them looked into his eyes; they fell unconscious the next second.

Kisame... Send them to Konoha.

Kisame nodded and activated a seal; the next second they were gone. Naruto alone remained there, unconscious.

Very well... The curse will grow... We WILL meet again, Naruto... and with that, Orochimaru, too, disappeared.

Now, what? Deidara asked.

We've got another eight month's time... Send a notice about what's about to happen to the kages... They'll need to prepare. In the mean time... Naruto and I will... do some bonding... Itachi stated without emotion. Each of you get the notes delivered... Then, meet with the rest of the members, and tell them that I've quit. Make sure the leader trusts you and believes you... He'll hopefully send you as a group to

hunt me down... We'll talk then. Until then...

They disappeared, leaving Itachi alone with his would-be-pupil. *You'll soon find why you're needed...*

Naruto...

15 - Revelations

Chapter 15: Revelations

Naruto woke up feeling extremely sour. Almost instinctively, he placed his mental barriers. Before checking his surroundings, he examined himself. His chakra was back to full; he wasn't tired anymore, but using chakra he detected all wounds had healed... except one the wound from the Manda still bothered him. Sensing around him, he found a rather strong chakra signature; of course, he had seen stronger, but this was strange... there was a strange calmness about him; yet, he was so evil not in an evil like Sasuke, consumed, but he was calm, cool, and collected. But this evil was ten times stronger... Opening his eyes he found he was in a room with tens of thousands of scrolls. There was one bed, and he was resting on it. The room was *huge* at least, he thought it was a room. He couldn't even see the other end. Getting up, he stretched his muscles. He was sore, yes, but hey, at least he was alive. Suddenly, he sensed two kunais thrown at him. Dodging them with ease, he turned around to see who in their right minds would do that.

Naruto activated his bloodline.

Uchiha Itachi

Threat level 12

Jutsus: Hellish Doom no jutsu; Sacred Resurrection no jutsu; Mengekyuou Sharingan

Yo, what's up, Itachi? he was still half asleep. Slowly, it sunk into his brain. Itachi... You're the one who caused Sasuke so much pain... You killed your own family! What kind of --

Shut up.

DAMN YOU! Naruto broke his mental bonds and rushed at him. Disappearing right in front of him, Naruto appeared behind him and punched, but Itachi was just a shadow clone. *shoot! His jutsu casting is so damn fast!* Suddenly, Naruto fell as he detected unbelievable pain. All energy was sucked out of him and he lay on the floor, gasping for air.

Get up.

Naruto struggled and stood up straight.

Are you wearing underwear?

Naruto slowly nodded.

Take off your pants.

Naruto hesitated, only to have another kunai thrown at him and the instruction repeated. There, on his right thigh was a curse seal only, this one was a little different. Three curse seals were joined together in a triangle, and, in the middle, there was a head on a snake, only it was like a tattoo printed in red.

Do you know what that is?

No.

Orochimaru is the snake senin. He takes everything from snakes. In fact, the Manda is one of the most powerful demons. Thus, many of his jutsus, seals, and his power comes from snakes. In the history of the world, only two people have received what you have from the Manda... You, and Orochimaru... Orochimaru modeled his own seal after the Manda, in fact... The Curse Seal... Yes, the Manda gave you its own curse seal, much more powerful... and much more dangerous. The Manda controls all that have this seal... But since the Manda had died the day your group killed it... its power goes to the most trusted official of the Manda... And the only other person who received its seal... Orochimaru... So now, providing your close enough, Orochimaru will control you... And... Once your freedom is stripped away, you're entirely to him... Your body... Your will... And that wonderful bloodline limit of yours...

... So you know...

Up...

Naruto got up.

Do know why you can tell how strong people are?

Y-You know about that, too!

Do... You... Know? Itachi repeated, running out of patience.

No... I don't...

Tell me... Do you know what clan you belong to?

The Uzumaki clan.

Yes... And if you look on the summoning frog scroll, you'll see someone by the name of Uzumaki Arashi... And before that... Jaraiya... And, to my knowledge, Jaraiya only trained one other person...

... Yondaime... Naruto said coming to realization.

Itachi took out a scroll from the wall. Uzumaki Arashi... More formerly known as Yondaime, married one by the name of Sheenaauthor's note: again, I take no credit for the name. illegitimately.

W-Wait, what?

Sheena was a lower member of the Uzumaki clan; to be specific, a housemaid... A maid in the house of Arashi. Not only did Arashi fall in love with her which, in itself was not allowed he went on to marrying her in secret without the elders' consent, and... he had a child... An illegitimate child... Then, the kyuubi attacked the village... Many of the Uzumakis died in the battle, as their hokage was a member of their clan... But most died protecting a child... The child of Arashi. Arashi never told them it was his child; he simply said, 'protect it with your life for it'll save the village.' He had committed a sin... He and his wife both... But their child had not; their child was innocent, simply a victim of their sins. And so, they rid themselves of the earth, sealing the nine tails demon fox in it to save the village. This way, they had hoped, their child would not be illegitimate... No, their child would be a hero... A hero who save the village. But as things turned out, that was not the case. Many lost their lives in the battle against the kyuubi, and many had to place blame. And so, they placed the blame on this child. Perhaps if the parents of the forsaken child had had a strong heart, they would have openly admitted it... Perhaps if they had had a strong heart, they would have told their views, and, as hokage, admitted to the village the sin of their past... Perhaps if they were strong, they would have carried their burden and loved what they did for themselves, and what they believed in... But not everyone's that strong, are they...

Naruto stared with tears in his eyes.

YOU'RE LYING! Naruto grabbed his kunai and jumped at him, but he was on the floor again within an instant.

Tell me, why would I waste my energy saving your sorry @\$\$, training you, and teaching you all of this just to lie to you. You're simply hiding your emotions... Because to you, and to the rest of Konoha, the hokage is flawless... You cower from the truth and use your excuse of hatred to justify it.

Naruto remained silent for a long while. No... Not everyone is that strong... And I think it's not a sin to be weak hearted... But it is a sin to not change once you've noticed your weakness... Simply letting your weakness grow... And sitting and watching grow... Until it consumes you... That's a sin...

Now you know where you come from. Do you know why you have the additional ability?

Naruto looked at him. Do you have any emotion? Do you care? I just learned something which changes the way I look upon myself drastically, and you just move on to what you have to do! You're... driven by only what you have to do.

In order of those questions: No, no, yes, and yes. Now, do you know?

No... I don't... Naruto said quietly.

The answer comes from the origin of your clan. The first question you should ask is, why is the clan so strict? Why with the love rules? Well, in the past, your clan was one of the most powerful ones. Wars

used to be more common. Thus, clans used to be war clan, completely bent on war. Your clan was one of them. With the use of the bloodline limit, your clan was usually key. A war clan needs to be strict; they couldn't afford to risk generals falling in love, leaving duty, etc. Hence, the rules. These rules, obviously, carried on. But the special thing about your clan is that, once every five hundred years or so, one person from your clan gets the ability you have to judge. This was often used in wars to decide if the army could win. And, thus, you have it. You're not the only one in you clan who had it, but you're one of the few.

I see. But people can hide their true strength.

Meaning you haven't awoken it fully. If you have, then it should tell you immediately the full capacity. Because it doesn't, it means you haven't been meditating enough.

So why did you save me?

I have my reasons.

So, what does all this mean? You showed me all of this...

The point being, I will be your teacher has next six months. By the time you're out of here, your bloodline will be complete. In eight months, there will be a war. I have to have your training done by then.

You have to have my training done by then?

Itachi broke all his bonds, activated his Mangekyou sharingan, and flared his chakra. Uchiha Itachi Threat Level 19. Naruto's jaw dropped. Do you know any ninja who's better than I and who's willing? Naruto kept quiet. Suddenly, he said, I need to make Sasuke's grave...

Itachi remained quiet for a long while. ... Fine...

They appeared in the very same valley where Sasuke was. The box remained undisturbed. Making a grave, Naruto buried his body there. After he placed the body there, he made a grave stone which sparkled like diamond. Using a jutsu, he burned the rock till it was glazed. Then, he carved the words on it:

A friend, a brother, and most of all,

A ninja

-Uchiha Sasuke

Naruto remained quiet for a while as he payed his respects to his dead friend.

Do you even care? he said turning to Sasuke.

Does it matter? It doesn't change the situation, does it... Me caring isn't gonna bring him back. Let's go, we have work to do...

Naruto looked at Itachi's emotionless face. You're heartless.

Let's go.

And they came back.

Right then. Itachi said coming back to normal First thing's first. You're going to learn every bloody jutsu in those monks' scrolls.

But how? I can't go back there with you.

I was the third person who learned the seventh course. That monk, you, and me. I used my sharingan to memorize the scrolls and recopy them. Taking out a scroll, Itachi showed the final scroll that Naruto hadn't finished. He was about half-way done. Your job is to do all these jutsus within two weeks' time. After all, you only have to do them once to master them. So, I suggest you get going.

I've got to get the hell out of here. Naruto wondered.

Oh, and, try to escape, and I *will* kill you. and he was gone.

Tsunade-sama! Shizune called.

What is it?

They're back! was all she said that was all she needed to say.

Tsunade ran to the hospital. They were all in one room in separate beds.

Is everyone all right?

Everyone's in stable condition... Only...

But Tsunade was already already gone. Out of all of them, Kakashi was the only one still conscious.

Kakashi! How was the mission?

We failed... Orochimaru's still alive... Although all his followers are dead. He's powerless. He explained everything to her.

So you're saying he might have joined Akatsuki again.

Yeah.

It seems there's a division in Akatsuki. Kisame warned me of war... It seems the leader is hated. She said.

Hmmm... Oh, and, Hokage-sama... One more thing.

Yeah?

Naruto's... dead... He was captured by Akatsuki... We were dead tired...

Tsunade stared at Kakashi with tears, and Kakashi, too, was crying a bit.

Wh-What? No... No... He... He can't... No... I...

Jaraiya came in, and he, too, had heard the news. *He hasn't... No, Itachi was the third apprentice... And he would have sensed the Kyuubi was gone... Then why would he oh no... Kami-sama... He can't be training him for meaning he would be in the Hokage's chamber, wouldn't he? And Tsunade... and no one else... can get in there... At least, now yet. Itachi himself could only get in there because of Naruto... Naruto will be safe then... As will Itachi... for now...* Tsunade, Naruto is not dead.

Tsunade looked up, thanking God and almost blessing Jaraiya.

Kakashi looked up curiously.

Say, Itachi-san?

... What?

When do I get to see my friends? They'll be thinking I'm dead.

Not until your training is complete, and they won't. Your sensei will tell them.

What? How do you know?

... Because I, unlike you, have half a brain. And that was the end of that.

During the days, Naruto would keep training, and Itachi would look through the scrolls. Then, they would have a meal which Itachi somehow got, but he wouldn't say how. Naruto figured he probably stole or something. Then, they both would meditate, and Naruto would work on unlocking his bloodline limit to the full extent. Then, Itachi would make Naruto read the scrolls that Itachi had prepared. The scrolls would often be about the history of the Hokages much like Naruto's father's history. Other scrolls had advanced chakra conserving techniques, genjutsu, ninjutsu, and taijutsu some he had studied before, but others were new. And so, every night he would plow through these scrolls. As it turned out, Naruto finished the jutsus in a week, and so they could move on.

... All right... From here on out, the nights are going to be pretty constant, but in the day time, we're going to spar. I want you to use everything you learned in the scrolls. You learn at a moderately fast pace, and this helps because you don't too much to learn you need to practice it a lot to learn it. You're already about half way through the scrolls. Anyways, I want you to give it your all. I need to find your weaknesses.

Naruto activated his bloodline limit, and the fight began.

Naruto made a shadow clone which teleported behind Itachi, but Itachi had already teleported beside Naruto. As it turned out, Itachi was even faster than Naruto at jutsus. Soon, Naruto was caught in the Mangekyou, and he lay on the floor, dead tired. Because Itachi was a true heir to the Sharingan, his Megekyuou was exponentially more powerful.

Your jutsu speed is rather impressive. You're one of the few who can almost match three-quarters of my speed... Naruto hung his head. Itachi had a most profound way of insulting a person. Your stamina is rather impressive as well, no doubt due to the kyuubi, and so we don't need to worry about that. Your weakness is genjutsu you can neither use it well nor block it. As for taijutsu, you're rather fast, but you're weak. We're going to be working on taijutsu and genjutsu then.

And so, throughout the months, Itachi taught him ways to use genjutsu. He learned from genjutsu scrolls, too, which helped greatly. After that, he learned ways to block genjutsu: genjutsu reversals, genjutsu reflection; and genjutsu nullification. Because his bloodline limit was so powerful, he learned all of these quickly, too. By the time a month had ended, Naruto was done with his genjutsu quota of his training.

As for his meditation, he was progressing rather quickly. In his mind, he could now visualize the final gate that was blocking him. As he meditated, he could feel the gate in his mind being slowly cracked, pushed, and giving way. The more he did it, the closer it came, until, one and a half months away from the start of his training, he finally did it. Activating it, he looked at Itachi.

Uchiha Itachi

Threat Level 19

Jutsus: Hellish Doom no jutsu; Sacred Resurrection no jutsu; Mengekyuou Sharingan

He sensed Itachi's chakra, but it was not flared; if anything, it was suppressed meaning he had finally done it.

I did it, I unlocked the final part.

Itachi nodded. ... Good... Continue at this rate, and you'll only need three more years...

Damn Itachi...

They continued to work on taijutsu; Itachi did every exercise known to man! At least, that's what Naruto thought. Itachi had Naruto wear three hundred kilos of weight and try to spar him! Naruto couldn't even move a foot. However, as he tried and tried, he could slowly do it. Eventually, he was back to his original speed. At the same time, Itachi had Naruto break things like steel, bricks, and other objects without any chakra at all. Eventually, Naruto began progressing to the point where Itachi could add multiple layers. By the end of four months of training, Naruto had completed everything.

You're ready now. Go to your friends.

What? That's it? No goodbyes, no hugs, no --

Itachi disappeared.

No hugs? Okay, you don't do hugs. What about a handshake? Naruto yelled, but Itachi was gone. *Fine then, be that way.* Despite the fact that Itachi was a missing nin, and he wouldn't give any explanation whatsoever, Naruto had managed to get along quite well with him. He still hated him, too the core, yes, but, he figured, Itachi wasn't too bad...

Naruto used a seal to get him outside. His jaw dropped he had been inside Konoha the entire damn time! He went straight to Tsunade's office.

Naruto! Tsunade was on top of him immediately.

I miffed oo, too Om! Now gerrof of me! Tsunade finally let Naruto go, only to have him collapse from her hug.

You've beengoneforsolongIthoughtyouweredeadThankGodyou'realiveImissedyousomuchWherehaveyou beenYou'regonnabeinsomuchtrouble! Tsunade said *extremely* quickly.

Ummm... Yeah? I guess... Looking at her one last time, he saw:

Tsunade

Threat Level 14

Jutsus: Medical nin; Summon; Demolition Jutsu

Wow...

On the way out, Jaraiya went to him. Naruto.

Naruto looked at him.

Jaraiya

Threat Level 15

Jutsus: Summon; Rasengan; Annihilating Blast Fire jutsu

So, he is stronger...

Yeah?

Did Itachi train you?

Naruto nodded.

shoot... I knew it... I don't what the hell he was thinking... Jaraiya mumbled.

Anything wrong?

Huh? Oh, no. No, not at all... Jaraiya was lost in thoughts.

Naruto went home, hoping, of course, that Hinata would be there. Luckily, she was! Opening the door, he went to her. She had her back to him. Placing his hands over her eyes, he said, I love you.

She whirled around and hugged him deeply. I love you, too. They had been away for four months, and that was *much* too long for them. They walked, side by side throughout Konoha, talking, hugging, and enjoying each other's company. Naruto had missed her; missed her special smell; missed her hair; missed everything about her! It seemed so long ago that they had talked, and Naruto wanted to fix that. Naruto and Hinata spent the entire day in each other's arms.

Coming back home in the evening, Hinata told him about everything that had happened during the months he was away.

It seems there's going to be a war in four months. Everyone's preparing, and, so, they're having their last Jounin Exam before the war to get any last jounin members they can. Other than that, nothing much has changed. Same old missions. The missions stop in another two months, too.

I see.

Naruto had some spare time on his hands after he turned in the application for Jounin, and he decided to walk around Konoha. He talked to the adults, advising them on their shop business and made himself rather well known. By now, three-fourths of Konoha had come to accept him. Only the southern end (the area where the kyuubi had caused the most damage,) truly still hated him. After paying a visit to the academy and Iruka, he decided to pay a visit to that southern end.

Sakura saw him as he walked. He seemed to literally increase the sunshine and brightness as he walked. As he walked, he seemed to make all the insects fly with joy, the grass dance in the wind, and the sunshine provide merciful warmth upon its recipients. Naruto seemed to truly have the spirit of fire a kind, forgiving, yet passionate and burning desire to fight, to fogive, and to be happy inside him. He seemed so innocent, and yet, there he was, one of the strongest ninjas in Konoha, yet having killed so little only ten in his life, to be exact. Sakura had shared this same opinion among most of the village, actually, and they all seemed to get along with Naruto. Naruto would help anyone and *everyone* solve problems, talk with them, and simply have a good time, be they five or fifty years of age. Sakura was staring at him when she snapped back into reality. *What am I doing? Ugh...*

Sakura-chan! What's up? Naruto called during his usual daily walk through Konoha. He was smiling at her.

She couldn't help but to smile back. Hey, Naruto. How are you doing?

Good, good. Had ramen, talked to people, trained... Yup, same old life, eh? So, how's life for you?

Not really too good. My mom forced me to join this club of hers where all the women sit, talk, and... socialize. The thing is, every once in a while, some people come and make a speech on what they believe, or answer some questions, and other stuff just to give us something new to talk about once in a while.

And? I don't see the problem with that; I think it's a great idea!

Yeah, well, it's not such a great idea when you have to bring the person.

So, it's your turn to bring someone?

She sighed. Yeah... I have no idea...

Why don't you bring me, Sakura-chan?

16 - Time for a Change

Chapter 16: Time for a Change

You? Sakura raised an eyebrow. You? You want me to bring you? '

Sure, I mean, why not, right?

I-I think I'll get back to you on that...

Sure, whatever, Sakura-chan! See ya!

Sakura rushed off towards the south-side, where she lived. *Bring him... Is he insane or something?*

Bring... I can't believe the nerve Bring him... Hmph...

Why not? I think it's a great idea, Sweetie!

MOM? You're supporting him?

I'm not supporting anyone. All I'm saying is that it's a good idea. But, it's your choice, not mine. I remember my first time... she sighed.

Sakura raised an eyebrow. Who'd you bring?

Some random boy I'd been crushing on for years, but never got the guts to tell him until then. she said, Dad? You brought dad?

Uh-huh. she nodded.

Fine, but I'm not bringing him for the same reason.

Of course your not... she stifled her giggle.

Mom!

I'm joking! Jeez...

Naruto continued walking down there when he saw a very young girl, about three or four years old, crying.

What's wrong? A pretty girl like you shouldn't be crying!

Get away from me... Daddy says I shouldn't talk to you because you're really a fox... she said through her sobs.

Really! Coolio! So I have a tail? he tickled her, and she laughed. Once she calmed down, he asked, Now what's wrong?

Those meanie boys took away Susie...

Susie? How big is she?

This big... her palms were about six inches apart.

A doll, I guessing. All right! Let's go get Susie back, shall we?

She nodded through her tears.

Taking her up, Naruto twirled her in the air, making her giggle with joy. So, where are they?

She pointed her tiny, cute finger in the northern direction. They walked about two minutes when they saw the boys. Yo! Give her back her doll.

There were about five or six boys about eight. Or what?

Or this! Naruto teleported near them instantly, took the doll, and kicked them lightly. Of course, to them, it was a rather hard kick. Is this what you do? Pick on girls five on one? The boys ran like there was no tomorrow. Turning to the girl, he asked, What's your name?

Miki...

Well, Miki-chan, here's Susie! he showed her the doll and she smiled, wiping her tears and hugged him.

Daddy says you're a big, mean monster... But I think you're a cute, fuzzy, nice monster... she said, still

hugging him as he carried her.

Thank you, Miki-chan! Now, where do you live?

I don' wanna go home! Daddy will scold me... Can I go home with you?

Ummm... Are you sure? I mean, your parents will --

Please, please, please, please!

Okay, okay. he kissed her on the cheek and carried her home. On the way back, he went to a store and bought her several clothes to last her until he could find her parents. When they reached his house, he explained to Hinata everything, and she agreed. Naruto changed her clothes as Hinata made dinner.

Ta-da! he said coming out with Miki on sitting on top of his head. He held her there with his arms. It's the new, Miki-chan!

Hinata mumbled, 'Good job, now let me concentrate.'

Miki frowned. Why is Hinata-chan sad?

Naruto threw Miki up and caught her. Don't worry! She's just jealous that you're *much* prettier than she is.

Miki giggled.

Hinata sighed, looking at the two of them play, and thought, *Naruto-kun...* Naruto fed Miki and all three of them slept together Miki in the middle so she wouldn't roll off the bed, and Naruto and Hinata on both sides. It was a bit cramped, but none of them really minded.

The next day, Miki, Hinata, and Naruto together roamed the city. All over the north side of Konoha, Naruto put up posters to look for Miki's parents. They asked many people, but no one knew. Then, Sakura came.

Hey! Sakura-chan! What's up!

Hey, Naruto. I've decided to bring you. Tomorrow, seven o' clock. Please don't be late. she said.

Cool! Is it okay is Miki-chan comes, too? I found her, but we can't find her parents. Until we do, she's staying with me.

Fine, bring her, too. she said, and walked off, feeling extremely nervous about how Naruto would do. Naruto decided to get new clothes, as his were rather old, sweaty, and dirty. After that, they went back home. The next day, Naruto and Miki went to see Sakura right after lunch.

Hey, Sakura. I'm here early, cuz I'm sure I'd forget, so I just decided to hang with you gusy. he said.

Naruto! Where were you? There's only six hours left before you have to go on! You should have been here earlier!

Ummm... Sakura?

What?

I just thought that since I was going there, shouldn't I be the one nervous, not you? he asked.

Yes, well, I brought you, and so, if you suck, it'll be *my* fault!

Oh, um, okay... I didn't really think about it that way, and, Sakura?

What now?

Well, since you're sharing 'me,' I just thought that may be I should be myself, and not... you know, try to impress people. And secondly, I *think*, I dunno, this is just some random idea of mine, but you *might* be panicking?

I'M NOT PANICKING!

Ummm... Okay...

Sakura's mother watched this scene with a couple of her friends and they giggled about it tremendously.

That kid's gonna do fine. one friend said.

Yeah, he's a good guy. said another.

They all agreed at this.

Okay... I'm just gonna go home, okay?

What! You can't go home then you'll be late!

But Naruto was already gone. *Jeez! How much does she worry for one stupid club meeting thing! It's not the end of the world! Jeez... My God...*

Naruto and Miki returned at around six thirty to find Sakura helping set up for the meeting. Hey, Sakura-chan! We're here!

Thank goodness! I thought you'd forget for sure!

The 'meeting' then started.

All right! the organizer said. It's Sakura's turn to bring in someone, and she has brought Uzumaki Naruto! Please come in and welcome!

Naruto stepped up with Miki on his head. Um... This is the first time I've done something like this, so, can anyone tell me what I'm supposed to do?

One lady near the middle spoke up. You just tell who you are, what you're doing, and what you believe in.

Naruto nodded. Sounds simple enough. My name is Naruto Uzumaki. I was born in this village... And my parents were Uzumaki Arashi, and Uzumaki Sheena. Currently, I am a shinobi for Konoha; I just recently returned from a mission. I am currently of Chuunin rank, and I'm entering the jounin exams in two weeks... Um, about my beliefs, can anyone ask me questions to guide me? I have a lot of beliefs, and so I don't... really know where to start.

The audience seemed nice enough. Another lady's hand rose. Yeah, how... Say that child on your head was yours. How would you raise a child?

I think it would matter depending on the child. If the child was like me thick headed, strong, unbelievably stubborn -- this got a few laughs. -- Then I would probably insult it, be tough on it, and force it to do better. Why? Because, I, personally, have an extremely high stamina. And so, I do well under such circumstances. My whole life I've been put down, and so, when someone insults me, I naturally try my hardest to prove them wrong. And so, I do well under difficult situations partly cuz I'm so stupid, and so no insult really affects me.

They all laughed and smiled at the boy in front of them who was so honest, innocent, and hard-working in front of them.

But some people aren't like that. Some are very talented, can do everything, but are extremely self-conscious, and they can't take that kind of stuff. And so, for someone like that, I would emphasize kindness, love, and try to encourage. I guess what I'm really trying to say, is that it all depends on the child, and as a parent, one should know that.

They all nodded. Everyone in the group soon liked him, too everyone except a group of ten in the back who lived at the southern end of Konoha. Most of these people did live in the southern end, but more towards the middle than really the south. Another question. Just wondering, but where did you find the girl?

Haha. Um, actually, that's a pretty funny story... And so, he told the story quote for quote what Miki said, and what he said. He threw Miki up, caught her, and whirled her around. Miki hung to him loosely and laughed. Oh, yeah, that reminds me. Is anyone here her parent? I found her on the northern side of Konoha, so I assumed she lived there. I've asked all over and even put up posters, but I can't find this girl's parents... Does anyone here know?

They all shook their heads. As a ninja, what do you feel when you kill someone?

Well, my first kill was actually about eight months ago... I accidentally killed someone by using a stupid jutsu that was too dangerous... And I stayed there... And cried, knowing well that if I hadn't killed them, they would have killed me... And yet, I still cried. It was later that I realized, that not having wars was impossible... Not having deaths was impossible... Because until the day all people think alike there will always be conflict... And where there is conflict, those in the middle are crushed... It's like being stranded

you're the only one of an entire army... Everyone else ditched you and joined the enemy... But you wouldn't join the enemy because you know the enemy's corrupt. Everyone else was a coward and simply ran away to save their own hide. Would you fight, and die fighting for what you believe in... Or would you join that enemy? It sure is easy to say right now, sitting down what you would do... But you go there, and... It takes a truly strong heart to do that but there's the problem... When everyone believes what they're doing is the right thing, there's even more conflict. So then comes the question is goodness subjective, or objective? Is what each person thinks is good the good, or is there a general good... I don't know the answer to this question... If it were as simple as kill the bad guys, I would have done it... But what happens when the 'bad guys' have a family... a son... a brother... a wife... just like you and me... What if the 'bad guys' believe they are the good ones... and that you're the bad one... just like you do to them... What if the 'bad guys' are human... just like you and me... What if they are so similar, you can't tell the difference? What do you do? I've only killed ten people in my life... And each time, I ask myself this question... I ask myself is it worth it? Why do I fight... And each time, the same answer comes to me... I fight to protect my family... Yes, I am an orphan... Yes, half the village hates me... Yes, I do have a demon fox inside of me! But, I, too, have a family... And my friends have now become that family... And I promised myself I would protect them. Do I know the answer to this question? No, no, I don't... This is what I think and feel when I kill a person...

This time, there was actually applause! Naruto was amazed that people actually like what he thought... No one but Hinata did that. And then he realized it; he had been taking her for granted... All the time, he figured why bother? She'll always be there for him... But all the time, he hadn't been loving her how she had loved him... He had taken her for granted... And that would stop.

Whoops! Time's up! Me and Miki gotta go! Bye guys! Hope you enjoyed my speech! and he left. When he went out of the building, he saw Hinata there, smiling.

I heard your speech, Naruto-kun... I liked it...

Naruto ran to her and embraced her. I'm sorry, Hinata... I've taken you for granted... I'm really, really sorry.

Hinata wondered what on earth happened to him, but she was pleased nonetheless. It's okay.

Suddenly, she felt herself seized by Naruto and she felt his lips touch hers.

With that, they walked home.

Sakura looked at him. The entire audience was in a chatter about what he had said, and they were enthralled by his ideas. But Sakura decided to skip out on the fun. She stood there outside, watching him go by. *All those times in Team 7... How many insults... How many teasings... Even now, I refuse to acknowledge your greatness... And this wonderful speech, shows only a part of it... Naruto... You've changed so, so much... And yet, you're still that same old Naruto you always were... You just show it a bit more now... And perhaps now I see... How blind I was... She closed her eyes and tears rolled into them. Naruto... I love you... But it's too late, isn't it... Please forgive me...*

It's never too late, you know... a voice said behind her.

No, Mom... It *is* too late... I know...

Naruto lay his head in Hinata's lap; Miki was asleep in Naruto's room, and Naruto wanted to spend some time with Hinata. She was leaning over to a table and writing something.

What are you writing?

I'll tell you when it's finished!

Come on. Please? Just tell me and I'll never bug you again!

No!

As she leaned over, Naruto turned his head and kissed her stomach. She gasped and then slapped his head lightly. Fine... Meanie... he said and turned around so that his hair was towards her and closed his eyes.

The next morning he woke up to find himself in Hinata's bed. *Huh?* Hinata wasn't there. Waking up, he found Miki, too gone. *Okay, this is not cool... Seriously...* He searched the house but they were nowhere to be found. Going around Konoha, he found his friends to be missing too, along with the hokage, who was taking her usual sake break. He decided to go to Sakura's house to ask where the hell everybody was. When he entered, everyone yelled HAPPY B-DAY NARUTO!

Naruto's jaw dropped. Say what?

Your Birthday Naru-kun! Miki shouted and ran to him.

Naruto picked her up and kissed her on the cheek. Thank you, Miki-chan! Turning to the rest of his friends, he said, It's October 10th today?

Yeah!

Hmmm... Yeah, I guess I forgot!

How could you forget? Sakura shouted at him.

Well, I mean, it was always a bad day for me when I was little, cuz that was the day the kyuubi attacked, right? And people always bullied me and stuff... he told her softly.

She felt *extremely* guilty. Naruto I'm --

Naruto! Comrade! Come! Let us give you our gifts of youth! Lee shouted.

Naruto ran to the rest of his friends. He was piled in gifts that day. Sakura's mother was hosting the party, in fact. First they all talked for a bit, until it was time to cut the cake.

Naruto walked in front of the cake. He closed his eyes and made his wish. Then, opening them, he opened his mouth to blow the candles, but Kiba pushed his face into the cake. Kiba was laughing incredibly, as were many others. Naruto took a handful of cake and splatted it on Kiba's face that started it. From there on out, it was a straight food fight.

It was, naturally, everyone team up on Naruto since it was his birthday. By the end of it, Naruto's clothes were pure red from punch, his waist up white from cake, his shoes caught in ramen (what a waste,) and his back in lemonade.

Happy now, Kiba?

Almost. and then he threw a tomato which landed square on Naruto's nose. Perfect! he said like an artist looking at his 'masterpiece.'

They all laughed and Naruto took a shower, dressed up and came back.

After that, they all sang the happy birthday song, talked, and everyone went home. The party ended at about six in the night. Hey, Sakura, thanks for hosting the party. It was great seriously, thanks... It's the first time I've celebrated my birthday. Thanks, it really means a lot. and with that, Naruto, Hinata, and Miki walked back home.

Hinata couldn't stop giggling.

What's so funny?

She took something out of her pocket it was a picture of Kiba's masterpiece.

Oh, hell no! Give it back!

Hinata ran like hell. When Naruto finally caught up to her, she said, I've got copies!

Naruto's expression was like a man's when he saw the end of the world coming. Where?

She shook her head. Not telling! and she ran again.

Get back here! Naruto pinned her down and tickled her all over. Taking the picture from her, he said, I'll tear up my humiliation now. and tore it.

Hinata shrugged and took another one out of her pocket.

Oh, I give up... Naruto said and picked up Miki.

As he went through the southern end of Konoha, he found a *lot* more people accepted him now since the club meeting. Word spread like wild fire, and more and more people began talking to him, getting to know him, and agreed with the rumors he was a nice guy.

One day, carrying Miki, he went shopping for clothes, when, suddenly, a man yelled, Give me back my daughter, you fox!

Naruto turned around and looked at the man. Miki-chan, is this your father?

By now a huge crowd had gathered.

Uh-huh... she softly said.

Walking up to the man, he said, Here you go, sir. I didn't know Miki-chan was yours.

So you just take in any random girl?

I put up posters all over the north side. I found her there, so I assumed she lived there. I didn't know she lived here. I'm really sorry if I've caused you any trouble.

Pulling things out from his backpack, he said, Here you go. They're hers.

He grabbed them and grunted.

Bye Miki-chan! he said cheerfully. We'll meet again, okay?

She nodded, but her father interrupted. Oh, no she won't!

I have no authority over her... Her father does, and it isn't my place to do so... Okay, then. It was nice meeting you Miki-chan! he hugged her.

She cried on his shoulders. I don't wanna go, Naru-kun!

Oh, come on, Miki-chan! Your father must have been worried sick about you! Come on. Your mother has a nice meal at home for you, okay? and he wiped her tears.

She nodded and went to her father. Bye, Naru-kun...

Bye, Miki-chan! he said giving her his trademark grin.

The crowd was huge, and they all saw this scene, nodding at Naruto's actions. Naruto walked back home. Sakura, too had seen this. *Naruto... You just saved that girl's life...*

He explained to Hinata everything that had happened.

So Miki's home, now.

Yup. I miss her, you know... She was a nice, friendly spirit in the house... She had a good atmosphere with her.

Hinata nodded. Yes, I miss her, too. Oh, and, Naru-kun, the exams are tomorrow.

We gonna rock as usual?

Is that a question? she asked smiling.

We're gonna rock as usual. he stated, smiling.

It's time for a change... Now, Naruto Uzumaki will show just what he's made of...

17 - The Jounin Exam

Chapter 17: The Jounin Exam

Naruto and Hinata lay huddled together in bed. Naruto woke up, remembering that today was the jounin exam. Looking at the clock, he saw it was five o' clock. Since it was getting cold, he put the blanket over them for better warmth and scooted closer to her. Kissing her on the cheek, he thought, *I'm not gonna let anything happen to you...* He would guard her with his life. He hugged her lovingly and placed an arm on her head. Feeling he hair, he kissed he head and he played the the two longer strands that hung due to her bowl cut. He kissed her again on the cheek, and she woke up.

Naruto-kun? Wh-What time is it? '

It's five... he said.

Hinata smiled and came closer to him.

Why are you so happy?

Because we still have two hours before we have to get ready and go. and with that, she lay close to him.

Naruto felt overjoyed. Grabbing her, he kissed her on the lips, causing her to blush heavily. And we're gonna spend those two hours right here. he said.

She smiled and nodded sleepily as she fell into Naruto's arms. The two stayed in bed and played for two hours. When it was time to get up, Naruto wouldn't leave. Hinata had to *persuade* him with a couple kisses, but it worked out in the end.

They both got up and took a shower and brushed their teeth. Coming down, Naruto was in his best fighting clothes. He had all brand new, sharp weapons. He wore nothing fancy; it was because of the monks he got this far, and he decided he would honor them. He wore his informal meditation clothes, for he could never fight in his formal ones. Both the pants and the shirt were white with some golden designs on both. White and gold suited him perfectly, as his sapphire eyes were now radiating in contrast, and his hair was a bit of a golden color in itself, only it had red tips. He used a jutsu to make his forehead protector's blue part golden, so now, his protector was golden clothed and silver where the leaf symbol was. Hinata was cooking. Coming up to he from behind, he hugged her and tickled her stomach.

Naruto!

He kissed her on the cheek. I love you...

She whirled around at these words and gave him a deep, passionate kiss. She moaned as their tongues touched, and she placed her hands inside his shirt and rubbed his back. They kissed again, and when they finally broke away, both their eyes were brimming with overflowing love.

I love you, too.

With one last kiss, Naruto left her to her work and went off preparing. After they ate breakfast, Naruto and Hinata made their way to the stadium. When they reached there, Tsunade was on a platform ready to make her announcement.

After everyone settled down, she began. Welcome to the Jounin Exams! This will a tournament between leaf ninjas alone. There are two ways to become jounin. Either you are automatically raised to jounin level by the hokage, or, you qualify in this test. This test will begin in half an hour, so, please, be ready. And with that she got down and walked of. She wanted to personally wish Naruto good luck, but she was hokage; she wasn't supposed to be biased... At least, not in front of the Elder's Council.

Hinata... If we end up fighting... each other...

Naruto-kun, I would expect you to treat me like any other enemy. I don't want you to hold back on me...

Because I'm not going to hold back on you. and she kissed him. Naruto, it's the only way we can respect each other.

He placed his arm around her shoulder and squeezed it tightly. I know... he said quietly. Kissing her again, he said, But I hope we don't...

She nodded. I do, too...

Hey, Naruto! What's up? Kiba came along with Shino, Lee, TenTen, Neiji, and Sakura. All eight original 'rookies' were there.

Hey guys! You're all still chuunin?

Huh? Nah! Shino, Lee, Shikamaru, and Neiji are already Jounin. They're just here to watch. But the rest of us are.

Naruto nodded. I heard the top ten candidates are going to be Jounin.

Shino nodded. That's what I heard as well, only, it doesn't matter to me.

Yeah, and I heard the top three are going to be team leaders. Sakura said. I eavesdropped on Tsunade-sama.

Naruto was ecstatic. Seriously! All right! I'm gonna lead my own team!

How do you know you'll win? TenTen asked.

It's Naruto. Sakura, Kiba, and Shino said.

Ah, right. Forgot about that. I wonder how the Jounin training stadium is going to look like. TenTen added.

Well, you won't have to wonder much longer. Here comes M um... Tsunade-sama... They were all giving him the 'Say *what?*' look. What? and he walked off.

All right! Settle down folks! There are fifty applicants here. Naruto and Kiba! First match!

Naruto and Kiba both grinned, eager to get on with the fight.

Hinata came to him with a pleading look in her eyes.

I know... you're his old teammate... I won't, you know...

She smiled. Thanks, Naruto-kun.

Naruto nodded.

Naruto walked up to the stadium facing Kiba. The arena was *huge*. It provided plenty of space, and Naruto loved this; he could mess with people. The audience burst out into cheers. He could recognize many from Sakura's club, and others from his daily walks. Unfortunately, Miki wasn't there. He faced Kiba.

You ready for this, Kiba?

Kiba pet Akamaru. Oh, *we're* ready, all right. And don't worry, I'm not going to use the underestimating excuse this time

Why? Got a different excuse this time?

Bring it, Loudmouth

Hey! Naruto pointed to Kiba. That's Mr. Loudmouth to you. And you know what? Mr. Loudmouth's gonna give you an @\$@ whuppin' you're never forget.

Naruto simply waited for him to make the move this time.

Kiba and Akamaru transformed into wild beasts and rushed at Naruto. Naruto charged a rasengan at them, but Kiba and Akamaru used Wild Beast Spin jutsu which made them into one single torpedo and they cut through Naruto; but 'Naruto was only a shadow clone. After four months of training, Naruto had gotten to be or less as fast as Itachi in jutsus. True, they had gotten to be about equal. Itachi was still a little bit stronger in using genjutsu, though, but that was compensated by Naruto's stamina.

Damn he's fast... Kiba thought. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, Naruto came and pounded Akamaru; not without a loss, though. Kiba had seen him coming with enhanced senses due to a soldier pill, and Kiba had clawed him; but, this Naruto, too, was only a shadow clone.

It's impossible to tell then! Kiba realized. *At this speed, I won't be able which one's a shadow clone! It seems Kiba has realized why the shadow clone jutsu is a forbidden one...* Kakashi thought. You're student's getting the royal @\$\$ treatment. Kakashi said to Kurenei. Kurenei nodded. True, she agreed. But this fight is far from over. Kakashi grinned. No, I think it's going to be over soon. *Naruto hasn't even activated it yet... Otherwise, people in the audience would notice...* He chuckled.

Kiba and Akamaru bent down low, as if stalking. Suddenly, Naruto stood in front of them.

Kiba

Threat Level 10

Jutsus: Torpedo Assault no jutsu; Beast Stalker no jutsu; Morphing no jutsu

Akamaru

Threat Level 10

Jutsus: Torpedo Assault no jutsu; Beast Stalker no jutsu; Demonic Fang no jutsu

I see... The Torpedo Assault Jutsu is more powerful if two people do it...

Akamaru, it's only a shadow clone; it smells different than the real Naruto.

Akamaru barked.

Yeah, since he's hiding his scent, he's either hanged, or he's smothered himself in something. Kiba agreed.

Suddenly, Akamaru used his Demonic Fang to get Naruto in the shoulder. Naruto was bleeding rather heavily. However, Naruto reflected it with his absolute defense; the whole point was to get Akamaru away from Kiba where he wouldn't be defended.

Naruto rammed a rasengan into Akamaru's head; Akamaru was unconscious the next second. Naruo was confident Akamaru didn't feel any pain the attack itself didn't last very long, and Akamaru was unconscious before the attack was even done. Right after, Naruto switched himself with a shadow clone. Kiba came from behind and clawed Naruto, only to have Naruto explode in his face, literally. *Damn... Another one... But it smelled just like Naruto!* Kiba was then whacked from underneath.

Damn! It smelled just like you though!

I used your own strength against you. If it smelled like me, you would think it had to be me. And so I faked my scent.

Haha... Nice match... Kiba said before falling unconscious.

WINNER, UZUMAKI NARUTO!

Sakura stared at Naruto. Naruto wasn't just good; he was *amazing*. His clothes made him seem almost God-like. Looking incredible, Naruto's looks were matched or even surpassed by his skill. Sakura would only see flashes of him, but she was dazzled. However, Naruto was only as good as, or perhaps a little better than, most jounin, and after seeing the hokage fight, seeing Naruto fight shouldn't have been so exciting, but, hey, love changes things and in this case, love changes things a *lot*. As he went back up to the stands, Sakura stared at the one she loved. He had changed so, so much... And, perhaps that was why he didn't love her anymore...

Naruto went back up the stands to Hinata and hugged her.

Good job.

Thanks. I have a feeling I'm gonna be on a roll today.

Do you know why?

Of course! Today's the day both of us accomplish our dream.

She seemed curious.

Today, I prove to Konoha what a ninja I am. Today, you prove to your clan what a ninja you are. And, today, he said placing an arm around her shoulder and kissing her head, is the day, we become jounin!

She rested on his shoulder, enjoying everything about him. They sat together and watched, listening to his comments and making her own in between.

The next two matches were between was between two unknown ninjas. Then, the match was between Sakura and another unknown ninja, a boy. Sakura easily defeated the boy. The next five matches were also between unknown ninjas. The next match was between TenTen and an unknown student; TenTen won. The next ten matches were also between unknown ninjas. Then, it was Hinata's turn.

Naruto kissed Hinata on the cheek for confidence. Hinata, he said pointing to a man on the other end. Hinata followed Naruto's finger to a man in the audience.

Oh, no... Her face visibly paled.

Hinata, he said looking into her eyes lovingly but sternly. You are going to prove that man wrong, today. he said and kissed her. Today, you prove the world wrong.

Hinata smiled. Naruto-kun, I've been waiting my entire life for this day. Today, we prove the world wrong. she confidentially.

Naruto smiled. Go and get 'em.

Hinata jumped down and stared at her opponent. She activated her byakugan. Immediately, her opponent rushed at her, but Hinata waited for the right time and hit him square in the chest, gentle-fist style. Her opponent coughed out blood and stood there, recuperating from the blow. While he did that, Hinata rushed at him with a kunai and stabbed him. But he managed to counter; he kicked her in the head and used a jutsu which sealed her chakra at the cost of most his chakra. But Hinata wasn't done yet. She used the kunai and got him while he was resting from using that much chakra at once. The seal broke and Hinata's chakra was freed again. She ran to him and used the Heavenly Spin technique to end the battle. She looked at her father, but he simply looked at her stolidly.

Going back up to the stands, she rejoined Naruto.

Naruto hugged her. All right Hinata-chan! You showed him!

Hinata blushed heavily because he said her name so loudly.

Naruto looked at her, saw that she was tomato red, and sat down. Good job. he told her. You were awesome.

She hid herself from the staring faces by burying herself in Naruto.

Naruto chuckled and hugged her tightly.

The next four matches ended very quickly, and that summed up the first round of the tournament with twenty-five people out. However, the hokage stepped up once again. We've assessed your performance, and we have decided due to lack of time, another five will be disqualified. Tough.

Kakashi came up now. Contestants 50, 32, 29, 3, and 14 are disqualified.

The contestants whined, made several comments, and walked out of the stadium.

All right! There will be a half an hour break for you to relax, as well as the audience to stretch their legs, and... well, do whatever they need to do. If the contestants aren't there when their match comes, they will be disqualified. Tsunade said and walked away.

All right! So all of us except Kiba made it! For the rookies, we're doing pretty good! Naruto said.

Yeah, the first chuunin exam... Brings back some good memories... Sakura said.

I'm pretty sure we're going to make it. TenTen said.

After the break was over, it was time for the second round ten matches. It was Naruto against an unknown ninja.

Naruto easily won against this ninja. Running up to her, he disappeared and reappeared right behind her; but she used the body flicker jutsu to appear at the other end. Naruto made shadow clones which remained hidden. Running up to her, he threw a kunai at her, which she returned it to him, but he simply caught it. As she landed, she used used a fire jutsu at him, but dodged and had his shadow clone knock her out with a kunai. The match had been all to easy, and Naruto was yearning for a good match.

The next match was between Sakura and another ninja. Sakura caught him in a rather advanced genjutsu right at the beginning, which allowed her to win easily. The next two matches were between unknown ninjas.

The next match was between an unknown ninja and TenTen. TenTen actually lost, much to the 'rookies' ' disappointment. The next five matches were also between unknown ninjas, and, finally, it was Hinata's turn. She, too, won rather easily. All it took was one Hakke and the boy was down.

The next two matches were between unknown ninjas. However, what truly disturbed Naruto was that two of the ninjas were wearing masks; true, they had been tested to see if they were Konoha ninjas, and they were. But it seemed all too strange for Naruto; nevertheless, under Hinata's *persuasion*, he put it to the back of his mind.

Congratulations! You ten ninjas are now, officially, jounin. Any who feel they are too tired to fight may quit. As for those who want to continue, the top three will become teachers and take on three pupils. Those who want to quit, may do so now, simply come to me, and mark off your name. As for the others, you have a half hour break. That is all.

All right! So the rookies... well, at least some... are still in! Me, Hinata, and Sakura-chan are gonna become those teachers! Totally!

Sakura noticed how Naruto put her name after Hinata's. I'm sorry, Naruto... But, I'm not going to be able to teach. Sensei only wanted me to become jounin. I could never train three students, as I'm needed by the hospital as well as sensei to help around. I'm sorry, Naruto.

Naruto nodded. I understand, Sakura-chan medical ninja stuff, eh? It's okay. One day, I'm sure you, too, will have an apprentice.

She smiled sadly. I hope so, Naruo... I hope so. Well, I'll be cheering you and Hinata on from the stands. she looked at him sadly and went off to the hokage.

Right before she left, Naruto's eyes met hers... and what he saw did not make him happy. He could recognize pain he had felt it for the most part of his life, and he knew Sakura was feeling pain... And the worst part was, she was feeling a very similar pain to what he had felt, only, he saw there something else in her eyes... A sort of happiness... Only, there was a mix of happiness in it as well and this only happened in two situations that he could think of. Either someone was regretting what they had done in the past, and they had an end to the pain, or they were going through pain, but they knew it was for the best. And from the looks of her face, Naruto was guessing it was the second. *I need to talk to her later...*

Neiji came now. Hinata-sama.

Neiji-niisan. How are you?

I am doing fine. May I have a word with you in private?

Hinata looked to Naruto, and Naruto nodded. *I need to talk in private myself.*

Sure.

Thank you.

And Neiji and Hinata went off.

Naruto went to Sakura, who was sitting underneath a palm tree.

Hey, he said.

Hey... she replied.

Why so down? This isn't like you at all.

I'm surprised you even noticed. she grumpily.

He came, sat down, put an arm around her, and said, Well, I'm a surprising guy.

She sighed. Look Naruto, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that... I was... a little grumpy, sad, annoyed... everything... I'm sorry. '

Hey, it's okay. We all have good and bad days. There are days when I'm not myself. And people cheer me up. So? What's on your mind?

Realization, I suppose...

You realized something? I'm guessing it's something bad, eh?

She remained quiet for a long while. It's time for you to go...

There's no point in becoming a jounin if my friends aren't there to share my happiness with me. She looked at him for a great while and began crying. Please, just leave.

Naruto, go on.

Naruto saw there was no point in arguing and simply left.

Hinata-sama... About this Jounin exam... Please... don't get hurt.

Don't worry, I won't. I'm not worried about Naruto; he and I have already discussed that.

Neiji shook his head. Hinata-sama, I've been made head of the branch house.

That's great, Niisan!

Yes, and... I wanted you to know, if you become the head of the Main House, you have my complete and total support... I believe in your abilities to lead a clan, and I believe in your ideals.

Hinata hesitated for a moment, then nodded. Thank you, Niisan.

And...

Father wants me to lose, doesn't he... And he's going to come up with an excuse to get me out, isn't he?

Hanabi... Neiji said sadly.

So, Hanabi is in this tournament...

Neiji nodded.

Thank you, Niisan.

Neiji smiled sadly. Hinata, please... Please, be careful.

Hinata smiled. Don't worry, Naruto-kun and I have done some training. And with that she left. *Today will indeed be the day when Naruto-kun and I show the world.*

And with that she left.

How do you think I feel?

Heh, I'm guessing you're feeling exactly how Naruto felt when you blew him off all those years...

Kakashi said quietly.

At this Sakura began crying even more, but, nevertheless, she nodded. Exactly...

Sakura, you know he loves Hinata...

She nodded through her tears.

But what you don't know, is that he loves you, too. You hold a place in his heart that could never be taken by anyone... All of us do. He doesn't treat you as a friend like he treats the others... That's because you're more to him than that. You were one of his first friends... And now, you've grown to being his sister. More than his sister, in fact. You are part of his very *life*. I heard that speech he made, too... And believe me, it was heartfelt. And he fights to protect you, me, Hinata, this village, and everyone in it... everyone except, himself. He does love you, Sakura... So, I suggest you love him back. She looked at her sensei, smiled, and wiped her tears. Thanks, sensei.

Kakashi nodded.

As Naruto was walking back, he met up with Hinata. So, how'd it go?

She smiled. Good. As you said, 'Today's the day we show the world.' I'm excited. she said happily.

Naruto kissed her. Good. You should be.

She hugged him. It's you who made me so.

Hey, Naruto! a voice called from behind.

Naruto turned around. Sakura-chan? Hi!

She came and ruffled his hair. You didn't think I'd miss you kickin' @\$\$, did you? I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Naruto smiled. All right!

All right! There are six people left! The first round of the finals will be regular, and, the last round will be three person fight, every... er, ninja for him or herself. Let's go!

Suddenly, Naruto felt his curse seal almost *sink* into his body. It was like all bonds were broken, and no, it was a part of him. *Damn... The curse seal's gotten used to my body... Meaning the grace period is over... Now that my body's used to it, Orochimaru can control my body... shoot... I just hope Orochimaru doesn't know the grace period is over...*

Naruto faced his opponent; a girl this time. Naruto decided to go all out for one second and finish this so that he could tell Jiraya. Naruto charged his chakra as he rushed at her. Suddenly, he used the body flicker to disappear, and reappear right in front of her. He used the Menkyuou and it was over. She was unconscious immediately. The medical ninjas rushed her to the hospital. *shoot!* Immediately in pain, Naruto gripped his thigh. It was burning incredibly. Naruto had held back a little; any more and she may have gotten to a critical condition. He had lost a lot of chakra, but he had more than enough time to rest and regain it. As he walked up, clenching his thigh, he made a mental note of the effects of the curse seal. While it provided great chakra, it could only be used if he had succumbed to it and if that should happen, Orochimaru would have total control over his body. At his current state, Orochimaru could activate it, cause him pain, and torcher him into giving in, but Orochimaru could not control his body directly at least. He went to Jiraya and explained everything while Hinata went down for her fight.

I see... If that is the case, the only relief would be either the death of Orochimaru, which you cannot do in this state, or the obtaining the Healer's Scroll. It is a legendary scroll said to contain the healing technique of every curse and seal in existence. However, it's been destroyed... And I know of one person who knows this technique. Or... knew... It depends on whether or not she's alive.

Naruto nodded. I see. And who was this person?

Evil Sealing Method. Jiraiya used a jutsu. It'll seal it up for about a day... At most. Jiraiya then motioned towards the stadium. As for her, I'll tell you later.

It was time for Hinata's match.

Hinata walked down to the arena. The ninja with the mask came down and faced her. Hanabi...

Please... We don't have to do this...

The ninja took off her mask, showing that it was, indeed, Hanabi. Heh. Trying to get away from fighting because you're too scared, eh? No, I don't think so. After I win, I will become the Main House leader.

Hanabi... You're making a wrong choice. Please, listen to me --

I already told you no! You're so cowardly! I refuse to even call you my sister!

Hinata's eyes saddened. Hanabi...

What are you gonna do about it? Go run to your boyfriend?

Hinata closed her eyes, and when she opened them, her byakugan was activated. Sister... I am sorry you feel this way.

BEGIN! Tsunade shouted.

Hanabi activated her byakugan and ran at her opponent. Hinata waited for the opportunity; as soon as her sister came near, Hinata used the body flicker jutsu to come right behind her, and she threw a kunai at her. Hanabi jumped over the kunai towards her sister, but landed right into Hinata's trap. Immediately, five more kunais were thrown at her. She used the Heavenly Spin Technique to block them all; however, while she was spinning, Hinata ran at her, and as soon as Hanabi stopped, Hinata made an attack. However, Hanabi ducked and countered, but Hinata simply made a kick to Hanabi's face. Hanabi dodged and made an attack to her chest, but Hinata used the Heavenly Spin this time and blocked Hanabi. Hanabi landed; she had a wound on her shoulder, but it was nothing serious, and so she didn't worry about it.

Getting up, Hanabi made some hand signs and said, Heavenly Air Style, Summoning no jutsu! she

didn't even use a scroll. Soon after, a katana appeared in her hands. Taking that, she ran at Hinata and made a thrust. Hinata ducked and dodged it, but she was hit back and landed five yards away. *I dodged it though... Is that Kaiten the Heavenly Spirit's Katana? But only the... leader oh no... Father...* Hinata got up quickly enough, only to find Hanabi making one handed signs and waving the katana around. Hurricane Blade! she yelled and, as a last thrust, pointed the katana to Hinata. *Naruto-kun... Thank you...* A huge hurricane raged to Hinata.

Hinata made some hand signs of her own and said, Juggernaut Domination no jutsu! a huge ball of chakra shaped like a lion raged towards Hanabi and *literally* trampled the hurricane and kept going towards Hanabi, but Hanabi simply cut it with her katana. Hanabi ran at her and made a thrust, but Hinata jumped over and threw a kunai at her; Hanabi simply blocked with her blade, but she was not prepared for what was to come next. As Hinata landed, she used the body flicker to come behind Hanabi to make a thrust; unfortunately, Hanabi had seen it in time using her byakungan and dodged, and then countered with the blade. Luckily, Hinata had been able to jump away in time before she was hit by the air blade that came out of the weapon.

Hinata ran at Hanabi as fast as she could. She didn't even know how fast she was going, as wind rushed at her face and made tears come down from her eyes, but she didn't care. She was focused on getting to Hanabi.

Hinata on the offensive? That's rather strange... Kurenei thought.

Hinata and Hanabi exchanged sequences, but Hinata got faster and faster and more powerful with every blow. Soon, Hanabi was just barely able to keep up and she was using all her chakra on her taijutsu, whereas Hinata wasn't using any. Hinata rushed at her sister going incredibly fast; dodging and before the dodge was even complete, counterattacking, and then coming back to a defensive position, only for a second, and then jumping over her sister and countering.

How the hell is this dog even keeping up me? Hanabi thought.

Incredible... She's as fast as Lee when he has only one third of his weights on... Gai thought. Lee wears 600 kg. She's as fast as he is when he's only wearing 200 kg, and what's more is that she's getting even faster... Unbelievable...

I've never seen Hinata like this... This is... amazing... Kurenei thought.

Now, Hinata will finish this... Naruto smiled.

BODY-FLI-CKER! she said as she used it three times consecutively to get Hanabi off track. Then, coming from behind, she made a clean hit to the chest, Gentle First Style, making Hanabi cough out blood. Then, she kicked her.

Hanabi landed ten yards away, face first, into the ground. Then, running to her opponent, Hinata grabbed the katana along the way and stabbed it into the side for a finishing blow.

Hanabi stared at her as she bled heavily. H-How...

She stared at her sister and put the katana down. Because of a dream... Because of a dream of a 4' 3" boy with blond hair who said that he would change the Hyuuga when he became hokage... Because of the compassion and comfort from that same boy... It was *that* boy who one in the *entire* Konoha believed in me, and gave me confidence... When my own family shunned me... When my own family thought I was weak... When my own family hurt me with a wound uncurable by everything but love... And it is *that* man the *one* man who gave me love and compassion to heal my wounds for whom I fight... for whom I dream... for whom I *live*... While my own family disregards me as even being a member... Honor... Duty... and Pride... These words have been recited throughout the history of my clan for ages... To every child, these were the first words. To every priest, this was the blessing... To every member, this was the *thought* that governed their lives... And you lost because you believed in this, Hanabi... I do not blame you, for it is the way you were raised it is the way *every* Hyuuga was raised. And it is *that* way that should be changed, Father. she said and looked at her father straight in the eye without any

hesitation. When you live by this, and *only* this, you forget to live... You become nothing but machines who kill... We don't enjoy life, Father. In fact, we don't even joy the gift of happiness in our lives... It is time for a change, Father... And I have decided to become the heir to the Hyuuga. Neiji has supported me fully in my decision, and from today, we are changing the Hyuuga... From today, we will stop reminiscing in the past, and start *living* in the *present*. Because of a boy's dream... and a boy's love... Hundreds of people's lives will be made better, Father... If you do not see this, then you are as blind as a bat. she said and walked up to the stands as the medics carried her sister. She hadn't killed her, no she could never do that, but Hanabi was in a critical conditions.

As she walked up, Naruto ran to her, picked her up, twirled her around, and gave her a deep, passionate kiss. She felt her lips against his and embraced them further. He placed his hand on the back of her head for support. When they finally let go, they looked each other and then turned to the audience. The audience burst out into thunderous applause as they cheered. In fact, Hiashi had to hide his face, and so he inconspicuously walked out of the stadium.

Naruto could sense that Hinata was dead tired from her match, and so he carried her back. As she rested in his arms, she closed her eyes and snuggled closer to his chest. *Naruto-kun... I hope... I made you proud...*

You *have* made me proud, Hinata. More than anyone else... he said to her ear. He kissed her cheek and let her rest.

WINNER, HYUUGA HINATA! Tsunade shouted. She had a tough time getting the unnecessary message over the booming noise that echoed throughout the stadium.

Naruto carried her up to his seat and let her lay on him. Hugging her tightly, he stroked her hair and she slept. Once in a while, he kissed her forehead, but he mainly let her rest.

The next match was between two unknown ninjas. Surprisingly, the winner of this one, also, had a mask on. Meaning, because Hinata could not fight this round, they had something against Naruto. *But who would have a grudge against me? That too a leaf ninja...* Naruto pondered this as the match ended.

Tsunade now came up to speak again.

Due to the fact that Hyuuga Hinata is resting, the final match will be a regular one on one match. Contestants, would you please step up?

Sakura-chan? Can you heal Hinata a bit and take care of her?

Sure thing, Naruto.

Naruto jumped down to face his opponent, who was already in front of him; however, Naruto could tell something wasn't right. The chakra signature of the person in front of him wasn't normal he couldn't put his finger on it, but he could tell something wasn't right. The chakra seemed to be... almost vile.

Naruto immediately activated his bloodline limit, and his eyes scanned:

Threat Level 19

Jutsus: Flying Thunder God Jutsu; Ryoushagan; Rasengan

Naruto's jaw dropped. He was level 19! That was as strong as Itachi; true, Naruto himself came pretty close after all that training, but level 19! Not only that, but this opponent knew rasengan as well as his bloodline limit the ryoushagan, and as far as he knew, he was the last of his bloodline. Something was wrong here horribly, horribly wrong. He didn't know what the hell this Flying Thunder God thing was, but he could tell it wasn't going to be pretty.

Wait a minute! I'm not... not yet ready. he said suddenly. Going up, he went to Jiraiaya and told him immediately what he felt.

Flying Thuder oh no... Oh God... Jiraya immediately told Tsunade.

I'm evacuating everyone. and she immediately gave a signal to the anbu members who began evacuating everyone.

What? Do you know who it is?

Jiraya seemed extremely solemn look. It's... Yondaime...

My father? My father who died sixteen years ago is down there?

Orochimaru...

Suddenly, Naruto remembered.

Itachi... What have I done for you to... grace me with your presence?

Sasori, Deidara, and Kisame now came behind Itachi.

Ah, my old... friends. Orochimaru was now worried; he secretly prepared a jutsu to escape. Soon, all of his chakra was paralyzed.

Don't bother. Itachi said. Now, we have a proposition.

It was a rather weak and vague memory, as he was dead tired and a bit far away to hear it all properly; nevertheless, he remembered it. *Orochimaru can summon the dead with his forbidden jutsus... Is that why Itachi wanted the proposition... A team? But then why the hell did he train me? He said he needed to... in a matter of months' time... Was he... somehow... expecting this? But if he was, why would he want Orochimaru? He himself said he disliked to train me... It all seems a big waste of effort to train me just to test my strength, as he could have done it himself... Damn it! It's all so damn confusing... Mom...*

Don't send them away. Then they'll get suspicious, and, if that happens, they'll start panicking if they realize their dead hokage is here... I suggest you ready the anbu members. I'll fight him... If I can defeat him, then it'll be over... If I can't, when I give you the signal, signal the anbu members to take him down... Arrest him... Or some random other excuse..

Naruto, your plan is great and all, but you're forgetting this is *Yondaime* we're talking about. He singlehandedly took out fifty people in a battle once! Konoha Yellow Flash! You'll be killed in less than an instant!

Hey, calm down, okay. I learned from the best. Besides, that's what you should have your anbu members ready for. Jiraya-sensei will know what to do.

Jiraya nodded. *We'll have to intervene, but there's no other choice. Arashi... Please go easy on your son...*

Naruto took off his 300 kg of weights and jumped down.

Let's go.

The figure was waiting patiently for the fight to begin.

be... BEGIN!

Naruto activated his bloodline limit. His saw a mirror: Ryoushagan bloodline limit of the Uzumakis...

That was all Naruto needed to know they had the Ryoushagan; he didn't need to know its stats. Naruto made shadow clones at instant speed and they immediately jumped at Yondaime from behind. But Naruto saw his movements they were as fast as he was, if not a little bit faster. Shadow Clone Jutsu.

So, he decided to use a shadow clone... The shadow clones destroyed Yondaime's shadow clones.

Suddenly, Arashi came from behind with a rasengan, but Naruto, too, had used shadow clones previously. The shadow clones were destroyed, and, right after, Naruto came from behind using the shadow teleportation jutsu, but his father saw it, jumped away, and threw a kunai at him. Naruto dodged the kunai and kept going after his father, but his father used a Katon fire jutsu to get Naruto off guard.

Naruto blocked with his absolute defense while his shadow clones went after his father. He felt so free without his weights, and he was literally soaring in the air. One clone missed the kick due to a duck, but, immediately following, another rammed a rasengan into Yondaime's stomach, but it turned out to be just a shadow clone.

Yondaime came using the body flicker jutsu and used a lightning prism star jutsu which would have been a fatal attack, but Naruto had been using genjutsu; the attack went on, destroyed all five of Naruto's shadow clones, and made a huge dent in the wall. Yondaime was as fast as he was in mostly everything, only, Yondaime didn't hold back *anything*. Of course, Naruto wasn't holding back now, either,

but Yondaime didn't hold back from the beginning. Suddenly, he threw five more kunais at Naruto. *Those kunais aren't normal... They have writing on them... Like... SEAL! shoot!*

The audience saw a flash of light which went around the stadium pummeled Naruto, but 'Naruto' was just a shadow clone. *So... Looks like I was right... That's how he does his famous Yellow Flash Technique. Flying Thunder God no jutsu* extremely fast jutsu, unable to be seen properly by even the sharingan eye; activated by a seal; takes decent amount of chakra. Now, Naruto had seen it, too... And now, a new Yellow Flash would be born.

Naruto came out of the ground after using Ragnarok, learned from Horace, and caused Yondaime to be swallowed into the ground. But it was only a shadow clone. Yondaime came from behind and used a Ice Breaker jutsu to freeze everything in a hundred yard radius of him and then crack it, but Naruto was in the sky; he had jumped up using his chakra, and came charging down at Yondaime as he fell. However, about three yards before reaching Yondaime, Naruto disappeared. A Yellow Flash was all around the stadium, and then, appearing behind him, Naruto landed a rasengan... but, in front of him, a shadow clone appeared. *shoot! He uses the replacement jutsu to replace himself with the shadow clone... Not a bad idea... Dad, it's time we do some father and son bonding...*

Naruto now made some shadow clones himself and now used the kunais previously set to his advantage. Suddenly, a whole ton of Yellow Flashes appeared throughout the stadium, when, suddenly, everything stopped. Yondaime appeared holding a body of Naruto with a shuriken stuck in him... Naruto, was dead or so they thought!

Naruto came out from behind and rammed his father with a rasengan. Naruto had used a replacement jutsu *during* the Flying Thunder God jutsu. Because he was going so fast, all his opponent saw was a flash, and during that flash, he substituted himself with a clone. Had the Yondaime been facing the right way, his eyes would have read Replacement Jutsu, but even then, it would have been impossible to react at that speed. However, it wasn't over not even close. Yondaime, too, had received the same training as Naruto had... And Yondaime used the exact same absolute defense to deflect the rasengan. *shoot! After all those moves, all that chakra usage, none of us have even made one blow?*

Incredible... The speed is too great for even my sharingan... Kakashi said. I can just barely see their movements...

We can't even see their movements... Kurenei said in awe.

So this is hokage level fighting... Unbelievable... some chuunins said in awe.

Jiraya! What's happening?

... Not... Not one blow... He's... He's actually holding his own! Jiraiya said with a smile. Maybe... Just may be... We might not need the anbu...

Tsunade sighed of relief of course, the battle had yet a *long* way to go, but it was good that he could hold his own. Then, if needed, he could run away. At least then, worst case, Naruto would lose... But he wouldn't die, now that he could hold his own. *He'll live...*

Yondaime didn't remain motionless for a second; he immediately got into action again and began executing sequences motion after motions. Naruto, too, was *completely* absorbed in the fight. Naruto didn't stop to think, brag, or even *breathe*. He was now fighting completely on instinct alone the passion in his heart that drove him, the passion in his heart which told what to do, the passion in his heart that forced him to fight. Naruto used jutsu after jutsu that he learned from the monks, and even began using some jutsus he made up; nevertheless, he couldn't make a single blow neither could Yondaime, however.

They were both tiring, but Naruto had the upper hand, as he had the kyuubi's chakra to add on to it. Naruto suddenly used the FTG author's note: FTGFlying Thunder God Jutsu and appeared right in front of Yondaime and immediately activated the Mengekyuou. As he was paralyzed for a second only a second, and that was more than enough for what Naruto needed for a jutsu Naruto got his chance.

RAIKIRI! and Naruto ended it with a final blow to the heart, and it was over.
Dad... Naruto caught his father's body as it fell.
Dad?... Naruto? My... You've grown... Good enough to beat your old dad, eh?
Kakashi now came. Sensei... Your son has your magnificence.
Yondaime smiled. I trust you've taken good care of him, Kakashi...
Hinata now came. Naruto-kun?
He kissed Hinata. Dad, this is Hyuuga Hinata... Hinata, this is... my father...
Naruto... I trust you'll take you'll live a good life with her? And accomplish your dreams? Yondaime asked tiredly.
Naruto nodded.
Hinata, was it? Hinata nodded.
Hinata... Take this blessing from an old man... And live a happy life with my brat... Okay?
She nodded with tears in her eyes.
Oh, and Hinata? Make sure he doesn't do anything stupid, okay? he said in smiling.
Sensei... Even in death you joke... Kakashi said smiling, yet he had tears in her eyes.
Yondaime tried to chuckle, but blood came out of his mouth. Then, every thing's settled... And I can leave this world in peace. and he closed his eyes as Orochimaru's jutsu disappeared.
Soon, the jounin sensei, Jiraya, Naruto's friends, and Tsunade all stood around the body in shock. You bear a great resemblance to your father... Jokes, pranks... Happiness... Unbelievable determination... Looks... and the same wisdom... Kakashi said finally breaking the deathly silence.
Naruto nodded. I only hope I've made him proud. he said smiling. I probably even beat his ramen-eating record! he said placing a hand behind his head.
That eased everyone's tension and they all smiled as the hokage took the stage.
Naruto-kun... You hide your pain for the sake of everyone else's happiness... Because of that comment, you allowed things to progress... Hinata looked at him with pity, took him in her arms, and gave him a great kiss. I'm sorry...
It's all right... he said quietly so only she could hear.
ALL RIGHT! LOOKS LIKE WE ONLY HAVE TWO WINNERS, AS THE SECOND PLACE WINNER... COMMITTED SUICIDE. THUS, THE WINNERS WILL BE HYUUGA HINATA AND UZUMAKI NARUTO! THESE TWO WILL TAKE ON NEW TEAMS AS WELL!
The audience burst out into applause as the exams were finally concluded.
Later that night, everyone was gathered at Naruto's house to congratulate him. After all his friends left, only he, Kakashi, and Hinata were left.
Why do you think Orochimaru re-joined Akatsuki? Naruto suddenly asked.
He probably didn't have a choice. Itachi, Sasori, Deidara, *and* Kisame against him? He didn't stand a chance. Kakashi said.
Yes, but why would Akatsuki let him in?
Probably for his jutsu which raised the dead... Hinata suggested.
Yes, but wouldn't they just raid Konoha and steal the scroll?
... Perhaps they wanted it as a secret... If they raided Konoha, then all the other countries would be prepared... And that wouldn't be good for them. After all, they're only human they, too, have a chakra limit... They, too, are mortal. They couldn't stand a chance against three countries. So, they use Orochimaru.
Yes, but... What happened to Grass and Mist? Hinata suddenly pointed out.
Kakashi shook his head. They have denied the alliance... I suppose they think think this upcoming war is a fake... Or they have their own methods of defending themselves... Or they are the enemies...
... Then, who are the enemies? We don't know for sure at all... All that's simply happened somebody in

Akatsuki came, allowed themselves to be arrested, gave a warning, broke out, and disappeared. What's more is that the allied countries have also been warned... Naruto wondered.

I, too, am curious. Why would Akatsuki be inconspicuous and all secret, if they openly come and warn the countries? Kakashi said. You... You don't think that there's internal conflict within Akatsuki, do you? Hinata nodded. It would make sense. After all, they're all after the jinchuuriki... To cooperate, the leader would have to be the strongest. And even then, the alliance is very weak. All it would take to break out in internal conflict would be the theft of one jinchuuriki... Then, they would start stealing over and over...

Yes, but then... Who are the teams? Kakashi asked.

It seems to be... Itachi seems to be leading the four Kisame, Sasori, Deidara, and himself... They all listen to him. Naruto pointed out. The other two nodded at this. But what really seems to confuse me, is that... Itachi seems to go against himself all the time. First he rescues us... Then he befriends Orochimaru, our enemy... Then, he trains me, telling me I only have a matter of months to get stronger... And finally, he sends Yondaime over here to kill me... It all doesn't make sense...

... All those orders would have been the leaders wouldn't they? Hinata suddenly said.

Naruto and Kakashi nodded, slowly understanding where this was going.

And... And there's a conflict inside Akatsuki... You don't think... You don't that Itachi and co. would be... would be afraid of the leader... do you?

Kakashi nodded. It would make sense. He has to follow the leaders orders, and so he does that... But, in secret, he carries out his own to prevent the leader...

That's why he trained me... To protect me... I guess... We may share a commone enemy, but he's not our ally.

They nodded.

Then why would he train me? Why would I be so important? I'm just another leaf ninja...

He's the one who told you about your bloodline limit, your family, trained you on your weaknesses... It seems to me he knows more than he's willing to tell...

Yes, your bloodline limit *is* of great value... Kakashi said.

So we know one thing for sure: Itachi and co. are against the leader, and so they go against them in every way...

They all nodded.

Soon after, they called over Tsunade and Jiraiya and dicussed what they found.

But think about it they didn't warn grass and mist... Do you think that they've joined up with Akatsuki?

It's quite possible. Tsunade said.

They all nodded.

After that, Naruto and Hinata decided to retire. Meanwhile, Tsunade sent a hawk over to sand and lightning to warn them.

Naruto and Hinata stood outsider her house. Naruto stroked her hair and kissed her head while she purred quietly.

Be careful on your missions. she said kissing his cheek.

Will you give me a kiss when I get back? he said nuzzling her neck.

She grabbed him and gave him a great kiss, massaging his back. Of course.

Naruto smiled and grabbed her closer to him. Then I will.

Saying good bye, they parted ways and Naruto went home.

Hinata met Neiji and they walked proudly into the Hyuuga hall. Hinata took over her father's room as she claimed her title as leader of the Main House.

Hinata-sama, congratulations.

Hinata smiled. Thank you, Neiji-niisan.

On the way back, Naruto met Hiashi. Good Evening, Hiashi-sama.

H-Hiashi-sama?

Yes, that is your name, is it not?

Y-Yes, of course. Uzumaki Naruto... Could I have a word with you?

You already have, but, nevertheless, you may have another. Naruto said smiling.

I huh oh, yes, thank you. Do you think I have failed as a father?

What? No. Hinata's the nicest person I know full of morals, healthy, nice... She's fine. You haven't failed.

Yes, but, as she said, it was you who helped her to become who she is.

If you believe you have failed Hiashi-sama, I suggest that you go, apologize to your daughter, and ask for her forgiveness. If you do, I'm sure she will forgive you. As you said, she is kind. And, at the stadium, she was angry. Imagine, all her life's pain, frustration, anger, sorrow, and feelings came out in one fight...

Do you think she could forgive or even think logically in that situation? Emotion was overwhelming in her. Now, that she is calmed down, I am sure she will. It isn't over, Hiashi-sama. The only way it will be is if you end your life, and only cowards do that. I suggest you go, apologize to Hinata, to your clan, and to Neiji. If you do this, then I will become your first friend, and support you completely.

Hiashi looked at him for a moment and then nodded. Thank you, Naruto-san.

Naruto nodded and walked off.

NARUTO!

Naruto turned around to see Tsunade running towards him. Yeah Mom?

Did you just talk to Hiashi?

Yeah, I told him to go and say sorry to Hinata and everyone else, and if he did, I would be his first friend.

Tsunade stared at him. You what?

Naruto shrugged. Everyone deserves a second chance. he said.

To be able to forgive such a person... My God. Well, anyways, you have a mission your team alone.

So, I suggest you pack up and get some rest. Oh, and, Naruto?

Yeah?

Good job. You'll get your new team after this mission.

Thanks. he said smiling.

Naruto nodded and went to bed, feeling strangely alone without Hinata.

18 - The Power Within Naruto

Chapter 18: The Power Within Naruto

Naruto woke up at four o' clock, packed his things, and decided to visit Hinata since he was bored. Coming to the Hyuuga mansion, he was met by a guard who stared at him.

Hi, can I see Hinata?

That's *Hyuuga Hinata-sama*, Leader of The Main House. he said strictly.

Jeez man! Sorry. May I see Her Highness?

The guard grunted and led Naruto to Hinata.

Good morning, Hyuuga Hinata-sama, Leader of the Main House of the honorable Hyuuga Clan. Naruto said in very sarcastic respect.

Naruto!

Naruto laughed and kissed her on the cheek.

Hinata-sama! You know this this --

Yes, I do. I told you already you can call me Hinata.

Y-Yes, Hinata-sama. Of course. and the guard walked out.

So, how is the new leader of the clan doing?

She put her arms around him and said, I'm doing fine. And so is the clan. But how are you doing?

He kissed her. I'm missing you, but other than that, I'm all right.

She hugged him. We're not going to be able to see each other much, now that I'm the head... I'm going to be needed for discussions and such...

Naruto nodded. Let's see, if takes about two minutes for one good kiss, and I can see you for half an hour a day, that'll be 15 kisses a day! Awesome!

She slapped him lightly and smiled.

Naruto then turned to more serious matters. Did your father talk to you?

Hinata nodded. Naruto-kun I... I forgave him... she said it as if it was a sin.

Naruto nodded. I knew you would. he said smiling a deed which earned him a kiss on the cheek.

Also, I'm going on a mission. It's to the sand, and it has to do with Akatsuki.

Hinata seemed very solemn. Am I going?

No, Hyuuga Hinata-sama, Leader of the Main House of the honorable Hyuuga Clan cannot go. he said jokingly. The title was all too ridiculous, and he couldn't even come close to picturing Hinata demanding that name; obviously, it was the elders who wanted it.

She slapped him lightly again. I can defend myself just fine, you know... I could whup your butt.

Naruto nuzzled her on the neck. I know, and that's why you can't go. First, you would get them with your looks; then, you would beat 'em up... It'd be all too heartbreaking for Akatsuki when they realize you're already taken... Poor guys, we want to spare them of the pain. he said and he kissed her.

She smiled at this. Naruto-kun, please, be careful. she said.

Hey, ignoring the incidents when I wasn't careful, when have I not been careful?

N-Never...? But that's --

Exactly! So calm down! he kissed her on the cheek and he was gone.

Hinata smiled.

Miki, you're staying in there! a man roared so loudly the child burst out into uncontrollable tears.

She's only a --

Natasha! I know what I'm doing, and it's for her own good!

At this, the lady put her head down and continued doing her chores.

In the background, a girl's sobbing could be heard.

SHUT UP, STUPID GIRL! I'M TRYING TO WATCH TV! YOU HAVE YOUR PUNISHMENT! At this, the girl's crying increased even more. The man rushed into her room, opened the door harshly, and slapped the girl. Throwing a teddy bear at her, he yelled, HERE'S YOUR STUPID DOLL! Slamming the door, he fumed out.

Now, the girl's sobbing had decreased due to, not happiness, but pure and utter sadness. Her erratic breathing was interrupted by sobs as she buried her head in her teddy bear to hide her tears as she clung to it for dear life.

Please, she's only a --

YOU WANT YOUR BABY? FINE, YOU CAN HAVE IT! he grabbed the girl and threw her to her mother and pushed them both outside the house. COME BACK IN WHEN YOU'VE SORTED THINGS OUT! Naruto now went to the southern side of Konoha to go to Sakura's house. On the way, he heard a girl crying. The voice seemed rather familiar. Running to the source, he found a small girl and a woman next to her.

Miki-chan! Why are you crying? he ran to the girl and picked her up.

N-Naru-kun?

By the way she was breathing, Naruto could tell Miki had been crying for hours may be even *days*. Naruto gave her a kiss on the cheek and spoke to her softly, giving her consolation. Come on, now, it'll be okay. I'm here now, so cheer up. Slowly, it seemed to be working. Once she was calmed down, Naruto took out some medicinal herbs from his pack and healed her. She had bruises all over her body, especially on her head. There, the deepest bruise appeared. From what he could tell, the bruise occurred rather recently, and it appeared from a slap. Then, using some jutsus, he healed her further. Finally, she was all right. Still carrying her, he moved to her mother.

Are you all right?

The woman had an extremely sad look in her eyes, but she slowly nodded.

Okay then. Come with me.

She had a fearful, distrusting look in her eyes. She opened her mouth, but Naruto cut her off.

It's okay. You don't have to tell me anything about what happened unless you want to. But I *do* insist that you come to my place. It's a townhouse, but it's a three bedroom two bath, so it'll be spacious. Miki's already been there.

But how?

Didn't Miki's father tell you? I found Miki previously out in the streets crying because some boys took her toy. Then, I got it back for her and took her to my place. She stayed there for a bit while I looked for you or your husband. I finally found her father, and I, gave her back. he said smiling.

The woman slowly nodded. A-All right, we'll --

Go where? a gruff voice suddenly asked. You! the man said facing Naruto. I thought I told you to stay away from my daughter!

I'm sorry, sir, but Miki-chan was crying, and so I just wanted to help her.

Well you shouldn't have! She had her punishment for a reason.

Naruto suddenly seemed grave. Sir, did you give her those bruises? Damn right I did! Stupid God forsaken --

Naruto suddenly appeared right in front of him and punched him as hard as he could; the man went flying. Naruto walked up to him. HOW DARE YOU? SHE IS YOUR *THREE YEAR-OLD* DAUGHTER, AND YOU BEEAT HER LIKE THAT? HOW CAN YOU EVEN CALL YOURSELF HER FATHER? I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU! Naruto rammed him with a rasengan right at his stomach; the man was bleeding tremendously. Naruto was about to hit him again when he felt someone grabbing his feet.

Miki's mother was sobbing at his feet. Please, please don't kill him! Please!

Naruto picked up the now barely conscious man up by the shirt collar. You're damn lucky your wife doesn't want me to kill you, you know that? And with that, Naruto threw the man away.

Come on, let's go to my house. You and Miki-chan can rest there for a while.

The woman barely nodded seeing the anger of Naruto, and didn't want to upset him further. As they walked, Naruto carrying Miki, and the woman closely following, Naruto spoke.

I'm... Tell your husband, I'm sorry I acted like that and lost my temper... I just... I can't imagine what kind of monster would do that to such a nice girl like Miki-chan. he gave a kiss on the cheek and tickled her as she giggled.

He would... will be... a truly good, caring father... The woman thought.

Well, here we are! Naruto said, opening the door to his house. Entering, Miki jumped out of his arms, ran to the couch, and began jumping on it. That's her favorite spot, he explained. Well, Miki? What do you want?

I want ramen! she shouted joyfully.

He ran to her, threw her up, and caught her. Are you trying to steal all my ramen? he asked tickling her. She laughed sweetly, and shouted, YEAH! Well, all right... Naruto said pretending to be sad. Noticing his 'sadness,' Miki kissed him on the cheek. All right! What flavor do you want?

As the two talked and excitedly ran around the house, the mother sat in one corner, noticing all the differences and kindness this home had to offer. How free Miki was, how much happiness she got here, and how this *truly* was, her home. Suddenly, she noticed someone shouting for her.

Ma'am! Ma'am!

Coming back to reality, she said, Y-Yes?

Would you like anything? Food? Water? A bed to sleep in?

She shook her head immediately.

Sure? Miki-chan's having something. Wanna try?

Slowly, she nodded, getting accustomed to this newfound freedom and enjoyment. As she ate, she talked with Naruto. Miki really seems to be happy here.

Naruto smiled. Yeah, we get along great!

I was thinking... Naruto-san, would you be all right with adopting Miki? She... Her home... doesn't suit her. And, you're so kind to her, and... '

Ma'am, I would love to, but I am a ninja, and, this wouldn't be so bad if I wasn't always out on a mission. A father must spend time with his child, and, I don't think it would be best for Miki if I was never around.

But she can't go --

She *won't* go back, believe me. I would never want that... But, I have a better idea. Would you mind if she stayed in a clan temporarily? I'm leaving on a mission today, and, once I come back, I'd be happy to take her in, but, right now, she could stay with the Hyuugas. That way, she'd be able to play with other kids, have parental care, and in a comfortable place all the time. But, she doesn't know anyone there.

Oh, believe me, she does. The leader of the clan lived with me during the time Miki-chan came over. She and Miki-chan get along quite well.

She?

Naruto nodded and smiled. Hyuuga Hinata.

HINATA-CHAN! Miki screamed with delight.

Yeah! Would you like to live with her while I'm gone?

Miki made a pouting face. You're going to go, Naru-kun?

Damn she's smart... Naruto noticed how she could ignore all the sugar-coated words and see the real meaning underneath. He picked her up and kissed her. Only for a while. Besides, you can stay with Hinata-chan while I'm gone, right.

She still seemed sad.

Tell you what, as a reminder, while I'm gone, will you keep this safe for me? he said taking off his forehead protector. She made a pouting face. Oh, you know, not just *anyone* can hold my forehead protector. Only, a special person whom I really love can. he said and nuzzled her on the neck.

She smiled and jumped up. I will, I will!

You promise to keep it safe for me and give it back when I return?

She nodded vigorously.

All right then, Miki-chan! To Hinata-chan's house! he said and gave her a piggy-back ride.

While walking, Naruto noted how odd it felt without his forehead protector, but it was worth it for Miki. As soon as they entered, Miki screamed, HINATA-CHAN! she ran to Hinata, and Hinata picked her up. Hinata kissed her on the cheek as she listened to the situation, and said, Of course I'll take care of her. As Naruto alone left, Hinata said, Better be careful, Naruto-kun. When you come back, Miki-chan's gonna be stronger than you.

At this, Naruto *had* to grab Hinata and kiss her. With you teaching her, I don't doubt it. he said and walked off towards Sakura's house. *My, that was quite a detour.* He thought as he finally arrived there. It was now six in the morning.

Hello, Mrs. Haruno?

Naruto! My, you're up early ah, that's right, you have that mission. I'll send Sakura down immediately. she said and called, SAKURA!

Sakura's father now came down in his night robe, having messy hair, lids underneath his eyes, and walking like he had just come back from the dead. My, God, woman. How loud do you have to be. Mrs. Haruno kissed her husband on the cheek, which immediately cheered him up. Naruto smiled realizing how similar they were to he and Hinata, only more mature and comfortable. *Probably because they're husband and wife...* Naruto thought.

Hey Naruto. Sakura said finally appearing.

Sakura-chan! Hi.

Shall we get going?

Sure. Naruo nodded.

Sakura took Naruto's hand and proudly walked out the door with her pack.

You know, Sakura's gone... We have the whole day to ourselves. So, what do you want to do? Mrs. Haruno said seductively as she twirled her index finger on her husband's chest.

Her husband picked her up and carried her in a deep embrace as they walked to the bed...

Kakashi-sensei! You're early! For once... Sakura muttered.

At this they all started laughing. They worked perfectly as a team, despite their attitudes. Kakashi the lazy one who was always late; Naruto the loud-mouthed friendly one; Sakura the kind, sensible one with a *huge* temper. And yet, when the time came, they were a perfectly coordinated, and at social events they were everything *but* coordinated arguing, laughing, and through it all, having a good time, be it missions or social events.

All right team, let's go to Tsunade-sama's office.

Why? Don't you have the specifics already with you? Sakura asked.

Well, yeah, but we can't leave without my Icha Icha Paradise book, now can we?

You can't... Naruto said.

Of course not! What would I do without back up copy number 3? That's my favorite copy!

IT'S A FRIGGIN' COPY! Sakura and Naruto screamed in unison.

Yes, but that one has Jiraya-sama' autograph on it.

You see him everyday!

Kakashi shrugged.

Naruto, Jiraya said gravely. About the jutsu... Her name is Phaidra. author's note: I take no credit for this name; yes, I know, I have issues making up names... She's in the sand village... or, was...

Naruto's eyes widened. She's dead?

Jiraiya shook his head. No, she was attacked by 'some snake person'...

Orochimaru... he breathed softly.

Jiraya nodded. So, she's moved to a hidden ninja village. And, rumor has it that, this was the origin of the Uzumaki clan.

So some of my ancestors or someone may be alive? Again, Jiraiya shook her head. They're all dead; the village was long destroyed, at least, that's what I've heard. The thing is, it's impossible to get in unless you're an heir of that village.

So how did she get in?

Jiraiya had a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. I'll leave that as a surprise for you. But the thing is, only you can get in.

But if no one could get in, then how did they die? Unless betrayal or -- or murder... Sounds like Itachi, doesn't it?

Naruto nodded. He didn't like this one bit.

The thing is, it's on the way to the sand, or, at least, it's supposed to be. And only you can get in; of course, you're gonna let in Kakashi and Sakura, and that's why you're needed. But this lady may heal you.

Naruto raised an eyebrow. *May?*

Jiraiya sighed. Why did you think she went to a mysterious, nearly-impossible to get into village? She doesn't like healing or sharing her forbidden arts. Partly why after Orochimaru tried to kill her she left. She's the only hope... I know she's alive because I've met her before... long ago... But that's not the point. She's your only *chance* of hope, got it?

Naruto nodded. One question. If Orochimaru was hunting her, that means he would know about my activated curse seal... Why wouldn't he just activate it and torcher me?

Firstly, it could be because Akatsuki's forcing him to, and not because he wants to. Secondly, he might just want to get rid of your chances of escaping from the jutsu and not actually know that it's activated for you.

Naruto thought about and nodded. but where do I look for this thing?

When you see a rock the shape of a rasengan, you'll know this all what rumors say. I don't know how to get in though.

Naruto nodded. That was reasonable enough. All right. Thanks, Sensei.

Jiraiya nodded. Good luck.

Right then, let's go. We need to go to the sand. something the Kazekage needs us for. Anyways, the sooner we get started, the sooner we reach. So, let's go.

Naruto and Sakura walked together talking, conspiring as to what could possibly be under that stupid mask as Kakashi walked ahead reading his infamous book.

So, Tobi and Zetsu are dead... I wonder who... a dark voice said.

Indeed... It had to be someone relatively strong to get inside... another said.

A third person remained quiet. I sense... betrayal... a third voice said in a deadly quiet.

Looks like the Oro's gone after Phaidra. Shall we kill him off? He's nothing but trouble as well. I mean the Naruto kid could have died... It would have ruined everything... Kisame said.

Yes, and now that he knows the curse seal is activated, he would take advantage of that... It would be wise to finish him. Sasori stated.

Itachi shook his head. If he kills Orochimaru, not only will he be able to get some few last minute jutsu, he will be get stronger... Also, we can't let the leader know that we're betraying. Plus, I want Naruto to kill

him...

Yeah but he already knows of our betrayal from their corpses. I would say kill him off, yeah! Deidara put in.

But Itachi remained steadfast. If Orochimaru was dead, then what would be Naruto's reason for going after Phaidra?

But why does he have to go after Phaidra? Kisame questioned.

I have my reasons... She may not be willing to tell him the whole truth, but then again, I didn't... But she will let him see the books, and that's all I need.

Does he know something we don't? Deidara asked Kisame and Sasori.

Sure seems like it. Kisame said.

Sasori merely grunted.

Soon, they reached the half-way point between Konoha and Suna. Naruto explained the situation about what Jiraiya had said and the three began looking for such a rock. Naruto activated his bloodline limit just in case anything should happen.

After looking for *hours*, Kakashi and Sakura returned to camp. Suddenly, Naruto came rushing after them. Guys! I found it! Follow me!

It had actually only happened because Naruto slipped and fell into a hole. Unfortunately, there was a chakra draining seal in the area where he had fallen. Thus, he had to walk through the cave-ish arena to get out. Coming out, he had found the rock only after activating his bloodline limit.

They repeated the process and coming to it, Naruto activated his Ryoukagan again, and Naruto pointed to a large boulder, There. There was no response. What? Can't you see it?

They both shook their heads.

Right there!

Again, nothing. Now, Kakashi took revealed his sharingan and examined the rock. It seems there are thin chakra lines in the formation of a rasengan embedded on this rock... Somehow, Sakura and I can't see it. It's obviously because of your bloodline limit. This goes far beyond any of its powers...

Naruto formed a rasengan and rammed it into the rock so that the lines matched the curves on the rock. Suddenly, Naruto felt he was being sucked into a blackness. *This must be how to get in! shoot!*

Hurriedly, he grabbed Kakashi and Sakura, and the three vanished.

Reappearing, they saw they were in a very sunny town which was in perfect condition. There was a blue sky with some clouds. The buildings were all one story and there was grass on the sides of the streets, and a large fountain in the middle of the area they were in. The air was surprisingly cool and refreshing. All the houses were perfectly clean and organized. *Where the hell is so they are dead... But then why is this place in perfect condition?*

Sakura and Kakashi were nowhere close to him.

As he walked around the area, he found it *very* greatly to his liking; in fact, it seemed more and more perfect as he stayed there longer. There were birds chirping, fish singing, trees thriving all in perfect order, but no one there. As he walked to what seemed the center of this 'city', he saw a great statue, and as he looked at it more closely, images flashed in mind... the very same images that the kyuubi flashed in him mind, only now, a thousand times more clearly. It was the very same woman...

It was a girl... A beautiful girl with caressing lavender eyes surrounded by a creamy whiteness. Her skin was soft; Naruto didn't touch it, but he somehow knew it was. She had long, flowing hair which fell on his bare shoulders. It was tender and silky. He felt her flawless skin with love. She had lovely pointed ears which he nibbled gently. Suddenly, he realized it was not he who was doing all of this, but it was something inside him... something that used to be inside him the kyuubi. A small, human version of the kyuubi now came next to the hologramic image of the girl and kissed her. The kyuubi looked very much like Naruto, only had purely red hair and red and black eyes. He smiled at the two as the image faded

away. Suddenly, he remembered what the kyuubi said. **And one more thing; there was one more person in the entire history who took a seventh course and he had an advanced bloodline limit... He works in that organization, Akatsuki... He will kill you... Be careful, baka. I've grown quite fond of your idiocy... Make sure you don't die... He killed...** He smiled remembering his friendliest conversation with that de no, that friend of his. As soon as he remembered, anger gripped him. *One other person... Itachi... Then why the hell did you train me?*

He slowly walked up to the statue and touched it. Standing there, he looked at 'her' eyes. He sent me her... to tell you... he's left... I'm sorry...

Suddenly, a kunai flew at him. Naruto dodged it with difficulty, but managed to do it. He looked at his opponent, and his jaw dropped. It was none other than that very person in that statue. However, she didn't stop at him. She threw three shuriken at him before making a yellow flash and coming right behind him. However, cutting through him, she found it was a shadow clone. Naruto activated his bloodline limit.

Threat Level 14

Jutsus: Rasengan; Flying Thunder God Jutsu; Ryoukagan

*You've **got** to be kidding me...* Naruto thought. Please, I don't want to fight.

Sorry pal! and she used the same jutsu again but Naruto was three times faster than her at using jutsu; he was already behind her and placed a kunai at her neck.

Please, I don't.

Yeah right! and she used a rasengan at him, but he used FTG to appear right behind her.

Wh-Who are you? she said still tense.

Naruto sighed. Finally... he muttered. My name is Uzumaki Naruto, and I come from the Village Hidden in the Leaves. he said louder so that she could hear.

Her kunai dropped. U-Uzumaki... that clan...

To think the kyuubi had such bad taste to pick her... Naruto muttered.

What did you say about Kitsune?

Nothing, nothing... Jeez... he said the last part quietly.

How dare you insult him? Who are you to --

I was his container... Naruto quietly said.

H-His what?

His container... I was the jinchuuriki...

Was? So who's the container now?

Naruto shook his head. He doesn't have a container anymore.

So he's free? Kitsune's free?

Naruto shook his head again. He wanted me to find you... and tell you...

Why- Why couldn't he have done it himself? her panicking was slowly increasing.

He's... gone... Before he went, he told me to find you... to find you and to tell you, that he loved... that he loves you...

He... He's dead... He... He's dead? she instantly fell to the ground, sobbing.

Naruto sat there and comforted her while she cried.

He and I... We loved each other for four thousand years... We decided trying out being human for a while... We had planned it all out, when... when we came, we each made our own bodies and came... I went first... I decided to be born in this city... He, however, wanted to be born with the Uzumakis... As we grew up, we learned the human ways... Only, if we didn't acquire a moonstone by the age of thirteen, we would remain human forever... In the entire world, there was only one moonstone we knew of... And he wanted it for me... He went to Konoha, to... to bargain... And, they kicked him out... He returned a second time in his true form... But...

But he was sealed... in me... Naruto said quietly.

She nodded through her tears. I prayed... hoped... wished he would get out before I died... Then, at least then... We could enjoy our final moments... together...

Is that why you ran from Orochimaru? To come here?... Because... You thought he may have been waiting here for you?

She nodded. Only now, I'm human permanently... With a few demon marks...

Naruto smiled sadly. Fate... can be cruel...

She sobbed more at this. Finally getting up, she snapped her fingers to reveal a tied up Kakashi and Sakura.

Naruto untied them and found they were unconscious. So... What is this place?

It seems Naruto has found his way to her.

Itachi nodded. Good... Now, Orochimaru can no longer have a hold over him... He will be free during the fight then.

Yes, but... The time draws near... Do you think he can? Sasori asked.

If not he, then who can? Itachi stated calmly.

The leader is already on the move, yeah! He's gone off to grass and mist... Yeah, it seems our dear little Naruto will have to have his last moments of training... The war begins in two months, yeah!

Dear little Naruto is stronger than most of Akatsuki, Deidara! Kisame growled.

Let's hope he's stronger than *all* of Akatsuki... or our plans are ruined. Sasori said in a deep voice.

Indeed. Itachi said.

19 - Mysteries Revealed

Chapter 19: Mysteries Revealed

Ugh... What happened? Kakashi said feeling dazed.

Hey, Kakashi-sensei! Welcome back.

Soon after, Sakura woke up.

While Kakashi and Sakura the woman had given Naruto a crash course on the history of her and the kyuubi. Once they woke up, she gave all of them a meal, none other than, to Naruto's delight ramen!

So... What's up with... you and... Orochimaru? Naruto said between gulps.

I don't know. He simply said he had to kill me because he couldn't afford to have someone healed.

Wait a minute... *You're* -- Sakura said in shock

Phaidra. she nodded smiling.

Looking at Naruto, Sakura saw he, too, nod. *O... My God...*

It had been quite a shock for Naruto as well, more so, in fact, as he knew the relationships between her and the kyuubi. It had shocked him that a demon had taken up healing arts; then again, he himself was a jinchuuriki, and it surprised many that he wasn't demonic.

After the meal, Phaidra took them all for a tour around the village and explained the history. This village is set up much like your village, Konoha, as Konoha was partly modeled after this village. The original Uzumaki clan was in fact originated here. From here, about two or three hundred years ago, about one-third of the clan left. There was a split in the clan, and those people were forced to leave. Well, they soon went to Konoha.

But, where is everyone? Sakura asked.

They're probably all dead... Just like Jiraiya-sama said... Kakashi said quietly.

She nodded solemnly. About fifty years ago, one person rose in the clan... He soon became very powerful, and he was very skilled. Soon, he got followers... Then, one day, it happened... I'll never forget. Our village was built to be the *ultimate* paradise... It's always sunny... We always have enough water... It's always the perfect temperature... When ninjas were first born in the world, the jutsus they used were actually to help in day to day life... To make the sun come out... things like that. Well, they used similar forgotten jutsus to make this place... But that day... It rained... It was stormy, and thunder and lightning made their marks... caused fires everywhere... Not many people had been outside the village, and those who were, knew it was a storm... They immediately told everyone to clam down... That it was only a temporary backfire in the jutsu... and that it would soon wear off. But it didn't... Then, one gigantic, shocking bolt came towards the city. Everyone ran away as it approached, but one cloaked figure alone stood there. As it came down, an arm raised, and the figure *caught* the lightning bolt, just like that... He grabbed it with his hand and the bolt simply subsided in his arm... Everyone stared in awe. The cloak fell back to reveal... to reveal him... he put his hand out, and a bolt, three times more powerful, came out... It destroyed one-fourth of the city... in *one* blow... one fourth of the city... Soon, even his followers realized the extent of his malice... the abyss of his mind... I was only a child then... Perhaps ten years old... My parents told me to run. Everyone was running out of the village... But he was out there, killing every person who tried to escape... But my father knew a secret passage out. He hurriedly told me to take it... But my legs froze... Then, I saw him coming... He was a tall figure, his hands dripping in blood, but he didn't stop. My father used a jutsu on me, and my legs took a mind of their own... They started running. I cried after my father... The man instantly appeared behind my father, and... put an arm

through his body... The blood gushed out incredibly... I didn't know what happened next. When I woke up, I was in Suna... The entire clan except me was killed that day. she paused for a long while after that. I came back, five years later... Cleaned up everything... Went to the library, studied... I finished the normal course, although I didn't have a teacher... and passed the normal rite to enter womanhood... Wh-Who would do such a thing? Sakura asked after a long while.

He wanted power... and he wanted to be the only one who had it... And so, he killed everyone else in his clan who had the Ryoukagan... He didn't bother with Konoha because very few people had the same powers. The Uzumakis' power was decreasing. Not many could see the threat level of their opponents... Since the power was already diluted, he didn't bother...

Is he still alive? Naruto asked, the anger inside him boiling.
She nodded. Oh, yes, very much... He is... the leader of Akatsuki.
Naruto's blood froze.

Tell me, why would I waste my energy saving your sorry @\$\$, training you, and teaching you all of this just to lie to you. You're simply hiding your emotions... Because to you, and to the rest of Konoha, the hokage is flawless... You cower from the truth and use your excuse of hatred to justify it.

... Perhaps they wanted it as a secret... If they raided Konoha, then all the other countries would be prepared... And that wouldn't be good for them. After all, they're only human they, too, have a chakra limit... They, too, are mortal. They couldn't stand a chance against three countries. So, they use Orochimaru.

Yes, but... What happened to Grass and Mist?

They have denied the alliance... I suppose they think this upcoming war is a fake... Or they have their own methods of defending themselves... Or they are the enemies...

... Then, who are the enemies? We don't know for sure at all... All that's simply happened somebody in Akatsuki came, allowed themselves to be arrested, gave a warning, broke out, and disappeared. What's more is that the allied countries have also been warned...

I, too, am curious. Why would Akatsuki be inconspicuous and all secret, if they openly come and warn the countries? Kakashi said. You... You don't think that there's internal conflict within Akatsuki, do you?

It would make sense. After all, they're all after the jinchuuriki... To cooperate, the leader would have to be the strongest. And even then, the alliance is very weak. All it would take to break out in internal conflict would be the theft of one jinchuuriki... Then, they would start stealing over and over...

Yes, but then... Who are the teams?

It seems to be... Itachi seems to be leading the four Kisame, Sasori, Deidara, and himself... They all listen to him. But what really seems to confuse me, is that... Itachi seems to go against himself all the time. First he rescues us... Then he befriends Orochimaru, our enemy... Then, he trains me, telling me I only have a matter of months to get stronger... And finally, he sends Yondaime over here to kill me... It all doesn't make sense...

... All those orders would have been the leaders wouldn't they? And... And there's a conflict inside Akatsuki... You don't think... You don't that Itachi and co. would be... would be afraid of the leader... do you?

It would make sense. He has to follow the leaders orders, and so he does that... But, in secret, he carries out his own to prevent the leader...

That's why he trained me... To protect me... I guess... We may share a common enemy, but he's not our ally.

Then why would he train me? Why would I be so important? I'm just another leaf ninja...

He's the one who told you about your bloodline limit, your family, trained you on your weaknesses... It seems to me he knows more than he's willing to tell...

Yes, your bloodline limit is of great value...

So we know one thing for sure: *Itachi and co. are against the leader, and so they go against them in every way...*

It all fit together perfectly. *Itachi wanted to train me... Because... I was the only Uzumaki alive... the only Uzumaki with equal inherited powers that is... Plus, I have the kyuubi's powers with me... All signs point to me... That's why. The leader was too powerful for him... And so, he needed someone else with the Ryoukagan... He needed me.* He repeated his thoughts out loud.

Kakashi nodded. Not many others in your clan had that ability... And if they did, they could've simply used a jutsu to revive the dead... But you had the kyuubi...

But in order for them to do this, they would have to have all these plans executed when the leader was away.. Sakura said.

Oh no... Phaidra suddenly said.

What? Naruto asked.

Grass and Mist... They've always been the weakest villages...

So? Sakura asked.

Grass and Mist would be the most desperate to survive this war... Itachi has done this... Meaning, the leader and his true followers have been gone for a long time... And Grass and Mist are at opposite ends... And... it would take a while to go from one end to the other... There's a war coming up... And the only ones who haven't signed up are --

Grass and Mist... they all said together.

The only reason they wouldn't join the alliance is if they had another way to survive... Kakashi said.

And Itachi and the others warned every country except the Grass and Mist. They must have wanted the countries to make to make an alliance!

Naruto shook his head. No. Perhaps they wanted that, but that was not their primary goal. If the leader allied with Grass and Mist won the war, he would be even more powerful than he is now. And so, they wanted to warn them so that the countries would at least look out and not be caught totally off guard, as the countries wouldn't believe them anyways. However, it just so happened that the countries *did* believe Itachi... and so, the alliance formed.

They all nodded, as this made sense.

We have to tell the kages about this. Naruto said.

Kakashi nodded. We're going to the sand, so we'll tell them when we get there. As for our village, Sakura, can you summon a slug to deliver it? My dogs won't travel that far that fast, and Gama-Bunta-sama will be easy to spot.

Sure. Sakura said and took out a scroll. Opening a scroll, she summoned Kitsuii, the slug lord.

Kitsuii-sama, can you take this to Tsunade-sama? It's really urgent. Sure. the slug replied and disappeared into the ground.

After the slug left, they all looked at Naruto quietly. Something was not normal about him something they had never seen before. They looked into his eyes deeply and saw passion burning inside of him, raging like an unstoppable force under which everything crumbled. But his face remained calm and collected and this was perhaps the scariest thing about him. As they looked into his eyes, though they knew they had nothing to worry, fear grew in them. Whoever made Naruto an enemy, was in *big* trouble.

Let's go to Suna, sensei... But after this mission is over, I am coming to back here... to study.

They all nodded and started off to Suna.

Phaidra, thank you for all you've done.

She nodded. Naruto, it has been my honor... But please, I have only one request.

Yes?

Please, don't fight the Akatsuki leader... You *will* die. She knew it was a futile attempt, but she couldn't help it.

Naruto shook his head. I'm sorry. That is one request, I cannot do.

Then I won't teach you when you come back!

Naruto nodded. Very well. I will learn by myself.

Tears were streaming down her face due to the horror from her childhood memories. Naruto, please! I have *seen* this monster! Please, it's pointless.

Naruto shook his head. Then I will die trying.'

Damn it! He's so stubborn... Oh... Yeah, I never did get to heal your curse seal...

In all the events that had passed, Naruto had completely forgotten about that. He lay down on the ground as she and Sakura healed him. He wasn't sure what had happened before he woke.

But he saw his curse seal was gone, and that was enough for him. Waking up, he saw he was in a bed with Sakura, Kakashi, and Gaara next to him.

G-Gaara-san? We're in Suna?

Do you have any idea how heavy your body is? It's a good thing Gaara came or we might have never made it! Jeez! I'm gonna make Hinata put you on a diet, I mean, come on!

Hinata... Hyuuga Hinata? So I suppose these two are in love? Gaara asked.

IN LOVE? CAN YOU EVEN FIND A MOMENT WHERE THEY AREN'T TALKING TOGETHER OR KISSING?

I can never find a moment when you're not talking, that's for sure. Gaara said quietly. Sakura turned red from embarrassment, and tried to contain herself from beating Gaara to a pulp because of the fact that he was a kage. Anyways, we have noticed a rather large group of enemies approaching. If they continue at that pace, they should be here in a month's time. So, we have decided it would be best if the allies all go to one headquarters... Meaning, everyone assume a war time policy, and we *all* evacuate to an area. We have decided that to be Konoha the Raikage has also agreed to this, and Tsunade-sama has graciously agreed to be the host. We have decided to take both the people and their belongings except their dwellings via seals. We know you have justus with which you can make new accommodations. However, we need to stall the upcoming part, or it would be slightly disasterous. So, you and ten others will go, set traps, make jutsus, and try to stall, or if possible, prevent their coming. You will also tell us how they operate, who is the leader, and any... *unusual* or devastating things about them. If everyone doesn't return within a week, we will assume they are dead, as there is no time for waiting. Understood? '

Wow... Gaara doesn't mince words... Sakura thought.

Wait... Why move though? Isn't it easier to defend yourself from here you stand?

As I said, we have decided it, and it is between the kages. We have our reasons... Gaara simply said.

They all nodded and met up with ten others. Four of them being Kankuro, Temari, Rin, and Horace. Hey guys! What's up? Naruto said in a cheerful mood.

So these were the ninjas Gaara was talking about. Kankuro said.

The six others came as well, and they began their journey.