

# Illusion

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*Watching over captives is never fun, and Sakura has reason to dislike this man. But even with gills and pointy teeth, he's still human. Non-romance, SakuKisa, for the 100 Themes Challenge.*

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## 0 - Illusion

Inspired originally by the story Perception by Cynchick over on ff.net, grown into being after reading one too many fics with Kisame as a side-character. No romance I'm afraid, and verging on being quite dark. Written for the 100 Themes Challenge on deviantART:

### 45) Illusion

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Konoha's prison was dank. Dark and claustrophobic corridors were lined with tiny damp cages, enough to make any prisoner regret their wrongdoings. Sakura was going to kill whoever had signed her up for night duty. It was an honor though, in a twisted way, to be guarding the highest rank cells, watching the restrained A and S-class nins languish in their final hours. Still, the interest in seeing the mighty fallen palled after the first few hours – sleeping, broken men and women could not hold her fascination for long. So after a while, she sat down at the end and waited for one of them to wake.

Eventually, one of them groaned and shifted, the sound echoing in the harsh atmosphere. Blue skinned hands grasped the reinforced bars as the most recent prisoner rose to his feet. She tensed instinctively, the infamous name echoing through her mind. Hoshigake Kisame. The last surviving member of the Akatsuki, the only one she'd never seen face to face. It was a heady feeling, to know that she held the keys to his freedom, and equally, this terrifying nin's life, in her hands. She shook her head, trying to suppress the buzzing feeling of power, and walked over.

“Welcome to Konoha. Do you require anything, Hoshigake?” Her voice sounded derisory, helped by the hard walls. Beady, predatory eyes watched her, sharp teeth grinning with pain. He hadn't been taken down gently, if the wounds on his massive torso or the smell of blood were anything to go by.

“I'd love a bite to eat, princess. Then some sake, a comfy bed, and a pretty girl. Can you manage that?” He chuckled, teeth bared as muscles tensed, as if he expected to be beaten for his insolence. She smiled, more cruel than humorous, and went to get a bowl of slop. A moment later, she pushed it through the bars.

“Any serious injuries? I have to heal you up before I hand you over to interrogation tomorrow.” It wasn't a part of this job she normally relished, but in this case she felt she could take some pleasure in it. After all, this was an Akatsuki member, and Itachi's old partner, no less.

“You, keeping me alive? You're the nine-tails brat's friend, right? Haruno Sakura. Can't I just give you information, without being beaten up first?”

“Wh...Um. Yes?” He was willing to give information? She frowned. “Why would you do that? I didn't take you for a coward.” He had no reason to tell her anything, it wasn't like they'd let him live either way.

"I'm no coward, but I have no allegiance to anybody. If I'm gonna die I might as well avoid extra pain on the way. So ask me anything you like, girlie, and I'll tell you." He looked...well, as straight forward as a ferocious shark-man ever could. Even if he was lying, it couldn't hurt, and it still beat sitting alone all night in the cold. He had lived an awfully long time for a shinobi, and as a Mist missing nin, no less. Strange to think that such a violent country could have any laws at all...and how terrible he must be to have broken them

"What did you do to become a missing nin?" It came out wrong – curious and slightly scared, rather than strong and authoritative. He was the one in a tiny cell for goodness sake, and she had the power to hurt him terribly, if she chose. But he seemed to know she wouldn't, letting out another feral laugh.

"Funny, isn't it. You know about Mist, right, and the seven swordsman? Well, I was just a young'un, and we were a team, special ANBU genius kids. And we had pretty foul missions, mostly large scale assassination, culling of the largest clans...nasty shoot. Eventually, we decided to speak out, told people what we'd been made to do. But the Raikage didn't want it known he was killing his people, so he denied it.. We were picked off one by one, and they started with me." He wasn't laughing now, and his shadowed yellow eyes looked almost wistful.

"So?" She prompted, trying not to startle him out of the relaxed state he seemed to be in. It sounded true enough, and it was actually very interesting. Definitely not the kind of thing you learned from interrogation. He shook himself slightly, and took a gulp of his mushy food before continuing.

"I was the easiest to pick off, 'cause of my looks. Most of the villagers already thought me a monster, and it didn't take much for them to believe I'd gone on a rampage and killed against orders. And I suppose I am a monster really." He seemed to slump a little, though he was still nearly as tall as Sakura, even sitting.

"How come you...uh..." The words came out without permission, and she shifted uncomfortably in her chair. She didn't want to hear about him being a monster, didn't want to hear that he might just be another child grown up too soon. He was one of the enemy, she didn't want to empathize. But she couldn't take it back, and she could see he knew what she meant.

"Oh, my looks. Well, I was an experiment. My Ma had some kinda...I dunno what, but some forbidden jutsu, they used it on her when she was pregnant. I broke her hips when I was born, 'cause I was too big. She died when I was nearly two months old, got a bone infection or something. We didn't really have medics. I grew up in an ANBU training center, and I had various things done to me. When I was seven, they made Samehada out of this tail thing I used to have. Then I was sent out on missions. I'm not a complete monster, I had friends, and I think just like a normal person. But when I smell blood...well, I kinda become an animal."

It sounded like Naruto, like Gaara, like Neji and Lee and Sasuke. Just like all those people she called friends. And she could see it, looking at him now, see the human emotions of pain and sadness, of regret; all those things she associated with the good people. It was a terrifying thought. He blinked at her, not with the sharp eyes of before, but with some form of...understanding?

"Nobody ever sets out to become a missing nin. Nobody wants war, except those nutty bastards like

Orochimaru. In the end, most people want a nice life, to die in their sleep when they're old and grey. I was born unlucky, and that couldn't happen for me. I don't need pity, 'cause I'm alright. I've lived long enough, and I've had friends...I might not be that smart or well mannered, and I might be a 'bad guy', but in the end, it's all just an illusion. We're all just people.” He slurped up the last of the prison food and lay back on the stone floor.

“Night princess. Wake me in time for interrogation.” She watched in silence as he slipped into exhausted sleep, his breath deep and loud in the darkness. She watched, mind racing through everything he'd said. She watched, next to him behind the bars as the time passed, looking at his grey-blue skin – so rough and inhuman, but with smile lines like her shishou round his mouth – under the dim lighting of the place. Gently, she placed one hand on his chest, and smiled as he opened one eye, blinking an acknowledgment. A moment later, the tiny flare of her chakra faded, and she stepped out again, leaving his body behind.

No human deserved torture. He had just been another kid. And in some small way, that night, he had been a friend.

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I'm not entirely happy with this, and I'll probably edit it in a month or two. But I'm still glad I got the general idea down...It was odd writing about Kisame, but I can't help thinking he has a bit of a history. And the similarities between him and some of the 'good guys' (especially Gaara) make me feel a bit sorry for him...so I gave him a story.

Anyway, feedback is much appreciated, especially as I might edit this sometime. Thanks for reading!