

MISFIT

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[AU] All they really needed was a little verification. Someone to tell them they weren't worthless.

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1 - Prologue

A/N: I give you full permission to lynch me for starting another multi-chaptered fic.

But you know how evil those plot bunnies can be, and I actually wrote this one out beforehand. Give me some credit.

Pairings to be announced when they appear. No yaoi or yuri couples, kiddies.

Disclaimer: I don't own Naruto and friends. Plot mine, characters not. (Cries)

Background:

Every day after school, The Group gathers in the office of their current Guidance Counselor to help them deal with their messed up lives and messed up problems. Naruto, the self-proclaimed leader and worst behaved of the six outcasts, always takes the job of scaring away the counselor that was sent there to help them. But when Sasuke takes the position, the blond is given a run for his money.

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M I S F I T

Prologue

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"Hyuuga Hinata, Inuzuka Kiba, Nara Shikamaru, Akimichi Chouji, and Sabaku no Gaara."

Sasuke blinks before responding.

"I believe you forgot one."

The Dean of Students puts down the files in his hand and turns to face the raven.

"Excuse me?" he asks.

Sasuke's response is impassive.

"You gave me five names. I was told there were six students in 'The Group'. Unless I was misinformed, Jiraiya?"

The white-haired man sighs as he falls heavily into his chair. He stares down at his unkempt desk as he speaks.

“There is another. His name is Uzumaki Naruto, and he’s the biggest troublemaker you’ll ever meet. He’s been in The Group the longest.”

Jiraiya looks up at Sasuke sharply.

“And he is a lost cause.”

Sasuke blinks again, before looking up at the ceiling as though contemplating.

He bites his bottom lip thoughtfully- a habit he’s been plagued with since childhood- and pulls one hand out of his pocket to run through his blue-black hair.

And suddenly, he smirks wickedly.

Now, it’s Jiraiya’s turn to be confused.

Their eyes meet.

“I always did like a challenge.”

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“Naruto, man, I’m serious! This new guy is gonna be your biggest challenge *yet!*”

As if to prove his point, Kiba leans towards his friend- who sits across from him- and slams his hands onto the table.

Naruto looks up at him briefly before he continues to wolf down his ramen.

He says, with a mouthful of fish cake and noodles, “So? I love a good challenge! All the old GC’s were sissy pansies.”

“Dude, you don’t get it! When I went into his office for that one-on-one interview thing- which none of the other GC’s *ever* did with The Group- I saw Hinata come out.”

“...Eh? So?”

“Get this! She was *smiling!* And it gets even weirder...She was *laughing*, too!”

“Hm... Seriously?”

“Yeah! It was really quiet and she tried to hide it behind her hand, but she was definitely laughing. When was the last time you saw Hinata smile or *laugh?*”

“Hm...” Naruto chews on the tip of one of the chopsticks thoughtfully and ignores his friend’s question.

“Well,” the blond finally says, “How was the interview?”

Kiba repositions himself on the cafeteria bench.

“The guy is really observant. Like, *really* observant. Makes me wonder why he didn’t become a detective or something, I’m sure the pay is better than at this rat hole...”

Naruto sighs and moves to his second bowl of ramen.

“Kiba?”

“Hm?”

“Stop getting off topic.”

“Right, sorry. Anyway, the dude is sneaky, too, you know? Like, he tricks you into telling the truth.”

“So what type of GC is he? One of those balding, forty-something year olds? No, wait. He sounds more like one of those old people, the kind that think they know everything. Yeah, that’s it, right?”

Kiba fidgets as he answers.

“His name is Uchiha Sasuke, and-“

“Come on, dog-breath! Answer my *actual* question!”

“Okay, okay! Geez... Well, I don’t know his exact age, but-“

“Would Uzumaki Naruto please come down to the Guidance Office. Uzumaki Naruto to the Guidance Office.”

Naruto slurps down the remainder of his ramen before standing up.

Kiba sighs. “He already talked to Chouji, Hinata, me, Shikamaru, and Gaara. You’re the last one. Watch yourself, Naruto.”

The blond smiles widely and laughs loudly.

“Don’t worry about me,” he shouts, waving as he runs towards the door of the cafeteria, “I’ll show that guy whose boss! Dattebayo!”

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Ino looks up from her paperwork when she hears the office door open.

She smiles when she recognizes the whisker-cheeked boy and motions towards the chair against the wall.

“You can wait right there, Uzumaki-kun. Sasuke-kun will be out in a moment.”

Naruto falls heavily into his chair as he surveys the secretary.

“You know the new GC personally?” he asks as he drums his fingers on the armrests.

“Now, how would you know that?”

Naruto shrugs before grinning at his own brilliance.

“You said his name pretty familiarly just a second ago, and it’s only his first day here.”

Ino tries in vain to push her long bangs off of her face and opens her mouth to speak.

She doesn’t get the opportunity.

“That’s rather observant of you, Uzumaki.”

Both blondes turn towards the newcomer and Naruto’s azure eyes narrow into dangerous slits.

This must be the guy, he thinks.

He’s tall, with wiry muscles and dressed in worn-out jeans as well as a dark blue button-down shirt. The sleeves are pulled up past the elbows.

Naruto looks him up and down, his eyes calculating.

The man is young, perhaps in his early twenties. He’s pale, and his eyes are so dark that the pupils aren’t visible.

His hair is dark as well, bangs falling on either side of his face. It’s spiked wildly in the back.

The Uzumaki hates him already.

Not necessarily because of his appearance.

No, it was the man’s *posture* that ticked him off.

He’s leaning against the door that leads to his personal office; his arms are crossed over his chest, his legs crossed at the ankles.

Like he’s so superior, Naruto thinks as he stands.

His scowl turns into a vulpine grin and Sasuke cocks an eyebrow as the boy passes him.

The raven turns his questioning look towards the school secretary, who shrugs in response.

'Good luck' Ino mouths, giving him an encouraging thumbs-up.

Even as Sasuke turns to enter the room, Naruto is plotting against him.

Ha! He thinks he's a big shot, huh? Well, the bigger they are...the harder they fall.

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Next Chapter...

(Naruto's rather interesting interview)

"Is that a challenge, Uzumaki?" Sasuke asks, arching an eyebrow.

Naruto falls back into his chair with a huff. He crosses his arms and glares daggers at the raven.

"Well, it isn't exactly an invitation to Cinderella's Ball, asswipe."

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A/N: REVIEW! Next chapter will be much more entertaining.

2 - Cross Words

A/N: People, seriously. If you put this on your alert list, please just leave a little review to boost my spirits.

My therapist says they're good for me.

Warnings: Naruto has a potty-mouth.

Disclaimer: Let's see...I'm writing an alternate universe fanfiction for the series...I'm only fourteen years of age...I still live with my folks.... I'm American (and proud!)...No, pretty sure I don't own Naruto and company.

Background:

Every day after school, The Group gathers in the office of their current Guidance Counselor to help them deal with their messed up lives and messed up problems. Naruto, the self-proclaimed leader and worst behaved of the six outcasts, always takes the job of scaring away the counselor that was sent there to help them. But when Sasuke takes the position, the blond is given a run for his money.

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Cross Words

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Naruto steps into the office he knows so well with his grin still in place.

"Take a seat, Uzumaki. Unless you plan to stand there all day?"

The blond tries to act unfazed as he sits in the chair placed for him. He knows how to counter these mind games.

Sasuke sits on the edge of his small mahogany desk. He thumbs through a manilla folder that's thick with white paper.

Naruto sees his name printed on the front of it in big, bold letters and realizes that it's his school records.

"I have to say.... You have a pretty interesting rap sheet here."

Naruto feigns innocence and cocks his head to one side.

“Whatever do you mean, Uchiha-sensei?”

Sasuke stands up and lays the folder on top of the desk. Sparing it a final glance, he closes it and turns to the seemingly clueless student.

“Don’t test my patience, Uzumaki.”

Naruto grips the seat of the chair until his knuckles lose color. He schools his features into a smirk and locks his eyes onto the counselor’s indifferent face.

“That’s funny,” the blond says, “I was under the impression that Guidance Counselors had *loads* of patience.”

Sasuke ignores the statement and walks behind the desk. He lowers himself into his chair, his eyes never once leaving Naruto’s.

The troublemaker takes the lack of emotion for a small victory and continues speaking.

“So if you already had enough of me, maybe you aren’t cut out for this job. Maybe you don’t have what it takes, hm, Uchiha? I mean, all-“

“Truancy, tardiness,” Sasuke interrupts, counting off on his fingers, “disrespect toward teachers and authority figures, skipping classes, fights with other students, skipping *more* classes, failing courses, juvenile pranks... and that’s only about half of your usual offenses, am I right?”

Naruto’s smirk falls into an angry frown and he growls low in his throat.

Sasuke’s voice sounds bored as he continues.

“I didn’t even have to read your file. You fit the profile perfectly. Why don’t you try being a little less cliché and a little more unique, hm, Uzumaki?”

Naruto’s nails nearly puncture the seat cushion as they grip it relentlessly. The blond glares hatefully towards the raven.

“...Shut up.”

But his command falls to deaf ears.

“Now, we aren’t here to make enemies.” He pauses to pick up a clipboard and pen. “I know your games, Naruto. I *invented* them. So grow up and act your age if you want to survive The Group this year.”

The blond chuckles throatily before asking, “Who says you’ll be here all year? You’ll leave eventually, just like all the other ones.”

Sasuke's eyes are focused on the clipboard in his hand. He scribbles things down on it every few seconds and it takes all of Naruto's will power not to rip it out of his hands and break it over his knees.

"If you're trying to intimidate me, Uzumaki, you're going to have to try a lot harder."

Naruto has had enough. He jumps out of his seat and slams his hands onto the desk. The fact that Sasuke doesn't react in the slightest makes him all the more livid.

"Who the hell do you think you are?!"

"I thought we've already established that I'm your new Guidance Counselor." He jots more onto his clipboard and Naruto's fingers curl into fists on top of the desk.

"Stop being a wiseass! Stop acting like you know everything!"

The blond throws his pointer finger out, pointing dangerously close to Sasuke's face.

"I'M SO SICK OF YOU GUYS! COMING HERE AND ACTING LIKE YOU CAN 'FIX US!'"

"Is that really what you think?"

"YES!"

Naruto's chest is heaving with the effort of his outburst. Sasuke's eyes finally flicker up.

"Is that why you think it's your job to get rid of all the counselors?"

"YES! And I'll get rid of you, too! Dattebayo!"

"Is that a challenge, Uzumaki?" Sasuke asks, arching an eyebrow.

Naruto falls back into his chair with a huff. He crosses his arms and glares daggers at the raven.

"Well, it isn't exactly an invitation to Cinderella's Ball, asswipe."

"Ah. Tell me something, Uzumaki... If you keep scaring everyone who wants to help you away, who'll be there when you *really* need help?"

His baby-blue eyes become dark.

"I'm beyond help."

"No one's beyond help, you idiot."

Naruto's head snaps up at that, only to see that Sasuke is focused on his clipboard again.

The student smiles a soft, grim smile.

“This whole group is. That’s why they dump us here. They don’t want to deal with us. So, sorry Uchiha, but you got the short end of the stick.”

“Mm. Says you. And why do you think that?”

“Because we're outcasts! And outcasts don't get second chances, or golden opportunities or anything like that. Try all you want, but you can't fix us. Once a misfit, always a misfit.”

“That’s a bleak outlook.”

“Because *you* seem like *such* an optimist.”

“We aren’t here to talk about me.”

There’s a thick silence sfter that, where the only sound in the room is the dull scratching of pen on paper.

“What’s a four-letter word for dead-last?”

“...*Nani?*”

“A four-letter word for dead-last.”

“*Why?*”

Sasuke taps the pen on top of the clipboard. Naruto sputters.

“Have...have you been doing a crossword puzzle this *whole time*? Are you kidding me?”

“Why does that come as a surprise?”

The clipboard is now lying face up on the table. Naruto can clearly see the black and white puzzle.

“I just...I guess I kinda figured you were taking notes on me. You know, analyzing me?”

Sasuke snorts lightly and crosses his arms.

“Don’t flatter yourself. I enjoy taking notes about as much as you enjoy actually attending an entire class... And taking notes makes people nervous.”

“...Eh?”

Sasuke sighs. “It *intimidates* the people I talk to. They’re afraid they might say the wrong thing, or something along those lines.”

“Um...okay. I guess tha-“

“Dobe.”

“...*Excuse me?!*”

“A four-letter word for dead-last. Dobe.”

“ Right, I knew that.”

“I’m sure you did.” Sasuke looks up towards the clock and sighs again. He opens a desk drawer and pulls out a yellow slip of paper.

“Time to go back to class, Uzumaki. And I mean *class*, *not* the school parking lot. Here’s a hall pass, now get going. You better show up for Group after school as well.”

Naruto stands and accepts the pass in a daze. He pauses at the door and looks over his shoulder hesitantly.

“Er...hey, Uchiha.”

“Yes, Naruto?”

“How come you made it look like you were taking notes if it ‘intimidates’ people?”

There is a short moment of silence before Sasuke answers.

“Like I said earlier, you fit the profile. I knew it wouldn’t intimidate you.”

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“Are you *serious*? A crossword puzzle?”

Kiba lets out another round of barking laughter.

“It’s not *that* funny, dog-breath! That guy is a bastard.”

“Yeah, a bastard who’ll probably give you a run for your money.”

Naruto lets his head fall back so that it hits the red-brown bricks. He slides down the outside school wall until he’s sitting next to his friend on the concrete.

The faculty parking lot stretches out before them.

Kiba should be in Study Hall this period.

Naruto should be in American History.

Kiba suddenly jumps and hits his friend's arm none too gently. He points towards something across the parking lot.

Naruto rubs his sore upper arm as his eyes land on a sleek black car with tinted windows.

"So what? It's a car, big deal."

"Naruto, you douche. Look at the sign in front of the parking spot."

Naruto squints and he reads the big black lettering on the sign his friend indicated.

'Reserved For KHS Guidance Counselor'

His blue eyes widen before narrowing evilly. Kiba and him grin, their sharp canines glinting in the sunlight.

"Hey, Kiba. You thinking what I'm thinking?"

"But of course."

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"A lot of good those fancy tinted windows will do you know, buddy."

Naruto and Kiba lean back to admire their work.

Punctured tires, shattered windows, scratched paint job, and profanities written in pink graffiti.

Naruto laughs hysterically and throws his arms out dramatically.

In a singsong voice he says, "It is my *masterpiece!*"

Kiba doubles over from his own barking laughter and clutches his stomach. They both stop abruptly when they hear approaching footsteps.

"Come on, in the bushes!" Naruto hisses, grabbing his friend's shirt and jumping into the greenery.

The person approaching rounds the corner. He's talking boredly into a cell phone.

"It's him!"

"Shhh! Do you *want* him to see us, mutt?"

Both boys strain their ears to hear Sasuke's conversation.

“Uneventful, for the most part.”

Naruto muffles his snickers with his hand.

Sasuke pauses in his talking, listening into his phone.

“I’m on my lunch break now,” he says, nearing the car.

Naruto lifts an eyebrow and turns to his friend, who shrugs in response.

You’d think he would of noticed by now...

“No, I can’t meet you there, I don’t have a...” he trails off and stops walking all together when he reaches the destroyed vehicle.

The hiding boys are near hysterics.

They eventually gape when the counselor continues walking- *right past the car.*

“Sorry. I said I couldn’t meet you there because I don’t have a car. I walk here... Yeah, it’s close enough.... Right, have fun. Bye.”

He flips the phone shut and slides it into the pocket of his jeans.

The raven-haired counselor stops when he reaches the part of the bushes that Naruto and Kiba hide in.

Without turning his head to look in their direction, he smirks.

“Better luck next time. See you two later.”

He lifts a hand in farewell as he walks away.

The two pranksters wait until he’s completely out of sight to jump out and run towards the car.

“Kuso,” Naruto groans, threading his fingers into his wild hair and tugging on it.

Kiba gapes at the once beautiful vehicle.

“Kiba, if this isn’t Uchiha’s car, then who’s-“

“Naruto, Kiba! What are you two doing out of... class... again... ..MY CAR!”

Both boys cringe at the voice and turn to face their doom.

Jiraiya stands a few feet away from them, his eyes wide. His mouth hangs open dumbly.

Naruto rubs the back of his neck and Kiba scratches the red tattoo on his cheek. Both boys have their

eyes closed so tightly that it's almost painful.

"A-ah! Hi, Ero-sensei! Um...this isn't what it looks like..."

The white-haired man looks positively livid.

The students gulp in unison.

Destroying the car that belongs to a bastard Guidance Counselor is one thing.

Destroying the car that belongs to a Dean of Students- and getting caught red-handed- is another thing.

Naruto and Kiba wince as Jiraiya cracks his knuckles menacingly.

Another thing entirely.

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Next Chapter...

(Naruto and Kiba receive their punishment and The Group begins their first meeting with their new Guidance Counselor)

"Naruto, m'boy, you're almost as bad as that Uchiha brat was when he was your age... *Almost.*"

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A/N: I know the preview was short. But c'mon, I gave away a rather golden nugget of information with that one.

Meh, I don't like this chapter as much as I should.

REVIEW.

3 - Flash Backs

A/N: Glad you guys enjoyed the last chapter. Yeah, I'm updating at the speed of light (be proud, I usually average at the speed of a slug...sliding over a field of salt.... in the pouring rain...)

'FLASHBACKS'

Disclaimer: You think I could release a drawn manga chapter every week when I can't even take the time out to update *fanfictions*? Psh, keep dreaming.

Background:

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Flash Backs

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"B-but, Ero-sensei, give us a chance to explain an-"

"WHAT'S THERE TO EXPLAIN? YOU TWO DESTROYED MY BRAND NEW PORSCHE! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT THING COST ME? I HAD THE INTERIOR CUSTOMIZED! *CUSTOMIZED!*"

"On *your* salary? Isn- *mmph!*"

Naruto slaps a hand over Kiba's mouth before he word vomits anymore damage. He knew of his friend's odd habit of insulting people when incredibly nervous (like a joke to lighten the mood).

The blond opts to rub the back of his own neck with his free hand, pressing his fingers into the tensed muscles to relax himself.

"Look, Jiraiya...I mean, Jiraiya-*sama*." He adds the last part nervously at the look the Dean is giving him.

"What you have to understand," he continues, (coat your voice with honey, it works *wonders* when you're in a bind, son), "is that we weren't targeting you intentionally. You aren't in your usual parking

spot, so we assumed it belonged to the new GC!"

Jiraiya blinks for a moment. Naruto, taking this as a somewhat good sign, pulls his hand from his friend's snarling mouth. Kiba glares at him before crossing his arms and turning his nose up.

They sit in Jiraiya's office. The chairs are hard and uncomfortable, though the two students do take some comfort in the fact that a large desk separates them from their insane teacher.

The white-haired man rubs his temples.

"What," he asks slowly, "did he do to get you two angry enough to destroy- no, *demolish*- 'his' car?"

Naruto falters for a moment and Kiba bores holes into the tiles on the floor with shame.

"He...Well, he was really rude and...er, and..."

"And *what*?" Jiraiya prompts impatiently.

"And *stuff*."

"And stuff?"

Kiba looks a little queasy beside his nodding friend.

"Yeah, stuff."

There's a thick silence that seems to weigh down on the shoulders of everyone in the room. The clock ticks from where it hangs over the oak door.

"Alright, you two. I know that you know you aren't getting away with this unscathed."

Naruto and Kiba's eyes remain focused on the floor.

"Lunch detentions. Every day, until it seems your behavior's improved."

Their faces brighten at the seemingly light punishment for such a heavy crime.

"With Sasuke, of course."

Their faces fall again.

"But, that guy's a sadistic bastard! Who knows what he'll make us do!"

"That's for him to decide, Naruto. Kiba, go ahead and scurry over to the Guidance Office. The Group starts soon, the final bell rings in a few minutes."

Kiba stands and gives Naruto an unsure glance.

"Now, Inuzuka."

He winces and walks out of the room, leaving a wave of silence behind so deep that it nearly crushes Naruto.

"Why do I have to stay, old man?"

The older of the two sighs.

"You really are a special case...Just like Sasuke."

Naruto blinks. His most frequently used phrase slips out. "...Eh?"

"Naruto, m'boy, you're almost as bad as that Uchiha brat was when he was your age... *Almost.*"

"Stop trying to act all mysterious, Ero-sensei. You suck at it." The blond crosses his arms stubbornly.

Jiraiya manages a pained smile that comes out more like a grimace.

More alike than they'll ever know...

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The white-haired man sighs behind his folded hands. The brooding teenager sitting in the hard wooden chair slumps even lower in his seat.

"Uchiha, how many times am I going to find you sitting in my office this year?"

"Why? Trying to see if I can break my record from last year, old man?"

The man ignores the statement and regards the student indifferently.

Sasuke continues speaking.

"Besides, I'm not here because I got into some stupid fight or skipped another class."

"That bruise on your cheek speaks differently."

"..." Sasuke looks towards the ground, his long bangs obscuring his entire face.

"I didn't get into a fight," he murmurs, almost to himself, "That witch of a math teacher took one look at my face, signed a pass and now I'm sitting here. Wasting twenty minutes of my life."

"And twenty minutes of mine."

"I guess I'll be going, then. I don't want to be here, and you obviously don't either. Mutual

understandings always work out the best, don't they? See ya around, old man..."

The raven stands up, his hands shoved into the pockets of his uniform pants. He turns to leave and walks all the way to the door before he stops.

Jiraiya feels pity pool in his gut when the boy turns tired, worn-out eyes on him.

The teenager points at the large lilac mark practically glowing on his ashen skin and says, "And I'm telling the truth when I said I didn't get this from some stupid fight. Go ahead and don't believe me if you want to." He shrugs and opens the door. "I don't really care much for anyone else's opinions, anyway."

As his footsteps fade down the hall, Jiraiya is left to ponder if he did the right thing by letting the Uchiha leave.

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"Old man," Naruto calls, waving his hand in front of the Dean's face, "Now's not the time to go all nostalgic on me!"

"Hm? Oh.... Sorry about that, brat."

Naruto falls back into his seat and gives the man one of his calculating gazes.

Jiraiya ignores his look and turns to check the time.

"You better get going. Group starts in about two minutes. I'll escort you there, I have to talk to Uchiha about your detentions anyway."

Naruto looks comically annoyed. "So you made me stay here for *nothing!*" he shouts.

Jiraiya sighs.

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All six students sit in a circle of chairs.

Naruto and Kiba sit together, plotting things in hushed voices.

Shikamaru sits (yawning all the while) next to Chouji- who munches happily on his third bag of potato chips.

Hinata sits alone, staring at the ground and twisting a strand of violet hair around her pale finger.

Gaara sits alone as well, opening and closing his favorite switchblade as his eyes flicker from one person to another. He mutters inaudible sentences under his breath every few seconds.

Everyone looks up as Sasuke steps back into the room from talking with Jiraiya. He yawns as though bored as he walks towards The Group.

The raven sits on the edge of his desk and gives them all an once-over.

His eyes stop on Kiba and Naruto, who glare heatedly in return.

“Your Dean requested that you two not sit next to each other. Naruto, go sit next to Hinata. Kiba, next to Gaara.”

Naruto looks almost happy as he gets up and bounces over towards the shy Hyuuga. Kiba looks terrified out of his wits as he takes the seat next to Gaara, sitting as close to the edge as possible.

“Good. So, I guess it’s time for introductions...”

Shikamaru sighs from where he slouches in his seat. “So troublesome...”

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The phone rings a total of five and a half times before Kakashi deems it deserving of being answered.

“Hello?” he speaks into the receiver, yawning and scratching a spot on his head.

The person on the other end laughs. “Sorry, Kakashi, didn’t realize it was only two o’clock in the afternoon. Next time I’ll call later so you can catch up on your beauty sleep.”

“Well, you know me. What is it that has you calling me at the wee hours of the morning, Jiraiya?”

“How’s the job hunt going?”

The pepper-haired man glances towards the blank pages of his open address book on the counter.

“Well...I have several interviews today...but I prefer to keep my options open. Why do you ask?”

“Well, I have an opening over here. Only if you’re interested, of course.”

Kakashi blinks. “At the high school? You trust me to teach teenagers? I thought you knew me better than that.”

“I do, and that’s why it isn’t a teaching job...per se.”

“Then what is it?”

“I want you to be our first Guidance Counselor. There are some kids here that could use saving.”

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Next Chapter...

(The first meeting continues and surprises ensue)

“Hey, Uchiha,” Naruto calls out jokingly, “How’s your love life? Seeing any pretty girls? Or do you swing the other way?”

Sasuke lifts an eyebrow and slides something off his left ring finger. He slides the object back onto his middle finger instead, and flashes it towards Naruto.

The blond sputters at both the rude gesture and the gold engagement ring that glints back at him.

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A/N: (Gasp) Sasuke’s *married?* Oh, wait... I knew that.

REVIEW.

4 - Question Marks

A/N: This would have been out sooner, but I've had sleepovers, parties and barbeques to attend.

(This chapter brought to you by my Green Day play list...Oh yeah, be afraid. Be very afraid.)

Disclaimer: If they were mine, I'd be much more possessive over them. (cackles)

Background:

Every day after school, The Group gathers in the office of their current Guidance Counselor to help them deal with their messed up lives and messed up problems. Naruto, the self-proclaimed leader and worst behaved of the six outcasts, always takes the job of scaring away the counselor that was sent there to help them. But when Sasuke takes the position, the blond is given a run for his money.

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M I S F I T

Question Marks

-xxXXIXXxx-

"Uzumaki, for the fifth time, leave Hinata alone."

Naruto smirks slyly at the red-faced Hyuuga one last time before leaning back in his seat. He gives Sasuke a sour look and crosses his arms.

Hinata's lilac eyes remain focused on the ground and she continues to shake violently.

The raven-haired counselor eyes her from where he sits and bites his bottom lip for a moment. He seems to come to a decision, and then stands.

The dark-haired female looks up through her short bangs as he approaches her.

Sasuke gives her a small ghost of a smile and lowers himself to one knee so that the two are eye level.

"Would you mind sitting next to Kiba?"

Hinata averts her eyes from his and shakes her head. He stands and the humiliated girl scurries across the small circle to where Kiba is smiling gratefully. Anything was better than just Gaara.

Naruto scowls at his best friend and glares when Sasuke takes Hinata's currently vacated seat.

The raven leans in close to the blond with a dangerous smirk on his face. The whisker-cheeked boy grips the bottom of his chair again to refrain from wiping the wolfish look off of his face.

“I told you not to test my patience, Uzumaki. Now you’re sitting alone.”

Naruto’s gritting his teeth so hard that it’s painful.

Sasuke’s face falls back into its usual apathetic expression, his eyebrows raised a fraction.

“But you’re used to that, aren’t you? What was that you said earlier today? Ah, that’s right. Once a misfit... always a misfit.”

And before the blond has a chance to even respond, Sasuke is back on the edge of his desk, surveying the slightly surprised faces of all six outcasts (excluding Gaara).

Arms crossed and eyes closed, he says, “I’m not here to be nice to all of you. I’m not here to hold your hand and tell you what to do every step of the way. I don’t care what any of your previous counselors have told you, but I’m not here to make your decisions for you. Your problems are yours and yours alone. Do *not* expect me to lose sleep over you.”

The silence that follows is thick and stiff and a certain blond doesn’t like it one bit. His life needs noise, because nothing good comes from anything quiet.

He grins. Face splitting and vulpine to the fullest extent.

“Hey, Uchiha,” Naruto calls out jokingly, “How’s your love life? Seeing any pretty girls? Or do you swing the other way?”

Sasuke lifts an eyebrow and slides something off his left ring finger. He slides the object back onto his middle finger instead, and flashes it towards Naruto.

The blond sputters at both the rude gesture and the gold engagement ring that glints back at him.

“*You’re* engaged?”

“Married, actually.” Sasuke replies with ease, placing the wedding band back to where it belongs.

Naruto lets out a round of barking laughter. “Who would marry *you*?”

“It’s none of your concern. Now, if we could move on, I believe we’ve forgotten introductions.”

Shikamaru let out a soft snore and Chouji snickered in between mouthfuls of junk food.

Sasuke sighs (yet again) and reaches behind him. He picks up a ballpoint pen from his desk and throws it.

It hits the sleeping boy square in the head and he lifts his chin from his chest. His eyes open groggily

and he yawns.

“Welcome back, Nara.”

The lazy boy grumbles out an incoherent response.

“Nice to see some enthusiasm,” Sasuke comments dryly.

Naruto snorts loudly and Sasuke quirks an eyebrow.

“Something funny, Uzumaki?”

“Nothing, nothing,” the blond assures him, chuckling and waving a dismissive hand, “It’s just that you don’t exactly seem to be the most lively person here, either.”

“Not all of us are able to remain wired all day like you, Uzumaki. Some of us *do* our work.”

“With all do respect, Uchiha-*sama*,” he says mockingly, “I do my work. I just choose to do it at a slower pace than most.”

This earns him yet another raised brow and the blond nearly screams in frustration.

Another routine silence hangs in the office, ominous and foreboding. Sasuke and Naruto stare each other down and measure each other up.

When their gazes finally break, there is still fifteen minutes left before The Group is meant to end.

Sasuke dismisses them anyway, but not before commanding Kiba and Naruto to remain where they are. When the room is empty, save for the three, Sasuke actually sits behind his desk, in the small chair waiting for him.

Kiba looks as though he’s about to speak when the raven opens the top drawer and pulls out a small orange bottle. The cap on it is white, as is the label that neither student can distinguish from where they sit.

Without a word, the Uchiha opens the bottle and empties three small pills out. They’re small and round and the two boys gaze at them curiously as the man drops them into his mouth and swallows them dry.

Kiba’s brow knits together. “Isn’t that illegal?”

Sasuke rolls his eyes and drops the canister back into the drawer.

“Not if you have a condition that requires you to take prescribed medication at a certain time.”

Naruto raises an eyebrow curiously. “What kind of condition?”

Sasuke ignores the question and stares evenly at the two students.

“Jiraiya told me of your little escapade earlier. To be honest, I didn’t think you’d be that careless.”

Naruto snorts again. “You act like you expected it from us.”

Sasuke gives the smallest of shrugs. “Maybe. Either way, you two are stuck with me for a while.”

“Seems that way,” grumbles Naruto. Kiba grunts in agreement.

“I don’t think I’ll have trouble keeping you busy. There’s plenty of cleaning and filing to be done around here that I don’t really have time for.”

A collective groan is heard.

“Stop complaining. You’re dismissed.”

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Sasuke can smell his wife’s cooking as he inserts the key into the door that leads to their shared apartment. He was lucky she hadn’t burned down the whole building yet.

He slips his shoes off after he enters, making sure to keep extra quiet.

The Uchiha enters the small kitchen and tries not to choke on the black smoke that fills most of the room.

Underneath the thick fog, he can see his wife’s legs currently clad in a pair of gray sweatpants. His gray sweatpants, most likely. She had a habit of wearing his clothes when they were home.

Sasuke creeps up behind her and very nearly laughs when he hears the string of profanities slipping past her lips. He leans forward so that he’s pressed into her back and puts his hands over her eyes.

She makes a small squeaking sound in surprise before smiling warmly and moving his hands down until they’re wrapped around her waist instead.

Much more comfortable, she thinks happily, no longer mindful of the choking smoke surrounding them.

She cranes her neck back so that it rests on his shoulder. He has to bow his head lower just to press his lips to hers.

When he pulls away, he’s smirking.

“What have I told you about cooking? Stick to instant if you’re too stubborn to wait for me to come home.”

He walks away, still amused, and opens their small window to let the room air out.

His wife pouts as they walk into the living room.

"I was only trying to be helpful," she mumbles.

Sasuke gives a soft chuckle as he comes up behind her and rests his chin on her shoulder. His hands come around and grab her own gently and their fingers lace.

"How about take-out? You can choose," he offers.

She sighs softly and nods once. "Ramen. Miso ramen."

"Of course."

He presses their lips together again.

-xxXXIXXxx-

I hate this stupid job.

Naruto's grumbling as he walks down the hall in a relatively small apartment building. He holds a delivery bag with two orders of ramen steaming inside.

What's the point if I don't get to eat the ramen?

He knocks shortly on the third door to the right and smoothes out his brightly colored uniform.

A lock clicks open on the other side. The doorknob turns and it swings open.

Naruto gapes and nearly drops the ramen. "*Uchiha? You live here?*"

"Ah, Uzumaki." He eyes Naruto's work clothes. "Nice to see you committing yourself to something."

Naruto growls and gestures towards the bag hanging from his hand.

"I never pinned you for the ramen type."

"Funny, I never pinned you for the delivery boy type."

"...Sasuke-kun? Is everything okay?"

A woman appears beside the raven and blinks at the sight of Naruto.

"Uzumaki-kun? Is that you?"

This time, Naruto does drop the ramen. He looks back at Sasuke.

"You're married to our *school nurse?*"

“Aa.”

“You’re married to *Sakura-chan*?”

“Aa.”

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Next chapter...

(Naruto and Kiba begin their punishment and Naruto makes a life-threatening mistake)

Naruto blinks as he looks up at the man.

The stranger smirks.

“I’m afraid my younger brother isn’t very...*fond* of me.”

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A/N: Right, so the preview is so obvious that it hurts.

So, any suggestions for Sasuke’s ‘condition’? I actually think I know what I’m gonna do, but if you can think of anything, feel free to share. I’ll give you credit for it if it’s used.

Pairing One Revealed: SasuSaku (come on. It was SO obvious if you know me at all)

Meh, school starts tomorrow! (sighs) No more summer...expect slower updates.

Next chapter is a BIG one.

So leave a BIG review if you want it.

5 - Miss Understood

A/N: Lurve you all.

Disclaimer: I'm not worth suing, so let me save you and your lawyer the trouble. I don't own Naruto and co.

Background:

Every day after school, The Group gathers in the office of their current Guidance Counselor to help them deal with their messed up lives and messed up problems. Naruto, the self-proclaimed leader and worst behaved of the six outcasts, always takes the job of scaring away the counselor that was sent there to help them. But when Sasuke takes the position, the blond is given a run for his money.

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M I S F I T

Miss Understood

-xxXXIXXxx-

"...Then, after he told me he wasn't paying for the ramen, 'cause I spilled it, he slammed the door in my face! Can you *believe* that bastard? Old man Sarutobi took the money out of my paycheck, too, and now I'll have to cut down on eating at Ichiraku's, and buying instant at the supermarket, and-

"Uzumaki. Shut. Up. I can hear your ranting from down the hall."

Sasuke enters his office, rubbing his temples. Naruto crosses his arms from where he stands next to Kiba, who looks thankful for the interruption.

"Well, it's the truth!"

"I know. I was there. I don't need to hear it again, and I'm sure the little mutt over there doesn't want a migraine either. Dog's have rather sensitive hearing."

Kiba bares his teeth and growls. He blinks for a moment and settles for a glare instead when he realizes just how canine-like the actions were.

"Who're you calling a dog?"

Sasuke points towards Kiba's backpack in the corner.

It's squirming.

As if on cue, Akamaru's head pops out, eyes squinting and grinning obliviously.

Naruto laughs as his friend desperately scrambles for an explanation.

"I only brought him here today! My sister Hana's away at college, and my mom had to go to a conference in America! I didn't have any other choice, I swear!"

Sasuke's sitting on the edge of the desk again, not even paying attention. A tug at the bottom of his slacks alerts him that Kiba's done talking.

The raven looks down and blinks.

The boy is now kneeling on the floor, his hands clasped together and his eyes pleading.

"Please don't take Akamaru away! I'll do anything, just don't take him away!"

"Why would I want your mutt, Inuzuka?"

The brunette's face lights up with a smile and he quickly stands, bowing.

"Arigato! Thanks a bunch, I don't know what I would've done if Jiraiya confiscated him again."

"Right, right," murmured the Uchiha.

Naruto glares from the Uchiha to his best friend, gritting his teeth.

Sasuke slightly jumps as a small buzzing noise fills the room. Cursing quietly, he reaches into the pocket of his pants and pulls out his small black cell phone.

His brow furrows when he looks at the number flashing on the screen and he presses the receive button warily.

Ignoring the inquisitive stares of the two students in front of him, he greets the caller.

"Kakashi? It's not like you to call this early. Especially when you know--"

His brow stays knitted as he's interrupted on the other line.

Naruto and Kiba watch in fascination as all color drains from his pale face and his eyes widen.

"I...when?"

He stares with wide eyes at the ground and fists his dark hair in a mixture of frustration and astonishment.

"No, I..." he has to pause to take a shaky breath before continuing, "I'll tell her...I-it's safer that way, I

think. I don't want him to..."

He seems to suddenly remember the presence of the two other boys, who are practically gaping at him now. His eyes snap up, and with a nod of his head that Kakashi can't see, he snaps the sleek phone shut.

Naruto can see that Sasuke's hands are shaking violently as he runs one through his hair.

The counselor takes a deep breath before speaking.

"Inuzuka, Uzumaki, just.... wait here. Do not move. I'll be back before the period's over and Ino's right outside if you need anything. Got it?"

They nod slowly and Sasuke walks briskly out of the room.

They hear Ino call out his name questioningly and Sasuke give her a curt, muted response.

The door slams behind him.

Kiba turns towards Naruto, who's still looking at the door that their counselor had just walked out of moments before.

"What the frack was *that* about?"

"I...don't know."

The blond's brow furrows further.

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It's ten minutes later, and Naruto's already gone through Sasuke's entire desk.

Kiba is still working at the lock on the faculty filing cabinet, where all employee records are kept.

"Oj, Naruto. Did you find anything in the desk?"

The blond shakes his head. "No. Nothing good, anyway."

Kiba grunts in a frustrated manner, twisting the lock at an impossible angle and yanking at it violently.

"Not even a key?"

Naruto laughs and lifts up something small and silver. It's on a similarly colored ring, which rests around his finger as the blond spins it.

"You mean like this?"

"You @\$\$ Why didn't you *tell* me you found it?"

Naruto shrugs. "I was bored. Your struggling was entertaining."

He throws Kiba the key as the brunet grumbles. "Sadist."

"Your welcome."

His dog-like friend replies by giving him the finger. He slips the key into the lock, turns it, and smirks when he hears the small click.

"Yosh!"

Naruto grins as he stands from Sasuke's seldom-used chair. He walks towards the door as he speaks.

"I'm gonna go ask Ino if she knows when Uchiha is coming back."

Kiba nods and yanks the drawer open with the enthusiasm of a five-year-old in a candy shop.

Naruto steps out of Sasuke's office and into the tiled waiting room. The receptionist desk is empty.

"That's weird," he murmurs. He walks farther out.

Ino's phone is off the hook; a container of open nail polish is tipped over. The metallic pink sits in a puddle around the small brush.

"That's really weird," he whispers, his eyes slightly wide. Ino wasn't the type to drop everything and run. Especially when it came to gossip and manicures.

He turns, fully expecting to go back into the Guidance counselor's office, when he hears an unfamiliar voice.

"Excuse me?" it asks. The voice is deep and dull.

Naruto turns, eyeing the man warily.

He is tall and slim, his hair dark and tied into a small tail at the nape of his neck. His eyes are dead and black. He has two identical tired lines under each and his skin is pale.

He looks kinda like Uchiha.

"Er...yes?"

"Do you happen to know where Uchiha Sasuke is at the moment? It's rather urgent."

The blond's eyes narrow, because this new guy seems like a sketchy character.

“Who wants to know?” he asks rudely.

The taller man doesn't blink. “His older brother.”

“Oh. Really?”

Before Naruto can take a nervous breath, the new guy is in front of him.

“Really.”

The shorter gulps, and tries to hide the fear coiling in the pit of his stomach. He nearly pees his pants.

“Well, if-if he's your family, shouldn't you know where he is?”

“I should, shouldn't I? But, the truth is...”

Naruto blinks as he looks up at the man.

The stranger smirks.

“I'm afraid my younger brother isn't very... *fond* of me.”

“Er...okay, then.”

The blond reaches over to Ino's desk, grabbing a sheet of white paper and her favorite pen (purple, feathers, glitter and googly-eyes cover it).

He scribbles down the address to Sasuke's apartment, from his ramen delivery last night.

He knows this man is a stranger, and therefore potentially dangerous, but he looks like Sasuke, and knows where Sasuke works, and says he's Sasuke's brother. Why not believe him?

And, in truth, Naruto just wants this guy to *leave*.

Besides, family members were safe people. It's not like Sasuke's own brother would hurt him.

“Here you go,” the blond says, handing the man the address. He can't explain exactly why at the moment, but he feels as though he's done something wrong when the dark stranger grips the paper with a smirk.

“Thank you, Uzumaki-kun.”

Before Naruto can ask him how he knows his name, the man is gone.

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Kiba's eyes widen as they pass over the Uchiha's file.

Naruto walks back into the office, looking bewildered and shaking his head.

“Dude! Come over here!”

Out of his stupor, the blond walks over to his friend.

“What?”

The brunet shoves the papers into his face impatiently.

“Read,” he commands.

Naruto looks down. His eyes move across the paper quickly, and he sits back down in Sasuke’s seat as he reads.

By the time he’s done going through each line and every word, down to the last punctuation mark, he is jumping out of the chair.

“Kuso, kuso, kuso, kuso! Why am I such an *idiot*?!”

The papers fall slowly to the ground.

Kiba’s brow furrows as he picks them up, places the back into the folder, and back into the faculty cabinet.

“What do you mean?” he asks.

Naruto’s breathing is ragged as he responds.

“I...he... His brother just came in here! I just gave him his address!”

Kiba’s eyes are wider than ever. His voice sounds small. “You...what?”

“And Sakura-chan is probably home by now, and Uchiha probably just got some call telling him his wacko brother escaped, and now he’s probably gonna be home, too, and his brother’s gonna be going there...*Kuso!*”

He races out of the room, Kiba close behind.

“What’re we gonna do?” the brunet asks, his voice scared.

“What do you think? We have to warn them!”

-xxXXIXXxx-

Sakura places the grocery bags down, in front of her door. Knowing she has to hurry, considering her

lunch break ends soon, she searches desperately for her keys.

She pats her back pockets, and looks through every section of her pocketbook.

“Where did I put them?”

She blinks as the door suddenly creaks open on its own.

That’s weird. I know I locked it this morning.

Leaving the groceries where they are, she takes a tentative step into her apartment.

“Sasuke-kun?” she calls, “Are you there?”

The only sound she can hear is the slow drip of a leaky faucet.

She flips the light switch on, wishing she had left the blinds open earlier.

“Hello, Sakura-chan.”

Her viridian eyes widen.

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Next Chapter...

(In which relief and distrust ensue tragedy)

“Naruto,” Sasuke says wearily, “Do you have any idea what you’ve done?”

The blond’s eyes remained trained on the ground.

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A/N: So, yeah, not as good as it could’ve been.

Gah, I’ve recently become obsessed with Bleach. Anyone else eagerly awaiting The DiamondDust Rebellion?

Things will be (mostly) cleared up next chapter, so don’t despair.

Oh, time for some shameless advertising. If you haven’t already checked it out, go read my newest oneshot. Called Glow, SasuSaku (naturally), and fluffy as marshmallows.

I happen to like it.

Reviews?

6 - Dream Catcher

A/N: SIMON! NOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

Ah-hem. Apologies. Just read Lord of the Flies (amazing piece of literature that it is) and found out the unfortunate and brutal death that my favorite character has gone through. I know how to pick 'em, eh?

Anyway, you wanna know why the updates are coming slower and slower? Because this story would most likely have triple the amount of reviews if all those who put it on one of their lists (favorites, alerts, you know the drill) just gave me one simple comment.

One. Simple. Comment.

But thanks to those who did review. Cyber-cookies for all.

'FLASHBACKS'

Disclaimer: Um. No. (You're jealous of my marvelous wit!)

Background:

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-xxXXIXXxx-

M I S F I T

Dream Catcher

-xxXXIXXxx-

"How did you get in here?"

The man on the couch waves a dismissive hand in Sakura's direction. "I let myself in."

He stands, and Sakura remains where she is. "But, why are you here? For Sasuke-kun?"

He smiles, and shrugs. "Just stopping by for a visit. Is that so wrong?"

She scowls. "When you're uninvited, yes. It certainly is."

“Gomen, gomen. I’ll give some warning next time. And when did you get so cold, Sakura-chan? I thought that was your husbands job.”

“Hn.” She sighs, and puts a slender hand on her hip.

He lifts an eyebrow, and she sighs again.

“Are you just going to stand there all day? Or do you want to help me with my bags?” She gestures towards the groceries that still sit out in the vacant hallway.

The man chuckles and walks forward. “Pushy as ever.”

She swats him lightly on the shoulder as he passes her, smiling, and asks, “Ne, what’s been going on up at the college, Kakashi-sensei?”

Kakashi bends down to pick up the bags, and Sakura takes them from his hands as he straightens. He randomly scratches the back of his head, his one visible eye curving into a happy arc, as he says, “Nothing of interest. You guys were much more fun to tease. These college students must have *something* shoved up *somewhere*, with how stiff they are. Very boring.”

He nods his head with his statement, and Sakura rolls her eyes.

“You haven’t changed one bit.”

“No, can’t say that I have.”

“Still reading those ‘romance novels’?”

“I’m insulted! You say that like enjoying a good piece of literature is a sin!”

“That disgusting orange book is not literature.” She sniffs and crosses her arms, before beginning to unpack the groceries. “It’s trash.”

Kakashi slowly shakes his head. “You wound me, Sakura-chan.”

Sakura throws a tomato at his head.

-xxXXIXXxx-

Sasuke races up the steel stairs, his shoes making a horrible clanging sound.

An ominous echo for him to ignore.

The elevator would have given him much too much time to think, and the static coming from the radio that spat out classical jazz would only serve as more paranoia.

He reaches the next landing. He keeps running. His footsteps keep echoing.

-xxXXIXXxx-

“Uchiha Sasuke to Guidance. Uchiha Sasuke to Guidance.”

His classmates snicker as he stands. He ignores the fact that they all whisper and try to hide their pointing fingers behind their cupped hands.

Sasuke strides out of the room before the teacher can blink, fingering a piece of paper in his pocket.

A hall pass, to go meet the new guidance counselor. He had received it in homeroom five periods ago.

So he could have proved his peers wrong. (He wasn't in trouble, for once.) But he didn't.

It's as he is walking down this deserted hallway, as his feet make a hard sound on the stupid tiled floors and bounce back to him from the stupid white walls, that he hears the scurrying.

And a voice.

“Why am I so late? My mom's going to kill me if she finds out! I'm so, so late!” *it groans.*

Sasuke vaguely recalls Alice in Wonderland, and the white rabbit with the pocket watch.

But one flurry of papers and body crashing into his later, all Sasuke can think about is how much he always hated fairytales.

His head hits the floor painfully, and he can see stars. He hears a worried voice hovering above him.

“Oh, no! Are you okay? I'm sorry, I wasn't watching where I was going, and then you were just there, and-“

He sits up, slowly, and rubs the back of his head.

“Shut. Up.”

The feminine voice doesn't respond, so he spares its owner a glance. It's a girl in his grade, with pink hair and eyes like-

(“Don't you just love green eyes, Sasuke?” his mother had called, airily laughing and pulling her young son onto her lap. She wrapped her arms around him in a tight embrace, and he squirmed towards her to see her smiling face. “They're so bright and exotic! And quite rare. They remind me of the ocean. What about you, Sasuke? What do green eyes remind you of?”)

-no, like-

(He bites his bottom lip, something he inherited from his mother, and thinks as hard as a five year old boy can think. “Green eyes are like...like...” His mother continues to smile as he struggles for an answer.

She places her hand on his head, and ruffles the raven hair that came from her. "You'll figure it out eventually." Sasuke blinks, but then smiles and nods eagerly. "Yeah, I will! Then I can tell kaachan, right?" She smiles back. "Of course, honey..."

-no...

The truth is, he doesn't know what her eyes look like.

But he recognizes the girl genius of the school. Haruno Sakura is her name.

He doesn't know much about her. But, judging from the fact that she's slowly standing, looking at him with increasing horror dawning on her pale face, he's pretty sure she knows who he is.

He stands, and it seems that is all that is needed to prove his thought. Because Haruno Sakura, with eyes like nothing Sasuke's ever seen, is running in the opposite direction and abandoning her scattered books and papers.

("...Because I'll always be there to hear it." She gives him a kiss on the forehead, and Sasuke forgets about green eyes for just a moment.)

-xxXXIXXxx-

"Kakashi, I'm going to *kill* you."

"You should be relieved, Sasuke. Not murderous."

Sakura's eyes flicker back and forth between the two males, confused. Her husband had swung open the door to their apartment just a moment ago. He had stopped to blink for a little bit before spotting Kakashi beside her and marching over to the two of them.

A quick smile to her, a few urgently whispered words with their former guidance counselor, and here they are now.

"What's going on?" she finally asks.

Sasuke's eye twitches (*Don't think I don't notice that smug look on your face, you pervert*) as he turns away from Kakashi.

"This *idiot* didn't tell you?"

She shakes her head ever so slowly.

Sasuke sighs.

"It's about Itachi. He-"

BANG. BANG. BANG.

“Uchiha! Open up! Sakura-chan! Anyone! Open the door! Open-”

Sakura fears for Naruto and Kiba’s health as Sasuke turns towards the door.

He yanks it open, catches Naruto’s still-knocking fist, and hisses, “*What* are you *doing* here?”

The blond student shoves the raven inside (after his azure eyes return back to normal size, of course), Kiba scurrying in behind them.

Sasuke whips back around and glares at Naruto, only to see his eyes on the floorboards.

He mutters something, and Sasuke leans in. “Repeat that.”

In a sudden surge of courage, the Uzumaki says, “Your brother came to see you after you were gone for a while. I told him your address. I didn’t read your file until afterwards.” It’s after taking a deep breath that he realizes he’s only making sense to himself. But he continues.

“He knows where you live. And I’m sorry.”

Sasuke’s arm shoots out to catch her before she even falls to the ground. Sakura had collapsed. But not fainted.

Fainting was too much of an easy way out at the moment.

She wraps her arms around her husband, her body shaking, as he kneels next to her on the rug.

The raven looks up.

“Naruto,” Sasuke says wearily, “Do you have any idea *what* you’ve done?”

The blond’s eyes remained trained on the ground.

Kiba wrings his hands uncomfortably.

“Wait,” comes Sakura’s weak voice.

Everyone turns to her as she looks towards the two teenagers.

“Ino.” She says simply. “She would’ve recognized him, I’m sure of it. She wouldn’t have let him into the office, she would’ve told someone he was there, or at least *warn* us. She would’ve done something about it, even if she never met Sasuke-kun’s brother in person. Where is she?”

Naruto’s eyes widen. “She wasn’t there when I saw him. The phone was off the hook and her nail polish was all over her desk.”

Sakura’s heart races faster than ever as she looks at Sasuke’s narrow, contemplating eyes.

“He wouldn’t...”

She looks hopelessly at the others for confirmation. She finds none.

Her voice is small (again).

“Would he?”

-xxXXIXXxx-

Next Chapter:

(Repairs are made, a mystery is solved)

“We’ll get through this, Sasuke-kun.”

She hugs the sleeping form of her husband, and wills the tears to go away.

“We’ve been through worse.”

-xxXXIXXxx-

A/N: So, yeah.

What do you think happened to Ino, hm?

And, I was thinking that I may or may not turn this into a series instead of a chapter story. Just a thought.