

Nikora Kirishima

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Nikky Kirishima, of The Village Hidden In The Heavens has fallen in love; How can she set aside her feelings for the older boy so she can focus on her studies? It's brains <3 as she tries to overcome <3, exams, and her newly found identity

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Chapter 1 - A Clarinet and Training	2
Chapter 2 - Finn Kokomo	3
Chapter 3 - Deciding from the Boy on the Swing	5
Chapter 4 - Moonlight Training	7
Chapter 5 - Returning	8
Chapter 6 - The First Dream	9
Chapter 7 - Dreams Jutsu?	12
Chapter 8 - The Festival	15
Chapter 9 - Fresh Air	17
Chapter 10 - Nikora's Secret Technique Revealed!	20
Chapter 11 - Kakashi Hatake	22
Chapter 12 - The Second Dream	24
Chapter 13 - Secrets Approved: Finn Kokomo	26
Chapter 14 - Finn the Flirt: Part 1	27
Chapter 15 - Finn the Flirt: Part 2	29
Chapter 16 - Finn the Flirt: Part 3	31
Chapter 17 - Gai-sensei (i.e. Your worst Nightmare)	32

1 - A Clarinet and Training

Nikora was a weak ninja from the Village Hidden in the Heavens.

She had no father and her mother had been away on business since she was five. Sometimes she would go to the outskirts of town to play her clarinet when she became nervous, afraid or angry. She had a few skills but was about to learn of her greatest skill of all...

Nikora's long brown hair flowed easily through the wind, she had tied it with a black thread (ribbons weren't her thing) to keep it out of her face while she played.

Each note floated out of the small black instrument and surrounded her like the clouds that surrounded the village all day long. Her reason for being there today was to calm herself with the music and train for the graduation test coming up. It was just a few simple targets! Why couldn't she get it right?!

She set down the clarinet and stood up. She had to pass...she knew she was weak- but not weak enough to fail.

Nikora had tacked a few green leaves to the trees. They were perfectly visible against the Autumn scenery. She removed her yellow and black jacket to reveal her dark blue tank top so that it wouldn't get caught in her needle as she threw like yesterday's practice with Finn.

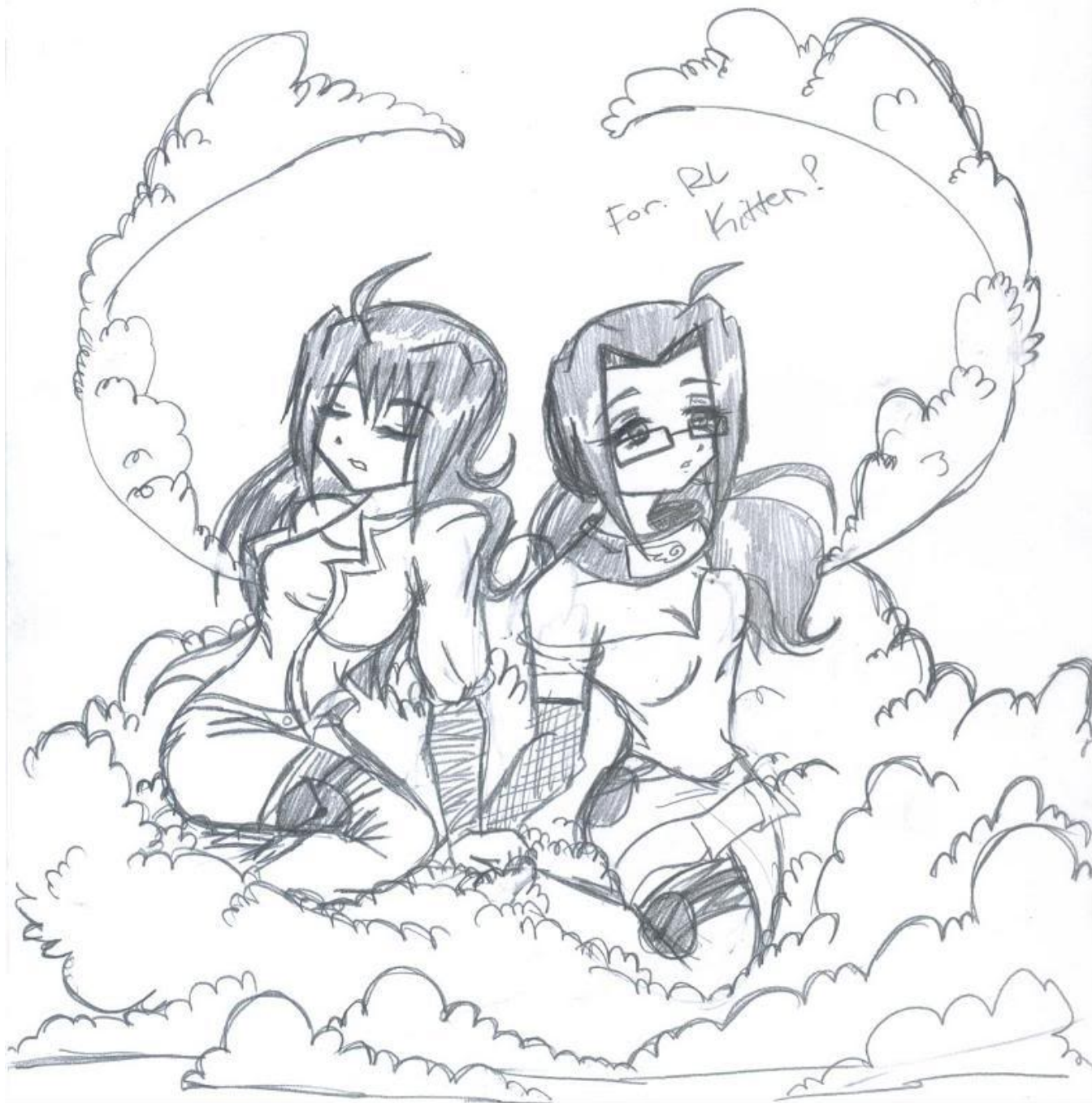
Her throat tightened at the thought of her best friend advancing before her. She was in an emotional mood, but she blinked back tears and tried to concentrate on her training, despite the fact that her vision was now blurred.

By the time Nikora returned to her apartment, the sun was long gone and the full moon was blanketed by clouds, once again. She collapsed on her bed without bothering to change out of her sweaty clothing.

{**no dinner again**} , Nikora sighed in her thoughts and she drifted into her usual nightmares of failing.

2 - Finn Kokomo

Enter:



Props to Dreamer5666666 for the pic!!

-----Finn Kokomo-----

'Wake up, Sunshine!' Finn joked as she tugged at Nikora's shirt.

'Uuuugh, it's Saturday...go away...' she groaned, but still smiled, despite herself.

'C'mon! Get dressed! We're going on a road trip!' Finn said, tugging a bit harder now.

'Where? Why?' Nikora managed to say while yawning.

Finn gave a surprised look as if to say, -You don't know ANYTHING, do you?!- and said 'The Village

Hidden in the Leaves, for the three day weekend! Schools out on Monday due to some sort of secret mission the teachers are going on-

'Secret mission?' Nikora asked puzzled.

'Yeah-a secret mission', Finn repeated, ' But that's not what's important! What's important is that WE have the day OFF and the Village hidden in the Leaves are having thier final exams today, and there are fire works afterwards! A festival, too!'

'A....festival?' Nikora asked dizzily,' We're leaving to go see fireworks? Why doesn't our village do fire works after exams?'

'Because of our elevation- who could possibly see fireworks through all of the clouds that surround Mount Lavanda?!, 'Finn responded,' Besides, you remember what the Hokage said- people shouldn't be out after dark! The temperatures can drop dramaticly and you could freeze to death! Why do you think our houses are so complex?! To keep us warm AND from DYING'

'Oh...' Nikora stammered.

'BUT,' Finn persisted,' THAT'S not important! Where are we? School? No, we're on HOLIDAY- now hurry up and get dressed!! We;re leaving in an hour!'

'I wouldn't think of it as a holiday, Finn,' Nikora argued,' This could be serious,' she said as she struggled to pull het shirt off.

'Oh, who cares, Nikky?!' Finn insisted while scrolling through Nikora's wordrobe,' If it was really important, the village officials would tell us!'

'Fine, whatever, Finn,' Nikora stated sarcastily while giving Finn a stern look through her sleeve.

'^_^ Nikky, really, everything will be fine! You'll see!'

Finn pulled Nikora's tank top on and assisted her woth picking out some suitable clothes for the trip and the two girls were soon in the back of Finn's parents' trailer playing 'Guess Who' and 'Connect Four' while struggling to keep each game upright with every bump and drop that occured.

'Hey Finn...' Nikora said,' do....do you think I'll pass the exams this Thursday?'

Finn looked up from the bag she had she had been going through- they were trying to find Finn's CD case.

'Hum.....Nikora...really, you're doing great..but...' Finn began, but Nikora cut her off.

'It's my technique again...isn't it?' Nikora whimpered and looked and the ground.

'No, Nikora! You just need more practice is all! You're very talented! You just need practice!! I'd like to help you train after school, but with the new Chunin classes I'm taking I just.....can't,' Finn sighed and zipped up the bag, forgetting about the CDs.

'It's okay, Finn...it's not your fault- I can find a tutor with the same schedule as me...,' Nikora looked up and Finn was surprised to see she was smiling,' I'll do great! I just know it! Like you said, just pracice, right?! ^_^'

Finn hesitated, but quickly replied,' Yeah, you'll do great!'

3 - Deciding from the Boy on the Swing

Enter:

'Ahhhh..' Nikora sighed, 'I just love the air here! Don't you just love the air, Finn?' Have you ever tasted air so clean?!' Nikora said gleefully as she stretched.

'And of course, Nikora notices the air, instead of the decorations...' Finn thought to herself, but replied, 'Yeah,' anyway.

'Come on you two! Unless you want to get left behind!' Mrs. Kokomo called from up ahead. 'we have to get checked into our motel before it gets filled up! You don't want to sleep in the car, do you?!'

'You go ahead, mom!' Finn shouted, 'We wanna go explore, we'll meet up with you there!' 'Fine!' her mother called back and waved as she walked away with Mr. Kokomo. 'C'mon, Nikky! ^_^' Finn said smiling as she hooked her arms around Nikora's and pulled her. 'So...where are we gonna go?' Nikora asked as they walked. 'I wanna see the academy....and the hotties!' Finn said with a perverted smile. 'Alright,' Nikora said, getting a little bit more interested now- even though she'd never had a crush on anyone since her mother had left.

'The cool thing is, they have their graduation tests before ours! Look! I think they just finished their ceremony!' Finn informed as they approached the fence that separated them from the laughing ninjas. 'Yeah...' Nikora said in deep thought, but Finn didn't notice her reply: 'WOW!' Finn said dreamily, 'Look at all the ninja hotties!! A cute one in blue and white over there! And one in gray with a fishnet looking shirt! And a guy with a dog in his shirt...and that guy with shades....' she continued as Nikora stared at something else. 'Jack pot! Eh, Nikky? Nikky?' Finn glanced at Nikora and strained her neck to see where she was looking. 'He...I guess he's the only one who didn't graduate?' Nikora choked. A boy in an orange and blue jumpsuit sat sideways on a swing with his forehead resting on the chain and staring blankly into the crowd of graduated students. 'Oh.....how sad....well, he'll get a chance next year! Won't he, Nikky? Now, C'mon, lets go,' Finn assured her and tugged her along so she wouldn't become too depressed. As Nikora walked away, she looked back and waved a little, hardly noticeable wave, but quickly turned her head when she noticed his eyes on herself. Then, she looked back again, but the boy was gone. On the way back to the hotel, Finn chatted about how much fun they'd have this weekend, and Nikora answered, but wasn't really 'into' the conversation, her mind was elsewhere. Her mind was with the boy she had seen. 'The finals...they're only three days away....I can't be wasting time like this...' she thought to herself. And so she decided. She was going to train tonight. When the Kokomos were asleep.

4 - Moonlight Training

The outline of a person in front of the window soon moved out of sight. A door slowly creaked open and then closed.

"Phew," Nikora thought outloud, "None of them woke up while I was getting ready. Good."

She often did this when she was alone, and continued to speak to herself until, as she neared her destination, a loud crash erupted from a nearby shop and sharp curses were thrown at what seemed to be a fight between two men. Nikora quickly shut her mouth and scurried to the alleyway only a few yards ahead that led into the village outskirts.

She looked back over her shoulder, though she wasn't really expecting whoever had been yelling to follow her, and then decided to get to work. To her great astonishment, a straw dummy was set up nearby, next to a tall log that had apparently been given a thrall beating as it was indented on both sides. Nikora tried hard not to think about what kind of powerful shinobi must have trained here and decided to use the things to her advantage.

She trained on into the night, only able to see the targets by moonlight, but Nikora accepted the extra challenge. Soon birds started to chirp and the sky was only just barely becoming light, realizing this, Nikora hastily gather up her kunai and shurikan from the dummy, making sure not to mess it up, since it wasn't hers and took off for the inn, when all of a sudden-

"Aaaauoooooww!!" Nikora found herself screaming in surprise and pain as she hit what seemed to be another person and was sent plummeting to the ground.

"I'm so sorry! Are you alright? I did not think-. I mean-. It's just so early I-."

"Uhm- I'm fine," Nikora said painfully, resisting the temptation to rub her aching butt.

"Oh- good. Then, please let me help you up. My name's Lee, by the way."

5 - Returning

Enter:



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Once she was standing, she was able to get a better look at who had slammed into her.

The boy had black hair, cut into a bob and was wearing what looked like a green jumpsuit with orange legwarmers.

"I'm Nikora Kirishima- whoa!" she exclaimed, cutting herself off.

"What?" Lee said in alarm.

"Oh...um...nothing," Nikora said, tearing her view from just above his eyes down to the ground.

He seemed to figure out what she'd been staring at on his own, because he then said, in a very irritated, but embarrassed way, "Well, I better go."

He quickly side stepped and then took off at the same pace he'd been going at, from the looks of it. It wasn't until just seconds before he took off after sidestepping when she'd noticed the Leaf Village headband tied around his waist.

This left her thinking to herself for a couple seconds with major anxiety over the finals once again, but, with great effort, she pushed the thought out of her mind and took off in a steady sprint (so she didn't look to tired when she got back) for the inn once again, with every intention to sleep.

When she got back, she quickly checked each bed to see if everyone was still sleeping. Mrs. Kokomo, check. Mr. Kokomo, check. Finn, check. Thankfully each of them were still sleeping soundly. Nikora changed her clothes, with much resentment-as she was so tired that she wished she could just crash with them on as always, and fell asleep almost the instant her head hit the pillow.



## 6 - The First Dream



"Nikora."

"Huh?"

"Nikora," the voice echoed once more.

"What-? who-?" Nikora said. Darkness surrounded her and she could see nothing and could only hear

the echo of the voice as it faded.

"Nikora, please....Believe in yourself," the voice seemed to belong to a woman.

Nikora gulped and broke into a cold sweat, she didn't know why or what made her do it, but she found herself calling out to the Darkness, but no words issued from her mouth as she attempted to say what she wished.

"Your abilities. They put all others beneath you. In your Village, you master all."

What? This wasn't making any sense. Where was she? Who was talking? And what did they mean by saying her abilities put her above all the rest??

"Nikora...search within yourself....and when you are ready.....do as I say-"

"Wha-," Nikora started to soundlessly say, but then someone stepped out of the darkness, however, Nikora could only make out an outline.

"Ox. Tiger. Boar. Rooster. Rooster. Monkey. Dog Ram. Dragon. Ox. Dragon."

Nikora recognized these as names for ninja hand signs. Was she supposed to do them?

She set her hand into position, but, without her noticing, the person had somehow come to be standing right in front of her, and they put their hand out to stop Nikora. Their skin was cold as ice and made Nikora start in alarm and look up into the darkened face of the person.

"Not now."

Nikora then suddenly felt the floor beneath her vanish as the person disappeared into fog.

Nikora tried once more to say the word she'd wanted to before, and this time succeeded, "Mom!!!"

"Hey, Nikora! C'mon we're going soon! Wake up! You've been sleeping practically all day!"

This voice did not belong to the person from before. Nikora opened her eyes to see Finn towering over her with her arms crossed and a kimono draped over her shoulder.

"A...dream?" Nikora thought to herself, blinking against the bright room.

"Good. You're awake", Finn said, and with that, she dumped the kimono on top of Nikora's head and stalked off, still talking, "We've got two hours before the festival! Now go take a shower! Because seriously....you stink!!"

"Heh, You don't exactly smell like flowers and daisies yourself, Finny K!!" Nikora shot back, and was then tackled by Finn.



## 7 - Dreams Jutsu?

After wrestling on the floor for a short while (Mr. and Mrs. Kokomo quickly made the two split up after they almost knocked over a lamp), the two locked themselves in the bathroom and got to work.

Nikora and Finn started with admiring each others kimono. Even though Nikora was still tired from training, it didn't stand in her way from having fun.

"So, really, Nikora- why did you sleep in so late?" Finn said while making two braids on either side of Nikora's head, "Are you always that lazy?"

Nikora smirked and said sarcastically, "Oh, and like YOU weren't ever late back at the academy?"

Finn laughed and said, "Oh, being in the Academy was fun!! I actually almost MISS Fumi-sensei's long lectures about being punctual."

"Yeah, well at the rate I'm going, Fumi-sensei will be giving me lectures on why it's bad to fail grad. every year of my life," Nikora said, her face becoming slightly solemn.

Finn paused and stopped braiding for a moment and then said, "Nikora.....you just need to believe in yourself."

Nikora's eyes widened, did she somehow know about her dream? No, it was unlikely, but nonetheless- Nikora was then reminded of the strange dream.

"Hey, Finn..."

"Yeah?" Finn asked.

"Do-.....do you know anything about jutsus having to do with.....dreams?" Nikora finally said.

"Hm," Finn said narrowing her eyes, as Nikora could see in the mirror.

"What?" Nikora said, a slight chuckle in her voice.

" *Someone* hasn't been reading their Heavens Village History Book."

"Well...," Nikora said with a sweatdrop, " Let's just say it slipped my mind. Now- do you know anything or not?"

"Hm," Finn snorted, " Fine."

"Enlighten me, Finn-sensei!" Nikora said gleefully.

"The first Hokage of the Village Hidden in the Leaves, as you SHOULD know, is Asami (meaning 'morning beauty') Haruka (meaning 'far off') founded our Village only 100 years ago. Her daughter, Hideko (meaning 'splendid child') was our Hokage until 12 years ago, when she mysteriously vanished leaving behind only a note listing who was to be the next Hokage- Hotaru ('firefly' or 'lightning bug') Jun ('obediant'). As I'm absolutely POSITIVE you know- Hotaru Jun....right?" Finn said with sarcastic uncertainty.

"Yeah, yeah- our current Hokage," Nikora said, a little annoyed at this.

"Well, anyway, Asumi Haruka and where she came from remain a mystery to all of the people. Even Lord Hokage, Hotaru, doesn't know. The elders of the village, or so they say, said that they remembered Asumi as a beautiful woman, even in old age, but, of course, all those elders would have been ignorant children back then. But," said Finn, shrugging, "That's what's written in our history books so-

"What else can we believe, right?" Nikora piped in.

"Hm," Finn said nodding.

"But what does that have to do with dream jutsus?"

"Lord Asumi, probably the one who discovered all of the original jutsu we have now, created a special type of jutsu."

"Special type?"

"Yes, one that we call, the "Mind Entrance Jutsu". She only ever taught this technique to two people," Finn said, holding up her index and middle finger, " Her daughter, Hideko,"she put down her middle finger," and a young man, who was thought to be her lover," she put down the other finger," However, that's another story. The fact is, only three people in the world knew the jutsu."

"So what was the point of this jutsu? What did it do?" Nikora asked eagerly.

" The jutsu is the reason we've had so much peace within our Village. Asumi and Hideko, as Hokages used the jutsu to enter into people's dreams and practically brainwash them with nightmares until they submitted to whatever it was they were suppose to do."

"That's terrible," Nikora said resentfully.

"But, wait- there's more," said Finn with a knowing smile as she pinned a blossom to the beautiful bun she'd made with the braids on top of Nikora's head," Leaders of other nations who were planning to do war with our village would have nightmare after nightmare of their Village crumbling from defeat, should they challenge our village of the Heavens. This resolved many matters, as most leaders fell back in fear that thier dreams, which had happened an unnatural amount of times, would come true."

Nikora only nodded at Finn in the mirror, who was now working her own hair into two buns on top of her head. This wasn't making sense. Maybe her dream really hadn't had anything to do with any of this. Maybe it was just another silly dream that people get sometimes...maybe...

"Girls! Ten minutes!" Mrs. Kokomo's voice rang out from the other room.

"Kay, Mom!" Finn called back, then quickly leaned closer to the mirror as she applied some lipstick.

Once she was done, she held it out for Nikora, who shook her head in a sarcastic sneer.

"Alright, then," Finn said, twisting the lipstick and capping it, "Let's go."

Nikora smiled and took one last look at herself in the mirror before following her out of the bathroom. Tonight wasn't a night for worrying. Tonight she was going to relax and take a load off from this dreaming and exams trouble. Tonight it was just her and Finn.

## 8 - The Festival

Nikora couldn't remember ever having so much fun. Finn and her went around to each of the shops, where most were giving out free samples and things. They played games, none of which Nikora actually won, but were fun all the same.

It wasn't until half-way through all the fun that Nikora caught a glimpse of the boy she'd ran into that morning. They had been headed for the Cafe when she saw him so, she quickly asked the Kokomo's if she could catch up with them in just a sec.

"Oh! I'll go with you-" Finn started, but then stopped when she caught a glimpse Nikora's look.

She gave a quizzical look, followed by Nikora mouthing the words, "I'll explain later" and then she took off for where she'd last seen him. As she searched, she thought about how she'd have to make up a story to tell Finn later on.

"Aha!" Nikora thought to herself.

She saw the boy helping some lady with large bag over to a table. Nikora waited for him to finish before approaching him shyly, with her hands behind her back.

"Y-you!" Lee said, when Nikora was standing right in front of him.

"L-listen....," Nikora started, blushing furiously and looking at her feet, "I-I'm sorry about this morning....I was being really rude and I- I-"

Nikora looked up into his face, which looked very serious, like he was taking in every single word, "I didn't mean to hurt your feeling or anything. I'm sorry."

What happened next surprised her and caused her to blush even more. Lee's eyes were filling with tears and he then lurched forward, embracing her in a hug.

Nikora just stared into space, completely thunderstruck. What the heck was he doing?!

"No one has ever- You- Thanks!!!" she heard him say.

BAM!

"You slimy no-good CREEP!" Finn's voice shouted, "Get offa her!!!"

Lee, who had face-planted into the ground, was now pulling himself up and rubbing the back of his head, where a bump had appeared.

"F-Finn!" Nikora said in astonishment.

"Ahh! Yes! Finn saves the day!" she said triumphantly, but then her jaw dropped when she saw what Nikora was doing, "Are you crazy?!"

"Lee? Are you okay?!" Nikora said, horrified, while rubbing Lee's shoulder.

"I'm sorry- I'm sorry- I'm sorry- I'm sorry," Lee continued muttering to himself.

"Finn!" Nikora said, turning on Finn, "What was that for? He was jus' thanking me! And didn't I tell you not to come?!"

"Yeah but-"

"I can take care of myself, thanks," Nikora said, narrowing her eyes.

Ignoring her previous comment with a grin, she said, "Who is this guy anyway?"

"This is Lee and-"

"She was just-"

"I ACCIDENTALLY stepped on his foot just now, causing him to trip- and that's how he fell so- you see, this is all just one big misunderstanding!!!" Nikora said, speaking over Lee.

Finn blushed, looking VERY embarrassed and said, "Oh...I'm sorry!"

"Uh...it's..o-kay?" Lee said, looking confused.

"Well, we better go-" Nikora said, grabbing Finn's arms, "Bye!"

And with that, she left Lee standing all alone, rubbing the back of his head as if he might have just bumped it too hard.

When they finally arrived at the Cafe, where Mr. and Mrs. Kokomo were impatiently waiting, they had made up and were content once again.

Nikora's conscience had been lifted, since she'd apologized, but her and Finn's little fight back there had made her worry, even as she laughed along with Finn at the table they were eating at. Why hadn't she trusted her? Nikora was just as old as she was and really could take care of herself. Just because Finn had graduated before her didn't mean that she could watch over Nikora like a little kid.

Nikora tried pushing the thought out of her head as she continued to try enjoying the night.



## 9 - Fresh Air

.. Enter:

.....

..Nikora sighed and pulled her hair out of it's bun as she tumbled onto the bed.

"What a night!" she wailed while running her fingers through her now undone hair.

"I know," Finn agreed, undoing her own as well.

"I can't wait to be home," Nikora said dreamily, thinking of her own cozy bed at home.

"Especially with you bumping into that Lee character AND lying to me," said Finn.

"What?" Nikora asked, trying to sound innocent, but the panic was written all over her face.

"First you told me that he was thanking you, and THEN you tell me he just tripped- so which is it, Nikky? C'mon, trust me! I'm your best friend!!"

Nikora flushed, trying to remember exactly what she'd said. Had she really made the mistake of saying both reasons?

"Ugh, I don't know what you're talking about," Nikora said, wanting the subject to end.

"Nikora-" Finn started sternly.

"I'm going for a walk," Nikora said, cutting her off, "I just need some fresh air."

Finn paused, with a concerned, almost motherly look in her eye, before saying, "Fine."

Had Finn always looked at her like that? Was she just noticing this now?

"It's not like she's my mom or anything," Nikora said to herself, halfway down the hall, "I-I mean she just needs to give me my space!!"

And why was all this happening now?! As if it wasn't enough to worry about exams.

Nikora opened the door to the inn and stepped out into the night breeze. The streets were cleared of all people. The decorations were gone. It was above all, a perfect night for a stroll.

Nikora watched as the few houses whose lights were still on eventually went out. She only planned on walking down the street, but found herself wandering into the forest.

She climbed up into a tree and looked up at the night sky for a small while while, knowing that the Kokomos' would worry if she stayed too long.

Finally she decided she'd had enough fresh air, and headed back. On the way, however, she noticed a boy walking down the deserted street. He had long brown hair and pale blue eyes. Nikora was somehow captivated with them, but what the boy said next quickly pushed her feelings aside.

"Someone as weak as yourself shouldn't be wandering the Village this late at night."

Nikora, who was usually pretty shy, shot back, "Someone as ugly as you shouldn't be wandering the Village either!"

The boy frowned and said, "Your not from around here. Who are you?"

"None of your business," Nikora said, and stuck her tongue out, just for effect.

"Ugh," he said in disgust, "Go away, I don't have time to deal with losers like you. I can already see through your little act. You're a failure, just like so many people I know."

He then walked coolly past her, leaving Nikora speechless. She shook with rage and could feel the tears coming.

"No...", she growled, "NO!"

She then swung around and, without thinking, tossed a kunai at him. The boy quickly dodged it and swung around himself.

"So? You want to fight me do you?" he said.

"I am Nikora Kirishima, of the Village Hidden in the Heavens. And I'm gonna make you wish you'd never called ME a failure!!"

"I'm Neji Hyuga, of the Hyuga Clan. And this battle...is already won."

## 10 - Nikora's Secret Technique Revealed!

"You jerk! I'd like to see you even come close to beating me!" Nikora said, but as soon as the words escaped her lips, she regretted it.

Could she really beat the Neji guy? She knew she was overconfident, but...

"By the looks of it, you're doubting yourself already," he said with a smirk.

"Oh yeah?!" Nikora growled, and she then lurched forward, three shurikan being held in each hand between her fingers.

Neji, as fast as lightning, merely leaned to the side, dodging her easily, but Nikora knew what to do.

She started to slam her shurikan-armed fists down on his legs while twisting her body towards him after the intended miss.

Just then, right before impact, she felt two sharp pains on each side of her collar bone.

"Agh!" Nikora said, wincing and dropping her shurikan immediately.

Neji, meanwhile, jumped back as Nikora proceeded to crash into the ground. What just happened?!?!

"You see- it's impossible to beat me," he said while flying backward, "I can already see you're- AGGH!!!"

Nikora had been trained not to allow an enemy to brag. She'd never understood why Fumi-sensei had taught her this until now. Gloating merely lowered their guard.

The six shurikan Nikora had dropped were now stabbing the soles of Neji's feet. Nikora had never explained her unique fighting style to anyone, not even Finn. Nikora was addicted to puppet mastery, although she wasn't very good at it. She discovered this technique near her third or fourth years at the Heavens Academy.

"What?!" Neji exclaimed, wincing in pain, "Strings of chakra?"

Indeed, six long strings connected Nikora's fingertips with the six shurikan sinking into Neji's feet, straight through his shoes.

After taking a few puppet mastery classes, Nikora had become aware that she'd never be able to channel her chakra to a puppet in order to make it move the way she wished. Instead, she decided on a different approach. Moving weapons, which were smaller and easier to control.

"Hmph," Nikora smirked in satisfaction while getting up off the ground, "I attached my chakra strings to those shurikan after dropping them and positioned them so you'd land right on top."

"Rgh," Neji clenched his fist.

"Incredible," he thought, "Using chakra to control her shurikan unpredictably, but this fight has gone on long enough."

"Not that this hasn't been fun and all," Neji said, "But it's time to finish you off and teach you a lesson."

Nikora scowled at him, disappointed that her trick hadn't been as effective as hoped. Neji put his left foot up onto his right knee and quickly pulled the shurikan out, before gasping in disbelief.

"One hit was all I really needed," Nikora said, smiling.

A light yellow liquid dripped off the tip of each shurikan now held in Neji's hand.

"What is this?!" Neji said, "Poison?"

"Not just any poison," Nikora said, "It isn't quite as effective as most are. Fortunately for you, I'm not into the whole "kill-everyone-I-see" gig. All this will probably do is...well..."

"What?" Neji demanded, throwing the shurikan on the ground and quickly proceeding to remove the others.

"Well...let's just hope you like the color-," But before she could finish, a man dressed in a light green vest appeared in a whirlwind of leaves.

Nikora and Neji both put their arms up to cover their faces against the gust of wind.

"Alright you two. Break it up. Save it for another day, it's late and I'm sure you don't want any more Jonin like me waking up to racket like this. They may not be so merciful."

"Who- who are you?" Nikora said, putting her arms down.

## 11 - Kakashi Hatake

"Hm?" said the man, now looking entirely at her, causing Nikora to blush, "Hm...I'm Kakashi Hatake, but I think the real question here is who are you?"

Nikora blinked and said, "What?"

Who did this guy think he was?

Kakashi sighed, causing his already bored eyes to look even more lazy, "Let me try putting this in a way that you can understand. Whhhoooo," he started slowly, "arre yooouu."

Neji smirked as Kakashi pointed to Nikora with both hands while finishing his sentence.

Nikora's face was deep red, either with rage or embarrassment, but it didn't really matter. Any second now, she knew Neji would be going to cry out-

"What the-?! What's happening?!"

"Huh?" Kakashi said, turning to Neji, "Uhm..."

Neji's feet were quickly becoming a deep shade of orange. and it was creeping up his leg as Kakashi stared at him. Kakashi didn't seem very surprised, but rather curious about what was happening.

Nikora laughed and then put on a sarcastically serious face, "Hey, Neji- you're turning orange."

Neji frowned and lunged at her, cursing under his breath, but Kakashi grabbed him by the back of his shirt as he whizzed by towards Nikora.

"Now, what did I say? Stop, right? Neji, you're one of Gai's right?" Kakashi said, seeming irritated.

"Yes, sir," Neji said, glaring at Kakashi.

"Well then, if I'm correct- he has early morning- and I mean very early morning- training sessions with your team. Riiight?"

"Yes," Neji said, now glaring at Nikora.

"Then you should be getting home right now. If you have to wake up early, then the best way is to get to bed early as well. I'm sure he's told you all that."

"Ye-"

"So get out of here. Go home," Kakashi said and shoved Neji the opposite direction of Nikora.

Neji stumbled forward and then muttered under his breath and walked coolly away, rubbing his hands, which were now becoming orange, too.

As Nikora watched his back along with Kakashi, she was suddenly feeling sorry for the boy. That poison would, of course, only change the color of his skin and didn't wear off for a couple of hours. She hoped it would wear off by the time he has to train.

"Uh...Hey!" Nikora suddenly called after him, surprised that the words were really leaving her own mouth.

"What?" he said sharply, not turning around.

"I'm....I'm sorry," Nikora looked at the ground, even though she knew Neji wasn't staring at her, "It wears off in...a couple of hours."

She looked up to see Neji walking away again. Whether he'd heard her now depended fully on him. She turned to Kakashi and sighed.

"I'm Nikora Kirishima, I'm visiting here with my friend, Finn Kokomo, and her parents."

"Ah, . I heard his family might be visiting here for the festival. Well, let me walk you home."

Nikora hastily collected her poisoned shurikan, cleaned them off, and restored them to their holster.

"That poison," Kakashi said as they began to walk, "I've never seen anything like it."

"I invented it," Nikora said proudly.

"Hm," Kakashi said, giving her a disapproving look.

Nikora, being very offended by this, said nothing in return. That's how it continued- complete silence until they reached the Inn.

"See ya," Kakashi said casually, and looked as if he was smiling beneath his mask.

Nikora only waved her hand and then turned to go inside. Her fingers curled around the door handle when she stopped, remembering the "fight" she'd had with Finn. She wanted more than anything to just walk into the hotel room and tell Finn all about what had happened but...

"She'll just start fussing over my safety, as always," Nikora whispered to herself, but after that decided to remain talking in thought, as her voice sounded strange with the silent night.

"I'm not going to tell her anything."

She then proceeded to open the door and make her way slowly to their room.

## 12 - The Second Dream

The room was dark, so Nikora assumed they'd all gone to sleep, but suddenly the light clicked on, revealing Finn leaning up against the wall just by the switch.

Nikora jumped, "Oh, it's you. Geez don't scare me like that! You almost gave me a he-"

"Where've you been?" Finn said, standing up straight.

"I told you I was just taking a walk-"

"Nikora, don't lie to me! It's been over an hour!" Finn said, clenching her fists by her side.

"Finn, you're not my mother," Nikora said, her voice shaking, " I don't need you to-"

"But I am your friend," Finn pleaded, putting her hands on Nikora's shoulders.

Nikora sighed, "It's fine, Finn. I guess I just wasn't paying attention to the time. Sorry."

Finn looked into Nikora's eyes as if trying to find the true answer, but, deciding that Nikora wasn't going to reveal anything, she turned away and headed for her bed.

"Whatever, Nikky, okay?"

Nikora said nothing in return and made her way to her own bed. How had such a joyous night suddenly become so...horrible. Not to mention Nikora's collarbone still hurt where that kid had hit her.

"Hey, where are your parents?" Nikora said, just now realizing that they hadn't been there.

"Out," Finn replied haughtily, resistant to fully answer any of Nikora's questions, just as she'd done to her.

"Oh..." Nikora said, and nothing else was said after that.

She slowly pulled on her pajamas and sunk under her covers, exhausted from all the night's events. She found herself staring up at where the ceiling was, even though the room was pitch black.

Suddenly, Nikora realized, purple swirls were appearing in front of her. They were beautiful and Nikora found herself mesmerized by them. Soon she was putting both her arms up as she laid in her bed, trying to catch the purple swirls.

"Nikora!!!" Finn's voice suddenly screamed.

"What?" Nikora said, jolting upright and looking over at her. For some reason the entire room was black, but she could still see Finn and her bed.



It didn't take long for Nikora to figure out just "what" Finn was screaming about, however.

Finn stood up in her bed and started stepping backwards, towards Nikora.

"F-Finn?" Nikora stuttered, starting to rise herself.

The same outline from her first dream was clearly visible, stepping ominously towards the two girls.

However, this time Nikora was able to make out more details. What looked like a long blue kimono blew in what seemed like wind, but Nikora couldn't feel anything. The face was completely darkened from the person's bangs. Nikora could tell it was a woman approaching them...but who was it?

Nikora, now fully standing, tried calling out to Finn, to tell her to run, but, just as before, she was unable to make a sound.

The figure then, in one swift movement, grabbed Finn by the front of her shirt. Nikora screamed soundlessly, but could only hear Finn's screaming struggle to get away.

The woman then somehow....went into Finn. She scooped her hand upward into Finn's and then shifted her body towards the rest of her. Finn dropped to the ground.

Nikora quickly rushed forward to the seemingly unconscious Finn.

"Finn...," Nikora began sobbing, her voice was now clearly echoing in the Darkness, "Finn!"

She looked into Finn's face tears running down her cheeks.

Then Finn's eyes snapped open, red and glowing.

Nikora screamed and then found herself twisting within her bed, her blanket rapped tightly around her like a straight jacket. She bolted upright and stared around.

It was still dark, but the moon from the window still provided light for Nikora to see Finn dozing and her parents returned to their own beds.

"The Second Dream..," Nikora whispered.

## 13 - Secrets Approved: Finn Kokomo

When morning arrived, Nikora was the first to know. She hadn't had the courage to go back to sleep.

She pretended to be dozing, but with one eye open, as she watched Mr.Kokomo wake up and head for the bathroom. She watched Mrs. Kokomo wake up and start watching the bed. She listened to the two of them talk about going home softly when Mr. Kokomo came back.

She then closed both of her eyes and envisioned her own parents doing things like them. She found herself burning with a sudden surge of jealousy towards Finn that just wouldn't fade away.

She laid there, trying to get the coveting thoughts out of her mind until Finn, herself, woke up.

"Morning, Finn," Nikora said, fake yawning.

"Hm," Finn replying coolly, but it lacked the harshness intended due to the morning time. Mr. and Mrs. K went down to the lobby to check out after packing away all thier things, leaving Finn and Nikora alone, packing and folding in silence.

Althought Finn's feelings stayed the same, Nikora's previous dream had given her some compasion towards Finn, even though it had never really happened.

"I'm sorry," Nikora finally said, throwing down her kimono she'd been folding, "I...I'll tell you about last night..."

Finn didn't look up at Nikora, but paused and stared blankly into the shirt she'd been folding. Nikora actually wondered if she was going to reply at all until Finn looked up with a smile, "Nikky, it's alright. I overreacted. I was being nosy. You don't have to tell me anything."

"But-" Nikora insisted.

"Nikky, even friends keep secrets from each other. We don't have a pact or anything."

"I know, but..."

Just then, Mrs. Kokomo burst through the door, jubilent and happy- completely not matching the current mood.

"Alright- Daiki is coming around with the wagon, so lets get this stuff loaded up and go."

Finn and Nikora looked at each other and smiled, "Okay," they said in slightly off unison.

## 14 - Finn the Flirt: Part 1

Nikora was loaded up with stuff and let out a deep sigh of relief as she dumped it into the back.

"Well, that's the last of it," Mrs. Kokomo said and then glanced at her watch, "Looks like we'll have some time left over...you girls wanna go-"

But before she could finish, Finn and Nikora had taken off and were waving.

"Be back be 12!!" Mrs. Kokomo called after them.

"So," Finn started, "Where to?"

"I actually do have a place in mind..," Nikora said thoughtfully.

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"Okay...," Finn said looking around, "And why are we here again?"

The two girls stood just by a clearing in the forest, the sun was now fairly high in the sky, giving the trees around them an average and dull appearance.

"Shh," Nikora said and approached a bush separating them from the clearing.

As quietly as possible, she separated them and gazed out to see just what she'd expected.

Rock Lee, the boy from the previous day, was standing there, kicking the tree stump that Nikora had seen during her night of training. So it was him. He was the one who damaged the tree stump!

Finn came up next to her and gasped, "Hey!! It's that guy from the festival!!!"

Then she turned and gave a perverted smile to Nikora, "Too bad for you-" she said and moved the bushes a little ways, revealing a girl with two brown haired buns on either side of her head and a pink shirt.

"What are you-" Nikora started, and then, realizing what Finn had meant, jabbed her hard in the ribs.

While Finn had tumbled backward into silent laughter and giggling, Nikora moved the bushes further, then gasped.

"What?" Finn said, wiping some tears of laughter away, "What is it?"

She moved her head right next to Nikora's to see where she was looking.

"Who is THAT?" Finn said with emphasize.

"I...I don't know, Nikora said turning away."

Sure enough, Neji Hyuga, the boy she'd battled the previous night was throwing shurikan at a dummy, and was his normal color again.

Then she heard some distant talking behind her, when she realized who the voice belonged to, she whirled back around, her eyes wide.

Finn was striding out towards Neji, speaking in the way Nikora knew well and walking to match.

"Flirt," Nikora thought, her face turning red in humiliation.

## 15 - Finn the Flirt: Part 2

"Hello," Finn said with a smile, looking her up and down, as Neji stopped throwing shuikan to look at her.

"Hm," Neji said, nodding towards her. The brown-haired girl and Lee had both stopped training and looked suspiciously at the new girl who had suddenly appeared.

"My names Finn," Finn said, before Neji could turn back to his shurikan throwing.

When Neji said nothing in return, Finn continued, "So, are you, by chance, going for the chuunin exams soon?"

This seemed to spark a little bit of interest as Neji turned a little more towards her, "Yes."

"Oh- that's really neat!" Finn said smiling and batting her eyelashes. Nikora put her hands over her mouth to prevent her giggles from escaping, Finn always did this, but for some reason, batting her eyelashes always worked.

"So, I'll see you there then!" Finn said, smiling wider.

"I really don't need more spectators," Neji replied harshly.

Finn blushed, "No, I'm taking the Chuunin Exams. I've been training since September, when I graduated early."

Neji rolled his eyes. "Good for you."

Finn's hair seemed on end at this and Nikora saw her clench her fist, "Look, if you don't believe me, let's have a bout- right here and right now!"

Neji sighed and said as-matter-of-factly, "Your not worth my time," and turned back to his training.

Nikora noticed that the brown haired girl had her arms folded while Lee was watching with great intent.

Finn put her hands on her hips glared at him. She then turned away on her heel and stomped back towards the bushes.

As she passed Nikora, she pulled her up into standing position and said, he's not as cute as I thought.

Nikora giggled and went to follow Finn.

"Hey!!" a voice called behind her. It was the brown haired girl. She was jogging towards them, "I'm really sorry about Neji. He's just....well, Neji."

"No, it's fine," Finn said haughtily, "I was just-"

"Hey!!" a second voice called behind her, this time it was Neji.

"What do you want?" Nikora said, trying to sound as rude as possible, "Didn't like the color orange? Would prefer purple?"

Neji was walking towards them and said, ignoring Nikora's rude remark, "I want to finish that battle we started."

Nikora was in complete horror as Finn turned to her and said, "What battle?"

## 16 - Finn the Flirt: Part 3

"I don't know what what he's talking about," Nikora said, trying to look as clueless as possible, but before she could turn away, Lee suddenly appeared next to the brown haired girl.

"Hey, Tenten- I think this is the girl who turned Neji orange this morning!" he said pointing at Nikora.

Nikora opened her mouth to speak, but just then, Neji's hand shot out and nailed Lee in the mouth, causing her open mouth to get wider, along with Fin and "Tenten", whose jaws both dropped.

Neji, meanwhile was not orange, but red, "I want to finish that battle," he repeated.

"Fine," Nikora said with a moments hesitation and then lunged into him suddenly.

Neji put his left hand up as veins began to show around his temples, but in a flash of green, Lee was between them, one hand on Neji's chest and one hand on Nikora's.

Finn, seeing the unintentional, but clearly visible perversion, lunged at Lee. Lee fell backwards as Neji and Nikora finished thier attack towards each other and Finn swung punches at Lee.

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Tenten, who had backed up as soon as Nikora made her move watched the dust fly everywhere with a sweatdrop.

It was almost just like in a cartoon, where there's a big puff of smoke and crazy noises emitting from it, but instead there where shouts, screams, and curses.

Then, there was a slight whooshing noise behind Tenten and she turned around to see her sensei looking at the fight with a frown.

"Hello, sensei," Tenten greeted him nervously.

"Tenten," Gai said nodding to her, but not removing his eyes from the fight.

Tenten looked back to Lee, Neji, and the other two girls in worry. Neji and Lee were going to regret fighting with strangers, or, as Gai would probably refer to them as while he yelled at them later, guests.

"Excuse me," Gai said, stepping around Tenten and towards the ruckus.

"Oh noo," Tenten moaned and backed up further.

## 17 - Gai-sensei (i.e. Your worst Nightmare)

As Gai's nostrils flared in rage, Tenten backed up farther and farther behind him with her hand over her mouth.

Gai marched up to the raging battle, where Nikora was biting Neji's hand as it pulled her hair and Finn had Lee in a headlock, and in practically no time at all, had Lee and Neji under each arm.

Nikora and Finn stared in surprise up at the tall man as Neji shoved Gai away and Lee looked on the verge of tears.

"Lee!!" Gai shouted, making Nikora jump, "Get back over there!"

He stabbed his finger towards the log he'd been kicking before and Lee quickly bolted there.

"Neji," Gai shouted, but more stern than loud, "You too."

Neji scowled at Nikora and Finn with the greatest amount of loathing.

Nikora was just about to stick her tongue out at him before she saw the look on the man's face.

"Now, who wants to explain what two ladies like you were doing flirting with my students during their training?"

"Wh-what?!" Nikora exclaimed, "We-we, I wasn't flirting with anyone!!! He- Neji started it!!"

"Mhm," Gai said, bringing his hand up to his chin, "I see."

Nikora's face went beat red and opened her mouth to say something, but Finn rushed first, "What my friend here is trying to say, sir-"

"Might Gai," he said smiling.

"-er, right," Finn shuddered slightly, "is that we were only helping them train!"

"Um, yeah...", Nikora agreed, noticing Neji and Lee glance back at them when Finn said this.

"We're sorry," Finn said, her eyes getting large, "We won't do it again!"

Finn had to be the greatest actress Nikora had ever seen. This wasn't the first time she'd done something like this. Nikora had always been quite the trouble maker at school, but no matter what Nikora got herself into, Finn somehow pulled her out of it. Nikora had become accustomed to agreeing with just about whatever Finn said when they were in a jam.



"Yes, we promise," Nikora said, trying to make her eyes equally as big, "But we really must be going now."

With that, Finn and Nikora quickly turned to leave, but before they even had half of their backs turned to him, Gai said, "Now wait just a minute."

Finn looked fleetingly at Nikora, who gave a similar look in return.

"What did you say your names were?"

"We didn't," Finn said, her devious mind at work, "I'm Aichi Yami and this is Totoro Yuzukie."

Instantly Gai began laughing, "Dear Miss Kokomo, do you really think you can fool me? Ah, your so funny. How is your father these days?"

Finn suddenly looked alarmed, "How do know my dad?"

"Oh, Daiki and I have been friends for quite while. Even before he met the Hokage."

"Huh?" Nikora asked, turning to Finn in confusion.

((Ugh. Sorry. I'm stu