

# What I Regret (Naruto fanfiction)

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*The tale of Niroshi Haruka, born into Sand Village, and her journey as she escapes her reluctant residence in Leaf Village and tries to sort out the issues that come with her choice in allies. Part two is now up!*

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## 0. Prologue: Recollection

You can skip this part and go straight to the story if you want.

(I just couldn't help it anymore; there's a reason why everyone else has Naruto fanfictions, and that's because they just happen and you want to show them off. That's why I wrote this. By the way, it's not a love story. I might possibly include the possibility of one person loving another, but it's not such a mutual feeling as one of them would like.

World, certain characters, and concepts from Naruto, (C) the people who own Naruto. I don't know who, but I know that I don't.

Haruka & family, and other characters who are not yet introduced, (C) me

I want to see what people think of this style of writing. It's the dialogue of only one character, talking to someone about her past. The person, obviously, isn't very talkitive, and thus, I was too lazy to write in that dialogue and instead wrote around it.

By the way, this is not what the rest of the story will be like. I just like prologues better when they have a different style or perspective or whatever from the rest of the story.

Should I shut up now? Too bad. I like talking about my works. That's the reason why I even considered being a manga artist. But I don't really like drawing comics. I just rant so much that I wish I had a side-column to talk about these things in...

Comment if you like it, forget if you don't!)

~~~~~

Um...hello?...Good morning?

...

I...I think so. I will be soon if I'm not already. But...where am I?

.....

Wow...I never would have thought this would happen from my old life...

...

Do you really want to know?

...

Not a lot of people seem interested in me. Let alone strangers.

...

Well, I guess you saved my life, so I'll tell you. My day used to start like this:

I'd wake up, about the time the sun came up. About the first thing to cross my mind was usually something like, Damn sun, always waking me up. I can tell my cells to sleep, so why can't I tell them to sleep through sunrise? Just three minutes past sunrise, I ask of you, cells!

I'd sigh and groan and maybe roll over and try to sleep again if Kazuki-niisan didn't come in. He'd usually come in and go, "Ha~ruka~, it's breakfast time!" all sing-song-y and syncopated like that. He wasn't so bad at singing, I guess, but I'd groan with the exact same pitch for the exact same amount of time before I rolled over to face away from him.

Kazuki-niisan would always sigh and say, "Haru-chan, wake up already and make breakfast so I don't have to lie to Haruka when I wake her up."

I never could help it; I'd always grin and tell him sleepily, "Fine, but go away so I can brush my hair." He knew I didn't get any real kind of bed head, but I'd tell him that anyway, and he'd make this sound that was kind of like a sigh and a laugh at once, and say, "Okay, but I'm coming back in a minute and if you're not ready to face the day, I'm dragging you out by the ankles, like it or not," and leave, closing the door behind him.

Then I'd smile and sigh blissfully as I pushed the sheets down to their regular place at the foot of the foot of the bed, wrinkled and disorganized. It didn't matter that my room was a mess; nobody really came in anyway, just Kazuki-niisan in the mornings, and he never cared.

I used to go over to my mirror hanging on the door and sigh at my hair; it always had a perfect center part in the mornings, not a hair out of place from the perfectly organized hairstyle. Of course, I wasn't organized enough to like it; I'd have to mess it up so that it went to a left part. I'd get dressed, well within Kazuki-niisan's minute-limit and walk down the hall to the kitchen, where I'd make some kind of breakfast, humming whatever tune was in my head at that moment and telling my skin cells on my head to deal with the change in hair position and that if they'd just let it stay that way it wouldn't be so uncomfortable when I parted it again.

Before he passed on, Arata-tousan used to be up about halfway between when I started cooking and when it was done. He'd be blinking and squinting, running a hand through his hair as we watched his foster-daughter cook breakfast. He'd usually complain about how bright it was before he went on to ask if the food was ready yet, and I'd tell him cheerfully when it would be done. All he could do is moan that he thought it was already ready,

and that I cook too slow, but I knew that he was just joking, and I'd laugh softly and tell him that if he'd wake up later than I could call him to breakfast and it would be the first thing he'd notice instead of how bright it was.

He'd chuckle tiredly and say, "True, true," as he sat down heavily at the table and waited patiently for Kazuki-niisan to bring him the newspaper as he always knew to do for his father.

I know that the way I'm saying this makes Arata-tousan sound almost like a bad person, but really, he wasn't; he was just kind of grumpy in the morning. Actually, if he hadn't been so kind, I wouldn't have been living so happily with Kazuki-niisan after Kaa-san got sick...

...Anyway, after we all finished having breakfast (we ate together, but we never really talked at breakfast), before Kazuki-niisan graduated from the ninja academy, we'd go out together to school, and separate into our classes at the last possible second. Really, we were nearly inseparable, to the point where we were late to class as many times as we could afford--which was really saying something, because we both had high hopes of success.

Maybe I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for our being late so often....

Well, we'd attend classes, and got the highest possible grades for being late so much. In other words, we were on the border of failing...until Arata-tousan went missing on a mission.

When he went missing, Kazuki-niisan and I were pretty well off, all things considered, because he had prepared for this and left a lot of money for us. We got a little money from being without an income, and between those two sources, we got along well enough to stay alive in our old home. In some ways, we were doing even better, because then we had true motivation to start doing well in school. We were never late again and got the best grades in our respective classes. I don't know how we did in comparison to each other, but we got whatever we really needed and we knew that we would soon graduate and have our own income and be able to pay for ourselves without help from Arata-tousan's reserves.

He was still missing when Kazuki-niisan graduated. I was so proud of him, even if he wasn't really my brother; he took care of me like a father after Arata-tousan disappeared, and we were close as family, so it was only natural for me to be proud of being almost related to a new Sand Village Gennin. At that point, between what Arata-tousan had left behind and Kazuki-niisan's new income, we were pretty well off...or so I thought.

One day, we heard the news; they had found Arata-tousan's body. He was confirmed dead, so Kazuki-niisan was the only way we could get any new money until I graduated. Naturally, I tried my hardest, and my teacher told me that I was the closest thing to guaranteed to graduate the next year as I could be.

Unfortunately, there was too much time between when she said that and the exam that I needed to take to graduate. Kazuki-niisan told me one night over supper that he was going out on a long mission in another village. He was leaving early in the morning, and wouldn't be back for supper tomorrow, probably even the next. I didn't know what he was really doing, so I let him go without really questioning it.

The next day, I went off to school. On my way, I saw one of Kazuki-niisan's teammates. She wanted to know where he was. I told her what I thought; he was off on a mission in another village, but even as I said it I realized the problem, and she pointed that out to me the moment the words came out of my mouth.

If he was on a mission, she wouldn't be there, and she wouldn't be wondering where he was.

We looked so hard that I was late to class for the first time since Arata-tousan disappeared.

When I got home, I was so anxious I couldn't sit still, so I started pacing around the house. I remember eventually ending up walking into Kazuki-niisan's room, and I saw that he left the bandana with the Sand symbol on it, sitting on the bed.

And that told me that he'd be back as soon as he could. He was too proud of his graduation to leave the proof of it behind for any reason other than proving that he wouldn't.

Sure enough, he was back the next day.

Needless to say, I pestered him with questions about where he was. All he'd say was "I can't say," until I finally got him to crack and tell me, "I was making some plans. You'll know all about them soon enough."

I remember sighing and letting him be for then. I figured I'd ask him more later---but later never came.

The next morning, I woke up, after sunrise, in a hospital room. I didn't have these scars until then...I honestly don't remember getting those scars. I just remember falling asleep and waking up with them.

Eventually, a nurse came around, and she explained what she knew---that I'd been found unconscious on the hospital's doorstep with a note. She was kind and let me read the note.

In a nutshell, it was an apology for leaving me; an explanation of why he had left the day before; a note saying that I was going to leave for the Leaf Village to live with my mother's family, whom she ran away from; and it was an apology for leaving me with the family that my mother made such an effort to keep me from. And he mentioned something about my little ability to talk to all of my body being a family thing, so maybe it wouldn't be all that bad in Leaf. He said.

That's why the forehead protector in your hand is from the Leaf Village and not the Sand.

Do you have any idea how hard I worked for that forehead protector? I had to change gears entirely, going from virtually no cover and thus not very much specific strategy to spending more time hiding behind trees and walking softly than technique and strength.

I still hate the forest. It's a little cooler but so humid that it's worse than the

desert, and the bugs keep eating me alive, and I still don't know anyone, and I seem to be quite appetizing for the bugs.

Did I mention the whole bug issue?

Okay, now I know why I had it worse; there was a guy, he had a bit of a bug thing going on, and he kept following me everywhere. So much so that when I was forced to retire, he went and talked my aunt--the person taking care of me there--into letting him marry me.

Marriage? Arranged marriage?!

That's why my mother ran away, by the way. My aunt was the head of the family, and she decided that my mother, her sister, was to marry someone beneficial to the family. But she loved someone else. So she ran away.

She once told me why I don't know my real father; she said he had already planned for them to run away when she told him about her plans, but his plans were more, well, planned, so they went with those. Soon, though, my mother got pregnant (with me), and realized that the plan they had involved making a new village, and that whole plot seemed a little risky for a newborn child. So she ran away from her plans to run away, away from the man she ran away with. She ran to Sand Village, where I was born, and where I met Kazuki-niisan, and where she got sick and passed away, and where I lived with Kazuki-niisan until he ran away.

What is up with my life and running away?

So, anyway, in the desert, there were virtually no bugs, so I had no previous way of knowing that I had a horrible phobia of bugs.

See the problem yet? That whole about-to-be-forcibly-married-to-a-guy-who-is-one-with-your-worst-and-most-unwanted-fear thing? Yeah. I think my reasons for being here are very good ones.

Everything was set up for the marriage, and we were having this cute little party to celebrate. If I'd been born into that family, I would have been perfectly happy with it, smiling and dancing and whatever like a girl who just married the handsome prince of her kingdom. Really, the guy himself wasn't that bad, just a little...stalker-ish, and the bug thing freaked me out too much, and that's why I...

...That's why I'm here. That's why I had to leave, and that's why I fell into the river, and that seems to be why you found me, and that's why I'm here.

~~~~~

(I'm sorry to any people who might possibly be waiting for me to write something else. This had

to come out or I think I'd explode. Although, due to circumstances beyond my control, I have things to do with a great deal more priority, so please don't expect the next chapter to be posted any time soon. Don't PM me every day saying, "When's the next chapter going to be up?"

Yeah, right. Like that would happen. But really, don't expect anything else from me any time soon. Or I'll borrow a camera and show what I've been working on. After I upload everyone's requests ^^;

I'm not going to post more until I get some comments.)

## 0. Character page

If anyone would like to use any of these characters in one of their fanfictions, say so first. And some of them really go a lot better together than alone.

Niroshi Haruka

Age: About Naruto's age

Basics:

She has a bloodline trait that allows her to completely control her body, to the last cell. She never knew her father, until later in the story. Born in Sand Village, her mother died of illness because she wasn't very skilled in using the trait, when Haruka was pretty young, about four or five. She lived with her best friend at the time, Kazuki, and his father, Arata. However, two years before she graduated from the academy, Arata died on a mission. Kazuki managed to graduate before the money Arata left ran out, but as a Gennin, he didn't make enough money to take care of both of them. So he ran away, leaving Haruka to her relatives in Leaf Village.

Her friends (a bit of a makeshift family) are as follows:

Kazuki, Arata, her mother, Gaara, and Naruto, as of yet.

Kazuki

Age: About a year older than Haruka

Basics:

Never knew his mother. Grew up in Sand Village. Left Haruka when financing became too much of an issue. Read and figure out where he went.

Airi, Kazuki's teammate...

Will add more later. Admittedly, not all of it is entirely complete, but...live with what's here for now.

# 1. First Impression

I do not own Naruto, the world of Naruto, or any other characters.

Haruka, Kazuki, Misaki (c) me, Zopponde

I wish I could take OCs but there wasn't enough of a response and I just kept going with my own. If the chapters posted get close enough to the chapters I've written, this may or may not change.

First Impression  
Chapter 1

The sheets on the old mattress were dirty, but the injured girl in them didn't know. She was still unconscious, just as she was when she was placed within them. The short dark hair that covered most of her head was still wet and dirty from her fall into the river, and was forming unattractive clumps in the longer front part.

Two other figures were within the room; both clad in the same black cloaks and straw hats. Neither had any kind of bedding; both seemed content to sit and lean in different corners and fall asleep that way, although it was hard to tell; neither showed many signs of being alive, let alone obviously awake or asleep.

The river's movement could be heard from outside. It wasn't really strong or anything, it was just close enough and the housing was old and thin enough that if anyone was awake, they would be able to hear the water rushing past within the barriers of the riverbed.

At some point in the earliest hours of the next day, the girl in the makeshift bed began to stir. They weren't signs of awakening; they were more so the signs of a troubling dream. She twitched her hand and her mouth moved as she breathed just heavily enough that one standing directly next to her might be able to hear her murmuring, "Kazuki-niisan...come back..."

Eventually, her twitching became somewhat regular, in the same pattern: the motion of groping for something just beyond reach. Her breathing became heavier, and her words reached a volume about the same as the river, perhaps a bit quieter.

One of the black-cloaked figures happened to be in the corner closest to her. As her arm extended, it brought her body somewhat closer to where the figure sat, until her reaching arm touched the sleeve of his robe.

The girl's hand clenched around the sleeve's cloth. Her subconscious mind noticed that her body made contact, and, because of similarities in her dream, her

subconscious woke her up when she called softly, "Kazuki-niisan!" as she pulled the cloth.

The cloaked figure, pulled by her subconscious tug, fell over as she woke, landing on her.

The figure sighed and returned to its previous position. The girl, however, was a bit more social.

"Um...hello?...Good morning?" she asked tentatively.

The figure turned its head, and the girl saw his dark eyes and what looked like worry lines on his face. "Are you feeling better now?"

"I...I think so," the girl answered uncertainly. "I will be soon if I'm not already. But," she added, looking around at the crummy old shack, "where am I?"

The cloaked man sighed. "We found you in the river on the border of Fire Country. You were unconscious, so we decided you could sleep here while you recovered. You seemed a bit injured."

"Wow," said the girl. "I never would have thought this would happen from my old life."

"What was it like?" the cloaked man asked, not sounding like he really cared.

"...Do you really want to know?" the girl asked.

The man nodded.

The girl hesitated, suspicious. "Not a lot of people care about me. Let alone strangers."

"I'd like to know if the life I saved was worthy of the help." He pulled out the headband with a strip of metal attached, the symbol in that land that the carrier was a ninja from the Village Hidden in the Leaves.

The girl recognized it as hers. "Well," she sighed, almost smiling tiredly, "I guess you saved my life, so you might as well know about it. My day used to start out like this..."

She went on to explain her life, how it began in the Sand Village, how her family all died or left her one by one, until the only people who could take care of her were her relatives in the Leaf Village. She told of her adjustment, how her family set her up with a person who controlled her very worst fear, and how that pushed her to run away, which had her end up in the river where the cloaked man said he found her.

As the girl spoke of her past, the other cloaked figure began to stir. As the girl came closer to the end of her story, the figure stood and moved to the pitiful excuse for a fireplace and began to cook something.

"...and that's why I'm here," the girl's story came to a close with a distant look.

She was obviously not telling everything of her story. The cloaked man who listened to her tale

began to say something about this when she changed the subject entirely.

"Is that food I smell?" she asked hungrily, sniffing the air. "Do you have any idea how hungry I am? Please tell me there's some for me."

The figure walked over to the corner in which the others sat with his finished product. "Barely," he growled. "We were running a little thin on supplies even before someone found a helpless little girl in the river who just had to be saved." He rolled his eyes. "Trust me, kid, you're lucky. He doesn't even give Misaki that kind of attention. Although he should, if it would make her shut up."

The girl nodded her head to hide her embarrassment at being the cause of their hardship, even as she silently smiled at his comment about someone being too talkative and wondered who that person was. There certainly weren't any girls here.

The vaguely friendlier figure glared at the cook. "You wouldn't be very willing to give a girl like that the kind of attention she wants, either."

The second figure laughed. "Says the man who went so far out of his way to make sure she got in."

The girl smiled faintly as the cloaked men continued their argument about a girl she didn't know. However, the second man had set the food reasonably close to her, and she reached out for it.

Both of their attentions snapped over to her. For the first time, she saw the second figure's face, and she realized that his face was, oddly enough, blue. She would have stopped anyway, but she instead pulled her hand back and hoped that she could still have some. She could feel her stomach rumbling, and she knew that she'd need food to recover from the recent events in her life.

The blue man frowned and divided the food equally into two. He gave one dish to his partner and kept the other.

The girl sighed and made an expression of pure and pitiful envy. She was really hungry and knew that she would be even more so for the next week or so. Her stomach growled loudly.

The friendlier figure held his chopsticks in midair and looked at her tiredly. She returned a look that tried to say that she was okay as it was. He sighed and handed over his plate.

The girl was gratefully surprised, but the man's partner glared at him. "I gave that to you, not her."

The dark-eyed man looked at his partner tiredly. "I'm not hungry, and she needs it more than I do."

A heavy silence settled among the three. The girl broke it nervously by saying, "Uh, thank you, um..."

The man who gave her his plate turned to look at her coolly. "Uchiha Itachi."

"Uchiha?" The girl recognized the name, somewhere...she couldn't remember where. It was probably the name of one of the other ninjas from the Leaf Village that she didn't care about. "I think I might have heard that name once before..."

The blue man snorted. "What kind of Leaf Village ninja are you that you don't know the story about the Uchihases?"

The girl stared at him with ice in her gray-green eyes. "Leaf Village never was my home, and it never will be. I do not care about what happens to other people there." She turned back to her food and began eating huffily.

The blue man looked at Itachi, who just stared back coolly, before shrugging and going on to eat his own meal.

The girl ate fast; before three minutes passed, she sighed tiredly and set her chopsticks down on her empty plate. "I'm sorry," she began, turning to Itachi. "I just ate all your food without even properly introducing myself. My name is Niroshi Haruka."

Itachi nodded slowly and introduced his partner, who seemed too busy eating to respond for himself. "You know my name already, and my partner's name is Hoshigaki Kisame."

Haruka nodded to Kisame. "Hello, and thank you for the meal."

An awkward silence fell on the three people. It held its grip firmly for some time and remained in place even as Kisame finished with his share of breakfast, and wasn't broken until shortly after that when Haruka sneezed.

Itachi turned to look at her. "Please don't get a cold. It would inconvenience everyone greatly."

Haruka paused, looking distant and thoughtful, and Itachi was about to turn his attention away when she answered, "I'm in the lower stages of a mild cold. I can take care of it pretty easily...but do we have any more food?"

Kisame snorted. "Itachi, we should just go and leave the girl to beg for scraps from other people. People that have more supplies than we do."

Haruka frowned. "There's a river just outside, right? I think I saw some fish there--that's why I stopped there, and that's why I fell in. Does anyone have a fishing rod?"

"We generally pack our food ahead of time," Itachi answered, "and we have money for food in town. We don't usually need such things."

Haruka sighed and sat up. "I don't suppose you found a backpack anywhere nearby when you found me, did you?"

Itachi shook his head. "Just your forehead protector."

Haruka swung her legs out from under the sheets. "Then I guess I should see if I can find it."

Itachi stared at her coolly. "You have a cold and I doubt that anyone could possibly be recovered from that fall in the river already. You are not going out."

Haruka raised her scarred eyebrow. "Did I forget to mention that whole thing? I guess I did," she answered herself. She sighed and ran a hand through her crusted hair. "You know what a bloodline trait is, right?"

Itachi's face moved such that he was probably grinning knowingly, but Haruka couldn't tell because of his high collar. Kisame snorted. "Itachi's a bit of an expert on those."

Haruka smiled. "Good. Saves a bit of explaining. So," she went on, "the Niroshi family has one such trait. And that trait is an ability to consciously and completely control every cell in our body. We can do whatever we want with any part of our body. But," she added, "what a lot of people don't understand is that not all bloodline traits are all good."

"We know that," Itachi interrupted.

Haruka paused, shrugged, and kept going. "Well, in our case, micro-managing our bodies takes a lot of energy, more than using medicines and other simpler cures, so we need a good deal more food than most people, when we're using our ability. We get hungry easily, and that's why I'd like to find my backpack with a fishing rod in it so I can catch some fish, which I will eat for energy to help me control my immune system and kill this cold.

"Also," Haruka went on for clarity, "it means that I used some of my energy to heal my injuries from my fall in the river. They're not entirely healed, but they're close enough that I'll be fine walking calmly along the river looking for what I packed."

Itachi sighed. "Then go out and look for it. I don't care."

Haruka smiled at him and continued getting up. She looked down at herself; the dirty sheets and her wet body and clothes mixed together to make her rather dirty, but she knew she should avoid bathing until she cured herself or found a hot spring or similar. She wiggled her toes; they were crusted in dirt from the night before, when she dangled her feet in the river before walking around a bit barefoot, and the last she remembered of her shoes, they were still at the riverside. They probably ended up in the river one way or another, but she still might not see them again.

She sighed. Not a full conscious day gone, and I'm already missing some of those damn luxuries, she thought, slightly irritated at herself.

Haruka stretched herself out as she walked toward the door. When she reached it, she thought of something and turned to say, "Kisame-san, leave without me or not, I don't care, but I'd kind of prefer to at least know when you're leaving," before she walked outside.

The shack hadn't exactly been ideal for keeping the light out--Haruka hadn't been surprised in the least to find that she'd woken at sunrise, whether or not she usually did--but she still blinked in the full sunshine. As soon as her eyes stopped watering, she blinked and smiled at what she saw: her backpack had washed ashore right at her feet. She picked it up and paused to consider what to do next before she slung it over her shoulder and looked around the river's shore to decide which way to go. She looked right, upstream, and grinned gleefully, almost laughing softly, when she saw that her shoes had neatly reached shore not ten feet upstream of her backpack.

After her shoes were on again, Haruka sighed and took her backpack off. She rummaged through it for a short period of time before she took out her neatly packed traveling fishing rod and unpacked it. She sighed again. She really didn't like fish, but maybe she could find something else in the forest nearby to wash it down.

Haruka put her hands together in a short series of ninja seals before a perfect replica of her appeared beside her in a small puff of smoke. One of her images took a seat with the fishing rod while the other went into the forest.

The flap-of-a-door on the shack parted, and Itachi walked out, without his hat for the first time that she knew, blinking in the sun much like Haruka had not a minute ago. Her remaining image turned to face him smilingly. "Hello, Itachi-sama."

He blinked again, then proceeded to sit down next to her. "That was fast."

Haruka grinned. "It was right here," she said, pointing to the dirt next to her, where it had been before she picked it up. "And my shoes were just a little bit that way," she added, pointing upstream. She paused a moment, then reached down and pulled them off so she could dangle her feet in the water.

Itachi sighed. "Why exactly did you run away?"

Haruka froze. "Wh-what do you mean?" she asked fearfully.

"You said that it had something to do with an arranged marriage, but that doesn't seem such a likely excuse," Itachi explained. "If that was the only problem, you seem the person who would run away from her family, not her village."

"It's not my village!" she snapped. "How many times do I need to tell you people?"

Itachi sighed. "Okay. The Leaf Village. Why did you run away from all that?"

Haruka paused, staring distantly into space. "I don't know. I...I guess I just needed some time to myself, so I decided to go out here..."

"How long did you plan on being out?" Itachi asked.

"Oh, n-not long," Haruka stammered, "j-just a day, o-or maybe two--less than a week, I know..."

"Really..." Itachi seemed to doubt this story.

"Y-yeah," Haruka answered, relieved that he didn't question further.

Itachi sighed. "Then maybe we should escort you ba--"

"NO!" Haruka jumped before trying to appear more calmed down, but there was still panic in her voice as she went on, "N-no, I'm not going back. I don't want to go back, I never want to see the Leaf Village again!"

Itachi raised an eyebrow. "You don't seem the person who would just leave for no reason."

"No," Haruka went on, "I'm not going to tell you, I'm not going to tell anyone, I'm not going to let anyone know what horrible things I've done--they won't know what I regret and what I'm proud of!"

Itachi sighed, irritated. "You said that my name sounded familiar. Do you know a boy, a year or two younger than you?"

## 2. Confession

I understand the improbability of certain events in this fanfiction. Tough cookies. I am the author, I can control whatever I want.

By the way, the only reason I'm posting chapters is because I'm getting comments on deviantART. If you're interested in this story, comment and it'll be up sooner.

Haruka, Masuyo (c) me, Zopponde. I'm pretty sure all other characters appearing in this chapter belong to Masashi Kishimoto.

Confession  
Chapter 2

Itachi sighed, irritated. "You said that my name sounded familiar. Do you know a boy, a year or two younger than you?"

Haruka paused, grateful for the change of subject, before thinking about his question. "I'm sure I know several boys a year or two younger than I, but I can't say I personally know any of them unless you give me their names..."

"Just think about their names," Itachi told her.

Haruka sighed, thinking that he was probably just trying to get her to shut up, but she did stop and think about it. "Let's see, a year or two younger than me? Probably the rookie year. So there's probably six people that could be the one he's talking about...probably..."

She mentally listed the current rookies of Leaf Village when she reached the name he was probably talking about. "You mean Uchiha Sasuke?" Why didn't you think of that sooner? Haruka asked herself.

Itachi nodded. "Did he ever say what happened to his family?"

"He's two years younger than I am," Haruka pointed out, "and we were never in the same class, and I was pretty isolated in the first place. The only reason I'm even aware of his name is because his teammate caused a bit of a ruckus in the Chuunin exam. Well," she added, "Sasuke stole a fair deal of attention too, but his teammate generally stuck out more."

There was a short silence between the two before Itachi spoke again. "They're all dead," he said coldly. "My brother Sasuke and I are the only two Uchihis left."

Haruka relaxed in pity. "What happened to them?"

Another pause before Itachi responded, "I killed them all."

Haruka stiffened and froze.

This silence lasted almost a full minute, and was interrupted only by the wind.

Haruka's bobber ducked under, and she jerked the rod, but she was too late and lost the fish.

She sighed tiredly. "I guess that means you expect me to tell you everything."

"No," Itachi responded, "I expect you to realize that Kisame and I are criminals, as is everyone else in our organization, and we won't do anything against you for having done some 'wrong' in your life."

Haruka breathed out slowly, staring at the fishing bobber. "I don't think that what I did was wrong. The way I see it, you shouldn't do something you think is wrong, and if you do it anyway, it's an accident, or it's because you thought it was right until you realized something that proved that it was wrong, in which case you should only regret that you were mistaken into thinking it right."

"But," she went on, "even now, after leaving the warm bed that I had, after being saved by one criminal and starved by another, I still think that it was the right thing to do."

Haruka took a deep breath and made as if to continue, but didn't.

The wind blew a bit.

The bobber dunked and Haruka jerked the rod--and caught it this time. She smirked and reeled it in without any real effort.

The fish came out of the water and Haruka left it for a moment on the end of the rod, out of the water, before she sighed and said quietly, "It's almost as if she wanted to die."

Itachi took no notice, thinking she was just muttering to herself, but she continued.

"Masuyo. She was a fool and a coward, but she bossed everyone around anyway," Haruka explained bitterly. "I really don't like the Niroshi Clan. Those who don't use their bloodline ability are religious figures, and their children can't use it, either, or they become sinners, but they can't even really go anywhere. That's part of why I hated it so much."

Haruka sighed again. "My mother was one of these people. She never changed her body by telling it to do things, except for muscle movements and that. The problem is, when I got dragged back here, I had already used mine. So everyone hated me. The only reason anyone took me in was because they liked the thought of having someone dependent on what they say. Masuyo was just begging for it."

"She never gave me any respect, she had me doing all the chores--honestly, I was half a step above a servant. Except servants got paid," she added bitterly. "And then when Shino-san asked her if he could marry me, she only approved because she wanted me somewhere else and decided that his family would freak me out the best. And she was right," Haruka added. "I did freak out, at the party celebrating my engagement.

"She took me to her room to talk to me, because," she added a bitter laugh, "I didn't know about it yet, and she didn't want me to freak out in front of everyone. It would make her look worse, getting me married without my knowing.

"And I quote," Haruka continued, " 'Haruka, you're so worthless to this family that I decided to give you to another family.' I responded cheerfully, because I didn't realize exactly what she meant. So she smiled but raised her eyebrow and said, 'I didn't know you wanted to get married so badly.' And...well...I snapped. I heard a bit more of what she had to say, about how worthless I was but this other family has this cute little boy who would love me as his wife, blah blah blah, oh, by the way, he wields your greatest fear."

Haruka gritted her teeth. "I'd rather not go into the details, but I can tell you that Masuyo left this world by my hand."

Itachi nodded and stood up. "Thank you for telling me this. Now I have to go."

Haruka sighed, suddenly tired now that she had confessed. "I should be the one thanking you for listening. I'll see you when I have a few more fish, Itachi-niisama."

Itachi paused, seemingly taken by surprise by his new title, but turned and went back into the shack.

Haruka sighed again, relieved to not be keeping a secret anymore. She kicked her feet lightly in the water, wondering vaguely what her real self was doing while her clone just sat there, waiting for a fish to bite the hook and hoping that the one she just caught would be the first of many today as her stomach growled.

### 3. Contemplation

I understand the improbability of certain events in this fanfiction. Tough cookies. I am the author, I can control whatever I want.

By the way, the only reason I'm posting chapters is because I'm getting comments on deviantART. If you're interested in this story, comment and it'll be up sooner.

Haruka, Masuyo (c) me, Zopponde. I'm pretty sure all other characters appearing in this chapter belong to Masashi Kishimoto.

#### Contemplation Chapter 3

Haruka sneezed. I hope that clone catches a lot of fish, she thought. I'm going to need a lot of food to recover from this damn cold!

She paused to pluck a helpful herb from the ground and moved on.

A few minutes passed similarly, and she began to consider heading back to the shack when she thought she heard something and stopped.

She heard it again and confirmed it: it was the sound of someone walking through the forest.

An almost familiar female voice nearby muttered something and she heard a considerably more recognizable voice call out, "Haru-chan! There you are!"

Haruka cringed, a pause that gave her energetic pursuer enough time to jump out of a tree and directly in front of her in an orange-and-blue blur, blocking her escape.

"Haru-chan, we've been looking all over for you!" Haruka knew the colorful ninja, named Naruto. She was still grateful for his previous actions, but she knew that he'd drag her back if it was the last thing he did.

She held herself stiffly in a vaguely offensive manner, but then remembered that, though it hadn't exactly been the most quiet death, Masuyo had hardly screamed or anything, so they might still be trying to figure out who killed her at this point.

"Why did you run away?" Naruto asked innocently as three other familiar ninjas dropped from nearby trees in a circling pattern, one considerably more so than others.

Haruka cringed again. Damn it, of all the people who could have followed me, it had to be Shino's team and Naruto! My clone had better be having better luck than I am!

"Naruto, you were supposed to wait for the signal," Shino's male teammate, whose name Haruka never could remember, scolded. His ever-present dog yapped once in agreement from his owner's feet.

Haruka sighed. "Okay, why do I have a full team of ninjas after me?"

Naruto looked at her as if confused. "Because you should be at home, why else?"

Haruka twitched angrily. "How many times have I said it today, Leaf Village is not my home!!"

"I don't think that's all," Shino's dog-loving teammate added. "I think I heard some talk of suspected of attempted murder."

Haruka felt a pang of panic. Attempted?! she thought. Did she actually survive?

Shino's head snapped to face his teammate. "Do you actually believe any of that? Do you really believe that Haru-chan could do such a thing?"

Shino's other teammate, Himaka or something, piped up. "Um, Shino, p-please calm down..."

Haruka sighed. "Yeah, really, please do calm down. I can defend myself perfectly well, thank you very much."

"So," Naruto chipped in, "are you coming home?"

Haruka sighed again and looked up at the trees, contemplating. I have a clone back with Itachi-sama and Kisame-san, she thought, and I really should settle this whole "attempted" bit...

She smiled as innocently as she could. "Yeah, I guess so. These woods are getting boring, I'd like to head back to civilization now."

## 4. Decision

Inaccuracy is nothing to flame for.

Only being posted because of comments elsewhere.

Haruka, Masuyo (c) me, Zopponde, all other characters (c) Masashi Kishimoto

Decision  
Chapter 4

Apparently, the river was quite swift, because, even though it wasn't even noon yet, Haruka had to camp out with Naruto and Shino's team--whose names she finally remembered; Hinata and Kiba, plus Kiba's dog Akumaru--before they reached the actual village.

It was hardly comfortable. Not only was there a root where her sleepingbag was laid out, but Kiba also kept treating her like a criminal. Well, he was right to do so, but it was still uncomfortable. Equally awkward was how Naruto kept anxiously asking, "So, you didn't do it, did you?" Haruka hated lying, but she sucked it in and told him that she didn't.

It seemed that the team hadn't expected to be out this long; their rations were running low, and with Haruka added in, food was scarce. Haruka had collected a few herbs and berries already, but it wasn't enough to squelch her appetite and help her recover. She barely even managed her appetite, even after Shino offered her his share.

The next day, they all trudged back to the village. It seemed that they should have just kept going last night, because before a few hours had passed, they reached the unfortunately familiar gates.

Naruto grinned childishly and sighed, "Ah, home, sweet home."

Haruka glared at him from a ducked head. "Ah, prison, sweet prison," she hissed under her breath.

He turned around to face her. "What was that?"

Haruka sighed. "Nothing."

Kiba still eyed her suspiciously and made her walk through the gates before him.

They stopped just inside the gates. "Well," Kiba began, "I guess we all should just go home now. Later," he finished, waving over his shoulder as he went.

"Um, yeah," Hinata agreed, "I think I should be going home too."

Shino nodded. "I suppose I should report to Tsunade-sama before I go home, too." He paused for a reasonable time before he turned to go.

Naruto stared after him. "Man, that guy's weird. What was that pause for, anyway?"

Haruka sighed. "You wouldn't understand. You were lucky that you weren't invited to that party. I wish I hadn't been."

Naruto hesitated before saying, "Well, I'm off to the ramen stand. I guess I'll see you around!" He turned to leave.

Haruka jumped. "Wait!" He stopped and turned back. "I'm really hungry after that," she half-lied. "Um, could I come with you?"

"Uh, sure," Naruto allowed.

Haruka nodded and followed him. She really was hungry, but there was something else that made her jump after him. She didn't have anywhere else to go, and she decided that she would be best off following Naruto.

As they sat down at the ramen stand, Naruto asked her, "So, why did you go out that far?"

"Oh, I just thought, you know," she lied, "Masuyo was getting really annoying, I felt like I was ready to snap and kill her or something, so I figured I'd take a day or two out in the forest."

"Yeah, but how did you get that far out?"

"Um...you see, I went to the river, and then it rained, really hard, and I guess I got carried downstream..."

Naruto squinted at her. "We were pretty far from the river when we found you..."

Haruka shrugged. This was an easy solution to make up, because it was more or less true. "Do you seriously expect that I'd just sit there all day?"

"You didn't have a backpack or anything, either."

Haruka gulped. She left her backpack with her cone at the river. "I guess it didn't get washed away with me?"

Naruto still looked a bit suspicious, but right then, the man who ran the ramen stand passed the bowls over the counter. Haruka sighed in relief and joined Naruto in saying thanks.

Both of them ate quickly, silently trying to see who could do it fastest. They finished at about the same time and chorused for seconds.

Haruka grinned. "Just like old times, eh?"

Naruto nodded. "Yup!"

Haruka sighed blissfully and leaned back as much as she could for not having a back on her chair. She was still grateful for what Naruto had done for her.

It wasn't so long ago--Naruto had only just been put on his team, and they were out training together. Haruka had a day off, because her teammate Akio was still recovering from the injury that time that kept them out of that Chuunin exam, and she tried to train by herself. They were using her favorite spot, however, and thus she couldn't train.

She didn't originally know that they were there. Naruto later explained that they were doing a training exercise of a capture-the-flag style, and she had just waltzed into their defense line--theirs as in Sasuke's and Naruto's, who were on the team opposite of their other teammate and their sensei.

Sasuke had mistaken her for their teammate and attacked defensively. Caught entirely by surprise, Haruka wasn't able to properly defend herself and ended up with a black eye and a few more bruises that took a bit of time to heal.

The round was over pretty quickly. Haruka had accidentally caused a diversion for the other team that they used and won with.

Sasuke, naturally, was mad at her. She had cost them the match, which apparently meant that he and Naruto--two orphans, though she hadn't fully understood Sasuke's situation at that point--had to pay for dinner. Since it was her fault, he decided that she should pay for it instead.

Haruka had no money. She was earning some money as a Gennin, but Masuyo, naturally, had found a way to get every penny of it, and she most certainly didn't share. So Haruka couldn't pay, and she apologized very much for this, but Sasuke still was not satisfied.

Naruto pointed out that Sasuke had, if minorly, injured Haruka, and thus he should be buying dinner for her.

Sasuke didn't like the idea, but realized he couldn't get anything better of it, so he huffed and agreed to it unwillingly, as long as Naruto paid for the rest of the team.

Haruka shrugged and accepted it, thinking that something didn't quite line up, but not complaining that she'd get a meal out for once.

Since Naruto was paying (mostly), he, of course, chose where to eat. Where else would they go but his favorite ramen stand?

Ramen never was the best stuff to help someone recover, but Haruka took a few vitamins with the meal and was able to heal her bruises before she was done with her third serving--about the time Naruto got his third.

She opened her mouth to ask for fourths (which wasn't as much as it seems, because she did need some energy with the vitamins to heal her bruises) when she realized what she had forgotten before: Masuyo would lock the doors to the Niroshi Estate near the village's edge in about five minutes.

Haruka stood abruptly, apologized and said her goodbyes as she turned and sprinted for her chance at a warm bed that night.

She was too late. The doors had been locked for the night when she got there.

She sighed, distressed, and turned to go back to the ramen stand with tears in her eyes, hoping that Sasuke was still there and she could still get a bit more warm food before the cold night settled on her.

A few blocks away, she found Naruto, apparently looking for her. He took her back to the stand, where he had apparently somehow convinced Sasuke to stay, and she had another two bowls of ramen (a total of five) before Sasuke warned her that he didn't have a penny left on him.

Haruka blushed and apologized sincerely, still feeling the effects of a very light hunger.

He yawned and complained about how long she had kept him. She apologized again as he left.

Haruka sighed. Naruto looked up at her from his last bowl of ramen and asked what was wrong. She confessed that she had been locked out for this.

Naruto stood up fiercely and told Haruka that she should leave that house. Haruka told him that she couldn't, because, well, they had the best supplements and treatments for her bloodline trait, and where else could she go?

Naruto's place, of course. He immediately sighed huffily and said that she should at least stay at his house for that night. Having nowhere else to go, Haruka sighed and agreed.

The moment they arrived there, Haruka regretted it. There weren't enough beds and there were too many cockroaches. A lot of cockroaches. If Haruka didn't know better, she'd think that she was at Shino's house. Of course, he probably had more sophisticated bugs than cockroaches. Fortunately, she hadn't ever actually been there and thus didn't really know.

Naruto soon realized that his floor was too dirty to sleep on and immediately saw a problem.

After much discussion, they finally settled on sleeping arrangements: Haruka slept at the foot of the bed and Naruto kept his usual place, though shifted slightly to give Haruka a bit more room.

Naruto fell asleep almost instantly and began snoring. Haruka silently regretted letting Sasuke go without asking for a place to sleep, but she probably wouldn't get anything much better from this and told herself to stop worrying about it as she lulled her cells into as deep a sleep as she thought possible.

The next day, she went back to the Niroshi complex as soon as the doors opened. Unfortunately, Masuyo was rather bitter at Haruka's rebellion and decided that she couldn't stay the night there again. This statement only lasted a week, but Haruka still was unhappy at the loss of Niroshi supplies and her sudden dependence on Naruto.

That week went on similarly, with Haruka staying out all day and spending the night at Naruto's apartment--in a completely nonsexual manner, I would like to keep as clear as possible. He was acting as a family member would, not as a boyfriend would. By the end of the week, Haruka found herself calling him Naruto-niichan--not "Naruto-kun, my love," but Naruto-niichan.

Also, the night that Haruka thought she killed Masuyo, the first thing she did (after apologizing to Shino for canceling the wedding) was run in the general direction of the ramen stand. At the same point she found him after being locked out, Haruka found Naruto again. He said that he'd just come back with his new teacher, one of the Legendary Sannin or something (Haruka still didn't care about the village to really care about that), from finding the next Hokage and a lot of training.

She sighed and told him that she'd been kicked out of the Niroshi family, that they'd never accept her as their own again (which they probably wouldn't) and that she needed a place to stay.

She tried to spend the night, but as Naruto slept innocently at the head of the bed, his feet kicking Haruka in the stomach, she made the decision to leave the village.

So she did, and she fell into the river and met Itachi and Kisame. If she hadn't, she'd probably already be in serious trouble for murdering (or trying to murder) Masuyo.

In the present, she sighed, having already plowed through her traditional five bowls, and asked the man behind the counter for another bowl. Naruto groaned a complaint but shook his head and told her to eat as much as she wanted, because he kind of missed her over those few days.

Haruka smiled and waited for her next bowl as she planned what to do next. She was quite certain of her decision after her sixth bowl, so she turned to Naruto and asked, "So, what's this I hear of attempted murder on Masuyo-san? Is she okay?"

Naruto smiled tiredly and said, "Yeah, she's doing pretty well, all things considered. They're still trying to figure out who did it, though."

Haruka put on a worried frown. "Maybe I should go see her?"

Naruto perked up. "Yeah, that's a great idea! Haru-chan, you've forgiven her for what she's done, right?"

Haruka nodded, mentally kicking herself for having to lie. "Yeah. I know she was a jerk, and she really didn't have much reason for it, but I think now that she's stood on the brink of death by another's hand, she's probably realized that a lot of what she does makes people hate her. She's probably at least started to realize what she did

was wrong." As if, Haruka thought, but she knew that she had to do this to get her plan done right.

Naruto brought her to the hospital that Masuyo was being kept in, and soon enough, Haruka was sitting next to her aunt's hospital bed, playing the part of the worried niece.

Masuyo was unconscious when they came in, but the nurse said that they wouldn't be the ones to wake her up, so they could stay there while and wait for her to wake up so they could talk to her.

She woke up within about five minutes. The first thing she did when she saw Haruka's face was gasp and back away.

Haruka looked at her, pretending to be confused. "Masuyo-san, what's wrong?"

"You," Masuyo growled, "you did this to me! All I ever did was try to give you a good husband, and the thanks I get is an attempt on my life! Stay back, you monster!"

Naruto looked at Haruka, worried. "I thought you said..."

Haruka shook her head, trying to look worried and sad and afraid. "I-I did say that, and I didn't do it. Masuyo-san, I'm so sorry that this happened to you..."

Masuyo curled her lip like a cat or a dog. "I won't fall for that! I know you just came here to finish the job!"

Read like a book, Haruka thought. She sighed, pretending to be worried. "Masuyo-san, what can I do to prove to you that I have no idea what you're talking about?"

Masuyo squinted at Haruka. "Nothing. I know what you've tried to do, and I will not let you have your way."

Haruka took a deep breath, trying to control her patience. "Naruto-niichan, maybe you should go find a nurse to bring Masuyo-san some water or something. I think she could use it."

Naruto hesitated before shaking his head. "Uh-uh. I don't think you did it, but I don't think I can trust you alone with her."

Masuyo grinned at Haruka. "See? The boy believes me. You won't find yourself alone with me any time soon. You won't get your way."

Haruka sighed, irritated this time. "Naruto-niichan, I didn't want to do this, but you leave me no choice. I must. Please forgive me."

Naruto began to stand in a defensive gesture, but before he could, Haruka disappeared and reappeared behind him, hitting him in the back of the neck just right to send him into unconsciousness.

Masuyo gasped again as Haruka turned to her. "Y-you wouldn't dare!" Masuyo

stammered.

Haruka grinned evilly. "Masuyo, I've thought about this, and I can't help but notice that probably the only way for someone to recover from that would be to use that little ability of our family's."

Masuyo paled. "A-and if I did?"

"That means that you're no longer in a position to be considered head of the family," Haruka pointed out. "Your children no longer have any benefit from refraining from the use of the bloodline ability, and would be wise to begin using it, but they're all a tad old to be learning to fight with that whole new style. Doesn't any of this bother you?"

Masuyo faced Haruka with a lot more courage than she expected, but there was a good chance that she was faking it all. "N-not in the least."

Haruka rolled her eyes. "Then do you regret that you've lost all your power within our clan?"

Masuyo paled further. "N-n-no, I d-don't."

Haruka glared at her. "Yes it does. I know it does. You've sacrificed everything just in the vain hope that you'd be able to live just a bit longer. I guess it didn't work so well, did it?"

Masuyo swallowed. "I won't lose my power if nobody knows what I've done."

"Oh, don't worry, I won't tell anyone," Haruka promised, "but that doesn't mean you're coming out of here alive."

~~~

Naruto woke up some time later, still on the floor of the hospital room that housed Masuyo.

Or at least, it used to.

He saw what was on the floor and immediately remembered what happened, and realized that it was probably already too late for Masuyo.

On the floor were the words, written in blood, "I only regret that this was what was necessary."

## 5. Motion

Disclaimer:

Naruto world and characters (c) the guy who owns Naruto whose name I forgot again.

Haruka, Masuyo (c) me, Zopponde, useage only welcome with advance permission and a link to the finished piece. Oh! And Misaki gets mentioned. She's mine too.

Certain events may or may not be probably improbable or possibly impossible. Tough cookies.

Author's notes:

At the bottom there's a section marked "Mockery 1". Why? Yes, why...I think I was half-asleep when I wrote it. It's pretty much a crackier bit that really does nothing for the plot so I tried to seperate it. And there shouldn't be anything wrong with that because, let's face it, Naruto is hardly the most serious anime in the world. I mean, how many battles/missions have been determined won or lost based entirely on Naruto farting?

And please note that I have some SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND WORDS on this story. I'm not taking forever posting it because I have writer's block or anything like that, I'm not posting it because nobody will look at it anyway! So comment and you'll see so much more!

And I'd say that I'm accepting OC's, but I'm not sure what I'd do with them, and it would take FOREVER to get to the point where they show up.

Motion  
Chapter 5

Haruka was really tired the next morning. She had used a useful little trick, based off of the substitution jutsu, to get herself back into her clone's shoes speedily, but it had still been late at night when she reached a range that she could use it at.

She yawned widely, thinking of the memories she received after she dispelled the clone. At first she was irritated that the clone had spilled her secrets, but she soon realized that it had been precautionous and hadn't confessed until Itachi told her what he had done.

As they settled for breakfast, Haruka couldn't help wondering what would happen next.

It wasn't such an easy topic to bring up, apparently. She found herself shifting nervously instead of saying anything. Finally, she sighed and blurted, "So, what happens next?"

Itachi and Kisame both turned to look at her, and she suddenly wasn't so sure. "What do you mean?" Itachi asked.

"Oh, well, it's just," Haruka realized that she really would have been better off just waiting, "I don't think we can just stay here, you know? It's not a permanent residence, is it?"

Itachi and Kisame shared a look. Itachi turned back to Haruka and said, "I suppose we never did fully explain much about ourselves. We both are members in a certain organization, which has certain goals that are being achieved by a means that requires us to move about a lot. We probably wouldn't have found you if it wasn't for this.

"After a brief consultation with the leader," Itachi went on, "we have decided that we may be able to give you a role in this organization."

Haruka felt some triumph from this statement. Things are starting to look up a bit.

"However," Itachi continued, squinting slightly as he told Haruka, "do not be fooled. You are not being considered a full member."

Kisame rolled his eyes and growled, "Just the next-best thing."

This put a slight damper on Haruka's spirits, but not much of one. She still had something to do. "So what do I need to do?"

Kisame glared at her. "Itachi did all the work for you. All we have to do now is show up at the base and keep the place clean with Misaki."

Haruka's heart sank. Cleaning? Did they just take me in as a maid?

Itachi noticed the look on her face. "I think she'll be getting out more now that she has a partner."

Kisame groaned. "Now she's getting a partner? Really, what's the difference between 'honorary spy' or whatever we call her and a full-blown member?"

Itachi turned to glare at Kisame. "She made that robe herself and only got the nail polish because you left it out. The only thing different about her is that she lives in the base, and since we can't find anything for her to do, she spends most of it cleaning the base."

Haruka relaxed. Maybe it won't be so bad, she thought. Well, maybe...

~~~

It took them another day to get to the base. Haruka was bored throughout the whole of it, due

to the fact that neither Itachi nor Kisame seemed capable of keeping a conversation alive more than a full minute, if that, and neither of them seemed willing to do so, either.

Finally, they reached the...Haruka suddenly realized that she didn't even know the name of this organization. She closed her eyes and cursed herself for her idiocy. Let's run around getting recruited into an organization of criminals that I don't even know the name of, she thought sarcastically as she observed the entrance to the base.

The moment she saw it, she sighed and amended, Okay. An organization that I don't even know the name of, consisting pretty much or absolutely entirely of criminals whom I will be trapped with in a hole in the side of a river, blocked in by a giant rock. See and marvel at the awesome intelligence of Niroshi Haruka.

Itachi sighed and narrated, "That's the entrance to the main base. Inside is where...well, it's our base. There are no living quarters here, but there are some nearby."

Haruka was slightly surprised at this. What else was a base for, other than housing for a bunch of people of the same organization? Well, I guess it's not such a normal sort of organization, she figured.

The sun was already worryingly close to the horizon. Haruka was still tired from her late night out, and the day-long trip hardly helped at all. How far could she go before she just collapsed? Itachi and Kisame apparently had little more need for food as they did for conversation, because they only stopped to eat once, and that was pretty much long enough to take out a snack-like quantity of food that they ate as they went. Haruka was about ready to have a feast of fish, even raw. She felt like she could eat a fish the size of a shark.

She closed her eyes as she tried to stop herself from thinking of eating Kisame. Shark-like as he is, she told herself, he's still Itachi-niisama's partner, and if you can't live with him without eating him, you've just lost your chance at a home and set a bunch of criminals against you.

She still found herself eyeing his arm hungrily as she followed him.

## Motion Sickness Mockery 1

The last sliver of the sun was slipping away below the horizon, probably moments from being lost behind the great mass of rock that was the planet, when Itachi, in the lead, began to slow down. Finally, she thought. Please tell me that this is for these living quarters and not to sleep out in the forest again. She was almost surprised to realize that she was missing that ruined old shack that smelled of fish, but it was the best place that she'd slept in since she first tried to kill Masuyo.

The three came to a stop in something of a clearing with a strange moss-covered rock in the approximate center, and Itachi continued his commentary.

"This is," he began, putting one foot up on the small stone, "a rock."

Haruka almost fell over at the thought of taking the effort to stop just to see a rock.

"One of the rocks that tells you that you're near the Akatsuki living quarters," he added mercifully. "There are three other such rocks, all in a clearing like this, each marking the corner of a square, in the center of which is a small house. That is where you will be staying. And please do not state the obvious about how strange and mossy these rocks are. There are things in this forest that seem to use such obvious statements against us."

Haruka wondered vaguely what was wrong with mentioning how strange the moss-covered rock was, when she was suddenly struck very hard by a heavy dizzy spell. Due to her hunger and exhaustion in combination with this, she completely lost her balance and fell over ungracefully.

Itachi sighed and helped her up. "You thought about it, didn't you?"

Haruka nodded, rather breathless, and ended up getting half-carried, half-dragged the rest of the way by Itachi, wondering in awe what person--or thing--was strong enough to know what she thought and capable of making her feel such strong effects just thinking of a rock!

Little did she know, this was only a small sample of the power held by the great deity of Akatsukism, known simply as The Author, and The Author had great power. A very great power indeed...

Haruka heard Kisame trip and fall, and he soon followed, complaining, "Ow, my fourth wall."

~~~~~  
Author's note: Kisame's line is my absolute favorite in the history of the world. I just had to put it in somehow.

And...the moss-covered rock came from a childrens' book that I used to read--"Anasazia and the Strange Moss-Covered Rock", I think. Everyone walks up to the rock, says, "My, what a strange moss-covered rock!" then it goes "KA-PONG!" and they're unconscious, then the spider steals their stuff. And I do point out every moss-covered rock I see, calling them MCRs. "OMG MCR!" it's pretty funny, seeing as I spent the first two weeks of summer in the woods...surrounded by strange, moss-covered rocks (KA-PONG!). The abbreviation is also partially so I can be walking in the woods with a My Chemical Romance fan and I'll go "OMG MCR!" and they'll be, "Where? I want their autograph!" or something. And I'll be like, "I want it too, but how does a rock give you their autograph?"

At least I kept most of my ramblings at the bottom so you wouldn't have to find the end of them to read the story!

And...COMMENT ON MY BABY! The thing stole my soul--no, it is my soul, the least you could do is at least pretend that you have some appreciation for my soul! TT.TT and people wonder why I wear so much black. I'm freaking depressed that's why! And why am I depressed? Because everyone seems to hate my soul!

So COMMENT ON IT or I will WHINE SOME MORE!!!!

## 6. Introduction

Okay, so, this is the chapter where I was really leaping before looking, and there were a few things that I just left as labels to change for what it was really supposed to be. So, if you see anything \_like this\_ or [this] or anything like that, it's probably just a tag so I wouldn't forget. I'd like to be alerted of these.

And...I'll have to point out a slight warning of certain people :coughitachicough: being...a little less in-character, I suppose. Yeah. Sorry. It was just too entertaining in my mind.

(And I guess the plot's not meshing so much with the anime/manga...eh, oh well.)

Naruto world and characters (c) Masashi Kishimoto (remembered his name!)

Haruka, Masuyo, Misaki (I think that's all this time) (c) me, Zopponde. If you want to use any of them, ask me FIRST and give me a link later. Else I shall devour your soul.

PS, thanks so much to Kiathekali, first to notice this story here! I'd offer a request or something, but...I'm kinda backed up on those, it would really take a while to get in...you'd probably forget you'd made a request by the time it got up ^^;;;;;

Introduction  
Chapter 6

Due to the slight detour and the considerable slowing after Haruka's fall and Kisame's trip, they didn't arrive at the house until well after the sun had set. The moment she saw it, Haruka sighed in relief and yawned widely.

Itachi asked, "Can you stand on your own?"

Haruka yawned again. "If I can't, it's because I'm tired, not still dizzy from...the incident." She leaned her weight onto both feet with one hand to her mouth to stifle a yawn, trying to prove it.

Itachi nodded and reached forward to knock on the door, but before his hand was a foot from the door, Haruka heard rushed footsteps coming forward, and Itachi moved to stand back.

Haruka did not realize why he stood back. The door apparently opened outward instead of inward on the opposite side of the doorknob, and Haruka got knocked in the face with it, pushing her off balance and sending her falling backward as the person who opened the door...well, she couldn't see what happened, the door was in the way, but she did see

arms get thrown around Itachi's neck and most certainly heard a female voice ranting, "Oh, Itachi-kun, I thought I'd never see you again! I should talk to Leader-sama about giving you the long missions, I missed you so much!"

Itachi stood patiently for her to run out of breath, at which point he cleared his throat and said, "In case you've forgotten, there's a reason we came back, and you just gave that reason a faceful of door before you even knew her. And I was the one who decided that we'd take so long."

"Oh." The voice was considerably less enthusiastic at Itachi's change of subject to another person. However, its user stepped outside slightly to close the door enough to see Haruka, still trying to get up. "That's her? What is it about her that you--"

Itachi sighed. "I'm not cheating on you. I wouldn't be even if I was going out with you in the first place. I just saw her potential and nominated her in."

Haruka looked at the woman who opened the door as she looked back. She had purple hair in her face on her right side, Haruka's left, and a whisp of hair on the other, completing the frame around her slashed-through Leaf Village forehead protector. She wore the same cloaks as Itachi and Kisame, except a bit more fitted to her...rather curvy body. Haruka recognized her eyes, though--she had the same eyes as Shino's teammate, Hinata. Byakugan, were they called? Haruka still didn't care enough. Haruka only saw one of her eyes, so for all she knew, something weird had happened, and this girl only had one of the lavender-white eyes.

The woman huffed and said, "Really, Itachi-kun, what did you see in her?"

Itachi sighed. "I saw that she would make a good partner for you. This means you can get out more often."

The woman's face broke into a smile. "Really? You mean I can get a chance to actually go out on a mission? Thank you Itachi-kun!" She threw her arms around him again.

Itachi sighed again. "Misaki-san, please stop doing that. It rather complicates the whole issue where I still need to breathe."

"Ohhh, but I just want to hug you and squeeze you until you go--"

"Eep!" Itachi gasped for air as she squeezed him harder.

Haruka found herself trying hard not to burst into laughter at this spectacle. She truly did admire this Misaki person or whatever her name was, being able to transform Itachi, the silent, plotting, family-murdering, well, murderer, into a cute and friendly...plushie.

Misaki-person giggled, and Haruka saw that Kisame seemed to be straining with effort to hide his laughter, too. She suddenly felt very sorry for Itachi, being laughed at this way...but it was so hard not to laugh at it!

Itachi sighed. "Really, get off of me. Now."

Misaki sighed back. "Fine, fine," she gave in as she let go.

Itachi had to take a moment to catch his breath before Misaki opened the door and led the way in, chattering all the way.

"Itachi-kun, your timing has never been better! I just put on a pot of tea, would you like some? Oh, come on, it's a special herbal blend to help you relax! You could use it after that long journey, couldn't you? Did you even sleep in a bed? I bet you didn't. Come on, stay the night at least, please? You need a night in an actual bed, don't you? I don't know, did he sleep in a bed, Kisame-san? Oh, never mind, you probably didn't sleep any more comfortably than he did. Do you know, um...what's your name? Oh, we haven't been introduced!" Haruka realized that Misaki was talking to her as she turned to courtsey gracefully. "My name is Akatsuki Misaki, and I guess I'll be your partner!"

Itachi sighed. "Misaki, please stop using that name. It doesn't really fit you."

Misaki huffed. "Well, what else is my name? It's not Uchiha, even if it should be, and it's not Hyuuga, because I distinctly remember Hiashi saying that I am no longer a member of that family, and thus I am no longer a Hyuuga, and I'm not an Uchiha either, so what am I but a member of Akatsuki?"

Itachi sighed. "Just because he said you're not part of the family doesn't mean it's still your name. I think I can prove that well enough."

"Itachi-kun, in case you've forgotten, you only keep your family name because you killed your father before he could disown you!"

"But you're not a member of Akatsuki," Kisame chided.

Misaki sighed. "Listen, do you want tea or not? You really should relax a bit, you haven't been sleeping in a bed, have you? Have they been sleeping in a bed, um...darn, I forgot to let you introduce yourself! What's your name?"

Haruka found that Misaki's spirit had given her some energy. "My name is Niroschi Haruka," she began, "and I guess I'm in Itachi's situation, only still having my family name because I killed them before they could say otherwise." She found herself smiling weakly as she said this.

Misaki frowned. "You don't seem the type to kill someone..."

Haruka shrugged. "That's just because I'm incredibly tired after a low-sleep night and a day's journey. You'd be pretty bad off, too, if you were in shoes even remotely similar to mine."

"Oh, well, I guess Itachi-kun wouldn't have thought you so capable or whatever if you couldn't even kill someone," she added with a touch of bitterness.

Haruka yawned widely. "Uhhh...I don't suppose you have a bed ready for me, do you?"

"Huh? Oh!" Misaki seemed a little distracted by Itachi. "Um, no, I don't have a bed ready for you yet, but the couch is always available--sorry," she added.

Haruka nodded. "It's more comfortable than anywhere else I've been sleeping lately."

"Really? Where have you been sleeping?"

"Oh, places," Haruka answered vaguely, aware that Itachi and Kisame knew nothing about her leaving to take care of Masuyo once and for all.

"Well, that's descriptive."

"Hey, at least I wasn't sleeping in a corner!"

"So you two were sleeping in a corner, were you, eh?" Misaki asked Itachi and Kisame.

Itachi sighed. "There was only one bed, and it was only big enough for one. Haruka-san got priority because she was still unconscious."

Strictly speaking, Haruka hadn't been unconscious for the last two nights, but she just shrugged, because she most certainly didn't regret that she wasn't the one sleeping in the corner. "Anyway, seriously, where is that bed? Er, couch?"

Misaki smiled and led the way to a room branching off of the first one she saw, which had only the couch that she mentioned, in a corner with a small table in front of it. "Whenever those two come to visit, Kisame usually sleeps here, but there are other places that he'd fit in. Besides," she added, "I think you get priority, being the new member."

Haruka smiled tiredly as she sat on the couch. "Honorary spy," she corrected.

Misaki smiled back. "I don't care what they call us, just as long as it doesn't change so much."

Haruka nodded and turned to lay down. "Night," she murmured, already half-asleep.

~~~~~

(I'm in a good mood and all, so I think I'll post the next chapter right now.)

## 7. Procrastination

I think FAC should have a warning on it for OOCness--like spoilers and violence and all that. Because some people don't like that. I...eh, I have to be in the right mood. Anyway, if there was an out-oc-character warning, it would be on mild right now. Mostly from average than the worst.

:sigh:...as of this chapter I have to enact the sexual content warning...man, I love Misaki, but sometimes...well, she got a ninety-seven on a Mary-Sue test...and the "kill it dead" was back at fifty. So, yeah, she's pretty...something. Hmm...maybe someday I'll go back to the history of all my characters...yeah, I'm going to do that, eventually, some day, I think...

And there was something else about her that I was going to say, but it would be just too obvious, and it would ruin future surprise.

Naruto world and characters (c) Masashi Kishimoto

Haruka, Misaki, Kazuki (c) me, Zopponde

Procrastination  
Chapter 7

Haruka dreamed that night. It was a very vague dream, but she knew that Kazuki was in it. Toward the end, she thought she heard the beginning of his normal morning call, when she realized she was hearing it in reality.

She sat straight up and bolted immediately for the door, not noticing that she was in a completely different room, and flung it open, calling, "Kazuki-nii...!...san?" She soon realized that it most certainly wasn't her adoptive brother, but a face that seemed familiar but was driven away by her vivid recollection.

The person looked slightly confused and rather surprised, but she smiled and said, "You sure seem enthusiastic!"

Haruka remembered everything that had happened and her hopes fell. She sighed. "I'm sorry, I was mistaken. That must have been rather confusing for you."

Misaki smiled again and said, "It's okay! Sometimes I miss my family, too. Well," she added, "I guess I never knew my real family, or at least not my real close family, but there are some things that I sometimes wish I hadn't left behind."

Haruka opened her mouth to say that she hadn't left Kazuki behind, but she thought better of it and instead said, "So, do I have to make breakfast?"

Misaki looked at her strangely. "Why would I call you to breakfast if it wasn't ready?"

Haruka shrugged. "Kazuki-niisan used to do that."

Misaki took in the "used to" part of that and her expression turned sympathetic. "Oh, I'm so sorry, you don't need to talk about him if you don't want to."

"No," Haruka corrected, feeling a tug at the corners of her mouth at Misaki's misinterpretation. "It's not like that, he didn't die, he...well, I guess he might have by now..." She shook her head. "No, he's alive, somewhere, and I'm going to find him one day."

Misaki shrugged and went on, "Well, anyway, breakfast."

Haruka nodded and followed her back out into the room where she had first actually met Misaki.

Itachi and Kisame were already sitting at the table, neither of them looking terribly alert. Itachi looked like his face was about to fall onto the table.

Haruka grinned. "Not morning people, are you?"

Itachi turned to look at her. His face had even more lines than usual. "I'd like to see you go through what I just had to go through and look any better. And these aren't helping," he added, brushing his hand over his face to indicate his natural lines.

"What are those, anyway? What happened so bad that gave you wrinkles?"

Itachi glared at her. "They're not wrinkles. They're just lines on my face. Like a mole is just a dot on your face."

"Those are some really long moles," Haruka teased.

"They're genetic," Itachi responded sourly. "My father had them before me."

Haruka nodded, then wondered, "So you had wrinkles even when you were a baby?"

Itachi sighed and turned away. "I'm not dealing with this. My eyes hurt and everything's blurry and my head hurts and I hate the world."

"Didn't you hate it in the first place?" Misaki teased. "Isn't that why you joined Akatsuki to take over it?"

Itachi sighed again. "Do you want me to kill you? I'm amazed you survived the night. You're pushing your luck."

Misaki giggled.

Haruka couldn't help asking, "What happened last night?"

Misaki smiled from ear to ear. "Oh, there was a shortage of beds, so we had to share. Itachi and I. We had a lot of fun."

Haruka think she guessed what Misaki did. She raised her eyebrows and finished the conversation with, "Okay!" before looking away and changing the subject. "So, um, where's breakfast?"

Misaki giggled again and walked over to the counter. Haruka followed, suddenly remembering a question that she had.

When they were safely out of earshot, Haruka breathed a question that had been bugging her for quite some time. "Um, so, this organization? The name of it is Akatsuki, right?"

Misaki turned to look at her and almost blurted but managed to restrain herself long enough to realize that she whicpered to avoid embarassment. Instead, she smiled motherly and nodded.

Haruka sighed, glad to finally know for sure. She picked up some of the plates and carried it over to the table.

They all sat down and began to silently eat. Misaki was a fast eater, Haruka noticed. She kept pace with Haruka, as long as she wasn't talking, but Haruka still reached for seconds first. This would have been the case even if Misaki hadn't stopped after her first.

Haruka had just put down her utencil to reach for seconds when Itachi did fall onto his plate. His choice of meal couldn't have been more dramatic: the oatmeal on his plate seemed to splash a little when his face hit it.

Misaki cringed in mirth, smiling stupidly, before she reached over to pull him up.

Kisame grabbed her hand before it touched Itachi. They looked at each other for a moment, and Haruka heard Kisame mutter, "Let him sleep for once," before Misaki nodded and leaned back again.

She was still smiling at his position, though, and she burst into giggles when she heard him snore.

~~~

Haruka sighed and leaned back in her chair. Every plate had been cleaned, but Misaki only had one serving and Kisame didn't have much, either. The only food Itachi ever took was now on his face. For the first time in a long time, Haruka was full and content.

Procrastinators unite!...tomorrow.  
Mockery 2

Haruka was lying in her "bed," hoping that Misaki had caught the hint yesterday and would tell her to make breakfast today.

Soon, however, she didn't seem to realize Haruka's feelings and instead just calmly knocked on the door and opened it when Haruka didn't respond. She came in, looking rather upset in a tearful way.

Haruka immediately sat up. "Misaki? What's wrong?"

Misaki cleared her throat, still looking rather down. "Haruka," she began in a teary voice. "I think I'm...I'm..."

Misaki kept stammering as Haruka thought about what could possibly be wrong. Then she remembered the talk yesterday about her and Itachi in bed. "Oh," she muttered, thinking she understood.

Misaki nodded and stopped stuttering. "It's horrible, isn't it? I can't believe that I...I...I..."

Haruka began to panic. If Misaki really thought this way about pregnancy, then there was a very great issue at hand. She started to pace nervously as Misaki kept stammering, "I...I...I...I...I..."

In seconds, Haruka began running around in a rather flail-like motion. "Wh-what are we supposed to do? I don't know how to take care of-of this! Whaddowdowhaddowdow?"

"I...I..." Misaki went on before she sneezed. "I think I have allergies."

"D-does Itachi--?" Haruka stopped mid-step. "Allergies? That's it? Just allergies?"

Misaki looked at Haruka confusedly. "What did you think I was going to say?"

"Um..." Haruka was embarrassed to say it. "Eh...I thought you were saying you were pregnant or something..."

Misaki laughed. "Oh, now that's just plain silly! Although," she added thoughtfully, making Haruka's jaw drop and face pale, "maybe I should get some pregnancy tests...you know, just in case," she finished, allowing Haruka to close her mouth as some--but not all--of the color to return to her face.

She nodded thoughtfully and smiled. "Yeah, I'm going to get some pregnancy tests. Just to see the look on Itachi-kun's face." She giggled, which escalated into a laugh, and she ended up rolling on the floor at the thought of his face.

~~~~~

(Hmmm...that concept...that stupid concept...where did it come from, anyway? When did I wonder what would happen if Misaki had a child? And why?

PS, I, strictly speaking, have forty chapters written. Seventy-six thousand words, I do believe. In other words, I'd normally be doing something special because FORTY CHAPTERS!!! Including prologues and epilogue...

You know, this story has three parts, and all of them have prologues but only one has an epilogue...eh. I'm not done with the last one. Unfortunately. I don't know how I'm going to end it...)

## 8. Assumtion

(if disclaimers and stuff don't matter to you, skip down to the part where it says "Chapter 8," okay?)

Ehm...yeah. Like always. I don't remember what happened in this chapter. It all mashes together when you have some forty other chapters. So, I can't say anything about it because I don't remember what happened here. But, uh, yeah. If you see random symbols like \* or \_ or [] {} whatever, it's a tag because I forgot something or someone's name or something similar. Please tell me so ASAP. It's kind of embarassing for it to stay there.

Naruto world and characters (c) Masashi Kishimoto

Haruka, Misaki (c) me, Zopponde. They're mine and I refuse to let anyone else use them without advance permission and a link to the finished product.

I've been trying to go back and put all the thought stuff 'like this,' instead of just like this to clarify a bit more. And because Microsoft Word is a pain more often than not.

Some characters might not be entirely in character. Tough cookies. This is fanFICTION. It doesn't have to make perfect sense with everything else in the show.

...that's all? Eh, thanks again to...my readers, who seem to prefer to remain anonymous... -\_-

Oh, and a reminder: I have almost eighty thousand words of this story written. They're not being posted because it seems pointless to post something that nobody reads. Thus, comments will greatly increase the rate at which this story is posted.

I'm done.

Assumtion  
Chapter 8

The next week proceeded similarly. Misaki finally realized that Haruka wanted to make breakfast, and so she did on the day a week later. Itachi never seemed to get any sleep, and he soon gave up on putting food on his plate before his face collapsed into it.

Every time he did this, Haruka raised her eyebrows at Misaki. Finally, she asked, "What have you been doing to him?"

Misaki grinned evilly. "Oh, come on, pregnancy tests wouldn't freak him out much if he

still thought I was a virgin."

"...forget I asked," Haruka denied before going on to change the subject. "So, um, I remember someone mentioning getting out of the house?"

Kisame nodded, not much better off than Itachi. "Yeah, but you two weren't in our calculations when we organized everything, so it might take a little time for them to find you any work."

"But I'd much rather to at least be out walking somewhere, whether it's useful to the organization or not," Haruka protested.

Kisame shrugged. "I guess I could go check." He walked into the other room.

Itachi was already snoring on the table, now too smart to even put his plate in front of him.

Haruka looked at Misaki curiously, wondering why Kisame went out of the room instead of out of the house after talking like he was going to discuss something with people that weren't there. "Um...why did he...?"

A look of comprehension dawned on Misaki's face. "Ohhh, you don't really know that much about Akatsuki, do you?"

"Um...remember that question I asked the first morning I was here? Yeah..."

Misaki nodded comprehendingly. "Yeah, I guess you don't know about that bit. Okay. So," she began, "I don't really understand it so well, because that's one of the things you need to actually learn, you can't just immitate it from the perspective of an honorary spy. Anyway, they have this communication system, so that if they concentrate hard enough and they do the right hand signs and collect their chakra right or something," she shrugged, indicating that she wasn't quite sure, "then they can show up in Akatsuki Base--the other one, of course," she added.

"I've never used it before," she went on, "but I've been at the base when they had a gathering. It's kind of funny, because they're not really quite so solid--they're kinda like sillhouettes." She smiled and added, "Rainbow sillhouettes. I still laugh when I see them all and think about it--these evil S-ranked criminals all gathering about to accomplish their goal of taking over the world, and they're outlined in rainbow."

Haruka smiled faintly at this, but couldn't help noticing something else that she'd said. "Taking over the world? Isn't that a bit cliché?"

"Hey, I'm not here for world domination," Misaki pointed out, shrugging slightly.

Haruka grinned. "You're here for Itachi-niisama, aren't you?"

Misaki grinned, shrugging again. "What can I say? I guess I'm a sucker for wrinkly old S-ranked criminals."

Haruka laughed at her simple (and hardly flattering) description of Itachi.

Kisame walked back in, announcing, "Incedentally, we just figured out what to do with you two. It seems like the Sound Village has been acting up again. Nobody really thinks you'll be able to do us so much good, but they figure that right now, you won't be going so far before you run into some of them. If they find out that we have new members--even if," he added, grinning a bit, "you aren't really members, you still look enough like us to get them to come out of hiding to chase after you. So right now, all you two have to do is run around and look like real members," he summed up, "until Orochimaru decides that you look enough like the real deal to send some minions after you. And don't worry," he added, "Itachi and I will be staying here for a while, so if you don't go too far, you'll be good no matter what. We'll start following you more closely when you've gotten a bit more attention and we might be able to actually catch someone."

Misaki frowned. "So we're bait."

Kisame shrugged. "Hey, I didn't come up with this plan. I just said that you guys needed work. Everyone else brainstormed to that idea."

Haruka frowned, too, but she sighed. "At least we can get out of the house. Don't you ever feel just a bit like they're only keeping you so you can cook and clean?"

Misaki snorted. "Yeah, and being used as bait is such an improvement."

"Agreed," Haruka concurred, nodding empathetically, "but I'm sick of sitting here and I've only been an honorary spy for a week."

Misaki sighed. "I know, it's just frustrating when the best thing anyone can do with you is risk your life."

"There are worse things you could be risking your life for."

"Remind me again, what am I risking my life for right now?"

Haruka thought about this for a moment before answering, "Higher chances for Itachi-niisama to survive an encounter with a potential threat to his life."

Misaki nodded enthusiastically. "Yeah, that's worth it. Hmm, and I guess it might help him think better of me, and then..." She smiled.

"Yeah!" Haruka encouraged, nodding. "You could be risking your life to, I don't know," she thought about what in her life was a worse thing to risk her life for when she remembered, "You could be risking your life for the very slight benefit of the head of a family that you really don't care about."

Misaki smiled, seeming to remember something. "Yeah, that really sucks."

Haruka was surprised. She didn't really know much about the Hyuuga family, but she didn't think that it was that bad. Actually, she imagined that it would, in some ways, be

better than the Niroshi family. For one thing, the Hyuugas had more power in the Leaf Village, so she imagined that it wouldn't be as likely to be such control freaks within the family. But, she supposed, there were more reasons to dislike a family than how much say they have in your life.

She shrugged it off. "I'll have to ask her about that later," she decided.

~~~~~

(Hmmm...yeah, okay, that's what happened...sorry it's a short chapter, I think I'll post the next one today anyway.

So, tonight's the party for the release of the final Harry Potter book. We'll be going pretty early, to beat the lines in, so that should leave me effectively with quite some time beforehand to type some stuff on the laptop. Maybe more of this, maybe some other random story or something, but I don't doubt that I'll be writing something. Or drawing. And trying to get everyone to stop BEING NOSY and LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER! For some reason, every time I start drawing, everybody's looking over my shoulder, "What are you drawing? What are you drawing?" Hmmm...so many wishes that I could make in relevance to that...

Okay. Nobody cares. Of course. Too bad, I'ma rant anyways.

Story will expand instantly--just add comments!)

## 9. Complication

(skip to the part that says "Chapter 9" if you don't care about disclaimers and author's rantings)

The funny thing about this story is that I don't think I ever made an actual conflict. Just complications. This is where it all starts to get funky. Ehm, starts to.

Oh, and what I have so far? As of yet, there are three parts. There are only eleven chapters in the first part. Then it skips to Shippuden. Which is...um, sixteen chapters, I think. And has an epilogue. And then...more complications which I would rather not talk about. But, yeah, just a basic road map.

And...I guess I'm really wierd for thinking so much about their whole signal thingy when they think they're being followed? Oh well. I knew that already.

Naruto world and characters (c) Masashi Kishimoto

Haruka, Misaki, Kazuki, Masami, as-of-yet-annonymous Sound ninjas 1-3(2 and 3 don't really appear, but we're technically aware of them) (c) me, Zopponde. Usage without permission=deathwish.

I don't think any trademarked characters actually appear here, so I don't think any of them can be acting out-of-character or anything, but, yeah, if they are, much appologies.

### Complication Chapter 9

Almost another week passed. Misaki and Haruka had basically made rounds on most of the villages, where they did some petty theivery or similar to attract attention, specifically avoiding Sand and Leaf. Normally, they might not have been so obvious, but the way Haruka saw it (and told Misaki that she saw it), if the Sound Village had reason to believe that they had a weakness, they'd be more likely to attack, and they wouldn't be spending so long looking over their shoulders and waiting to be attacked.

In that time, they had become quite close, and Misaki earned the title Misaki-nee-chan. More usefully, they had developed a system that helped them in an ambush situation. They had all the lines rehearsed, knowing that Sound Village ninja would probably be able to hear absolutely anything, and knew all the motions and systems for it.

Really, it wasn't such an overall help, but it seemed useful at the time, and soon enough, it proved its use.

Haruka led the way down a path that came relatively close to the Akatsuki living quarters, which, among them, was known better as "Prison".

Haruka thought she sensed someone following. She slowed down a bit and asked, "Are you getting a bit hungry, Misaki-nee-chan?" The internal meaning asking if she had heard something.

Misaki slowed down, too, and responded, "I suppose so, a little bit." Meaning that she agreed

Haruka nodded. "I still have some dried fish, maybe we could have some of that?" Meaning that they should do something about it.

Misaki bobbed her head indecisively. "I don't know, I feel so filthy that I'd rather take a bath right now." Meaning that she wanted to scout out and figure out what kind of people they were up against.

Haruka nodded again. "Sounds fair. I think there's a spring up ahead, I think that would be safe away from prying eyes."

Misaki nodded again. "Okay. I'll go there and you can do whatever."

Haruka nodded back. "Yes, I'll just be sitting on this odd little rock, waiting for you to finish up." It was pretty hopeless that their supposed pursuers would say anything about the strange moss-covered rock, but it was worth a shot; Haruka hadn't been terribly focused on any one thing, but she did take a good deal of time from combat training to learn some medical skills, so she wasn't exactly a wonderful fighter, and Misaki's biggest asset was her Byakugan, which weren't too specialized, either. She once confided in Haruka that she never knew her parents, but she could be quite certain that at least one of them wasn't a pure Hyuuga, and she had a poor mastery over the bloodline trait. If something could increase their chances to delay the enemy, they would take it.

Haruka saw Misaki stretch not too far away; this was a part of their signal. The bath was a cover to see what kind of people were following them, if they did have followers. Misaki would basically use the bath as a reason to scout the area a little better; namely, she would use her Byakugan to see who was nearby.

Haruka carefully observed the way she stretched. She knew that Misaki knew better than to just stretch on instinct (if she wanted to do that, she would have done it sooner), so she could trust that the signal she meant to get across this time was that there were four ninjas following them.

Haruka was careful not to nod and give away their plan but she did sigh and close her eyes for a moment while Misaki went on to put up the next part of the signal.

Misaki "accidentally" splashed in the water with her clothes still on, which meant that she'd have to hang some of her clothes to dry, or for the intended purpose of sending a signal. In their system, the way she hung up her robe to dry would indicate how many people had followed her.

Haruka watched and got the total message: they had a team of four Sound Village ninjas after them, out of which two girls had followed her to the spring. Either they were being polite or they were balancing the ninjas between Misaki and Haruka.

Seeing as they chose the girls to go after Misaki, they were probably being polite. Probably.

Haruka sighed and tried to pinpoint the other two that supposedly were after her. She sat perfectly still and listened, closing her eyes and tweaking the cells in her eardrum and the auditory part of her brain so that she could better hear and identify these people.

She sighed when she didn't hear anything out of the ordinary. I should have known, she reminded herself, Sound ninjas would probably be able to hide their sounds better. Or at least they're probably better at sounding like birds or something.

Haruka frowned and wondered how to get the ninjas out of hiding. Then she thought of it.

She exhaled, and concentrated really hard on doing exactly what everyone always told her not to do with her ability: play dead.

After some thought, she decided a pretend-heart attack would be best. She managed to set up her body to almost--but not quite--completely shut down for a little under thirty seconds. Hopefully, with their cute little specialty, the Sound ninja had decided to start listening to her heartbeat trying to figure out if they'd been spotted, and they'd soon know if her heart stopped.

She inhaled to prepare herself, made sure that everything would go just right, and stopped her heart.

It was a strange sensation, but at least she wouldn't have to act like she was feeling it. There was a pain in her chest, and then her arm started to feel kind of weird before she passed out.

She woke up soon after, rather tipsy but at least conscious. She cracked her eyelids open just enough to see if there were shadows across her vision that would mean her attackers came out.

Sure enough, she noticed two shadows across her vision, and she heard them talking. She closed her eyes fully and brought her attention to their words.

"...looks a little familiar," one of them said, an agreeably familiar, relatively young male voice. "Really familiar. I don't think I could bring myself to do it either way."

The other voice, another male but older, muttered back, "I think so, too. She looks a bit like...well, I haven't seen that face in such a long time, I'm not even sure she's alive. And this girl is definitely too young. But I'm not sure I could do it either, they look too similar."

"Which face haven't you seen in a while? She's probably just the daughter of some person you saw once in Leaf Village."

"...The daughter of? Hmm, that would be interesting. While I'd admit meeting that person back at Leaf, I did see her after I left. And why, if this girl is the daughter of her, then I'd have to say that this girl is rather directly related to me."

"Really? Who does she look like?"

"Have I ever told you about Masami-chan?"

"Yes, you have, and I remember it quite well because I've met Masami-san before, too."

The name ringed a bell in Haruka's mind, too. She decided to open her eyes a little, because it seemed that she wasn't going to get hurt yet and her pursuers seemed slightly preoccupied.

Indeed, they were too occupied with each other to notice her, so she opened her eyes fully.

And one of them did look quite familiar. The other one, she had never seen, but the one who looked familiar...she knew she shouldn't trust him anyway, but she wasn't sure she could fight him with this nagging feeling that she knew him too well.

Now she strategized, but she couldn't find a good way to ensure her safety. Finally, she gave up, and instinctively sighed, immediately decided it was a horrible mistake.

Both of them looked down at her, both of them frowning. The one she thought she recognized spoke up.

"Okay. Our orders were to find the new Akatsuki members and kill them, but neither of us can bring ourselves to do it. You really do look familiar; what's your name?"

Being it the case that she thought she knew them, Haruka figured that she could tell them her name without really regretting it quite so much, so she told them, "If you really believe that it's your business, then I guess I can tell you that my name is Niroshi Haruka."

The eyebrows on the Sound ninja she didn't know flew up. "Niroshi?"

The one she did know frowned again a bit deeper, before he broke into a grin and flung his arms around Haruka.

"Haru-chan, I never thought I'd see you again!"

Haruka was slightly confused. "Um...you look really familiar and all, but I can't remember your name, either."

"Oh come on, did you really forget your older brother? It's me, Kazuki!"

Haruka felt herself numb in pleasure. "Kazuki-niisan...!"

The other man looked on confusedly. "Kazuki-san, do you really know this girl? Her name sounds really familiar..."

Kazuki loosened his grip on Haruka to turn around and face his partner. "Oh, I've heard you talk so many times about Masami-san, don't you remember what she said about her child?"

The man stood in thought for a moment before quoting, " '...and I will name my child Haruka so that she will always be far from that wretched family.' " A look of comprehension dawned on him. "Kazuki-san, you're hugging my daughter!"

Haruka was more than slightly panicked by this new development. "WHAT?" Haruka's call echoed across the clearing, and she noticed that Misaki, who had just finished her (rather brief) bath, looked up from getting dressed.

"Crap," Haruka cursed under her breath, her eyes widening with Misaki's.

Haruka saw Misaki getting hurriedly comprmise for just wrapping her cloak tightly around herself as she rushed over.

"Get out of here," Haruka ordered quietly. "Now. shoot, get out before she makes a fuss! Now!"

Kazuki let her go and stared her in the eye. "Okay, I see the issue, but...Haru-chan, I'm not leaving you this soon, so I'm really sorry I have to do this..."

Haruka felt a rather hard tap on the back of her neck before she passed out, without ever saying anything about the strange, moss-covered rock.

~~~~~

More rambles:

(Sorry about the repetitive moss-covered rock. But...I like the moss on the cover on the rock! It's...okay, I don't know. I guess I just like the random stuff. Like MOSS COVERED ROCKS!

I started to make chapter introduction pictures. Mostly for on deviantART, to keep everything clear. It included warnings on individual chapters and random tidbits about the characters. Some day I'll go back and put those in front of the story. Then it would clarify things about what made it have what warnings.

Oh, and, um.....nobody here has serious issues with yuri, do they? ^;;; because, um...if you do, I advise that you don't read the next chapter...ehehe...cough)

## 10. Comprehension

Okay, I just realized that this story has over 100 views--and why the hell shouldn't I post another chapter to celebrate? Mind, I'm kind of low on time, so, uh, I'm not going to say anything about the chapter, and I'm not sure I can edit it so that the italics are where they should be. In which case...bear with me!

Naruto world and characters (c) Masashi Kishimoto

Haruka, Misaki, Kazuki, unnamed-yet-I-think Sound ninjas 1-3 (c) me, Zopponde, stealing=deathwish

I don't think any trademarked characters will show up enough to be out-of-characters, but if they do and they are, deal with it. It's a Naruto fanFICTION. It doesn't actually happen.

Oh, and, uh, yeah, there's some mention of yuri, so...it's just a passing mention, but that's why it got that thing marked.

...how did that happen, anyway...?

Comprehension

Chapter 10

Haruka woke up under the shadow of someone leaning over her. She opened her eyes a little more to see the face of a young woman essentially glaring at her through her heavy, unnaturally colored makeup.

When she saw signs of Haruka's consciousness, she huffed and called over her shoulder, "Kazuki, your girlfriend woke up."

Haruka heard Kazuki deny, "She's not my girlfriend!"

"Then why'd ya keep her alive?" another female voice, whose owner Haruka couldn't see, taunted.

Kazuki sighed as the lady in Haruka's face stepped aside to let him see her. "Because she'd make good bait for the others."

Haruka frowned. Bait seemed the only thing she seemed good at being. Maybe that was why she didn't like fish; she always had to endanger something that she could empathize with.

Kazuki smiled at her. "And I would like to talk to her. There's always a chance that Akatsuki has a weakness."

Haruka sighed and breathed to him, "I've only been in Akatsuki for about two weeks.

Less than that. And I'm not even a real member. Kisame-san never lets me forget that."

"Do you want to talk to me again or not?" Kazuki hissed back.

Haruka smiled tiredly. "Fair enough."

Kazuki stood up. "Now I'm going to take her somewhere else, so she doesn't feel too pressured."

The first woman that Haruka saw looked at Kazuki suspiciously. "And we want to relieve pressure now?"

Kazuki glared at her. "Would you start talking if all of your enemies were crowding around you?"

The woman sighed and nodded, but she still glared at Kazuki. "Alright, but I've got my eye on you."

Kazuki smiled at her and helped Haruka stand up. "Can you walk on your own?"

Haruka thought she could, so she nodded, and, sure enough, she could walk without really doing anything more than holding Kazuki's hand.

They walked away a little--okay, a lot. They walked on for about ten minutes, and rather fast. If Haruka had to guess, they went at least half a mile away.

Finally, Kazuki sat down on a rock--a rock without moss. He gestured for her to sit down as well, and she found a grassy spot to sit on before he took a breath and frowned.

"Haruka, what are you doing in Akatsuki?" he demanded seriously. "They're all S-ranked criminals--if they know you're in it, you'll automatically be considered one as well, for betraying your village."

Haruka sighed tiredly. "Kazuki-niisan, I know that I shouldn't have, but really, it's your fault."

Kazuki's eyebrows raised disbelievingly. "My fault? How is that?"

Haruka looked up to meet his eyes coolly. "If you hadn't left me, I wouldn't have been sent to Leaf Village, and then I wouldn't have met Masuyo, which means I wouldn't have killed Masuyo, which means I wouldn't have run away and fallen into the river and been saved by Itachi-niisama, and then I wouldn't have..." Haruka smirked slightly. "Then I wouldn't have become an honorary spy for Akatsuki."

"You killed--" Kazuki seemed rather speechless. "Haruka, this all is serious--and it's not my fault! This whole business--I left you behind because I didn't want you to kill people!"

Haruka shrugged. "Then you should have just let me live alone in Sand Village. I would have stayed put there--really, I'd never even think of betraying Sand Village, even now." She really meant these words.

Kazuki sighed. "Do you even know the goals of Akatsuki?"

Haruka shrugged. "I know, but the way I see it, I'd rather be on the side that'll win."

Kazuki sighed again. "Haruka...you've just backed yourself in. You'll never be able to leave Akatsuki--only one person ever has before, and the only reason he's still alive is because he knows how to use a new body if his is destroyed."

Haruka shrugged again. "Why would I want to leave? I'm perfectly happy right here. That is, until I realized that you were here," she added. "Now it's all crazy, and I'm starting to think twice about it. Starting to."

Kazuki leaned forward, put his elbows on his knees and rested his forehead in his hands. "Haruka..."

"Kazuki-niisan, I'm fine," Haruka insisted.

Kazuki looked up a bit. "And you know, you call Itachi by that title--Itachi-nisama. Do you seriously think he's that great? Don't you know what he did to his last family?"

Haruka looked down a little. "Not much better than what I've done. The only difference is that he went a little further."

Kazuki sighed. "Haruka, you're being too friendly with these criminals. It's not healthy--you're probably lucky they didn't just kill you the moment they saw you!"

Haruka knew that Kisame probably wanted to or wished he had, but saying that wouldn't exactly help her argument. Instead, she sighed and said, "Look, they didn't, and now they won't. Thus, I'm probably now safer because now I have a whole bunch of rather capable people teamed up with me." Actually, she had the weakest, in-on-a-fluke person for a partner, but that still wouldn't help her argument, and right now, she supposedly had Itachi and Kisame looking after her, which was something she wouldn't mention because right now, while she wasn't sure whose side she was on, she wasn't going to give up an Akatsuki yet.

Kazuki sighed. "Your partner doesn't look that well off. She didn't even seem to notice my teammates who followed her."

Haruka suddenly wondered something. "Did you guys do anything to her?"

Kazuki shook his head. "No, but only because you screamed and ruined their opportunity. She'd probably be mince meat right now if you hadn't been so noisy and ruined our chance to talk with better circumstances. Why? Did you two have a relationship or something?" He eyed her in such a way that he seemed to suspect that his sort-of younger sister was having a love life that he didn't know about.

Haruka glared at him. "Do I really look any less straight than you do? By the way, is blue

lipstick the uniform in Sound Village?"

Kazuki rolled his eyes. "No, you don't, but that doesn't mean you are straight. I just want to know who my younger sister is interested in."

Haruka rolled her eyes too. "Well, I guess it might look like that, but it's not. She's just my partner. Do you assume that Itachi-niisama and Kisame-san like each other that way just because they're partnered?" She suddenly got a very vivid and rather strange picture in her mind and scrunched her face in displeasure at the sight of it. "No, no they're not," she answered. "They had better not. And besides, I think I have some reasonable proof that Itachi-niisama is straight." After all, he had freaked out when he saw the pregnancy tests, like he thought it was a possibility. Haruka was still wondering if it would ever happen. And how the poor child would come out. Haruka hoped with all sincerity that the only reason Misaki ever got them was to bug Itachi.

Kazuki shrugged. "Those two weren't the ones I was thinking of. I know for a fact that people will follow each other into the hardest places for the sake of someone they love, and that person doesn't always have to be of another gender."

Haruka looked at him suspiciously. "And you know this...how?"

Kazuki grinned. "Oh, those two girls who were about to attack your friend? They are very close together. Really, I think the only real reason that they joined Sound Village is because Orochimaru-sama supports gay marriage."

"Interesting...and why would he do that?"

Kazuki shrugged. "I don't know, it doesn't concern me."

"Anyway," Haruka went on, "really, you don't have to worry about me. I'll be fine, just as long as you don't ruin it for me."

Kazuki sighed. "Haruka, I'm trying to help you. You don't belong with Akatsuki."

Haruka rolled her eyes. "Are you going to tell me I belong in Sound Village now? I don't have any better reason to do that than I have to stay with Akatsuki."

Kazuki took her shoulders. "Haruka, you have every reason to come with us instead! I'm there, your father is there, it's generally safer, and we're not trying to take over the world! Why did you join Akatsuki, anyway?"

Haruka glared at him. "Why do you think? Itachi-niisama saved my life, and then the next thing I know he's talking about me joining his organization. And I can't leave it now, I've made a few friends there! By the way," she added, "the reason I left Leaf Village could also be blamed on your village in general."

Kazuki raised one eyebrow. "Oh, really? How so?"

Haruka sighed. "The village didn't seem to want me to be a Chunin, because there

was always an ANBU somewhere nearby on our last mission before the exam, and then someone got injured in such a way that the ANBU was definitely involved. The only exception was last time, and then, your dear Orochimaru went and had a little bout with someone over our heads. And who should get caught in the crossfire but my teammate? Thanks to your great lord, my teammate was forced to retire, and so my whole team was forced to retire, so Masuyo decided to marry me off to someone, and I snapped and killed her. So it might not all be your fault, but it is the fault of someone in the village."

Kazuki relaxed and took his hands off of Haruka's shoulders. "I'm sorry, I didn't know he'd do that."

Haruka shrugged. "I guess it was the kid he was fighting that did all the real damage, but really, whose fault is it that he was throwing fireballs all over the place?"

Kazuki sighed. "I'm sorry. I guess I can see why you don't like Sound Village. But still, don't tell me Akatsuki has done nothing to wrong you."

Haruka thought about it for a moment before she shrugged. "Nothing worse than not having anything for me to do, and really, all that meant is that I got a few days to rest before all this happened."

Kazuki started to sigh again before he stopped and sat up straight, as though listening for something. A moment later, he stood up, looking back in the direction they came from. Then he looked down at Haruka and said, "Excuse me," before he ran off back where they came from.

At that point, Haruka realized that the air seemed to be ringing. It took her a moment to realize that Kazuki's friends were probably signalling him, and that's why he left.

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Author's rambles:

(Oh, yeah, and, if anyone's interested in Beta-reading? Please? I hate spell-check and grammar-check, I wouldn't mind someone checking everything before it's posted. For this story only, for now, I guess.)



Itachi turned to her and whispered, "You said there were four of them before, right?"

Misaki nodded and activated her Byakugan. She searched the whole area, scanning for a trace of the last Sound ninja and for Haruka, but she couldn't find them in the immediate area. She shook her head. "They're somewhere else. I could probably find them if I went a little further in the right direction."

Itachi squinted before he nodded and muttered, "Can you figure out which way they went? Are there any footprints or anything?"

Misaki looked for signs of movement, but it all was widespread. "Not from here."

At that moment, she realized a movement in the air. She twitched her head and itched her ears, trying to get the ultrasonic feeling out. "Do you hear that?"

Itachi sighed. "They've probably found us. They're Sound ninjas, after all."

A thought crossed Misaki's mind. "Maybe they're calling for help from that other one. If they are, then he'll come from where he took Haruka. I'll go that way, and you two can deal with these guys, right?"

Kisame nodded. "They look like the only thing hard about them is their heads."

The darker-haired woman twitched, swept a kunai knife out of her pouch, and flung it in their direction in one swift movement. "Care to say that to my face?" she demanded, glancing their way.

The kunai hit about a centimeter to the left of Misaki's ear and she squeaked in alarm, loud enough to give away their position to most people with any sense of hearing, whether or not they specialized in sound.

Kisame smirked. "Yeah, you're only difficult in reasoning with."

She turned to fully face them now. "I know you're there, so come out! You and your two friends," she added.

Just as the three of them stepped into the open, Misaki heard someone running through the forest and looked over just in time to see the fourth Sound ninja charge into the clearing and skid to a halt in the center of his friends. "What'd I miss?" he asked breathlessly.

The woman who hadn't yet said anything shrugged and spoke up. "Not much. Just Airi being majorly offended by Mr. Blue's diss."

Kisame gritted his teeth and pulled his whale of a sword from his back. "Please don't call me that."

Itachi nodded. "He gets rather rash when anyone refers to him by titles relating to that little condition."

Misaki nodded too, having had her own lesson-teaching experiences with titles for Kisame, before she remembered that she was to go after Haruka. She took a moment to remember where the last Sound ninja came from, and another to make an escape plan. "If you&rsquo;ll excuse me, I kind of have to...answer a call of nature right now," she excused, before pulling her hands together into a seal that made her image disappear with a poof and a cloud of smoke.

She reappeared only a few meters away, and took the time to gain some altitude in the trees before rushing to where the last ninja came from, always keeping her Byakugan activated and searching for traces of her partner.

Finally, she found that Haruka was sitting, looking rather bored, on a rock in a clearing almost half a mile away from the other Sound ninjas. Misaki slowed down as she approached, and stopped on the closest branch she could get to the clearing before she called down. "Haruka-chan, do you need help?"

Haruka looked up, looking rather unhappily surprised to see her partner. "Misaki-nee-chan...!"

Misaki hopped down from the tree, landing just in front of Haruka. "What&rsquo;s going on? First you were hugging that one Sound ninja, then he takes you out here, and you&rsquo;re just sitting here waiting for him to come back? Haruka, do you know this guy?"

Haruka looked away, paused, and finally sighed. "Yes. I think I&rsquo;ve mentioned him to you before. He&rsquo;s Kazuki-niisan."

Misaki recalled the first morning that Haruka had been in Akatsuki, when she flung open the door and responded as if she expected someone totally different to answer the door. She nodded. "Yeah, once or twice. So you really know him well, don&rsquo;t you?"

Haruka nodded distantly, still not looking at Misaki. "He was the only one left...after Kaa-san and Arata-tousan died..." She sighed. "And now I&rsquo;ve met Tou-san, sort of, and I don&rsquo;t know who I should be with anymore. Where am I supposed to go? The only place I know I won&rsquo;t go is Leaf Village, or any other village but Sound or maybe Sand." She sighed again. "Maybe I should just go to Sand. I could be just like I was before, but I guess I&rsquo;ll be retired from being a ninja. Maybe I&rsquo;ll open a store of some kind..." Her stare went further. "Maybe cacti. Like flowers but more suited to the desert. It wouldn&rsquo;t be very popular, but at least I&rsquo;d be home, and I&rsquo;d have all this behind me and done."

Misaki came forward and put her hand on Haruka&rsquo;s shoulder. "Haruka-chan, I don&rsquo;t think that&rsquo;s the right decision. I can see why you&rsquo;d think that, but it&rsquo;s not. You&rsquo;ve been with us too long, I was just getting used to being used as bait instead of a housewife." Haruka smiled and looked up into Misaki&rsquo;s face.

"I guess so, but..." She turned away again. "...now I&rsquo;m against Kazuki-niisan, and Tou-san, too, even if I don&rsquo;t really know him." She closed her eyes. "I shouldn&rsquo;t have done that. I shouldn&rsquo;t have hurt Masuyo, or at least I shouldn&rsquo;t have gone back and finished her. I should have just gone back home." She sighed, opening her eyes again. "I wish I could go back in time and change all this."

Misaki felt some memory stir inside her at this last sentence, and thought she heard a voice that she knew, but older, echoing in her head, crying, "I wish we could go back and stop him. Then none of this would have happened."

She shook her head to clear it. "Haruka, no, I don't think that's the answer. Time travel's impossible anyway, right?" Something felt wrong about these words.

Haruka seemed to sense that, and she shook her head slowly. "No, I don't think that's true. But I suppose," she added, sighing, "I don't exactly know how to do it anyway." She smiled softly with thought. "I wonder where I'd be most likely to find out..."

Misaki instantly knew how to make Haruka stay with them. "Isn't it obvious? Akatsuki's the place to stay! It doesn't matter where they figure it out, because one day, we'll conquer the world, and we'll have everyone's research, and one day, you'll know how to go back in time and completely stop Kazuki-niisan from leaving! Then you'll spend the rest of your life, happy and loyal to Sand Village instead of uncertain of all this!"

Haruka smiled widely and genuinely. "Yeah, I guess so. I really don't think it works that way, but I don't think I'll be able to get anything closer."

Misaki smiled, happy to have her partner back. "A-and maybe we can get a pet or something, for the base, if we're going to be staying there the whole time!"

Haruka's smile stretched. "Let me guess; you want a weasel."

Misaki paused, wondering what she meant, then smiled evilly. "Oh, a weasel indeed...yes, it would be a very pretty weasel, and its name shall be Itachi..."

Haruka giggled. "Do you mean you'll just put a collar on Itachi and call him a weasel?"

Misaki laughed. "No, I wouldn't, and I don't really want any kind of weasel, and Itachi wouldn't make a very good pet, but it's fun to joke about."

Haruka sighed. "Maybe a cat. I like cats. And then maybe Kisame wouldn't always be there to constantly remind us that we're just honorary spies."

Misaki smiled, but the jokes about Itachi's name and Kisame's little quirk reminded her that they were still an inch away from a nasty fight. She grinned meekly. "Um...speaking of Kisame," she began, "he and Itachi...that is to say, um, I guess the reason that Kazuki-niisan went is because..."

Haruka sat up, alert. "Oh shoot! I forgot about that!" Her face collapsed into worried wrinkles. "Ohhh, what am I supposed to do? Who am I supposed to fight for? I don't know what to do," she whined, dropping her head into her hands.

Misaki thought of something. "Hmm...maybe we could try to pry them apart," she suggested. "I don't know, remind Itachi that you left the stove on or something."

Haruka thought for a moment, then nodded briskly and stood up, already running through the forest.

Misaki sighed, content for once, and followed, but she took the higher path, leaping from tree branch to tree branch until she caught up with Haruka and gestured for her to climb up too.

Haruka nodded and hopped between trees until she was at Misaki's height, never looking up from the branches. "I never really liked this form of travel," she explained. "I never fully mastered the art of anything to do with anything but sand, and sometimes cacti. I only learned them well enough to pass the Leaf Village exam. And I still don't know the trees in this area so well."

Misaki nodded, understanding, and replied, "You can run on the ground if you want, I don't mind."

Haruka shook her head, still looking directly at the branches. "I'd better learn now, if I'm ever going to live anywhere within fifty meters of two trees."

Misaki smiled. "I suppose so."

They went on in silence, until Haruka stopped abruptly.

Misaki turned around and asked her, "What's wrong, can't find the next branch to leap to?" Her question was answered immediately by a solid collision with a warm human body.

"Ow--watch where you're going!" snapped a familiar man--the older man in the group of Sound ninjas.

Misaki backed away just enough to look at him. "You watch where you're going! You're the one who's supposed to have heard me before I hit you!"

He just sat there and eyed her suspiciously. "What did you do to that prisoner of ours?"

Haruka hopped forward a few branches to catch up, but still stayed a few trees behind Misaki. "I'm right here, er...I guess I should be calling you Tou-san?"

The man looked over to her, smiling warmly. "Yes, I suppose so."

Misaki sighed. "I guess you did say something about your father earlier. But really, we need to get going. Now. Itachi-kun might be suspecting us soon."

Haruka sighed. "Misaki-nee-chan, you have a one-track mind. You think about Itachi-niisama so much that you completely forgot that it's Kisame-san we should be worried about. But yes, we should be going." She looked at her father. "I'm sorry, I really do wish that I could get to know you better, but I don't think we're meant to know each other any better than we do already."

The old man sighed as another familiar Sound ninja caught up to him. "Yes, I suppose so."

Keep in mind, though," he added, "I'm going to be trying to change that. I apologize in advance for any problems that may come up from my trying to get to know my daughter."

Haruka nodded. "I understand. I just hope it doesn't cost me my life or yours."

The younger ninja smiled ironically. "Well, I do hope that answers your questions. Now can we go before we get any suspicion on us?"

Haruka nodded and left for the next branch. Misaki waited for Haruka's father to go before she went along, too, with the younger ninja following her. He pulled up beside her. "By the way, my name is Inaroki Kazuki. What's yours?"

Misaki paused a moment before she decided to tell him, "Akatsuki Misaki."

"Any particular reason for the suspicious family name?" Kazuki asked, raising an eyebrow.

"If I've guessed right from Haruka," Misaki answered, shrugging slightly, "you're from Sand Village, so you wouldn't know the Hyuuga Clan. But I was originally from there, until the head of the family decided that I was too weak to the clan and disowned me. Everybody keeps telling me that I'm still actually a Hyuuga, but I think that my name in the bingo book is, actually, under the Akatsuki name."

Kazuki grinned. "That's a story to tell the children."

"Let's hope I don't have any," Misaki hoped, grimacing slightly. "I don't think that Akatsuki is such a safe place to raise a child."

"Sound Village might be safer," Kazuki suggested.

"No," Misaki answered his unasked question. "Haruka decided that she's not going to you guys, so the person there that I know best would probably be you. No offense or anything, but I'm not sure I can trust you guys very well."

"Fair enough," Kazuki agreed. "Actually, that's why Haruka was raised in Sand Village instead of Sound. Her mother decided that it wasn't safe enough, raising a child in the changing conditions of a hidden village still in the process of being fully thought-out."

Misaki thought back a bit. "Did he really plan it that long ago? Orochimaru, I mean. He only left Akatsuki less than ten years ago..."

Kazuki shrugged. "I can't say I know the full history of my village, but who does? Really, I dare to ask you if anybody knows about every detail and concept that formed with others to eventually form any village?"

Misaki nodded slowly. "I wasn't challenging that, but you do have a point." She began to slow down, noticing that the old man in front of her was doing so. Haruka stopped abruptly at the edge of the clearing and looked down on the scene.

What she saw wasn't as bad as she had expected; in fact, there didn't even

seem to be any real damage at all. If anything, the scene was a rather blissful one, if only in a rather twisted sense.

Kisame was leaning against a tree, watching on boredly. Itachi stood nearby with a similar expression. In the center of the camp, the two young women were surrounded by fire, not seeming to notice the flames for their undivided attention to each other...and each other's lips.

Haruka had to say that she thought she understood what Kazuki had meant earlier when he said he knew that people would follow each other anywhere if they loved that person, gender not being an issue. He must have been talking about his teammates.

Kisame looked up, seeing her watching awkwardly. "Hey, what took you?"

Haruka shrugged. "Misaki ran into some old friends. Anyway, why are we still hanging around here? Let's get going, now that everything seems to be taken care of."

Itachi sighed. "I suppose that we have hit a bit of a dead-end. Those girls didn't realize that the grass around them was too wet to catch on fire, and they're saying their 'last goodbyes' or something for no particular reason. No matter what metal we throw at them, it melts in the fire. The only thing we can do is wait for them to realize this and get out for themselves." He paused. "I assume you've taken care of the other two?"

Haruka shrugged again. "Haven't seen them. I guess they just ran away or something."

Itachi paused, but didn't question her. "Well then, I suppose the best thing we can do now is get you two back to your base."

Misaki had caught up some time ago, but just now had gotten over the unwelcome shock after realizing the events within the ring of fire. She piped in, "Our base? Oh, so now you guys have your own?"

Kisame sighed. "That's always been your base. It's just a place to keep you, really. The real Akatsuki base is the other one. I guess you two just have the honorary spy Akatsuki base."

Misaki huffed and hopped down from her tree to grab Itachi's arm. "Come on, Itachi-kun. We're going."

Itachi sighed and gave in. "Fine, but I'm going to sleep tonight, if I have to tie you up and have you sleep on the floor."

Misaki looked as if she was going to whine, but she thought of something better. "Oh, it's okay. It doesn't even matter anyway. You'll be a father soon either way."

Itachi tripped, breaking free of Misaki's grasp, steadied himself, and whipped around to face her. "WHAT?"

Misaki giggled. "No, no, not yet. I just wanted to see how you'd react."

Itachi glared at her. "Do not do that again. The next time you lie to me about something that serious, I will--"

Misaki sighed. "Yes, I know all the gory details. Pain ow pain stab rip stab ow scream pain slice cut pain ow. Something like that, seventy-two hours, and again..."

Itachi nodded. "I'm glad you understand."

The two kept on walking in the general direction of the Akatsuki Honorary Spy Base, Misaki holding Itachi back into a vaguely romantic stroll. Kisame grinned and stood up to follow them. Haruka sighed, thinking of how great her life seemed at that moment, with Misaki torturing Itachi in the most laughable way, until she looked up and saw Kazuki standing in a tree with a rather distant expression staring at her. She stared back at him similarly, then smiled, nodded curtly, and went on to catch up with the rest of her little team.

At that moment, she decided that her encounter with the Sound ninja was a good thing; if nothing else, she was now confident that Kazuki was safe, at least for now, and that she just might be able to see him again without hostility, and the thought of being able to stay in contact with her old friend without losing her new ones entirely made her day--before she collapsed on the ground from fatigue. She suddenly remembered her staged heart attack and resurrection, and that she hadn't eaten since breakfast. Her stomach growled as the grass nearby crunched.

She looked up and saw Kazuki, smiling, handing her a sprig of some herb that she recognized to be a form of sustenance. He whispered, "This should hold you off," and gently placed it on the ground in front of Haruka before he jumped over her into the trees.

Haruka smiled, reached for the herb, and stood up to follow her new friends, nibbling on the sprig as she went.

## Complication Nation Mockery 3

In order to eliminate confusion, I would like to go over what happened between Itachi and Kisame and the two Sound ninjas, Airi and Kanon.

Misaki: ..leaves to find Haruka:.

Itachi, Kisame, Kanon, Airi: ..intense glares at each other:.

Itachi: ..sighs:.. Fireball jutsu!

Kanon & Airi: ..dodge:.

Itachi: "Grrr..." Fireball jutsu!

Airi and Kanon: ..dodge:.

Airi: "You'll never hit us! We were the best at dodgeball!"

Kanon: "Well, we were the best at the dodging part..."

Airi: "Yeah, we kind sucked at the 'ball' part--"

Itachi: Fireball jutsu!

Kanon & Airi: ..dodge by landing back into the center of the clearing:.

Kisame: "I'll keep them from dodging! Go ahead, Itachi!"

Itachi: Fireball!

Kisame: Water prison jutsu! (there's water/condensation on the grass and in the air, it should be enough to scrape together...>.> )

Kanon & Airi: "Oh crap, we can't get away now!"

Kisame: ..dispells water prison at last possible second:.

BOOM!

Smoke clears and we see that Airi and Kanon were too wet from Kisame's prison to be affected by the fire, as is the grass immediately next to them. However, they are still rather confident that they are about to die and start saying their goodbyes.

Itachi: ..sighs:. "Kisame, you're an idiot."

Kisame: ..shrugs:. "What else did you think I was going to do?"

Itachi: "I don't know, maybe something useful?"

Kisame: "Hmm...that would be useful..."

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That's the end...until...PART 2--Shippuden!!