

yay for Shikamaru x Ino!

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Submitted: August 8, 2004

Updated: August 8, 2004

the title says it all.

1. Shikamaru x Ino

"Ino! Why are we doing such a troublesome thing?" Shikamaru grumbled for the hundredth time that day. "We've been walking through the park for hours! What the hell are we looking for, and why couldn't Chouji come with us?"

"I've told you already! We're going to make something for Asuma sensei as a thank you for training us," Ino explained.

"Then why couldn't Chouji come?" Shikamaru pressed.

"Because he'd want to eat the entire time," Ino lied. Well, it was a half lie, but a lie nonetheless. Ino couldn't tell him the real reason, at least not yet.

"Then what are we looking for?"

"We're looking for the plant that he likes to put in his cigarettes, baka."

"How troublesome," Shikamaru grumbled. Ino stopped for a moment and put a hand over her face to shade her eyes from the bright noonday sun. She squinted for a moment, and then smirked in triumph.

"Aha! There it is! See it?" Shikamaru gazed in the direction she pointed out for a moment, and then nodded.

"Hai, I see it, I see it."

"Come on then! We haven't got all day!" Ino scolded him, grabbing his arm and pulling him toward the plants.

"Hey, stop pulling. Geez your pushy." They both knelt on the soft grass and started pulling at the roots of the plants, crushing them into powder with their bare hands. Unfortunately for them, the sweet aroma of the plants rather got them high, and soon they got a little woozy. Ino started laughing crazily.

"I think I see why Asuma sensei likes this stuff," Ino giggled.

"I'll bet he loves it," Shikamaru corrected her, laughing along with her.

"What do you love, more than anything?" Ino asked, since they were discussing the subject.

"Me? Well, I like looking up at the clouds a lot."

"No, I mean really love," Ino reiterated. Shikamaru shook his head suddenly.

"What the hell is gong on? What were we just talking about?" The drug had worn off, and his senses had honed themselves again.

"Hmm?" Ino asked, still high. "We were talking about what we really love."

"What do you really love, Ino?" Shikamaru asked seriously, swallowing hard. He had wanted to ask her, but being the gentleman that he was, didn't want to pry. But Ino was high, so he could make an exception.

"Me? I love--" But before she could finish her sentence, she shook her head suddenly, the drug wearing off.

"Ino?" Shikamaru asked uncertainly.

"What, Shikamaru?" Ino snapped putting some of the powder into a small bag she had strapped to her waist.

"Never mind," he replied, scratching the back of his head. Ino raised an eyebrow, but didn't press the matter.

"I think we have enough for Asuma sensei. We'd better go wash this stuff off, or we're going to get high or something." Ino got up and started walking. When Shikamaru didn't follow, she turned around.

"Aren't you coming?" Shikamaru looked like he was musing for a moment, and then

snapped back into reality.

"Oh, sorry. Yeah I'm coming," he said quickly, getting up.

"You've been acting really weird lately, you know?"

"So have you," Shikamaru replied defensively. Ino raised her hands up in front of her.

"Sorry!" she said sarcastically. "I'm just saying."

"Well just . . . never mind," he said for the second time that day.

"Okay," Ino replied, shrugging. As they made their way to the small fountain in the park, both of them were silent.

"I wish he would just say whatever he's wanting to say," Ino thought angrily. "I'm getting annoyed."

"This is so troublesome. I wish she would have said whatever she was going to say." "I'm getting annoyed," Shikamaru thought, nearly echoing Ino's thoughts. It was rather funny, although the two didn't know it. They reached the fountain, and Shikamaru did the gentlemanly thing and let Ino wash her hands first. Once she was done, Shikamaru stepped up to the raised stone pool, dipping his hands into its now red tinted water. He stuck his lower lip out in his trademark pout, still sifting through the earlier events.

"Shikamaru! Earth to Shikamaru!" Ino said loudly, waving a hand in front of his eyes. "Are you done? You've been standing there looking at the water for nearly ten minutes!" Shikamaru jumped slightly and quickly rid himself of the red powder on his hands.

"Y-yeah! I'm done now!" he stuttered, wiping his wet hands on his pants.

"Geez, you've been so weird lately." Shikamaru winced inwardly.

"How am I letting this get to me so easily?" he thought. "Darn it all!" he yelled, slamming a fist on the fountain, causing it to crack slightly. His face was etched clearly with a scowl.

"Shikamaru! I really think you need to take a break for a while. You don't look well," Ino said nervously, looking at the crack that Shikamaru had made with his bare hand. Shikamaru's scowl disappeared and was replaced by an apologizing smile.

"Sorry Ino. A lot's been going on, and it looks like it's finally getting to me," he laughed softly, putting on a hopeful smile this time. So it was a half lie, but he didn't want Ino to know about his little secret.

"Come on. I'll take you to Ichiraku's. Maybe something to eat will cheer you up." Ino beamed at him. She was concerned for her friend, and wanted to do something to keep his spirits up.

"Thanks, Ino. I really appreciate it," Shikamaru replied politely, ever the gentlemen. He and Ino walked side by side to Ichiraku's, the sun not quite at its peak anymore.

When they arrived at the ramen bar, Uzumaki Naruto was sitting at the bar, eating his third bowl of ramen. Shikamaru scowled, and Ino frowned, but they sat at the bar anyway, far away from Naruto. Shikamaru, who was closest to Naruto, saw the blonde haired boy shoot him a sidelong glance, more out of curiosity than of suspicion. Shikamaru gave him a little of his pouty scowl, and Naruto went back to eating his ramen.

"What do you want, Shikamaru?" Ino asked.

"I think I'll have the pork ramen," Shikamaru replied distractedly, trying to focus on what Ino was saying rather than Naruto.

"One chicken ramen and one pork ramen please," Ino relayed to the bartender. While the bartender went about preparing their order, Ino turned her head to Shikamaru, her chin in her hand. Shikamaru noticed that she was looking at him worriedly and tried to look as though the bar counter was very interesting.

"Are you feeling a little better, Shikamaru?" she asked him quietly. The raven-haired boy raised his head.

"Yeah. Thanks, Ino. This is really nice of you."

"Your welcome," she smiled at him. She could tell now that Shikamaru really was feeling better, but an awkward silence fell over them. Both of them glanced over at Naruto as he got up and left. Then the bartender came up to them, placing their orders in front of them. Shikamaru snapped his chopsticks apart and started eating, as did Ino. For a while, all that they did was sit there and eat. Shikamaru finished his bowl of ramen first.

"You didn't have to do this, Ino."

"I know, but I don't want to see you like this. I just want to make you feel better."

"Uh, well, there is one thing you could do that would make me feel better." Ino looked at him curiously, her chopsticks still holding a bit of her ramen.

"What's that?"

"Well, when we were picking those plants for Asuma sensei, I asked you what you really love, and you never answered the question. It's been bugging me, and I guess that's been bothering me." Ino froze for a second, dropping her chopsticks into her bowl.

"Um, well, I was under the influence of the drug, so I must've not been making any sense, so it doesn't really m--"

"Yes it does, Ino. When I asked you the question, you nearly answered it. That doesn't sound like you weren't making any sense." Ino tried to look as though her ramen bowl was very interesting.

"That's a personal question, so I shouldn't have to answer it." The bartender came up to them the next second with the bill. Shikamaru put his wallet on the counter and paid for it.

"Shikamaru, I should pay the bill. I took you out here."

"No, I'll pay it. That way you can pay me back by answering the question."

"Shikamaru," Ino growled. Shikamaru eyed her levelly, crossing his arms as he put away his wallet.

"You don't have to answer it here. I'm just asking you to answer it."

"Then let's go back to the park."

"Fine with me. Geez, girls these days are so troublesome and secretive."

"We have our reasons," Ino said shortly, standing up and starting to walk back toward the park. In seemingly not time at all, they were back at the fountain that Shikamaru had slammed his fist into.

"What do you really love, Ino?" Shikamaru asked her again. Ino looked at the ground, hesitating.

"What I really love is . . . what I really love is . . ." Ino swallowed hard, her voice lowered now to barely a whisper.

Shikamaru approached her until he was less than an arm's length from her. Ino raised her head meekly. Shikamaru placed his hands on her shoulders, remembering all of the times he and Ino had spent with each other.

"What I really love," Ino whispered, "is you."

Shikamaru stood there dumbly for a moment, his brain not fully comprehending what she had just said. His arms fell limply to his sides, and Ino bowed her head once again.

"Ino--I--" Shikamaru stuttered, searching for something to say.

"You don't feel the same way, do you?" Ino asked him quietly.

"No, no, no. I do feel the same way," Shikamaru said softly, putting his hands on her shoulders again. Ino's blue eyes met his dark ones, and he pulled her into a tight embrace, resting his chin on her shoulder. Ino gasped softly, but returned the embrace, burying her face into his muscled chest.

Shikamaru pushed her back for a moment, turning red. He looked like he wanted to ask her something.

"Uh, Ino? I just want to know if I could--" Ino cut him off by placing her index finger on his lips.

"I know, Shikamaru. You don't have to ask." Shikamaru smiled and nodded. Without any further hesitation, he placed his lips gently over hers, wrapping his arms around her waist as Ino put hers around his neck.

Not a soul glimpsed the pair in the fading twilight as a shooting star streaked across the sky.