Only Ever You
by Chrononautical

Summary

Eternity isn't just for rivals.

Notes

Many people have requested that I write something more explicit than An Unexpected Homecoming. This is that story. It is also a personal experiment in tenses. You have been warned.
Chapter 1

He shouldn’t have used the Sharingan against the bandit leader. He shouldn’t have needed to. This mission was supposed to be an easy in and out for Kakashi and Guy. Designated a B Rank only for the sheer numbers of the roving gang, no one had mentioned that the leader of the crew was an S Rank Stone Shinobi who’d gone missing a few years back. It was bad intelligence and it will get one of them killed, but it won’t be Kakashi.

Defeating the bandit leader had been a real fight, not an assassination. It should still have the desired effect. The group will disband. A group this large can’t hold together without a cause or a charismatic leader and, skin like rock or not, their leader hadn’t survived a Chidori thrust through the throat. Kakashi counts one hundred and eighteen criminals. That’s fourteen more than their initial assessment. If they’d made it out as planned after assassinating the leader, that would have been all to the good. A large group has factions. A large group has infighting. The larger the group, the faster it will fall apart. Unfortunately, this group still has one thing binding it together. They’d had a good thing going and they all want revenge on the man who took it from them. Collapsed against a damp cave wall, Kakashi can’t even make himself look like a difficult target.

His right leg hurts like hell. The stone bastard broke it in two places and it can’t hold any weight at all. His right wrist isn’t much better. It was probably broken, too. It’s swelling like a bitch and he can hardly bend it, let alone form a seal. Not that that matters. He doesn’t have the chakra for a single substitution jutsu, let alone anything helpful. Even a shuriken jutsu will knock him out completely. Kakashi is perfectly safe.

After all, Guy wasn’t even injured in the first fight and he’s standing between Kakashi and their hundred murderous opponents like a solid green wall. Guy would protect Kakashi with his life. It doesn’t matter that most of the bandits have shown during their many criminal acts that they have at least genin level skill. Guy is strong enough to take them all. It doesn’t matter that Kakashi is terrified of the tattooed woman holding a cutlass in each hand. She has something up her sleeve and it’s definitely above chunin level. Kakashi is as safe as a baby in a cradle. Guy is going to protect Kakashi with his life.

“We were contracted to break up the bandit band and return the golden teapot to the local temple,” he says. It’s the last chance he has. “Think of the mission. I can hold these weaklings here until you get back.” He knows Guy’s answer before the words leave his mouth.

“Your Youthful Eagerness for battle does credit to your Sense of Duty, Rival, but you cannot fool me with your hip attitude. You have acquitted yourself well already. There is no shame in allowing me a turn. Indeed, it is Only Fair after you claimed the strongest opponent for yourself earlier leaving me with only two weak guards.”

“Guy.”

Guy stops laughing. “Don’t ask me to do what you would not, Kakashi. Besides, I have faced numbers like this before. Have Faith.”

It’s true. During the war Guy had taken out hundreds upon hundreds of the White Zetsu Clones, but that had been always been fighting back to back with Kakashi or Lee, and Zetsu didn’t have the skill of some of these lieutenants. Kakashi isn’t a hopeful man. His mind doesn’t work that way. But he does have faith in Guy. The man has defeated S Class criminals, and he’s proven time and again that he can do anything he sets his mind to. However Guy defines winning, he will win this fight.
“If you die for me, I’ll kill myself.”

“No you won’t.”

Of course he won’t. Too many people have already killed themselves for Kakashi’s sake for him to throw his life away.

The first six bandits attack. They move as a well-trained unit, all armed with solid wooden quarterstaffs. Kakashi judges them to be about the same as skilled genin. Guy doesn’t bother to hold back or try to make the others underestimate him. He strikes each attacker once and sends all of them flying.

“See, Kakashi! This is nothing!”

It’s bravado. Guy doesn’t believe it any more than Kakashi does. The ones who rush in first are always the weakest. Those kids were the ones who had something to prove. Kakashi wishes he could believe. He wishes he could redefine winning for Guy—make it something he needed to live to see.

“If we both survive this, I’ll let you fuck me.”

Guy looks shocked, mildly scandalized, and not at all uninterested, but he doesn’t have time to answer. A much larger, even more coordinated group of twenty or so is rushing him. The redheaded twins with the shuriken are the ones to watch out for. The others attack Guy with swords and kunai, but those two hang back while he defends himself. At the worst possible moment, they throw dozens of the sharp little stars at Kakashi. He dodges. He isn’t quick enough to dodge the second round. Guy has to intercept them. It costs him.

“At least you want something more than to shut me up this time,” he laughs, pulling the wakizashi from his side and dealing handily with the woman who managed to stab him.

Kakashi remembers, of course. Their first time. He remembers being aggravated about being stuck on a mission with Guy instead of his teacher, or even Obito. It was always harder to keep his cool around Guy than it was around others. Guy was always so casual about taking Kakashi’s arm or slapping his back in emphasis. Almost as if he didn’t realize that Kakashi might fail to dodge and really hit him back. He remembers the irritation building as Guy yammered on about their imagined rivalry and the many challenges he couldn’t wait to have. Even achieving their mission objective hadn’t calmed the boy down, and there were too many traps in those woods to press on in the dark. When night had fallen, they made camp. Guy didn’t stop talking. After a dozen polite—and not so polite—suggestions, after over an hour of staring blankly into the fire imagining ways to kill Guy and make it look like an accident, Kakashi had finally spoken.

“If I jerk you off, will you shut the hell up and go to sleep?”

It worked immediately. Guy’s mouth didn’t even close; he just stopped talking, leaving his jaw hanging there, like a dangling participle. Kakashi had known from the first that there was something different about the way things were with Guy. For one brief moment it occurred to him that it might not be what he assumed. Guy might have been honestly appalled. After all, it took a certain type of person to assume attraction was what drew two men together.

Then, Guy’s mouth had closed. His eyes were as wide as the sky above, but he’d nodded, just once, slowly. So Kakashi moved closer. He kept his eyes on Guy. He unfastened the other boy’s belt and slid that ridiculous jumpsuit open. Guy’s breathing had been quick and uneven, but Kakashi made sure to display nothing but boredom in his own demeanor. He’d been so careful not to look too long
at the golden skin of Guy’s chest. When he pressed his left palm against the base of Guy’s hips and wrapped his right hand around Guy’s little acorn there wasn’t anything to indicate that he hadn’t done this a hundred times before. Maybe this was Kakashi’s preferred way to silence an annoying teammate. With Obito around, how could Guy have doubted that Kakashi used it frequently?

Though of course it had been Kakashi’s first time. He didn’t know how to get the angle right from the opposite direction and Guy seemed to respond more to a firmer touch than the one he used when alone, but taking the time to explore his body would be too obvious. Guy made soft, breathy little noises, and if the point had been to make him shut up, Kakashi regretted it. He wanted to press his ear against Guy’s mouth and feel those choked little grunts reverberating through his skull. Even more than that he had longed to pull down his mask so that he could bury his nose in the crook of Guy’s neck and really smell his arousal. The thought of actually doing that—of really being that close to Guy—squeezed his chest with a sickening panic that warred against the arousal burning low in his stomach. Still, he was a genius, and he had achieved the goal of the exercise within a satisfactorily short time frame.

“Kakashi,” Guy murmured, gazing at him with disturbingly flushed cheeks.

“You promised to go to sleep,” Kakashi grunted irritably, pretending to wipe his hands clean with a handkerchief.

“I will,” the other boy had sworn. “A deal is a deal, but wouldn’t it be more fair if—“ Guy’s cheeks had flushed like sunrise; they were redder than the last embers of the campfire. “I could touch you, too. I mean, I may not be as experienced as you are, but I’m sure I’d be able to—“

Kakashi had snorted. “Don’t be ridiculous. I’m going to do a patrol. You go to sleep. A deal is a deal.”

That had been the final word spoken at the time, but Kakashi hadn’t gone to do a patrol. He’d perched in the trees to watch Guy sleep—to finally lower his mask and taste the residue on his hand—to wrap that same hand carefully around himself in the dark where no one could see his weakness.

All of the bandits can see Guy’s weakness now. It’s as evident as Kakashi’s injuries. The shuriken twins target Kakashi again. So do the rest of their group. Guy has a choice, but he doesn’t see it that way. He opens the first six Gates.

Even back then, when both of his eyes had been his own and he’d only had those first two lessons about the cruelty of the shinobi world, Kakashi had known better than to get attached. At the time, he’d thought any emotional connection, even friendship, endangered his objectivity. Later, after Obito, he’d decided that comrades were okay, so long as he fought for them. A shinobi needed something to fight for, but letting any one person become more important to him than the rest of his comrades was still an unthinkable weakness. Kakashi had had good reasons—beyond the dizziness, shortness of breath, and chest pain—for his utter rejection of Guy when he started showing up with flowers, chocolates, custom training weights, and tossing around the word date like he’d once said challenge. Kakashi told himself he wasn’t tempted, that he wasn’t a coward being ruled by the panicked feeling of letting someone get that close. Leaving off the last part, he’d told Guy that the same thing. Guy responded with terrible public poetry about their Eternally Destined Rivalry and Courtship.

It had been too much. Obito and Rin both teased Kakashi unfairly about his nonexistent boyfriend who didn’t matter to him at all. Worse, Kakashi’s teacher had taken him aside for a heartfelt conversation about the nature of love, socially normative behavior, and the surprising irrelevance of gender and sexuality when it came to a person’s character. During the talk, Kakashi had listened attentively, as befit a model student, but his insides had been churning in revulsion. Minato had
known everything. Not just that Kakashi was extremely unlikely to ever repopulate his clan, but that he wasn’t nearly as irritated by Guy as he was terrified. Minato-sensei hadn’t suggested that it was a weakness, but he had seen it. Kakashi needed to crush it.

“You want me to touch you again, right?” Kakashi said, interrupting Guy’s florid presentation of yet another colossal, lurid bouquet. “That’s what this is really about.”

Kakashi hadn’t found a kid who could spout nonsense about young flowers blossoming together blushing redder than the roses he held endearing at all. “Yes,” Guy had said, refusing to admit to his embarrassment. “More than anything in the world.”

“Fine. Then we’ll make another deal. I’ll jerk you off again, but this has to stop. No more presents, no more asking me to go on dates, no more damn poetry. We’ll be Rivals, and that’s it.”

Kakashi had been somewhat impressed when Guy said no. Usually the green clown wasn’t any good at looking beyond the short-term gain, but Guy had a lot to say about Kakashi finally acknowledging their Rivalry, True Love, and Waiting. For the sake of his sanity, Kakashi ignored all of that.

“This has to stop,” he repeated. “I’m not interested.”

Guy deflated. “One date, then. Go on one date with me. If you don’t have fun—if it isn’t the best date you ever had—then I’ll agree to your terms: Rivals only.”

“Nowhere public. And you never tell anyone.”

Kakashi agreed easily, with no intention of keeping his side of the bargain. It wasn’t a fair deal since it would be the only date he’d ever had, Guy couldn’t expect honest agreement under the circumstances. Then again, Kakashi could frame it as the path of least resistance but a part of him—a small part that he intended to conquer and thereafter ignore—wanted to go on a date. Just once. Because toward the end of their talk, Minato-sensei had suggested that trying some of the more common life experiences would help him better understand human behavior and make him a better shinobi. Not because agreeing made Guy smile with his whole body.

No date with Guy could be a typical one and Kakashi’s own rules had precluded most of the common activities, but he’d still been a little surprised to be taken into the Forest of Death for a picnic. In his— theoretical, observation based—experience, most people tried to avoid mortal peril for their romantic liaisons.

The food was good. Well, the dango was burnt and the rice balls were a little bland, but Kakashi’s whole bento had been arranged in the shape of a cartoon dog. Guy wasn’t much of a cook, but he sure knew how to make an effort. Kakashi hadn’t reacted, of course. He’d pretended to be bored and inattentive during their entire meal, but Guy had been animated enough for both of them, offering up different juices and conversation topics like a fisherman changing the bait on his line. Kakashi took the juice once or twice, but he never took the bait. Like any patient fisherman, Guy hadn’t even been annoyed.

Then the swarm of giant ants arrived. Kakashi and Guy leapt up together instantaneously. Without a word, Kakashi went low as Guy went high, taking a leg each from the first six ants with precisely thrown kunai while Guy smashed them from above. The ants were only slightly larger than the boys, and they were ungainly once they received even a little damage, but they were incredibly strong and fast. More importantly, there were hundreds of the things. Lucky they were stupid, then. Kakashi took a couple dozen out with one fireball after Guy herded them together.
Guy was Guy; a shouting, spinning, laughing, kicking, daring, flipping, wisecracking fighter if ever there was one. He was everywhere, but never in Kakashi’s way. After fighting each other so many times that they fought perfectly together. Giant ants were barely a workout, no matter what their numbers were. Kakashi even smirked once or twice at the ridiculous jokes. If Guy’s sense of humor leaned toward silly puns rather than dry wit, at least he was lighthearted, unlike Obito who took everything too seriously. That playfulness always made fighting alongside him more fun than a serious fight should be. Still, Kakashi had to tease him when it was over.

“And this would be why most people don’t choose the Forest of Death for a first date,” he’d chuckled, tossing the last of the twitching insect carcasses onto the pile.

“What do you mean?”

Kakashi lit the heap of dead ants with a fire jutsu. The resulting bonfire was taller than the surrounding trees. Putrid smoke rose slowly from the bodies, filling the clearing. Kakashi pulled Guy into the forest to keep an eye on the flames from a distance. Cleaning up was only polite—the natural scavengers wouldn’t take care of a mess this big before the bodies went to rot—but he didn’t want to start a forest fire. “You should have known something like this would happen.”

“Of course I did! My teacher told me those ants were getting ready to swarm days ago. He said they were a natural menace and usually caused a lot of destruction in the forest unless village shinobi took care of them. I begged him to allow me the honor of handling it. I’m just happy that the timing worked out so nicely for our date!”

Kakashi stared at him.

“What? Didn’t you have fun?”

“No,” Kakashi lied, because lying about that had always been the plan.

Guy’s grin twisted into tears, though he was obviously trying to restrain them. “Oh.”

One date was fine, but there could never be a second. Kakashi couldn’t afford the weakness. Fun was for children. Eventually Guy would realize that and thank Kakashi for this. “A deal is a deal.”

Guy nodded slowly. “Of course,” he said as one sparkling tear escaped from the corner of his eye to race down the side of his cheek, leaving a clean path through the dirt and soot. “I’ll keep my word.”

So Kakashi pushed him back against the tree trunk and started shoving that absurd green jumpsuit out of the way.

“What—you are doing?”

“Touching you again, obviously.”

Guy wasn’t with the program—undressing him was like trying to move a sleeping cat—but his body was. Once Kakashi had him naked, he was able to get a hand around him quickly enough. He even removed one of his own dirty gloves, though he drew the line at lowering his mask to lick his palm.

“But I—you didn’t like the date.”

“No backing out, Guy. This is the deal. I jerk you off again and you never ask me on another one.”

“Yes, but—” Guy gave up. That was a relief. Kakashi knew their agreement had been changed, but technically he was the one who owed a forfeit under the new deal. He could at least give Guy
Getting the right angle was even more difficult while standing on a tree branch, but the troublesome footing was a blessing in disguise. Kakashi had an excuse to press close. He was able to hold on to Guy more tightly than he could have if they were sitting on the ground. Kakashi remembers tripping Guy—just overbalancing him a little with one foot—so he could slide to the side and hold him steady by wrapping his left arm around Guy’s waist. Kakashi remembers what Guy said then.

“I promise, Kakashi,” Guy had mumbled, not looking at Kakashi’s face. “I’ll never ask you for another date or bring you presents or say any of these things you hate to hear ever again. I promise. But I’ll always love you. I love you so much. If you ever change your mind, well, I’m yours if you want me. Whenever you want me.”

Those big black eyes had been staring down at Kakashi’s naked right hand, watching it move in time with Guy’s breathing. Kakashi remembers liking the sight, but he remembers liking Guy’s fascination even more. With his teeth, he’d tugged his mask down just enough to free his nose. For the first and only time, he’d buried himself completely in Guy’s sweaty, musky, sticky, earthy, manly scent. Kakashi remembers breathing deep. He remembers the choked way Guy groaned when he came. He remembers leaving Guy half naked in a tree with a roaring, unattended bonfire. He remembers running like a whole company of enemy shinobi was in pursuit because he wanted so badly to pull his mask off completely and taste a kiss.

Guy’s speed after opening the Gate of Joy is always a revelation. He takes out over thirty of his attackers in the initial push. He uses the Morning Peacock on the shuriken twins, even though it’s overkill. So much overkill, in fact, that the flames from his punches actually injure some of the surrounding bandits. The enclosed nature of the giant cave system makes a quick escape impossible. Most of the weaker bandits try anyway, slipping as they attempt to climb the steep tunnels leading out of the cave. Guy lets them go. He has bigger things to worry about, like the balding giant charging Kakashi with an axe. Guy is fast enough to intercept the attack. He hits the giant with a Morning Peacock. The giant burns. Kakashi hasn’t met too many who can survive that flurry of fists. But the giant succeeds in the true objective of his suicide run. Rocks fall. Kakashi can’t dodge. The weight on his injuries almost makes him pass out from the pain. He’s trapped and hurt and he can see the green glow of Guy coming for him like a beacon.

For years Guy has been there when Kakashi needed him, but Kakashi has never kissed him. That seems like a shame. He remembers thinking about it, one year to the day after the Fourth Hokage’s death, when Guy came to harass him out of a deep depression. Kakashi had refused Guy’s challenges, rebuffed his offer to talk, rejected the soup he’d brought, and rolled lethargically away when Guy lost his temper and tried to physically manhandle him up from the floor.

All Kakashi had been able to think at the time was that Guy was the last person alive that he really cared about. Guy was the only person who had ever said, “I love you” to Kakashi and not taken his own life—either in suicide like his father or in sacrifice like his teacher. In that moment, Kakashi had been utterly certain that Guy one day would. Guy used the Gates and one day he would pass through the Eighth, which only allowed conduct in one direction. At least he wouldn’t use Kakashi as the means the way Rin had.

Kakashi’s depression turned to desperation. He flipped to his feet, kicking Guy soundly in the chin as he did so. “Leave me alone,” he snarled, meaning the exact opposite.

“Never,” Guy said, facing off squarely against him. “You are my Eternal Rival and I shall not abandon you in your time of need!”

They fought, quick and brutal because Kakashi wanted to hurt him and Guy was more worried about
not breaking all of Kakashi’s possessions than he was about fighting back. Kakashi had him pinned to the floor within a minute. “Leave me alone,” he demanded.

“No.”

“Fine,” Kakashi said, because his body was already pressed against Guy. “Fine. We’ll make a deal.”

Guy’s breath caught as Kakashi started peeling the annoying jumpsuit out of the way.

“You leave me alone.”

“No!” Guy scrambled up off the floor, the top half of his spandex monstrosity open and hanging loose around his waist.

“Yes,” Kakashi snarled, slamming him against the wall and dropping to his knees. Guy didn’t resist much. “You leave me alone for one damn day and I’ll blow you.”

Guy swallowed hard. He searched Kakashi’s face, but Kakashi didn’t return the gaze. Instead, he tugged down his mask and continued undressing his unresisting rival. “If that’s what you need.”

Kakashi hated that. Hated the way Guy made it sound like what he needed was to be on his knees instead of left alone. Hated that it was probably true. Hated that he wanted so badly to be close to someone and physically could not allow anyone close enough to hurt him again. Hated that he could smell Guy perfectly without his mask. Hated that his body finally trusted Guy this close even though Guy would inevitably hurt him in just the same way everyone else had.

Guy had grown up in the years since they were chunin together. Filled out. Kakashi was still slightly longer, but Guy was thicker and so very hard. It was nothing like sucking on an acorn. For a moment, Kakashi was distracted by the wish that he had some practical experience. He was familiar with the mechanics, however, and relaxing his throat to swallow around a large object without choking was easy enough for a genius shinobi. Kakashi was the master of his body, even if he wasn’t the master of his emotions.

He couldn’t keep himself from needing Guy, but he quickly figured out how to keep his Rival close. How to make Guy gasp and squirm and whimper and groan. Sucking, licking, stroking, groping, Kakashi finally took his time exploring Guy. He ignored the hard pull of Guy’s hand in his hair in favor of listening to the deep, eager noises his rival made. Guy was right. Kakashi wanted to be on his knees. He needed to be close to the last person he had a connection with. But he made Guy need him, too. He made Guy curse and beg and growl. He made Guy come. Then he made Guy leave.

Guy lifts the boulder off of Kakashi easily, which hurts almost as much as being crushed by it in the first place. The pain steals Kakashi’s breath and blanks his vision so he can’t warn Guy. He comes back to his senses just in time to see the attack. The tattooed woman slices both of her cutlasses down at Guy’s back. He evades, a little, not enough to avoid two deep cuts. Kakashi doesn’t need the Sharingan to see the Wind type chakra being funneled through the blades. He realizes what he doesn’t like about her. A proficient user of Wind Style could have the speed to keep up with Guy, if she is the A-Rank shinobi she seems to be. Guy should have backup against someone like her, but Kakashi can’t offer any now. He would only be in the way.

There have been women over the years for Guy—a few men, too—but Kakashi has only felt the need to intervene three times. Guy is a physical person. He can express that physicality in any way he cares to without bothering Kakashi. Sometimes, if Kakashi felt lonely, he would even hide himself and watch Guy’s dates. Watching never panicked Kakashi, and sometimes it was comforting to see Guy when he was happy and enthusiastic, especially if Kakashi didn’t have to bear the brunt
of that enthusiasm. Dating was fine, but—and Kakashi knew how selfish it was—no one could be allowed to supercede Kakashi’s place in Guy’s life.

“I’m going to ask her to move in with me,” Guy had confessed once, his eyes bright with dreams of marriage and fat children.

“Weren’t we sparring?” Kakashi drawled, to all appearances completely bored with the topic.

Guy apologized and blushed a little the way he sometimes did when Kakashi shot him down. They started sparring. Kakashi started fighting seriously.

He didn’t connect solidly on any hit, but he targeted Guy’s sensitive points one after the other, barely even bothering to defend against Guy’s attacks in order to line up his own strikes. It cost him a split lip, a black eye, and a sprained ankle, but he managed to control the fight. He stroked hard along the muscles of Guy’s lower back. He squeezed Guy’s thigh. He pressed his thumb deep into the line of Guy’s hip. When he was certain that the adrenaline of their match and the precision of his strikes had aroused something more than Guy’s fighting spirit, Kakashi allowed himself to be pinned. Then he arched his hips up against Guy’s.

“Sorry,” he said immediately, in case Guy didn’t understand. “Damn this is embarrassing. It’s just been a while for me, you know.” Kakashi wasn’t really lying. He’d never allowed anyone close enough to touch him sexually. His whole life could be considered quite a while.

Guy loosened his hold. Another time it would have been a great opportunity for Kakashi to take back the match. “I understand.” Guy’s voice was at least two octaves lower than normal.

“Oh, hey!” Kakashi said brightly. “You too? That’s great!” He flipped them over to straddle Guy’s thighs and started opening his own pants. “You wanna just—“

Guy did want to. Kakashi shied away from the attempts to lower his mask and remove more of his clothing than his already open pants, but thankfully Guy didn’t press either issue. Guy did press against Kakashi. He wrapped one big calloused hand around both of them together. Kakashi couldn’t take the pleasure—the closeness—he hadn’t been prepared for it. He’d fallen forward, resting his forehead against Guy’s shoulder and staring down at that strong, scarred hand rubbing them together. Kakashi was a born shinobi. He couldn’t do anything but hold on to Guy—rut into his hand, rub eagerly against him—but he could avoid being obvious. He kept his breathing even. He kept sound from escaping. He used the pain of his injuries to keep focus. He struggled and he struggled and he struggled and he kept himself from coming until Guy made the soft, choked noise that indicated he was close.

It was the most intense feeling Kakashi had ever experienced. He and Guy were completely connected. They spilled together simultaneously. For a brief, impossible moment, their pleasure was in absolute unison.

He allowed himself three breaths against Guy’s neck before he pulled away.

“That was fun,” he said, tugging his pants up, mask still firmly in place. “We’ll have to call the match a draw, but maybe we can do it again sometime anyway. See ya!”

Kakashi hadn’t been expecting the lethargy. He’d used masturbation as a soporific a few times when nothing else would help, but, much like the pleasure, the feeling was far more intense than what he had experienced alone. He teleported directly to his apartment and dropped into bed rather than tailing Guy to his girlfriend’s as planned. It didn’t matter. Guy’s sense of honor was as predictable as the sunrise.
“I had to end things with her,” Guy admitted later. “I cheated. She deserves a much better man than me. She should be with someone who can commit to her completely. Someone who will love only her. I can’t give her that. I’m grateful to you for making me aware of it.”

“Sorry,” Kakashi had said, looking up from his book. “Did you say something?”

He’d used the same trick again about two years later when Guy mentioned the man he’d been sleeping with regularly for a month and a half was almost as much fun to spar with as Kakashi. If anything, being touched that way was even more intense the second time. That was unimportant. All that mattered was that Guy ended things with the threat.

The third time might not even have been a real problem. Guy had only fucked the Sand Kunoichi once, but there had been something in his eyes and voice when he talked about going to visit her in Wind Country. It was a simple bargain. Kakashi would suck Guy a second time if Guy promised to never see her again. After falling into a coughing fit that Kakashi patiently waited out, Guy had agreed.

The objectives were simple, if something based entirely on feelings of panic and inappropriate desire could be termed so formally. Kakashi couldn’t give in to his carnal desires, but he couldn’t let anyone become more important to Guy than he was. After their first date, Kakashi had never given in twice during the same year, but eventually he did let someone usurp his place as first in Guy’s enormous heart.

Kakashi had known the moment he saw Lee that the kid was destined to be Guy’s student. He’d even remarked on their similarities in case Guy didn’t pick up on it. A kid like that needed Guy. No one else was ever going to give him a chance. He’d given a few more pushes until Guy was officially the boy’s jonin sensei, then he’d forgotten about it. Even if he’d been angry later when he discovered that Guy had given the boy his suicidal techniques along with his taijutsu, Kakashi never doubted that encouraging the connection had been the right thing to do. Guy deserved a better man than Kakashi, someone who would give him the love and devotion he wanted. Someone who could be openly affectionate. Someone less likely to panic at a hug. Kakashi couldn’t tolerate Guy having a serious romantic partner, but he didn’t really mind the certain knowledge that Guy would choose Lee over Kakashi if he ever needed to. Now that they’ve reached the end, Kakashi can only wish his friend had chosen to leave and live for Lee.

The woman is so fast that her cutlasses are a blur to Kakashi’s weary eye. Guy has six gates open and is still using his nunchaku. Something is wrong. Guy is receiving more cuts. Kakashi believes the few bandits who haven’t fled yet are under the command of this woman. He thinks they aren’t trying to attack Guy because they know she’s already taken him out. They’re wrong.

Guy opens the Seventh Gate. He is the Blue Beast. The woman can’t keep up. Guy punches the air. His Daytime Tiger roars. The woman is blasted through the cave wall and a good portion of the side of the mountain goes with her. The last of her subordinates are caught in the falling rocks, but Kakashi is caught up by Guy and carried out into the open. As soon as he sets Kakashi down, Guy collapses. The Gates close and his aura dissipates like smoke in the wind.

“Poison,” Guy grunts.

“I know.” And Kakashi does. A shinobi like her was bound to have something underneath her Wind Style and speed. She’s dead, but Kakashi hates her for it on principle.

“Stay with me,” Guy pleads as Kakashi drags himself up on his one good leg and cuts down a sapling that looks sturdy enough to support his weight.
“I’ll be back,” Kakashi promises. “Don’t die.”

It would be better if the wrist opposite his broken leg was the injured one, and Kakashi knows that he’ll be scolded later by the medics for not splinting anything before he tries to move, but he doesn’t have that kind of time. Kakashi drags his broken body over to where the rubble should be. It’s further than he thought, but the pain isn’t bad enough to make him pass out, so that is largely immaterial. The woman is completely buried, but one of her cutlasses fell far enough away from her body that he can dig it out. It’s slow going. He’s too weak. The rocks are too large. He can’t use his left hand. Finally, he gets the damn thing free and fumbles in his flack jacket until he finds the specially modified litmus paper Sakura gave him. He slits the paper with the cutlass and waits for it to change color.

Green, blue, or purple would all be fine. They’re the three most common poisons and he has antidotes for each specially prepared by Sakura. Red is pretty common too, but the antidote is unstable and can’t travel. He watched her make it once. He can probably find the necessary root in this area. He’s a genius. He’ll figure it out if he has to. The only thing he can’t deal with is black. Black means it’s an uncommon poison. Black means Guy will need a real healer, someone like Sakura or Tsunade who can make a diagnosis and formulate an antidote in time. Kakashi doesn’t know where he’ll find someone like that or how he can move Guy when he can hardly move himself or why the white paper hasn’t changed colors.

The paper is white and Sakura said it would take a minute or two but the paper is still white. It occurs to Kakashi that both blades might not have been poisoned. He might need to dig for the other one. There’s too much rubble. He’ll never shift it in time without an Earth Style and using that kind of chakra will kill him before he can get an antidote back to Guy.

The paper is purple.

Kakashi falls more times than he cares to count on his way back to Guy. It hurts. It slows him down. Luckily, he doesn’t lose consciousness. He can save Guy as long as he doesn’t lose consciousness. Kakashi remembers their last time, when he would have given anything to lose consciousness for even a minute.

After the war—after good triumphed over evil, but Obito was dead again and Sasuke was still Sasuke—everyone went home, but Kakashi didn’t go home alone. Obito’s ghost came along and haunted his every waking moment, far more than he ever had before. Kakashi couldn’t stand to close his eyes long enough to let him go, and lack of sleep turned into the inability to fall asleep. Sakura had not only flat out refused to give him sleeping pills on the sly, but the little traitor actually told Tsunade, throwing around words like trauma, stress, and disorder. Kakashi had been removed from the active duty list until he agreed to get treatment or proved he was healthy. Apparently, a competent medical shinobi could tell when he hadn’t slept in days by the feel of his chakra, even if he transformed his red, swollen eye into something resembling its usual shape.

Desperate, he’d conned Guy into his apartment and ambushed him. It was hardly medical science, but the two times Guy had given him an orgasm, he’d fallen asleep within five minutes. Since he was being denied medicine by a couple of nosy harridans who wanted to discuss his feelings about being responsible for his best friend’s death a second time, he figured it was the next best thing.

Guy had been cooperative. Surprisingly cooperative. He’d been naked before Kakashi even had his pants mostly down. He never tried to touch Kakashi’s mask. He wrapped a strong hand around Kakashi within seconds of realizing what Kakashi wanted. Kakashi felt he owed his rival something for that.

“I just need an orgasm,” he mumbled. “I think it’ll put me to sleep.”
“And I’m the closest warm body?” Guy’s laugh was light, maybe rueful, but not hurt. Kakashi owed him a little honesty, but he didn’t owe him everything.

“Do you mind?”

“Never. I could do this every day.”

Kakashi had been exhausted. Guy had been touching him for the third time in his life. Imagining that luxury—being with Guy every day—had been more than enough. He collapsed against Guy, coming all over his hand.

It was wonderful. He always managed to forget somehow just how much better it felt with Guy. Slumped against his warm, strong friend, he could barely stay awake.

“Great,” Kakashi said, hitching up his pants and wandering toward his bed. “Thanks. See yourself out.”

Of course it hadn’t been a miracle cure, but once Kakashi had finally slept a few hours, he was able to see how irrational he was being. Returning to Tsunade, he agreed to see a doctor, snowed the doctor completely, and got the damn pills. Eventually, in his own time, he came to terms with the way his friend had been manipulated by Madara. After that, he had time to think about Guy’s words.

To be together every day—to touch Guy whenever the mood struck him—would be pretty nice. Of course he’d have to tolerate things like flowers, terrible poetry, and public declarations of private feelings, but actually being with Guy would be worth all of that. After the war, after dying for the Village, making peace with his father, being forgiven for Rin’s death by Obito, and leading an army to save the world, Kakashi finally felt that he might have earned a little happiness. Maybe he and Guy could finally be together the way Guy had always wanted. For one brief moment he allowed himself hope that maybe nothing bad would come of that.

Guy isn’t sweating anymore when Kakashi finally limps back to his side. His breath is coming in shallow gasps and his eyes look like glass. Those are not good signs. “Yo,” Kakashi says, hating the way Guy barely even turns his head to look at him. “You dead yet? Because if not I have an antidote.” The words are casual, but he drops gracelessly onto his ass next to Guy’s head, ignoring the jarring pain in his leg, and pulls the correct antidote from the pouch on his jacket as quickly as he can manage.

“Not dying here,” Guy mumbles. It’s obvious how injured he is, but the fact that he can form a sentence is encouraging. “Have something to look forward to.”

“That’s right,” Kakashi says, propping Guy’s head up. He knows how bad the poisoning must be when Guy doesn’t flinch away from the touch. Unimaginable pain comes after passing through the Seventh Gate, so much pain that some who survive the Gate die of what follows, but Guy’s clearly not feeling much now. “The minute you’re up to it. A deal’s a deal, after all, and you aren’t dying here.”

Guy is looking at Kakashi, but he doesn’t seem aware that an antidote has been poured into his mouth. That isn’t a problem. Kakashi knows how to hold his nose and stroke his throat to force him to swallow. The real problem is making it circulate through his body the way the poison has. Kakashi should get him up and walking, but even if Kakashi could stand again himself—not likely—there is no way Guy will be able to move this soon after using the Seventh Gate.

Guy mumbles Kakashi’s name while the genius is still considering the problem. Kakashi focuses. He hopes Guy will say Kakashi is hurting him, but he knows it’s too soon for the antidote to take effect.

“Fuck me. Have me. Whatever you want as long as you live,” Kakashi clarifies with his brightest grin. He gets that cheery probably isn’t very seductive, but it’s the only thing he can manage that isn’t pointlessly emotional or utterly blank.

“Can I—instead?” Guy is fading. Kakashi took too long figuring out which antidote to use. He would have just given Guy all three except Sakura had explicitly said that combining all of them would probably kill a healthy person. Kakashi has always known that it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

“Well, you have to tell me what you want,” he drawls. Guy is strong. If he can keep him awake and talking the antidote will take effect. “I mean, the answer is probably yes, unless it’s ridiculously kinky. I do have a few lines. Not many, but they do exist.”

“Kiss you. Just once. You don’t have to pretend to like it.”

“Sure,” Kakashi says, keeping his voice even, swallowing the lump of sadness in his throat. “Survive this and you can kiss me for hours.”

Guy blinks again. It takes longer for his eyes to open this time. “I would have liked,” he whispers. Kakashi can count on one hand the number of times he’s heard Guy speak this quietly. Beyond the absent eyes and physical symptoms, that, most of all, tells him that his friend is leaving. “Before—"

Guy’s eyes close. They don’t open again. Kakashi can feel the lack of a pulse in his throat. Kakashi is a genius, not a medic. He knows a thousand jutsu, but even if he had the chakra, he couldn’t use the Magic Palm. He knows that Guy’s heart stopped before the antidote could circulate. As a natural Lightning Style user, he knows exactly one way to start it again.

Kakashi is completely spent. Using a jutsu now will probably kill him. If Kakashi is very lucky, it will save Guy. If he has any luck at all, they’ll die together. Most likely, it will fail, he’ll pass out, and by the time he wakes up it will be too late to try anything else.

Kakashi slips his gloves of. He places his hands on the upper right of Guy’s chest and the lower left of his side. He charges a small Lightning Style. The world goes black.
Chapter 2

Kakashi wakes up in a room at the monastery. His body is heavy with the familiar paralysis of complete chakra depletion. He manages to open an eye. The stone walls and brown cotton sheets confirm what the incense in his nose already told him. This is a private room at the monastery that commissioned Guy’s ill-fated mission to retrieve a teapot. He is not alone.

“Good, you’re awake,” Sakura says. “How do you feel?”

“Alive.” Kakashi should have known better than to hope for luck.

“I suppose that’s something. What happened?”

Kakashi is grateful that Sakura is the one who has come to retrieve him. For one thing, he doesn’t have to worry about a strange doctor poking him. As one of his former students, Sakura is a member of the very small group of people whose touch doesn’t send Kakashi’s body into his automatic fight reaction. It can be difficult to restrain when he’s injured and vulnerable, even with doctors from the village. More importantly, Guy’s death isn’t really the fault of the monks. They said the bandits were probably shinobi. Peace loving people don’t have the means to distinguish the differing strength of ninja without seeing them in battle against other shinobi. The bad intelligence that assigned this mission to Guy alone was the fault of some lazy chunin at the mission desk, not the monastery. Bad luck was all that had convinced Kakashi to tag along. Wanting to spend time with Guy and unsure of how to go about it, this mission had seemed like an opportunity. Now he will never have another. That isn’t the fault of these monks. Kakashi shouldn’t hurt them because of it. In the presence of a girl who once looked up at him like he was someone capable of doing good and not just killing well, Kakashi won’t.

“I lost my best friend.” Kakashi keeps his voice even. He doesn’t show weakness. He doesn’t cry. Sakura isn’t his superior officer, though. He doesn’t need to give a report. Not yet.

Sakura looks shocked. “Kakashi-sensei, no! Guy-sensei is fine. He’s the one who brought you here.”

It occurs to Kakashi that Guy being alive—with Sakura here to protect them both while they recover—is the thing that he wants most in the world.

“Don’t even think about it,” Sakura growls, grabbing his right wrist hard enough to give him matching breaks. “This isn’t a genjutsu, and if you flare your chakra right now you’ll use up what little you have and go back into a coma.”

Kakashi nods. That sounds real enough. “What’s his condition?”

As if in answer the door opens soundlessly, Guy slides around it, and closes it carefully behind him. He has big bandages over the cuts on his face, but he looks good. His eyes are bright and his arms are full of an overflowing fruit bowl.

“Rival! You’re awake!” Guy bounces on his feet, but he’s mindful enough of Kakashi’s injuries to refrain from throwing himself at the bed. He does need to catch an apple that overbalances and rolls out of the overfull bowl.

“You look better than I expected.”

“He’s fine. You’re the one who almost died in those woods. Guy had to wait until his body recovered from opening the Seventh Gate to bring you here. The monks set your broken bones, but
they didn’t know how to treat severe chakra depletion. Even I had trouble with yours.”

“The Sharingan.”

“I never realized that when you have it closed and covered it still drains so much of your chakra. The injuries you suffered meant that your body could only produce just enough chakra to sustain that drain. If you had taken even a little more damage than you did, or whatever moronic jutsu you tried had required even a little more power than it did, you would never have lasted until I got here.”

Kakashi nods a little. “I need to eat.”

“You’re damn right you do.”

“Oh!” Guy leaps forward. “At the lovely Sakura’s direction, I have gathered fruits to help you build your strength Rival! She insisted that they would be superior to a hearty curry.” Guy offers the bowl he’s carrying with a typical flourish.

Kakashi looks at the closed door, then at his two saviors, and sits up. The sheet Sakura had drawn up over the lower half of his face falls to the middle of his chest. He reaches into the bowl and takes one of the carefully peeled grapes. It is sweet and juicy and tart and perfect. Kakashi realizes how dry his mouth had been. He suddenly feels his hunger. He eats.

“Thanks for the food,” he murmurs belatedly. Guy is blushing. Sakura is blushing and staring. As a medic, she’s had plenty of opportunities to peek while he’s been knocked out and in her care, but he’s never shown her his face on purpose. He supposes he should have expected this reaction. As long as it doesn’t turn into a crush, it’s fine.

“Are you going to tell us what happened or not,” Sakura demands, proving yet again that she really should have been his favorite student.

If logic dictated emotional responses, though, Kakashi probably wouldn’t find the way Guy snatches any fruit he reaches for and peels it at top speed endearing. He probably wouldn’t feel a lot of the things he does about Guy.

“I had to use a Lightning Style.” He shrugged, chewing another perfectly pared apple.

“Did one of those miscreants attack us even after they’d been bested?”

Kakashi shrugs again, eats some more of the pitted cherries. He’s perfectly comfortable with Guy making that assumption, but Sakura doesn’t go for it.

“The burns and tissue damage on Guy’s chest. I assumed that was from the Seventh Gate. How long after you administered the antidote did his heart stop?”

“My heart stopped?”

“A minute. Maybe two.”

“Then in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases defibrillation wouldn’t have been enough without the assistance of the magic palm. You shouldn’t have taken the risk.”

“No, Sensei.” Kakashi doesn’t bother to hide the small smile that rises to his lips.

“Yes, well.” Sakura smiles too. “You got lucky.”

Kakashi won’t dispute it. He thinks it’s the luckiest he’s ever been in his life, even counting the time
he came back from the dead.

“Did I die?” Guy asks. Kakashi is grateful that Sakura is completely unaware of the context and answers like the first rate student she’s always been.

“No way. Defibrillation can’t resurrect the way healing ninjutsu can. Given the poison used, I suspect the electrical impulses that control your heartbeat were misfiring, not stopped. Kakashi’s Lightning style was able to correct that irregularity, causing your heartbeat to resume, which gave the antidote time to counteract the poison. Don’t get me wrong, you would have died without his intervention, but nothing Kakashi did actually healed you. That was your own incredible power of recovery. Seriously, I didn’t realize the poisoning was that severe. It really only took you a day to recover enough to carry Kakashi back here and send for me? Would you be willing to submit to a few medical tests when we get back to the Village?”

Guy’s laugh booms happily. Despite the fruit peeling, he’s clearly no longer thinking of Kakashi as an invalid. “Of course! But I can already tell you my magnificent secret: lots of wholesome exercise!”

“Right,” Sakura says, dismissing the words and continuing to look at Guy like he’s something to be dissected. Kakashi admires her cool scientific interest and continues to be proud of having had some part in her education, but he is also willing to give Guy a little credit for the exercise. The relationship may not be a causal one, but if Guy’s body weren’t able to take the near constant punishment he puts it through, the man would never have lived past the age of twelve.

Being the detached, competent doctor she is, Sakura decides pretty quickly that Kakashi needs more rest. Once she shoos Guy away, he’s happy to comply. After eating, sleeping is the best way to regain chakra, and Kakashi has reason to suspect his dreams won’t be nightmares.

The three shinobi take it slowly. Kakashi’s leg takes longer to heal than it normally would with Sakura hanging around because of all the damage he did by walking on it after the break, but they aren’t in a hurry. The monastery is a safe place to recuperate, and the village can spare them. Things have been remarkably peaceful since the war. By the time they do make it home, all Kakashi needs is a little more physical therapy to be one hundred percent. Tsunade asks what took them so long.

Kakashi tells her he tripped over a rock.

Kakashi goes over to Guy’s that same night. He doesn’t really care about whether or not he seems eager, but he tries to play it cool for form’s sake. When Guy turns around, Kakashi is leaning casually against his window frame. “I think I made you a promise.”

“I remember.” Guy’s voice is impossibly deep. If Kakashi wasn’t already half-hard with anticipation, that would be more than enough. Guy crosses the room in four easy strides so that Kakashi has a better angle on those dark, focused eyes. Guy raises his hand to touch the corner of Kakashi’s mask. It’s trembling. It stops. Guy pinches the edge of the mask. Kakashi can see his other hand balled at his side. Kakashi still has his own arms folded over his chest. He wonders if he should do something to help as Guy slowly peels his mask down and leans even closer.

The scent of Guy’s apartment assaults his Hatake nose like an eager puppy. It smells like exercise, welcome, and Guy, with the hint of turtles, a dash of curry, and the usual melody of soaps, foods, and furniture. Guy drops Kakashi’s mask, letting it drape around his neck. That calloused hand strokes Kakashi’s cheek so gently as it slides around to cup the back of Kakashi’s skull. It would be a decent hold in a fight, but this is Guy, so there’s no threat. Kakashi enjoys the scent, the sudden warmth, and the gentle press of a mouth against his own.
Guy shifts closer. The pressure of his lips changes. Guy shifts a little more. His other hand finds its way to the small of Kakashi’s back. It’s nice. Warm. Guy’s mouth moves a little more against Kakashi’s lips. Kakashi can still smell everything. The soap Guy uses to wash, the hot water he bathed in, and the terrible cologne he wears sometimes, even his dinner. Kakashi smells the tea he drank earlier—oolong—without spilling a drop, the soup—miso—that must have splashed when he poured it from the pot, even the white rice. Kakashi can smell everything. Kakashi can smell Guy.

Guy pulls back. He takes two big steps away. He’s smiling, but something is wrong. It’s his “Things Couldn’t Be Better” smile. Usually he only pulls it out when Kakashi accidentally injures him during a challenge. Kakashi can’t have done anything to hurt him, though. Kakashi hasn’t moved at all since Guy started kissing him, unless he could somehow hurt Guy just by breathing. Then again, Guy was probably expecting a little movement. Maybe even for Kakashi to return the kiss, rather than standing around like an idiot while yet another opportunity passed him by.

“Right,” Guy says cheerfully, not meeting Kakashi’s eye as he grins and rubs the back of his head. “Thank you for—that is to say—as always, you have kept your word, Rival. Would you like—”

Kakashi grabs Guy and kisses him. It isn’t as easy to do as Jiraiya’s books always made it seem. For one thing, Guy’s mouth is still open. Kakashi doesn’t want to be bitten and have his second real kiss turn into even more of a disaster than the first apparently was. Ideally, this will be an activity that Guy will want to repeat. Kakashi solves that problem by catching Guy’s head between both hands and aiming for Guy’s lower lip instead of his mouth in general, but that creates his second problem. Guy closes his mouth against Kakashi’s again with a happy hum of encouragement. That’s great. It reverberates through Kakashi’s whole body and heads straight to his dick. The problem is, now Guy’s mouth is closed again.

Kakashi has read about how to do this a thousand times. His favorites involve “slowly teasing” Guy’s mouth open, but yet again he is struck by the difference between a written description and practical experience. He doesn’t really know how to go about doing that. He doesn’t want to create the space between them that would seem necessary to “run his tongue along his lips, begging for entry.” Luckily, Guy is on board and has some practical experience. He shifts his mouth against Kakashi’s again with a happy hum of encouragement. That’s great. It reverberates through Kakashi’s whole body and heads straight to his dick. The problem is, now Guy’s mouth is closed again.

Once he’s sucking on Guy’s tongue and stripping them both out of their clothes as efficiently as possible without breaking the kiss, things seem more like a novel anyway. Kakashi manhandles Guy toward his bedroom leaving a trail of discarded clothing, just like the hero of Makeout Paradise would. If Guy is hardly the trembling virgin from the story, Kakashi doesn’t care. This is their story. Their story will be vastly superior to any of the thousands he’s read because it will finally, finally be real.

When they make it to his bed, Guy seems to remember their game plan. He rolls on top of Kakashi and starts kissing his way down his rival’s chest. Kakashi reviews his knowledge base and concludes that running his hands through Guy’s hair and spreading his legs should be enough participation to keep Guy from stopping again. When Guy’s hot mouth closes around him, Kakashi hopes it will be, because he honestly can’t manage anything else. Even that realization is a vague one because the only thing he can really focus on is how unexpectedly perfect that wet suction feels and the fact that he absolutely must not orgasm no matter how much he needs to.

Guy’s obviously read a few Makeout books himself. Or, more likely, he’s put as much effort into practicing this as he does with anything he wants to be good at. His mouth engulfs Kakashi completely. Kakashi can feel him swallowing as he slides his slick lips up and all the way down. His mouth is so hot and wet and tight that Kakashi almost can’t take it. Then Guy’s hand slides up
Kakashi’s thigh to squeeze his balls and Kakashi has to bite the inside of his cheek until it bleeds to keep things from ending right there. Kakashi shoves one of Guy’s pillows under his lower back for logistics and to hurry things along. Guy takes the hint.

The stretch that comes when Guy presses his first finger in helps a lot. Of course Kakashi has done this to himself and has enough fine muscle control to loosen at once, but like everything he does with Guy, it feels so much more intense than it did when he was alone. Guy’s fingers are thicker than Kakashi’s are, too, to the point where one is almost as good as two. Kakashi spreads his legs a little wider and tries not to moan desperately. That might interrupt the soft, hungry noises Guy is making around Kakashi’s cock. They don’t make holding it in any easier, but the last thing Kakashi wants in the world is for those approving sounds to stop.

Guy takes it very slowly. Kakashi doesn’t think his friend knows this is his first time, but a small part of him appreciates it anyway. At least Guy knows that this time is different than their rushed, previous encounters. After this Kakashi won’t leave. It feels like an hour before Guy adds a second finger, bobbing his mouth up and down on Kakashi’s cock the entire time like it’s the only popsicle in a desert. By the time Guy gives him a third finger, stretching isn’t even an issue anymore, and Kakashi’s pleasure only intensifies. Guy strokes inside of him and swallows around him that way for a long, long time.

Finally, just when Kakashi knows for a fact that he can’t hold on any longer, Guy pulls his head back, three fingers still stroking in a perfect, unerring rhythm. Guy doesn’t shift up, though. He plants a kiss on the inside of Kakashi’s thigh like a threat. He isn’t going anywhere anytime soon. “Please, Rival.” His voice is so throaty that Kakashi’s hips jerk toward him of their own accord. Kakashi curses his own lack of control silently and once again barely manages to avoid losing it completely. Guy keeps fingering him. “Will you give me another hint?” Guy asks softly.

“Hint?” Kakashi doesn’t bother trying to keep his voice even, but he’s a little ashamed that he can’t control the low groan he ends on thanks to the unfortunate timing of Guy’s strong fingers.

“Tell me what you like. What you want.” Guy’s voice is low and serious, but his question is absolutely ridiculous. If he manages to stumble across something Kakashi likes more than this, their evening is going to end prematurely, either because Kakashi won’t be able to refrain from coming, or because the strain of resisting will actually kill him.

“I want you to hurry up and fuck me already.”

Guy’s fingers stop moving halfway inside of him. “You want—”

“Sorry,” Kakashi says, even though Guy’s the reason he’s so on edge. “Sorry, I can hold it. Take as much time as you want.”

Miraculously, Guy shifts up instead. His fingers leave Kakashi bereft and he strokes himself quickly, moving over Kakashi as he does until his hands are on Kakashi’s thighs and he is slick and ready, pressed against Kakashi. Pressing into Kakashi just a little. “But will you keep holding out if I do?”

Kakashi grins at the terrible entendre. He would say something witty, but Guy’s eyes go wide and his hips jerk forward almost involuntarily, shoving all the way into Kakashi with one decisive stroke. Even after everything, there’s a certain amount of pain.

“Sorry,” Guy gasps. “Sorry—I wasn’t—you smiled and—I’m so sorry.”

Kakashi grips his arm hard enough to bruise. “Do that again,” he says, because pain is a constant in life, but he’s never felt anything like this kind of pleasure.
Impossibly, Guy’s eyes grow darker. “Ah.” He draws back, slowly. Too slowly, but Kakashi knows the point is to avoid injury. The slow pull isn’t unpleasant, either; it just isn’t that thrilling flash of glory. Kakashi has beaten shinobi who had songs and stories told about them across the world; he deserves a little glory.

Anyway, the pain helps him focus a little, keeps him from going off too soon.

Guy thrusts forward a second time with a more measured stroke. The force and angle is identical to his first strike. Lightning shoots through Kakashi’s nerves.

“This is the way you prefer it, then?” Guy asks during his slow withdrawal after the fifth time.


Kakashi is grateful for the twinge in his back as Guy bends forward to press their lips together. He is indebted to the tight pull in his recently healed left leg. Without the little pains, kissing Guy while they were so close together would be unbearable. He would never last until Guy began to really work in him, and that would be regrettable. Guy is incredible.

They’re together—over and over and over—but the best part is that they will be together again and again and again. Kakashi surrenders. He has never been so happy to lose to his Rival. He has never been so happy.

Kakashi wakes up alone.

He should have been expecting it. Guy isn’t going to let a little thing like finally winning over the love of his life interfere with his morning training routine. Kakashi is still naked, and he figures Guy’s bed is comfortable enough. He hangs around for a while. Most days Guy finishes up the predawn stuff by mid-morning, which is a good time for Kakashi to con someone into bringing him breakfast in bed.

At noon Kakashi gives up. Dragging himself out of Guy’s bed, he makes rice and helps himself to the last of Guy’s natto. Guy isn’t home yet, so Kakashi gets dressed. He spends an hour thoroughly tossing Guy’s apartment nominally trying to find a summoning scroll that he might not even have had in his flak jacket last night. He realizes what he’s doing. He goes home.

He spends almost half an hour in his apartment pretending that he isn’t going to go looking for Guy. There are legitimate concerns. Kakashi expected Guy and Guy didn’t show up. He could be in trouble, and won’t Kakashi feel like an idiot if someone is holding his best friend captive somewhere and Kakashi failed to go looking for him?

Tracking Guy to a training field is no kind of a challenge. Kakashi masks his presence and watches Guy spar with Lee for a while, but there is no evident trouble. Being forced to admit that the only reason Guy is here instead of his apartment is that he prefers it stings a little. Kakashi ignores the feeling.

A confrontation isn’t warranted. Instead Kakashi does some training of his own. He breaks some big rocks into smaller rocks, practices changing the trajectory of a kunai with a shuriken, and swims across a lake. None of that keeps him from over thinking things, so Kakashi buries himself in books. Love always triumphs in the simple stories he likes best, but Guy has finally outgrown whatever feelings he once had. Kakashi has to live with that. Whether or not he does so with dignity is his only choice.

Guy is absolutely the type to gloat, but he isn’t capable of cruelty, so Kakashi is a little surprised
when he turns up at Kakashi’s door that same evening. Even the strongest dog likes a little time to lick his wounds. Guy should respect that.

“Rival! I hope you have had a pleasant and productive day?”

“Slow start this morning, but I trained a little.” Kakashi makes a point of not inviting him in, but Guy is Guy and pushes past him without noticing.

“I wanted to return this scroll to you,” Guy continues obliviously. It’s the summoning scroll that Kakashi used as an excuse to waste time in Guy’s apartment that morning. Kakashi’s search for it was very, very thorough. Guy clearly stole it before leaving. “You must have left it in my apartment this morning.”

“Thanks. I guess it slipped my mind after all the fun.”

“Yes indeed, Rival, last night was particularly enjoyable. Wouldn’t you agree?”

Kakashi makes a small noise as noncommittally as possible.

“If you found it agreeable we could repeat the experience.”

Kakashi takes a moment to wonder when Guy started playing angles. He wants a relationship, not some strange new game for their rivalry. “Suppose we could. If you want.”

Plaster rains down from the hole Guy punches in the ceiling to accompany his victorious shout. “I knew that if I proved how cool and casual I could be you would agree!”

Kakashi smiles for the first time all day.

“Ah. That is to say—“

“Guy, you can be yourself. I like you.”

The big man sucks in a breath like he’s never tasted air before. Instantly he’s in Kakashi’s space, gently tugging the mask away. Kakashi is the one to close the distance, though. He’s the one to strip them both and push Guy toward the bedroom. He’s the one who pushes Guy down into the mattress. Guy is the one who comes within two minutes of getting Kakashi’s mouth around him.

“You’d better have one freakishly short refractory period,” Kakashi says, still a little uncertain about Guy’s intentions. It’s very unusual for Kakashi not to know exactly what Guy is thinking at any given moment. He doesn’t like it.

“Of course, Rival! It’s the prerogative of Youth!” Guy is panting for breath, but he still manages to make an over the top declaration. “I challenge you to match me! I am ready to continue at once.”

“No,” Kakashi says, not because he’ll lose but because this is exactly what he doesn’t want. “No challenges. Not like this.”

Guy catches his breath and looks up at Kakashi with startled, serious eyes. “Then—“

“This isn’t our rivalry,” Kakashi says firmly, because it’s always best to spell things out for Guy. “So none of that. This is just like any of your other relationships. We can still be rivals, but when we’re together, we’ll just be together.”

“I understand.” Guy nods an affirmative that is completely out of place between a man who has just had an orgasm and the person who swallowed it down. It’s comforting; Guy is still Guy.
Surprisingly, he was telling the truth about his refractory period, too. Kakashi is fascinated. He always found that sort of thing slightly unbelievable when it came up in his pornography. Like any intelligent person, he decides to experiment.

Even after the third time, Guy can still come for him—if Kakashi is patient and moves at just the right angle over and again—but he no longer spills when he does so. Instead he shakes and groans and begs and grasps at Kakashi with pleasure-weakened hands. It is absolutely perfect. Kakashi can’t remember what about these touches could have frightened him for so many years. Finally, after what seems like a lifetime of longing, Kakashi buries himself completely in Guy and rides the lightning deeper and deeper.

Kakashi wakes up alone in his room.

Just as he would in any unknown tactical situation, Kakashi takes things slowly and analyzes his circumstances carefully. Nothing about his rivalry with Guy has changed at all. They have a taijutsu competition, a ping-pong playoff, and a drinking contest. Having sex is excellent, fun, and extremely satisfying, but Guy doesn’t ask a second time; nothing happens unless Kakashi initiates it. There are no flowers, no declarations, no embarrassing attempts at poetry, and no dates. Nothing about their relationship suggests they’re together at all. Kakashi understands the implications, but he’s never been one to give up without a fight.

“There’s the firework viewing tonight,” he observes casually, leaning against one of the training posts opposite the one Guy is kicking repeatedly. Kakashi is reading *Makeout Tactics*. It’s a deliberate choice.

“Indeed! The commemoration of the noble victory of the Second Hokage over the miscreants who would have destroyed our great village! I look forward to it!”

“The rooftop of the tallest building near the South Wall is the best place to sit and watch. You can see most of the village and the best view of the Monument. Join me.”

“Certainly! That sounds like an excellent location.”

Relief floods Kakashi’s chest. This seems like the best possible scenario, the one where Guy doesn’t object to dating any more than he objects to the sex. Kakashi can understand. After all, Kakashi has rejected Guy’s advances before. So much so that the man who never gives up might actually be playing it safe. Unbelievable and unexpected doesn’t have to mean unwelcome. Kakashi can draw Guy out pretty easily if he’s correct. One perfect date should be enough. One perfect date under the fireworks and then they’ll be together the way they always should have been.

Great sushi is even more expensive in Leaf Village than it is elsewhere because of the distance to the ocean, but Kakashi buys more than even Guy will be able to eat. He finds a blanket so soft it feels like sitting on a cloud. Cleaning the roof of any stray stones and unsightly detritus is the work of a moment, but Kakashi stakes it out all afternoon to politely dissuade any other shinobi who might have the same idea. Even the building’s tenants decide to watch the show from a different location. Everything is perfect when Guy shows up with Lee, Tenten, and Naruto in tow.

“Kakashi-sensei! Thanks for bringing so much food! Wow!” Naruto throws himself on the blanket and starts shoving food into his face. Lee and Tenten sit down more politely, so Kakashi uses a handy jutsu he knows to clone the teacups he brought. He feels unbalanced by this move. Like everything else Guy has done since that damned mission chasing the golden teapot, it can be interpreted in too many ways. It’s possible—it’s always possible—that Guy didn’t understand Kakashi was asking him for a date. Kakashi knows better than to assume Guy understands, but he also knows Guy is much smarter than most people think. Guy has always understood Kakashi better
“Indeed Kakashi-sensei,” Lee proclaims, “This is the best firework viewing picnic I have ever been invited to! Had I known you would be providing such a bountiful supper, I would not have eaten earlier.”

“I brought some candies to share,” Tenten says, offering Kakashi the basket in return as he passes her a cup of tea.

“Thank you,” Kakashi said, taking one and handing the rest to Naruto. He doesn’t eat the candy. He doesn’t eat any of the sushi either, though that disappears quickly once the fireworks start. He leans back and watches the others watch the fireworks. Watches the childlike glee on Guy’s face mirrored on Lee’s. Watches Tenten swipe the last piece of yellowtail from Naruto. Kakashi watches the way the finale lights up the whole sky and waits for his moment.

“Thanks again for treating us, Kakashi-sensei,” Naruto says, almost on cue. “You never treat anyone!”

“It’s a special occasion,” Kakashi shrugs, folding his blanket casually. “I was a little surprised you didn’t want to watch with Sakura.”

“Nah, she’s stuck at the hospital. Sai’s on guard duty or something, too. He refused to skip it. I was a little bummed about not having anyone to watch with until Bushy Brows invited me to join you guys yesterday.”

Which is the information Kakashi was looking for, but he isn’t sure it helps. If Guy knew he had other plans before Kakashi asked him out, then it was possible that Guy hadn’t even realized it was a date. Asking to join Guy who already had plans with their former students could easily have been misinterpreted. Or—

“Guy-sensei! Shall we go for one final run around the village before bedtime?” As always, Lee’s enthusiasm is unmatched. Kakashi likes kid, but he’s already been a good sport about having his date hijacked. He needs to talk to Guy far more than the teenager needs an extra hour of external validation.

“Sorry, Lee. Guy needs to come with me and wash the dishes. That was our deal in exchange for me treating everyone.”

“Oh. Of course! Guy-sensei has incredible manners. Do you need any other help? Naruto, Tenten, and I would naturally be delighted to offer our assistance as well after such a delicious—“

“It’s fine. You three enjoy the rest of your evening.”

Guy spends the walk to Kakashi’s apartment babbling about everything and nothing at all. He says how kind and unexpected it was for Kakashi to bring a picnic to share. He enthusiastically describes his favorite fireworks, as though Kakashi had not been sitting next to him the entire time. He even makes it a point to talk about how much fun Naruto and his own students seemed to have together. Kakashi lets him talk.

“Well Kakashi,” Guy says finally, when they’re safely inside his apartment. “Shall I wash your teapot for you?” Nothing could look more out of place on Guy’s face than a leer. He looks ridiculous when he tries for lewd.

Kakashi slams him into the wall with a kiss that’s little more than an attack. It’s an effective distraction. Guy’s hands go to Kakashi’s waist. He doesn’t even notice Kakashi’s hands forming
seals.

Ropes fly from the wall to bind guy tightly by his wrists, neck, shoulders, elbows, abdomen, knees, and ankles. It’s a very effective trap jutsu. Guy will have to use the Gates if he wants to free himself. From the way he keeps licking into Kakashi’s mouth even though he can’t move his head, Kakashi guesses that isn’t much of a priority for him.

“Guy. If you don’t like this, or you want me to stop—“

“I have played many games of this sort before, Rival.” Guy’s eyes are impossibly dark. “My safe word is curry.”

Kakashi feels his stomach twist. Guy has offered himself bound and helpless to other lovers. Guy thinks this is just another game. That is all immaterial. Above all, Guy is his friend. Kakashi won’t hurt him. It’s good that Guy has experience with this sort of thing. It’s good to have a safe word, even if Kakashi had been planning to suggest the word “stop”. He isn’t interested in more false responses, but he doesn’t reject the plan either. Part of him still thinks the answer might be found here. If he can just get past his inexperience, do this right and be what Guy wants now, then Guy will give him what he promised all those years ago.

“Curry. Got it.” He kisses Guy again, slowly and with more control this time. “Got you.”

“Never you dastardly fiend!” Guy winks on top of the overacting. It’s both endearing and utterly ridiculous.

Kakashi snorts and slits the green jumpsuit open from neck to navel, his razor sharp kunai grazing Guy’s skin like a cold caress. “Please. I can have anything I want from you. You’re mine.”

“Not at all! I am a shinobi of the Leaf! No matter what you do to me, you can never break my indomitable spirit!”

Kakashi slices the rest of Guy’s clothing away, revealing powerful, straining muscles. It’s even more of a fiction than the silly speeches. Guy could free himself in seconds. This is the real power Kakashi has over his rival: he doesn’t. “Let’s see then,” Kakashi murmurs once he has Guy completely naked except the ropes cutting into his golden skin. “Let’s see if I can make you mine.”

Carefully, Kakashi fits a piece of silk around Guy’s erection. He’s done his reading. It’s somewhat amusing that the books about more deviant acts generally have helpful diagrams, while he had to improvise his way through kissing. Still, he knows how to do this without causing pain, and the silk won’t burn or cut the way the ropes will.

“I have no fear of castration!” Guy proclaims boldly. “I am willing to give everything I have for my village, even my very life!”

“Why would I castrate you?” Kakashi murmurs, groping the powerful thighs of the taijutsu master. “I have much better uses for a man like you.”

There is a small bead of sweat at the crook of Guy’s neck, just below the thick rope collar immobilizing his head. Kakashi licks the salt of it away. Guy shudders, but he can’t move. Kakashi lets his mouth roam. He traces the lines of Guy’s muscles and spends plenty of time where he knows Guy is most sensitive. Those choked, increasingly desperate curses are music to his ears, so he keeps meandering. Kakashi spends a while kissing the welts around the rope on Guy’s left wrist. They’re Guy’s own fault for pulling so much, but Kakashi made them. He likes the color.

“Please,” Guy gasps while Kakashi mouths over and around the silk shield. It’s even sweeter than
“Say it,” Kakashi orders, pressing a trail of kisses up Guy’s abdomen so that he can once again look his love in the eye.

“Please.”

“Admit to it and you can come.” Kakashi smiles hopefully. He wants this more than anything. “You want to come, don’t you?”

“Yes. Yes, please Kakashi.”

“Then say it. I’ll let you come. I’ll untie you. I’ll be so good to you, I promise. For the rest of my life I’ll be so, so good. All you have to do is admit it.”

“Kakashi—I’m sorry.” Something is wrong with Guy’s voice. He’s upset, not playing a game. “I forgot what I’m supposed to say.”

Kakashi releases the trap and pulls the silk binding off Guy instantly. Guy comes the moment he’s free, falling against his friend and spilling everywhere.

“Curry,” Kakashi says, not sure how he should apologize, trying to ignore the strange hurt blocking his throat as he holds Guy up. “The word was curry.”

Guy’s stamina is as impressive as always. He recovers immediately and begins peeling Kakashi out of his clothes. “I’m sorry,” he repeats. Kakashi lets himself be undressed. He’s spent over an hour touching a naked, unresisting Guy. Now Guy is touching him and he can’t resist, even if Guy would willingly endure anything except pretending that he belongs to Kakashi for one brief moment.

“I’m sorry for ruining the game.”

“It’s fine.” Kakashi ruts mechanically into Guy’s warm, strong hand. He doesn’t want to stop. He doesn’t want this to be over. For some reason he remembers the day Minato-sensei met his father. He remembers how often his teacher had congratulated him with a hand on his shoulder after that. It was then that he realized he didn’t need to dodge every time someone made a move toward him. He wishes that he could tell his teacher now that gentle touches hurt so much more than any blow.

“I didn’t mean to say curry.”

“It’s fine.”

“I meant I forgot what I was supposed to say in the game.”

“Right.”

“Kakashi. I am sorry. I remember now. I was supposed to give in to you, right? I was supposed to say I belong to you.”

When he comes, Kakashi buries his face desperately in Guy’s shoulder. He doubts it’s enough to save his dignity.

Guy pulls away from him slowly and goes to finger the shreds of his clothing on the floor. “I don’t suppose you’ll lend me something to wear home, Rival?”

“Help yourself.” Kakashi doesn’t feel any of his usual post-coital lethargy, just a deep depression.
“I really will do better next time.” Kakashi already knows that there can’t be a next time. He can’t continue this way. “Also, I owe you for the sushi tonight. Let me take you out for dinner tomorrow. We can go somewhere nice.”

“Guy. Are you asking me on a date?” Unexpected hope hammers hard in Kakashi’s chest.

Guy laughs—a horrible, fake sound. “Of course not. I would never dare!”

“You’ve never wanted anything in your life without reaching for it with both hands. If you wanted —” And there it is, the simple truth that Kakashi has been avoiding for weeks. Guy doesn’t want this. At least he doesn’t want the things Kakashi does.

Guy blinks. Kakashi should have tempered his anger more. No matter how it hurts, Guy has no reason to believe he’s been handling this badly. Unlike Guy, Kakashi has never actually admitted his feelings. What has he said? Don’t die? I like you? We’ll be together? And always with enough context to weasel out later if he needed to. Honestly, Kakashi knew he could never have this kind of happiness. He isn’t even that sure he’d have preferred a flat out rejection to touching Guy on thirty-two different occasions.

“I think I have a mission tomorrow,” Kakashi says, forcing any expression from his face and voice. “We’ll go for dinner another time.” Fortunately, his clothes are in a relatively neat clump on the floor next to the sofa. He grabs them and teleports away before Guy can speak.

Kakashi wakes up enough to be ashamed of his actions before he even has his clothes on. In attempting to avoid pain himself, he has hurt a friend. It is everything he has sworn not to be. He needs to go back to the apartment and apologize. He needs to explain like a rational adult that he feels more than Guy does, but he understands that those feelings are not requited. He needs to promise that he will trouble Guy no further with this matter and reassure him that their friendship will continue as it always has.

That is what he needs to do, but he can’t trust himself to do it. After years of manipulating his friends in every small matter, Kakashi doesn’t trust himself to not mention an eighteen-year-old promise. He knows a promise to love someone can’t bind any more than a promise to stay alive, but a small, selfish part of him knows that he could hold Guy to it. Guy prides himself on never breaking his word, no matter what it costs him.

Kakashi spends the night in the forest not giving in to temptation. As soon as the sun rises, he goes to the Hokage’s office. “I’d like a mission,” he says as politely as possible.

“So go to the mission room, brat,” Tsunade retorts. It’s earlier than she likes, but Kakashi found her here. Shizune is probably the one who dragged her out of bed; she doesn’t need to take it out on Kakashi.

“No, Lady Hokage, I need a mission.”

Finally she looks up from her paperwork. Those sharp brown eyes don’t miss a thing. “Ah. A mission.”

Kakashi isn’t stupid and he isn’t suicidal. He just needs a mission that will actually keep him occupied for long enough to get his feelings in check. He sees the Hokage’s doubt, but he doesn’t know how to convince her without admitting more than he can.

“I have something,” she says. “You’ll need a team.”

“My team,” Kakashi agrees. “We won’t need backup.” There are very few missions that Kakashi
can’t handle alone, and he strongly doubts that there is anything left that could stop him with Naruto and Sai while they have the second best medical shinobi in the world to keep them alive. Hubris, maybe, especially since the pain he’s in now could be considered the result of a bad decision after a poorly planned mission, but if Sakura had been with them from the start of that botched retrieval, they would never have been in the same danger. Tsunade clearly comes to the same conclusion.

“Fine,” she says, handing him an S-rank scroll. “Naruto will be happy, at least. He’s been bothering me for weeks for a ‘real’ mission.”

Clearly Naruto should have turned up first thing in the morning on the edge of a nervous breakdown, Kakashi carefully does not say.

“Listen up, brat,” Tsunade says, destroying Kakashi’s hope of escaping the village without a heart to heart. “You can take care of yourself. You’ve proven that more than once. You’re still the only case of hallucinatory post traumatic stress I’ve ever heard of recovering completely without treatment.”

“I saw a psychiatrist. You made me.”

“Yeah. Right. I know you won’t do anything to endanger your team, but try to remember that they aren’t children anymore. You could talk to them if you wanted.”

Kakashi nods respectfully, knowing that he will never do anything of the kind.

“Yeah, yeah.” Tsunade waves a hand dismissively. “Stay safe. Don’t screw up the mission.”

On the way to Naruto’s apartment to gather his team, Kakashi narrowly avoids running into Guy. Clad in his usual green, the Jonin seems to be searching the rooftops for something. Kakashi sends a shadow clone running and tries to ignore the wrench in his gut when Guy chases after it calling his name. He has a mission.
Chapter 3

It’s unusual for a straightforward protection mission to get the S rank, but this one deserves it. The Princess of the Land of Cotton is beautiful, intelligent, accomplished, and the sole ruling power of her small, peaceful nation. Therefore, she is naturally being targeted by a small group of missing ninja looking to force her into a marriage and take control of her country. They are all A-rank shinobi, and they are smart enough not to chance a head on confrontation with Kakashi’s team right away. First they spend over a month striking from the shadows, attempting to abduct the princess, looking for any advantage.

Fortunately, Kakashi’s team is just as good as he thinks they are. When the assassin with a special affinity for ice tries to take the princess from her bath, Sakura is there to make him wish he’d never been born. She even captures the rogue, but the team doesn’t manage to beat any truth out of him before one of his friends manages to poison his food. Worse, the cold bastard feeds them a lie that sounds pretty good after his untimely demise.

Acting on the bad intelligence, Kakashi and Naruto go to find the supposed headquarters of the little group, giving the poisoner and his shadowy partner a perfect opportunity to attack in the night. By all reports, the shinobi who manipulates shadows is even more impressive than his partner. At night, in the dark, he’s completely invisible and extremely powerful. With the poisoner shooting darts from every corner to back him up, they turn the entire palace population into patients for Sakura. Using his Super Beast Scroll to fill the shadows with hunting animals, Sai takes both A-rank shinobi down without being poisoned, but he has to use lethal force to do it. Naturally, Sakura does what no other rank-and-file shinobi in the world could, and keeps all of her patients alive, but that’s the only good news. Kakashi’s team can’t turn the attack into a rout. Searching for clues doesn’t turn up anything, even with Pakkun and Biscuit helping, but Sai’s was still a solid victory.

It isn’t the way Sai dealt with the enemy shinobi that impresses Kakashi, or even the way Sakura cures a palace full of patients before he and Naruto return from their fruitless scouting mission. As he told Tsunade, Kakashi’s team doesn’t need backup. Impressive is what happens after the cleanup when Kakashi gives Sai an ANBU nod. The boy understands it’s the most sincere acknowledgement Kakashi can offer. He straightens perceptibly and practically radiates satisfaction from his expressionless face.

“Thank you, sir,” he says politely, “but it is Sakura who deserves your praise. While I am certain that she could have bested the enemies I fought, had our positions been reversed, I could never have saved the lives of so many.” Awkwardly implemented, as always, the little speech is straight from one of his self-help books.

Deflecting praise, especially well deserved praise, is a good way to show your friends their value. It helps, however, if they notice you’ve received an accolade.

“What praise?” Naruto asks. “Kakashi-sensei didn’t even say Good Job.”

Even though she missed the initial interplay as well, Sakura sees what Sai is doing. “No, no, no,” she corrects. “You need to smile more with your eyes when you say something like that.”

“Like this?” he asks, correcting his facial expression slightly.

“No, like this,” she says, pulling both of his cheeks like elastic.

“Here, let me help,” Naruto shouts, tackling them both to the ground where they roll around in a
giggling pile of teenagers for a while. Kakashi stands to the side smiling benevolently down at the three of them, but secretly he has to wonder. When he was an ANBU operative at Sai’s age, he could never have tolerated such an attack.

Approaching Sai when he’s finally alone a few hours later isn’t easy, but for the sake of friendship Kakashi does. “At seventeen, I would never have accepted that kind of affection. If my comrades had been strong enough to force the issue, I would have fought. I couldn’t have restrained myself.” It’s the closest he can come to asking a seventeen year old for advice. Even if that seventeen year old is one of the few people that Kakashi thinks might actually understand his particular brand of insanity.

“Sir. I would never hurt Naruto or Sakura. Please don’t concern yourself.”

“You never feel the impulse to strike back when they attack that way?”

“I am gratified that they feel comfortable enough with me to express their affection physically.”

“I’m not talking about what cerebral understanding you have come to about the nature of the interaction, Sai. What did you feel when Naruto tackled you? What exactly did you feel in that moment?”

A peculiar glint appears in Sai’s usually expressionless eyes. “I think,” he begins slowly, “I think maybe the word is—happiness.”

“Back at the Foundation you must have wrestled that way with your brother a great deal.”

The implied ghost of a smile pulls at the corner of Sai’s mouth. “Yes, we did. Only when the adults weren’t around, but—Naruto is very like him.”

“Glad to hear it,” Kakashi says, and he is. He would never wish his aversion on anyone else, especially not someone who craves friendship as much as Sai does. Perhaps having access to someone who had overcome a similar difficulty would have been helpful, but Kakashi doesn’t actually need to fix his issues, he just needs to be sure that he will act honorably when they inevitably return to the village.

“You don’t need to worry about me, sir. I will never hurt one of my friends.” Kakashi has said words like those a thousand times; he can only wish that he believed them the way Sai clearly does.

After a full week of letting Kakashi stew undistracted, the remaining three members of the band are kind enough to decide that their best chance of getting the Princess is a joint attack. While she’s taking an afternoon stroll in the garden, a summoning beast the size of the palace smashes through the brick wall. The thing is some kind of cross between a squid and a three headed dragon. It spits acid. Perched on the middle head is the shinobi who summoned the beast, directing the creature’s destruction. Behind him his partner, who has enormous leathery wings, darts through the break in the wall and snatches up the Princess in the confusion. The third member of their little group unleashes a swarm of angry bees to screen an escape. As a strategy, it might have worked if Naruto had any regard for his own personal safety. Charging through the bees, taking hundreds of stings, he punches the left head of the dragon creature with a Rasengan, ignoring the acid spewing from its hungry maw.

The creature’s tentacles flail wildly in response to the hit, one of them accidentally striking the winged shinobi. Kakashi knows a chance when he sees one. He runs up the destroyed garden wall and leaps into the air, just high enough to twist the princess out of the arms of her careening captor. Her wide brown eyes are barely tracking. She’s untrained and doesn’t know what to do, but when he
fits her hands around his neck, she holds on helpfully enough. Once he has her, he races down the side of the flailing monster, slicing bees from the air with a razor sharp kunai. Managing to get her to the ground without injury is a feat in itself, but Sakura is there and waiting to take over. As a medical shinobi, she’s the most qualified for protection detail.

Sakura protects the Princess. Sai draws inky beasts that can deal with the insect user. Naruto is the most naturally qualified to fight giant monsters. Which leaves Kakashi with the half bat shinobi firing unknown, exploding bolts of darkness ringed with purple flames. Kakashi takes his time to analyze the way the flames burn. It isn’t Amaterasu. The flames devour, but they can be extinguished by smothering. In fact, the flames are most like a grease fire. Water or wind spreads them. Only earth can defeat them.

Luckily, Kakashi’s fairly proficient with Earth Style. Trying to defeat a flying opponent with only Earth Style is a good intellectual challenge, even though he suspects a few well-placed lightning bolts would also do the trick. Kakashi prefers to take his time and work out what jutsu his opponent is using. Disappointed, he realizes that the wings are just grafted on from a summoned creature and the shinobi keeps himself aloft with weak Wind Styles. His fire jutsu is also amplified by this minor affinity to uncommon element. It takes Kakashi a little while to figure out that it isn’t a simultaneous casting, but two in quick succession. First he uses a jutsu to shoot the fire bolt and then he sends a small wind style to make it explode. It’s an interesting technique, but probably too chakra heavy for Kakashi to copy it. Noticing that his students have taken out their opponents already, Kakashi uses a well-placed shuriken clone jutsu to sever the wings from the shinobi’s body and send him plummeting to the ground.

The Princess rushes to his side at once, expressing how grateful she is with an eager charm. Kakashi genuinely likes her, but declines the invitation to a private dinner the way he always does when singled out. He hasn’t been protecting her alone. Showing a grace uncommon in a noblewoman, the Princess agrees at once. She meant to invite the whole team to a private dinner with the monarch, of course.

Dinner is impressive. Whether it was the Princess or not, someone has arranged for every dish any team member has expressed a fondness for. Amid the local delicacies there is ramen for Naruto, fruit cocktail for Sakura, and a plate of the local dumplings Sai called interesting. There is even a salad of the tender young sprouts Kakashi liked, impressive because he never mentioned that fact aloud. He suspects that an attentive palace chef somewhere is grateful to have the beloved princess safe at last. As for the Princess, she is kind to Naruto, sweet to Sakura, and polite to Sai—a perfect hostess.

Late in the evening, after plenty of food and charming conversation, Naruto yawns. “This was really great, Princess, but if we’re heading home tomorrow, I need to sleep.”

The others take their leave more politely.

“And you, Kakashi? Do you need to sleep?”

He will be home in two days. It is imperative that he face Guy the minute he arrives; their friendship deserves that much. Their friendship might not survive without that much. Still, Kakashi has never had this much difficulty subjugating his feelings. It might be easier to do if Guy wasn’t the only person who ever made lightning course through Kakashi’s veins.

“I always have time for you, Princess.”

“Yoko, please.” She steps forward to place one graceful hand on his bicep.

“Yoko, then. I’m honored.” She leans close. She’s a noncombatant. If she had any fighting ability, it
would have been revealed in the last month. She’s not a threat.

As if to confirm it, her lush mouth shapes soft words. “I would not be here now if you hadn’t saved my live twelve times over in the last month. I could never have consented to play wife for one of those brutes. My undying gratitude is yours.” Her hand is on the corner of his mask. Kakashi allows what he never allows; she peels it slowly down his face. The surprised smile makes her even more beautiful. He supposes it should be gratifying that she is pleased by his appearance as well. Closing the final distance, Kakashi presses his mouth to hers.

The Princess is opening her mouth and clutching at his vest within a moment. Kakashi keeps his weapons in his vest. She smells like hot tea, floral perfume, sweets, arousal, silk, and lavender oil. She is the complete opposite of a threat; she is far too close.

Disengaging as gently as possible, Kakashi puts a few meters between them and tugs his mask into place before she can finish blinking. “Good night, beautiful Yoko. May your dreams be as dear as the one you have given me.”

He leaves before she can respond, but when the team takes their official leave the next morning, she has a soft, private smile just for him. At least he didn’t offend her.

The gates of Leaf Village stand open, welcoming the long absent shinobi home. Izumo and Kotetsu are on guard duty, so Team Kakashi is waved through without even the most cursory question. That doesn’t mean that they enter the village unchallenged.

From the foliage around the guard stand, Guy springs out menacing Kakashi with two-dozen roses. “Welcome home, Rival! Celebrate your successful mission by going on a date with me!”

“Date?!” Naruto and Sakura still form a chorus when they’re shocked, Kakashi notes, for all that they’ve both become better at mastering their reactions. He dodges the bouquet easily enough.

“Go home, Guy.” The mission seems longer than it was. All Kakashi wants is a bath, a book, and a nap.

“Not until you accept this proof of my respect and devotion, Kakashi!” Guy charges with the flowers again, but Kakashi is ready for him. He taps the roses with a small fire jutsu, reducing them to cinders without hurting Guy.

“Hey!” Sakura seems upset, if the way she swings a Kakashi, crushing a fencepost to splinters when he dodges, is any indication. “Be more respectful when a girl confesses her love!”

“Is that really what you think is happening here?” Too much of his anger reaches his tone, obviously, because Sakura’s eyes grow like twin lakes after the first spring thaw.

“One date, Kakashi,” Guy says, still grinning that false grin. “It will be fun!”

“No.”

Clearly, Guy has more to say, but Sakura spins on him as quickly as she turned on Kakashi. “No means no!” she shouts. Guy goes flying through a sturdy tree branch.

He bounces back. Guy always bounces back. It’s what Kakashi loves most about him. Today, it’s unforgivable. “I’ll prepare a splendid dinner for us both,” he promises.

Kakashi is so weak. It would be so easy to just—have dinner. Usually Kakashi tries to limit innocent casualties, but protecting his moronic friend is the most important thing today. Dodging Guy’s
attempt to put a hand on his shoulder, he saunters casually up to the guard stand. “I don’t actually have plans tonight,” he mentions, leaning across the desk into Izumo’s space.

Izumo’s voice always drops half an octave when he addresses Kakashi. As crushes go, it’s been a harmless one. Kakashi’s used it to manipulate him before, but even Izumo realizes that Kotetsu is the one for him.

“I don’t really want dinner, but it’s been a long, lonely mission. I could use a little company.”

“Well,” the chunin blushes. “That is.” Sweat beads along his forehead and his one visible eye is completely black.

“Your lover is welcome to join us,” Kakashi offers, looking at Kotetsu with approval. “Watch, join, whatever you’re comfortable with.”

Kotetsu is less affected than his partner. “But—Mighty Guy,” he manages.

Kakashi doesn’t need to follow his gesture to look at his rival. He can imagine the look of surprise well enough. He doesn’t want to see the underlying relief. He doesn’t know what that would make him do. He already has a hand sliding along Izumo’s waist.

“Guy and I aren’t together. We never have been.”

“He seems,” Izumo begins, but clearly doesn’t know how to finish.

“I didn’t say we’ve never done anything,” Kakashi purrs, “but I don’t owe him anything. Don’t you want to know what we did? Don’t you want to know all of the things I’ll never let him do again?”

“Yeah,” Izumo breathes.

“Kakashi-sensei!” If it were just shock or righteous indignation, Kakashi would ignore him, but there’s real upset in Naruto’s voice. “I’ll treat you to some ramen, Kakashi-sensei, so just calm down, okay.”

Naruto isn’t just being officious like Sakura. His face is scrunched up and his eyes are darting from Kakashi to the chunin on duty to Guy without ever resting. The last time one of Naruto’s friends acted this cruelly on purpose, Sasuke left the village for Orochimaru. It’s a sorely needed reality check. Kakashi is being purposefully mean and worrying his students in the process. After Guy, Naruto is the closest thing he has to a living family member.

"I don't really eat when I'm upset the way you do, Naruto." The boy's hands clench into fists at his sides. "After we report to the Hokage, let's go visit your father."

Naruto blinks. "And you won't—"

"My regrets," Kakashi says, not even bothering to look at the chunin. "It would appear I do have plans this evening. Another time, perhaps."

The chunin make choked, confused, upset noises, but they don't actually object. Izumo isn't a fool. Guy is. He grabs for Kakashi’s hand, but Kakashi evades yet again. He knows he can’t evade forever.

"Not today," he says. "Not here. We’ll talk later."

Guy nods. The furrows on his brow are deep enough to plant in.
Proving that they're a better team than he deserves, neither Sai nor his students mention the incident at the gate to Tsunade. Kakashi suspects that Sakura will rat him out as soon as he's out of earshot, but it isn't like Kotetsu is going to keep his mouth shut either. When a powerful shinobi acts recklessly, there is always gossip—even more so when it's as out of character as this.

Visiting the memorial calms him a little, the way it always does. Kakashi has brought Naruto here dozens of times, but never this way. Then again, he's never brought anyone with him for a real visit before. He's a little self-conscious.

"Yo," he says. He only has a few rice balls to offer Minato-sensei, but he talks to him first anyway. Sensei has always been the easiest to apologize to. "Sorry for not coming around lately, Sensei. The team passed through the Land of Wood on a mission. The woodcarver we saw is still there. He still puts those ridiculous beavers on everything. I got one for Obito."

Kakashi takes the silly little statuette from his vest and put it in front of the memorial stone. Its badly proportioned face seemed to be grinning with dazed, dizzy eyes.

"I didn't see you buy that," Naruto says. "You told us we were wasting our time in that shop."

"And you were. None of that woodwork is worth half what he charges. He’s doubled his prices since the last time, Sensei. Apparently he's mastered his craft now. Still, I remembered how much you laughed when we were there together, Obito. I hope you like this one, it reminded me of you: the stupidest one in the lot."

Naruto stifles a laugh.

"The mission went well, Sensei," Kakashi continues, giving his teacher a quick summary of his report, just as he would if the man were still Hokage. "Your son is getting better every day. He didn’t even recklessly endanger his life this time around. Part of that is, of course, the improvement in his skills. He still rushes in the way he always did, never analyzing his opponent until well into the fight, but now that he's attained the level he has, that isn't really reckless. Well, you saw when you were reanimated, there are very few threats left in the world for him. Even I couldn’t hurt him in a fair fight, which turns out to be a good thing. He talked me down today. You would have been so disappointed in me, Sensei, but I needed to be talked down."

The soft sound Naruto makes is nothing like a laugh.

"Guy brought me flowers again today. I was so angry, I hurt two innocent chunin just to try to keep him away from me. I knew it wouldn't work, but I did it anyway. Sorry, Rin, I burned them again. I didn't even mulch them, but I did save you one." Kakashi places the single rose at the base of the memorial stone with the beaver. "I know you said you wanted them all next time, but that would only encourage him."

"Um."

Naruto is biting his lip and shifting his weight from foot to foot, avoiding Kakashi's eye. "Go ahead and ask."

"Not that—I mean, there's reanimation and lots of stuff—do they usually talk back?"

Kakashi laughs a little and carefully avoids giving a direct answer. He knows his friends don't really answer, but that doesn't mean he's never heard them. "The last time Guy brought me flowers, Rin was still alive, Naruto."

"Oh! So that was a while ago. I thought it was weird, I mean, I've never seen him try anything like
that before—everyone knows you're the perverted one—I guess he used to do stuff like that a lot, though? From the way you're talking—"

"All the time." Kakashi smiles because there's no way he's crying about this. "I used to get pretty annoyed with him, especially when Rin and Obito teased me about it."

"What made him stop before?"

"We made a bet. I agreed to go on one date with him and if I didn't have fun he'd never try to ask me out again. He lost."

"Then how could he do that at the gate today?" Both of Naruto's hands clench into fists and his cheerful face twists into a scowl. "I really respected Super Brow-sensei, you know! I thought he was the sort of person to always keep his word. I can't believe he broke a promise like that!"

Kakashi stares at Naruto. It cannot possibly be that simple.

"Naruto, I have to go."

The teenager might be one of the most powerful shinobi alive, but he still needs to work at being a ninja. The effort it takes for Naruto to unclench his fists and banish the emotion from his face is even more obvious than his reaction was. "I'm sorry, Kakashi-sensei, really. We can keep talking and stuff, I won't be a jerk or anything."

"Naruto, in about six months I'm going to ask you to be my best man because of today," Kakashi says absently, unable to pay attention anything but the sudden thud of hope in his chest. "But right now, I have to go. Thank you. Really, thank you."

Kakashi finds Guy in his apartment. The big man is slumped dejectedly in a chair, but he springs to his feet when Kakashi slips through the open window. Uncharacteristically silent, they stare at each other for a moment.

"I wasn't expecting you so soon, Rival," Guy says neutrally.

"I've never known you to break your word," Kakashi retorts. The effect is immediate. Guy crumbles, slouching back into the chair as though he lacks the physical strength to hold himself up.

"I'm sorry. I can never apologize enough for that. I've betrayed our friendship and I've betrayed myself. There can be no excuse."

"Guy."

"I believed that keeping my word had hurt you," he mumbled, "So I broke it." It is the single most romantic thing anyone has ever said. Kakashi needs to throw himself at Guy, but he needs to clear the air more.

"Guy, I had fun. It was fighting giant ants, what boy wouldn't have fun?"

Guy finally meets Kakashi's eyes, but there's no understanding there.

"Do you even remember our deal? One date, and if it wasn't the best date I ever had, you'd never ask me out again."

Guy blinks.

"At that time it was the only date I'd ever had, Guy."
"You lied to me."

"Of course I did."

"You let me believe for years that I could not approach you without breaking my word."

"Well, you would have approached me otherwise."

"Kakashi." Guy steps forward. "You had no right to lie to me." This isn’t Guy’s usual frustration with Kakashi’s manipulative ways. His face is red and his eyes are aflame. Maybe it’s the directionless feeling of having broken a promise he never really made.

"What right did you have to expect the truth?" Kakashi drawls, because he usually gets the whole truth from Guy and he hasn’t heard it yet.

"I won the challenge!" he shouts, but that obviously isn’t all of it. Guy’s breathing is far too heavy and his fists are white knuckled—too dangerous to hit someone with.

"We never counted that one on our tally," says Kakashi, reasonably enough to push Guy over the edge.

"I had a right to continue to pursue you."

"Did you? I didn’t want you to."

"No, you wanted everyone but me for years!" Which is laughable. Kakashi has never wanted anyone. Well, sometimes he wants Guy. Not very much right now, though; his nostrils are flaring like a bull’s. ‘I’ve had to watch others parade through your bed while you gave me nothing but the dregs of your affection!’

That stings more than it should. It isn’t fair. Kakashi can hardly be blamed if Guy’s freakish body isn’t as easily sated as his own. What he could give Guy when they were younger hadn’t been the dregs; it had been everything he’d had to offer. Anyway, if Guy had mentioned that he needed to go two or three times before he was really satisfied, Kakashi could have been better. Done more.

Still, this is clearly important to Guy, and the only thing at stake is Kakashi’s pride. “I wouldn’t say it was a parade.”

Guy looks at him skeptically. It isn’t that surprising. Kakashi has always been very careful to keep his weaknesses hidden.

“You know how hard it is for me to let someone else even see me in anything less than full armor. I’ve never even been in a hot spring or a bath without my mask at least.”

Guy looks at Kakashi. Really looks at Kakashi. His clutching fists slip open and he is far too still. “You haven’t been faithful to me.” Once on a dare, Guy swallowed a whole live carp. The sharp scales of the fish had scored his throat so badly that he could barely speak for a month. His voice sounds rougher now than it did then.

“Don’t be an idiot. Of course I haven’t,” Kakashi says honestly. “You’re the romantic type, not me.” He should leave it there, but Guy doesn’t look convinced. “I just—can’t usually, and you happen to be something of an exception to that rule.

“You do hate to be touched,” Guy observes slowly. “You almost never allow it.
“I can handle it,” he shrugs.

“With me.”

Meeting Guy’s eyes is suddenly the easiest thing in the world. “I can take you,” Kakashi lies. Any fair fight between the two of them will come down to luck and they both know it.

Guy grins. Apparently, his anger was only a flash after all. He steps forward and catches Kakashi in an enthusiastic kiss. Kakashi has developed a deep appreciation for the way Guy kisses, and he’s pulling the taller man against his body now like their lives depend on being as close as possible. Unfortunately, it doesn’t last. Wrenching back abruptly, Guy looks like he tastes something awful. Kakashi should have cleaned up after a month long mission. It was stupid to come straight here from the cemetery. He knows better. Proper preparation prevents poor performance, after all. His father would be disappointed, though not for as many reasons as Kakashi thought before their fireside conversation between worlds.

“You have been deferring to my greater experience.”

Kakashi doesn’t blush. “I don’t defer,” he growls. “Not to you.” Tackling Guy, they slam together hard against the table. Guy’s lip splits under Kakashi’s assault and he tastes blood. Guy’s hands slide down to Kakashi’s ass, holding him close again and robbing Kakashi of some of his momentum. He can still taste the blood, but it seems less urgent now. They press together—kissing and kissing and kissing—because they can. Because gentleness is what Kakashi has always selfishly longed for and desperately feared. Unfortunately, his brain never stops processing. He heard what Guy said.

It would be so easy to bend his neck so that he could look up at Guy shyly and murmur that he doesn’t need to do this for Kakashi. One day he will have the soft, slow touches he craves, but not now. Tonight needs to be something they both want—something equal. Because they are equals and this can never become what Kakashi wants it to be until they start there.

“This all you got?” he challenges, tightening his grip and tugging at Guy’s clothing.

Guy blinks at Kakashi in confusion. The people who think of Guy as shallow have never bothered to get his attention. The eternal night sky is at the bottom of his focused black eyes. “Yes,” he lies gently.

Kakashi loses control. He manages, just barely, to bury his face in Guy’s neck as he spasms against his friend, grasping and clutching and climbing him desperately. It’s the second time today that Kakashi’s been totally blindsided by Guy’s generosity. He allows himself three deep breaths in the crook of Guy’s neck. He allows himself a fourth. “Would you like to come to bed with me?”

“More than anything in the world.”

The way they cling together as they cross the short distance to his bedroom is the gentlest anyone has ever been with Kakashi. Guy is cooperative about getting undressed, but he takes his time and slows down even more after Kakashi finally presses him down into the bed.

“There are some things I should tell you,” he mumbles into the skin of Guy’s neck. “If it’s time to put our cards on the table.”

“Oh?”

“I used to watch your dates. Not all of the time, and I always left before anything intimate happened. That doesn’t make it right, I know.”
“Kakashi.”

“Just think, though, if I had stayed and copied a kiss, I would have actually been good at kissing when we first tried it.”

Guy is completely still underneath Kakashi, so Kakashi pulls back to really look at him. Eyes shining with excitement, Guy looks completely besotted. Kakashi can practically see cartoon hearts and flowers haloing the man. “That’s the most romantic thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Actually, it’s stalking,” Kakashi says. Relieved, he turns back to the far more important matter of Guy’s warm, golden skin. “I’m just lucky to be attracted to someone crazy enough to find my particular set of mental disorders endearing.”

Having traced the map of Guy’s scars before doesn’t mean that Kakashi has ever explored to his heart’s content. There isn’t a centimeter of Guy’s skin that escapes him now. Guy encourages him with petting hands and approving groans. Kakashi is tasting the thin white line that some enemy with a kunai etched across Guy’s left external oblique when he realizes that it’s been a while since he heard one of those groans.

Guy has his left fist between his teeth to muffle the sound, but the fat tears streaming from his eyes are obvious enough. Kakashi thinks he understands, but he hesitates anyway.

“Please don’t stop, Rival,” Guy sobs. “I will do a better job of containing my joy. The last thing I want is to disturb you, but I never dared to dream we would reach this beautiful milestone in our storied relationship.”

“You don’t disturb me.” Kakashi doesn’t look away. He doesn’t shrug. But he can’t say the words threatening to choke him, either. “Tell me.”

Gasping for air like a drowning man, Guy says, “Yes, yes. I can tell you now, My Love.”

Kakashi might make a soft noise in response to the change in title. He tries to remember that it’s okay; it isn’t a weakness to let love see his honest reaction. Probably the tears still pouring from Guy’s eyes will keep him from noticing anyway.

“I know that you did not wait for me out of love the way I should have waited for you, but the fact remains that mine is still the only body you have come to in this way. If I did not please you, I would hurl myself from a cliff in shame.”

“You’d make a mess,” he answers, rather than explain that it isn’t Guy’s body that fascinates him, but the way he lives in his skin more than anyone else Kakashi has ever known. Turning his attention back to the golden expanse of Guy’s chest, Kakashi allows the cadence of Guy’s now constant declarations of love to buoy his explorations. When dawn comes, Kakashi is still nibbling at Guy’s shoulder while big, calloused hands stroke his hips gently and a gravely, overused voice murmurs words of love.

“Of course your skill with a blade is equally impressive, as is to be expected of my most worthy Rival, but it was the way you gripped the nunchaku when you took them from me that inspired my ardor on this particular occasion.”

“Is that a hint that I should grip your nunchaku?”

“No,” Guy says, firmness in his voice that Kakashi would have thought he was too worn out to show. “Tonight I am entirely yours, My Love.” The warm hand moves from Kakashi’s hip to his back, but Kakashi lets his own hands wander down.
“Only tonight?”

“Always. I am always yours, Kakashi.”

Kakashi isn’t done. Not at all. But Guy’s been hard and waiting for hours now and Kakashi takes care of what’s his. “Same here,” he says taking his friend gently in hand. “I didn’t want to be, but I was always yours.”

Guy makes a desperate whining sound and a face Kakashi hasn’t seen before. He’s trying not to come. It’s a fairly silly face, even when made by a man who rarely makes any other kind. Kakashi can’t help the mischievous feeling that overtakes him. He moves away so that he’s not touching Guy at all.

“I love you,” he says for the first time. Guy jerks in the air and comes everywhere. Kakashi can’t help it. He laughs and laughs and laughs until Guy tackles him back into the bed.

“This is a Beautiful Romantic Moment, Kakashi!”

“Yeah,” Kakashi laughs, “but your face.”

Guy growls and gets a strong hand around Kakashi. It’s enough to stop his laughter. “I love you, Kakashi,” Guy says forcefully, as though Kakashi’s arguing the point. “I know I failed our love, but I won’t let you make a mockery of it.”

Kakashi would like to grin unrepentantly, but Guy’s hand stroking over him is still rare enough that he’s sure it comes across as more than a little love struck. “I’m not mocking you, Guy,” he manages. “I don’t go for easy targets.”

“Rival!”

“Mmm. I love that you make me laugh. Sometimes I think the only times I’ve ever really been happy were when you were there to make me laugh.”

The shocked, lost look can only be seen in Guy’s face for a heartbeat before they’re kissing again, but it’s enough to remind Kakashi that he still has good reasons to keep some things to himself. It isn’t enough to bring him down. He may not be connected to the element, but there’s lightning in Guy’s hands.

“This time I’ll be here when you wake,” Guy promises when Kakashi is drifting on his chest. There’s more than a little disgust in his tone, so Kakashi takes the trouble of rousing himself a little.

“Don’t you dare.”

“Kakashi?”

“If you don’t have your morning workout, you’ll be intolerable. I don’t want to kill you the day after telling you I love you.”

“It’s true that we have been lazing, Rival, but I thought perhaps you would join me in greeting our first glorious day as a couple with rigorous—“

“Sleep. Go bother Lee if you want a sparring partner.”

“I thought you wanted to be always together now.”

Kakashi chuckles softly and curls into Guy’s warmth. “I’d kill you in a week.”
“Kakashi—“

“It isn’t complicated Guy. We’re the same people we’ve always been. You’ll work out. I’ll sleep. You’ll make me breakfast. I’ll read for a bit. You’ll go train some more. I’ll walk my dogs. We’ll go on a date. If you invite our former students again, I’ll give them details you don’t want them to have.”

“Is that how it will be?” murmured Guy, stroking Kakashi’s hair.

“Tactics are my field. You should probably just go with it.”

With the dry press of a kiss to the top of Kakashi’s head, Guy acquiesces like a small miracle. For the first time in his life, Kakashi drifts toward sleep feeling warm and safe in the arms of someone who loves him absolutely. A honorable comrade who cares more about Kakashi than duty or pride. A friend who might die tomorrow, but has survived a dozen times when no one else would have. A man that Kakashi can actually trust.

Kakashi doesn’t believe in happy endings, but once upon a time he couldn’t believe that he’d ever be able to fall asleep with someone else in the same room. He’s willing to be proven wrong. After all, for the first time in his life there’s someone who might try to make the argument.

If he wakes up less than an hour later to hear Guy shouting from the roof about the fact that they had sex—in terribly parsed, incredibly clichéd poetic phrases—he decides that it’s worth it and manages to fall asleep again while the neighbors are shouting back.

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