Out of the frying Pan (Into the Fire)

by cyan96

Summary

“This body reacted on autopilot,” he said, enunciation careful. “I... “ he looked up, cocked his head — that was a very Uzumaki gesture and not a very Sephiroth one, as was, oh, the entirety of his body language and posture — “if it were me I … Would have punched you harder.” He frowned minutely.

Sakura, who had been Genesis all three months and thus knew bleedthrough when she saw it, snorted.“You wouldn’t have punched me at all.”

“No, I would have punched you,” said Sephiroth. Then he scowled, and with Uzumaki’s intonation: “You were a dick.”

Notes

This is completely ridiculously and fuelled by 3 am coffee fuelled writing maniac. I cannot be held accountable for my actions.
In which reincarnation is not clear cut in terms of personality dominance

Sakura had been on perfectly amiable non-terms with Uzumaki. This was to say that she only knew him by his raucous fool of a reputation. He was two years above her in the Academy and had carved out a niche for himself as both extremely annoying and not very bright, which were traits Sakura found unappealing on principle and thus her interactions with him were divided into the two categories: avoidance or snorting whenever he announced his pipe-dream of becoming Hokage loud enough to cross walls and ceilings. She didn’t care for him. He likely didn’t know she existed.

Sakura was perfectly content with this status quo, where their relationship in a nutshell was that there was no relationship.

That was until lunch, October fifteenth, the first day back to school after the Hero's festival. Technically Uzumaki started it. He was sitting on the cluster of rocks Sakura and Ino usually reserved for their lunch breaks, looking peculiarly at his hands, and after asking him thrice very politely to a) leave b) move over please and thank you, without even a twitch of acknowledgement, Sakura’s temper frayed in the way it was wont to do.

“By the Goddess, are you daft or just brain damaged?” she snapped. “If you can hear me, blink, if you can’t then you probably deserve getting shoved off and set on fire.” She was being generous too: getting set on fire was actually not the most painful thing that could happen by a longshot, especially for idiots that were blanking out in a ninja Academy. With those response times, he was lucky not to be porcupined during target practices.

This seemed to finally provoked a response.

Uzumaki turned, blinked huge blue eyes. And then said, in blankly surprised, extremely familiar tones: “Genesis.”

The right hook caught Sakura across the face.

About eighty percent of the reason for that was because Sakura’s attention had temporarily reset and not because of Uzumaki’s punching abilities. It was sloppy, obvious, and not very well executed one. For a moment Sakura saw stars and staggered, but it took no time for her balance to readjust. Frankly she was reeling less a lot less because of the punch and more because — “Sephiroth.”

Who was staring at his fist as if it were a foreign object, a bewildered look over his face.

He jerked up at the sound of his name.

“I…” he looked down at his fist again, and said, slowly. “I did not mean to do that.”

“Excellent,” said Sakura. “Pray tell, exactly what did you mean to do?”

“This body reacted on autopilot. I… “ he looked up, cocked his head — that was a very Uzumaki gesture and not a very Sephiroth one — “if it were me I … Would have punched you harder.” He frowned minutely.

Sakura, who had been Genesis all three months and thus knew bleedthrough when she saw it, snorted. “You wouldn’t have punched me at all.”

“No, I would have punched you,” said Sephiroth. Then he scowled, and with Uzumaki’s intonation: “You were a dick.”
He paused. Went a little cross-eyed.

Sakura let loose a derisive little noise in habit. Elsewhere, another habit, younger and stronger at the same time, was demanding shrilly with a little girl’s voice for her to listen to nine year worth of accumulated manners. She ignored it. “This coming from the man who decided to embark on his godhood quest by destroying the world? Insanity suits neither of us well, hmm?”

Sephiroth-Uzumaki blinked.

"That was -"

He halted.

And proceeded to look quietly miserable. Uzumaki had expressive expressions. Then his face shifted, somewhere half Uzumaki and half not, brows furrowing in a suggestion of oh, possible constipation, and Sakura felt her ire drain a little.

She sighed.

She sat down on the stone bench next to him, swinging her heels, and said shortly. “You’ll adjust.”

She was not sure whether she was saying this to Sephiroth or Uzumaki, but they were the same, really — Although who in the name of the Goddess or the Shodaime would possibly think that Uzumaki-ramen-idiot-Naruto was Sephiroth. It was a bad joke, except Haruno Sakura three months ago before she’d fallen from a tree and broken a leg, a collarbone, and a damn of memories was hilariously unlike Genesis as well. Not quite to the extent of Uzumaki-Sephiroth, but she’d been painfully shy, painfully softspoken, and painfully insecure. She wasn’t gone either; far from it. Nine years of Sakura did not erase in two seconds. The process was more the other way around. Genesis was — faded. Bits and pieces of memory, motivation and skill, all in all occupying far less space than he should have, considering how developed his personality had been to the girl’s. But the body was hers. The upbringing was hers. The brain chemistry and nine years of habits were hers, and apparently a child’s willful stubbornness could cancel the dominance of a life already half faded from a reincarnation cycle. Maybe if Genesis had remembered earlier, it would be different, but Sakura had had her own ego already.

She sighed again, and said very quietly: “For what it’s worth, I am sorry.” Her fingers found the hem of her shirt and fidgeted. That was a Sakura gesture. Genesis didn’t fidget.

It had been partially the degradation, of course, fear going into insanity into — somewhere. Partially it really hadn’t been the degradation. Genesis wouldn’t apologize for his cells mutating, that was not his problem; he’d not apologize for himself either. But he owed Sephiroth one, maybe. He owed Angeal one, definitely. Nine year old little girls had guilty consciousness.

Eventually a glance up showed her Uzumaki-Sephiroth’s expression. His face was doing a thing where it seemed it didn’t know at all what exactly it was supposed to be doing. He looked like an idiot.

Sakura very charitably did not tell him so. She let the moment stretch, feeling vaugely off-centered. Then the expression stayed on his face long enough that she had to tell him so. His didn’t react. She unscrewed her bento box, took out a rice-ball, and stuffed it into Uzumaki’s face, wherein he scarfed it down at light speeds. Once again he seemed baffled at himself. Sakura, who’d once seen him demolish ten cups of noodles in two minutes, was not, and since he’d not brought a lunch himself (and the only lunch he brought, ever, was the atrocity called instant ramen, which was probably why he was so vindictively short this life) charitably allowed him more of hers. She could always steal
food off of Ino.

“Gene — “ he paused, three rice balls later. “Sakura?”

“I’m surprised you know my name,” remarked Sakura.

Uzumaki-Sephiroth twitched. Sakura eyed him. When he opened his mouth it was Uzumaki’s slightly distorted vowels and street accent peeking through: “No. Do you. Have a preference?”

She shrugged. “You may call me whatever you like, barring Sakura-chan. I have no preference but I do have standards. Is Uzumaki acceptable?”

“Genesis, then,” he murmured. “And yeah. Yes.” Intonations switched. Uzumaki’s expression switched too, to one of confusion. He squinted at his hands.

Really, he was the last and pretty much least compatible person to be Sephiroth ever, being his opposite in pretty much every way possible. Uzumaki was loud and dim and by reputation terrible at everything; Sephiroth was taciturn and unfairly brilliant, prenaturally skilled. Sakura stifled the mean laugh that threatened to bubble, because that would be rude and unfair to Sephiroth’s predicament. Also her own hair was pink and she had the voice like a squeak and three weeks ago when Ami, that purple haired amateur, had thrown Sakura’s textbook into the mud she’d nearly had a very real and very embarrassing breakdown into tears before Ino had come to the rescue.

(Well, she’d still set Ami on fire, in the end.)

“You’ll adjust,” Sakura repeated.

Maybe.
In which Sephiroth Adjusts and Angeal is Sasuke

Chapter Summary

Sephiroth does not adjust; Angeal is Sasuke.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Someone was trying to kill him, which was how Sephiroth woke up.

He didn’t remember much. He remembered the Hero’s festival ongoing, sneaking out late at night despite the Old Man Hokage’s stern reminders the day before to not do exactly that. He’d been barred from the festival for years and years and it always looked so fun — the Old Man didn’t know what he was talking about. It’d been his birthday too. It’d been dumb that he couldn’t go. So he’d scrambled his best clothes out of his closet, scrounged up all his limited pocket money, hit the main street with its million shining lanterns and awesome, delicious food and festival games, and then —

It’d gotten a little fuzzy.

There was a man. A ninja. He’d had dark eyes and hair that looked yellow in the fire-light. After that things had gone less linear and dissolved into a series of weird colours and hurt sensations — his head smacking into the alley wall and maybe two seconds of pain — light — and then standing ankle-deep in sewer water, in front of a cage and a giant, orange, sleeping fox. For a moment there and then it’d been overwhelmingly, only Sephiroth, and he’d thought, taking in the situation, that this was probably Karmic retribution.

When he woke it felt like someone was trying to grind pieces of his brain together.

Uzumaki Naruto was there, occupying space. Sephiroth was — faded, an imprint — also occupying space. It didn’t fit.

They were so different.

Naruto was young, loud, vibrant and terribly stubborn. Sephiroth was strategic, careful and stoic. Any one decision made, from clothing, to desecrating national monuments, to food incited either a feeling of appallment or sulky annoyance.

It was a long and confusing week.

(Sephiroth thought: A lot of things were off concerning Uzumaki Naruto, given an outside perspective looking in. Evidently some level of importance was assigned to him, considering his watchers. This level of importance was not pronounced in his living conditions, his diet, or his academic records and was likely connected to the energy dense fox living in his head. Sephiroth, who’d been a living weapon and very well knew it, was bewildered at this diversion of resources. Did the village not want the boy’s potential to be correctly harnessed? That didn’t make sense. It was a ninja village. Their cut off rate for child soldiers was a decade less than ShinRa’s.

Naruto thought: A lot of things were weird about Sephiroth, mainly that he was a giant dick. And his hair was like, super girly. Okay so he could use a giant sword, and that was pretty cool, but trying
He met Genesis on Monday. Genesis who was... Sakura. Pink haired, green eyed, shrill voiced Haruno Sakura, whom... Naruto had been crushing on. That was a crush quickly extinguished. Because, no. At least Genesis had not changed very much.

He — she had clear eyes. That was a positive comparison to the foggy memories Sephiroth had of him last. A sane Genesis was a lot easier to work with an insane one. Although, as Genesis had quite scathingly pointed out, it was not as if Sephiroth had any room to talk.

He tried not to think about it. Reincarnation had wipe his mental state clean, to an extent.

It could be worse.

On Wednesday, he met Angeal at the grocery store.

Dinner was, like for the past eight days and maybe the past eight years of Naruto’s life, supposed to be instant ramen. Uzumaki Naruto greatly enjoyed instant ramen. Sephiroth did not, because it was dehydrated noodles and a ridiculous amount of sodium with no nutritional values to speak of, but apparently Naruto’s love for ramen cancelled and overrode Sephiroth’s distaste. Thus it took eight days before thought of nutritional figures and also thoughts of *huh, maybe the broth’ll taste better with an egg in it*, spurred Naruto to the grocery store. Unfortunately, once there, it was revealed that neither Naruto nor Sephiroth had ever acquired between them the ability to choose fresh produce.

That really was unfortunate. They dithered picking up raw vegetables, holding it up to the light, and then putting them back onto the produce piles, until a dark haired boy with a shopping basket sidestepped them to begin bagging tomatoes. Naruto-Sephiroth stared at his back — there was a fan there and it was, Uchiha? — and also his tomato-choosing technique.

When the boy finished with the tomatoes, he paused for a moment. He turned.

Naruto, who’d realized he’d been caught staring, crossed his arms and scowled. The boy had dark dark eyes and pallid skin and a shuttered expression, but he looked at Naruto and his empty basket, and asked:

“Do you need help?”

"No," said Naruto even as Sephiroth wanted to say: “Yes.” What came out of his mouth was a weird squeak.

He made a face.

The boy tilted his head.

“Yes, help,” wrangled Sephiroth.

There was something familiar about the boy. He was Naruto’s age. Naruto had seen him around. He couldn’t really remember his name, though. For the first few minutes of vegetable freshness 101 Naruto frowned at potato and tomatoes and wondered what the heck the boy’s deal was, because people were generally not very nice with to him, and the boy was being a combination of patient, comprehensive and completely dismissive at the same time (and also explaining the sweetness to colouration factor of tubers, which was just weird for a kid to know in general).

Sephiroth figured it out by the apples. Of course it was the apples.
There was just a faint spark of a memory in the way the boy picked up an apple, the way he tilted his head as if it was some very important thing. It was a guess. Some gut instinct. Sephiroth had been more sure with Genesis, but Genesis was not subtle. Genesis had been — himself, more or less. This boy had pale pale skin and dark, dark eyes and a solemn mouth, an almost outsider air. He didn’t seem like Angeal and he did not feel like Angeal (he felt like Angeal in the days before everything went wrong and unhinged). But Sephiroth, once again, had no room to talk.

He said it anyways: “Angeal?”

When the boy paused mid-sentence it was to look Sephiroth up and down, as if seeking familiarity of features Sephiroth knew for certain was not there. And Sephiroth said, flatly: “You made raspberry cake on my birthday.”

There was a long, slow moment of silence.

Perhaps he’d been wrong. Sephiroth felt something unhappy clench in his stomach. But then the boy opened his mouth and his voice was morphing, picking up a different roll on the consonants, eyebrows creasing “Sephiroth?”

He’d not been wrong.

Since Sephiroth wasn’t going to punch Angeal, all he did was just stare.

(Naruto kind of wanted to punch Angeal, but Uzumaki Naruto wanted to punch a lot of things, and. Well, perhaps Sephiroth was going to punch Angeal after all. It wasn’t as if Sephiroth had expected Angeal to choose him over Genesis, not really, but he hadn’t expected either of them to just off and leave without a note either. But Angeal had died, anyway, before things had gone off the rails.)

Angeal stared back.

They... stared.

An overhead light flickered. A child wheeled past them, followed by a harried mother. They were still standing in the vegetable aisle of the grocery store.

"We should probably talk somewhere more private," said Angeal.

Chapter End Notes

The mix and match of pronouns here can tell you exactly how confused Naruto - Sephiroth is.
In which we have two very different relationships

Chapter Summary

Two very different relationships.

They found a bench in the park a few steps away from the grocery store. Unlike Midjar, Konoha’s variety of parks and other green spaces were in great abundance, and the air was sharply clean. Angeal sat gingerly. Naruto seemed incapable of sitting gingerly so Sephiroth flopped onto the bench.

It was very, very quiet.

Sephiroth was not sure what to say. Angeal had always been better in situations that required social grace anyways. Right now though, he was not adequating for Sephiroth’s silences. This had not been a problem with Genesis. Genesis could carry a conversation by himself just fine.

Actually.

“I met Genesis.”


“In the Academy.” Then he paused, thought about explaining Genesis’ situation, and felt a brief but near overwhelming need to see the look on Angeal’s face at sight of Sakura. “He’s... himself.”

Which was more than could be said for Sephiroth. And Angeal, apparently.

“Of course he’s himself,” Angeal sighed.

“He said — it’s been three months for him.”

Angeal glanced at him sideways. “... A year,” he admitted. Sephiroth eyed him, and wondered if Genesis’ words on adjustment was a giant lie.

“A week, for me.”

“... Ah.”

Sephiroth scowled. Actually that was probably Naruto. “I was told it’ll get better,” he informed Angeal, even though he did not feel like this was happening. His head felt like a drum, a very thin one, and all these opinions kept... clashing.

“It does, with time.”

“Time,” complained Naruto. Angeal glanced at him, smiled a little. Small and higher on one side than the other, it was not a very Angeal smile. It was unpracticed looking. He wondered who Angeal was this life.

“I didn’t think that was a sound I’d ever hear you make.”
“Extenuating circumstances,” said Sephiroth.

The next day Genesis responded to the news by heaving Sephiroth up by the shirt collar and demanded, at alarming volumes: “What do you mean you met Angeal? He’s been here for a year? How come I did not — no, nevermind that. Where is he? Who is he?” he shook Naruto-Sephiroth, who was still processing this new development of being lifted off his (admittedly very short) feet, and also wondering if he needed to punch Genesis again.

It was a tempting thought.

Refraining was made a little easier by the almost stricken note in Genesis’ voice. Unusual. Yes it was Angeal, but such blatant shows of emotion were beneath Genesis, and such blatant shows of emotion in front of Sephiroth just did not happen. Was it magnified because he was using Haruno Sakura’s too shrill nine-year old voice and too expressive girl-child face? But...

He’d apologized. To Sephiroth. Maybe it was all three of them having wild personality problems.

Genesis shook him again, and Sephiroth said, flatly: “His name is Uchiha Sasuke. Now put me down.”

There was a long, hostile pause.

“Very well.”

Genesis, frankly, was not one for this kind of physical confrontation either. Sephiroth rolled out the new kinks in his shoulder and re-adjusted his collar, frowning, looking at… her. It was her now. Genesis loved violence but he preferred to use his words and his sword and his fire, because he considered them beautiful things, and very rare was there an opponent he couldn’t fall with those three options in tandem. Brute force, according to him, was… brutish. Force was just force, to Sephiroth.

Then again, Sephiroth was also not in the habit of punching people though, so perhaps it was just this world’s childhood conditioning. Mentally, he reviewed his memories of Haruno Sakura.

She was… yeah.

When Haruno Sakura got violent she got violent.

He fixed his wrenched collar, made a face at it, and told Genesis, “he invited us to tea. Tomorrow, at four.” He’d been given it along with an address scribbled in marker and half of Angeal's groceries, before they parted ways. Genesis blinked.

And then strangely, she laughed. “Of course he did.” It was not a nice laugh. “Uchiha god damned Sasuke.”

“Gene — “

“Haruno,” she interrupted.

She’d told him yesterday she’d had no preference. Genesis being contrary was nothing new though. He eyed her. Belatedly he wondered if this was part of the adjustment period, and whether or not using — Naruto, if that would help. It was easier being Sephiroth around Angeal and Genesis. This
village and this life was Naruto’s. Genesis and Angeal were of Sephiroth’s world.

“Haruno.” he paused. It felt strange, on his tongue. He felt like it shouldn’t have. He opened his mouth, closed it, and was torn between pestering her for what she knew and close-lipped silence. He blinked frantically.

“Don’t make that face, you look like a landed fish,” said Haruno.

He glowered at her.

This was going to be another long, long week.
In which there is afternoon tea at the Uchiha Compound

“You could have warned me,” said Sasuke. He stood at the front gate and wondered, looking at the absolutely adorable pink haired little girl in a pale yellow dress wearing his best friend’s slanted mouth, whether Sephiroth had deigned not to tell him of this development because he’d dismissed it as irrelevant — which, no, Sephiroth was not good with social implications but he did understand them theoretically — or because of the strange, barely there humour he occasionally had.

Humour that was mixing with Uzumaki Naruto’s per chance for mayhem.

“Just be glad you’ve ended up the right gender and the right colouring,” said Genesis.

“... Yes,” Sasuke agreed. Evidently, Genesis was neither the right gender nor the right colouring.

Naruto, who was Sephiroth, snickered. That was yet another sound Sasuke had never thought he’d ever hear Sephiroth make. Genesis stomped on his foot.

"Ow," said Naruto, knee-jerk, and then blinked a little frantically. He reached up to touch his temple.

Because he had tact, Sasuke decided not to comment. The pink haired girl that was Genesis only glanced sideways and clicked her tongue. Sephiroth-Naruto rubbed his head, frowning sternly, eyebrow twitching.

Well, they’d been standing on Sasuke’s front porch long enough.

“I made apple pie,” he said. “Come in, you two.”

They put their shoes neatly at the entrance way. The kitchen was from there a splash of airy walls, pale yellow wood, and sunlight. Sasuke lived in a comfortable two story at the very edge of the Uchiha District. It was a big house, for a single person. It was not his parent’s house. He’d only managed to stay there for the first month or so after the massacre, when Uchiha Sasuke was still a ball of anger and fear and grief and cutting edges and physically could not be moved. His new home had… less triggering connotations. That was good.

(Over time the entire district was beginning to be less triggering. It was slowly gaining residents, morphing into something new and separate, after Sasuke had, after a great and migraine inducing mental wrestling match with himself, allowed the properties inside to be rented. Like pretty much every other decently sized metropolis Konoha had housing problems. The Uchiha district had empty houses. Sasuke got to not live in a ghost town. It was the smart choice.

Sometimes though, on bad days, he stood at the edge of his doorstep and thought, vicious, at these foreign, non-Uchiha people behind Uchiha walls, that: no no no you shouldn’t be here. Get out. )

(He was getting better at that ignoring those feelings.)

They gathered in the kitchen table, where Sasuke had set the pie to cool on the table. Also gathered were three types of juice, a cheese-spread, and a plate of cherry tomatoes. Genesis — and Sasuke wanted to know what her name was here, exactly — perched immediately onto a chair and helped herself to the knife. Naruto-Sephiroth slunk in behind her and placed himself two seats left.
Sasuke sat adjacent to them.

Conversation should not have difficult, but it was, and some queasy anxiety sat in Sasuke's stomach. Sephiroth was familiar. Kind of. They'd talked yesterday. Even if they hadn't Sasuke was pretty sure Genesis would still be the bigger problem. He was an complicated factor in a way Genesis should really not be, considering Angeal had known Gen since they were five. Of course, technically Genesis was always an unknown, complicated factor, but not to Angeal. By the end of things though Genesis had been —

Well, everything had been a mess.

Sasuke decided on ingrained social niceties. He felt distinctly uncomfortable. “So... how are you?”

“Well,” said the girl who was Genesis, not looking up from the pie.

“Ugh,” said Naruto.

There was a pause of silence. Sasuke debated his options, and then into the silence and the soft slide of knife through crust said: “I— it’s Uchiha Sasuke now. Call me Sasuke.”

Genesis raised an eyebrow. “I know.” The obviously was implied. “Are we doing introductions, then? Haruno Sakura — the kanji for spring and field. My parents were not hugely imaginative with my surname, as you can see quite clearly.” She glanced up. “Sakura, to you.”

Clear eyes and a familiar, cutting tone in a pink-haired, pink cheeked, healthy girl. No madness there.

“Uzumaki Naruto,” said Sephiroth.

Gen— Sakura? Rolled her eyes. “Yes, we know. At the volume you tend to scream it I’m sure the majority of the village does.” She reached out a hand. “Pass me a plate.”

Sasuke passed her a plate. “You are quite famous,” he said to Naruto. “Well, mainly for painting the Hokage Monument pink.” The thought was amusingly strange: Sephiroth: defacing national treasures in paint.

“That was... I'm... not very sure. Awesome? No — it was — ” he wrangled with himself for a moment, syntax shifting, while Sakura hmmed, passed the plate back to Sasuke with pie, and said:

“I think you mean regrettable and juvenile, especially as you got caught,” because of course Gen didn’t care for trouble, but being caught was dull and boring.

“Genesis,” Sasuke sighed.

“We live in a ninja village.”

There were so many things Sasuke could say in relation to that. In the end, he settled on a half-grunt and, "I know."

Sakura eyed him. “You’re not attending the academy,” she said shortly.

Of course Sasuke wasn't. Considering the ninja military's uncomfortable similarities with ShinRa, which had worked out exactly not at all the first time, unethical human experiments included, Sasuke wondered why Genesis was.

But he didn’t say that.
"I don't think I like the Academy," said Naruto-Sephiroth.

"That's because you skip the majority of your classes and have by rumour the memory of a squashed cantaloupe," said Sakura.

Sasuke watched as Naruto picked up a cracker, shove it into his mouth, and then chew viciously. There was a distinctly petulant overtone to the entire motion, accented by him saying: "The teachers suck."

Certain things Naruto said were well, Naruto. At least from what Sasuke knew by village rumour mill and also the one time Sasuke had caught him rigging a paint bucket over the Uchiha compound gates. Knowing Sephiroth was in there and saying the same things made Sasuke's brain frizzle. The mental disconnect was strong.

Sakura was easier. Her voice threw him for a loop but Naruto had been right that she was… herself. Himself. Just Genesis. Everything about her was familiar. Cadence, diction, body language, More familiar than what Sasuke saw in the mirror some mornings. She had Genesis’ vocabulary. And Angeal had not known what Haruno Sakura might’ve been like, before the change.

She was saying to Naruto: "It's called success in spite of inadequate instructions."

"But you agree they're inadequate," said Naruto-Sephiroth.

"The entire curriculum is," she said dismissively. "They should be sorting classes according to ability in each subject per, not overall or by age group. It's stupid. But I suppose that's large scale education, and that's before going into the examinations--"

Genesis' lectures were blistering, and could to last anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour. This one lasted twenty minutes. There was the dissonance of hearing some positively foul things leave a nine year old girl’s mouth. By the end of it Sasuke knew more about the ongoings of the Academy administration system then he wanted and Sakura was winding down on the absolute stupidity of having of having only three academy taught Jutsu, punctured by jabs of her fork.

"Sakura," Sasuke said, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"— And not even advanced use of the henge! You can get more out of a chapter of "Transformations Through the Ages" than three bloody months of ninjutsu lessons! Whatever idiots —"

"Gen."

"— Believed this to be adequate preparation should be eaten by a dragon —"

Sephiroth was the type to feign indifference and pretend to ignore Genesis whenever he got like this, leaving Angeal to deal with it. No help there. "Genesis," Sasuke repeated.

The pink head slewed around.

"What?"

"If you're done indulging yourself."

A pause. And then for a moment there was only the flash of her eyes through a spill of frothy pink hair, before Sakura smiled, tight lipped and a little mean. "Not very, I'm not. But if you ask, I suppose it can be halted for the time being."
"Please," Sasuke said dryly.

In return, she reached over and stole the last handful of cherry tomatoes from his plate. Sasuke watched them disappear and internally sighed at the loss. They barely occupied her for a second, anyway, since diverting Genesis from one topic meant introducing another more interesting one. Sasuke was colossally unsurprised when she cleaned her fingers off on a napkin, and staring at him bright eyed, asked, "So, in lieu of the Academy, tell me, what do you do?"

Sasuke contemplated. "I garden."

Naruto made an interested noise. "And?" said Sakura.

He shrugged. "Repair work. Managing the estate. I just started taking some courses at the local University to help with that as well…” he trailed off. “That’s. Well. That’s about it."

“Horticulture and estate management,” drawled Sakura, leaning back.

He pinched the bridge of his nose. He should have predicted this. “Yes,” he said, grimly. "Horticulture and estate management."

Possibly Genesis found this hilarious. His family that had been the wealthy landowners. Angeal had quit the farming life that was trade in Banora and hitch-hiked a continent to ShinRa with Genesis for glory and independence. That was just what people lived off of, in Banora: the land, and Angeal had left and had been extremely glad for it. There'd been no prospects for him there. But after the massacre (after Itachi) he'd been so, so tired of fighting and violence.

He’d gone gardening because Angeal had always been good at it. Banora had been safe and relatively happy and not ShinRa, and Angeal was in many ways a creature of habit. So yes, horticulture and estate management.

(He usually tried not to think about what actually happened to Banora at the end.)

"Gardening is... good," Naruto said, looking between them.

Sakura snorted. "I did not say it wasn’t.” Her lip curled. “Although, if I remember correctly, you kill all your plants.”

An eyebrow raised. "And you didn’t?"

"In terms of killing things I believe you have the upper hand,” said Sakura, careless and offhand as usual, which was why it was vaguely alarming to see Naruto's hands clench around his chopsticks.

“We can talk about you,” he said flatly.

Sakura’s eyes narrowed, her tone — still little girl shrill — lowered ominously. “Oh?”

Sasuke had no idea what was going on. "Someone fill me in?"

Naruto and Sakura — Sephiroth and Genesis — looked at each other, eyed Sasuke, and then seemed, unanimously, to agree to shut up. And now it was Sasuke’s turn to raise an eyebrow.

“’You are filling me in later, though.”

"Perhaps,” said Sakura.

"Mmm,” said Naruto.
Sasuke could have rolled his eyes and sighed.

So they skirted around the very big hole of “all the events past degradation” to instead talk about ninjas (“really, are we in the Wutai equivalent?” muttered Sakura) and chakra (“it helps make up for the lack of mako enhancements” said Sasuke) and Academy administration (“I dumped glitter into Mizuki’s marking box,” said Naruto, and they both stared at him. It was the Sephiroth-dissonance issues.)

At half to six, Sakura put down her fork precisely. “My parents said I need to be home for dinner,” she declared, looking really pointedly at Naruto.

She made no move to move. Naruto squinted at her, and she sighed. “That means leave.”

“Gen.” Sasuke was— not appalled — because if he were appalled at every rude thing Genesis every did he’d never have managed two decades as Genesis’ best friend, but still it was rude. And for a moment there was hurt flashing across Naruto’s face, un-Sephiroth like, both because Sephiroth was used to Genesis’ mannerisms and because Sephiroth was… well, himself.

Except now he evidently wasn’t. Sakura looked at the both of them, and her mouth twisted.

“Don’t — make that face,” she said. Her eyes closed, and she reached up to rub at her temple, the same way Naruto did every so often. “I dislike having to — ugh. You. Uzumaki. I need to talk to Angeal in private.”

Her frown was tight, and Sasuke wondered, for the first time, who Haruno Sakura had been before Genesis.

Naruto was looking at her too. “Alright,” he said, slowly. He hesitated. “I’ll — “

“Go.”

Sliding out of his chair, Naruto glanced between them, the unsureness on his face prominent, vulnerable in a way Sephiroth never was, and Sasuke didn’t want him to leave, abruptly, but Genesis’ eyes were clear and her mouth was strained. Angeal had always chosen Genesis first, even when Genesis had been actually mad and dangerous enough to cut Angeal on his edges.

He gave Naruto a wave and a rueful smile, shrugging in a it's Gen what can you do kind of way. “I’ll see you.”

Sakura nodded at him, short.

Blonde hair disappeared into the entrance way. There was the sound of Naruto putting on his sandals, of the front door creaking and closing.

Sasuke turned back. Sakura had her hands folded on the table.

And then it was the two of them.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like this is turning into a character analysis fic, which is terrible because quite frankly crack reincarnation crossovers are not ideal for any analysis, period. On the
other hand, we’re back to the fun stuff! Putting Genesis into a situation automatically makes it 150% funner to read/write.

Tell me what you liked and what you didn’t!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!