Poison's Legacy
by Foodmoon

Summary

Anko's in the mood to watch something writhe and die when she runs into the brat in an alley.

Notes

I don't intend to continue this.
It was inspired by an amusing bit of dark crack in someone else's fic, which only goes to prove yet again that I shouldn't read things when I'm exhausted.
Chapter 1

Anko would be the first to admit that she’s not exactly sane (okay, lies; she definitely wouldn’t admit it to anyone except herself). She had a fascination with poisons and an uncensored enjoyment of things with pointy teeth or sharp tips that ended in the opponent suffering or dying, to begin with. Sensei, of course, hadn’t even tried to filter that, and had instead taught her that experimenting on others was ok (though one should get technical allies’ permission before doing so) even if that resulted in the other party’s death. Doing whatever he’d done to her memories when he’d decided to keep her alive had definitely not helped matters, and had been the final push in making her permanently ‘not quite right’. Several Yamanaka therapists, and a couple Hyuuga and Uchiha medics had tried to reverse the damage caused by Sensei’s mind alteration without notable success. Finally they’d given up and told her that she was ‘as normal as could be expected’, which hello? Anko’s not stupid. She knows ‘completely insane but still useful anyways’ when she hears it.

Konoha’s a ninja village. Anyone who expects them to throw an asset away over something as minor as insanity with a side of liking to watch people die is delusional. Skills such as hers are in high demand. She’s not ANBU, but she knows who at least half of them are, given that she keeps getting tagged to help them out with certain kinds of missions. Stealth isn’t really her thing, but she’s very good at it when there’s an ANBU being all oppressive at her shoulder. The smaller, sneakier snakes are willing to let her summon them if they get to kill. She can relate to that. And if ANBU dictated missions leave her antsy most of the time because she doesn’t actually get to see her target die? Well, any village as ‘clean’ as Konoha doesn’t mind if the occasional pathetic drunk or street person turns up mysteriously dead. She’s even managed to take out several spies with her post-mission choice of wind-down that way. Accidentally, but hey!

She’s not sad at all that these days her mental health checks consist of, “So, Anko, how are you doing?” “I’m doing fine, Yamanaka-san.” “Okay, good to hear. You’re cleared for duty.” Yeah, she doesn’t blame the woman at all for not wanting to muck around in her head when she’s not forced to. Even she doesn’t like it in there some days, and ‘dark’ is kind of her thing.

So it’s not exactly unusual when she finds herself looking for stress relief after a mission in the seedy part of town. What is unusual is the little blond kid with too-thin cheeks for his age and a wary look in his eyes. The bruise on one side of his face and whiskery marks decorating both cheeks are enough to tell her that she’s facing the one so-called ‘village asset’ that people will miss less than they would miss her. The bijuu will die with him, but it will eventually reform and be recaptured and sealed into someone else, and 90% or better of Konoha won’t care at all as long as it stays far from Konoha. The bijuu are cruel and destructive, but they leave humans alone unless they deliberately bother them. The thing is though…she’s pretty sure the kid is supposed to have ANBU guards. But a quick check reveals that either they’ve been assigned elsewhere or they’re slacking on the job, because none are around.

“Hey, kid. If I feed you, will you let me kill you?” Technically he’s an ally, so she has to ask first.

He stares at her instead of backing away in fear, which is interesting, blue eyes a little too assessing for his age. “Food first.”

Anko blinks at that. Even at the worst of her hero worship for Sensei she wouldn’t have taken a bargain so straightforwardly guaranteed to have her death as the result. How hungry is this kid? Or
does he just not understand what death is yet? He’s only three, after all. Probably the only kid whose birthday every adult in the village knows. Sad for him, since they all hate him for it. “Dango okay?”

He nods.

And dang, but the kid can eat! She’s never seen anyone eat more dango than she does before. It almost makes her feel a little warm towards him. More to the point, though, she can’t bear watching him throw up that much dango, so she chooses a poison that will just put him to sleep, never to wake up again, and gives him a dose meant to take an adult down. He looks surprised that she just pokes him once, but doesn’t say anything, and a bit later he yawns and curls up to sleep. She watches as his breathing slows to sleep and then slower, to imperceptible and then gradually picks back up to sleep-normal.

What?

That shouldn’t be possible. It makes her want to try another poison on him, but she hadn’t bargained for that. One meal, one attempt. And yeah, maybe she hadn’t explicitly stated that, but honestly. She has some standards. The kid’s an ally, not an enemy, so there’s no excuse for breaking implicitly understood bargains.

And if she’s a little disappointed to not see death? Well, that he survived is sort of fascinating, so she can let it go this once. She strokes the blond hair back from where it’s fallen over one eye. “Take care of yourself, kid.”

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The next time she sees him, it’s been a bad mission and she wants to see someone hurt. To see them scream, and suffer and die in pain. She’s not looking for him. She’s actually lurking to see if she can find a spy to victimize. They’re much more entertaining as they die than civilian drunks and vagrants.

But the kid is just there and he turns even though she doesn’t make a sound. ‘Kid’s a sensor, isn’t he?’ some part of her observes. He looks a little scruffier than last time, but there’s no bruise this time, and the wariness in his eyes turns to a trust that makes her stomach churn when he sees her. Fuck, I should have just killed him last time. The trust reminds her too vividly of herself with Sensei. It makes her sick.

He runs up and grabs her leg.

She grits her teeth and doesn’t kick him into a wall. How stupid is this kid?

“Food.” He demands.

Oh, fuck it. He asked for it. “Fine. But only if you survive. I’m not going to use a nice poison this time, and I don’t want to see you puking up perfectly good dango.”

He eyes her for a moment, the wariness back, then nods.

She wants to see him suffer. She uses strychnine. Watches as his breathing turns rough and raspy, his back arches, his muscles spasm, his jaw clenches against his will, his fingers curl into macabre imitations of claws and then…slowly relaxes. His breathing gets stronger, his muscles quit spasming, and his fingers uncurl. He just lays for a while, looking like he feels like shit. Which, understandably, but she has no idea why he’s alive, let alone recovering so fast.
A couple hours later, he flops over on his back from his face down position and looks up at her with a determined expression. “Food.”

“Yeah, ok, kid. You’ve earned it.”

She didn’t think it was possible for someone to eat that much dango. Maybe next time she’ll start the kid off with something a little more…filling before she rewards him with dango.


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It somehow becomes routine. She finds him after a mission (sometimes even on purpose), doses him with some unsurvivable poison, watches him dip close to death and then recover, empties her wallet feeding him, and is reminded less and less of a little kid and more and more of a skinny runt. An entire year passes in this manner before she really looks at him one day and frowns.

The kid is surprisingly good at keeping his clothes clean, but they’ve been getting steadily rattier and now they’re a couple inches too short at the wrist and ankle. “Hey, kid. Don’t you have any other clothes? Who takes care of you, anyways?”

He blinks at her, that damnable trust in his blue, blue eyes, and takes a moment before he replies. “No. Just these. The mask people give me food sometimes. I guess you do, Anko-nee.”

What? What the fuck!? She’s been trying to kill him every time they’ve met for an entire year and he thinks she’s been taking care of him?

Oh fuck. He hasn’t been avoiding home on the streets, he’s been living on them. And if the ANBU assigned to him are sometimes giving him meals and he thinks she’s taking care of him that probably means she’s the only one feeding him semi-regularly. No wonder he always eats so much. It also explains a lot about his willingness to be poisoned for a meal.

Fuck, fuck, fuck! Even Sensei (who is really the worst example anyone could use for human decency) wouldn’t allow something like this. What the fuck is wrong with Konoha? What the fuck is she supposed to do now? She can’t just take in Konoha’s jinchuuriki without getting all sorts of unwanted attention from the council and ANBU.

But…

The kid is a sensor. And the child of two of Konoha’s strongest ninjas ever. Which means he’s definitely got chakra. “Hey, kid. You know what a henge is?”

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It turns out he’s a little young to manage one yet. (Well, he can, but he can’t manage to do it without the whiskery marks that are a total giveaway.) That, and Anko remembers that him simply disappearing with no body to be found will trigger a search that she wants nothing to do with. So she finds a kid dead of an infected dog bite, dregs a technique she observed Sensei using once out of hazy memory, and uses a bit of Naruto’s blood, inserted through the wound to hide the mark, to form a blood henge on the corpse to make it look like him. It will wear off eventually, but by that time the autopsy should be done and over with and the records will have him marked down as deceased.

With a little practice, and the bribe of being able to live with her if he can do it, he manages to be able to hold a henge of a miniature version of her (minus the boobs and wide hips, cuz fuck that had been creepy the first time he’d tried it) for half a day at a time. And she manages to lay a
permanent, very subtle genjutsu on a choker that covers the whiskery marks and encourages others to not notice his henge as being anything other than his normal appearance.

He gives her such a suspicious look when she tries to get him to wear it that she actually has to explain. And ask his name. Which sounds exactly like something his moron parents would have chosen, so she has to have him pick a new name. Or rather, she gives him a choice of names that sound like something her stupid parents would name someone, and he chooses Shiruko. Which at least is better than Naruto to her mind.

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So she takes in the chibi brat, who apparently always eats like that even when he’s not starving and has an unhealthy love of ramen, but at least likes dango as much as she does. She has a civilian friend teach him how to make his own ramen and tells him he’s not allowed to say ramen is his favorite food in public because it has too much in common with his real name and might make people suspicious (although it’s really because it was his mother’s favorite food).

Shiruko actually takes an interest in cooking, which is interesting, if traumatizing. He still seems to have no problem with her poisoning him for bargains, so she does that in exchange for letting him try new dishes on her, and occasionally for other things. Like an allowance every month. What? Like she’s made of money? Feeding the brat is expensive!

Anko flinches the first time she hears him end a sentence with ‘dattebayo’ and forbids him to use it again, to his startlement. She refuses to explain that it makes him sound far too much like his mother and ends up bargaining a month’s worth of trying new dishes without poisoning involved in exchange for him agreeing to remember to not use the word again. She tries a lot of new dishes that month. Enough that she starts getting concerned looks from other ninjas because she looks pale or greenish so often.

“You okay, Anko?”

If Hound is asking, she must look worse than she thought. “Fuck no. My cousin is learning to cook and is terrible at it. He makes me try everything. The only thing edible I’ve had in three weeks is dango.”

“Cousin?”

She huffs, because she knows he’s a nosy bastard and will go looking if she evades, and she can’t afford to have him turn his sharingan on Shiruko and see through the henge. “Yeah. Brat’s parents have too many kids and sent him to live with me.”

It’s not exactly a lie. She does have some distant cousins, civilians in another village, who have way too many kids and actually tried to pawn one off on her a few years ago. Given that they breed like rabbits in spring and she knows for a fact that they have pawned off kids on various people, they probably don’t even know how many kids they have or who all they’ve successfully pawned them off on. If they didn’t look way too much like her, she’d absolutely deny the relation. They’re enough to turn anyone off kids for life. She got herself fixed the day after she came back from there just to be sure she can’t follow in their footsteps on accident. It’s not like assassination missions are all she’s tapped for, after all.

“Maa, Anko, you need to eat vegetables too.”

The bastard doesn’t even bother to dodge the senbon she aims right between his eyes, just plucks it out of his mask and hands it back.
“I get plenty of vegetables, they just all taste terrible!” she hisses. Which is true. Thank Kami she only has a week left before she can bargain over not trying Shiruko’s terrible food.

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Anko grits her teeth. “No. You can’t be a girl for the doctor, okay?”

“But wouldn’t it be better? No one would suspect a girl is a boy, ne?”

“That would be a good idea if you weren’t dealing with a med nin. The more you change, the more likely they are to notice something is off. Not to mention you’d have to master a full-sensory henge, which you really don’t have the chakra control for. And do you really want to have to henge breasts and go to the girl’s bathroom for the rest of your life?”

Shiruko pales. “Urk. Fine. If less is better, what do I change?”

“Just do your normal henge. You’ve gotten good enough at it that it shouldn’t be a strain. It’s just lucky you have a ridiculous amount of chakra for your age.” He doesn’t use it in the apartment, but he uses it anytime he steps out of it and can hold it for most of the day before running low on chakra. It’s absurd and she’s a little jealous, to be honest.

He looks sulky. “Can I make dango?”

She groans. Up until now she’s refused to let him try, afraid the outcome will turn her off her favorite food for life. But the brat is entirely capable of sabotaging himself if he doesn’t get something he wants. “Fine. But I’m not trying them until they taste like real dango. Not even for poisoning you.”

Shiruko smirks and she just knows she’s going to regret agreeing.

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Anko comes home from a long mission to find a pair of twins she knows to be half-Uchiha brats sitting in her kitchen with Shiruko not wearing a henge and hisses in annoyance. “How many times have I told you that you cannot let other people see your real face, brat?”

Both twins, a boy and a girl, jump at her words and turn to face her, and both of them have bruises.

She groans. “Oh fuck no. You cannot just adopt whoever you want because they’re having problems, Shiruko. And these are clan brats. Someone will notice and come looking, with the sharingan.”

Shiruko just shrugs. “They’ve been here almost two weeks and no one has noticed. I don’t think they care.”

Anko pauses, because that really shouldn’t be possible. Then she remembers that the clans have been letting Shimura, the creepy bastard, take some of their kids for his ‘secret’ organization. It would be more secret if shinobis didn’t gossip like fishwives. And if no one confronts Shimura over it… Well, it’s a risk, but probably not a high one. The Uchiha aren’t fond of bastards, even if they take them in, and if their dad doesn’t care enough to ask around in two weeks, it’s probably just not going to happen.

She crosses her arms. “And what do I get out of it? Kids are expensive, brat.”

“U-Um. We can make bargains with you, l-like Shiruko does?” the girl offers, and the boy nods
emphatically.

“Oh really?” Now that’s interesting.

“You can’t poison them or hurt them, Anko-nee.” Shiruko says abruptly, reading her too easily.

“Maa, that’s what I’ve got you for, brat. Fine. But they’ll have to dye their hair all the time, and dress like I say. And wear genjutsu collars like yours if they ever activate their sharingans, because I don’t have time for the amount of shit I’d be in if that ever gets found out. Stealing clan brats is a serious offense.”

Shiruko beams at her. “You’re the best, Anko-nee!”

How is this her life?

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“Anko, you do not seem your youthful self today. Was your last mission a bad one?”

She groans and tries to bury her face in the bar. Gai is the last person she needs to deal with today. “Have I mentioned I hate my cousin?”

“Why, that is a most unyouthful sentiment, Anko. What is the matter?”

“The brat talked me into taking in a couple street rats. Me!”

“That is serious indeed. I wasn’t aware that you held such disgust for rodents.”

She moans and gestures at the bartender for a refill. “Kids, Gai, kids. Do you have any idea how much kids eat? Don’t even get me started on clothes. And weapons. I’m going to die of overwork just to pay for them before they even start school! And now they want me to train them. How am I supposed to have time to do that?”

“I see. That is unfortunate. Perhaps I could…help with training? And bring over groceries now and then?”

It’s a terrible, terrible idea, and oh Kami, Gai, she’ll have to interact with Gai on a regular basis, but… “Yeah, that’d be great, Gai.”

Gai beams at her with his trademark smile. “I will be most honored to teach your most youthful cousin and wards!”

She hides her shiver in her drink. That smile has too many similarities to Shiruko’s. It’ll be terrible if Shiruko picks it up.

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As it turns out, Hime is great at running errands and Tanto has a knack for gathering information without being noticed. (Don’t ask her, she doesn’t even know their real names, and Shiruko had obviously warned them, because they’d chosen their new names ahead of time.) Hime takes to Gai’s training like a duck to water, but is pretty open about the fact that she never intends to be more than a genin and only that because she wants to have something in common with Shiruko. Tanto is pretty bad with taijutsu, but he can cook (simple things, like toast and eggs) and has an interest in poisons. It’s uncertain if he wants to become a ninja or not, but he also plans on at least becoming a genin.
Shiruko declares that he’s going to be the best ninja, ‘even better than Anko-nee’ and it’s mildly terrifying how well he picks up both taijutsu and poisons, although he sucks with aiming weapons and using basic jutsus beyond his henge (which is actually chunin level, because that was the most basic one Anko could remember when teaching him). It’s more than a little terrifying how well he gets along with Gai, but at least he doesn’t pick up the man’s mode of speech or his over the top posing. He does pick up the hyper and loud, but then again that describes Anko, too, so she’s not entirely sure she can blame it on Gai. Particularly since he copies her over the top posing instead.

And because Gai is Gai, no one questions the new additions to Anko’s household at all, which is a relief. Not even Kurenai is curious enough to note the genjutsu chokers’ effects. And if Kurenai isn’t questioning it, no one will look twice.

Even Kakashi wanders by a few times without apparently noticing anything unusual. Although it’s a little hard to tell with that bastard. But that he never uncovers his left eye is a good sign, at least.

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It’s only a few months before her brats are due to start at the Academy when the Uchiha massacre occurs, leaving the clan head’s youngest as the only survivor.

Anko goes home and spends the evening clinging to her brats tightly. If she hadn’t let Shiruko talk her into taking them in…

She can’t picture her life without Hime and Tanto in it.

That’s the night the twins start calling her kaa-san and she doesn’t tell them not to.

Shiruko tentatively tries it once and she shoots him a look promising revenge and he never does again, sticking to ‘Anko-nee’ and ‘nee-san’.

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School is…interesting.

Shiruko comes home babbling about some shy, smart girl named Sakura. For some reason listening to his obvious crush on the girl feels like a massive insult to her, and she slams her fist down on the table, startling him into breaking off mid-sentence.

“All right, Anko-nee?”

“So that’s the kind of girl you like?” Maybe her tone is a little hostile, but it’s not on purpose.

He stares at her, expression blank, eyes thoughtful for a long minute, then says, “I just thought she was interesting. I’ve never seen pink hair before.”

He never brings Sakura up again.

He talks about some nice-guy teacher instead. Anko meets the guy at the Missions desk, haranguing some jounin about bad handwriting and messy reports and decides Shiruko’s criteria for a ‘nice person’ might be a little skewed. Then again, he is still the brat who thought she was taking care of him during a period she was systematically poisoning him in return for food bribes. But he takes Shiruko out for meals sometimes, which gives her wallet a break, so she decides he’s alright, even if he is a mouthy brat of a chunin.

All three of her brats try to graduate early. The twins manage it two years early. Shiruko fails
because he still sucks at basic jutsus no matter how he tries, his aim is still a bit pathetic, and he doesn’t have the patience to pay attention long enough to do well at classwork. It finally occurs to her, shortly before his fourth try at graduating, when she finds him crying silently in his room, that his problem is too much chakra. She bullies (bribes with the latest Icha Icha book) Kakashi into showing him how to do the kage bunshin and is gratified when he picks it up within hours.

Gai finds himself a mini-me apprentice to train in the year between the twins’ graduation and Shiruko’s, which is the weirdest thing ever. If she didn’t know better, she’d think he’d asexually reproduced.

Hime decides she wants to be a mail courier ninja, and Tanto decides he wants to be a medic nin.

But the weirdest thing comes after Shiruko graduates.

He’s stuck on the same team as ‘the last Uchiha’ and some pink haired girl, and Kakashi is assigned as their jounin teacher.

Shiruko comes home looking grey around the edges.

“What’s the matter, brat? You fail?” Kakashi has never passed a team, so failing isn’t that big a deal. He can just try again next year as far as she’s concerned.

He shakes his head dazedly. “No. We passed.”

“Really? Then why do you look like someone walked off with your dango?”

“I might’ve…punched Sakura cuz she called you a crazy woman.”

Anko raises both brows. “Well, that’s one way to impress Kakashi, I guess.”

“No. Um. I mean…Sasuke and I kind of got tired of her whining about it being unfair she was missing lunch when I was the one who hit her, so we force fed her to shut her up. And Kakashi sensei said we passed because we worked as a team.”

“So are you upset you hit a girl? Or upset that you passed when you weren’t working as a team?”

“She said my stir-fry tasted weird!”

His indignant tone makes her laugh. “Wait, so Kakashi used the lunches he asked you to make as part of your test?”

“Well, yeah. It’s not like Sasuke or Sakura can cook! Sasuke buys his and Sakura’s mom makes hers. Kakashi sensei didn’t tell them I made it, though, so they can learn to do it themselves and I’m just going to pretend I know nothing about it and tell Sakura how weird her cooking tastes!”

Anko pities the poor genins who are his teammates, but not so much that she won’t enjoy Shiruko’s tales of their eating woes. After all, she suffered through him learning to cook.

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The first time Kakashi realizes that his cute little genin is wearing a henge is when he uncovers his sharingan because freaking Zabuza Momochi, one of the Seven Swordsmen of the Mist shows up. He stares, because he knows that face. And that’s impossible, because Naruto is dead and so are Minato and Kushina. It can’t be. Except it is. The sharingan doesn’t lie. And the only reason his
distraction doesn’t kill him is because Zabuza is too busy mocking his genins. Which is weird for an S-rank missing nin to do, but he doesn’t have time to think about it because he has to save his students from getting killed before they can figure out how to react.

Later, recovering from chakra exhaustion in Tazuna’s home, he takes advantage of a moment when his other two students are out of the room to give the henged blond a sharp look. “Naruto?”

The kid just looks at him for a moment, then his eyes widen. “How do you know that name?”

Ah, so it is him.

“Minato was my jounin teacher.” And the look in the kid’s eyes is not a good one. “Maa, Shiruko, it’s bad form to poison your sensei. I’m not going to tell anyone. No one with half a brain would believe that Kurenai and I didn’t know. And since she doesn’t, there’s no need to bother anyone with charges of treason, ne?”

Shiruko stares at him with a blank look, one he recognizes as covering deep thought, lips pressed together slightly. Finally he inclines his head slightly. “It’s hardly treason to save a kid from starving to death on the streets.”

Right, like he’s naïve enough to believe that Anko hasn’t told the kid the truth. She hates secrets with a passion. “So that choker. I should probably take care to not look too hard at Hime and Tanto?”

“Don’t look!”

“Maa, maa, I don’t intend to. Don’t be like that. Why don’t you go do something useful, like chop wood? Let your poor sensei rest, ne?”

Shiruko favors him with one last wary look before complying.

Kakashi closes his eye wearily. He’ll have to thank Anko.

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Sasuke almost dies about three seconds after he activates his sharingan for the first time because he suddenly notices his idiot brown haired, brown eyed teammate now has blond hair and blue eyes. Fortunately, his reflexes are working better than his brain, which has briefly stalled out.

Later, when he wakes up somehow alive, with their opponents dead, the first thing he asks is, “Dobe, why is your hair blo-?”

Shiruko tackles him off the dock midsentence, and they end up trying not to drown while he tries to get an answer.

“What the hell, dobe? And why are you blond? Are you a spy?”

“Shut up! I’ll tell you later. You can’t tell Sakura. Or anyone! And I’m not a spy. Do you seriously think anyone would send me as a spy?”

“Like I would know? I don’t know you, do I? I’d like to know whose life I saved.”

“Oh, fuck you! I haven’t changed just because you saw through a henge I’ve worn since I was four.”
“If you’re not a spy, why would you-?”

“You’re not going to let this go until a better time, are you, teme?”

“No! Quit avoiding the question!”

“Because they’d take me away from Anko-nee if they knew who I was! Okay? They think I’m dead and I like it that way! I don’t want to lose my family! So just shut up and don’t tell anyone. I’ll explain later.”

Okay, he can understand that, even if he doesn’t understand why people knowing who he is would take him away from his family.

A rope splashes down between them.

“Hey, brats! Climb up.” Their obnoxious client calls down.

“Fine. But Kakashi sensei is going to see through it eventually, dobe.” Sasuke hisses in aggravation, because it’s true.

“He already has! Now climb, teme, before I get tired of treading water and let you drown.”

Sasuke rolls his eyes and starts climbing. He’ll get the truth out of the idiot eventually.

Chapter End Notes

Naruto’s bruise heals faster than normal, but not so fast that she notices and then the poison kind of redirects healing efforts. She tries strychnine on him again out of curiosity and is astonished when the symptoms only last half as long the second time. She concludes that he just has an eerie natural resistance to poisons and gains immunity quickly, without ever stopping to think that it might be the Kyuubi at work there. ‘Shiruko’ is red bean soup. She totally regrets it. Naruto|Shiruko eats dango rejects in front of her with great relish for weeks. Even if they taste terrible, they look normal and the temptation is soul wrenching.

Anko doesn’t remember Sakura, because she never met her and Naruto|Shiruko never talked about her again. By the time he’s graduated from Academy, Naruto has all but forgotten his original name and thinks of himself as Shiruko. The twins are a couple months younger than him, just enough that they call him nii-san or Shiru-nii without irony. He gets some flack because they exceed him in school and graduate earlier, but the twins take more offense at it than he does. He also gets some flack because he’s loud and has trouble with school, but more like the level of flack Kiba would get than what he got in canon. Everyone thinks ‘Naruto’ is dead, if they think about him at all, and no one makes any connection between ‘Naruto’ and ‘Shiruko’, so he’s spared most of the whispers and hostility he gets in canon. I say most because he faced a fair bit before Anko picked him up, and he’s heard enough people talking about the Kyuubi and ‘that demon brat’ and being glad he’s ‘dead’ that Anko took him aside and told him the truth after swearing him to
Okay, I want to be very, very clear here. Anko’s and NarutolShiruko’s relationship to each other is not normal, not intended to be normal, and is in some ways very, very unhealthy and codependent. Anko’s feelings towards him are...complicated, and will get more complicated as he gets older. Because he doesn’t deal with the amount of prejudice in canon, Shiruko never has reason to provoke the villagers with pranks or conceive of the idea of being Hokage so ‘everyone will respect him’. As a result, that single-minded focus and drive is more split. Of course he wants to be the ‘best ninja’ (and has a better basis for it, thanks to Gai and Anko) and to be a good big brother (he’d die to protect Hime or Tanto, or to make sure they were happy and they wholeheartedly return the sentiment), but a lot of his focus is on making sure Anko is happy and healthy. He’d do pretty much anything for her, from before when she takes him in, and he maintains his canon ability to read people. He figures out literal years before it ever starts to occur to her that her feelings for him are not that of a sister, that she has a possessive attachment to him. He didn’t stop talking about Sakura because Anko got inexplicably annoyed, he stopped because he decided that his attention to the girl was hurting Anko’s feelings. Since Anko is far more important to him than a pretty classmate, he puts his crush out of his head, and by the time he ends up on the same team as her, has long since forgotten about it.

Shiruko is, because he had the opportunity to become one, a total motherhen, at least as much of one as someone raised by Anko can manage. He’s also got two ‘siblings’, so he’s better at knowing when not to say something, though this isn’t really that different from canon, given Anko raised him. Sakura is nowhere near as casually abusive to him as in canon because she finds out early on that he’s not above hitting girls (although it takes a lot to push him that far).

Because of Gai, Kakashi has interacted with Shiruko enough to have a fair idea of his skills and personality, so he reads him right when he assumes that he’s thinking about poisoning Kakashi to eliminate his little privacy problem. But fortunately for him, Shiruko|Naruto has enough respect for him to actually let him talk him out of it without much effort.

Poor Sasuke, your life is about to take a rather dramatic turn as you find out things you were never meant to know. But, eh well. It’ll turn out fine, I’m sure~
Sasuke has stuck close to Shiruko since the Wave bridge incident, because hell if he’s going to let the dobe get away with not explaining who he is. He knows both Sakura and Kakashi have noticed. Sakura’s ‘I hope you die’ glare at Shiruko is several times more venomous than usual. Kakashi just gives him looks of mild amusement, but Sasuke can tell that Kakashi’s behavior is a little off too, like he’s torn between hovering protectively over and outright wariness of Shiruko. Not like he thinks Shiruko is a threat, but like he thinks Shiruko might be a personal threat. He wonders vaguely what Shiruko has threatened their sensei with to get him to keep his mouth shut, and why it’s apparently working. The blond-not-brunette might be a bubbly loudmouth, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t spiteful when crossed.

And he doesn’t mean the decking-Sakura-for-calling-his-sister-crazy thing.

Both he and Sakura struggled to cook edible meals when out on the road, helped by Kakashi’s occasional contributions (when the meals really were inedible) or tips. It hadn’t escaped their notice that Shiruko never volunteered to cook nor been asked to by Kakashi, and judging by their own attempts they assumed letting him near food preparation would be a frightening disaster. It wasn’t until Kakashi sensei was unconscious from chakra exhaustion and they were still out on the road and needed to feed the client that they learned that not only could Shiruko cook, he was an excellent cook, who could use sparse ingredients to make a tasty and filling meal. In half the time it took Sasuke to struggle through making something.

When Sakura demanded to know why, Shiruko gave her an inscrutable look and said calmly, “You said my bento tasted weird, so I assumed you preferred to cook your own meals.”

It took them a while to figure out what he was referring to, since neither of them recalled ever eating a bento presented to them by Shiruko. Finally, Sakura twitched and straightened. “Wait, are you talking about the bell test? The bentos Kakashi sensei gave us?”

“The stir-fry?” Sasuke blinked. “You made that?”

“Of course I did. You don’t really think he’d have gone to the trouble on his own for genin he didn’t want to pass, did you?”

Sakura’s shriek of outrage made all three of them cringe, and even Kakashi sensei twitched in his
sleep. “You mean you made us eat burnt and awful food for weeks because I insulted your food one time!?”

Shiruko stared at her for a minute, then smiled in a way that made the hair on the back of Sasuke’s neck stand up. “It’s hardly my fault neither of you have ever learned even basic cooking before this. I’ve just been helping your self-sufficiency skills by not interfering. Better to learn now than when your life might depend on it, ne?”

Old Tazuna just laughed, making Sakura’s face turn red in embarrassment. “Never insult the cook, girl. That’s just bad manners.”

Sasuke eyed Shiruko’s too-pleasant expression and decided that getting lumped with Sakura could be dangerous if he doesn’t want to experience a mysterious bout of food poisoning down the road. “If I promise to never insult your food, will you teach me how to cook?”

The dangerous smile turned sunny in an instant. “Of course. All you ever had to do was ask.”

So, yes, he’s aware that the blond-not-brunette is spiteful enough to make good threats, but it is surprising that such threats would work on a jounin. However, none of those threats have so far been directed at him, so he’s not very worried about it either.

Shiruko, of course, pretends that he doesn’t see their altered behavior, which is mildly infuriating, but in general his existence in Sasuke’s life is mildly infuriating, so it’s tolerable until they get back to Konoha and Sasuke still hasn’t managed to get him alone to demand he explain himself!

So he follows Shiruko home once Sakura has split off to go to her own home and reassure her parents that she’s alive. He knows that Shiruko allows it, because for someone with such a large amount of chakra and shitty chakra control, he sometimes disappears just as easily as Kakashi sensei. Well, that, and the fact that Shiruko shoots him a knowing grin over his shoulder. And that Shiruko actually stops and waits for him once they get there. He’d feel worse about being so obvious to the dobe if he didn’t want to know what was going on so much.

To his surprise, when they enter, two kids about his own age who he vaguely remembers as having skipped grades and graduating a couple years early fling themselves at him. He sidesteps hastily, sharingan activating at the unexpected maybe-threat, only to realize they weren’t aiming for him at all as they plaster themselves all over Shiruko. “Shiru-nii, Shiru-nii! Nii-san, nii-san! You’re actually home while we’re still here! How was your mission? Did-?”

Sasuke tunes their tumbling-over-each-other chatter out, eyeing their dyed purple hair curiously. Then the girl tilts her head just so and…oh! “You’re Uchihas.”

Their chatter cuts off as if with a knife.

They turn and regard him with deep wariness. And yes…it’s unmistakable. They are Uchihas. He has family left!

“Maa, maa, Sasuke’s not going to tell. He’s just curious as to why I wear a henge.” Shiruko cuts in.

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“Aren’t they older? Why do they call you nii-san?” He asks, though what he really wants is to demand Why? Why have you kept my family from me? But he knows the answer to that. Shiruko has kept them hidden, kept them alive, since his brother slaughtered the rest of the clan. Revealing them would be all but murdering them.
“No, Shiru-nii is older. He just-” The girl says.

“Is really bad at chakra control-” The boy continues.

“And bookwork.”

“And we’re Mitarashis, not Uchihas.” The boy states fiercely.

“We don’t ever want to be Uchihas again.” The girl agrees.

“Father hit us because we were bastards and-”

“Our mother wasn’t clan.” The girl finishes.

And if he has to continue to think of them as ‘the girl’ and ‘the boy’ he’s going to start banging his head on the wall in frustration. “Do you have names?” he interrupts as they start to speak more.

“Hime and Tanto.” Shiruko says, amusement open in his tone, but his eyes are still hard and watchful on Sasuke. “They came home with me one day because I know what it feels like when an adult hits you, but their father never came after them. Then there was the Massacre, and nee-san adopted them. And trust me, you really, really don’t want to try to take nee-san’s kids away from her.”

Sasuke sighs. “They are safer hidden from my brother. I’m not going to try to take them away. But they are my family. The only family I have left that isn’t a traitorous kin-murderer. I- What I really want to know is why you are under a henge and think people knowing about it will mean you get taken away.”

Surprisingly, Shiruko’s expression softens. “You know about the Kyuubi, right?”

He narrows his eyes and nods. The demon had raged through Konoha shortly after his birth. The village still bears scars. He’s not sure what the Kyuubi has to do with Shiruko, but Hime and Tanto have shifted stance again and he can see that while they’ll hesitate to kill for their own secret, this one is different.

“Yes.”

“Well, to stop it, they had to seal it inside of someone. That someone was me. Which means anyone old enough to remember blamed me, thinking I was the Kyuubi. A jinchuuriki is a village’s greatest weapon and…I suppose that none of those who had the power to protect me cared to risk it or were able to be trusted with having the loyalty of the jinchuuriki. I-”

“Bullshit.” A woman’s voice says sharply, and Sasuke twitches violently because he hadn’t noticed her appearance until she spoke. “I found you on the streets at age three, and the only reason you didn’t starve to death is because a few of the ANBU watching you actually bothered to bring you food occasionally. And I’m pretty certain the only reason you didn’t die of something else is because you heal stupidly fast and have a surreal resistance to poisons. I take it the Uchiha brat is in the know now? What have I told you about letting people with the Sharingan look at you?”

Shiruko winces and says meekly, “Sorry, Anko-nee. It couldn’t be helped. Zabuza Momochi and some other Mist nin showed up. Both Kakashi sensei and Sasuke teme saw.”

Anko goes rigid, then gives a beleaguered sigh before glaring at Sasuke. “These are my kids and my boy. If you endanger them, you won’t live to find your brother and kill him.”
His eyes widen at the threat. At the lack of any subtlety.

“I…”

“Stop it, nee-san. He already said he wasn’t going to tell. They’re his family. Of course he’s gonna protect them. And I can take care of myself.”

Sasuke shakes himself as the Killing Intent dials back. She’d increased it so subtly that he hadn’t even realized what was happening. It’s not as strong as Zabuza’s, but the way it snuck up on him made it equally terrifying. This is not a woman to underestimate.

Anko snorts. “You’re my boy, and I’ve never seen someone worse at taking care of themselves.”

He and Shiruko exchange glances and then say simply, “Sakura.”

“At least if Shiruko poisons my food, I’ll know it was on purpose.” Sasuke grouses.

Shiruko grins. “I’ll bet that the first thing she did after she got home was ask her mom to teach her how to cook.”

“Hn. Probably.”

“That civilian teammate of yours?” Anko asks in a curious tone.

Shiruko rolls his eyes. “She’s not civilian, her dad’s a genin. But yeah. Sasuke teme can cook about twice as well as she can. And he promised to never insult my food if I teach him how to cook properly. She might’ve screamed about it a lot. Even the client told her she was being rude.”

Sasuke finds himself the focus of three pitying gazes.

Then Tanto enlightens him. “Never, ever try his experiments when he’s learning a new recipe. Just don’t. I won’t bother healing you unless you’re actually on the verge of dying from it.”

He gives Shiruko a leery glance and gets a bright smile in return.

“Don’t worry, teme, you’re allowed to refuse it. You can even tell me if you dislike something and why.”

“Hn.” Right, like he’s going to volunteer that unless asked? And if asked, he’ll be very careful to keep his tone polite. Before it had just been self-preservation. But now? If his teammate decides to kill him, his remaining family won’t have him to protect them. For now, he knows, they are stronger than him, but the Uchiha name does carry weight, if needed. He needs to get stronger. And to do that he needs to survive. Which means Sakura needs to get stronger before she gets them all killed. The thought annoys him. It means he’ll have to voluntarily interact with her.

Then he has a horrible thought and looks back and forth between Shiruko and Anko.

“Teme?”

“Kami. You’re my step-cousins, aren’t you?”

Anko gives him a look of reciprocal horror. “Fuck, no! I am not related to you stick-up-your-ass Uchihas!”

Shiruko laughs so hard that he falls on the floor.
Anko can be subtle, who knew? Then again, her teacher was Orochimaru. It's not wise to underestimate her, regardless of her questionable sanity.

Sasuke simply does not pick up the significance of 'Shiruko' being called Anko's 'boy'. He figures she's just saying 'my kid' in a different fashion. To be fair, it mostly does mean that at this point.

No Sakura bashing is intended. It's just that she's a pretty useless existence at this point in canon.
Mission: Traitor

Chapter Summary

Mizuki happens to Anko's most recent mission, her coping level is 0. Things happen.

Chapter Notes

**Trigger warning:** short-term strangulation of an innocent party, unhealthy coping methods, not particularly sane people, and questionable rationalizations and decision making.

Not edited.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Anko wants to rage and cry, break things and possibly kill something. *Well no, she doesn’t really want*—It’s tearing her apart inside. *She can’t*—She slams the door open, then kicks it shut with an efficient motion born of habit. If it was anything but, she probably would’ve landed on her ass, or nose, given how close she is to simply shaking apart. Nothing quite like needing *attention* for a task when like this to make one look like a total fool and clumsy as hell. Paying no heed to anything or anyone else (*even if she wanted to, everything is blurry other than her focus*) she finds Shiruko standing at the counter near the stove, watching her with...*she doesn’t even know, but it’s not fear so it’s good enough,* and stalks over, grabbing him and dragging him into her bedroom because no one else needs to see this. *Definitely not her kids.*

Shiruko doesn’t resist; he never does. He doesn’t struggle even when the light in his eyes starts to dim noticeably.

Then Anko flinches away, almost breaking his neck on reflex, as he lifts a hand towards her head. Tension thrums through her, and then he opens his hand, revealing a pair of slightly squashed dango that he obviously had been making when she showed up.

A hoarse, wretched sound tears out of her, and she carefully unlocks her hands from around his throat and slumps to the side, heaving messy, hopeless sobs against his child-thin shoulder.

~

Sasuke practically levitates, sharingan activating reflexively when the *creature* bursts in through the door. Only his cousins’ hands clamping down on his wrists without warning prevents him from rising to meet the threat, which… *Oh, it’s just Anko.*

He understands a bit why Hime and Tanto don’t want him moving when he sees her fixate on Shiruko so intently that KI might be less disturbing. It’s not a *fangirl* look, but there’s enough similarity of *crazy* to it that it curdles his spine. No way, no how does he want that look focused on *him.*
But…

Watching Anko grab Shiruko by the throat and drag him away is possibly even more disturbing. Maybe. Probably. He’d work himself up to checking on them, except his cousins are still pinning his wrists to the table.

“Don’t.” Hime warns.

“Leave them be. It’s none of your business.” Tanto adds.

Sasuke sort of wants to agree, but… “He’s my teammate.”

“And he’s our nii-san.” Tanto retorts.

Hime narrows her eyes at him, conveying the depth of the insult she takes at the implication that Shiruko is not their business more than his, without a word.

Grumpily, because he does know how protective they are of Shiruko, he allows, “Hn.”

After another tense moment, Tanto chuckles and they release him, apparently satisfied.

So yeah, he’s not going in there, not because he can’t (okay, he can’t. He’s pretty sure either one of them could kick his ass, and he definitely isn’t getting past both of them), but because Anko’s scary on a good day (today is obviously not a good day), but he trusts Shiruko to take care of her.

That’s his story and he’s sticking to it.

But…well, it won’t hurt to stick around until he’s sure Shiruko isn’t going to need a fast visit to a med-nin, right?

~

She doesn’t know how long it’s been, but her awful rasping sobs have quieted to shuddery intakes of breath and the feeling of mild dehydration, overlaid with the sensation of her face being swollen with too much crying and slathered in tears and grosser substances. Shiruko has wisely not tried to touch her, merely keeping his dango-holding hand half-lax against his chest, so the scent of dango mingles with his smell to help ground her and pull her back from that tangled horror in her head.

Anko takes mental stock of their respective positions and moves slightly to make it easier for him to breathe.

He makes a querying sound, then presses a piece of something against her lips. Oh, dango. A piece ripped off so its small enough she doesn’t choke on it. Come to think of it, she really hasn’t eaten anything in the last two days. Well, other than soldier pills. Maybe that’s why that nurse was screaming at her when she left the hospital without even getting a checkup?

She lets him feed her, bit by bit, because dango and because it helps in more than one way. Not just staving off the inevitable crash from the soldier pills, but grounding her with touch that she knows without a doubt is safe. Not like-

“I hate traitors.” Anko says finally, despairingly, and lifts her head to check his throat. She promptly winces. The marks of her fingers are livid, dark bruises, leaving no doubt as to how close she’d come to- She touches them, feather-light. “Sorry.”

Shiruko rolls his eyes at her and shoves the second dango into her hand.
Okay, fair.

Chewing on the poor, squashed thing, she swallows without really tasting it, ignoring the pain swallowing causes. Finally, she says, “I had to kill a Konoha nin. He- I don’t know how he got on the roster for the mission. I’m pretty sure he was one of your Academy teachers. I don’t- He almost killed the other two chunin on the team, almost succeeded. He was going to steal- Well, he was going to make it look like I defected and fake his own death. Too bad for him that he forgot or didn’t know that I’m a part-time assassin and professionally paranoid. I still don’t know if my teammates are going to survive. Temporary teammates, but aren’t they all? I just…” Snapped. “I didn’t mean…” To almost kill you. On accident. Mostly accident.

She hadn’t been going for his throat particularly, it had just been the first thing to grab at the right height and she couldn’t- “Get taller, okay?”

Shiruko manages a hoarse sound that’s somehow a mix of amusement and exasperation. Because of course he would if he could. Wasn’t he complaining just last month that it’s supremely unfair that he’s still shorter than Sakura and the rest of the genin?

Still.

“Get taller.” She repeats softly. This is a line she had not meant to cross, and she doesn’t want to do it again.

He rubs her back in reply, and she groans and buries her face in the covers. Then promptly jerks back because ew, wet and cold and snotty is gross! Shiruko laughs squeakily at her and she pushes him off the bed before flopping over on her back to avoid the nasty spot.

Anko laughs at his disgruntled expression when he picks himself up, sounding nearly as bad as he had. “I’m gonna pass out now. Maybe get a med-nin if I stop breathing in my sleep or something. Been hauling ass carrying two people, with no sleep or food for two days. Holding a shadow clone that long is a total-” She passes out mid-sentence.

~

Shiruko grimaces at the bed, then wanders out to find a washcloth to wipe off the snot before it can set in all its disgusting glory into Anko-nee’s favorite comforter. Maybe clean her face too.

He finds three sets of eyes glued anxiously to him when he opens the door, and blinks in surprise that Sasuke is still here. And actually worried about him. Looking like he’s about to drag him to the hospital by the look in his eyes as they fix on his bruised throat.

“Nii-san?”

“I’m fine, Tanto.” He rasps out. And really, it’s true. “She stopped once she realized what she was doing. You ca-” He breaks off with a painful cough, wincing.

Tanto promptly marches over and places green-glowing hands on his throat, easing the lingering rawness and swelling that the Kyuubi hadn’t deemed worth healing immediately, though at least he’s having no trouble breathing due to the beast’s intervention on that score.

“Find out which Academy teacher got an A rank out of Konoha and died on it recently.”

“Why?” Tanto asks suspiciously, dropping his hands.

Shiruko smiles viciously. “Because traitors don’t deserve to keep their reputation as loyal nin.
Especially ones who almost kill Anko-nee and try to make it look like she’s the traitor.” Then he looks at Sasuke. “Don’t tell Sakura. I don’t want to deal with the screeching. I’ll just cover it with my normal henge.”

Sasuke looks like he wants to object, then settles back with an almost imperceptible sigh. “Hn.”

*Good. Anko-nee might be irritated at him later, because the information is probably classified, but as long as no one can trace the source directly to her, she won’t get in trouble. Well that, and he doesn’t want gossip going around that Anko-nee is abusing him or something. He’d probably have to kill someone if that happened, just from spite.*

~

He is not disappointed. By nightfall, half of Konoha knows that a certain Academy teacher turned traitor, tried to murder the team he was with, and pin the whole thing on Anko Mitarashi, only failing because of underestimating Mitarashi herself. There was also the murmur of speculation of why Mitarashi of all people had been chosen as the scapegoat, and who exactly the traitor had been working for. *After all, Mitarashi might be crazy,* but they all knew she’d have disappeared into a T&I cell years ago if she wasn’t completely loyal, given who her jounin sensei had been.

*Ahh, he loves his siblings. They’re astonishingly efficient at spreading sourceless rumors. Most people don’t bother remembering medics except for the higher ranked ones, sometimes not even them, and definitely not trainee medics. Mail ninja are supposed to be indistinguishable and unidentifiable in their normal lives. Remove uniform=instant anonymity. So neither of them are people that are memorable, just vaguely familiar chunin in the crowd, and hardly anyone connects them to Anko-nee, despite none of them hiding the relationship. To be fair, of course, it’s hard for most people to wrap their minds around ‘Anko raising kids’. Not that he’s ever used their ability before, but Anko-nee has a time or two, to amuse herself.*

Shiruko has faith that the rumor mill will discover the traitorous teacher in question is Mizuki by morning, and possibly leap to the conclusion that he was working on Orochimaru’s behalf. *Even though that's hilariously unlikely to be the actual truth. The two-faced traitor had probably been going to defect to Iwa or some other hidden village.*

~

Kakashi sensei gives him a long look, probably because he’s being quiet for once, then says lazily but with a hint of command that lets him know it’s an order, “Okay, drop the henge.”

Shiruko grumbles and lets the part of the henge covering the livid marks fade.

“And what is that about?” Kakashi sensei asks after a long moment.

“Mizuki.” He says obscurely, noting that his voice is still rough, and absently renewing the bit of henge that he’d let fade. Well, actually it’s a separate henge because otherwise he’d have to let the entire thing drop and that’s a big ‘no’, but details.

“Hm. I see.”

He represses a wince, fairly sure that the man does see. Doubtless he’s heard the rumors, but it’s unlikely that he’d make the mistake of thinking Mizuki turning traitor had anything to do with Shiruko’s bruises directly. At least he’s fairly sure that Kakashi won’t spread it around. Even if only so he doesn’t have to watch his back on missions and double check everything for poison for the rest of his life. *Not that he’d kill him or anything. He’s fairly sure Anko-nee would be upset if*
Anko opens her eyes to find a single eye staring at her out of a mask, and promptly shrieks and falls off the bed. Groaning at the impact, she lays still for a moment, then picks herself up to glare over the edge of the mattress at the jounin crouched on her bed. “What the fuck, Hatake!?”

“Maa, maa, I thought you’d like to know that both your teammates survived.” He says cheerily.

“That is… Okay, she really wanted to know that. She leans her forehead against the mattress with a whine of complaint. “Couldn’t you have waited five minutes until I was, y’know, awake to tell me that?”

“Where’s the fun in that?”

She contemplates killing him, she really does. But that would require moving, and she hurts the fuck all over. Besides which, he’s Kakashi-freaking-Hatake and she probably doesn’t have a chance in hell of catching the slippery bastard even when just breathing doesn’t hurt.

“About Shiruko.”

Her head snaps up and she pins him with a glare.

“Maa, maa, I have just as much invested in keeping him safe as you do. Thanks for that, by the way.”

Anko glowers for another moment, then sighs. She knows what this is about. “I know I didn’t kill him, but is he okay?”

“Spectacularly bruised, but hiding it with a secondary henge. Still a bit hoarse. Sasuke knows, Sakura doesn’t. Evidence should be gone in a couple weeks. But if this happens again…”

“Yeah, she wouldn’t even blame him for that. She sighs tiredly. “Fair. But—” She doesn’t even try to water down the threat in her tone, “don’t take my boy away from me just for kicks, Hatake.”

Kakashi eye smiles at her obnoxiously and clasps a hand over his heart dramatically. “I’m wounded you think so little of me. Besides… it would only be a mental health separation. He’s an adult. And there’s no way anyone would be able to convince him to leave you alone for more than a few months at best.”

She snorts in reluctant amusement. “You’re just afraid he’ll poison your lunch.”

“There is that.” He acknowledges brightly and hops down off her bed. “Shiruko said to tell you to shower and that he has food for you.”

And then he’s gone before she figure out what the nearest throwable object that would hurt is. She hopes he sprains both ankles! Obnoxious, kami-damned- Anko keeps up a litany of spiteful mental curses as she heaves herself to her feet and wobbles towards the shower.

Just what she wanted to wake to, a sociable exchange of threats. Not. Some people!
Little does Shiruko know that the rumor mill is absolutely correct this time.

Other notes: Maybe later. Feel free to ask questions.

This would be the reference for Sasuke's mental excuse line.

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