Isle of Flightless Birds

by kyliEisMC2

Summary

In a world where angels and demons war. A befriended angel and demon chanced upon a mortal. She became a part of their life in different ways. To Naruto she was a friend, to Sasuke she was so much more. But mortals are fragile creatures born to die. Yet, there she was, centuries later, standing in a club and looking at him as if she had never seen him in her life.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Prologue

Now is the climax to the story, that gives the demons and angels purpose.

They fly around around while we are walking, and mold our emotions just to please them.

-Twenty One Pilots: The Isle of Flightless Birds

Prologue

They have been called many names over the centuries. Seraphim, Malachim, Valkyrie, but in the beginning, they were called the Ōtsutsuki. They were created by the gods to protect and guide mortals until their lifeforms expired and they were returned to the ground. Once passed on, their spirits were collected and fed to the God tree which gave them power. For thousands of years they did this, and with every passing year, they grew in power. They served the gods peacefully and worked together in harmony, guided by the leader of their kind. His name was Hagoromo and he had two sons.

Indra was the eldest, and Asura the second born. While they grew up, they each had developed their own unique powers and with those powers, they chose to use them to guide the mortals through their lives in different ways. Despite their different methods, they loved each other greatly and spent nearly all their time together. It seemed the brothers would always be at the others side for eternity. But their bond of brotherhood was broken by a single decision. When the time came for Hagoromo to choose a predecessor, it was Asuma, not Indra, that Hagoromo chose to lead their kind. Seen as an act of betrayal a divide was placed between the two brothers.

A bitterness grew in Indra’s heart and where it once housed love, hatred became its inhabitant. He began to rebel by sabotaging the work that had been bestowed upon them as he sought out power for himself. Unhappy with his actions, the gods cursed Indra and cast him from the heavens. In fiery exile, he fell down to the mortal world like a meteor. When he hit the earth’s surface, he broke through its hardened shell and when he finally landed, he found himself encased in the darkness that lay beneath the ground. His once white and soft feathered wings, began to mult, and turn into hardened leather. No longer did they resemble pure innocence of a dove. Instead they took on the form of the other winged creatures the lurked in the darkness of caves. It was there in the cold shadows that he dwelt. And it was there, in the damp darkness, his hatred festered.

Soon a war waged between the two brothers. Their posterity became their armies and the earth, being the space between the sky and the underground, became their battlegrounds. For thousands of years the war went on even after the two brothers themselves died in their feud. New powers developed as new branches of their posterity sprung from their blood lines. From Indra, the Uchiha and Hyuga were the strongest. And from Asura, stemmed the Senju and Uzumaki. There were many others on each side, smaller branches that had their own unique powers and names. While they were all of the same kind, they began to distinguish themselves from one another.
fallen or the blessed. The mortals identified them with many labels, but the most common became angels and demons.

The Uchiha, inherited not only Indra’s cursed bat wings but also his Sharingan. It was his most powerful weapon and therefore, they ruled over the fallen. They seduced young maidens and poisoned the minds of men. Corruption was their goal for it was long discovered that if a mortal passed on with a corrupted heart, their souls went to the underworld, giving those descended from Indra more power, and power was what they thirsted for.

The Senju, having inherited great healing powers that the gods believed was the greatest gift in keeping the mortals safe, were granted hierarchy over the blessed. Their goal was to save the souls of mortals in hopes that they would resist the temptations of the fallen seraphim and return to their creators.

War began to sweep across the lands and in its wake, pestilence and famine. As a result, the mortals began dying before their souls could be claimed by either side. With fewer souls claimed, the seraphim lost their purpose and without a purpose, they would cease to exist. So it was fate that a certain angel and a certain demon crossed paths.

Madara Uchiha and Hashirama Senju grew up on the battlefield. Breed to fight and taught to hate the other, they developed a rivalry with one another but it was not made of the same essence that fueled the feud between their kind. It was a friendly banter between the two and as they watched their friends and family die wastefully in the war, they began to become weary of the amount of loss in their lives. So a truce was made and an agreement was settled.

The night was given to the fallen and the day was given to the blessed. Each was given twelve hours to do as they pleased with the mortals. At night the demons crept from the dark crevices of the earth to the surface. They moved about the earth, corrupting and sabotaging any noble values that any human possessed. By day the blessed would descend upon the earth and go about healing and guiding the humans. They would attempt to reverse the darkness that the fallen had managed to plant within their hearts and strengthen those who were still pure in heart. It was a brutal game of tug of war between that the mortals had been caught in but it made them stronger and restored a purpose for the seraphim.

Hashirama and Madara created a dwelling on earth that served as neutral ground between the two factions of seraphim. They called it Konohagakure and within the lands, the mortals flourished. Once a year they would meet together in a council and renew their peaceful accords.

As mortals thrived, they spread out across the earth, they explored and built great cities in new lands. Over the centuries, the seraphim followed and formed a new city to serve as their neutral territory. They were worshiped and known by many cultures around the world. Some humans even
proclaimed them gods and built great temples and pyramids in their honor. But despite the many centuries that paused in easy peace, it was short lived when compared to the thousands of years they had waged war together. For when the gods cast Indra from the heavens, it was more than just his wings that were cursed but it was also his heart. It would come to be known as the curse of hatred.

Despite the respite of war between the seraphim, the accords were fragile and trust was brittle. Both Madara and Hashirama lost many of their family, but they each still possessed a brother that survived the war. And each seraph loved their brother greatly.

Some said it was an accident that had led to the death of Izuna Uchiha, but whether it was an accident or intentional, there was one fact that stood true. It was Tobirama Senju, Hashirama’s younger brother that had caused Madara’s brother to fall to his demise. And it was that fact, that caused the brittle trust to snap and Madara grew hungry for revenge. He demanded for the life of his brothers killer but when Hashirama refused they engaged in a great battle. Each fought with great ferocity but spurred by the curse that plagued his heart, Madara had come out the victor.

After Hashirama’s death, neither Madara or Tobirama, who took up his brothers place, were willing to go back to the old ways, so the accords were broken. But after the centuries of war that were not all that long ago, the numbers on both sides were few. Despite their hatred for each other, both leaders knew war would drive their kind to extinction. So the seraphim became dormant, only venturing out in small numbers during the safer hours of the day or night to collect souls. Occasionally they would cross paths, a brave angel trying to save a soul during the night or a greedy demon who ventured to corrupt even throughout the day. On these occasions, without the accords between the two, only one usually returned to their kingdom in the sky or their realm beneath the earth. They lived this way for centuries with only one law to govern them, a soul was to be claimed, but a mortal life was not to be taken. In this and only this were they in agreement.

It seemed that things would always be the same. But there was an unwritten law in the fate of mortals, that history would always repeat itself and it seemed that this law was not above the fates of seraphim. For it was not long after, that a single demon and a single angel chanced upon a meeting. They fought and rivaled against each other just as Madara and Hashirama once did. They became brothers and despite the feud between their kind, they met up over the centuries in secret. Perhaps it was coincidence or perhaps it was the fate of the gods in hopes that things could be mended yet again. Whatever the outcome that was to be expected, it did not happen. For down the road, in the time of the Greeks, the two friends chanced upon a mortal that changed everything that could have or would have been. Instead it set about a new course that would change their worlds forever in the far future.
A First and a Last

Chapter One: A First and a Last

Ancient Greece

Sasuke crouched on the roof of the small shrine that sat atop the small mountain rise. As the sun slowly peaked out over the horizon, he looked down on the city that sat at the base of the mountain. He knew he should return beneath the surface, but he dreaded his return home. He did not want to face his ever displeased father, he did not want to lurk in the dark. He hated the dark, but it suited him so well.

“Hey bastard, where are you!” came the familiar, loud yell of a certain blonde haired and blue eyed man.

Sasuke cringed at the shrill voice that entered into his ears.

“Shut up Naruto,” the dark haired boy replied in an annoyed tone. “I am right here.”

Naruto turned around at the sound of the cool, monotone of his friend. He caught sight of the dark haired figure perched above him.

“Oh,” Naruto turned slightly red and rubbed the back of his head, causing his already spiky hair to stick up more. “Sorry about that Sasuke,” he laughed nervously. “Thought you were not coming.”

Sasuke rolled his eyes and stepped off from the roof. He fell quickly but in the last moment, his wide, bat like wings stretched out and he landed softly on the ground. As soon as his feet touched, his wings tucked back into his body. Shoving his hands into his pockets, he began to walk down the dirt path.

“Whatever, I was bored and had nothing else to do,” he muttered nonchalantly without waiting for his companion.

“Hey!” Naruto protested as he ran to catch up to the stoic boy. “You know, I have more important
things to do than be here. Believe it! I only come here because I feel sorry for you!"

Sasuke gave a monosyllable ‘hn’ as a reply which seemed to only fuel the louder boy’s need to
defend himself.

“Besides,” he went on, “you could do with some sunlight, your skin is nearly translucent. Honestly
I don’t understand how you survive down there!”

At his words, Sasuke stopped and angled his head to glare at Naruto from the corner of his eye.
Suddenly he was flying through the air. Fast and deadly like an arrow, he rammed into the blonde.
With a flash of light, two white wings burst from Naruto’s back as his attacker tossed him through
the air. His wide feathered wings slowed him to a stop as he hovered above Sasuke who stood
firmly on the ground. With his wings poised and his stance ready for action, Sasuke smirked up at
him. Naruto mirrored the demons enjoyment of the battle heavy air.

This was what their rivaled friendship was born from. Sparing and critical words. They had bruised
and broken each other but never had their blows been ill intended. Perhaps some a little more
heated than others, but never lethal. For a long moment they stayed in their spots, sizing each other
up as they eyed each other. There was the sound of the occasional flap of Naruto’s wings as he
bobbed up and down in the air, everything else seemed to be silenced in dramatic suspense. Then,
with one powerful beat of his wings, Naruto was sailing back towards the dark demon below him.

They collided and in a flurry of feathers and talloned wings. Together, they hit the ground heavily
and immediately began to wrestle around in the dirt. A dusty cloud of dirt rose up and surrounded
them as they rustled around on the path, the sound of gravel, grunts, and fists consuming them.
Naruto bit down on Sasuke’s forearm who let out a feral snarl at the angels cheap method. In
retaliation, Sasuke pushed his hand into Naruto’s face and shoved his head to the side. The
scramble continued until the sudden smash of pottery echoed around them and they each froze.

Naruto was currently wrapped around Sasuke in a choke hold while Sasuke’s hands pulled at
Naruto’s arm. The moment they froze, they each looked towards the source of sound. Blue and
onyx orbs gazed up the path in stunned silence as they met a pair of jade green staring back at
them in shock.

She was a mortal. Easily identified by the lack of a chakra signature. At her sandaled feet lay a
broken clay jar and a pool of water that was quickly seeping into the ground that had once been
contained within the jar. She wore a simple cream dress that fell down to her knees while her wrists
and neck remained bare of any jewelry. While both boys had already exceeded a century in years,
according to mortal standards they looked to be only be eighteen years of age. The girl seemed to
be close in age, perhaps a few years younger as she seemed to not have yet reached full
womanhood. A small braid crowned her head as the rest of her hair was pinned up into a loose bun
while a green ribbon, that matched her eyes, criss crossed and held any pieces that threatened to fall out of place. Everything about her apparel and style confirmed that she belonged to the Greek culture of the mortal world, yet she herself did not look as if she belonged. It was her hair, more specifically, the color.

As Sasuke took in the pale pink strands that hung around her face, he was reminded of the small blossom of the cherry trees he had seen in a land to the far east. Combined with the vivid green of her eyes, she took on the personification of spring. She looked like an ethereal being, destined to live in an epic life that was far beyond the imaginations of the mortals. But here she was, mortal, and ordinary. Doomed to a dull life among those who were born to die. In a way it possessed the poetic tragedy of the plays. Like the ones he had watched mortals perform on the stages of the amphitheaters from the shadows on nights he could not dedicate himself to corruption.

Her eyes moved back and forth between the two young men tangled on the ground as her chest moved heavily up and down. Her viridescent stare took in their faces and then, very slowly, they moved on to take in each of their wings. A look of awe replaced the shock in her eyes and it was then that both Naruto and Sasuke realized their situation.

Quickly Sasuke chanced a glance behind him to find Naruto looking back at him, they exchanged a silent panic for a moment and then, they were moving. Sasuke ripped Naruto’s arms from around his neck and pushed away from him as they each scrambled with a wild flap of wings and arms to get to their feet. Each of them ruffled their wings before quickly drawing them in until they had receded beneath their skin, leaving only the black markings that outlined the shape of what was once there. Brushing away any remaining dirt that clung to his clothing, Sasuke looked to Naruto who was still covered in a layer of dirt.

“Dobe,” Sasuke hissed. “Why did you not search the area before coming?”

Naruto looked beriffed at Sasuke’s accusation. “You bastard! How was I supposed to know! Your the one who has been out all night! I just barely arrived. If anyone should have been aware of someone being up here at the time it should of been you!” He finished, moving a pointed finger to poke Sasuke with a swift jab in the shoulder.

Sasuke reflexively slapped Naruto’s hand away before the blonde could touch him an growled. “You should have been searching the area when you flew down here, dead last! ”

“Don’t call me…” Naruto’s loud voice was cut off when the soft whisper of a question sounded in their ears.
“What are you?”

Sakura had not even realized the words had slipped from her mouth until the attention of both men moved to her. They seemed so normal now as they stood before her, that Sakura almost believed her eyes had played a trick on her. But she had seen it, she had seen them. Just a moment ago, there had been wings on both of their backs. She had seen the ruffle of feathers on the blonds back and felt the gust of wind when he had ruffled the dirt from his wings. And the pale dark haired one, she had seen the veins that ran through the membranous wings when the sunlight shown through them. Then there was the feeling inside of her bones, like a primitive instinct that screamed to her that these two, were no ordinary pair. They were not citizens of the city making their way up to the temple at the top of the mountain they were currently standing on.

At that thought, Sakura’s eyes widened and she quickly twisted her head to look up to the building that stood high above the land around them. Suddenly, a horrifying realization hit her. These men were not ordinary humans, in fact, they were not human at all. They were deities.

Her head twisted back to look at the pair in front of her and she quickly observed the blonde one. His skin was well tanned giving it a bronzed complexion that made his blond hair seem even brighter. Contrasting brilliantly with his blonde hair and sun kissed skin, his bright blue eyes took on the hue of a cloudless sky on the sunniest of days. In fact, everything about the man seemed to be the personification of the sun that was now currently shining down upon them so high in the sky. Sakura’s mind stalled. The sun. Deity. This man was Apollo.

Once her mind fractionally processed this information, her eyes slowly moved over to the dark haired man. If the one on the left was the personification of light and sunshine, this one was the opposite. His hair was ebony and his eyes matched the dark hue of his unruly spikey locks. Contrasting with the darkness of his eyes and hair, his skin was unusually pale. As if he spent his entire life in a dark cave far beneath the earth and today was the first time he had ventured out in a hundred years. High cheekbones and thin lips gave him a stoic and unapproachable look. Like the other one, he was handsome, but not it the same way. Unlike his sunny companion, he emitted an aura that made one feel uneasy if they gazed upon him for too long. There was an almost, visible darkness that surround him that warned Sakura that this man was dangerous. Every instinct told her to run, to flee from his presence but she already knew without trying that it would be a futile attempt. Her eyes moved up his defined jaw and aristocratic nose until she met his eyes. A shiver ran down her spine as she looked into the dark pools with in and then the identity of the man hit her. She swallowed the thick lump that formed in her throat. Any emotion she had felt before was lost to her as she was consumed with overwhelming terror. Hades, the god of death. There was no other deity that could hold such coldness in his eyes.

Her mind lost any further thought. Not minding the mud that her knees sank into or the gravel that dug into her hands, she fell to her hands and knees with her head bowed deeply.

“My lord Hades, my lord Apollo,” she quickly sputtered. “I apologize for not recognizing you before, I meant no disrespect. Please do not bring death to my home. Please continue to bless these
lands with day and the life giving sun that you give us. Please…”

The woman continued to sputter out nonsense as she refused to lift her head, sending her pleading words towards the ground in which she was kneeling in. Naruto could not make sense of anything she was saying. Her words were linked too quickly together with hardly a breath between her words. For one who was proficient in the art of blabbering on endlessly, the only thing that Naruto could conclude was that the girl was groveling. What about, he was at a loss. So he looked to Sasuke who was staring at the girl with an incredulous look on his lips.

“What is she talking about?” Naruto asked. “I did not know they were a monarchy in these parts. Since when did they elect a king?”

Sasuke rolled his eyes. “Idiot, she thinks we are gods.”

Naruto folded his arms and glared at him.

“Don’t call me that!” he shouted loudly causing Sasuke to flinch in pain by the invasion of volume into his ear. “Besides, how do you know that?”

Sasuke pinched the bridge of his nose as he tried to drown out the loudmouth’s antics as well as ignore the steady stream of apologetic words that were escaping the woman’s mouth. His earlier thought of her being deserving of something better was easily erased by the display of weakness she was currently displaying. It was pathetic. It was such a mortal thing to do. To cower before anything that was superior to them.

“Dobe, Hades is the deity of death for these people and Apollo is their sun god.” He dropped his hand and opened his eyes to look at him. “Don’t they teach you anything up in those clouds of yours or is there just too much air up there that its filled your head as well?”

Naruto let out a low growl but ignored his rivals words of insult. “Well if you’re so smart then, what do we do with her? She is hysterical!”

Sasuke shrugged as he crossed his hands across his chest. “Not my problem, she will get over it eventually.”

“And what if she doesn’t!” Naruto shot back to which Sasuke only gave another unconcerned shrug.
Naruto narrowed his eyes but knew it was fruitless. He wondered if there would ever be anything in this world that would soften the cold heart within his chest. He waved off the dark haired demon as he grumbled under his breath and walked towards the cowering girl.

Slowly, he lowered himself down to crouch to her level and gently placed a hand on her shoulder. Her entire body was shaking but the moment he touched her, she stiffened as her words that had flowing freely from her lips instantly ceased. Her head snapped up and Naruto was taken aback by the vivid green orbs that looked up at him. Startled by his close proximity, she jerked away from his touch. Falling back she backed away with her arms supporting herself from behind as her sandals scuffled against the ground to push herself away from him.

“Hey, hey,” Naruto quickly cooed in a calming tone, as if she were some sort of woodland creature he was attempting to coax out of hiding. “We’re not gods, don’t worry. We won’t hurt you.”

Her eyes scanned his, then flickered behind his shoulder to sneak a peek at Sasuke before returning to him. She angled her head to the side, looking at him sidelong with sceptic disbelief.

“If your not gods,” she began suspiciously, “Then what are you?”

“Ummm…”

Naruto hesitated. There was no law or commandment that forbid them from revealing their kind to humans. Mortals have always had knowledge of their kind, but like their gods, they were usually perceived as myths and legends. Believed in, but not seen. Seraphim never outwardly exploited themselves. It was taboo and believed that it would bring upon bad things.

“We’re just travelers,” Naruto began, his eyes looking around frantically for inspiration. His bright blue eyes landed on the temple high above them and he peeked up. “Come to pay patronage just like you!” He finished excitedly as he pointed up the steep slope.

The girl did not even look in the direction of his gesture. “I saw your wings.” She deadpanned.

Sasuke nearly let out a snort of amusement at the girls words. She may have had no dignity but at least she was not gullible. Naruto’s hand dropped down from pointing and moved to the back of his head. He let out a nervous laugh, with his eyes closed he rubbed the back of his head.
“Uh, you’re smarter than most mortals,” he opened his eyes in time to see her give him an offended look at his compliment. “Well you see, we are seraphim.”

She looked at him blankly as if the word meant nothing to her.

“I do not understand,” she stated slowly.

“Naruto.” Sasuke warned from behind him, but Naruto waved him off as he watched the girl’s eyes flicker to the dark haired boy.

“Um…you know the fallen and the blessed,” He continued, causing the girl to look back to him. But again there was no registry in her face at the words. “We collect souls of the mortal.”

At that he finally got a reaction, but it was not one he was hoping for. She instantly tightened up again.

“Hermes?” She breathed tentatively at him then glanced to Sasuke. “I thought Charon couldn’t leave the River Styx?”

Naruto frowned at the names, again they were unfamiliar to him, but before he could manage to even ask Sasuke or clarify with her, she was weeping large droplets of tears.

“Ppp...please...I am not ready!” She stuttered out in panicked sobs. “I am not ready to die!”

Naruto moved to grab her shoulders and comfort her but the moment his hands touched her she let out a scream and crawled from his grasp again.

“We’re not here to kill you!” Naruto shouted in panic. “We’re not…” he struggled to remember the new names she had uttered. “We aren’t who you think we are. Remember we are not gods or deities, we’re…” his mind scrambled to think of one of the more recent names he had heard mortals refer to them as, “angels! He yelled out.”
At that word the girl began to calm down as she looked at him with watery eyes. She let out a couple of hiccuped sobs as she collected herself and managed to repeat the word.

“Angels?” She asked. Naruto nodded and she glanced to Sasuke. “Both of you?”

“Well um...sure!” Naruto supplied, thinking it best not to differentiate between the two. He had a feeling the word demon would not be received as well as the word angel.

Technically speaking they were the same species, so he figured the white lie would be harmless. Perhaps if Sasuke were any other demon he would make sure she knew to stay away. But he knew Sasuke was different. He did not enjoy what his kind did. He corrupted those who would most likely corrupt themselves. He just helped them along. But the good natured and innocent, he left alone.

The girls eyes moved back to Naruto. “So you know what an angel is?” Naruto asked. “You understand we won’t hurt you?”

Slowly she nodded her head, her eyes slightly vacant as she seemed preoccupied with processing the information. Naruto smiled softly and cautiously stood up to walk towards Sasuke. The girl did not move a muscle as she continued to sit on the ground and stare forward at the muddy spot her broken pitcher had created.

“What do we do with her?” Naruto asked the dark haired demon. “She isn’t supposed to know about us.”

Sasuke’s eyes flickered from the girl on the ground to Naruto and narrowed. “What do you mean we? You told her, not me. Clean up your own mess.”

He turned and began to walk away but stopped when Naruto began yelling.

“Oi, bastard! I am not the only one who had my wings out! She saw them before I told her!”

Sasuke stopped, his hands clenched at his sides as he spun around to glare at Naruto.
“Then what do you want me to do?”

“Uh…” Naruto stalled as he looked back and forth between the his rival friend and the girl. “Can’t you just do your little eye thingy and make her forget?”

“My eye thingy?” Sasuke sneered incredulously. “You’re such an idiot.”

“You know what I mean!” Naruto defended. “Isn’t that one of the so called powers your family is proud of? Can’t you just hypnotize her to forget or something?”

Sasuke rolled his eyes at the blondes antics and he could not help but be further annoyed at the fact that Naruto was right. Letting out an annoyed sigh he stepped closer to the girl. He grabbed onto her arms and pulled her to her feet. A small gasp sounded from her lips as she took in a quick breath of air. She stiffened at his touch and he unconsciously tried to let his fingers loosen their hold on her shoulder.

Black orbs bled to red as he looked down at her. She froze, even her chest stopped moving for a long moment as she ceased to breath. It was his bloodline gift, the Sharingan that he looked down at her with. With his sight enhanced he took in the young woman’s face. He had done this hundreds of times over the years. Forced people to do unspeakable things with barely another thought. But as she looked back up at him, with those jade eyes that shimmered in the sunlight from her earlier tears, something inside resisted. He was not sure why, but he was suddenly overwhelmed with a desire he had never felt before. A desire to be remembered. For some strange reason, he did not want this young woman to forget him.

Sasuke frowned at the thought and narrowed his eyes down at her, annoyed with his hesitation. His glare caused her to break from her frozen state and she moved to take a step back but his grip tightened on her shoulder. He saw panic flash across her face and perhaps even fear. He did not like that look, the emotions did not suit her. He felt her eyes attempt to look away from his but he knew it would be impossible, once gazing upon the Sharingan, one could not look away unless the wielder willed it. A slight smirk curled at the corner of his mouth as he felt her fighting the draw his eyes had on her. But the smirk was short lived when the woman did the unthinkable, she blinked, and then she looked away, past his shoulder to Naruto.

“Please don’t hurt me,” she said with a slight tremble in her voice. “I will do anything, I won’t tell a soul, I will go to the temple every day and give patron to each of you. I swear, myself and my entire family will…”

“What is you name?” came the monotone voice of Sasuke.
She did not answer immediately, either too scared or too thrown off by the question. So he repeated his question, this time trying to sound a little more gentle.

“What shall I call you?”

“S...Sakura,” she stuttered out, her eyes hesitantly flickering to his face but carefully avoiding his eyes.

Sasuke stared down at the woman. *Sakura*, his mind tried out, not daring to let his tongue taste the name. It suited her, though it did not suit this region. His mind wondered how her family had come by such a name. Perhaps she came from a family of merchants that traveled or her ancestors came from different lands. These Greeks had already conquered many lands, perhaps she came from one of the lands they had taken under their control. Either possibility would not surprise him, but what did surprise him was that he was curious. Curious about this girl. This girl who was nothing but a mortal, whose life time would pass in a blink of an eye compared to himself.

“Hn,” he let out.

Then suddenly, he let her go and turned around. Sakura stared at his retreating back in shock as Naruto continued to look between her and Sasuke with a stunned expression.

**Ancient Greece Three Years Later….**

“Sasuke!” came the angry growl of the blonde haired and blue eyed boy that followed in pursuit of him.

Sasuke had heard his name being shouted from the mouth of the noisy seraphim for the thousands of time over the years he had collected so far in his immortal life. But never, in those collected years had he heard so much bitter betrayal and uncontained rage echoing out with his name. It was understandable, the smoke and screams that echoed from the ancient pavilion that sat atop the mountain was a testament to that. For it was Naruto’s family and friends that were screaming and dying within the temple, and it was by Sasuke’s family that they were being slain. He had known, in fact he was supposed to be doing his part in the slaying, but when the time came, he could not follow through with his uncles command. So instead, he ran away from the frey and it was because of this, he was running away from his rival, running away from his friend.

As blue lightning and yellow sunlight flashed in the darkness, each young man flew at each other with swift speed as they charged. Never had they fought with so much power, and never with so much intent to destroy, to kill. There was no stopping them at the velocity and ferocity in which
they surged forward. There would be no backing out of this blow for either of them. And so it was for this reason that when a third color, the delicate color of a cherry blossom in full bloom came between them, that each of the bickering men’s eyes widened with horror.

Sasuke barely heard her cry to cease above the chirping of his lightning when she ran between them. Her arms were outstretched, hands facing them in halt as her pink hair whipped around in the wind caused by Naruto’s Rasengan. He watched in heart wrenching slow motion as her attention moved from the blonde to whip around and gaze up at him. He was granted a whole of two heartbeats to gaze back into her emerald orbs that turned teal in the reflected light of his lightening before it all happened.

In unison, as both boys realized the impending doom that was about to happen, they each tried to direct their attack away from the frail mortal that stood between them. The relief that Sasuke felt has he watched his hand move away from her heart and her body was short lived as it moved past her shoulder and collided with Naruto’s ball of energy. The moment his electricity merged with his rotating ball, he felt his body being thrown back. Naruto flew back as well, slamming through several trees before coming to a stop. Sasuke was thrown into a wall of rock, while he instantly came to a stop, his body created a small dent with hundreds of cracks and fissures in the slab from the force he was thrown into it.

Sasuke shook his head, his usually perfect eyesight was blurry and disorienting. On weak legs he slowly stood and began to walk back. Blinking his eyes to bring clarity, he caught sight of Naruto stumbling out of the bushes. His blonde hair shone brightly in the night and his large eyes were easy to see as they reflected the moonlight. Sasuke felt a twinge of relief to see his long time rival still alive but then his heart stopped when the blonde seraph’s eyes locked onto something in the space between them. Sasuke followed the direction of his attention and took in the horrifying sight of the pink haired woman lying on the ground, motionless.

*Tsunade. We can take her to Tsunade, she could help her.*

Those were the words Naruto had said. They had been murmured with uncertainty and desperation by Naruto, but Sasuke took it as a promise. Tsunade would help her. She would heal her. She would save her. There would be no other option.

With every powerful stroke of his wings, Sasuke carried himself higher up towards the top of the mountain. Smoke billowed up in thick black clouds, suffocating the stars as the dark shadow consumed the temple. He could barely hear her heartbeats. They were so weak he wondered if they were even there. He counted the thuds coming from her chest and noticed they were spaced out more and more with time. Spurred by urgency, he quickened his climb. He could hear Naruto’s own wings beating heavily behind him as well. They were more muffled because of the feathers which was a testament to how much power the angel was putting into his wings to keep up. But Naruto had always been slower than him.
He came down to the ground with a heavy landing. The ground beneath his feet formed tiny fissures in the stone pathway where he landed as his eyes automatically moved searchingly. Naruto landed not long after and placed a hand on his shoulder when he moved to take a step forward.

“Wait here,” Naruto instructed. “I will go find her and bring her here.”

Sasuke stiffened at his words and bared his teeth to let out a snarl but then the reality of what had just taken place came crashing down on him. The Uchiha had just attacked, their objective had been to destroy, to massacre, to annihilate. Tsunade Senju could be dead.

“What happened!?” came the harsh bark of the busty blonde as she made her way down the steps of the temple. Naruto and Kakashi following not far behind.

Tsunade would have crushed his skull between her two powerful hands had it not been for the delicate mortal he held firmly in his arms. When he only looked at her blankly, the woman walked closer, her honey eyes watched him with every step she took towards him. When she was close enough, she slowly lowered her gaze to the pink haired woman in his arms.

“Help her.” His throat had been so dry and tight that the words had come out strained and barely audible.

At his words, her honey eyes moved back up to him and took in his face. They narrowed into slits and his heart beat frantically. It felt like an eternity but it was but a few moments later when she instructed him to lay her on the ground. Sasuke followed her command with a gentle movement before taking a step back as he stared down at the woman examining the woman lying on the ground. He heard her ask again what happened but he could not bring himself to speak a single word. So it was Naruto who began to frantically explain the events that had led to the injured woman being brought to her. Naruto’s words became muffled white noise to his ears as Sasuke focused on the struggled rise and fall of Sakura’s chest. He was so focused on her breathing, that it took several barks of Tsunade to get his attention.

“Uchiha!” she barked causing his eyes to snap sharply at the womans spiteful tone of his family name. “Within the Naka shrine on the north side of the temple, have you ever seen a cup? It would be in the shape of a chalice, it would be gold and would have the insignia of Ōtsutsuki.”

Sasuke looked at her in confusion, but as his mind raced through the memories of the times he had entered the shrine, he could not recall ever seeing. He shook his head which seemed to cause an annoyance in the woman’s face.
“I need you to go to the shrine, find it, and bring it here,” she instructed going back to hover over the pink haired woman.

Sasuke narrowed his eyes. “I am not leaving her.” He said sternly. “Send the dobe.”

Tsunade’s head snapped up. “You are the only one who has access to that temple!” She snapped. “Now stop this nonsense and go! Every moment you waste she gets closer to death!”

There was no need for her to say anything else. He was already in the air and sailing swiftly to the opposite side of the temple where his family’s shrine stood proudly, the only structure on the top of the mountain that had only acquired minimal damage.

It did not take him long to enter the lower level hidden beneath the stone slab in the entryway. Once he descended the stairs, he immediately began to scan the room. His eyes gazed around, catching sight of the old relics and dusty tomes of his ancestors. He did not let his keen eyes miss a thing, taking in every detail of each item but to his frustration, nothing looked anything like Tsunade had described. In his frustration, he grabbed ahold of a heavy trunk and threw it against the far wall, letting out an frustrated scream as it smashed against the wall. It burst into pieces and fell to the floor with a clatter of splintered wood.

He fell to his knees as heavy gasps of air sounded from his lips as he did his best to contain the choked sobs that threatened to take over. With deep calming breaths, Sasuke slowly began to calm down. As he let in the slow breaths of air, he suddenly became aware of something. The room was sealed far beneath the earth, there were no windows and the door that he had opened to enter the room had sealed itself automatically, so when he felt the faint cool draft of air, he was confused.

His eyes circled until they caught sight of the torch that was flickering in the breeze. Next to it, where the chest he had thrown had landed, was a small crack in the wall. He was to his feet and crossing the room in an instant. His hand went to the crack automatically and traced the fissure, feeling the cool breeze that escaped until he reached the middle. There his fist clenched and in one fluid motion he brought his arm back and slammed it against stone. Several more breaks formed and he did it again. This time, as his hand slammed against the stone it broke away and his fist traveled through the wall. As small pieces of stone and dust fell from the hole as he removed his hand, Sasuke peeked in and his heart leapt. Tipped over on its side, resting behind the wall in a hidden cove was a chalice. Not just any chalice. It was dusty and tarnished but engraved on the side of the cup, Sasuke made out the design of the ancient symbol of the Ōtsutsuki, the symbol that had once represented all seraphim before the schism of Indra and Ashura.

He was racing back to the small group gathered around the limp body that lay on the ground. For a moment he thought he had taken too long but then he saw the faint rise and fall of Sakura’s chest in the faint green light of Tsunade’s chakra as it flowed into her.

At the sound of his racing footsteps, Tsunade looked up at him. “Fill it with water, quickly,” she
instructed as she pointed to the small fountain beside them.

Sasuke veered for the pooled water and filled the cup. With steady steps and minimal spillage, he raced back to Sakura's side. Tsunade took the cup from him wordlessly as she gently sat Sakura up. With a small tilt of the chalice, she pressed the cup to her lips and poured a small amount into her mouth until it began to dribble down her chin. He heard Tsunade quietly coax Sakura to swallow the mouth full and watched with relief and he watched her throat bob up and down as Sakura began to drink. It was agonizingly slow but finally, when the chalice was empty, Tsunade set the cup down and lay Sakura back down on the ground.

He was not sure what to expect. A bright light, a gasping breath, a chorus from the heavens. But none of those happened. In fact, everything remained unnervingly normal. Crickets chirped, a small breeze passed by and ruffled his bangs, the steady stream of the fountain continued to bubble. And Sakura remained completely still and unresponsive.

He felt sick. The sight of her pale skin and lack of movement gave the illusion that she was already passed on, so instead of focusing on what she looked like, he set his eyes on her closed lids and willed them to open. As his eyes focused on her closed lids, he focused all of his hearing on the weak faint heartbeat that sounded within her barely rising chest.

Thud.

It was slow and sluggish.

Thud.

He noticed Tsunade frowning and press a flicker of green light into Sakura’s chest.

...Thud…

There was no heartbeat that followed.

Tsunade’s green light faded and her shoulders slouched. After a long silent pause, she looked up from Sakura’s body, her honey eyes free of her earlier animosity as she looked up at him with apology. Sasuke did not like this, he preferred the hatred. He wanted to see fury. He wanted to see spite. He wanted to see accusation. Anything but this sympathetic and silent apology.
“I am sorry,” he saw, rather than heard her say. “She is gone.”

Sasuke stared down at the still and lifeless shell that once held the most precious of souls he had ever laid eyes on. He searched for any sign or lingering source of the pure life that once flowed in her veins, but he saw nothing. There was nothing. Her soul was gone, Sakura was gone.

It started as a dull ache, like the one felt when resisting the urge to cry, but then it erupted. Pain beyond anything he had ever felt burned at his eyes. His vision became clouded with a red tinge and he snapped them shut. With shaking hands he pressed his palms against his lids in hopes to relieve the pain and felt something warm and sticky seep from between his shut lids. He opened them slowly as he pulled his hands away to see blood staining his palms.

His shoulders heaved heavily up and down as a tremor shook throughout his body. Anger, grief, hatred, they all coursed through his veins and suddenly, he was overcome with an urge he had never felt before in his life. Revenge. Revenge on what, he did not know. So his eyes searched for something to blame. Red irises in the shape of flowers flashed up to the group around him. Tsunade looked back at him and watched as she flinched slightly and dropped her eyes to the ground. He watched as Kakashi’s single visible eye widened as he looked into his own eyes. Then he moved his gaze to Naruto. Naruto looked at him with similar, agonized pain that Sasuke was currently struggling to suppress as he let the hatred flow.

“You said she would save her,” he hissed at Naruto. When Naruto failed to provide any defense, his tone darkened. “You will pay for this. You will all pay for this!”
Present Day: New York

“I thought we already talked about this!” Sakura groaned into her hands as she leaned forward onto the coffee table. “You should know this by now. Children who can’t even read know this.”

“I am sorry but I am failing to understand why you are distressed about my actions?”

Sakura looked up from her palms to look at her dark haired mentee.

“Are you kidding me?” She asked, sounding exasperated. “You stole a woman’s purse!”

“But I gave it to a homeless man and the female looked like she had plenty to spare.” The young man replied without a change in his tone. “I do not understand how I am at fault. Am I mistaken in my understanding that it is good to take pity on the poor? Is that against the rules of morality?” The man asked, his tone taking up a hint of concern as he quickly withdrew a notepad and began skimming through its pages.

All frustration and and anger she felt earlier dissipated as she watched him. He really was trying, she had to give him credit for his efforts. And the genuine distress that was conveyed during these moments told her that there was still hope. Before he could flip another page, Sakura leaned over the table and pushed the notepad down from his face. As she disrupted his searching, he looked up at her quizzically, his black eyes staring back at her with curiosity.

“Look Sai,” she began. “What you did...it was done with good intention....but you executed it wrongly.”

He cocked his head to the side. “How do you mean?”
“Helping those less fortunate is good. But stealing from others to do that is still wrong, even if you meant well. Yes the woman has more than enough to spare, but it is still her money to choose what she is to do with it. You cannot dictate what she does with it without her permission.”

“But the book you gave me said it was okay.”

Sakura looked at him in confusion. “What book?” She asked, certain that no book she had ever given him had told him it was okay to steal.

At her question, Sai turned to the shoulder bag in the empty chair next to him and began to dig through its contents. He pulled out a sketch book and several pencils before finally pulling out an old, leather bound book and set it down on the table. Sakura recognized it instantly. Printed on the cover was the title Fairy Tales for Children. Below the title was a picture of young girl wearing a red cape and speaking to a wolf as she stood on a dirt path surrounded by trees. Before she could say anything, Sai began thumbing through the pages until he reached a certain story, then turned it around on the table so that Sakura could look at it up right. The moment she saw the title of the story and the picture of a man dressed in tights and a green tunic as he leaned on his bow, she let out a groan.

Of course the one moral he learned from the children’s book would be steal from the rich and give to the poor, her inner self moaned and Sakura could not agree more.

“Perhaps I was mistaken, but I was led to understand that the outlaw in this story was the hero.” Sai asked in genuine curiosity. “Or was the sheriff supposed to be the good guy? I did not find the man to be noble, but policemen are noted to be heroic occupations if performed correctly. And he was following the laws of the land…”

Sakura pinched the bridge of her nose as she listened to Sai ponder aloud. Here she thought today was going to be an easy day.

“Sai,” Sakura interjected with a heavy sigh. “Robin Hood is the good guy in this story.”

“But he was stealing from the rich and giving to the poor.” Sai countered. “Was I not doing the same thing? How can two people do the same action but one of them be in the right while the other is wrong?”

He had a point, Sakura thought to herself.
“Yes he did,” she admitted. “But the people who he was stealing from were bad and he knew that. The woman you stole from is not bad.”

“How do you know that?”

Sakura grimaced. “Okay I don’t know that for sure, but neither did you. She could have been bad, she could have been the most deplorable person on the earth right now. But she could have also been good. Maybe she has a charity and gives to thousands of homeless people every day.” He looked at her blankly, making her feel even more like a failure. “Look, the point is, we don’t know her situation, but we know yours. It is not for us to punish others for their bad behavior. What matters is that you are doing good and doing it in the right way. One wrong and one right leaves you the same.”

“But Robin…”

“It’s just a story Sai,” Sakura interrupted, growing weary with the debated dilemma.

“But is it not believed that the story is based on a real person?” Sai asked.

Sakura let out a weary sigh as she looked down at her now cold coffee. “Look why don’t we take a break today,” she said tiredly as she looked up at him.

There was a small frown on his face. “You are angry,” he noted as a small look of dejection filled his eyes. “I am sorry to disappoint you.”

Her heart strings pulled at his words and she quickly covered his hand as he reached out to collect his things.

“Hey,” she said softly causing him to look at her. “I am not angry. In fact I am proud of you. You have come a long way and what you did today was good. Just, next time, maybe offer your own money or buy the man a meal instead…okay?”

Sai looked at her for a long moment, his dark eyes searching her face for any deception. When he seemed satisfied that she had been speaking honestly, he gave her a smile and nodded. Sakura
could not help but smile as well as she watched his eyes close and his lips move awkwardly into a curve to form the actions.

“Come on,” she said, trying to keep in her laugh. “Let’s go to the park, we can sit on the swings while you draw.”

Sakura let out a happy hum as she tilted her head up to the sky and absorbed the warmth of the descending sun. She loved this time of the year. The trees were just beginning to blossom and the air was warm enough to not require layers. With a deep inhale, she breathed in the floral scent being carried through the air as the breeze rustled the honey locust that bloomed nearby. Her vivid green eyes opened up to the sky to watch the clouds then slowly fell down to the young man sitting on the swing beside her. She pushed herself gently with the tips of her toes as she watched Sai pull out a sketch pad and begin to draw. As she quietly watched him draw the small boy and his father on the grassy field in front of the swings, she began to ponder what to do with him.

He truly had grown and progressed. No longer was he getting better at interpreting emotions, but he was also beginning to express them himself. While not always accurate, he was still better than before when he seemed to be an empty shell. He had been incapable of understanding even the concept of the simplest emotions. And his actions, or at least the intention behind his actions, were more or less good. Though there was still much more for him to learn and her work was far from over.

“Hey Sakura!” came a loud shout from across the park.

Both Sakura and Sai turned around at the call of her name. There was no missing the newcomer as he ran towards them, dressed in an orange sweatshirt, he was a bright beacon to all around him. And like a beacon, he drew the attention of several around him as he ran with his hands wildly waving around. Sakura sighed, the definition of subtlety and blending in was never Naruto’s forte.

“Hey Naruto,” she greeted as he strode up to them with a broad grin on his face.

“Hello dickless,” Sai chimed with a closed eyed smile and stiff wave.

At the nickname Naruto glowered at the pale faced boy and Sakura let out a groan. And here she was just thinking about the progress he had made.

“Sai we just talked about name calling the other day,” she groaned.
“But it’s…”

“Oh never mind,” she cut in with impatience before looking back to Naruto. “What are you doing here?”

“Tsunade sent me to come get you,” he reported. “It’s getting late.”

Sakura looked at the sky. The sun had begun its decent, leaving purple and pink streaks across the clouds that littered the sky. It was late in the day, but there was still plenty of time before sunset. She frowned but nodded and stood anyways. That was another reason why she liked this time of the year, with each passing day, the sun's light lingered longer and gave her more time to enjoy things.

She turned to Sai, “I will see you tomorrow, be safe and make good choices,” she said with a quick wave.

He gave her his usual imitation of a smile and waved back. “See you ugly.”

Sakura’s shoulder sagged in defeat and turned to Naruto who was looking at Sai with an unsettled look.

“You know,” Naruto said lowly when they had made it a far enough distance, “as much as I dislike him spreading inaccuracies about my pe…”

“Don’t you dare finish that sentence,” Sakura warned.

“Errr um…my…you know,” Naruto panically altered while watching Sakura’s clenched hand closely, “anyways, what you really need to work on, is making him look less creepy when he smiles.” He paused for a moment looking thoughtful. “And while you’re at it, maybe work on his wardrobe. Guy looks like a pedofile wearing that belly shirt around the park. If he smiles at the wrong person you’re going to be bailing him out of jail with a sexual predator registration stamped across his forehead.”

Sakura shot him a dark glare. Taking a few quick steps she rounded on him, hands on her hips and
eyes narrowed. “I will have you know that Sai has made a lot of progress. You should be impressed that he can even manage the attempt to show an emotion!” She defended.

Naruto raised both his hands in surrender. “Okay, okay, I know, geez,” he quickly said not wanting to goad Sakura’s unpredictable temper any further. “I was just kidding,” he said before muttering under his breath, “sort of.”

“What was that?” She said as she balled her fists again.

At the sound of her knuckles cracking, Naruto panicked and his mind went to self preservation mode. Distract and distance.

“Race you home!” He quickly blurted before he took off in a quick run.

Taking his hoodie off with a smooth motion and tying it around his waist without slowing down, he quickly leapt high into the air as a blinding light flashed around him. Sakura looked away, shielding her eyes before looking back to her friend when the light dimmed. Sakura watched him as he soared upward, his white wings catching the descending sunlight and alighting them with an orange hue. Like wings of flame, they beat widely as he gained altitude. Then as he tipped forward when his wings folded in close to his body, he dove back down towards her.

“Come on slowpoke!” He cheered as he swooped past her. “You’re making this too easy!” He shouted behind him as he soured back up towards the clouds.

The gust from his wings ruffled her pink hair and blew away all anger and annoyance she had harbored earlier for her blonde friend. A wide grin spread across her pink lips as she crouched down in preparation. With a sudden burst of energy she sprung up with the agility of a bounding deer. In a flurry of smokey light and feathers, Sakura began to gain altitude. Large feathered wings protruding from her back between the spaces of her tank top. Unlike her companion her wings did not reflect the sunlight, instead, the contrasted darkly against the still light sky as the black feathers beat through the air in pursuit.

The sun was just beginning to fully set by the time they approached the veiled split in the sky that would take them to their home in the sky above. To the human eye it would look like nothing more than a rift in a cloud, a fissure in the earth's ceiling. But to them it was the doorway to home. Together they flew through it, the cooler air of the altitude suddenly warming as they passed through and in the blink of an eye, they were landing in a whole new world.
Sakura had always thought Earth was beautiful. She had seen so many cities and gone to a vast amount of villages in the countrysides spread through the mortal realm. The extensive variety of scenery in which the various terrains and climates created was her favorite. Each point of earth had its own unique beauty. But despite this, they were all incomparable to the ethereal beauty that her home in the sky possessed. The green vegetation was more vibrant, the water was always sweeter, and the scents more enticing.

Water dumped over a high cliff that rose not too far from them. Its thundering crash drummed along with the soothing songs of birds as the waterfall fell down to pool into a small lake at the base of the cliff. The lake fed into a meandering river that traveled through a large meadow of wildflowers that bloomed all year. In the middle, sat a large tree with thousands of buds that had yet to bloom. It was called the God Tree and it was by far the most beautiful sight to behold when it was in full bloom. She had witnessed the phenomenon only twice in her life and it had brought tears to her eyes each time.

“Hey,” Naruto called from up a path with a river stone wall that ran parallel to it. “Common let’s go, Tsunade will want to talk to you and I don’t want to get in trouble because I did not deliver you on time.”

Breaking her eyes away from the serene picture in front of her, Sakura began to follow him on the long path way that led up to a city. Built with such great craftsmanship and design, the city itself created a sight one could gaze upon for thousands of years and not get weary of its architecture. Quickening her pace, she ran to catch up with her friend who wrapped a warm arm around her shoulders as they walked together.

Sakura knocked on the large cherry wood double door, its red grained wood lacquered and polished to give off a small reflection. When she heard the unmistakable bellow of her mentor to enter, she pushed one of the doors open and stepped in. The circular room was lined with a dozen marbled stone pillars, with gold filigree that wound up them like vines, they rose up to support the ceiling that stood high above them. The ceiling itself was made up of panned glass. Each piece a different shade and color, creating a rainbow of light to be cast down into the room. On the walls, between the spaces of each pillar, hung a ceiling to floor oil painting. Each one depicting events pulled from the history of seraphim.

The first was of a beautiful woman bestowing a pair of wings to a small group of men and women. Each of them kneeling proudly before her. The next few conveyed similar beauty and peace, the years of tranquility. But as the viewer took in the rest that followed, darkness and war began to become a more common theme within the paintings. The last depicted a man with a long mane of dark hair and blood red eyes. Even as a painting, his eyes were hypnotic and seemed to pierce into her very soul as he watched from the smoke filled and desolate landscape that surround him on the canvas. At his feet lay several blessed, their white wings broken and bent and their feathers stained
A shiver ran down Sakura’s spine as she looked at it. She had never met Madara Uchiha, he was from a time long before her existence, but she knew the stories. He had been the leader of the fallen during a significant span of events within the seraphim world. He had made peace with the first Senju leader but that peace was long broken when he betrayed his friend. Some say he had gone mad, that he had been poisoned with a tainted love. Sakura believed this to be true, for it was unfathomable that someone could do the things that he had done. He had gone on a tirade and made it his quest to run the Senju to extinction. Something he had very nearly achieved with the exception of one. Even the fallen thought he was no longer stable enough to led and so another member of the Uchiha took up the underworld’s throne. Things had been relatively quiet in the few hundred years that had proceeded afterwards. It was not peace, but it was at least a period of balance and order. Souls were claimed and casualties were far and few. But that all changed when an official proposal of peace was extended. After the fateful night in which the peace council was held, everything changed. The blessed had been betrayed again and a vast number of them had died that night, including her parents.

At least, that is what she had been told. She did not see them die. Or more specifically, she could not remember. She could not recall anything from that night or really anything of her life before. She had vague pictures and recollections. Faceless silhouettes that remained silent and still. Scents that brought a feeling of nostalgia but with no memory to connect it to. She had no real memories. She could not remember being raised by her parents or anything from her childhood. It was a strange phenomenon. It was almost as if she had suddenly come into existence the day after the disastrous peace council. And it was all due to an injury she had received that night.

She had been found by Tsunade who had healed her and taken her in. Her, Naruto, and Kakashi were her family now. Naruto was the brother she loved unconditionally. He was loud and obnoxious, but he always knew how to make her feel better. They shared each other's secrets and defended the other when anyone tried to speak lowly to them.

Kakashi was a little more difficult to label. He was a very construed version of a father figure. He had been the one to teach her how to fly again. It had been difficult and humiliating. A seraph learned to fly when they learned to walk. For any seraph her age, as young as she had been at the time, flying should have been as easy as breathing. But for her, it was awkward and strenuous. It was as if her muscles had no memory of the actions, as if she had never flown in her life before the injury. But Kakashi had been patient and she had eventually perfected the art. He was also the only one she had ever felt truly comfortable with when she had her wings out. And it was only because he himself shared in a discoloration in his feathers, though his was slight in comparison to hers.

Tsunade was her mentor but even more, she was like a mother. She took her in and taught her how to use her strength and how to handle her chakra. She was strict and hard in her training, but after every bruising and beaten lesson, she would take her home and run a soothing bath for Sakura to relax in. Following her bath, Tsunade would sit her down on a chair and brush her hair with soft
strokes as she told wonderous stories that Sakura should have known but could not remember. It was what she imagined her real mother would have done and made the emptiness of not knowing her real mother feel a little less empty.

With thoughts of Tsunade in her mind, Sakura naturally turned her head to the center of the room. Located in the middle of the room was a raised dais with a beautifully carved chair positioned in the middle. Made of rich mahogany, the shortened back of the chair allowed one to sit easily with their wings out. Seated in the chair slouched Tsunade, making the seat look more like a recliner than an extravagant throne. Standing in front of her was Shizune as she relayed a days worth of messages and reports to Tsunade as the blonde gave more attention to a porcelain bottle than the woman speaking to her.

Upon Sakura’s entry, Tsunade looked up from the bottle of saké. Giving a dismissive gesture with one hand to Shizune, she beckoned Sakura with the other. Shizune gave a small bow then turned to leave. She gave a small, sympathetic smile as she passed by that told Sakura what kind of mood their lady was in. Though she was not surprised when she had spotted the saké. Sakura rarely saw her mentor in any other mood when the drink was in her hand, except for maybe, the one time she ventured with her mentor to the earth city of Las Vegas. She shuddered at the nightmare of an experience. Sakura had nearly killed herself trying to keep her teacher from exposing her angelic powers to the entire room of gamblers in the casino they had been in.

“My lady,” Sakura said with a small bow of her back.

“Enough of that,” Tsunade snapped. “I have had enough of bending and bowing for the day.”

Sakura quickly straightened which seemed to bring about an amused smile to the Senju’s lips. The pink haired girl nervously chewed her lip, unsure if she should speak or wait for the woman who had summoned her to speak first. When Tsunade’s attention seemed to drift back to the shortly forgotten bottle of sake in her hand, Sakura deemed it best to prompt her mentor so that she might escape before Tsunade drank herself farther from sobriety.

“Naruto said you wanted to speak with me?” Sakura proded.

Tsunade paused, her container of saké half way to her mouth as she looked at Sakura. At first it seemed as if Tsunade had no recollection of doing such a thing. And then, something changed in her face as she seemed to remember as to why Sakura was there.

“Ah, yes.” She said, taking a swig of alcohol. Her face barely cringed from the burn of the alcohol having grown used to it over the countless centuries she had clung to her drinking habit. “How are
things going with Sai? I heard about the incident that happened today.”

“He is improving, today was just a misunderstanding,” Sakura clarified although her voice held a slight tone of disappointment.

Tsunade raised a brow. “I would think such news would be given with a bit more enthusiasm,” she commented in a teasing tone. When Sakura only gave a wane smile, Tsunade sat up at attention, a look of concern on her face. “Is there something wrong? Is someone else influencing him?”

Sakura shook her head. “No nothing like that.” She quickly assured. “I just...I had hoped he would have progressed more. It’s been two years and he still struggles with the basics.”

Tsunade relaxed back into her chair as a look of relief appeared on her face and she nodded. “Do not get too discouraged. Despite what you might think, you have made good progress with that one. That traitor Danzo played quite the number on those orphans. It is why I assigned you to one of them. They require the best if they are to be saved. Sai’s progress may be slow when compared to the others you have been guardian to, but he is a special case. When comparing him to the others that were in Danzo’s clutches, I fear he will be one of the few that will be able to recover from the damage.”

Sakura nodded meekly as she looked down at her feet. It was true, Sai certainly was the most lost of souls she had ever been assigned to. It was just over two years ago that he was put into her care to guide him back.

Danzo Shimura had been one of the high council members for longer than Sakura could remember. He was highly influential. Some even said he had been considered for the position of leading the blessed. It had been back when Minato died during the Uchiha betrayal of the peace talks in the greek era. He had always been bitter about Tsunade being selected over him. She had been a disgrace of their kind, falling in love with a mortal and spending numerous years drinking and gambling amongst mortals. Some even still questioned her ways. And because of this, Danzo had quite a supportive group until two years ago when it was discovered that he was corrupting mortals and using them to gain his own power. He had been executed for his actions immediately but his devious ways had left a mark on their angelic work. Sai had been one of these marks. He was just one of many mortal children who had been corrupted nearly to the point of no return. Tsunade had assigned the best of her guardian angels to them but few were showing any progress of improving.

“If that is all there is to report,” Tsunade said, interrupting Sakura’s thoughts. “Then you may go.”

Sakura nodded and moved to bow but then thought better of it and instead simply turned to walk
away. She had not even fully turned her back to her mentor before she came to a pause. She looked back to see Tsunade smiling gleefully at her bottle of saké before noticing Sakura was still there.

“Was there something else that you wished to discuss with me?”

Sakura turned to fully face Tsunade. She folded her hands behind her back as she looked down at the ground.

“I was just wondering...if maybe...would you maybe…”

“Spit it out brat I haven’t got all day,” Tsunade growled.

Sakura flinched at the bite in her words but it was enough to spur her forward. “I wanted to know if you have given any more consideration in my request to progress and be an archangel.” She quickly blurted out as she bent forward in a respectful bow.

There was a long pause and all Sakura could hear was the pounding of her own heart. She slowly peeked up through her bangs to see Tsunade looking at her with a pinched expression.

“I have,” she replied stonely and Sakura’s heart skipped a beat. “And my answer is no. You are not ready yet.”

Sakura frowned. “But you yourself said I was getting stronger!” She argued. “Kakashi himself said that my skills in chakra control would be useful. He said…”

“Well Kakashi doesn’t decide if you are ready now does he?” Tsunade snapped back. “And besides, you cannot just abandon your guardianship of Sai, he needs you.”

“But I can still help Sai and hunt…”

There was a shatter that echoed throughout the room as Tsunade’s hand clutched the saké jar too tightly.
“I said no!” She bellowed, her thunderous voice cutting off any retort that Sakura might have had as the glass windows above them rattled.

As Tsunade’s resounding rejection died in the air, the only sound left was the drops of saké hitting against the stone floor as they dripped from Tsunade’s drenched hand. Sakura stared hard at the small pool forming amongst the shattered pieces of the broken bottle. Her eyes burned from the threat of angry tears but she refused to let them fall. Without another word she turned on her heal and stomped away from the throne. She heard Tsunade let out a tired sigh of regret but it was not enough to stop the pink haired seraph from slamming the throne room door as hard as she could.

She heard the wood groan from the force, threatening to break but she ignored it. It would not be the first time it happened and it certainly seemed it would not be the last. Leaning against the closed door she let out a heavy, dejected sigh. She had known the answer before she had already asked the question. It was the same as every other time, yet this rejection tasted just as bitter as the first.

She let out another sigh as she let her eyes close. When she had calmed herself enough, she opened them back up to see the first of stars beginning to appear in the sky. Naruto and Kakashi would be leaving soon and as much as it hurt for her to watch them depart without her, she knew she could not disappoint them. She had seen them off every night since Naruto got his promotion and as much as she was disappointed in herself, she would not disappoint them.

A small frown pulled at her lips as she walked down the path to the portal. There were many things in her long life that she did not understand. Normally she did not question them, but on the rare occasion that she did, it was half answers or a quick change of subject that she would receive as an answer. For the most part she was patient and accepted what was given to her. But she was beginning to grow weary of it. She was getting weary of many things. One of them being just how delicately everyone treated her. She loved being a guardian but she wanted more. She wanted to be more helpful. She wanted to prove to herself and everyone else that she was strong. Things were getting worse on earth, at least that is what she had heard Naruto and Kakashi whispering to each other about. If that was the case she wanted to be ready.

Naruto was already standing at the gate as he waited for Kakashi before descending back down to Earth. Sakura slowly meandered towards him, with her eyes cast down to the ground. So she missed the scrutiny of her friend and had not thought to hide her distress before he would notice.

“What's wrong?” Naruto asked causing her to look up at him.

“Huh? Oh, nothing,” Sakura sighed. “I am just tired. That is all.”
She came up next to him and plopped down on the ground with her legs crossed. Naruto followed suit as he slid down the wall until he sat with his knees bent and arms resting across them.

“You asked her about going with us didn’t you?” He said after a short pause. “My guess is that it did not go as you hoped?”

Sakura let out a sigh and let her head fall back so she could look at the sky.

“I do not understand,” Sakura breathed out in frustration. “She keeps setting standards that I have to meet in order to qualify and then when I meet that standard, she comes up with a new one. You did not even have to go through half of what I have done.”

Naruto gave her a sheepish smile that was half guilt and half sympathy. “What standard did she tell you this time?”

Sakura let out a scoff and clucked her tongue. “She didn’t even bother giving me one this time. She just said no and gave the excuse that I was not ready.” She let out a grunt and bowed her head. “Am I really not as strong as I think I am? Does she really think I am so weak I cannot handle myself? I just...feel so useless.” Her last words were quiet, barely whispered and filled with so much vulnerability that it caused Naruto to frown. He did not like it when Sakura doubted herself.

“Hey, don’t think like that.” Naruto dissuaded as he put an arm around her shoulders. “You are strong Sakura. Hell, we both know you are stronger than me in an arm wrestle!” He let out a small chuckle but when she did not respond in same he sobered slightly. “Look. It took Tsunade nearly a millennium to finally let you start as a guardian, and look at you now. You are one of the best guardian angels that we have! Hell, you are the best. Although Guy and Lee may have you beat for enthusiasm.”

That earned a small chuckle from her and Naruto quickly went on. “Listen Sakura. I know you want this, but I am sure Tsunade has her...reasons...for doing what she does. Perhaps it's for the best. I know you would do great with Kakashi and me but being an archangel is a lot different than guardian. It changes you and it's dangerous.”

“I know that,” Sakura growled as she whipped her head to the side to look at him. Her hands clenched into fists and Naruto eyed them warily. He had seen what those tiny hands could do. “Why else would I have spent all those years in training with Tsunade?!? It sure as hell wasn’t for the bruises!” She quickly stood from the ground and looked down at him. “You know, I used to
think that you wanted me to team with you and Kakashi but it seems like your just as determined as she is to keep me cooped up here as much as possible!"

She began to walk away and she heard Naruto scrambled to his feet.

“Sakura,” he called, reaching out to stop her.

As his hand caught her shoulder firmly, she stopped. They both knew she could easily break from his grip but he was relieved when she stayed still. He took in a deep breath, unsure of what to say. He did want her to join them and he knew she would be a good asset to their team. Kakashi believe in her, but Kakashi had always been more lenient with her. It was because of his convincing that Tsunade even assigned her a trial based guardianship. It had been supervised extensively, as was her second and third mortal. It was not until her sixth assignment that Tsunade allowed her to be assigned a solo mission. And even then she often sent either himself or Kakashi to escort her to the ground or home when she left particularly early or stayed late. It was not because they thought her weak. They just feared what could happen should a demon see her, one demon in particular.

Run ins with Sasuke had been far and few over the past centuries. But each time he had changed. He had become stronger, faster...darker. The deeds he had done where sometimes unfathomable ever since that night. He did not know if Sasuke would even remember Sakura, but something within Naruto told him that there was no forgetting a soul like hers. Perhaps he would have trusted the old Sasuke, but this new version of his friend was unpredictable. One of the more recent times they had run into each other, Sasuke had nearly torn one of his wings off. An injury that would have been unmendable even with Tsunade’s healing abilities.

Naruto had thought he had lost Sasuke completely back then. But then Sasuke had been the one to give the killing blow to Orochimaru back during the mortals second world war. The snake had once been counted among the blessed but he fell when he became hungry for power. Sasuke had been his apprentice for quite some time but then something changed. Naruto was not sure exactly what had cause Sasuke to turn on his master, but he hoped it meant the was some glimmer hope for his friend.

Since then Sasuke had been quiet. They had heard rumors of sightings but Naruto and Kakashi had not seen him in more than half a century. He hated the fact that he had kept such an important thing from his friend but there was no telling what Sasuke would do if he saw Sakura. If he knew what they had done, what they had kept hidden from him and nearly the rest of the seraphim world, both fallen and blessed. The knowledge could destroy them all. He shivered at the thought and suddenly became aware that Sakura was watching him very closely. Too closely for one as perceptive as she. He gave her one of his trademark grins.

“Some day you will join us,” he said optimistically as he stuck his thumb in the air. “Believe it!”
Unable to resist his warmth, Sakura returned his smile and wrapped her arms around her friend in a tight hug.

“Thanks Naruto,” she whispered in his ear.

The rustle of feathers and a light thud on the grass caused them to pull apart and look at the new comer.

“Yo,” greeted Kakashi with a single crinkle of his right eye, the only indication that he was smiling from the small amount of his visible face.

“You’re late!” Naruto screamed as he took a stance and shoved an accusing finger in his face.

“Sorry about that, I got lost on…”

“The road of life, yeah, yeah.” Naruto finished for him as he waved him off. “Come on let's go.”

“Just a moment,” the silver haired angel said as he placed a hand on the blonde’s shoulder.

Kakashi produced a bundle of cloth from seemingly out of nowhere and threw it towards Sakura. Taken off guard Sakura caught it as the soft bundle hit her in the face and she lowered her arms to glare at Kakashi who was smiling at her expectantly. It was then that Sakura looked down to see what exactly had been thrown at her. It was a pair of black jeans and a silky black shirt that had shimmering sequences on the front. They danced in the moonlight, twinkling like stars as she unfolded to admire the article of clothing. It was the perfect cut and style that she preferred but it was an odd gift coming from Kakashi. Confused she looked up at the silver haired man to find him holding out a pair of booties and a leather jacket.

“It still gets cold down there at night during this time of year so you will want this,” he gave with no other explanation.

Sakura continued to stare, then she looked at Naruto who was looking just as perplexed as she felt. And then it dawned on her. With eyes alight with excitement she whirled her head back to Kakashi.
“You mean…” she began, unable to voice it fully as she tried to contain her excitement for fear that she was misunderstanding. It was too good to be true.

“Yep,” Kakashi said with a cheerful tone. “That is only if you want to start tonight, I heard it was a bit of a tiresome day with Sai. I am sure you would like to just go get some rest, maybe start fresh…”

He was cut off when Sakura snatched the boots and jacket from him and dashed off to change behind a tree. She stepped out a few minutes later adjusting the leather coat. She was happy to find that it fit perfectly and had two slits in the back for her wings to fit through without having to take it off every time she flew or risk ripping it should she summon them before. It was a problem among a lot of the seraphim which was why most chose styles to cater to this problem such as backless dresses or tank tops. Naruto was always complaining about ripping his favorite sweater yet his closest was packed full of twenty identical outfits for this same reason. Why he did not get them altered like Kakashi or most other seraphim was beyond her. She had asked him once and he complained about it being too drafty.

As she neared them, Sakura spread her arms out and turned in a circle to show off her new ensemble before standing at attention with eager eyes. Kakashi gave her an inspection which seemed to leave him content as he nodded in approval.

“Ready,” Sakura announced as she clasped her hands behind her back in an attempt to contain the unseemly urge to jump up and down.

“Excellent.” Kakashi said with a clap of his hands. “Now, to go over some terms and conditions.”

Earlier…

The sharp slam of the door reverberated around the room. It was followed with a tired sigh as Tsunade leaned back. Her wings ruffled slightly as she adjusted in her chair then let her head fall back to stare up at the glass ceiling. She needed a drink but the wetness on her hand reminded her that her drink was currently a puddle on the floor. Her tired sigh turned into a groan of frustration. She hated keeping Sakura on such a tight leash but there was nothing else to do. Since that first day she was brought back, since she was made, Tsunade had loved Sakura like her own daughter. She was strict and harsh but it was all for her protection. There were only three of them that knew the full truth, not even Sakura knew, and she never would if Tsunade could help it.
She heard the faint sound of a rustle. It was a light flutter but not one made by wings. It was more like paper being shifted, like the turning of a page in a book. By the softness of the sound it was most likely a very worn page. As if it had been read a numerous amount of times causing the page to become thin and weak. They had many old books and texts contained in their libraries that were like this. Each of them held centuries of history and information but she knew better than to think that the sound was caused by one of those books. No, this sound came from a more modern book. One with lewd themes and pictures to compliment. And there was only one person in all the heavens that would possess such a book.

“I do not recall summoning you into this room,” silence was her reply so she added, “and eavesdropping on private conversations is not considered morally correct.”

She turned her head to the side in time to see Kakashi come out from behind one of the large pillars. As he came into view she watched him snap the book in his left hand shut before tucking it away in the pocket of his vest. Tsunade narrowed her eyes as she took in the all too familiar cover of the book.

“Nor would I consider that type of reading material very saintly Kakashi.” She stated in a reprimanding tone.

Kakashi stuffed his hands in his pockets and slowly began to circle around the front of the dais.

“Oh, well, I am an angel, not a saint,” he corrected as he came to a stop in front of her. He eyed the broken saké bottle and looked at her. “But good for you, kicking the old booze bottle and setting an example,” he added sarcastically.

Tsunade sat up and leaned forward, her knuckles turning white as she gripped the wooden armrests of her chair.

“What do you want Hatake,” she growled as her honey eyes narrowed with mirthless warning.

“There has been a lot of demon activity. Activity not sanctioned by the Uchiha’s. They are lacking in order and too many are running rampant and free. The fallen’s efforts may go against ours but it serves to strengthen the mortals. Those who overcome their trials are bettered. But these demons are not serving a purpose for mortals. They are merely collecting for themselves.”
Tsunade let out a scoff. “Tell me something that I don't know. There has been disorder among the fallen for quite some time. I have contacted Fugaku and he said he was handling it. Which gives me no reassurance. His word lost all validity long ago and despite his efforts, it has been hardly redeemed. It’s why we started sending teams down at night to try and get a handle on things.” Tsunade explained. “It’s why I send you and Naruto down there. So unless you two have been screwing around and not dealing with this matter I do not see why we are discussing this!”

She was shouting by the end but Kakashi remained unaffected.

“Let her come with us.” He stated bluntly.

Her brow narrowed as she gritted her teeth. “I know you were there long enough to hear my earlier conversation so I will pretend I didn't just hear…”

“You can’t keep her up here forever,” Kakashi interrupted. “You know she can handle it, she is strong, and she could be…”

It was Tsunade’s turn to interrupt him. “I made her a guardian didn’t I? She already spends too much time down below. And with the demons running rampant there is no telling how many she could encounter just during daylight hours.” She shook her head. “No, it’s out of the question. She stays here during the night.”

Kakashi’s mask shifted as his mouth pulled into a frown and he pulled his hands from his pockets to fold them across his chest.

“She wants this, she is curious.”

“You think I don’t know this?” Tsunade asked, her voice strained and full of distress. “You think I enjoy denying her? That I like keeping her cooped up here as much as I do? I know she has an undying urge to be down there, it’s instinctual. She belongs down there but she isn’t safe. There is no telling what could happen, gods save us if someone like Orochimaru had discovered her. The Uchiha brat did us a favor by ridding us of that snake despite what kind of damage he did when in his services. That apprentice of his, Kabuto is still lurking out there? And if what Juraiya has said about that infernal Akatsuki group is even half true…if they were to set their eyes on...if she were…”

Tsunade wavered and broke off as she shook at the thoughts plaguing her mind. Kakashi let the
silence that settled in the room linger for a short moment before speaking again.

"Whether you allow her or not, Sakura will find a way to venture. She did it before and she will do it again." Kakashi said softly. "And this will be after the daylight has been long gone. At least this way Naruto and I will be there."

Tsunade remained quiet and he did not wait before pushing her more.

"I care about her just as much as you do. I knew her before all of this, if but just a little, but even then she was gifted. She has only become stronger since then...and she has talents that could be useful." He pressed on. "Just let her try it. We can call it a trial run."

Tsunade let out a deep sigh as she steepled her fingers together against her lips. She stared down at her lap for a prolonged contemplation before looking back up at him. She closed her honey colored eyes for a long breath and opened them as she let it out.

"Very well," she abdicated with a great sigh. Kakashi smiled faintly and moved to leave but stopped when she looked at him sharply and lifted a finger, "but there will be certain rules. If she does not follow them then she does not go."

Kakashi nodded and turned to leave. As he reached for the door handle, her voice rang out once more.

"Oh, and Kakashi," she said in a dark tone. "Should anything happen to her, I will see to it that every copy of icha icha collection is thrown into hell’s furnaces myself."

A sheen of sweat immediately formed on Kakashi’s brow and he swallowed the thick lump that had formed in his throat. Without looking back at her, he nodded his head and ducked out of the room. As he wandered through the halls to take a detour before meeting at the portal, Kakashi pulled his precious book from the pocket of his vest and clutched it tightly to his chest. There would be no way he would ever let such a fate befall such a collection of precious literature. Sakura would be safe, he would give his own life and soul, as would Naruto, to preserve their precious blossom.

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Chapter End Notes
So this catches me up to everything I have so far. And this will be the pattern for awhile as well. One chapter from the past then one chapter from the present so next chapter we will be back to the past picking up from when Sakura first met Sasuke and Naruto. Hopefully its not too confusing and as time goes on things will begin to connect.
Ancient Greece

Naruto watched Sasuke make his way down the path in absolute befuddlement. Sasuke was not exactly the most caring person in the world. However, that did not mean he went out of his way to be cruel either. He was the perfect specimen of indifference. Yet, if Naruto was not mistaken, he could have almost sworn Sasuke did not want to use his Sharingan on Sakura. The sunny angel looked back to the mortal, unsure as to what to do. She was still standing there, her eyes staring blankly at Sasuke’s back while her mouth hung slightly open in paused confusion.

“Hey dobe,” Sasuke called over his shoulder in his usual monotone. “Are you coming?”

Naruto gave one last long look at the pink haired girl. His blue eyes scanned over her petite figure. Dirt and mud covered her hands and knees. Her dress was stained brown at the hem and knees from when she had knelt in the patch of mud and at her sides, where her hands clenched at the bunched fabric of her clothing, she left brown streaks of dirt from her fingers. Her hair was a bit disheveled from her frantic scramble to retreat from them earlier and her eyes where still red rimmed from her earlier tears. Aside from her disheveled appearance she seemed to be in no harm. Perhaps a little shaken but Naruto believed mortals were resilient. So it was with this comfort that she would be okay, he followed after his dark companion, leaving Sakura standing alone in the middle of the path staring at two departing figures.

“Why didn’t you erase her memories?” Naruto asked after they had walked for sometime in silence. When Sasuke remained silent, Naruto chanced a glance at him to see Sasuke staring ahead with an odd look on his face. “Sasuke? Are you okay?”

Sasuke gave him a sharp look at his words of concern and let out a scoff. “Tch. I just didn’t feel like it. Why would I waste my time and energy on something so futile as her.”

Naruto gave Sasuke a strange look. The Uchiha was from the main branch of the underworlds leading clan. While young, Sasuke already possessed a vast amount of power. Erasing this mortals memory would have been as effortless and blinking for Sasuke. But Naruto did not voice this point. Instead he asked, “what if she tells someone?”
Sasuke shrugged. “So what if she does. Not like anyone would believe her and it’s not like it has not happened before. Mortals are such a weak minded people that it won’t be long until she begins to question herself.” He waved a careless hand in the air. “By tomorrow she will have convinced herself that it this morning was just a dream. And besides, it is not as if we will ever see her aga—”

“Hey wait up!” came a shout from behind them.

The seraphim halted in their trek down the mountain and looked at each other. Then, in a synchronized motion, they each turned around to take in the sight of the pink haired girl sprinting down the path and waving her arms.

She slowed down and doubled over when she reached them. With her hands on her knees and her head bowed, she took in deep heaving breaths. Sasuke’s lip pulled up in disgust in the poor display of stamina. It always surprised him just how much weaker mortals were compared to those not of their world. As if sensing his thoughts, her head snapped up and she looked up at his face, her vivid eyes meeting his own as if in challenge. It was as if she were daring him to summon his Sharingan again just so she could prove to him that she could resist its pull.

Sasuke narrowed his eyes at the thought. It had been a fluke. She had not overpowered the pull. It had been because of that damned thought that had passed through his mind. The idea that he did not want to erase her memories. It had been his hesitancy that had broken the pull of his sharingan, not her will. If he had truly wanted to erase her memories he could have. In fact, he had half a mind to do it right now just to prove it to her. But again, as he looked into the jade pools, he was struck with the same feeling again. He did not want this girl to forget him.

“What do you want?” he asked, his voice coming out harsh as his frustrated thoughts plagued his mind.

He watched her face slightly flinch from the abrasive tone but did nothing to rectify it. So instead she looked to Naruto who was looking at her with a warmth of welcome that always radiated from the blessed seraph.

“Can I ask you some question?” she asked diffidently.

Immediately Sasuke felt this was a terrible idea. But before he could even deny the request, Naruto, who had no self control, was answering for the both of them.
“Of course what do you want to know!”

Sasuke rolled his eyes. For someone who had been so concerned with the fact that a mortal knew of their existence, it sure did not take a lot for him to change his mind. Now the idiot was seemingly willing to divulge anything and everything about their kind.

“Well,” she said, her eyes cast down to the ground as she dug the toe of her sandal into the ground while she fidgeted with her hands behind her back. Then suddenly, vivid green shot back up to them as a soft smile caressed her face. “To start with, what are your real names?”

Some questions had been an understatement. The sun was nearly at its highest point in the sky and she had still yet to run out of things to ask. Of course Naruto had done his fair share of interrogation as well. The loudmouthed angel had always been fascinated with mortals and how they lived. Anytime Sasuke had ventured into the city with the blonde seraph, Sasuke had always felt like a caretaker watching a toddler as Naruto bounced around from shop to shop. It was nearly cringe worthy watching him exclaiming loudly about how mortals had finally figured out something or wondered aloud what other things were for. He had lost count how many times he had to pull the dope quickly away as he went on about things that did not exist in the mortal realm.

Just the other day he had to pull Naruto away from the markets they had been exploring when he started describing a fruit to a vendor. It was one that grew on the other side of the world in lands that had yet to even be discovered by people within these parts. Yet somehow Naruto still managed to seem baffled that the man did not understand what he was talking about. The man had looked at Naruto as if he were demented. Sasuke let out a small snort of laughter as he thought about the look on the merchants face. It only took a few seconds after the noise escaped him, that he realized the none stop chattering that had been running into his left ear for the past few hours had ceased. He turned to see his walking companions staring at him with raised eyebrows.

“What?” Sasuke asked as he looked at Naruto standing next to him.

“Whatcha laughing at?” Naruto asked with a curious tone.

It was then Sasuke realized that he had laughed out loud. His eyes flickered to Sakura who stood next to his friend. She was leaning forward slightly to peek around Naruto’s broad chest to look at him more clearly. Her face was holding a small smile of amusement that Sasuke instantly dubbed; annoying. He did not like the idea of being some trivial form of entertainment for a mere mortal.

“Tch,” Sasuke scoffed. “I was not laughing, I was clearing my throat.”
Naruto narrowed his eyes with suspicion. “Didn’t sound like it,” he accused as he leaned in closer to examine Sasuke more clearly.

Sasuke’s lips twitched in disapproval of the close proximity and brought his hand up to Naruto’s face. “If I was laughing it would have been because of you moron,” he chided as he shoved the blonde away.

“Stop calling me that you bastard!” Naruto shouted as he stumbled back and pushed Sasuke’s palm away from his nose.

“Stop yelling dobe,” Sasuke shot back.

“Why you…”

Naruto was just beginning to crouch into a preparatory lunge as Sasuke took up his own stance when their banter was interrupted by the hundredth question that morning.

“Are you two sure your angels?” Sakura asked, looking quizzically at them.

Paused in his stance, Naruto looked at her. “Of course we are. Why would you think otherwise?”

Sakura’s gaze moved back and forth, taking in each of their battle ready stances. “Well…you don’t act like them,” she said with a wavering tone.

“Hn,” Sasuke said bringing her attention to rest on him. “And you are an expert on how seraphim should act? You just found out we existed today.”

She swallowed under his scrutiny, her earlier bravery seeming to dissipate as she had grown relaxed over the day. “That doesn’t mean I have not heard stories of your kind. My mother used to talk about the angels in the sky that watched over us when I was little.”

Something flashed in Sasuke's eyes but it was gone quickly. With slow movements he straightened
up from his crouched stance as he folded his arms and raised a brow at her. “Oh, and what did mother dearest tell you about the seraphim in the sky?”

Sakura frowned at the mocking tone he spoke with. But despite it, she obliged in giving him an answer. “She said that they are gentle and peaceful. That they are our ancestors long passed away and watching over us, protecting us.”

Sasuke let out a tsking sound and stepped closer to her. She moved to take a step back but was stopped when Sasuke caught her shoulder. She looked up at him, wide eyed and frozen as a smug smirk curled at the corners of his mouth. Her stomach churned at the nearly gleeful, predatory look in his eyes. With smooth movements, he leaned forward until his warm breath tickled her ear and caused the hairs on her neck to stand on end.

“There are many different kinds of seraphim little mortal, not all of us are happy cherubs,” he whispered darkly. “You would do well to remember that.”

As he pulled away, he paused a few inches from her face as he stared into her eyes. They were wide, letting in plenty of light and causing her pupils to dilate and become consumed by the jade coloring of her irises. For a moment, Sasuke felt trapped, as if it were she who wielded power in her eyes and not him. He felt a small breeze tickle his cheek and managed to use the distraction to look down at her lips. They were parted as the small flow of air escaped from them. Tinged with the faintest of pink to make them stand out next the rest of her milky skin. It was enticing, like ripened fruit just waiting to be picked from its green surrounding as it hung from a tree.

A warm breeze passed by and ruffled the leaves of the trees overhead. It would have escaped his notice had it not brought something else with it as well. Her scent. It was a mixture of floral and fresh spring water. And it was intoxicating. It shook something within him. The slight movement of her throat bobbing up and down as she swallowed nervously let him know that she too was feeling something as well. His eyes trailed up until he met her stare. There he kept his eyes locked on hers, savoring the way her body seemed to tremble under the hand that remained latched to her curved shoulder. His fingers twitched and slide down from her shoulder to her bare arm. He felt the smooth skin prickle at the contact and it made him wonder if it was in fear, or something else entirely. He continued to stare into her eyes, taking his time to memorize every shade of green within her irises as well as the flecks of gold that the sun highlighted when the light hit them just right. Sasuke felt as if he could spend an entire century mapping out every detail. The way the individual pink lashes that framed her eyes contrasted...The moment was utterly shattered as a yellow blob suddenly pushed its way between them and Sasuke felt his body being forced to take a step back.

“Oye,” Naruto bellowed. “Stop it Sasuke, your scaring her.”
Sobered by the disruption. Sasuke quickly looked over Sakura, concerned that perhaps he had gone too far. But it seemed that see too had been broken out whatever enchantment he had put on her and immediately a rosy color was blooming across her cheeks. Sasuke smirked which seemed to cause the blush to become deeper, despite the now scowl that adorned her face.

Sasuke’s gaze had felt heated and languid. He had taken his time to inspect everything, as if her were taking her apart, layer by layer. Before she had realised, he had eased into her mind and thoughts. Once he had inspected every thing she had to offer within her head, he had moved on. He had traveled through every inch of her body, making her tremble as he moved closer and closer to the center. She had just felt the beginnings of a gentle caress against the thundering walls of her heart, when she had suddenly felt him being yanked away when Naruto pushed himself between them. It had left her feeling exposed and Sakura immediately began to wonder which stare truly was the more dangerous. The gleaming red that he had drawn her in with earlier that morning or the solid onyx that had taken her apart piece by piece.

Naruto’s stare was nothing like either of Sasuke’s. It felt rushed. As if he were quickly surpassing the details and diving straight down to the bottom of her jade pools. Deep beyond the recesses of her mind and straight into her soul. For a long moment he just stared, examining with intense scrutiny. And then a look of relief passed over his face and he relaxed as he released her face, seeming content with something.

The ‘hn’ sound that was becoming relatively familiar since the early hours of morning sounded and she looked back over Naruto’s shoulder to see Sasuke walking away. It seemed to be a regular habit of his for the day.

“Hey where are you going?” Naruto called out.

Sasuke gave no verbal reply but a long arm raised above his head and a single finger pointed up to the sky where the heated sun beat down on them. Naruto turned back around, a look of
understanding seeming to appear on his face before met her eyes and smiled brightly.

“I guess it's just you and me for the rest of the day!”

The underworld was not the scorching heat of fire and brimstone that the mortals painted it to be in their stories and art. Neither was there a chorus of suffering pleas of imprisoned souls to fill the air. It was neither the empty dank cave that Indra had fallen into long ago. It had been quickly rectified and turned into an underground cathedral in which the demons dwelt and ruled. Carved with craftsmanship only capable by angelic hands. Littered among the walls and ceiling, were precious stones that mortals had yet to even discover. When a stone caught the smallest of light and became illuminated, it made it easy to forget that one was submerged miles deep beneath the earth's crust.

Beauty aside, Sasuke had always felt the dim hallways of his home frigidly cold. But it was not a temperate coldness. Being so far beneath the surface, the earth's core did well to keep the temperature a comfortable warmth, no matter the season at the surface. No, the coldness was not the kind that made a person shiver and reach for a warm blanket. It was a unwelcoming feeling that made him feel as if he did not belong. Sasuke loved his family, he loved his home, both these things meant everything to him. But he could not help but feel as if he were always alone. It was always seemingly too dark as the only light came from luminescent stones, glow worms that cling to the ceilings of the caverns, and the flickering flames of torchlight. It was enough to guide a person through the shadowed halls and dark corners of the underground, but it was nothing like the brilliant light of the sun that consumed the surface during daylight hours.

His steps were silent as he walked through the fire lit halls. The warmth of the torchlight heated parts of his skin each time he passed by the intricate sconce or raised pillar that held an everlasting fire. Fire was his family's pride and joy apart from the Sharingan. It was what they took inspiration from on how they ruled. Fire was what was used to forge and refine, but it could easily turn on you. It was not to be taken lightly for if manipulated wrongly, it could consume and destroy.

“It is a bit late in the day for you to be coming home, don’t you think Sasuke?”

Sasuke paused his steps at the disapproving sound of his father coming from behind him. He turned slowly, delaying the moment he would have to look at the face that would match the tone.

“I was busy, thought I would do a little overtime,” he said with an impassive expression.

It was difficult to maintain the indifference in his voice but over the years Sasuke had perfected it.
He would be lying if he said it did not bother him that his father still viewed him as nothing but a disappointment. He had given up long ago trying to live up to his father's unattainable standards. How his brother had managed such a feat Sasuke did not know. One thing he did know for certain was that as long as Itachi was around, Sasuke would never be on the receiving end of his father's beacon of pride.

Fugaku’s dark eyes trailed over Sasuke’s attire, taking in the mortal clothing. His father’s face was mostly shadowed but Sasuke could still make out the deep lines near his thinned mouth deepen with disapproval.

“You were with that blessed Uzumaki again, weren’t you?”

Sasuke did not say anything in reply.

“You would do well to stay away from that one,” Fugaku instructed.

Sasuke finally managed to bring himself to look his father straight in the eye. While he had given up trying to impress his father, it still stung to see the reflection of disappointment in his dark orbs. But he was done letting his father see that. Instead, he was determined to show his father that he was no longer concerned with his opinion. It was because of this that Sasuke tilted his face questioningly as he spoke.

“I thought we were in the process of working out peace negotiations.” Sasuke stated. “I would think communication with one such as the Uzumaki himself would be a good thing. Especially with considering whom his father is. Would it not make things easier if we were already...acquainted?” Sasuke did not dare, nor would he ever outwardly admit that he considered the blonde idiot a friend.

Fugaku frowned at his sons bravery to question him. “We are,” Fugaku confirmed. “But until then, we cannot be blinded by familiar connections. We must be vigilant and wary. Otherwise we will find ourselves walking away from a deal with nothing to benefit us. There will be a settlement, but Madara will not be making the same mistake twice. Remember, he considered Hashirama as a friend as well but the Senju betrayed him in the end and we as Uchiha were given nothing in return.”

Sasuke made no reply. He knew there was much more being discussed than peace treaties behind closed doors. But those were in meetings that only contained the most important or the main clans. Despite the fact that he was a member of the main branch of the leading clan, he knew better than to think his presence was needed. And he certainly knew better than to think it was wanted.
Sasuke knew his father would prefer that the clan forget he have a second son. So Sasuke kept to himself and let things run its course.

Things had been shaky for quite some time between the fallen and the blessed. For several centuries they had been stuck in limbo between peace and war. After Madara killed Hashirama there was no communication between the fallen or the blessed for decades. Each went about their duties and when their paths crossed only one of them survived. While certainly not a peaceful time, there was no one group purposefully seeking out the other. Although many had speculated that the Uchiha leader might have been an exception when Senju began to disappear at a rapid pace. Sasuke had not been alive during this time, but even he felt as though Madara had hunted down every last Senju with the exception of one. But no one had really seen or heard from Tsunade Senju since the war. Tobirama was the last to fall.

With no more Senju to take leadership, Hiruzen Sarutobi took up leadership over the blessed. Things had been slightly better during his time. A parley was held and a neutrality during sunrise and sunset was established during his reign. But before things could evolve into a more developed treaty, he had been killed by one of their own.

Orochimaru had wanted power and tried to take it from the God tree but in the end he failed. He had escaped the heavens before he could be dealt with. Originally he had sought refuge among the fallen but Madara had denied him entrance and the angel slithered off just as quickly as he came. Now he dwelt among the mortals searching out for new sources of power, for without the support of souls, his body was quickly deteriorating. The man had managed to survive thus far by linking himself with the lifesource of animals, specifically serpents. But there had been consequences to his actions. Now the man was more chimaera than seraph. The snake had approached Sasuke several times himself, promising him gifts but Sasuke denied him each time. Sasuke had yet to even learn what the man wanted from him but he desired nothing what the reptilian man had to offer. After his betrayal, Orochimaru had been deemed untrustworthy and Sasuke knew that any bargain made with the serpent was not worth his time.

Following Hiruzen’s death it had been Naruto’s father who had taken up leadership with the blessed and he had been determined to mend things between the fallen and blessed. Minato meant to end this cold war between seraphim and had extended an offer of peace to Madara. At first Madara ignored the attempts of contact, but Minato was persistent in achieving a better world. It had taken a while, but for the first time, the fallen where finally considering the offer.

“I would like you to start attending the councils,” Fugaku instructed, taking Sasuke off guard and instantly becoming wary. His father had never so much as been concerned with his presence at the dinner table, let alone a meeting. “Madara requested you be more involved.”

And there was the catch. It was not his father who cared, it was Madara. Madara, had been more interested in Sasuke’s life than his father for more than he cared to remember. He knew his father
Sasuke sat on the gravel shore and had been for hours, staring and thinking. His crossed legs had fallen asleep from lack of movement but he remained motionless. He did not even bother to turn around nor did her look away from the blackened lake when he sensed someone approaching.

“And what seems to be bothering my foolish little brother so much that he misses supper?”

Sasuke nearly let out a scoff at the question. There were many things that were bothering Sasuke’s mind. Some were old and some were new. In hopes to sort them out, he had wandered to the underground lake that many of his childhood memories were spent. On the far side was a wooden dock in which he learned to harness his first powers of procuring the flames that his clan was proficient at. It was perhaps the only time he ever felt his father acknowledged his efforts.

Sasuke remained quiet and unresponsive as his brother neared him. He heard the scrapping of rocks against each other and felt his brother settle down on the ground beside him. Itachi took in a relaxed breath and then let silence fall between them. At first Sasuke was determined to continue to ignore his brother. But Itachi was the epitome of patience. After several minutes of nothing but the occasional flutter of a winged creature that thrived in darkness, Sasuke lost his commitment and gave in.

“How do you do it?” He finally asked as he kept his dark gaze on the equally dark water before
A small draft swept through the cavern causing the surface to ripple and catch the light of the glow worms that clung to the spiky ceiling above. With each line of disruption, the water caught the light causing it to sparkle and dance, giving the illusion of a night sky full of shining stars.

“Do what?” Itachi asked.

“Corrupt.” Sasuke clarified turning to his brother to look into his dark grey eyes. “How do you do it so easily? How do you justify it?”

Itachi took in a deep breath and Sasuke watched his profile as his brother turned back to the lake.

“I don’t justify it,” Itachi replied. “I just see it differently.”

“What do you mean?”

Itachi leaned back with his hands behind his head and closed his eyes. His long legs crossed at the ankle as he let out a relaxed sigh.

“Do you know what the god tree is?”

Sasuke gave his brother an averted look. “Of course. It is what gives the blessed their powers.”

Itachi nodded. “And where do we get our powers?”

Again Sasuke looked at his brother with a reproached offense. These questions were trivial. Any child would know them. But despite this, he humored his brother and answered. “We gain it from the Statue of the Outer Path. The souls we collect are fed into it which in return grants us our powers.”

Itachi nodded again. “One man’s poison is another man’s cure.”

Sasuke looked at him in confusion, not understanding his brother philosophical prattle.
“Did you know that all the souls once went to the god tree?” Sasuke raised a brow, this he did not
know and the expression on his face told his brother so. “In the first years of our existence, all
souls were fed into the tree. Both good and bad. At first there was no consequence to this. Mortals
were small in numbers and there were few that led themselves astray. But as their population grew,
so did the number of corrupt souls that entered the tree. It was like a weak poison. A little will not
hurt, but over time, the build up begins to take its toll.”

He paused for a moment to let the information sink in. His long lashes opened slightly to see
Sasuke looking at him in and he went on.

“The gods originally created us for one purpose. To protect and strengthen mortals. That is what
we do, that is what I do. According to the blessed, Indra committed a great sin and was cast away
from them. We are the result of his actions. But the way I see it, Indra’s ways we’re not corrupt, at
least not at first, they were just misunderstood.” He said as he closed his eyes once more. “It is my
belief that Indra saw this and knew that eventually the tree would die and without it, so would we.
So he created the Statue of the Outer Path as a way to collect the corrupted souls, as a way to
preserve and save the god tree from being poisoned. It was just unfortunate that Hargoromo did not
acknowledge the importance of his actions. And I believe it was this misunderstanding that caused
Indra to lose focus and began to corrupt instead of collect the self corrupted. I think Madara and
Hashirama knew this as well when they ended the war. They knew that they could not let all the
souls return to the tree which meant someone had to collect those who had gone astray.”

Sasuke looked at Itachi thoughtfully. “I guess that would make sense as to why the seraphim did
not try to reunite fully.”

Itachi nodded. “Yes, but I fear history likes to repeat itself.” He added as he laid fully back down
and closed his eyes.

His statement spoke volumes of what he truly thought of Madara. Sasuke knew his brother did not
agree with the clans methods, nor their leadership. Itachi had never said it out right, but it was
times like this, when he shadowed his disapproval with vague hints that gave Sasuke the
impression he was perhaps not the perfect child that their father saw.

“So you think that in order for all seraphim to survive, we have to collect the corrupted souls?”
Sasuke clarified.

“Yes,” Itachi replied without opening his eyes.

“So how do you bring yourself to do the actual corruption and temptation of mortals?” Sasuke
“Mortals are weak minded and their hearts are even weaker. But when a mortal overcomes a trial they become stronger and their soul becomes more precious. When a soul returns to the god tree it must be tried and tested otherwise it is worthless. And that is our purpose, to be that temptation, to test the limits of their will power and reveal the true intentions of their hearts. It is unfortunate that not all can resist, but that is our purpose. It may not have been the gods original plan but mortals are unpredictable. It is why our race has evolved, to adapt to the change in our purpose.”

“It still does not feel right,” Sasuke said quietly as he settled down on the ground next to his brother. He tucked his hands behind his head to serve as a pillow and stared up at the jagged teeth of the caverns stalactites.

“Perhaps it is more rewarding to be the one to guide a soul to success but what we do is necessary,” Itachi replied after a short pause. “We don’t get the glory, but our work is just as important.”

Silence settled between them as they lay together and after a long and silent lapse of time, Itachi stood and without a word, left his brother alone with his thoughts. For a long while, Sasuke pondered his brothers words, wondering how accurate he was in his musings.

*You are already weak minded and sympathetic.*

The words of his father suddenly disrupted his thoughts and resounded in his mind. Suddenly, the peace that his brother had created in his troubled mind became turbulent again.

*He was not weak.*

The flash of pink lashes blinking and breaking away from his pull played across his mind and he frowned. Not pleased with the reminder of pink haired fluke of a mortal, Sasuke drew his brow together and with a determination, voiced a different affirmation in his mind.

*He was not sympathetic.*

As if his own mind was mocking him, another flash pictured in his mind. This time it was green. Green eyes looking up at him with complete innocence and purity. And then his mind truly
betrayed him as a single wonder flashed across his mind.

*Did she still remember him? Or had she already forgotten?*

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Musings and Missions

Chapter Four: Musings and Missions

Present time

Alexandria, Constantinople, Rome, Thebes, they were all great cities that he had once loved. Or in more correct terms, had a deep appreciation for. He had watched them all rise, thrive, and fall. He had seen many cities do this over ages. Some had been rebuilt, while others had been replaced with another upon its rubble, but few were ever restored to their former glory. They were only mock replicas of the original masterpiece. Like the cheap souvenirs mortals bought when they visited said places.

He had done his fair share in the work that caused many of these cities to crumble and fall. Some he had done it out of spite, others because he was instructed to, and a few, he destroyed just because he could. But it had been a long time since he truly wrecked havoc upon a city. Great cities seemed to flourish all over the earth now, but many did not quite hold the same finesse that the ancient empires once created. Those cities were true works of art.

There were still some that he admired during these modern times. Cape Town, Barcelona, Dubai, and London to name a few. Los Angeles fell under many other people's lists, but he could never bring himself to like the place. But then again, he was a bit biased. While his days of razing cities were over, he would be okay with that one sliding into the ocean after a good earthquake, if only because its namesake. It was perhaps a cruel thought, but he did not care. He was good at not caring, he excelled at it.

Currently he was in one of his favorites. Crouched down on the overhang of a skyscraper, he sat poised like a statue as he drank in the essence of what made New York. There was no starlight to be seen in the night sky, only the silver half moon that hung high in the sky managed to permeate through the light pollution from the city. Flashing traffic lights switching from red to green. The moving red line of brake lights running parallel to a white line of headlights flowing the opposite direction as they highlighted the city streets. Yellow square glows from windows of late night workers and apartments. Display boards that advertised the wondrous entertainments that the city had to offer. They all lit up the city and basked its tall towers in a glow of LED and neon.

The smell was an orchestra of everything good and bad the city had to offer. The smell of food wafted through the air from vendors and restaurants that littered the city and the blooming trees in Central Park that was not far off was delicious. But in between the floral and cuisine scents, there was the wafting stench that accompanied the city. It was not a humid, hot summer night, but already the warm spring had brought the beginnings of the sweaty odor that usually took over the city during a heat wave. Garbage and urine from the littered streets and the subways also weaved itself into the aroma that made up the cities air. Mixed together, it was a pungent potpourri of
various smells. Not all would consider it appealing, but it was the smell of New York.

Sirens wailed from all directions. Distinguishing sounds of fire, ambulance, and police vehicles crashing together and mixing in with the rest of the auditory stimulation. The reve of an engine sounded and echoed out from an alleyway. The blare of thousands of horns, all being blown at various intervals from impatient taxi cabs and town cars. Mixed with the sounds of man made machines, were the shouts and cries of humans themselves. Businessmen calling out for cabs, clubbers voicing their excitement as they waited in line, and street vendors peddling their merchandise. It was an orchestra of the intertwined culture and lifestyles of over eight million individuals.

It was all part of the nightlife of New York and he loved it. It was the chaos that he loved. The constant distraction of sounds, light, and smells that kept his mind busy and off of other things. The city had changed with time but not in a way that marred what made New York, New York. Just more buildings, more lights, and more noise, all which elevated the potency of the it all. He was indifferent to the city during the day light, but at night, it held a type of energy that had been there since the beginning. He had been drawn to it the first time he came to the city back in the late 1800’s and it was what brought him back ever since.

In the most recent years, he had been experiencing a certain phenomenon that also made the city stand out to him. Every time he came, he felt his body constantly searching and reaching out. He did not know what to expect to find, or why he was even looking, but something in his bones told him that when he did find it, he would know.

A pulse of energy grasped his attention and pulled him away from his thoughts. His dark eyes bled from onyx to blood red as he focused to the eastern side of the city. His eyes narrowed as he tried to pinpoint the exact location of what had caught his attention. There were several chakras out but nothing more than lesser demons, nothing that would be powerful enough to have distracted him. And then he caught it. The familiar faint glow of two chakra signatures.

It was too far away to make out the actual individuals, but he did not need to see them to confirm whom the signatures belonged to. The strongest and most familiar signature was bright and warm. There was no mistaking that it belonged to a useless blonde idiot that got on every single one of his nerves. Next to it, flowed a more average but just as familiar signature. Given the relaxed way the chakra flowed and swirled with ease, he was willing to bet a heavy wager that this one belonged to his long ago mentor. As he focused more closely, he suddenly found himself detecting a third chakra mixed in with them. It was faint and smaller than the other two but he could see the faint green mixed in with the red and white that dominated it. His head tilted to the side. It was not odd for the other two to have a companion with them, however he found himself intrigued. The steady calm of it, the way it seemed to flow so smoothly and controlled. Despite him never having come across such a signature, he could not help but feel a strange sense of familiarity.
He was already running late but he did not exactly care for the person who had summoned him. It annoyed him that he even received the summons, but it would bother the other person even more the longer he made them wait. A smirk graced his thin lips as he decided that perhaps it was time for a little reunion. Standing up from his crouched position, he casually walked to the corner of the building before stepping off the side. He fell through the air, plummeting towards the ground. His dark hair whipped around in the cool night air that rushed past. As he reached the halfway point to the ground, his wings spread open with a sharp snap of leather. Instantly he took a sharp turn and beat his wings to regain the altitude he had lost from the plummet. Rushing past the building he once perched on, he escalated towards the moon. His momentum slowed and died as he rotated towards his destination and with a single powerful flap of his wings began to soar across with a silent ease.

“Now what is a little thing like you, doing alone in such a big city?” came a deep voice, dripping with dark intentions.

Resisting the urge to grimace at the man’s words, Sakura quickly planted a look of innocence on her face as she turned to watch the demon slide into the empty barstool beside her. His lust filled eyes scanned her body, a lecherous smile coming to his face as they moved along the mass of exposed leg that the too small of dress failed to cover.

“May I join you?” He asked. “Perhaps buy you a drink?”

Sakura swallowed the words that would point out that facts that, one, he had already joined her before asking, and two, she already had a drink in front of her. She flashed him a sweet smile.

“Of course,” she replied instead.

The demon turned to the bartender and gestured for two drinks. As the man behind the bar table began pouring their beverages, the demon turned back to face Sakura. His teeth flashed sharply as he grinned at her. Their drinks appeared in front of them quickly before the bartender moved onto the next patron, leaving them alone. The demon took a quick swig of his alcohol and set it down on the table as he turned sideways on his stool to fully face her.

“Now,” he began, pushing her drink towards her, “you were about to tell me what brings you to New York and why a delicate thing like you is alone.”

Sakura ignored the drink being pushed towards her and gave him a saraccine smile. “My husband and I are on our honeymoon here.”
The demons eyes alighted. “A newly wed,” he said, then tilted his head as if in contemplation. “I would think that a newly married couple would be inseparable, don’t tell me you are having marital problems already.”

The tone in which he spoke was a mockery of concern. Sakura could see the delight in his eyes at the idea which told her that the lure was working. The ploy was a new one that they had recently developed, and so far, it seemed to be earning a place in successful missions. It had been Kakashi’s idea for her to wear the dress. After a great amount of protesting, Sakura had given in and put on the too short and too low of a cut dress. She had argued that it made her seem already uncaring about morals and did not match the character, but Kakashi assured her they would be too distracted and would overlook that small detail. So here she was, sitting in a bar, playing the innocent and happy newlywed, and hoping beyond hope, that she would not flash more than just leg and neck if she bent forward too much.

“Well, we had a date for tonight but he got called into work,” she said with feigned disappointment as she leaned forward and rested her chin on her hand. “He has several offices in major cities, it’s why we came here so he could be close to one in case of an emergency. His secretary called just as we were headed out the door.”

The demons brow raised and she suddenly felt a tingle running up her forearm. She realized it was caused by a finger being drawn along her skin and she did her best not to recede away from his touch.

“Does he often have these emergencies with his secretary?”

“Yes,” she said, putting a small hint of hesitancy in her voice.

“So you mean to tell me,” he began, leaning in closer than she cared. “That your husband is off with his so called secretary, alone in an office, on your honeymoon, because there was some kind of ‘emergency’?”

“...yes...” she replied, again with uncertainness.

He leaned in more closely. “Would you like to know what I think?” She nodded, keeping her eyes wide and nieve. “I think, that if your husband really wanted to be here, he would.”

She gave him a look of confusion. “What do you mean?” she queried, forcing some waver in her voice. “His work is important, he did not have a choice...didn’t he?”
The demons face turned into a wicked grin. “Oh darling,” he said darkly as he took a strand of her hair and played with it between his fingers. “We have so much to get into that pretty little head of yours.”

“How dare he!” Sakura shouted, slurring her words slightly to sell the idea that the four rounds of drinks were effecting her. Instead, she was slowly filtering the alcohol with her chakra, burning it away while simultaneously keeping it masked with such precision that she continued to appear as a mortal.

She had spent the last hour letting the demon in front of her think that he was convincing her that her none existent husband, was in fact, cheating on her with his secretary while on their honeymoon. She had quickly let him believe she was easily swayed. She had started briefly with denial, insisting that he would never do such a thing. That they trusted and loved each other equally. Then, she finally feigned accepting the idea and moved into an episode of displaying herself in hystericical tears. She had put on a spectacular show, grieving about how much she valued their relationship and how she would never do something like that herself. For a quick moment she made off that perhaps they could work through it, that she could forgive him. But the demon was quick to dissuade her from that. Insisting that she could not let him get off so easily. Now, she was currently putting on a show of anger. Slamming her fist down and making threats about what she would do with his favorite appendage. With each violent fantasy, the demon grinned wider, his eyes growing lustful with each darker and more vengeful idea that she voiced.

“...I spent the last year nearly killing myself to make sure the wedding was perfect for all of his cooperate friends and his high end family, I moved away from my family, and gave up my job! I gave up everything for him! I am going to kill him...no, I am going to destroy him. Destroy his company...no, take his company and everything else. I am going to...”

She continued on and by the time she finished her rant with her hands fisted and her body tight, she was breathing heavily. With a deep breath her chest expanded and as she exhaled, she let her body collapse in defeat. “Who am I kidding...I will probably just go back to the hotel and act as if nothing happened. My mother always said I was too forgiving,” she let out a sigh, “I guess she is right, because as much as it hurts, I still love him.”

“Tsk. Tsk. Tsk,” the demon tutted. “Oh darling, you may not be able to do those things now, but with my help you can,” he said. His voice was seductive and alluring. If Sakura were mortal, she knew that she would feel herself being pulled.

“You can?” she asked timidly.

His smile widened. “Oh yes,” his hand came up and stroked her cheek. He slowly leaned into her
ear. “Come with me, we can start tonight by getting even and then tomorrow, we will go beyond even.”

He pulled away slowly, his eyes connecting with hers and with smooth movements, his hand lifted in silent invitation. Without saying a word, Sakura slowly lifted her own hand and placed it in his with acceptance. He flashed her his teeth in a wide grin, his canines looking sharp like a predators as his eyes heated with chaotic joy.

They walked out of the bar, Sakura making a show of stumbling in an effort to continue the charade of her drunken state. He moved to call a taxi but Sakura pulled him away from the street into a darkened alley. The demon gave her a small look of inquiry but she responded with a look of heady want.

“You are an eager one aren't you,” he said.

Sakura turned away and directed her attention to the dark alley in an effort to hide the look of disgust. She took him as far as she could before she suddenly felt her body being tugged and pushed up against the brick wall. She could have easily overpowered him, but she let her body be pushed and positioned as the demon pressed up against her and attacked her neck with hot wet kisses. She masked a disgusted groan as a hum of appreciation as her green eyes stayed open and began to scan the area from over his shoulder, doing her best to ignore the sloppy tongue that ran along her pulse point.

Where the hell were they! She thought to herself. She felt his hand wander up her hip, it traced her waist, and then it... Oh hell no!

The wet kisses assaulting her neck were cut off when the demon’s head fell back as he let out an anguished cry. Along with his cry was the accompaniment of the cracking and breaking of bones of the earlier offending hand. The demon fell down to his knees as Sakura stood over him, staring down at him with a empowered smirk on her face. His hand, now a disfigured bag of flesh, was grasped tightly in hers.

“What the hell you bit—”

He was cut off when he was suddenly yanked off the ground and away from her upon the arrival of two individuals.
“Now that is not how you talk to a lady,” Kakashi said as he grabbed the man's arm and shoulder.

“Yeah, and don’t you know it’s wrong to take advantage of a woman who is drunk?” Naruto said as he took the other shoulder and arm. “Drunk is not consent.”

“What took you two so long?” Sakura asked drawing the attention of her two newly arrived companions.

“We got a little held up, ran into one of this guys friends and had to have a little chat,” Kakashi answered.

The demon’s eyes snapped from Kakashi to Sakura then narrowed. “You’re one of them!” he said, his tone full of disgust. “Thought whoring would be above you heavenly buzzards, or is it all just for show? I always thought you were all a bunch of prudes but who would of thought a blessed could turn out to be a good fu——”

Two growls interrupted the demon’s insults. They were followed by the sound of ripping and tearing of flesh as Kakashi and Naruto pulled the demon apart. Sakura quickly looked away, her stomach still not used to the blood and gore that came with the duty as an archangel. If there was something that she quickly learned in the last three weeks, it was that the duty was somewhat hypocritical. It bothered her at first, she was a guardian, she taught not to kill, not to have violence, to be forgiving. Yet, here she was, playing a role that resulted in someing being torn apart and erased from existence.

Kakashi had explained to her that it was their purpose, that they had to get their hands dirty in order to save mortals. As seraphim, they had different rules and regulations, there were exemptions. As long as their actions served their true purpose, their deeds were valid. He was patient with her and had spoken more deeply, even opening up about his times during the war which he rarely spoke of. In the end she still struggled with it but she was growing to accept it. She had still yet to actually take a life and Kakashi had promised her that he would not require her to until she was ready. A gift to which she was grateful for.

Shaking herself out of her queasy stupor, Sakura readjusted her dress for what seemed like the one hundredth time that night while Naruto and Kakashi busied themselves with the body. As she finished, she looked up from her now, not quite so exposed chest, to see Kakashi walking towards her as he clapped his hand together as if brushing off dust.

“I told you that dress would be productive,” he commented as his lazy eye grazed over her body.
Sakura gave the pervert a glower as she folded her arms across her chest. “Just because your pervy idea worked still does not mean it was a good idea,” she hissed. “It was demeaning and wholly demoralizing.”

“Ah well, morals are for mortals,” he replied with a relaxed charm. He pulled out a book that put several morals into question and began to walk back into the building. As he went past her, he paused to pat her on the head with an amused twinkle in his eye. “If it makes you feel better, we can try out for an innocent school girl look tomorrow.”

Sakura gave him a look of disgust then another to the book in his hand. Pictured on it was a scene of a girl in a plaid skirt and knee high socks being chased around a desk by a man who looked an awful lot like a teacher. Another wave of disgust washed across her face. And here she thought Kakashi was a genius, turns out he was just taking inspiration from an even bigger debauchee.

“Forget it,” she snapped. “I have no desire in playing in some twisted live action performance of your pervy trash!”

Kakashi actually had the audacity to look offended and Sakura rolled her eyes as he walked away, stroking his book soothingly. She was nearly positive she heard him whisper hushed words of comfort to the cover before Naruto came striding up. He clapped her on the back and began dragging her along to follow Kakashi.

“I am not going to lie Sakura,” he began, “as much as I love having you come with us, I kinda miss the old days. It's almost too easy now. Two weeks and I am already starting to get bored with the lack of challenge. These demons now days, they just lack imagination like they used to. It used to take a lot more than an innocent face and a few bats of lashes to get them away from mortal witnesses.”

Sakura narrowed her eyes. “Trust me, it takes a little more than that to get them out here.” She said through gritted teeth.

“Common you two,” Kakashi called as he held the door of the bar open for them. “One more and then we will be done for the night.”

Naruto was the first to burst through the roof top door, he stretched his arms as he gave out a big yawn. Sakura followed after and took in a deep breath, relishing the fresh air and open space after a night of sitting in dismal bars with stale air and crowded bodies. Kakashi was the last to walk out of the dark stairwell that had led to the roof, his nose stuck inside his book as he quietly giggled to
“Boy I am beat,” Naruto announced loudly. “Although…” he turned to his teammates with an eager grin. “We could always stop by that ramen stand near the park and…”

His proposal was cut short by a groan from Sakura.

“We have already eaten there four times this week!”

“What’s wrong with that!” Naruto exclaimed.

“It’s Tuesday,” Sakura deadpanned.

“But it’s tradition!” Naruto retorted. “Kakashi, back me up here.”

He turned to look at his long time teacher only to find that his teacher was distracted. While this was not unusual as his the pervert seemed to always have his nose buried deep in his books, this time was different. The silver haired angel stood in pause near the edge of the building, his eyes scanning the skyline of the city, not paying a single thought to his old student.

“Oi! Kakashi!”

“He obviously doesn’t want to go either Naruto,” Sakura shot at him, distracting the blonde from his mission to gain another to his ramen cause. Instead his attention went back to defending his precious ramen.

Kakashi stood motionless. The loud babble of exchanges, followed by the familiar sound of a blonde being hit over the head by a small fist, became white noise as he scanned the black towers surrounding them. Something felt off. Slowly raising the cloth that normally covered his left eye, he scanned sky. He felt him, rather than saw him first. It was so familiar and distinct. The unruly and raw power of the chakra signature. It was not as dark as it had once been but there was no mistaking who it belonged to. It was distant, several miles away but it was quickly moving. Moving directly towards them. Both eyes widened and he quickly spun around.
“Both of you silence.”

They each froze and looked at him. Sakura stood with her arm outstretched and hovering above Naruto’s head with her fist paused mid pummeling. Naruto was already cringing, his hand nursing an earlier assault as his eyes flinched in preparation for the next hit. When the next blow did not come, Naruto cracked an eye open to look at Kakashi. When he saw the spinning red eye that Kakashi only revealed on rare occasions, he opened the second eye and straightened up.

“Kakashi?” Sakura asked, “What’s wrong—”

Before she could complete her question, Kakashi had grabbed ahold of her and was dragging her to the otherside of the roof.

Sakura let out an exclamation of surprise as she was yanked along. “Kakashi, what’s wrong?”

He gave no reply as he continued to pull her. Two large air ducts protruded from the roof. The vents blew out cool air and created a loud billowing sound as the heating and cooling ducts worked to keep the building they were standing atop at a comfortable temperature. The pair of towering metal airways cast a large shadow to which Kakashi pulled Sakura into.

“Supress your chakra,” he hissed.

“But I—”

“Do it now!” he said in a slightly raised voice.

If she did not know any better, Sakura felt as if she sensed a panic in Kakashi’s voice. It was something she thought the heaven’s most relaxed seraph was incapable of feeling. Despite this, she did not question the urgency and immediately followed his instruction. It took little effort on her part as she had a gift for it. One moment it was flowing through her body like any other seraph, the next moment it was completely masked. To anyone who did not know who she was, she would appear as a mere mortal, no sign of having any possession of chakra capabilities.

“Oi, Kakashi. What the hell is going on?” Naruto hollered as he followed closely on their heels. “I don’t understand what—“
Kakashi turned around for a moment and stared past Naruto and nodded his chin in the direction of the sky. Confused, Naruto followed Kakashi’s indication. Sakura tried to look as well but Kakashi obstructed her view. She tried to focus on the minimal amount Kakashi’s visible face in hopes to glean information but she became distracted by the explicits that sounded past his shoulder, drawing her attention to Naruto.

“Shit,” the blonde seraph swore. “Shit, shit, double shit, shit.” He continued as he hurried the rest of the way towards her, pulling his sweater from his body.

Before she could manage to even inquire as to what was happening again, she was interrupted by a mass of orange cloth suddenly being pulled over her head. She thrashed for a moment, trying to free herself but gave up quickly as Naruto overpowered her. Her arms found sleeves and slipped in, although her hands remained hidden in the too long of arms. When her head managed to slip through the neck hole, she moved to push the hood off as it hung over her eyes like a veil, but the blonde seraph quickly stopped her from pulling it all the way off. She shot him an affronted expression, her face scrunching into displeasure of being manhandled into the offensively orange clothing. Naruto remained unaffected as he continued to adjust the article of clothing. The blonde seraph was in her view for only a moment more before Kakashi replaced him and began to push Sakura farther into the shadows. In the whirlwind of movement, the hood slipped from her head.

“Rule number two, what is it?” He asked as he pulled on the hood again, adjusting it so she could see but low enough for her face to remain hidden.

“Always appear as a mortal unless told otherwise,” she recited. She gave him a confused look. “Kakashi, what is —”

“What is rule number four?” He interrupted as he tucked a few strands of hair that had been exposed behind her ear, hiding them from sight.

“Always listen to you and do exactly as you say.”

He paused in his adjusting of the sweater and looked straight into her face. Sakura could barely make out his expression, the shadow from the air vents and the mask that covered the majority of his face did well to hide his face. Only his eyes were visible but even then, she could not make out the distinguishing lines that crinkled when he expressed himself.

“No matter what, you are to stay here. Do not make a sound, do not move, and do not draw
He said in a stern tone. “If you are spoken to, do not reply. Am I understood?”

“But I—”

His red eye fixated on her with a firmness that Sakura had never witnessed before. Again she gave him a confused look that he could not see on her shadowed face. She was desperate for an answer, but she trusted the silver haired man. She may not understand it, but she would follow. She gave a nod of her head to convey her submission to his command.

Seemingly satisfied, Kakashi nodded in return before turning to stand next to Naruto, who was already taking a stance at the edge of the shadowed area. As he stood, he faced the night sky, his eyes locked on something in the distance. A quick flash of light and both their wings were out. Rigid and tense, they each took a stance as they whispered quietly to one another. Together they made a barrier, cornering her against the air vent and blocking the majority of the roof from view.

Her heart beat rapidly. Gone was the confusion as it was replaced with panic. Something was going on, and judging by the reactions and the seriousness in which they were both acting, the severity of it was dire. Her hands moved up to her chest in an effort to keep herself calm and she focused on keeping her chakra suppressed. She was in no danger in losing control of it, but the focus kept her mind less frantic as her eyes surveyed the pieces of sky that she could see in the spaces between Naruto and Kakashi.

Suddenly, a silhouette of a man appeared before them, he had been so quick and so quiet, that it almost appeared as if he manifested out of thin air. He had glided so smoothly through the dark sky and alighted with such graceful agility on the edge of the roof, that he did so without a sound. With the moon behind the stranger, Sakura could only make out the outline of the tall male figure. His face was hidden in the shadow of the ebony locks that hung over his face, but despite not seeing his eyes, Sakura could feel his stare as it briefly glanced over her. It was but a brief moment but the intense feeling of scrutiny made her feel uneasy.

She moved to take a step back, hoping to dampen the intensity, but she was greeted by the cold metal from the air ducts behind her. In the earlier chaos, she had not realized that Kakashi had backed her up so far into the shadows. The stranger’s head moved from side to side, as if sanning the area, looking for something or someone. When he had concluded his scan of the area, his attention moved back to their direction. It was then he finally spoke, his deep voice sent shivers down her spine with an eerie familiarity.

“Where did the other one go?” He said sounding nearly bored. “I detected three chakras earlier.”
“Just a messenger,” Kakashi replied in a stoney tone before quickly diverting the subject. “It’s been a long time Sasuke, what brings you to New York?”

Sakura felt, rather than saw him looking at her again. The silhouette of his head tilted slightly, the way a bird of prey surveys its target before it moves in for an attack. With the new angle of his head, the side of his face caught a sliver of light. Pale skin and high cheek bones were revealed and she saw the faint glow of red where his eyes were. There was a rustle of feathers as Naruto’s wings slightly adjusted. Lifting higher and obstructing Sakura’s entire view of the man.

“Who is your little friend?” she heard him ask, his voice dangerously curious.

At his question, Sakura saw both Kakashi and Naruto stiffen.
Chapter Six: Night Stalks and Invitations

Ancient Greece

It sounded as if all the birds of Greece had migrated to the small glen in the woods, but it was in fact the opposite. There was not a single fowl insight as they had all been scared off by the wild screeching and flashing blue electricity. While no birds were present, two pairs of wings could still be found, but they belonged to an entirely different species. One pair was black and leathered. At the tips, sharp talons shone in the lowering sunlight as the owner sweat with exertion and breathed with heavy pants. The second pair were soft as a doves but colored in a faint grey. The discolored feathers shifted slightly as a breeze passed through them while the owner stood with his arms folded and a single black eye observing.

The blue electricity, once steady and bright, began to flicker as the dark haired seraph began to pant with exhaustion. A growl of frustration erupted from Sasuke’s lips as the last tendril died. As the snarl echoed and died, the mountain meadow fell quiet for moment as Sasuke slumped to his knees. He clenched the grass, pulling it from its roots as he tried to regain his breath. After the short rest, he stood up. With a look of determination on his face, he began to concentrate and start the hand signs that would summon the blue lightning again.

“That’s enough for today,” Kakashi said.

Sasuke shot him a look. “One more time,” he insisted as he moved to continue.

A hand on his shoulder stopped his fingers mid sign. “No more,” Kakashi said more firmly. “It’s too dangerous, this power is not meant to be wielded more than twice in a session. In time you will build up more strength and that number will increase. But for now, you need to rest, we can pick this back up tomorrow.”

Sasuke remained in his stance for a few more seconds then finally gave in. Straightening and walking over the the small stream he bent down to cup several greedy gulps of water. The last handful he splashed over his face, it felt cool and refreshing against his hot skin. Feeling revived, he stood back up and rubbed his sore shoulders.
Kakashi was already resting against a tree trunk when he finished, his face covered by a scroll of parchment as he vigorously studied it. Sasuke’s eye twitched when he heard the older seraph giggle behind the page. The silver seraph was a peculiar one. He was several centuries older than himself and had earned quite the reputation during the war. Ever since the war ended, he had become somewhat of a recluse. He was still loyal and served the blessed, but he spent more time on earth than he did in the heavens. A decade or so ago he had started mentoring Sasuke. He had been one of Naruto's mentors first and when he and the blonde started up their rivalry, Naruto had introduced them. It was then that Kakashi began to mentor him as well. Sasuke liked the silver man, even possibly looked up to him, but he was still odd.

Despite knowing him for a good amount of years, he still did not know much about the seraph. He was not sure how exactly his wings had become tarnished, but the man had many mysteries. He had his theories, most of them linked to the sharingan that he possessed and kept hidden. Sasuke had only seen his family’s bloodline on the man a handful of times. How he came to possess and wield it was just another mystery that made of Kakashi. One thing he did know was the man’s perverse habits. He knew that scroll was nothing academic. Despite what Jiraiya, the seraph that had given it to him, claimed it to be. The sage proclaimed it to be a composition of rigorously collected data and research. He and Naruto had stolen it once and found it to be nothing but a highly graphic pictograph of some rather intimate moments between and man and a woman. Speaking of the loud mouthed angel, he was late.

As if Sasuke’s thought had a magical summons, the loud thuds of something crashing through the forest broke the tranquility of the glade surrounding them. Sasuke glanced towards the sound while Kakashi remained unphased by the approach of something that sounded like a herd of elephants. From the pine trees and underbrush, Naruto burst through the foliage. Arms wildly pumping as he sprinted towards them, Sasuke took in the blonde seraph who had several sticks and leaves collected in his spiky hair, making him look like a crazed wild man.

“Where have you been?” Sasuke asked as he settled down near Kakashi who finally peeked out from over his scroll.

Naruto closed the distance, his heavy panting filling the air as he sat down with them under the shade of the tree. Kakashi moved his attention back to his scroll as his hand casually dug through a satchel sitting on the ground beside him.

“Sorry, sorry, I was with Sakura and we kind of lost track of time.”

Sasuke’s head whipped to the side.

“Sakura?” He asked in confusion, looking at the blonde as he drank from a flask of water offered to him by Kakashi.
Naruto paused and looked at Sasuke. “Yeah, Sakura, remember that mortal we met a couple weeks back.”

“I know who she is moron, I am not like you and have the memory of a goldfish.” Sasuke replied in annoyance. “My question is, why were you with her?”

Naruto shrugged. “She asked if I wanted a tour of her family's olive grove the other day when we went into the city.”

“You spent time with her before today?”

Naruto gave him an odd look, “Of course, pretty much everyday since we met her.” He clarified. He paused for a moment, analyzing Sasuke’s expression and odd reaction to this new information. Suddenly he was hit with an idea and a devilish grin spread across his face. “Why do you sound so bothered...jealous?”

Kakashi peeked over the papyrus scroll in his hands to satisfy some of the intrigue that developed from the conversation being exchanged before him. This was not the first time Naruto had mentioned a mortal girl he had been spending time with. Kakashi had heard his blonde student talk about her a handful of times over the week.

It was no oddity for Naruto to meet and take a fascination with a mortal. The boy both liked and lacked friends, so he was happy to accept them in any shape and form. Whether they be angel, mortal, or in Sasuke’s case, demon. Whomever and whatever they were, Naruto made them his friends. Although Kakashi figured the dark haired seraph would argue that terminology to label his relationship with the rambunctious angel.

What made the conversation particularly interesting was the fact that Sasuke seemed to know the girl as well. That one fact was enough to draw his attention away from the most recent addition to his personal library. Sasuke only associated with mortals enough to influence their soul before moving on to the next, never bothering to learn their name or recall their face. Therefore, it spoke volumes as to the impact this mortal must have made on Sasuke for him to not only remember her, but to question Naruto about her. If it were anyone else it would seem insignificant. But this was not just anyone else, this was Sasuke. And Sasuke was Sasuke. He did not ask questions unless genuinely interested.
Kakashi caught Sasuke’s dark gaze move to him and he quickly retreated back behind the scroll. As he stared at the Egyptian pictographs that illustrated Jiraiya’s most recent imagination of a pharaoh, a slave girl, and their forbidden love, Kakashi continued to listen sharply as Sasuke nonchalantly interrogated Naruto and his associations with their mortal acquaintance.

Sasuke stiffened at the accusation of being jealous, he was above such things. He quickly looked towards Kakashi whose one visible dark eye quickly disappeared back behind the scroll. Sasuke frowned at the nosy seraph, knowing full well that the older man was still listening closely to their conversation. He shot Naruto a glare.

“Tch,” Sasuke scoffed. “There is nothing to be jealous of. She’s an insignificant mortal. I am just concerned about her talking. If you keep showing up, how is she supposed to forget about our existence? She’s going to tell someone.”

Naruto shook his head. “She won’t do that.”

“How can you be so sure?” Sasuke challenged.

“She is not stupid,” Naruto endorsed. “And she gave me her word.”

“Whatever,” Sasuke brushed off.

Naruto noticed Sasuke’s effort to seem casual. Deciding he was not quite done with his fun he continued. “She asked about you the other day,” he baited, watching him closely from the corner of his eye.

Sasuke’s eyes snapped to Naruto. It was brief but Naruto caught the genuine eagerness before it was quickly masked with indifference.

“What did she want to know?” He asked casually.

“She was just curious about why she hadn’t seen you,” Naruto answered. “You know, you should join us sometime. She knows the market really well in the city.”
“Tch, why would I want to waste my time with a mundane mortal?”

“She’s different,” Naruto defended. “She said she would show me a sensational overlook of the sea tomorrow. You should come!”

“Why would I want to do that when I can just fly over the sea?” Sasuke argued.

Growing tired of Sasuke’s indifference Naruto waved his question off. “Suit yourself, just offering to come.”

“Hn,” Sasuke hummed as he laid down and settled in the long grass.

“So is that a yes? You’ll come?"

“Hn.”

Two Weeks Ago

Darkness had consumed the earth several hours ago. Sasuke had done his very best to not be here. Confused and frustrated, he had no answer as to why he was here. But he was. Perched on the tall rock wall that surrounded the humble estate, Sasuke watched the figure in the garden. Several tall fruit trees hid him in the shadows and he did his best to ignore the sweet scent of the ripened fruits that wafted in the breeze.

It had not taken him long to find her. Despite his seemingly withdrawn attitude from the mornings earlier conversation, he had found he had retained every scrap of information about her that she had shared. It was annoying. Annoying, but useful. She had talked about her family’s olive grove that was located just outside the small town at the base of the mountain. Most of the area was farming and agriculture but there was only one olive grove.

She was kneeled down on the ground in front a little garden. Herbs and flowers flourished in the small bed as she quietly hummed to herself. Her hair was let free to tumble down around her back and face. She paused in her digging around a rosemary bush to tuck the curtain of locks falling into her face behind her ear. Sasuke watched as the movement left a muddy smear across her cheek as she went back to digging her bare hands around in the dirt. As he watched her move from plant
to plant, sometimes pulling weeds while other times pruning the plants themselves, he found himself gaining more questions in his mind than answers.

The first question was if the girl was ever not dirty. He watched her gather up a basket of collected herbs and brush off her dirty dress. With the wicker balanced on a hip she walked into the small brick home and disappear behind a door. With no more reason to remain, now that his object of observance was no longer visible, Sasuke spread his wings and took off into the air, concluding that he would have to return again in order to collect more information in order to satisfy his curiosity.

Sasuke had returned the very next night, as well as the next, and the next, and the next. In fact, he had returned every night since meeting her two weeks ago. He told himself it was to make sure she was not telling anyone of his kinds existence. But deep down, he knew there was more to it than that. He had yet to figure out that reason and that irked him. He did not like to be ignorant of things, he wanted to understand. Ignorance was a weakness and this girl, while seemingly normal in almost every way, had somehow managed to stand out to him.

Tonight his attendance was no different. As soon as the sun began its descent beyond the horizon, sending Naruto and Kakashi back to their heaven above, Sasuke had swiftly found himself perched at his usual point of observation. There was still a small amount of reflected light in the sky, but complete darkness would soon consume the world.

He was earlier than usual. Passersby were frequent as they returned to their homes in the dusk light. Each time a fellow farmer or merchant passed by on their return home from the market, they each called out to Sakura with a happy greeting. She returned each and every one with a happy wave, a warm smile, and her own cheerful greeting. A few stopped and spoke with her, mostly girls her own age and a few elderly. When a young boy stopped by and spoke with her as well, Sasuke listened in, his heightened hearing not missing a word. The young boy spoke of his grandfather and an ailment he had been experiencing. Sakura asked a few more question and as he answered her, her face scrunched in thought as she listened. When finished she told the boy to head home and she would be by later to visit. Not long after she disappeared into her home. On any other evening, this was usually the time when Sasuke would depart, but this time, he lingered.

Sakura entered her home from the back door that led into the kitchen. Her mother was standing at the table taking inventory of the cellars with the woman who helped around the house. They were not excessively rich but her family did well enough that they were able to hold a few servants to help maintain the small manor as well as a few workers that helped her father with the olive grove and oil pressing during the harvests. Upon her entry, her mother looked up from the ledger and gave her a warm smile. Her golden hair was swept up into its usual bun as her green eyes shone with warmth.
“Pyrros’ grandfather is not doing well,” Sakura announced as she walked over to a wall with several dried herbs and a shelf of medicinal salves. She began to collect various supplies into a small basket. “I am going to go over to and check on him. I do not think it is anything serious but he has never been to full health since that cough developed.”

Her mother paused to peek outside. “Very well but be quick about it and take your cloak. It might be chilly tonight when you come back.”

Sakura nodded as she grabbed her cloak from a peg next to the door and slipped out. With hurried steps she walked down the path that led from the back door through the garden to the back gate. As she crossed her family’s property and onto the road that ran by her home, she began to walk briskly towards the small home of the carpenter.

He did not live too far away, but he certainly lived in the secluded area of the mountainside. He was somewhat of a hermit until his daughter and grandson came to live with them after his son-in-law died. Pyrros was learning the trade quickly, which was good given his grandfather's declining health. Already the twelve year old boy did the majority of the work while his grandfather sat and instructed him. His hands had become stiff with arthritis which Sakura did her best to relieve and keep functioning. She had done well to keep him healthy over the past year but a few months ago he developed a cough and it began to take a heavy toll. Most days the old carpenter could only manage to walk a small way before running out of breath.

By no means was Sakura a physician but she had a basic knowledge that she did her best to expand. The small, secluded town did not have a physician, this forced people to travel to the city which was far and expensive. For most minor ailments they came to her and anything more they would make the journey or pay the expense to have a physician come to them.

But the carpenter was too frail to travel such a distance and the expense of paying a person trained in medicine to come was too steep for the suffering carpenter’s business. So Sakura did her best to help as much as she could. She accepted the small carvings made by the boy and the pottery made by Pyrros’ mother as payment, although she would do it for nothing if the family let her. The carvings she passed onto other children she visited to persuade them or reward them for taking medications, while she made use of the small pots given to her to by storing slaves and medicines.

Sasuke followed the maiden all the way to a small hovel of a home. To the side of the home was an open shed full of half finished furniture. The smell of fresh cut oak and cypress was heavy in the air, the closer to the home, the more potent the smell became. He had moved with silence and a stealth with each step. With it being a new moon, it was easy to follow closely and not be seen. When she arrived to the humble abode. She knocked on the door and was greeted by the same young boy that she had spoken with her earlier. Behind the boy appeared a woman who looked to be the boy’s mother, who eagerly invited Sakura inside.
When she disappeared through the door, Sasuke moved. Taking up a position next to a small hole in the wall, that served as a window. He peered in to watch Sakura lean over a frail looking man laying in a bed.

He watched her as she reached out a delicate hand and felt the old man's forehead, she seemed satisfied with the results and continued further with her examination. Sasuke continued to observe her as she helped the man sit up and with her ear pressed to his chest she listened to his ragged breathing for a while. She continued various tasks, preparing a tea, rubbing an ointment on the mans chest, and speaking with the woman.

All the while, Sasuke watched her. The way she moved and handled her patient with such gentleness. The reassuring smile she gave the grandson when he worriedly asked if his grandfather would be okay. As Sakura spoke with the young boy’s mother he noted the compassionate friendliness in which she interacted with the woman. From what he had observed, Sakura’s family was among the more wealthy in the countryside. This family was obviously struggling and in a society segregated by class, Sakura was certainly far higher on the ladder than this family. But despite this fact, Sasuke noticed the maiden treat each member of the family with respect. There was no superiority in the way she interacted with them. Instead she treated them with kindness. But it was not out of pity or charity, Sasuke realized. He recalled the way Sakura had seemed to know and care about everyone that had passed by her house. She did everything out of the goodness of her heart and with pure intent.

This discovery disturbed Sasuke. It was people like her that attracted his kind. Both blessed and fallen. The blessed reveled in such purity and guarded such souls as they were the most precious stones to be found. But the fallen saw them differently. They saw such mortals as a challenge and they took enjoyment in tainting such precious souls. A person such as Sakura would draw any demon towards her, especially the more powerful ones. Sasuke frowned at this thought. She was a vulnerable target and here she was, traveling in the middle of the night just to tend to some sickly old man without any regard as to what could be lurking in the dark. Unconsciously he felt himself reaching out for any indication that there was another of his kind nearby. He felt no presence, but that did not mean she would cross paths with one on her way home. He was not sure why, but the thought of someone influencing her, whether it be good or bad, disturbed him.

Sakura was regretting not bringing a lantern with her. When she had left her home, the sky was still a navy blue and gave off enough light to see the silhouettes of her surroundings. Now, there was nothing. A heavy curtain of clouds overhead blocked the faint starlight that would normally help guide her. And with the moon being at the beginning of a new cycle, it too failed to produce a light bright enough to penetrate through the veil of clouds. Sakura knew the path that led to her house well enough. In fact she knew it so well, that it was easy enough to navigate through the darkness. But it was not necessarily the possibility of going astray that had Sakura on edge. The was nothing to be seen nor did she hear anything, there was no evidence that her normal senses picked up that anything was amiss. But the prickling of her skin as the hairs rose on her arms and neck, along with the deep impression of being watched, made her feel uneasy.
She had started her journey home, grasping her basket tightly with one arm and holding a small clay jar given to her as payment. Through the darkness she strode with slow, steady steps. At first she ignored the uneasy feeling. She had never been one to be afraid of darkness. Her village was safe and secluded, nothing bad ever happened. And it was not necessarily fear that she was feeling. She was not sure what emotion it was, but as her adrenaline began to make its way through her body, the feeling intensified. She picked up her steps, moving quickly through the dark and guiding herself with the familiar feel of the ground beneath her feet. She was nearly jogging when the sudden break of the quiet surrounding her was interrupted by a voice. A dark, sultry voice that was both alarming and alluring.

“You should not be out here by yourself.”

Sakura let out a yelp as the smooth deep voice sounded far closer than it should without her knowledge of a person’s presence. The sound of broken pottery echoed around her as she whirled in the direction of the voice. Staring out into the darkness, she strained her eyes for something. Eventually she managed to distinguish something. A dark figure leaning against something tall and slender, perhaps a tree? Unable to get her feet to move closer, she strained to identify the person. Her eyes adjusted a little more and noticed the light color of the pale skin that was not covered by the black cloak wrapped around their body. A pair of arms were folded across a chest. Near their right shoulder she caught the shine of a silver brooch holding the cloak tight, an indistinguishable emblem was engraved but it was too dark to make out the details. As she looked higher she found what was the person’s neck and face, and then she caught the faint glow of red.

Anyone would be afraid, they would scream, they would run. But Sakura did none of these. Because she knew those eyes, she knew that voice. She had only seen and heard them once a couple weeks ago but they were memorable enough that it only took once to memorize. Many a time she thought she had imagined such features. But there had been a pair of blue eyes that had returned nearly every day as a reminder, as evidence that she was not insane. But she never thought she would see this particular set of eyes again. While she knew the person before her was not a threat, it did not mean she was at ease.

“Sasuke?” She asked, her voice sounding small in the darkness as she looked for confirmation of his identity.

“Hn.”

Not only was the girl always dirty, but it seemed that she was always dropping pottery. His eyes looked down at the broken shards by her sandaled feet, his blood trait made it easy for him to take in the individual pieces with detail, despite the darkness around them. With slow survey, he trailed his eyes up to her face to see her squinting in effort to see through the dark. It was another reminder
just how weak mortals were. The reminder brought about a twinge of disappointment. He was not sure why, but he found himself always hoping that she would somehow be different, superior to the other mortals. The past two weeks of observing her in the dead of night had been frustrating to him to find out just how annoyingly normal she was. Aside from the one time fluke of her ability to resist his bloodline, she was monotonous. But that was not as annoying as the fact that he found himself continuing his habits every night, regardless of the repetitive findings.

She called out his name, her tone hesitant. It was as if she was not fully sure it was him. He wondered if it mattered to her whether or not if she was correct. He let out his signature hum and watched as a small flicker of relief washed across the face at the confirmation of his identity. Although he still sensed and uneasiness about her, he found himself content that she seemed somewhat comforted with the fact that it was his presence and not someone else.

“What are you doing here?” She asked, her voice holding confusion.

“I would like to ask the same thing,” he found himself replying. “It’s dark out.”

He saw a twinge of challenge in her face at his comment. And he liked it. It was that minuscule feature about her that had caught his attention before. It was that defiant sort of bravery that he realized set her apart from other mortals. She just needed some gentle coaxing in order to show it.

“I am not afraid of the dark,” she stated firmly.

Sasuke’s mouth curled at her determined bravery. He quick stepped to her side, his steps light and silent with only the shift in air to give warning of his movement. In a blink of an eye he was at her side leaning into her ear.

“It’s not the dark that you should be afraid of, but what’s in the dark,” he whispered.

She startled at the sudden close proximity. Her sandals made a scraping sound as she turned and shuffled away from him. Her whole body twitched and her grasp on the basket faltered. It too fell towards the ground but before joining the broken jar, Sasuke reached out and caught it.

“Tch, so clumsy” he mumbled to himself as he lifted the basket and pressed it back into her shaking arms. He was slightly disappointed in how her summoned courage seemed to be so easily shaken. But he was torn, for he enjoyed the way his words and proximity seemed to rattle her as well.
“Thanks,” Sakura said quietly as she managed to get her shaking hands to grasp the returned item.

Sasuke tucked his hands into his cloak and began to walk down the road. When she did not follow he paused to look back at her.

“Are you coming?” He asked, his voice holding impatience.

She stared at him, barley making out his body in the dark. “Where are we going?”

Sasuke did his best to not roll his eyes. “To your manor.” He replied, making it sound as if it were the most obvious answer.

“...oh..okay,” Sakura stumbled out but failed to move.

Sasuke raised a brow. “Well?”

“Rrright,” she quickly stuttered as she finally managed to move.

When she moved, he moved, and she had to quicken her steps for several strides before she fell into step with him. After a short while they settled into a slow pace, Sakura’s sandals making a small pitter-patter with each step while Sasuke strode silently next to her. As they walked in silence, Sasuke watched her closely from the corner of his eye.

It felt different than the last time they had walked together. She was less vocal than a few weeks ago. While her never ending stream of question had been annoying, he was beginning think that this odd, reserved version of her bothered him more. And it was not just the lack of talking that was different. Her body had still yet to fully relax. Her steps were more rigid and he could see her fingers grasping tightly at the woven basket frame. Sasuke found himself frowning, puzzled by her change in personality.

“Why haven’t I seen you with Naruto again?”
At her question Sasuke suddenly found his answer as to what was different. Naruto was not here. It was the blessed one who she had directed all of her questions to last time and it had been the blonde’s presence that had put her at ease. Sasuke knew he did not give off a calming aura, in fact most of the time he intentionally put people off. Why he expected her reaction to his presence to be different was beyond him.

“Why would you expect to see me with him?” Sasuke asked in a dull tone, keeping his head pointed ahead as he watched her in his peripherals.

“I just thought since you were friends…”

“Whatever that idiot has led you to believe,” he interrupted with a cold tone, “we are not friends.”

There was an uncomfortable pause before she let out a quiet, “Oh.”

He watched her press her lips together and look down at the ground. He was unsure as to how to interpret her body language. Was she was trying to watch the path so as not to trip or had he hurt her feelings. As he was not one for dealing with emotions, and this girl seemed to be one that had highly elevated ones, he did what he did best. He ignored it.

For the rest of the walk back she remained quiet and somber. Towards the end, her steps had become slightly slower and she fell behind him a half pace. When they reached her home, Sasuke stopped and turned sharply to face her when he reached the gate. Preoccupied with staring down at the ground, Sakura nearly walked into his chest but was stopped when he stuck a hand out and stopped her. She looked up at the contact, her wide eyes blinking rapidly as she looked up at him.

“Why did you stop?” she asked.

He let out a “Tch,” before stepping to the side for her to see the warm lamp light coming from the windows of her home. “We arrived.”

She stared at her house, a faint look of confusion on her face as if she did not recognize it. She looked back to him, her face tilted with inquiry, and her large forehead creased with confused wrinkles. “How do you know where I live?”

Sasuke was grateful for the darkness as it hid the momentary bought of panic. His mind raced as he
scrambled for a reason. “You said your family owned an olive grove, this is the only one for miles,” he explained, deciding to go with a partial truth, leaving out the part that he found it two weeks ago and had frequented it every night since.

“Oh,” she said with a small nod, “right, of course.”

He watched as she pulled her bottom lip into her mouth and nibble at it. Her eyes moved around, just as nervously. To the ground, at her hands, his shoulder, the wall that they stood by. Sasuke stood silently waiting until finally she managed to look him in the eye. She held his gaze for a moment before lowering it again.

“Thank you for escorting me,” she finally said, addressing his chest.

Sasuke waited until she finally raised her eyes again before giving an acknowledging, “Hn,” and turned to walk away.

Sakura watched his back, thoroughly confused and perplexed by the encounter. She had asked Naruto about him after the first week of their first encounter, curious as to his absence and whereabouts. Naruto had given her a slightly hedged answer, explaining that Sasuke was not much of a socialite and liked to keep to himself. It had killed her to keep so quiet on the walk home, so much so she had to physically tense herself so as to not disrupt the silence. She liked Naruto and by the way he spoke of Sasuke, she felt that she would like him too. But he made her nervous and unsure. Unsure of how to act or what to say. He was unpredictable, one moment close and intense, the next far off and aloof. Each of those examples went for both physically and mentally.

“Hey Sasuke,” she called out causing him to pause in his steps.

She froze as the words came out of her mouth on their own accord, for she was sure her mind did not tell it to do such a thing. He turned around, staring at intensely at her, waiting for her to speak. But she was unsure as to why she had even called out to him. His mouth thinned, a sign of annoyance and she began to frantically think of something to say. Her mind thought of Naruto which inspired her.

“Tomorrow Naruto and I are going to a spot on the cliffs at sunset. You are welcome to come…” Sasuke had turned and began to walk away, “If...you...want,” she finished after he had already vanished into the darkness.
Sakura was left standing alone at the gate of her home. A small frown pulled at her face as her shoulders sagged. Naruto would be disappointed. He talked often on how he wanted the three of them to be friends. Unfortunately, Sakura was beginning to doubt that would ever happen. A breeze passed through ruffling her hair and causing her to shiver out of her depressed stupor and retreat into the warmth of her home.

Unknown to her, a dark figure sat perched on the wall that faced the windows of her personal quarters. As her silhouette moved about behind the drawn curtain, Sasuke watched it. Perhaps it was time he expand his observances to a more closer and personal examination.

Chapter End Notes

I will try to get the next chapter up in the usual time frame that I post but if not I will do my best to not let it go for too long.
Chapter Five: Rooftop Reunions and Club Collusions

Sasuke soared above the towering buildings and crowded streets, all the while, keeping his eyes set on his destination. He knew the moment his presence had been detected because the calm and collected chakra that his teacher usual emitted, spiked and began to become more frenzied. He smirked as the one belonging to his long time rival began to become more active as well. However, when the third one suddenly disappeared, a small frown of puzzlement formed on his lips. He became even more puzzled when he saw that three individuals remained on the roof. Watching them as they assembled themselves on the end of the building cast in shadow, he readied himself for a possible surprise attack from the owner of the chakra that remained unaccounted for. It was not that he could easily terminate such an attack, but it would certainly be an annoyance. He did not want this reunion to take too much time, he was just curious as to how his ex comrades were faring these days.

With ease, he dropped altitude and alighted softly on the roofs edge. With dark eyes, he stared down at them from his elevated perch. As predicted, he was greeted by his old teacher and rival. Kakashi stood with his arms stuffed into his pockets, his one black eye lazily watching him. His left eye was covered by the cloth that had always kept it hidden as long as he had known the man. Although Sasuke had no doubt that it had been recently pulled up to reveal the unmatching red eye that was hidden beneath. It would have been impossible for them to have detected his presence so soon had he not, despite Sasuke’s lack of effort to approach undetected. On the outside, Kakashi looked calm and cool as he always did, but the fast current of chakra flowing through his body told Sasuke otherwise. Kakashi was nervous...but why? While he had to admit their past record gave good enough reason, Sasuke had not tried to kill either of them for several decades.

He moved on to take in the blonde seraph that stood next to silver one. For some reason the idiot was shirtless as his broad arms crossed over his bare chest. Sasuke was not sure if he really wanted, nor cared as to why the sunny seraph was half naked. Naruto had always been odd and his behavior seemed to still be the same. The only anomaly seemed to be the lack of a foxy grin that was usually pasted on his face. Instead her looked grim and wary.

For a moment his eyes flicked to the dark shadow behind them, but his gaze hardly lingered. It was only an insignificant mortal, nothing worth noting. Instead his eyes began to wander around the surrounding area. His head shifted from side to side, scanning the entire rooftop and a few neighboring ones as he put on a show of looking for someone.
“Where did the other one go?” He asked, curious as to where the third chakra he had detected disappeared to. “I detected three chakras earlier.”

“Just a messenger,” he heard Kakashi reply, as he continued to look around. “It’s been a long time Sasuke, what brings you to New York?”

“It’s New York, do I need a purpose?” Sasuke hedged as he finally brought his attention back to the old archangel.

He surveyed Kakashi again as he stood nearly shoulder to shoulder with Naruto. Both of their wings were out as they stood in near battle stance. He tilted his head thoughtfully as a realization came to his mind, a correction in his analysis. It was not a battle stance per say, but more of a defense, a barrier. A wall between himself and the mortal standing against the billowing air units. For the first time since his arrival, Sasuke gave his full attention to the mortal. Having been incurious before, he now found himself significantly more interested.

Given the petite figure and short stature that was being consumed by the baggy sweatshirt, he assumed it was female, a young woman judging by the curve of her hips. He tried to focus closer on her face in an attempt to get a glimpse of her features, but his view was blocked off by the sudden wall of feathers that appeared as Naruto ruffled and raised his wings. The smallest of smirks curled at the corner of his lips, he was now fully intrigued. He had been wondering why the pair of them were so wound up when he arrived, now he had his suspected reason, he just needed confirmation.

“Who is your little friend?” he asked, watching them closely.

Kakashi did well to mask his emotions but Naruto was always too expressive. He caught the slight, panicked look that the blonde gave to the older archangel. And despite the silver seraphs composure of his face, he watched as even his wings and shoulders tensed. Sasuke’s smile widened. It was in that subtle movement that he had his confirmation.

“Since when did Tsunade start assigning archangels to do a guardians work?” Sasuke asked as he looked to Kakashi. “Naruto I understand, he has always been a bit backwards. But for you it’s a bit insulting for one such as yourself is it not? Did you get yourself demoted or is your old age catching up with you?”

Naruto sputtered a bit as he let out a growl, but Kakashi remained unphased by Sasuke’s insults. Instead, the mask covering the lower half of his face raised slightly and his eyes crinkled as he gave a polite smile to the Uchiha.
“She is just a mortal we saved from a rogue demon earlier,” he said casually. “Something that we would not have to do if your family worked a little harder at trying to control your people? But then again, I guess they are not your people are they.” Sasuke remained silent. “But who are your people Sasuke? For a time you seemed to have found a place with Orochimaru but I suppose you proved that wrong when you killed him. Would it be too hopeful that you have finally come to your senses and decided to join in the Leaf Alliance?”

Sasuke could not help but let out a laugh of mockery. His dark chuckle echoed out around the rooftop. “Why would I ever align myself with such a pathetic force,” Sasuke asked when his laughter had died down.

The idea of joining such a cause was not just humorous, but insulting. The Leaf Alliance was the peace treaty between the blessed and the fallen. It was what his father had agreed to after Madara disappeared, leaving him in charge. No doubt it had been done by the council of his pacifist brother. But there had been consequences to such actions. The rift between the fallen and blessed had grown over the years and many demons had been outraged with the new restrictions and rebelled against the Uchiha rule. Now they were spread throughout the mortal realm. Many died off quickly, having been cut off from their source of power, but some found loopholes. Sasuke had his own reasons for remaining detached from his family and the alliance other than his dislike of the nephilim world. Thanks to Orochimaru, he had his own power source. It was the only useful thing that had come from the centuries of mocked servitude to the snake.

“I am sure your mother would certainly appreciate it,” Kakashi said, drawing Sasuke from his thoughts. “We could use someone like you fighting for order.”

Sasuke let out a scoff. “Be happy I have stayed neutral in this rebellion because we all know I would never side with astral lap dogs. My father may have become desperate enough, but I have no desire.”

Kakashi raised a brow. “I know you have your resentment towards the blessed, but this is more than that and I know you would not join the other side.”

“Do not sound so confident Kakashi,” Sasuke chided.

“I know about the mortals Sasuke,” Kakashi replied in a more serious tone. “Is that not why you turned on Orochimaru? Because he was experimenting on them? You know what the other side is doing to mortals in order to survive. You may hate us, but I know you care about the mortals, and it is them that we are fighting for.”
Sasuke stiffened at his words. There was a long pause, the air conditioning to the building shut off, making the absence of the loud hum make it seem eerily silent, despite the rest of the sounds of the city flooding around them.

“Why would I care about mortals,” Sasuke muttered darkly as his eyes narrowed. “Their lives are fleeting and pointless. They are weak. Why would I ever waste my time on something so transient?” He saw a saddened expression take over the small visible portion of his mentors face. And it was not just sadness, it was disappointment and pity. Sasuke hated the expression. He sucked on his teeth in annoyance. This conversation was not going in the direction that he wanted and he was done speaking on such topics. “I have somewhere else to be,” he quickly spat.

Without waiting for any reply, he spread his wings and shot up into the air. He did not look back at them as he swept away. However he did spare one glance to the little mortal that stood silently behind them. Unsure as to why, but for a strange reason, he felt drawn to her. The feeling was only momentary before the idea was banished from his impatient mind. Mortals did not interest him. Not anymore.

In the blink of an eye, his figure had melted into the darkness of the night. Neither Kakashi nor Naruto moved an inch as they watched the spot he had disappeared from. Sakura’s green eyes traced the tight muscles of Naruto’s back and took in the strained posture of Kakashi as well. She took a step forward, her hand automatically moving up to push the hood of the Naruto’s sweater away from her face.

“Who was that?”

Her question seemed to break the pair from their statuesque state and they each turned to look at her. She caught Naruto’s blue eyes flicker to Kakashi as if looking for a prompting. Her brow creased in confusion. Naruto was not one to check his tongue. As Kakashi slouched into his usual carefree posture and gave her a cloth covered smile her attention moved to him instead.

“That, was Sasuke Uchiha.”

Sakura’s eyes widened. She had heard of the infamous, rouge prince of the underworld. There was a plethora of rumors circulating around, all varying in degree and conflicting with the next. He was the youngest son of Fugaku Uchiha, the head of the fallen. But he had unofficially defected from the demons. For a long time he had been rumored to be with Orochimaru up until he killed the serpent angel during the mortals Second World War. Since then it had been a mystery as to what the seraph had been doing for nearly the past century.
Some said he was cursed just like Madara but she had always been confused by this claim. Everyone knew the story of Madara and how his brother’s death had led to madness. It was a fact known just as well as Indra’s own similar cause of his own curse of hatred. But Sakura had never heard any reason as to why Sasuke hated the blessed seraphim. He just did. And given the lack of involvement he had with the fallen, he seemed to not care for either side.

Sakura knew that both Naruto and Kakashi had a personal history with him but she did not know the full details. She had only the conflicted expressions she witnessed when the Uchiha was mentioned or after a rare run in with him.

She remembered the time when an injured Kakashi had come back with a half dead Naruto in his arms. They had tried to talk Sasuke out of aiding Orochimaru and his endeavors. She remembered the broken and torn wings of Naruto as he cried out in anguish. She remembered it vividly, for it had not been the potential of losing his wings he had mourned, but it had been the loss of his friend. Sakura remembered the way his tears had flowed from his eyes while Tsunade healed a thrashing Naruto as he repeated over and over that ‘they had lost him, he was gone’.

At the time Sakura did not know who he was, so as she healed Kakashi with shaking hands after Tsunade yelled at her to tend to the silver seraph, she asked him. Kakashi had explained that long ago, Naruto and Sasuke had been good friends. But something had happened, it was no one’s fault but Sasuke had needed someone to blame, so he blamed Naruto. Sakura had asked what happened but Kakashi had brushed it off. She had wanted to prod more but she could see the hurt and loss reflected in Kakashi’s eyes and let it go.

“We should head back now,” Kakashi announced. “Sakura,” he called, breaking her out of her thoughts to look at him. “I will carry you back in case we have any watchers.”

Sakura gave him an look but did not question the oddity of keeping up the pretense of being mortal during this part of their mission. There was no one around. But instead of pointing this out, she silently came to his side and wrapped her arms around his neck as he wound his own arms around her middle, locking her into place. With a nod to Naruto they were in the air. Sakura clinging on as Kakashi’s powerful wings pumped through the cool night air and lifted them high into the sky. As Sakura clung closer to Kakashi she peeked over his shoulder to see Naruto flanking them, his face serious as he scanned their surroundings. For a brief moment, she caught his eye and Naruto grinned at her in a way that was almost convincing of its genuinity. She responded with a wane smile of her own but she could not bring herself to commit to it fully. She was too preoccupied with the wonderings of her mind.

Sakura sat in the small alcove of the bay window in her room. With bright eyes, she stared up at the half moon that shone down into the small garden below. She could not bring herself to sleep.
Everytime she closed her eyes she was greeted with two red orbs suspended in darkness while a muffled echo repeated something over and over. She had strained her ears to try and make out the whisper but it seemed the more she tried, the more distorted it became. She had woken up over an hour ago drenched in a cold sweat and a throbbing in her head. With the comfortable breeze hitting her skin and bringing clarifying air to her mind, she had managed to bring herself some peace. Her pounding head had subsided significantly but she still felt the small throb each time she recalled her dream.

She shifted slightly and the ache in her joints and tingle in her legs told her she had been sitting still for far too long. With no foreseeable sleep coming if she were to lie down, Sakura decided perhaps a small walk through the gardens would help calm her frazzled mind. Grabbing a thin shawl and wrapping it around her shoulders, she quietly made her way through the still house she shared with Tsunade and entered the garden through the back door.

It was peaceful in the garden, it always was. Sakura was not sure why she had always been drawn to it, but it was always where she felt most comfortable, the most at home. There was a koi pond in the middle with a small waterfall that trickled down a display of balanced flat stones and fed into the small body of water. A simple arched bridge crossed over it and she had spent many hours sitting and watching the fish consume the small morsels of food she brought as offerings. Foliage from all types of terrains decorated the botanical space, each thriving easily despite the contrast in many of their natural climates. Spread throughout, were varying species of trees, with each featured genus making small groves in sections of the garden.

She had been making her way to the small bridge when a pair of voices caught her attention and she discovered her destination to be already occupied. Standing on the sturdy planks were Kakashi and Tsunade. Each of them had a serious expression, Tsunade’s growing more somber as Kakashi spoke. Upon seeing them, Sakura moved to silently retreat. She had never been one to eavesdrop. She knew it was wrong and despite the numerous mysteries in her life, she had never wanted to stoop to that level. However, that did not mean she was not ever tempted. But when the utterance of her own name drifted into her ears, for the first time in her life, Sakura gave into the temptation. For could it truly be eavesdropping if you were the very subject of the conversation?

She quickly ducked behind a tree to avoid being seen. Their hushed voices were quiet but when she concentrated hard enough, she could make out their words over the chirp of crickets and the trickle of water as it spilled soothingly into the pond.

“I told you this would happen,” Tsunade hissed, her anger obviously just barely under control. “No more. From now on, she no longer goes with you two.”

“He did not recognize her, to him she was just a mortal that we saved,” Kakashi explained.
“A mortal that caught his attention,” Tsunade shot back.

“A faceless mortal,” Kakashi pointed.

“I don’t care,” Tsunade waved. “No more. She stays here during the dark hours.”

“There is no reason to overreact,” Kakashi replied.

“Overreact?!” Tsunade all but yelled. “Be thankful I am not revoking her guardianship duties as well!”

“She will not like this,” Kakashi warned. “She has seen it, you know she won’t go back to…”

“I don’t care about that, what I care about is her safety.”

Sakura’s brow furrowed. Were they not all taking the same risks by hunting? Every angel descending after dark was in danger, why would her’s be any different? Why would her’s matter more? Why did it matter if Sasuke did or did not see her? She did not know him, she had never met him, so why would him seeing her matter?

Kakashi took in a depth breath and sighed. “A few nights. Have her stay in a few nights and then let her continue, she needs this.” Kakashi tried to bargain. “Sasuke never stays in the same place for long, we have her stay in for a period of time but then we let her continue.”

Any more of the conversation was drowned out by the thudding of her heart as the rush of blood deadened her ears. Panic took all ability to think at the idea of being banned from the mortal realm. Unable to gather anymore information, Sakura quietly moved away to retreat back to her room and try to process everything she had heard and seen tonight.

It had always been a mystery as to why she always had to be so cautious around their kind and act like a mortal. At first she had thought it was to better their success in hunting down rouge demons. But now, she was not so sure. Sakura’s brow narrowed as she thought back to earlier that night. Kakashi’s instructions, Naruto’s protectiveness, both of their mannerisms when speaking with the Uchiha. Kakashi had always seemed to divert the subject anytime it fell on or near her. It was almost as if they were hiding her. But why?
She had been seen by many demons in her time. Granted, each time had always been as a mortal. The few who had discovered her true identity as a seraph had been the ones her teammates had destroyed. This fact had not been any different during the nights earlier encounter but somehow, this encounter was different. And it seemed that the varying variable was this Uchiha.

This conclusion did not do anything to bring clarity to her confusion. All it did was intensify it. Was it all Uchis that they were worried about or was it just this one? If so, what was different about Sasuke Uchiha that they were so worried about his discovery of her? For that is what it was, was it not? It had been she who had been hidden and protected and it was she that would be suffering the consequences. But why? The demon had no connection with her whatsoever. Perhaps it was her connection to Tsunade. But then again, Sasuke had said he was neutral in the rebellion that was taking place. So again, why was he dangerous?

The pulse of the bass coming from the club thrummed through the walls and into the back of the club. The overhead fluorescent lights that lit the dingy corridor did not match the mood in which the music set. On the other side of the wall, in a large room dimmed in low light with the occasional flash of a strobe, hundreds of bodies were pushed together as mortals writhed against each other to the tempo of the music. He could smell the body odor and alcohol the moment he opened the rusty back door normally used by delivery trucks and employees. With quick strides he made his way to the hollow stair well and ascended each step with an even grace.

At the top of the landing was another, more narrow and darker hallway. Half the lights above were burnt out, leaving only the light closest to the stairs and the flickering light at the end of the hallway to illuminate the way. The walls, having been bathed in chipping black paint did nothing to help with guiding him to the door of destination. But Sasuke did not need the assistance of light to navigate, his evolved eyes were meant for darkness.

The door opened into a small room with another door. It was empty with the exception of a lone, dark haired man sitting in a metal fold out chair. His tan face was hidden behind a mask pulled around his face as his green eyes stared greedily down at a wad of cash he was thumbing through. He paused in his currency counting to look up at him. A glimmer of recognition flashed across his eyes and he nodded to Sasuke before reaching back to knock on the heavy steel door that he guarded. He gave two quick raps of his knuckles followed by two slow ones before going back to his money without a word or further acknowledgment to Sasuke. Sasuke waited in silence. A minute passed by before he heard the slide of a lock being unbolted and the door cracked open.

“You’re late,” commented a slicked back, silver haired man.

Sasuke said nothing and stepped past the man, giving him a red eyed warning as he passed by the demon. The thud of the heavy door being shut sounded and the effect was instantaneous. The loud, nearly deafening music was cut off by quality sound proof walls. Replacing the fluctuating rave
music was a smooth tone that set a sensual, relaxed tone to the atmosphere.

The only evidence of the riotous music that was being played on the other side of the wall, was the small vibrations he felt in his feet from the heavy bass of subwoofers that no amount of building material could escape.

The private lounge consisted of three solid walls painted a deep crimson while the forth was a floor to ceiling window that stretched out from wall to wall. It overlooked the interior of the club's main attraction. Sasuke could see the sea of bodies grinding and bobbing up and down to the beat of the music. From below, if a person were to look up, they would only be greeted with a reflection of the throng of dancers as the two way mirror gave those within the private lounge the option to observe the crowd below while keeping their own activities unknown to the masses.

The silver haired man who had opened the door passed Sasuke and took a seat at the small mini bar in the corner. A woman in a thin dress instantly pressed herself up along the silver haired man’s side. Wrapping an arm around the woman, he pulled her closer as she ran a finger along the exposed chest his half buttoned shirt revealed. Her manicured nail dug into his skin as she gave the man a sultry look. Sasuke internally sneered at the woman and the demon in which she was attached to, for that was what he was.

He was no mortal but one of his own kind. Though Sasuke could tell he was far from a pure bred like himself. Purebred or not, the demon was powerful. He could tell by the chakra that emanated from him. He either had no control in keeping it steady or the fool just did not care. He caught a glimpse of a silver necklace around the man’s neck as the woman’s hand fiddled with the pendant that hung from it. Sasuke recognized it instantly. A circle with a flipped triangle, the symbol for Jashin and the source of this man’s power. Sasuke’s eyes flickered back over the man as a name came to his mind. Hidan, he was a rogue demon, either banned or defected by choice from the underworld.

Without access this meant he had to find his own way to survive just like the rest of the seraphim that no longer remained loyal to the duties bestowed upon them by the gods. It was that, or quickly diminish out of existence. Hidan was one of the few who had found a loophole, although that number had been steadily increasing with time as more methods were discovered. Hidan however, had a signature method. He sacrificed mortals in the name of Jashin, a minor and more rebellious god, who in return granted him power to survive. Sasuke looked over the girl attached to him and wondered if she realized that the ‘night of her life’ that Hidan promised her would also be her last night ever.

His dark eyes looked back to the silver haired demon. If this truly was Hidan, then that most likely meant it was the infamous Kakuzu that had been sitting out front. Kakuzu had his own way in obtaining power to survive. Unlike his companion, instead of sacrificing mortals, he bought their souls. It was no wonder the man had been so obsessed with the wad of cash in his hands. For it was that bundle of green that kept him alive. That, and any mortal desperate enough to, in short, sell their soul to a devil.
“Well, well, well, if it isn’t my favorite nephew,” came a sinister drawl.

Sasuke turned to face the direction from which the voice had come. Pinned to the wall was a massive pair of blessed wings, spread out in full expanse for optimal display and mockery. There was a number of angels to which these wings could have belonged to given the identity of the man sitting below them.

Sasuke eyes dropped down to the man sitting on the low backed couch that was positioned directly below the taxidermied display. His face so similar to his own and his hair, dark and spiky just like his but with greater length. Nuzzled against his massive body, two mortal woman stared up at their companion with lust filled eyes as the man himself ignored their wandering hands and lips. A pair of dark wings, muscled and scared from the countless battles of their long ago history, hung over the back of the couch without a care that mortals were in his presence. Sasuke met the man's eyes. They were cold and dark, just like his but far more dangerous. Sasuke watched as a wide grin spread across his face just before his uncle spoke again.

“It has been a long time Sasuke,” he greeted.

“Madara,” Sasuke replied, nearly growling the name. “Thought you had crawled under a rock to die long ago.”

Madara smiled. “Ah yes, I can see where some would think that. But, as you can see,” a lazy hand indicated the length of his body sprawled on the couch, “those were obviously rumors as I am very much alive.”

“That is a pity,” Sasuke murmured.

Madara’s mouth curled even more. “I have to admit, I did not think you would come so quickly when I sought you out.”

“I wanted to see for myself that your messenger was telling the truth.”

“Ah, and here I thought you missed me,” Madara mocked.
“What do you want?” Sasuke deadpanned.

Madara had the audacity to look innocent. “What, can’t a lonely uncle reach out to his nephew in hopes for a family reunion?”

Sasuke’s eye twitched as he gritted his teeth in annoyance. “Spare me the theatrics Madara. We both know you don’t care about family.”

A dark glint shone in Madara’s eyes. “On the contrary my dear boy, I care very much about my family.” There was a small pause of intense silence before Madara seemed to relax and continue. “But you are right, I did not just summon you for a reunion.” Madara leaned forward slightly. “I want your help.”

Sasuke let a moment of silence pass by as he observed his uncle. Madara stared back at him, his onyx eyes focused solely on him with perfect practice as the two woman attempted to draw his attention only to be easily disregarded.

“I don’t help others,” Sasuke stated simply.

“Then perhaps we could call it a trade,” Madara offered. “You do some tasks for me and then I can pay you for your services. Help me, to help yourself. I promise I can certainly make it your while.”

Sasuke let out a small chuckle and strolled over to the large window to watch the pulse of dancers moving up and down to the music. There was no telling what song was being played, but the vibrations he felt in the floor told him they were on point. Crossing his arms he turned to lean his back against the cold glass as he looked back to Madara who was still watching him closely.

“What makes you think that I want anything from you?” Sasuke said spitefully. “What makes you think I want anything at all...from anyone.”

The corner of the older Uchiha’s mouth curled with mirth. “Everyone wants something. I remember you were always eagerly looking to expand your power.”

Sasuke gave an internal sigh. How many times would he have to repeat himself tonight that he wanted no part of the rift between angels and demons? “People change,” Sasuke remarked. He was growing weary of this conversation. He had already given his answer and there would be no
changing his mind.

His words did nothing to berift Madara, if anything, Madara only looked more amused. “Yes,” he agreed, “they do change. But you don’t,” he added with a thoughtful tone. “it is why I called for you. Just tell me Sasuke, what does that sinfully black heart of yours desire? Power? Position? Acknowledgment?”

The last suggestion struck a nerve in Sasuke, his eyes narrowed dangerously, but Madara did not so much as blink. He was not an unwise man. Everything he did, he did with purpose. And right now, he was playing against Sasuke’s weaknesses. The inability to ever earn his fathers approval.

“I already gave my answer,” Sasuke said with a sour expression and a bitter tone. “I don’t want anything from you and I have no desire to help you, not now, not ever. I don’t trust you.”

“You helped Orochimaru and that snake lived up to his title in more than just appearance. He was the inspiration for the phrase ‘treacherous snake’, “ Madara commented, he had a glint in his eyes that made Sasuke want to snarl. “Tell me, what made him so special? What did he offer you?” He asked, his head tilted to the side as his eyes glistened with intrigue.

Sasuke angled his head to look back down at the dancers below. He watched them for a long time as all expression in his face was wiped away. “Something unattainable,” he said in a small whisper, not caring if he was heard or not.

“Nothing is unattainable.”

His uncles comment caused him to break away from his absent minded staring and looked back to his uncle. The covet in his uncle's eyes gave Sasuke pleasure, knowing that Madara would not let that show if he did not want it that much. Which made his denial all the sweeter. Pushing off the window, Sasuke stuck his hands into his pockets and began to make his way to the door.

"That is what Orochimaru said as well and I made the mistake of believing him for centuries,” Sasuke commented as he crossed the floor. “But he paid for his lies.”

“Well if you change your mind,” Madara began, causing Sasuke to come to a sudden stop. His head slowly turned to the side to look at Madara. “My door is always open.”
“Tch,” Sasuke scoffed, turning back to continue his way back to his exit. “Don’t count on it.”

Not long after leaving the club, Sasuke found himself wandering along the streets of New York. He wove his way through the foot traffic, his grace and agility keeping him from bumping into anyone. The longer he strolled, the deeper his mind began to go over the events of the day. He had hoped the busy night life would have distracted him from such things but it seemed his mind was too perturbed to be diverted. To his relief, Madara had said nothing more to delay his departure after his last words. But he knew better than to think the long ago patriarch of the fallen faction would let him off so easily. Madara did not have dreams, he had goals that he made into realities. Sasuke had once had this same mentality in his younger years. It was one of the many reasons why so many always stated that he was more of his uncle’s son than his own father. He had once thought it a compliment but now he was not so sure.

Madara had fallen hard after his failed attempt to take over the blessed faction. After the disaster of the peace talks during the Grecian Era, Madara had disappeared, leaving the fallen without leadership. Not to Sasuke’s surprise, it did not take much convincing for Fugaku to step up and take his place. For awhile he kept order but when Sasuke left to pursue his own ambitions, many began to question his father’s ability when his own son failed to follow him. Sasuke was not bothered by it in the least. Occasionally he felt sympathy for his mother as she continued to stand by her husband as their world crumbled into disarray, but there had been certain things that had taken precedence over making his mother happy and pretending to be a loyal son to a father who hardly acknowledged his existence. It was true that he was long done with that ambition, but he doubted he would be welcomed home after all these years. His brother said otherwise whenever they ran into each other but Sasuke no longer heeded his brothers words.

So instead of going home, Sasuke had chosen to wander. For awhile he had a few companions, but they had found their own goals eventually and went their separate ways. Jugo, a mortal that had been possessed by several blood thirsty demon souls, had gone on to live a life in a secluded temple in the mountains of tibet. He had been one of Orochimaru’s first successful experiments. Although mortal, Jugo was now nearly three thousand years old, the majority of those years having been kept captive in a cage. With no way to rid himself of the demon souls that kept him alive but a danger to those around him, Jugo thought the best solution would be to learn how to keep control over his mind. It was his hope that the monks that lived in the mountains would be able to help him learn to do this.

Suigetsu was a demon far from the main branch that Sasuke had come to tolerate over the years of exposure. The shark toothed demon had taken a less zen like path than their orange haired giant. He had gone on to collect the seven nephilim blades that had been forged by the god Takemikazuchi himself. How he was going to obtain them and what he was going to do with them was unknown to Sasuke.

The third had been Karin, she was a blessed angel that Orochimaru had collected after the attack during the peace talks. Her ambition had not necessarily caused her to stray away more so cause Sasuke to leave her. He was not sure what the red haired cursed angel was up to now but he did not care.
For several decades he had roamed the earth by himself. It was lonely and many times meaningless, but Sasuke preferred that. He had given up on trying to bring her back long ago and when he had finally accepted that fact, his thirst for revenge had left him. Tired and weary of an immortal life, Sasuke now meandered the mortal realm, unsure of if he were waiting or hoping for something to present itself to him and give him motivation. In short, Sasuke was bored. However, not bored enough to be tempted in getting caught up with Madara and his schemes. He had to admit that after centuries of no word of whisper of him, Sasuke was surprised to find that he was still alive and well as ever. Perhaps at one point he would have been tempted, but it was the company in which Madara kept, that caused him to immediately deter from accepting Madara’s offer.

Madara wanted his help. For what, he did not know, and he did not want to know. He was done with angelic business. If there was one good thing that came from Orochimaru, it was the curse mark. It gave him the ability to survive without being attached to either faction of seraphim as well as not being forced to find his own means of survival like Madara’s men.

After witnessing two known Akatsuki members practically act as henchmen for his uncle, it did not take a genius to figure out who the leader was of the alusive group. Sasuke did not know everything about them. In fact he only knew a few facts, but it was enough facts to know what kind of assortment Madara had working under him. The varying ways that their kind resorted to in order for survival made him sick. Buying souls, sacrificing mortal lives, sealing souls into puppets before they had a chance to pass on, they had all found a way and it was all cruel. It was one of the weakness Sasuke seemed unable to rid himself of.

Kakashi had been right, he did care. He cared about mortals and that is why he stayed out of it. For a long time he had tricked himself, he told himself they did not matter and that they were insignificant. It worked for centuries and he had done unspeakable things. But that all changed during the mortals Second World War. He had still been with Orochimaru. He had been the one behind the majority of evil influencing that had taken place during those years.

Sasuke had done well up until he discovered the experiments Orochimaru had Kabuto doing on mortals. Sasuke had walked in on one of Kabuto’s sessions, and the woman who had been his victim of the day had looked up at him. It was that look that caused everything to change. She had looked nothing like Sakura. Hollow cheeks, skin tinged blue and black from the frigid weather she had been exposed to. And the hair, a mousy dull brown. In reality, it most likely would not have phased him had she not caught his eye. It had been her eyes that had undone him. Her green eyes had nearly been the same color, dimmed from the misery and pain of living the past year in Orochimaru’s personal lab, but it was close enough. The woman had looked at him with such pain, as if pleading him to end her life. It was that look that he knew she would have been disappointed and for the first time in his life, he felt ashamed.

It was then that he had turned on Orochimaru and not long after, the mortal war ended. He was only sorry that he had not finished Kabuto off before Orochimaru but he had not expected the
scaley minion to evade him for so long. He had been hunting the sick sadist for nearly seventy years only to find a trail of rumors and dead ends. He could be dead for all he knew but something in Sasuke told him otherwise. Kabuto was a survivor and a chameleon. He did not perish so easily.

Eventually Sasuke found himself outside of the city on a lonely pier. He leaned against a lampost and gazed back at the metropolis as the first rays of the rising sun began to make the city line glow. As he took in the scene and began to feel the warmth of the sun hitting his back, he let out an exhausted yet relaxed sigh. As the thoughts of Orochimaru, Madara, and suffering mortals left his mind, it was replaced with a single thought in the form of an image. A hooded small frame standing in the shadows. It was a fleeting thought but Sasuke clung to it, curious as to why his subconscious would bring such a thing to his attention. The more he thought back to his short reunion, the more he became intrigued. Since he was in the city maybe he would keep tabs on his former comrades. Perhaps this so called mortal showed up again and he could see why she earned such protection. Because it was quite obvious that she was valuable to them and he wanted to know why.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the late update. And yes I changed the pattern up a little bit so don't worry you didn't miss a chapter. It is because this chapter really was part of the last chapter but it was going so long I had to cut it in half hence the cliffy in the last chapter so I hope you don't mind I pushed it a little forward. Next chapter will be a Greek chapter again and then the next present day chapter Sasuke will finally actually see Sakura (as in the summary scene). Thank you everyone for your feedback it is much appreciated and I am so glad that so many are enjoying it. I really hope it is all making sense and not confusing. I am trying to incorporate as many of the characters in the story even if it is a brief mention so if there are any characters that you are hoping to see let me know and I will see how they could fit in.
A Club, a Face, and the Impossible

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Seven: A Club, a Face, and the Impossible

Present Day

Sakura was not herself. So much so, that even Sai had noticed the changes in her behavior. It was just unfortunate that he did not have the social knowledge in how to handle it. Sakura had taught him many things over the years and his humanity had progressed significantly, but his ability to read social cues and react in the proper manor still lacked. What he did know was that Sakura was not Sakura, and he did possess the knowledge to fix her.

Her mind had seemed preoccupied and distracted for the past nearly two weeks. So distracted in fact, that she was failing to correct him in his behaviors. Sai knew this because he had been purposely making mistakes to see if he could gain her attention. He had observed a small child doing this one day at the park and it seemed to work for him. The mother had been preoccupied with another child but as soon as neglected child began to act out and cause mischief, the mother had directed all of her attention to the naughty boy. While Sai knew better than to throw his arms in the air, lie on his back, and begin to kick and scream, he found his own ways to act out that Sakura would deem as misbehaving.

He cut in line at the hot dog stand but Sakura simply fell into line behind him. He threw his trash on the ground but Sakura merely walked around it without stopping him and forcing him to pick it up and dispose of it properly. These transgressions were child’s play when compared to what he had done in his past, but Sakura was not one to let even the smallest of infractions go without reprimand, followed by remedial actions. Yet for the past few days, she seemed to be letting things slide.

It was then that Sai decided he needed to do something bigger. Something more noticeable and more hurtful to others. If there was one thing Sakura despised the most, it was hurting of innocents. Physically, mentally, or emotionally, she was never lenient. He knew it was wrong, but like a child being ignored by his mother, Sai felt he had no other choice if he wanted to regain her attention.

So he punched a man. A random man. A burley, muscled, and steroid using man on the street. His logic had been the man looked tough, therefore he could handle the pain. And Sai had been correct. The man was tough, and he handled the pain very well. Unfortunately, he did not handle his rage very well. For it just so happened that an anger management session had just concluded. Its members were exiting the building they were passing and Sai had chosen their newest member as his victim. His planned worked, he had gained Sakura’s attention. But along with it, came her wrath as well as another’s.
Sakura was at a loss as to what had happened. One moment she was strolling peacefully down the semi-busy sidewalk, taking care to weave through the motley group that had just exited from the Compass Counseling Center, when out of nowhere, Sai was throwing a fist into the face of the largest man in the group. A loud crack erupted over the hustle and bustle of pedestrians, causing several onlookers to stop and pause, all of them taking several steps back to give the upcoming brawl plenty of space. Immediately Sakura whirled around to look at Sai. To her utter disbelief, Sai was standing calmly with his hands now tucked into his pockets. And to make things worse, he had his signature, awkward smile, planted on his face as he looked at the man he had just slammed his fist into with an expression of polite civility.

“What the hell!?!?”

They were the very words she was thinking and getting ready to scream into Sai’s face but someone else had beat her to it. His voice was so deep and grizzled that it sounded more like a growl than a question. The tone told Sakura that things needed to be settled quickly and drawing from past experience, Sakura knew that Sai’s empathetic lacking self was not going to defuse the situation. Already the polite smile he had on his face was only making the situation worse. She was tempted to let Sai suffer the consequences but guidance and protection were her primary duties to Sai, not judgement and execution.

With great difficulty to resist the urge to begin her interrogation of his motives then and there, Sakura turned around to begin her apologies on Sai’s behalf. But she was greeted by a wall of muscle instead of a person. She angled her head up only to be met by a meaty neck. She readjusted again, her neck straining from the stretch until she was finally greeted by the man’s face. A broken nose and blood covered snarl was all she could register before Sai opened his mouth and made everything worse.

“Apologies,” Sai said, his tone light and inappropriate for the circumstance. He sounded as if he were apologizing for lightly brushing past the man, not punching him in the face for no apparent reason. “But it seems my calculations were incorrect, I did not mean to break your nose. If you wish, I would happily assist you to the nearest clinic for medical assistance. If you do not reset the break quick enough, your nose will look disfigured permanently.” He paused as his eyes ran up and down the man’s body in quick survey. “However, I see the rest of your body seems disproportionate in other areas. I can assume this is due to your lack of lower body exercise, unless you wish for your body to be disproportionate. If this is the case, then perhaps I have done you a service …”

Sakura managed to turn around and gape at Sai for one more sentence before all hell broke loose.
“Why!?!?” Sakura questioned for the hundredth time. Sai opened his mouth but was cut short of uttering a single syllable when she continued. “Don’t say anything,” she snapped as she dabbed at the swollen cheekbone on his face. It was already beginning to blossom into a violet discoloration. With the last of the blood washed from his face, Sakura turned to the trash and threw the bloody napkin away. She let out a sigh and shook her head before looking at him. “Why in all the heavens would you do that?”

Following Sai’s backhanded apology, the man had managed one swing. It was all Sakura would allow before she threw the man backwards. It had taken everyone for a surprise given her petite frame and the man’s large build. After recovering from the shock of being thrown back by a pink haired pixie of a woman, the man moved forward, ill intentions blazing in his eyes but he was stopped by several others of his group that grabbed hold of his arms. With some mantra nonsense being quoted by his friends and a warning glare from her, the man quickly calmed down and left after throwing some choice words in Sai’s direction.

Now they were settled at a metal table with matching chairs that scraped horribly against the sidewalk pavement each time they shifted. Given the bloody mess on Sai’s face, Sakura had opted for outside seating and ordered two drinks to keep the cafe owner happy when she grabbed a handful of napkins and requested a cup of ice. With the blood now cleaned off, she placed the cooled ice against the bruise. Taking one of his free hands, she lifted it up to the cup for him to grasp in silent instruction for him to hold it himself. Satisfied that all her work as a healer was achieved, she leaned back and gave him an expectant look, waiting for him to give her an answer.

“I am confused. Do you wish me to speak or not?” Sai replied. Sakura let out a growl of warning and Sai was quick enough to interpret the response as an affirmative. “I wished for your attention.”

The lines creased between her brow quickly disappeared as she raised them in surprise. “My attention?” She asked in confusion as her mind raced for an answer of the type of attention he was speaking of.

Sai nodded. “You have not been yourself lately and I feel different. I do not know what to call this emotion. It is not sadness nor is it fear. But I do not like it. I feel driven to do something but I am at a loss as to what to do. Something seems to be bothering you, yet I feel a drive to find a solution for you.”

For a moment Sakura blanked as she tried to process Sai’s struggle to describe his feelings. Having a childhood like Sai’s, emotions were not allowed. Since a very young age, he had been trained to suppress such feelings and therefore, he never learned how to match what he was feeling with the name of the emotion and the proper action when feeling such things. When put under her care, the first thing she worked with him was allowing himself to feel such things. Now they were working on identifying and reacting. Each newly identified and mastered emotion was a milestone, though Sai only had a few that he had learned to become familiar with. Mastery was perhaps a stretch for
"Sai, I think what you are feeling is worry," she finally replied, a hint of excitement sounding in her voice. It was an emotion they had never managed to bring forth, therefore, this was a groundbreaking occurrence.

At her words, Sai quickly pulled out one of the books he carried around with him constantly, a small pocket sized dictionary. With a flurry of fingers and pages, he thumbed towards the back of the book and paused as he found the sought after page.

"Worry," he read aloud. "to feel or experience concern or anxiety." Sakura watched him as he turned quickly to another page, this time towards the front of the book. He stopped and his eyes ran down the line of vocabulary until he found the one he had been searching for and read aloud again. "Concern: to be a care, trouble, or distress for someone or something."

She watched him flip from page to page as he reread and compared. Finally after a few minutes of mental deliberation and assessment, Sai looked up from the notes he had compiled into a separate note book.

"It seems you are correct. I..." he looked down at his notes, "...I am worried about your change in character and how it will affect my progress. At first you seemed burdened and over the week it evolved into agitation. When you began to disregard my bad behavior I began to worry. I am afraid I have done something to make you no longer care or that perhaps you have given up on me. I fear that perhaps I have reached my potential and will not improve more and that this will be the best I will ever become."

Sakura gave him a look of endearment. It still surprised and warmed her of how innocent and childlike Sai truly was. It was her belief that he would have been a truly righteous soul had Danzo not corrupted him so much. Unfortunate as it was, it was not a complete travesty because she also believed that he would one day be that soul. And because of his trials and wayward past, he would be even better for it.

"Sai," Sakura said with a sympathetic sigh. "I would never give up on you. You have too much potential to ever give up on. However you are correct on one thing. You are right, I have not been myself and I apologize that I caused you to worry. I have been distracted, there have been things that have been bothering me lately that have been preoccupying my mind. But I should not have let them affect my work or duty to you. I am sorry."

Sai looked ponderous for a moment. "I read that when one is troubled, it often helps to speak with
a friend or loved one.” Sai said. “I know I do not fall under these categories for you but if you
would like to speak to me about your predicament, I would like to offer my services. I hear most
times people do not need a solution just someone to listen.”

Sakura reached over the metal table and grabbed his hand, giving it an affectionate and tight
squeeze. “Thank you Sai. While I wish I could voice things to you, I myself am still unsure of how
to make sense of things. I don’t even know where I would begin, but don’t worry, it is most likely
nothing and merely coincidence. But for what it is worth, I do consider you my friend, and I love
all my friends.”

Sai nodded with a smile on his face and Sakura could not help but catch a glimmer in his eyes that
could only be interpreted as relief and warmth. As she watched him process the emotions that she
knew were trying to resurface after years of repression, she caught sight of something yellow and
orange from just over his shoulder. Her eyes flashed to the point and there was no mistaking what
she was seeing.

Naruto was standing near an alleyway. The moment he realized he had been spotted, he quickly
ducked back. Sakura frowned. It had been thirteen days now. Thirteen days since Tsunade had
given her a shallow of an excuse to keep her in the heavens at night. She had been expecting it and
therefore accepted it without a fuss. Had she not overheard Tsunade’s and Kakashi’s conversation,
she would not have submitted so easily.

Now she was regretting it. She had told herself it would only be for ten days, a week and a half, she
could survive it. That had been the agreement between Tsunade and Kakashi thirteen nights ago
when she overheard them in the garden. Ten days of remaining in the heavens during the dark
hours. She had done it for centuries so what was less than a two weeks? It turned out to be torture.

Sakura now understood the struggle mortals had with the addictive poisons they inserted into
themselves. Once she had a taste of the freedom and experienced the adrenaline, it was difficult to
give up hunting. She had rejoiced on the tenth day but when Kakashi gave her a strange look when
she made to go with them, she realized that she had been wrong. Now it was three days past and
still she had yet to hear anything. She was paranoid. Already she felt Kakashi was suspicious of her
but then she remembered, she had nothing to be guilty for. It was they who were being suspicious.

If she had not overheard Tsunade and Kakashi’s conversation she would not have thought anything
of it. But she had overheard them, and they spoke as if the Uchiha’s presence was directly
connected to her freedom. She would have understood if they were taking precautions with all of
the younger and less experienced archangels. She did not like the idea of being too much of a risk
to go out during dangerous times but she understood, she was new. But it turned out she was the
only one that was being banned.
Another reason why she was on edge was that they were watching over her during the day. This was not the first time she had caught Naruto tailing her during the day. She had also noticed that someone always seemed to have a reason to delay her departure in the mornings and in the evening she found Kakashi and Naruto frequently coming to collect her significantly earlier than usual. It was one thing to be banned during the dark hours, it was another to be babysat during full daylight hours. She was new to her archangel duties, but she had been a guardian for far longer. She had experienced war when the mortals fought. She had guarded her mortals during their darkest times as they sat in the trenches and bombs exploded over their heads. While it was not a war between seraphim, they still fought and defended the precious souls of the mortals. Demons were always behind such contentions and while she had yet to take a life, she held her ground and fought against them on occasion in order to protect the souls she guided. Tsunade had trusted her then, she had faith in her skills and abilities that Sakura could protect herself. Where was that faith and trust now?

Naruto always had some kind of excuse for why he would come early. Excuses such as needing her for something then forgetting what for upon their return, or declaring he needed her healing expertise only to find out it was a splinter. That last excuse had earned him a well deserved goose egg that the golden angel was still sporting on his head.

Kakashi never even bothered to give her a reason to which she both appreciated and hated at the same time. He had always been like that when it came to her past and coddled treatment. Kakashi, the king of made up excuses, never insulted her when it came to matters that he knew to be important to her. She could see it in his eyes that he had truths and that he wanted to feed them to her, but something held him back each time. She had once asked him about it and he replied by saying, ‘if you wish for lies I can weave them, but I would prefer not to’. It did not make complete sense but it at least assured her that Kakashi did agree with whatever was causing him to withhold information.

Checking the time on the clock visible through the café’s front window, she noted it was nearly six o’clock. Sundown was not for another two hours, yet, for the past thirteen days she had been collected at six o’clock sharp. If she had not spotted Naruto spying on her, it would have only been a little longer before he made an appearance.

“I think I will take an early leave today,” Sakura suddenly said, turning her attention back to Sai. She stood up as he nodded. Just as she was about to leave she paused. “And Sai,” she began, waiting for him to look up at her.

“Yes?”

“Don’t throw trash on the ground and remember it is unfair to cut in lines. You need to wait your turn.”
“So you did notice those things?” He commented. “Why did you not say anything.”

Sakura raised a brow. “I am certain you know better than that. You have to take some responsibility for yourself. I won’t always be her to dictate what is right and wrong. You have to judge for yourself and reap whatever consequences come from it.”

Sai nodded and she began to step away but paused once more. “And the next time you want my attention, just ask, you don’t have to punch a person in the face. In the words of a good friend of mine, ‘it’s troublesome’.”

With that she departed, rounding the corner and catching a blonde Naruto off guard. After giving him a good throttle and interrogation to which she gained no satisfaction or honest answers, they each made their way to the heavens.

After Sakura left, Sai had felt better than he had for the past week and a half. He remained at the small table that was set up along the sidewalk as he sketched patrons and passersbyers. It was a more quiet street on the outskirts of New York. Some would consider it more Brooklyn than New York City.

After he finished his chai tea, he stood up from the rickety table with a cringe as the metal scraped against the pavement. Lugging his bag up he pulled the strap over his shoulder. As he preoccupied himself with placing his books back into their proper places, he began to make his way down the street.

He had not gone far when he felt his body run into another body and his hands lost their grip on the book he had been attempting to stow away into his bag. He quickly dipped down to retrieve the sketchbook that now lay open on the pavement. A half sketched Sakura smiled up at him for a few seconds before he gathered and closed it in one smooth motion. As he straightened up to give an apology, he found himself looking at his reflection or what seemed to be his reflection.

Dark eyes and matching dark hair, contrasting with pale skin. But the longer he took in the other person, he began to notice the subtle differences. His complexion was slightly darker and his hair longer and more untamed. His features were sharper as well, his nose and chin ending at a more narrow point than his own. And there was an air about him that seemed to exude power. Sai was no stranger to the supernatural powers. He knew of the seraphim world. It was a limited knowledge and slightly misconstrued given the contrasting exemplar that Danzo and Sakura were. Danzo showed his powers but gave no explanations, only orders. Sakura rarely showed her powers, she worked with him as if she too were mortal so as to give a true example of what was attainable for
himself. However, if there was one thing he had learned from being around them and the others of their kind, was to distinguish between a mortal like himself and a higher being.

The only exception was Sakura. He was not sure why, but for some reason she was different. She looked ethereal but she felt human. From the first time they met he had felt that something was off. Perhaps it was her constant efforts to make sure she seemed as normal as any other mortal to help him feel human as well. Or perhaps it was something entirely different. Whatever the reason, she was unique.

As a mortal, the trick to identifying a demon or angel, was being fully aware of one’s intentions. Seraphim had a certain attraction that drew mortals in, like their own gravitational pull that grasped a mortals desire and morphed it into a nearly uncontrollable urge. The stronger a seraphim was, the harder it was to ignore the pull. The tricky part was knowing if they were demon or angel, because despite a person’s ability to know right from wrong, a mortals mind could rationalize even the most sinful actions to be the most innocent of gestures.

As Sai looked at this man before him, he immediately drew the conclusion that this man was no mortal being. Judging by the intensity of the pull he felt for the man, he also concluded that he was no common seraphim. It was either that, or Sai needed to speak with Sakura again about sexual preferences. He had not ever contemplated his attraction preferences before since he had never felt the need. He had of course inquired about them. His observances of other people had brought about a curiosity as to why they were drawn to their partner or partners. Sakura had explained, but they had not focused on any feelings of the romantic nature as those feelings were complex and difficult to handle. It would most likely be awhile before he would ever be ready for such things.

The man’s eyes were focused intensely at Sai’s own as he began to slip his sketchbook into his bag again. Sai noticed the pinched frown on his face as well as the deeply furrowed brow as his eyes remained glued to Sai’s bag, even after he had tucked the book away. Immediately Sai began to match the man's expression with the earlier event in an attempt to try and interpret what the man was feeling. His conclusion was that the man was angry that Sai and ran into him. With his analysis complete, he immediately went into the proper actions.

“Pardon me,” Sai quickly said, doing his best to honor the manors that Sakura had so painstakingly tried to ingrain into his habits. He paused in his apology when he noticed that the man had been exiting a building. While Sai had yet to accomplish the feat of driving, he was aware of the mechanisms of merging and yielding. Sakura had taught him that it was common courtesy to adapt these vehicular laws when in pedestrian traffic as well. Not one for giving up an opportunity to pass on the guidance of his guardian angel, Sai continued to speak, altering his initial plan of action. “I know it improper of me to walk without watching, but I believe as a person merging onto the sidewalk, you yourself should watch and wait for the right opportunity in which you might integrate yourself into the flow.”
The man said nothing, he just stared at Sai’s bag. Then, finally, when Sai cleared his throat, the man’s dark gaze moved up to meet Sai’s own with an annoyed expression.

“I mean no offense in correcting your manors. I only mean to help a fellow man. My friend once told me that ‘acquired knowledge goes in vain if you do not impart it to others’, ” Sai quoted. Sakura had been teaching him about not belittling those who were less educated, but instead helping them to understand. “I am just trying to make sure....”

His explanation died when the man brushed past with nothing more than a simple ‘hn’. Confused if the sound was acceptance, gratitude, annoyance, dismissal, or anger, Sai was left to watch the man’s retreating back as he pondered the meaning of the single syllable sound. On his walk home he had opened his dictionary and searched for the word, this time taking precautions to not bump into any others as he researched. To his dismay, he was unable to find such a word of existence. After trying various ways of spelling and similar sounding words, he gave up his search and decided to ask Sakura tomorrow of its meaning.

There was something odd about today and it had nothing to do with his day starting in the late afternoon, this was usual for Sasuke. It was not an event that made it odd, but a feeling. Not just any funny feeling, but a sixth sense that tingled with promise. Or at least the potential of something astronomical happening. It was a strange feeling, but not entirely unfamiliar.

Sasuke had felt it a handful of times over the centuries. It was a strange feeling, difficult to describe. It was as if destiny was lurking around the corner, waiting for him to find it. At times it felt close, while other times it was just a faint pulse on a distant plane. Strong or faint, it was always the same feeling and always ended with the same results. Nothing would happen. After the first couple of times, Sasuke had learned to not expect anything to come from these days and did his best to ignore the pulse that seemed to beckon to him, begging him to follow. He was prepared to ignore it as always but for some reason, it seemed stronger than he had ever felt it. As if every other time there was always something not quite in place. But now, it felt as if all the stars were finally aligned, not a single luminescent spheroid was out of place.

He had been contemplating this slight change when he was exiting the hotel he had been staying at for the past thirteen days, when all of a sudden, a mortal decided to walk right into him. His first instinct was push the mortal out of his way and keep moving but all thoughts and actions were erased when he looked down at the human as it scrambled to retrieve its belongings. All agitation, all annoyance, dissipated as he caught sight of an image. Roughly sketched in graphite was the image of a girl. Her hair was short, just barely reaching her shoulders and the eyes were unfinished, but the smile. The smile was perfectly shaded and contoured. While the image held no color, his mind automatically filled in the blank space that the eyes would be located with an iridescent jade. It was gone as quickly as it happened when the mortal managed to close the book and begin to slide it into his bag.
Sasuke felt his face scrunch into deep lines as he pursed his lips. He continued to stare at the man’s bag, his eyes riveted on the canvas material as if he would be able to suddenly see through the barrier and look upon the page again. The man said something but he disregarded his words until he heard the man clear his throat. He raised his eyes to look at the man, his annoyance to the distraction clearly showing on his face.

“I mean no offense in correcting your manors. I only mean to help a fellow man. My friend once told me that ‘acquired knowledge goes in vain if you do not impart it to others’.”

All thoughts of the drawing were erased as Sasuke absorbed the odd mortal before him. And then he realized the absurdity of his earlier thoughts. It was just a drawing, a half finished drawing with hardly any details. It could have been anybody…but that smile, that perfectly drawn and familiar smile...

“I am just trying to make sure….”

Sasuke let out a skeptic ‘hn’ to himself and began to walk away, shaking his head at the illogicality of his thoughts. He heard the man’s words trail off but it mattered not. He was too focused on other things to listen to the apologetic ramblings of a mortal. At least that is what he guessed the mortal was attempting. Whatever it was, it mattered not. He needed to find something distracting, something that would preoccupy his mind before it fully entered dangerous waters. And so he did something that he had never done before, he let his feet guide him through the city as the followed the instinctual pull of whatever made this day seem...fateful.

It seemed fate at least knew what he needed. Sasuke had followed the pull until he found himself inside a loud dance club with plenty of auditory and visual distractions, that his mind had difficulty focusing on anything. Any other needed diversion was provided by an abundance of alcohol. His immortal body was hardly affected by the mortal drinks, it took a great amount for any of his kind to become truly inebriated, but it did bring a dullness to his mind that helped immensely.

It had been an utterly uneventful, and disappointing week and a half. Sasuke had kept track of his former comrades but it turned out that they were relatively boring these days. It seemed that the first night he had run into them, they really were just trying to save a random soul from being claimed by a rogue seraph. It was odd, but it reminded him of another time he had hoped that something was more than what meets the eye. He had wanted to find out that there was something more special about the mortal from that night. But after thirteen days of watching from the shadows, Sasuke came to a conclusion that perhaps he had been a little too bored lately. His mind was attempting to find something of interest where there was no entertainment to be had. So much so, that his eyes were beginning to deceive him. They certainly had when the odd mortal had run into him.
At the time he could have sworn that he had seen a face he had not seen outside of his dreams and nightmares in a very long time. It had been a light sketch and only half finished. Obviously it had been a trick of the light or his mind. His eyesight was superior to perfect, they did not get fooled by optical illusions. So he could only blame it as a cruel trick of his desperate mind.

This thought disturbed him. It was obvious that New York was not providing the necessary distraction that he needed. With this conclusion, he decided that it was time to move on. He had enjoyed the city, walked the streets, and found himself thoroughly distracted. Until now. Now it was time to move on, find another place that would provide what he needed to keep sanity. He would enjoy one last night in the city, then check out the latest rumor for Kabuto’s whereabouts over in Manila.

The densely populated city would provide the chaos that all highly populated cities offered to keep his mind distracted but it would also make his search difficult. That being if Kabuto was even still there or had ever been there. He had a knack for knowing when Sasuke was getting close and slipping away. Kabuto was also very good at leaving false trails as Sasuke had come to discover. But he seemed confident in Manila. It made sense, it was a good city for a person to disappear and hide. It also had an abundance of mortals that would make it easy for Kabuto to harvest souls in mass quantities. A wave of contempt and disgust rushed him at the thought but he pushed it aside. Tonight he would enjoy New York’s nightlife one last time without any thoughts of Kabuto, old comrades, or long lost souls. Tonight was about not thinking at all.

At the moment, he sat alone at the bar of one of the more popular clubs of New York. As the music and shouts of dancers filled his mind, it made it impossible to think. The atmosphere buzzed with energy making his senses vibrate like a suppressed coil waiting to burst. Along with watching his old comrades, he had been enjoying the energy that New York awakened in him each time he revisited.

A body settled next to him, and his relaxed posture tensed. He kept his eyes forward, focusing on the arrangement of top shelf spirits as if the world depended on his choice of poison for his next drink. When it was obvious that the person next to him would not be leaving anytime soon, Sasuke let out a tired sigh and finally spoke, not bothering to raise his voice as he knew they would hear him just fine.

“Did I not make myself clear the last time I saw you that if you bothered me again I would rip your tongue out,” he said as he finally turned to the blonde man sitting beside him. “Or did I need to be more specific and tell you which tongue I would rip out? I did not think that you would be more partial to one over the others.” He added, glancing down to the man's hands. “Or maybe I should just rip them all out.”

The man's long blonde hair swung in its ponytail as the lackey looked to Sasuke. The one blue eye not covered by his bangs looked at him with no fear. “You may be powerful, hm.” He said in a
confident tone. “But I take Madara’s threats more seriously, hm.”

Sasuke’s eye twitched. “I already gave him my answer Deidara,” he growled, finishing off his drink and grabbing his jacket from the back of the chair. He pulled it on as he began walking away.

“He says he will give you anything.” He heard Deidara call after him. “Sounds like a pretty sweet deal if you ask me, hm.”

“Leave me alone,” he said, not bothering to turn around as he began to make his way towards the exit.

A hand grabbing his shoulder caused him to whirl around, his sharingan blazed red as it activated and it was only then that Deidara showed the slightest of unease. His blue eyes dropped and his arms quickly retracted in a raised surrender.

“Hey hey, easy man. I am just the messenger, hm.” He said with an uneasy chuckle. “If you change your mind…”

“I won’t,” Sasuke stated flatly. “So you can fuck off and tell Madara that I don’t want anything from him. I don’t want any part in his scheming, he should be happy enough that I am not involved at all. And you can tell him that next time he tries to summon me after two thousand years of silence I will see to it that I get involved with the opposing side just to spite him.”

He did not wait for a response. Instead he turned back around and stormed off towards the exit. The masses parted before him. All eyes were drawn to him and each person who witnessed the expression like the one painted on his face, quickly removed themselves from his path. That is, all but one.

It seemed she had appeared out of nowhere but in reality it had been from the dance floor from which she had squeezed free from the tight mass of dancers. Short pink hair that was slightly disheveled and wearing a flashy red dress that caught the eyes of each male in her vicinity. Sasuke scowled at her. If there was one thing he hated about the modern fashions and inventions, it was hair dye. He could tolerate the green, he rather liked the blue, but the pink, the pinks he hated. He loathed them. They were a cruel joke because no matter what, his heart betrayed him each time with a beat of hope. Hope that was washed away when he met their eyes.

He watched the girl slightly stumble as she emerged from the dancing masses. Her abomination of
rosette hair curtaining her face as she looked around her surroundings. He could not decide if she were searching or reorienting herself. His debating was ceased immediately when she turned, and he was greeted with a shade of green that had haunted him for over two millennia.

Time slowed as he watched her wandering eyes roam over the surrounding club patrons and then they fell onto him and everything paused. The thud of the music halted, the cold blast of air conditioning that spilled from the vent above could no longer be felt, and all he could see was the verdian orbs that were framed by pastel strands. It was as if he were reliving the moment of the first day he had met her, that moment when he had looked into her eyes and then went deeper. Just as he was about to plunge deep within these very same orbs so that he could explore everything he knew she possessed within her already, she blinked. And as if to make up for the paused time, everything thing came crashing back into him.

His heart went from a dead stop to beating against his ribs at a bruising pace. The flash of strobe lights were nearly blinding as they skipped around the warehouse room, and the music was like a deafening sonic wave of indistinguishable notes. All the while, it seemed he was the only one being affected by the tidal wave of stimulation that was crashing down on his senses. He watched as the woman that had frozen time casually continued her sweep of her surroundings. Her lips were pulled down into a concentrated frown as her brows narrowed with focus.

His vision of her was momentarily blocked off when the occasional clubber entered or exited the dance floor. But between intervals of comers and goers, he took in the woman’s face as she remained in place, occasionally stepping onto the tips of her toes as she continued her search for...whatever she was searching for.

He knew that face. The eyes, the nose, the curve of the lips. Only the hair was different in length. But every other physicality of the woman before him matched to such an exact correctness, that it was impossible for this woman to be anyone else than her. Everything, except for the fact that the woman standing there did not belong here.

She belonged in an era that crumbled into ruin long ago. She did not belong in those clothes. She did not belong amongst the synthetic smoke that billowed from electrical machines. Nor did she belong amongst flashing LED lights. Her people were not this crowd of instagrammers and ravers. And she most certainly did not belong in this metropolis of skyscrapers and pavement. She did not belong in this modern world. Most of all, she did not belong because she had died. He had seen her die, seen the light fade from her eyes, listened to her last breath. Yet here she was, centuries later, standing in the middle of a club in New York city, and looking at him as if she had never seen him in her entire life.

His body was pushed forward as a group of drunken college students passed behind him, but they were spared from any wrath tonight because the moment his foot moved forward to keep his balance, his other followed. He shifted through the crowd, his eyes never leaving the rosette as he
watched her halt her search and turn her back on him. His pace quickened when he caught her move in the direction that would distance them and in a flash he was standing right behind her with his hand wrapped around her upper arm. He relished in the warmth and familiar smoothless of her skin and before he could even bring himself to register his actions or the impossibilities, a single word fell from his lips in the form of a name.

“Sakura.”

It was like a whispered prayer on his lips. A prayer of the utmost sanctity. He had not uttered the name for quite some time. Yet despite its agedness, it was still as sweet as the first day he dared let it part from his mouth. Upon his hand encircling her arm, she had immediately turned to look at him. There was a slight look of annoyance displayed on her mouth as her eyes glared up at him with silent threats. At the utterance of the name though, her green eyes widened and her face changed. Gone was the begrudged face and replacing it was one of shock and what he hoped was recognition.

“It’s okay.” He said soothingly. “It’s me, it’s Sasuke.”

Sakura weaved her way through the mass of dances as her eyes searched each face she pushed by. Where was he? She had been dancing with a demon for a good hour and working up to getting him to leave with her when he suddenly said he had to excuse himself. That had been nearly twenty minutes ago and now he was nowhere in sight. She cursed under her breath. She had put a lot of
effort into him. Tolerated his wandering hands and put up with his annoying way of speech. Now she had lost him.

The edge of the dance floor was tight and not wanting to throw any mortals halfway across the dance floor, Sakura was forced to wedge and wriggle her way through the wall of bodies. She tumbled out of the masses, catching herself before she fell onto the sticky and dirty floor. Straightening herself up and trying to reassemble herself, Sakura began to survey the booths and tables lined along the wall. Her viridian eyes swept the faces of the club patrons. Looking for a flash of blonde hair and blue eyes of the male demon she had been working on all night.

He was an important target. Powerful, and rumored to be apart of the Akatsuki. It was her first night back after nearly two weeks of being banned. Tsunade had a different term but Sakura knew better. Although she still did not fully understand why there had been a delay, when she returned to the heavens with Naruto earlier that day to receive the news that she was to go on a hunt, she lost all earlier worries. Now she was starting to feel a bit nervous again.

It turned out that Kakashi had been pushing Tsunade for several days to revoke the ban and it was only with the promise of the possible capture of a member of the allusive Akatsuki that she was even allowed into the mortal realm tonight. And here she had lost him. Sakura let out an annoyed sound from deep in her throat and continued to look carefully. It would be easier to find him if she did not need to keep her chakra so carefully masked but alas, that would notify every present rogue seraph in the club that archangels were around and hunting. And she could not mess this up. Tonight had to be a success, there was no other option.

She felt the pulse of a chakra and turned her head in the direction of it. Her eyes searched around for a moment until she was able to pinpoint which face it belonged to. She was met with dark features and a pale face, nearly opposite in every way of the demon she was looking for. The moment she took note of this fact, she had quickly moved on to scan the rest of the area. Any other night she would have abandoned her other target and approached the dark haired one instead. But tonight's mission was not as simple as taking out rouge demons. Tonight, was about gaining information that only certain demons could provide. Tonight was about proving that she was of more use down here than in the heavens.

Not seeing the blonde Akatsuki anywhere she decided to venture outside and look around. Perhaps her target had gotten distracted with a more vulnerable mortal than she had played herself to be. Turning around, she began to move towards the main entrance, but she was only allowed a few steps before she felt a strong hand encircle her upper arm.

It was nothing out of the normal. She frequently had to deal with this kind of thing, especially as the night went on. Drunken men and even sometimes woman thinking they could just drag her onto the floor where she would freely let them grind and grope her. Most of them did not leave without a sprained wrist or broken finger. Narrowing her eyes, she turned around to face the person who was
about to regret touching her. She was greeted with dark eyes that pierced into her.

His swirling chakra was nearly chaotic as the stranger looked down at her, his face pale and features construed into an assortment of emotions. Desperation, hope, anger, hurt, disbelief, they all danced with each twitch of his brow, the tightening of a jaw muscle, or the flash of his onyx eyes as he looked over her face. She watched his black orbs narrow with suspicion as if examining her with the precision of a microbe under a microscope. And then they widened. As if he had made some kind of astounding discovery that challenged everything's existence.

“Sakura,” he murmured.

It was intimate and familiar sounding from his lips, yet his expression and tone made it seem as if he were not certain. She looked at him warily. Did she know him?

So took a moment to take him in fully. She could not ignore the bought of familiarity that coursed through her mind, telling her that she knew him. But Sakura would have never forgotten such a face. His dark locks looked nearly midnight blue in the dim light and his eyes, piercing and intense were just as striking against his pale skin. Angled and sharp bone structure carved his cheeks and nose into a devastatingly handsome face that would tempt even the most noble of angels into corruption. Deep down she could sense her own unconscious mind pondering what actions she could commit in order to appease him.

And with that thought, she suddenly became afraid as she realized the danger that this demon could bring. She suddenly became all too aware of the bruising grip he had around her arm. He was strong and judging by the hefty aura of the chakra that was leaking out of his body, he was powerful. Very powerful. A strangely familiar powerful. But at the moment she could not place where she had felt it before.

“Sakura,” he repeated, sounding almost soothingly.

But despite his tone, the louder volume of his voice suddenly struck her. A cold chill ran down her body as a flash of a crying Naruto with broken wings played in her mind. Along with that came the sudden not too distant memory of why he seemed familiar, or at least why his voice was so familiar. ‘Who is your little friend?’, she was certain it was the very same voice that had spoken those words. Her heart was now pounding as adrenaline coursed through her veins. How did he know her name?

“It’s okay,” He said quickly as if he caught sight of the panic that was more than likely posted across her face. “It’s me, it’s Sasuke.”
The confirmation of his identity had the opposite effect on her that, judging by his tone, he intended to have. She quickly pulled her arm from him in such a panic she was sure she had let the mask of her chakra slip slightly. As she put a small distance between herself and him she watched for any reaction but he seemed too distracted with something else to have noticed the slight slip. Her entire body was on edge as her mind scrambled to choose fight or flight as adrenaline traveled throughout her body. The decision was made for her when he moved forward to grab her again. Her body moved on its own accord as it chose flight as the proper method to handle her situation. She pushed past groups of men and woman. Some falling over from the hard force and their unstable feet. As she passed by she heard a second wave of protests repeated not long after, telling her that he was following.

For the past thirteen days, she had been confined to the heavens during the dark hours. She had spent that entire time wondering and gleaning for answers. After nearly two weeks, all she knew of the reason, was that it was connected to Sasuke Uchiha. Sasuke Uchiha whom she had only heard whispers of his cruelty and lust for vengeance. Sasuke Uchiha who had nearly killed Kakashi and Naruto, his former friends. Sasuke Uchiha, who, at this very moment was pursuing her. She ducked down, and scampered towards the exit. She needed to get out, she needed to get away.

She burst out of the doors that were guarded by the bouncers and immediately veered right to make for the alleyway. She ignored the strange looks and occasional whistle from the line of mortals still waiting to enter the club. The moment she turned the corner she did not delay nor check to make sure she would go unseen as she let her wings burst from her back and in the same motion, lift her up into the air towards the sky. She beat her wings ferociously until she was to the roof and there she landed, taking refuge near the edge to peak out and watch as the demon himself, burst from the club and dashed into the middle of the street.

His name only seemed to frighten her more and suddenly her arm was yanked out of his grasp. First he felt relief. Relief that she did not vanish but it was quickly replaced with shock. Shock that she had managed to break free of his strength. Then again, she always seemed to have a resistance to his power.

He moved forward to grab her again but she was quick to step back. He could see her chest rising and falling as her breaths increased and her pulse, visible on her neck, began to beat harder. He stared at her for a solid minute, neither moving. And then she blinked and the small dip of her lashes was like the starting gun of a race. Before he could register the fluttered dip of her long lashes, she was moving. Not just moving, she was running, fleeing from him.

Sasuke watched her push past three small groups before he managed to break from his trance and begin to follow, neigh, pursue. He could not let her escape. He had searched for a way to bring her back to him for so long, he had done unforgivable deeds, he had been willing to sacrifice his own body in an effort to revive what he had lost. And he had given up that hunt long ago. He had lost all
hope and as a result lost himself. And then suddenly, out of nowhere, there she had been and now she was going. Leaving his sight nearly as quickly as she had left him once before, left him alone in this cold world.

Sasuke narrowed his eyes. No. Not this time. He would not lose her this time. He would capture and he would hold onto her. There would be no time limit, there would be no fragility. Because this time, he knew better. He caught a flash of pink just before a crowd crossed his path but there was no need to keep his eyes locked on her anymore. He already knew where she was headed. To the streets. She was headed for the exit where the wide open streets and late night would keep the view open for him. It was perfect.

With a speed too fast for the human eye to capture, Sasuke was moving towards the door. He was sure he would cut her off but he had perhaps hesitated for too long, for when he arrived at the front of the club, she was not anywhere near the entrance. Sasuke was not bothered by this fact, for he knew she would not be far. In a second he was out the door. Given the lateness of the night, the street was nearly barren except for the few late night partiers still waiting in line in hopes to enter the club.

His sharingan swirled and spun as he looked up and down the street. His eyes narrowed and his hands shook. It was impossible. There was no way she could have caught a cab or ventured far enough down the street in the fragment of time it had taken him to exit the building.

He swore loudly, his mind reeling as he frantically rotated in a full circle, scanning every alley way and car that drove by. It had not been an illusion. He had seen her. He had felt her. Yet, in this moment there was no evidence of anything he had witnessed. He let out an inhuman growl, disregarding the stares he collected by passerbyers as he stood in the middle of the road.

It was not until the high screech of rubber skidding across pavement, followed by the long draw of a horn that he was able to focus on something. It was a yellow cab, its headlights flooding his overly sensitive eyes. Immediately he let the sharingan fade as he focused on the cabbie hanging out of the window and yelling incoherent words as his heart pounded audibly in his ears. Unable to contain it anymore, he let his fist slam down on the hood of the car where it had stopped only a few inches from his legs. It drilled a dent into the metal, warping and reshaping as well as damaging what lay beneath. The car gave out a mechanical groan and he watched as the cabbie retreated back into his car, a look of fear and startlement on his face before revving the engine and speeding away in reverse.

As his shoulders heaved, sasuke looked around, his eyes taking in the numerous spectators as their jaws hung open in disbelief. It was then he realized that in his rage, his wings had appeared for all to see. He caught sight of a young man with a group of friends, his arm extended as his hand held up a phone. Sasuke swore and flashed stepped to the man. His friends jumped at the sudden apparition of himself before them, but the boy with the phone remained in place, unable to move as
Sasuke grasped his wrist with one hand. With his free hand he reached up and plucked the phone from his hand and in the same movement, crushed it and let it fall to the sidewalk. It crumbled onto the cement in a heap of wire, broken glass and plastic.

Ignoring the kids complaints, he took to the air, all shrieks of spook and awe being swept away with the wind as he rocketed to the skyline. Tonight was to be his last night in New York but that was no longer the case. Kabuto and Manila could wait. Now, he had an all new hunt before him. He would tear the city apart, brick by brick if he had to. He would find her, he would have her again. He did not care about the impossibility of it all because for the first time in a very, very long time, he felt alive.

She watched with both horror and awe as his roar filled the air and as he displayed his supernatural powers with no hesitation as he nearly punched through a car hood, leaving a large dent with his full wings on display. For a moment she thought he would rip apart a mortal and she moved to rush forward and stop him from committing the ultimate sin of their kind. The blood shed of a mortal. But she was halted when all he did was smash the man’s phone before taking off into the air. Sakura hid herself quickly as he soared above and scanned the street below him. As she watched him fly away, Sakura was left shaken and incapable of processing what exactly had just happened. When she finally did, there were certain facts that disturbed her.

The first being that he had known her name. He had spoken it not just with knowledge but with familiarity. As if he knew who she was. Yet at the same time, it was obvious that he did not know what she was. He thought her mortal. She had seen the surprise in his face when she broke free of his grip. And the way he searched up and down the streets instead of the skies, told her that he did not know of her angelic identity. What disturbed her the most was the intensity of his search and pursuit of her. It was not one of vengeance or a demon looking for sport. It had been like an act of desperation. As if his own sanity had been dependent on catching her.

As she watched his silhouette continue to spur along the streets, she felt a pull towards him. It was a gentle tug, as if they were somehow linked by a small thread. Sakura felt her mind being coaxed into following and she felt as if she were slowly gaining a small, understanding perception of the drive a moth had to a source of light. She was the moth and he was that light source. But he was not just any source, he was a flickering flame. A flame that could burn and consume her wings. Yet despite this danger, she found herself feeling the urge to fly to him.

She nearly hurtled herself from the roof in the direction of the departing dark demon. But just as she moved forward she paused as a brief moment of clarity came to her mind. No, she needed to stay away from him. He was dangerous, he was a flame. If she got close, she would burn. With this thought resonating through her mind, she forced herself to turn her fixation away from him and instead took flight in the opposite direction.
Long over due chapter, sorry. I have rewritten, cut, moved, rearranged, added, and changed this chapter so many times I am worried I doctored it too much and ruined it but I decided to just move on and go forward. (Sorry about any mistakes, it was a rushed edit) Hope you still enjoyed it and again sorry for the long wait, life happened and I was having difficulty finding time and motivation. Hopefully it will not be this long again for the next update. If the switching back and forth was confusing again I am sorry. Also if I am moving too quickly or things are not making sense or I skipped something please let me know. Obviously somethings are meant to be discovered later but I don't want to leave you completely lost. Until next time thank you all for you feedback and support. And welcome to any new readers!
Chapter Eight: Small Worlds and Poked Promises

Ancient Greece

Sakura paced impatiently from one side of the road to the other. The escalating heat throughout the week had dried out the land and left the road dry and dusty. With each step she took, a small cloud of fine dust would lift around her feet before settling back down at another part of the road. The result was an overlapping trail of pronounced footprints to act as a recording of her impatience. A cart pulled by a horse caused her to pause her pacing and stand to the side. As the farmer passed by, Sakura gave a small nod of her head as the older man steered the cart past her. As she waited for the road to be clear of any more traffic, Sakura looked down at her feet. Leather straps criss crossed over her feet and wound around her ankles and calves. A thick layer of dust had settled on her skin, she frowned at the definite line of where her normal skin tone contrasted significantly from the dirt covered portion of her lower legs. Instead of continuing her pacing, she decided to sit on the rock wall that ran along the road as she waited.

She managed to sit still for two breaths before her legs began to restlessly swing back and forth. When that was not enough to burn off the strange energy she had buzzing beneath her skin, her hands began to swat at the tall wheat that grew along the wall. She was not sure why she felt so restless but she had felt this way all day. After a night of tossing and turning she had pulled herself from her bed. Tired and dragging, she had managed just enough time to take two bites of her breakfast before she left with her father to the markets. It had been a busy day to which she was grateful for the distraction, but there had still been a gnawing in the back of her mind that caused her to feel nervous and queasy.

When it came time to come to the meeting spot and wait for Naruto she was relieved. Naruto always seemed to be able to find some way to distract her from anything that seemed to make her days seem off. It was strange, she had acquired many friends over the years but yet, she had never felt such a deep kindredship to anyone like she shared with Naruto. It was strange. Not even a month had passed since her eyes were open to the existence of the angelic world, yet now, she could not imagine her life without it.

As she plucked individual grains from the tuft of grain she had pulled from a certain stalk that had been tickling her elbow, a tanned hand was suddenly thrust into her face. Startled, she looked up to be greeted by the sun kissed face of Naruto. His brow and mouth scrunched into an investigative look of concern as he scrutinized her.

“Oh you’re here,” she said quickly.
Unconsciously, her eyes darted past his shoulder and a small bout of disappointment filled her when she noticed that it was Naruto and only Naruto that was standing in front of her. Naruto gave her a funny look as he looked over his shoulder then back to her. He caught the small glint of dismay as she continued to absentmindedly looking past him. He waved his hand in front of her face again to regain her attention.

“Are you feeling okay?”

She blinked a few times and then looked at him owlishly. As she seemed to awaken from her thoughts, she finally graced him with a soft smile.

“Yes,” she said. “Sorry, I did not sleep well and it has been a long day.”

“Oh...well...do you want to do this another time?” Naruto asked hesitantly.

Sakura was slightly tempted to accept the offer. Despite her earlier abundant supply of energy, she suddenly found her reserves low. The lack of sleep and rigorous day at the market was now collecting its toll. She cast a quick glance behind Naruto then looked back to his wide blue eyes. She had been ready to reschedule a moment before but the eager glint in his eye seemed to dim slightly at the proposal. Such potential disappointment caused her heart to go out to the blond seraph. She could see how much he was looking forward to this and she did not have the heart to postpone it. Summoning some extra energy, she shook her head and gave him a stronger smile.

“No,” she brushed off. “I have been looking forward to this all day.”

“Great,” Naruto beamed as he extended a hand. “What are we waiting for then, lets go!”

Sakura hesitated. Unsure as to why, but she had hoped that Sasuke would have come. She had believed he would have accepted her invitation. However, it seemed that perhaps he was not as interested in spending time with a mere mortal like herself as she thought. Doing her best to not let the disappointment fill her mind, she gave one long look down the road before nodding her head. She slid down to the ground with the help of Naruto’s hand and as they began to walk in the opposite direction, Sakura gave one more glance over her shoulder.

“I don’t think he is coming,” Naruto’s voice sounded.
“I didn’t…I wasn’t…” she fumbled over her words. **Why was she even bothering to look?** Sasuke had given no indication that he would come last night. Yet, something inside her continued to demand that she had been right to hope. “Are you sure?”

Naruto looked at her closely. He had not seen her since yesterday afternoon and he sensed something had changed. Sakura rarely seemed to be bothered by Sasuke’s absence. She had always seemed nervous, almost dreading when he mentioned he would invite the brooding seraph to come with them today. But right now, if he were not mistaken, she seemed almost discouraged by his failure to show up. Deciding to not push the matter, Naruto began to lead them down the road. And like always, it only took a few minutes of Naruto’s happy chatter until Sakura was nearly skipping along with him as she laughed and conversed with the sunny seraph.

They had only made it around the bend when Naruto came to a sudden stop. With their hands still clasped, Sakura had not been far behind him as she had been practically running to keep up with his long stride. With no amount of warning that they were stopping, Sakura did not slow down nor stop immediately. However, she managed only one more step before she felt her arm being yanked nearly out of its socket when the extension of their connected arms ran out. Rubbing her shoulder as she moved to question their sudden cease of movement, she was distracted when she noticed Naruto’s eyes fixed on something behind her.

“Didn’t think you would come?” Naruto said, a wide grin spreading across his face as he looked past her shoulder.

Sakura turned her head just in time to watch Sasuke step out from the shadows of the lining of trees along the road. She watched as his eyes drifted from Naruto to herself. Like always, she felt pulled and trapped under his scrutiny. Dark eyes ran down her frame and she was certain she could feel a heat travel through her body as he took in her appearance. His eyes lingered on her feet and she suddenly became self conscious about the layer of dust. And the wisps of hair she could feel tickling her neck told her the neat arrangement her mother had pleated before leaving for the markets was becoming unraveled.

When his eyes moved from her feet they only made it to her waist again where they lingered for a moment. Sakura suddenly became aware of the fact that her hand was still clasped within Naruto’s. A look of disapproval waved over his features and Sakura was struck with the realization that such a friendly gesture could be interpreted into something more. With this thought, Sakura loosened her grip on Naruto’s and quickly clasped her hands behind her back.

“What gave you the idea that I was not coming?” Sasuke asked, his tone monotonous and calm as he finally let his eyes rise fully and move his attention to Naruto.
“You didn’t say you were coming yesterday,” Naruto commented.

“Ah,” he acknowledged then after a short pause, “but I never said I wasn’t,” he pointed out.

Relief came the moment Sasuke’s eyes moved away from her and Sakura felt slightly more relaxed without the heavy pressure of his judgment. Subtly, she attempted to tuck a few loose strands back into her braided crown and kick some of the dust from her feet. She saw Sasuke’s dark eyes focus on her from the corner of his eye and she stilled, this time feeling silly for caring about her appearance.

Vanity was never an aspect she cared about except for when she went into the city market. It was the only exception she made to look her best at all times because when she was there, she represented her father’s business and her family. Gracing the family with a good image was what she strove to do. She was proud of what her family did and wanted to showcase that pride to the world. But in the countryside things were different. Everyone had a bit of dirt on them.

But there was something about the dark haired man before her that made her falter. The whiteness beneath his nails, the crisp and freshly laundered clothing, and the prim posture he held made her feel as though she was the odd one out. Suddenly Sasuke was looking at her all too soon again. He stared at her for a breath then raised a brow.

“So where is this view that you claim to be the best in the land?”

He had been losing his patience in waiting and was about to forget even joining them. He was in the process of doing just this when he heard the familiar obnoxious voice of his rival calling out for someone to hurry up. His shout was followed by the pitter patter of hurried footsteps on the compact ground of the dirt road. At the sound of their approach, Sasuke directed his attention farther down the road to see Naruto with his usual smile of a fool plastered on his face. Along with him, he towed a laughing and skipping Sakura.

Naruto caught sight of him first and came to an abrupt stop, causing Sakura to let out a small yelp of pain as she was yanked to a harsh stop. The dark haired demon watched with annoyance as a crooked, smug smile enveloped the sunny angels face.

“Didn’t think you would come?” Naruto commented.
Sasuke rolled his eyes and pushed off from the tree he had been leaning against. Hands still secured in his loose pockets, he moved forward into the sunlight and onto the dusty road. He kept his eyes fixed on Naruto for a long moment, then slowly trailed his attention to the reason he had even come. To clarify, he was not there for her, but to observe her. And that was exactly what he was doing now.

Her hair was disheveled, falling out in small wisps around her temples and neck. They clung to her skin, sticky from the sweat of a long day in the summer heat. She looked tired, yet her bright eyes suggested she still had plenty of energy for adventure. He liked this. It made her seem more resilient than most mortals. It meant she wanted to utilize every waking moment to enjoying her precious and limited life. His eyes trailed down the rest of her body.

She was wearing a finer dress than she would normally. From the time he had observed her in the evenings and nights of the past fortnight, this told him she had gone to the city today. He wondered how she acted amongst those of the finer and more chaotic lifestyles that the flourishing cities of Greece brought. Was she bold and outspoken like the city folk, or was she intimidated by the city and became a meek and gentle country bumpkin? Something told him that she was not one to be cowed by others. He had seen her brief challenging looks, and while she seemed to be timid around him, he had no doubt she would not be this way with other mortals. Polite yes, but not pushed around.

As he moved down to her feet, he could not help the twitch of his entertained lips when he noticed the layer of dust. It was more evidence to his growing suspicion that she was never clean. His eyes began to rove back to her face but they only made it halfway when he noticed her hand clasped with Naruto’s. He frowned at the innocent yet incriminating gesture.

The gesture of their hands was innocent enough. Children and parents, companionable friends, a simple offering of polite manners, they could all require such actions. But it could also be something else entirely, something of a deeper affection. If this was the case, Sasuke felt a sudden and deep disapproval of such a relation. It was not forbidden, but it was certainly taboo. It was unnatural and illogical. A relationship between a mortal and an immortal was inane. It was pointless. Perhaps some would deem it a poetic romance, but it was one of the tragedies and would always end poorly.

He knew Naruto was the kind to easily be affectionate with anyone and everyone. The idiot gave out more unwanted hugs and smiles then what should be socially acceptable. Then again, the blessed where always more affectionate to others than the fallen. Sasuke came from a family where rigid reserve was the only option. To show emotion would be to show your weaknesses. Physical and even vocal affection was limited and kept private. It was given to only those who were considered a truly special person. These things he knew, but he did not know what such actions meant to Sakura. Naruto had been practically dragging her along to keep up, but why where they still connected even when stopped?
As if sensing his thoughts, Sakura's hand quickly pulled free from the blonde man’s beside her and she quickly tucked her hands behind her back. This sudden change brought about a pleased feeling within his chest. His eyes moved back to study her face, she looked uneasy under his stare. He did not like this. He needed her to be more relaxed if he were to properly observe her.

It was then he decided to finally answer Naruto’s earlier comment.

“What gave you the idea that I was not coming?”

“You didn’t say you were coming yesterday,” Naruto commented.

“Ah,” he let out. It was a true statement and he had not planned to come. At least, not when Naruto had mentioned it. But that changed when Sakura had extended the invitation a second time. However he was not about to admit that detail. “But I never said I wasn’t,” he found himself giving as a hedged answer.

He caught Sakura fidgeting from the corner of his eye. At first it seemed like a natural movement but then he noticed the not so subtle way she tried to kick the dust off from her feet.

He turned his full attention back to her and she immediately ceased all movement as she stared back at him. He suppressed the amusement that dared to show on his face. She looked like a child having been caught in the act of a naughty deed.

“So where is this view that you claim to be the best in the land?”

And with that question it was not long before they were trekking along the cliffs of the coastal sea that formed the edges of the island they were on. It had taken them over an hour to walk there. A feature Sasuke was confused by at first. Such a trip could have been only a few minutes if flying. But then he remembered Sakura was leading the way and again, he was reminded of how ordinary she was. It was this reminder that brought about the usual frustrations and questions of why he seemed unable to not be fascinated by her. It was as if she had a forceful pull that he could not ignore. There was something about her he needed to discover, that he needed to know. Once he found it, he would finally put his mind at peace and no longer be forced to waste his thoughts with a mortal.

Sasuke was not sure what to expect. He had many doubts by the claims Sakura had made about the view, so he decided to not have too high of expectations. And he was right to do so.

The region of the island in which Sakura’s family lived, was located in the foothills of a mountain
that was more of a large hill than a mountain. Its landscape was made up of a white, rocky soil and a normal assortment of foliage that grew sparsely along the mountain side. Most greenery came from the crops, orchards, and vineyards of the local agriculture. It was not desolate or unattractive, but it was rather mundane and basic when compared to other corners of the world.

“Is it not the most beautiful place in the world?” Sakura exclaimed when they came up to the rocky overlook that looked across the sea.

Sasuke took it in and he disagreed strongly. It was a nice view at best. The sea was a mixture of green and blue that made up the majority Mediterranean coasts but it lacked the glassy clarity that was found in the more picturesque regions. The sun cast a red glow across the far waters, turning them a deep purple and highlighting the tips of the calm current in warmth. It was certainly a sight that one could appreciate but it was nothing memorable when compared to the true art Sasuke had witnessed nature create in other places of the mortal realm. And those masterpieces were far from comparison to the beauties that lay behind the rifted portals that crossed over into the worlds of immortals. He was almost positive that there was a much more lush and vivid view of the same sea on the next island over. He was just about to point this out when Sakura turned around and looked at them.

“My father’s sister lives in a villa on the coast close to Athens on the mainland. When I turned thirteen she came to visit and told me all about the beautiful sights that are there. Before she left she made a promise that I could travel across the sea to the mainland and stay with her for awhile. It was supposed to happen last year but my father nor my uncle could spare the time to travel with me.”

Sasuke could hear the disappointment in her voice as she took a seat on a flattened rock and tucked her legs beneath her. Naruto followed suit, taking the spot right next to her. Sasuke followed his lead with one small adjustment. He took a seat across from them, situating himself directly across from the maiden to allow optimal observation. Her attention moved back to the sea and the salty breeze picked up the loose strands of hair and caused them to dance.

“For my birthday she sent me a beautiful painting that she had commissioned just for me. It was a view from their villa of the sea.” She continued after a moment. “This place is nothing in comparison, but it is the closest I have been able to find. I like to sit out here sometimes and pretend that I am there at her villa.”

Sasuke watched her carefully as she continued to describe her imaginations. The sights she would see, the people she would meet, and the different lifestyle. She spoke of what she imagined sailing across the sea would bring. What it would be like to see the great temples and experience to see a play set in the amphitheaters of Athens.
As she spoke, Sasuke watched her eyes and face as they alighted with a yearning, a deep need for these things. It then dawned on Sasuke that perhaps Sakura had some validation in her claim, because she did not know any better. She had never left this island, she had never gone any further than the beaches and cliffs of this rock sitting in the middle of the sea. A piece of land that could be traveled in less than a full days time. So yes, perhaps this was the most beautiful sight of Sakura’s pathetically small world.

As she spoke of the wonders she had been deprived of, Sasuke began to think of other places, places not even of the mortal realm. He thought about the heavens and the god tree that sat in the meadows. He had only visited the place in the sky once when he was very young, but he remembered it vividly. He was certain the colors and aesthetic construction that the heavens of nature had created, would leave the already awed mortal speechless when she cast her jade eyes across the lands.

Sakura was still talking but Sasuke was no longer listening. But it did not matter as Naruto was doing his part to stay engaged and pester Sakura with questions about Sakura’s aunt. The pair chattered away and Sasuke took advantage of her distracted attention to analyze her in. She seemed so natural and relaxed than the other times he had been in her presence.

He took in her unique features that always seemed meant for a person far superior than a mortal. She did not belong in a dull world, she belonged in a place where her features did not defy what was around her but instead complimented her. He thought of his own home. Though dark and dangerous, it too was beautiful in its own way. Incomparable to anything found in Sakura’s world.

He began to imagine what her face would look like then if she were to see it. Would she be frightened or awed? Whichever it would be, Sasuke was suddenly struck with the desire to know the answer. And unlike everything else in his life, he was not indifferent to which answer it would be. He had a preference. He had a hope that she would think and imagine his home the same way she dreamed of the lands across the sea.

They stayed at the cliffs edge until the sun fell past the lapping waves of the sea. As the last glowing light began to fade and darkness began to take over the sky, Naruto stood. He let out a loud groan as he stretched and then in a flash he summoned his wings, giving them a few slow flaps as if recovering from being cramped within his body. The small gust caused a flurry of dust to rise into the air causing Sakura to turn her face away and cover her eyes. Sasuke watched her actions and glared up at Naruto.

“Oh sorry,” Naruto said, stilling his wings.

Sasuke rolled his eyes. “Idiot,” he murmured in a low breath as he stood as well. He heard a small
breath of laughter escape Sakura and looked down to see a small smile of amusement on her lips.

“I need to go,” Naruto announced, causing Sakura to rise to her feet as well.

After brushing off her dress, she moved to wrap her arms around Naruto. He returned the hug and Sasuke stared at them, taking in the affectionate interaction. Again his mind wondered what kind of bond they shared. When the embrace lingered longer than he liked, which was the moment they made contact, he let out an annoyed tsking sound.

“I thought you had to leave?” He said with an unexpected sharpness in his voice that surprised him. “The portal will be closing soon.”

His words had the effect he wanted and the hugging fest before him was ceased.

“Yeah, yeah,” Naruto waved carelessly then looked to Sakura. “Are you okay to get home by yourself?”

Sakura nodded.

“Are you sure? Because I can fly you…”

“No,” she cut in quickly as she shook her head. “I can manage just fine, I walk through this area all the time by myself.”

Naruto gave her a nod. “Okay suit yourself,” he shrugged as he took a few steps back from the cliff, preparing himself for a running start. “But one of these days I will convince you to fly with me.”

Sakura smiled as if this was some kind of shared humor that the pair shared. “Well until that day I will keep my feet firmly planted on the ground.”

Naruto grinned and sent her a wink before setting his feet into a fast sprint until he ran out of earth. He pushed off with his last step, arching into the air before plunging down. Sasuke heard Sakura take in a deep breath as she peeked over the edge. She watched with a nervous excitement in her
face as Naruto suddenly snapped his wings open and began to soar up to the skies. He sped past them in a blur of gold and white. He let out a distorted farewell that was carried away quickly as he continued to climb, then disappear into a patch of sky above the sea.

Sakura remained at the edge of the cliff, her eyes glued to the space of air where Naruto had disappeared. Sasuke waited for a moment before growing weary of waiting for her to break her gaze away from the disappeared portal.

Unlike the fallen, who kept their gates open at all times, the blessed kept the tradition of closing the portals during nightfall. It was something that was done during times of war as a defense, leaving no possible entry during their enemies most powerful times. Ever since Madara took the life of Hashirama the blessed had kept their portals closed during nightfall. As far as Sasuke could understand, Madara both liked and disliked it. It showed that they were afraid, as Madara had claimed with pride. But now that there were talks of an official peace to be made between them it caused him to be untrusting and paranoid.

Slowly, Sasuke walked towards Sakura and laid a hand on her shoulder. She startled at the contact. Letting out a hitched breath as her sandals began slipping, she wavered to catch her balance. Tightening his grip he pulled her closer towards him and away from the cliff’s edge, steadying her as she finally found her footing.

“Thanks,” she said, the word coming out breathy. “I forgot you were still here. You startled me.”

Sasuke frowned at her words. He did not like the thought of being insignificant to the point that his presence could so easily be forgotten. “Hn,” he hummed, then turned away, shoving his hands into his pocket. “Come on, You need to go home.” He called over his shoulder.

“Are you walking with me?” She asked.

Sasuke paused and turned around to look at her. “Of course, it will be fully dark soon.”

“I thought I told you I am not afraid of the dark,” she said, her hands falling to her hips as they jutted to the side.

Sasuke raised an eyebrow at her attitude. This was a new development in her actions compared to last night. Perhaps she was becoming adapted to his presence. This was good. It was progress and perhaps it would speed up his discovery of what it was about her that intrigued him.
“And I thought I told you that it’s not the dark, but what’s in the dark that you should fear.” He replied. “Stop be annoying and just come.”

She puffed out her cheeks then after a moment of thought, she let out the air in a huff. “Very well,” she sighed as she began to walk towards him.

Sasuke stayed still until she reached him and then fell into step with her. He noticed she quickened her pace and he could not help the twitch of a smile. Without any effort he adjusted his stride, taking no more effort than before to keep up with her. When she noticed the ease in which he kept up with her, she let out another frustrated huff as her breaths became labored and she slowed down.

They walked in silence, the occasional cricket filling the soundless void between them.

Sasuke watched Sakura from the corner of his eye. She had a happy smile of ease on her face as she played with the long strands of hair that were now collected over her shoulders. She had taken it down earlier as they watched the sunset and now her nimble fingers worked small braids into the rose strands with an absent mindedness. There was a thoughtful look on her face as she stared forward.

“What’s it like?” She suddenly asked.

“What is what like?”

“To fly.” She stopped walking and turned to face him, her green eyes looking straight into his. “What’s it like to be up there?”

Sasuke stared back at her, her lashes not even bating and her eyes holding no hesitation with their held gaze. He cocked his head in thought. He had learned to fly when he had learned to walk. It felt so long ago but he recalled it vividly.

He remembered a few occasions when his wings had dragged on the ground. He remembered the gruff voice of his father telling him he was too weak to even hold them up properly, let alone manage to catch air. He had been determined to prove his father wrong and worked vigorously at it. He remembered being frustrated when he seemed to only manage to achieve a prolonged glide. The disappointment in his father's eyes had stung deeply. His own brother had practically flown
from his mother's womb when she gave birth to her first son. His father had been so proud of Itachi and then he was born and that same pride could not be found in him. A seraph who could not perform what he was born to do was an abomination.

With hours of practice, and numerous bruises and cuts he accumulated from crash landings before his brother suggested practicing over the lake, for a softer less injuring crash, he finally made his first flight. He remembered landing sturdily on the ground before his father and the approving nod that his father gave him before walking away. His chest had swelled with so much pride at that simple gesture.

Sasuke often wondered if he would have cherished that moment so much at the time if he’d known how far and few of those looks he would receive in his life. He noticed Sakura looking at him strangely and he quickly cast away the unwelcome thoughts and focused on her question.

*How would he describe such a sensation?*

To him it was natural now, there was no effort or thought needed. But Sakura was not asking about how to fly, she was asking what it was like. And that was something words could not describe. There were not enough, nor the right descriptions, to paint a picture of the sensations one found in the sky. There was that change in temperature and pressure as one rode the wind currents. The exhilaration as one plummeted to the earth. The erratic beating of his heart and the sensation of feeling the tips of grass graze across skin as he pulled up just before colliding with the earth.

“*It is something only to be understood with experience.*” He finally said. Then without thinking he extended a hand. “*Would you like to know?*”

Sakura looked at his hand, outstretched and waiting. Sasuke saw her own hand twitch but then she took a step back, her arms coming up to her chest to hug herself as her head shook from side to side.

“No thanks,” she said quickly then bit down on her lip.

Sasuke let his hand stay suspended in the air as he watched her. He could not deny he was slightly disappointed with her. She was afraid. But then he remembered the twitch of her hand. Something inside of her had wanted to accept it. It was that thought that turned the earlier disappointment into satisfaction. He moved his hand back into his pocket and shrugged.
“Perhaps another time then,” he said and she nodded.

Satisfied with this, he began walking, pulling his hand from his pocket once again as he passed by her. His hand wrapped around her shoulder, guiding her to turn and walk alongside him. As they took up their earlier pace, he let his hand slide from her back. His fingers grazed against her soft hair and clung to a piece before regretfully releasing the silky tresses all together. Despite the warm summer night air, his hand felt oddly cold with the lack of connection. He quickly shoved his hand back into his pocket when he noticed her looking at him with a strange expression. He cleared his throat and looked ahead to the darkening path before them.

“When you do decide you want to fly,” he began, “make sure you come to me and not Naruto.”

He saw her look at him from the corner of his eye and he turned his head. Her face was pulled in question.

“Why?” She asked and Sasuke was pleased that he did not detect any displeasure in the request, just curiosity for his reasoning.

He gave her a smirk. “Because I won’t drop you like that idiot will.”

It seemed that perhaps having the goal to get Sakura relaxed around him could have been a mistake. The maiden could speak so quickly that it sounded like an archaic language lost even to an ancient creature like himself. But despite this, he cling to every word. Filing away things he could use later when he had time to analyze his findings. He took note of the tone of her voice. Analyzing the emotions that filled her melodious voice as she spoke of people and things. With each subject, he mentally paired them with the emotion, learning her likes and dislikes without her even declaring them.

They had been walking for nearly a half hour when his attention, for the first time tonight, was drawn to something other than the rosette girl that paced just a few inches from his left. Summoning his blood limit he scanned the area. His blood red orbs surveyed every tree and bush within a mile of them and then he paused when sensed it.

Like the thrashing waves of rapids, the chakra of another seraph moved through the rocky edge of the mountain. The tomoes of his eyes spiraled faster as a darkened anger coursed through his skin. His heightened eyesight took in the blue hue of the man’s hair. The silver shine of a large sword gleaming in what little moonlight was offered by the sliver of visible lunar sitting high in the sky.
He moved into action, his body moving of its own accord as he grabbed a hold of Sakura and dragged her behind the large tree that they had just passed by. He felt his wings erupt with a heavy, smokey darkness as he pushed the small frame of the mortal behind him against his spine. His heart beat strongly as he masked his chakra. It took little effort as it was a skill that had been practiced and perfected over the years. What did bring about his strain was the masking of Sakura’s soul. It was like a beacon set atop a high cliff with a bonfire alight, calling to all seraphs both blessed and fallen to come to her. Never had he thought her more annoying than in this moment. She was too pure, too innocent to not be a delightful find for any demon who had a yearning for the challenge in corrupting a soul.

Sakura felt dizzy and confused from the sudden change in their situation. They had been walking easily through the staggered outskirts of the forest as she had been spoke about a humorous exchange she had witnessed in the market today between a young child and his mother. They had been walking so closely together that it surprised her at how at ease she felt around him now. But then it all changed.

She had not noticed at first but eventually she realized that Sasuke was no longer listening to her. He had paused his strides and his attention was focused far off into the darkness that her eyes could not see through clearly. Walking to his side she moved to touch his arm and call out to him but then she noticed his stature.

It was alert and rigid. She was almost certain she could see the dark hairs on the back of his neck rising like that of an animal sensing danger. Then his head shifted, giving her a better view of his face and she noticed the faint red with black swirls being cast across the land.

Following his gaze she strained to see what he was seeing. She could see the mountain, framed and dotted by the small stars that were quickly taking over the skies. At its summit, she could see the geometric outline of the small temple that stood like a sentinel over the land. Along the mountain slope she could make out the darker shapes of trees and larger brush but nothing in detail. Only black blobs among darker or lighter blackness. She was about to turn back to Sasuke when she saw it. A flash of silver, the glint of metal and along with it, the shadow figure of something lurking.

She was not given a chance to observe it any more before she felt the sharp tug of her arm that was still paused in a half reach for Sasuke’s sleeve. Wrenched from her firm stance, her body was dragged then spun and pressed into something warm but firm. The rush of a strong wind blew around her and she shut her eyes as the dizzy whirl took over her head and body as well as the consuming smoke that had summoned from nowhere with the gust of wind.

She shoved her face into the source of warmth, squeezing her eyes tighter as she caught against the weak footing she felt in her body. As it dissipated, she slowly cracked her eyes open then
eventually, opened them fully. Pulling her face free she found herself looking into the finely woven linen shirt of Sasuke’s. She felt a roughness brush against her cheek and realized that his wings protruded from the altered slits of his shirt that were fashioned at his shoulder blades. She had always been curious about the function of this strange fashion design but now it made sense. She had seen Naruto ruin his fair share of shirts when wearing more similar tastes to that of folk of this region when he accompanied her into public amongst normal humans like herself.

She moved herself slightly, trying to peak around his side but she was stopped by the tug of her arm that he still grasped in his long slender fingers.

“Stay behind me,” he hissed in a tone that was laced with warning and a hint of annoyance.

“What is wrong?” She asked, keeping her voice whispered.

She saw his red eyes glance down at her from over his shoulder. He peered down at her with a look that she could not place before turning back around.

“He is a rogue demon,” he replied as he kept his focus on the figure moving about.

“Is he dangerous?”

She heard Sasuke let out a near snort at her question.

“To some maybe,” he answered.

“Is he to you?”

She earned herself another hard glare before Sasuke turned his red stare back to the mountain side. He said nothing in reply but Sakura took his glare as one being offended. Naruto had told her Sasuke was part of a powerful family, but how was she to know there where not families more powerful. It happened all the time. Even among her own country, the power of leadership was ever shifting and in many cases it was a person’s own family member that turned out to be their greatest enemy. Sakura did not understand the politics and ways of the seraphs but she had seen enough of their traits, bordering on the same level of human traits that she was not stupid enough to think they were any different. For all she knew, that figure could be very well a family member of Sasuke’s. One of equal or possibly more powerful than Sasuke. From what she understood, Naruto and
Sasuke were young for their kind, certainly the longer one lived the more powerful they became if immortal.

“Then why are we hiding?” She accused.

“Because I do not feel like killing anything tonight and if he were to see you, there is a high chance that could happen,” he said firmly. The shift of his head caused her to look up at him and meet the hypnotic spin that she was becoming more and more intrigued with. “Or would you like to watch me rip him apart?” Sasuke asked, with his brow arched.

Sakura could tell he was being sarcastic but she could not ignore that there was an underlying curiosity in his voice. Did he truly think she would even consider such a thing? Yes, she knew the evils of a demon. Naruto had warned her about the deeds and corruption that they could cause a mortal to do. But still, killing was wrong, no matter what a person had done.

She sent him a hard glare.

“Of course not,” she said with a tone of stone.

She watched as a flicker of something ran across his eyes but he turned his head from her before she could identify it. “Then be quiet and stay behind me.”

Sakura frowned at the back of his head but he either did not feel her eyes burning into his skull or he did not care. As time stretched on, Sakura gave up her glaring and let her eyes roam down to where his wings protruded from his back.

In the dim starlight she could barely make out the true details but she could see the small pulse where a vein protruded beneath the rough outer skin. She could feel his heart beating where her arm was partially pinned against his back. She watched with fascination as the beat of his heart synchronized with the pulse of the vein.

Her eyes moved on, moving along the edge of his wing. The polish of the spiked talon that rested atop the joint in his wing gleamed in the starlight. Without thinking, she shifted herself to free her pinned hand. She felt the tight warning of Sasuke’s hand around the wrist of her other hand but he did nothing else to stop her from freeing her arm.
With slow, transfixed movement, Sakura raised her finger up towards the peak of his wing. She was curious if it would be like softened leather or weathered and calloused. Would it be warm or cold. The complicated web of veins that fed hot blood into the membrane seemed it would be answer enough. But in this moment, Sakura did not want to deduce by facts, she wanted to know from physical evidence. Upon first contact she took notice of two things. It was very warm and surprisingly soft.

Sasuke had continued to watch carefully from around the tree as the familiar demon finally began to make his way in the opposite direction of Sakura's home. His eyes narrowed as he watched him disappear into the dark. It had been Suigetsu, a rouge seraph that was loyal to Orochimaru. And it did not look like he was just casually looking around for some poor soul to prey on. He was here with a purpose, had been looking for something specific.

His fingers dug into the bark of the tree at the thought. He did not like the idea of Orochimaru taking interest in something, or anything on this island. It was remote and sparsely populated. The few cities it hosted were mostly small trading ports with a few local taverns as offer of entertainment. It offered nothing that the larger cities of the mainland offered when it came to options in sinful indulgences. With those facts, no rogue demon would ever look for souls here. At least not one as greedy as Orochimaru.

The light brush and tickle along the veined leather of his right wing caused him to break from his focused thoughts and turn around. Sakura stood wide eyed with her hand held in the air and a single finger poised guiltily. He looked at her finger accusingly and frowned. Then he ruffled his wings, wanting to shake the lingering sensation of her finger tip where it had traced the sensitive edge near his talon.

“What are you doing?” He asked, moving his glare up to her face.

She did not shy away from his glare. Instead she kept looking up at him, meeting his eye with a slightly awed expression. He narrowed his brows more when she failed to give and answer which seemed to break her from the spell.

“Sorry,” she said, blinking a few times. “I just wanted to know what it felt like. They’re so beautiful.”

Sasuke stared at her. No one had ever described any demons wings as such. Frightening, yes. Daunting, sinister, powerful, all of these he had heard but never described as a thing of beauty. Again a phantom sensation ran down his right wing and it sent a shiver down his body. It was disturbing how much he enjoyed such a feeling and caused him to frown again.
“Don’t do that again,” he said, his eyes narrowing. “I am not a cat to be petted.”

His reprimanding words seemed to have no affect as a smile spread across her face and she let out a small giggle. He sent her another dark look and she put on a serious face, though he could see the hint of a smile as she struggled to suppress another giggle that was attempting to break from her lips. He rolled his eyes.

“Let’s just go,” he growled. “I have other things to do tonight other than walk you home since you insist in keeping to your mortal method of slothful traveling.”

He heard her composure crack again as a breathy laugh sounded but did not turn around. The soft sound of her sandals told him enough that she was following closely behind. If there were rouge demons wandering this landscape, he was not going to risk her lagging behind. He needed to get her home then find the reason why Orochimaru had suddenly taken and interest in this island.

Like the night before they came to a stop just outside the front gateway to her family's home. Sasuke paused with his hands in his pockets as Sakura turned to face him. Her earlier ease and playful attitude seemed to waver as she began to nibble at her lip in thought, a somber expression taking over her face.

“You are one of them aren’t you.” She said, breaking the silence.

Sasuke stilled for a moment, there was no question as to whom she was speaking about. Demons. Fallen Seraphs. The evils of the world.

He had never been ashamed of what he was. Questioned his duties perhaps, but never had he regretted what he was born as. Yet, as Sakura looked up at him, her eyes fixed on him with careful calculations, he found himself faltering, delaying what seemed like a dooming answer.

However, her tone had not been in the form of a question, but a statement. He could see it in her eyes, the truth. Therefore, why was she asking. Was she testing him? Or was she hoping she was correct? What if her were to lie, tell her he was one of the blessed, one of the good ones?

No, that would not do.
That was not who he was, he knew his heart and his heart yearned to lead mortals astray. It was his damned conscious that he had been cursed with that kept him back from his potential. And it seemed like he now had another reason, in the form of a mortal girl that he had an unhealthy obsession in understanding. She knew what he was, but did she know who he was? If she knew what he could truly do, she would run away from him just like any mortal would. Yet here she was, looking at him with no fear in her eyes, an anomaly.

He tilted his head to the side.

“And what if I was to say yes?” He asked curiously. “Would that change the way you see me?”

The silence that followed as he waited for her answer was painstaking. His heart changed pace to a more rapid throb. As he acknowledged the pounded within his chest, he realized something. He cared what her answer would be.

He watched her eyes graze across his face then move down his body, pausing at the small stitched symbol adorning the left side of his tunic. He watched her take in the details of the red and white thread that made the fan. Slowly they moved back up and he wondered if this is what she felt like when he surveyed her.

“No.” She said simply but firmly.

Sasuke felt his shoulders relax. “No?” He asked with a lift of his brow. “And do you truly understand what I am?”

He needed her to know. Her lack of fear in the appearance of a demon that was not him had him worried. Did she not understand the dangers? Did she not understand their kinds purpose or the value of the soul that lay within her?

Sakura nodded. “Naruto told me about your kind and the...divide between the fallen and the blessed.”

“And you did not fear Suigetsu?”

“Suigetsu?” She repeated in confusion. “Was that the rogue demons name? Did you know him? Why did he go rogue?”
Sasuke did not have the patience for her to lose focus on the matter at hand. “Where you afraid?” He demanded more forcefully.

“No.”

Her answer was nearly instantaneous.

“Why not?” he continued to demand, his frustration at her lack in understanding the potential danger was bleeding into his tone.

“Because you said he was not dangerous to you,” she answered simply.

He paused at this, trying to process what this meant. If he were correct, he was to assume she felt safe around him. Sasuke nodded, at this idea. It was a truth, she would always be safe around her. But he had to be sure he was right.

Keeping his eyes trained on her face for any hint of deceit, he continued his interrogation.

“And yet you are not afraid that I may claim your soul and drag it down to the darkest parts of your gods underworld?”

She shook her head.

“Why not?” his tone was no longer demanding but still insistent.

“Because if you had wanted to hurt me you would have done it by now.” She stated plainly. “And you made sure to keep me away from that other demon. If you wished me harm, you would not have protected me.”

Her perception was sharp and Sasuke did not like this, it made him feel vulnerable. If a mortal could interpret his actions, there was no telling what an immortal could gain from him. It was he who was supposed to be learning about her, not the other way around. He needed to regain his
Sasuke took a step closer, then another when she made no move to keep distance. He leaned down slowly, taking in the grassy smell of the countryside that had been trapped by her hair.

“I would not underestimate me if I were you.” He whispered. His breath trickled across her shoulder, causing a budding of goosebumps to rise on her skin. “I am a very selfish person and I do not like to share. Who is to say that I am not just biding my time?”

She pulled back slightly, but only enough to look him directly in the eyes. “I would like to see you try,” she defiantly challenged.

He watched the corners of her mouth twitch in a small self victory of her bravery. And he could not take it away from her. It was this version of this tiny mortal that intrigued him on the first day. A twisting ball of excitement rolled in the pit of his stomach and he gave her a devilish grin as he straightened up.

Her green eyes, of which the hue could still be seen in the darkness of the night, followed him. In a soft motion he raised his hand to her eyeline. Then, with a slow tap just above, he placed his index and middle finger to the center of her forehead. It was a familiar gesture he had been on the receiving end more times than he could count. But this was the first time he had ever offered the gesture himself. His arm had moved on its own accord but the moment the tips of his fingers touched her smooth skin, he had a feeling this would not be the last.

As he withdrew his hand her eyes came back into his vision. Confusion of his actions painted into her green irises that he felt he could agree with.

“Hn, maybe next time.”

Chapter End Notes

OK so just a little note and please do not hate me for this especially those who are here for the present but the next chapter will be another Ancient Greece. I am doing this for two reasons. 1: because I need the past time line to progress a little faster and 2: I will admit I am a little stuck on how I want the next few chapters in the present to go. I have two different paths in which they both come to the same point again but I
am just trying to decided which version would be better. So I am going to delay it just by a bit but I promise it will be after the next chapter. I am pretty sure I have come to a decision but I am still exploring and throwing around ideas.
Ancient Greece

After Sasuke left her in a fashion that she was beginning to think was normal, sudden and confusing, she dazedly went into her house and up to her room. Her exhausted body had barely made it to the bed before she flopped onto her back. Her feet hung over the edge while her hands dangled over the sides. For an hour she lay like this. Her body tired but mind too muddled and mixed for sleep.

Still dressed in her clothes from earlier, with no intention of changing until the next morning, Sakura lay restlessly on her bed as she stared up at the ceiling of her room.

Something had changed tonight. At what point this change occurred, she was not sure. Before tonight she had seen Sasuke only twice in her life. Each time had been just as intense as the other. And each time she had felt on edge. Like a prey being watched by a predator.

But on this third encounter there had been a shift. Sometime between the moment Sasuke stepped out from the shadows into the road and when he stepped back into the shadows with only the ghost of his fingers against her skin as evidence that he was there. Somewhere between those two moments, something had changed.

She had felt at ease. More than at ease. She had felt...safe. Which was odd because never before had she felt unsafe.

She was not naive enough to think the world without its dangers, but it was a simple fact that bad things did not happen in this countryside. Yet somehow he had managed to create the illusion of being protected from a danger that was not there. And there was more to him than she had thought. Before she thought him distant and indifferent but he continued to surprise her in the small gestures he offered. They were awkward and rigid, but they were sincere to what he was. He was a protector and he cared more than what he showed to the people important to him.

Like Naruto. He called the blonde seraph every insulting name she knew and more. But despite their frequent bickering and writing each other off, Sakura could tell that Sasuke truly valued
Naruto’s friendship. She would not be so bold as to think Sasuke felt this way about her, but the thought was appealing. And perhaps with time, and more appearances of the dark haired seraph, maybe she could be gifted with such a friendship.

Her mind replayed the small banter they had shared just before he slipped away into the dark. She was not sure what had come over her when she had challenged him like that. But she could not help but feel it was exactly what he wanted. It was painfully confusing and her mind strained to provide answers that only resulted in a headache.

A heavy sigh of frustration escaped her lips and she shut her eyes, determined to fall asleep and not think anymore of it. When her body did not seem to be lulling into any state of rest, she shifted. Pulling her legs up to cross and fall open as she moved an arm up to cushion her head. With her eyes still clamped shut, she took in a deep breath and slowly let it out as she mentally traveled through her body and relaxed every muscle. It was an old technique she learned from a healer man who had traveled from the far east. For awhile the effort seemed to work.

She was nearly lost in the focus of the air moving in and out of her lungs when all concentration was broken by the abrupt tap on her forehead. Body frozen in shock, Sakura’s heart pounded in her chest as her eyes snapped open only to be stunned by wave of confusion.

She had expected to see a dark haired figure with glowing red eyes to be hovered over her. But what she was greeted with, was the same boring ceiling she had been staring at all night as it played backdrop to her own hand suspended over her face. Extended and pressed against her forehead, were her own two fingers. She glared up at them in accusation then mentally cursed the rest of her arm for moving on its own accord.

‘Maybe next time.’

The words played in her mind with the voice that was quickly becoming familiar. Smooth syllables with a touch of darkness that bordered on dangerous. Every time he spoke, she could not help but relish the richness of his tone. Despite the potential menace it held, she could not help but be drawn into the underlying promise of something enticing.

But what had he meant by those words?

It could be interpreted as a promise to do what she had challenged him to do. Claim her soul, and drag her down to the dark lords realm, where she would suffer the darkest of punishments Hades saved for the most evil of deed workers. It seemed like an unfathomable idea that she could earn such a place in the underworld. But there was something about Sasuke that told her he could make
the best of people, join the worst, with just his words. Those sinfully dark, yet drawing words, could be her downfall.

She shivered.

It disturbed her how much his words could send her body into a nearly euphoric state. He was dangerous, there was no doubting that. But yet, she could not deny the strange pull she felt for him. She had been drawn to him since the beginning.

She had not noticed it at first. In fact tonight was the first she took acknowledgement of it. There was no other way to describe it, other than having a string attached to her finger to which the other end was connected to him. When he moved, she felt a tug. A pull in which she was instinctually compelled to give into. It made the thought of being dragged down to hell, not quite so fear inspiring when attached to the promise, that he would be there with her.

She bolted up from her bed.

Those thoughts were not her. She narrowed her brows and glared down at her hands. She traced her finger, running the tip of her left pointer around the circumference of her right hand’s counterpart. Quietly, she stood and sat down at the bench beneath the small window of her room. She looked out into the dark, contemplating this idea.

The pull was not always there. It was usually during the late hours of the night. When she was tending to her family’s garden before going to bed. Sometimes she would be woken from the soft tug. Now that she was aware of it, she wondered if it meant that when the pull became absent, it meant he was absent as well. Gone from her world and into his own.

Not the one in the sky that she had first imagined, but the one down below. The one that she once was terrified by the thought of its existence. It worried her how much that fear had dissipated in such a short amount of time. The meaning of it was lost to her and she wondered if she would ever make sense of it. Such a connection to someone who was nothing but a strange mystery was absurd.

With a soft sigh, her head fell against the window frame as she gazed around the shadows of the night. Right now she could feel the tightening of the string around her finger. It was soft and subtle, as if it was more of an assurance that it was still there than an urging insistence that she follow. Did that mean that Sasuke was out there? If so, was it faint because he was far away or was it meant as something else?
It reminded her of the safety that had settled around her earlier that night. She should have been more afraid. She should have been terrified, still terrified, with the thought of a demon, other than Sasuke, lurking around these lands.

But she was not.

Instead she felt perfectly safe.

She recalled the stories her mother had told her long before she knew of the actual existence of the seraphim. Her favorites had always been about the guardian angels. Spirits that protect mortals from the evils of the underworld.

But perhaps there were guardian demons as well. Dark shadows that stalked instead of watched, and killed instead of protected. Over the past weeks, she had begun to think of Naruto has her guardian angel. If that was the case, then perhaps, without her knowledge or it seemed even his own, Sasuke was her dark shadow.

Suigetsu was nowhere to be found. Sasuke had spent the entire night soaring through the skies and haunting the ground below him, but there was no trace of the shark toothed demon, or any other demon for the matter. Despite this, he remained posted outside of Sakura’s family manor until first light.

She was sleeping against the window sill. Her body leaned against the frame while her neck bent at an uncomfortable angle. If she spent the entire night like that, she would wake with a horrible knot in her neck.

He was tempted to go inside and lay her on her bed. But that would be crossing a line. He had never crossed over the walls of her home. Nor did he ever plan to. He was not here to take care of her, he was here to observe her. If she was too foolish to not get herself to bed then it was her own fault.

“Tch,” he mumbled to himself. “So annoying.”

And it was.
When Sasuke first began to observe her, he had come up with a set of strict guidelines. These rules were meant to keep him from becoming too involved. If his observances got too personal, he could possibly miss something. He was looking for facts, not friends. He needed to keep an unbiased observance.

But for some reason, Sakura made him want to break those rules which is what brought up this annoyance. Sasuke liked his rules. They kept things in order and he liked order.

So he stayed firmly perched in the tree and focused his attention on surveying the land around the manor, instead of what was in the manor. The moment the sky began to lighten, Sasuke was gone. Leaving no evidence for Sakura or anyone to know that he was even there.

It was the first meeting since his father told him of Madara’s wishes two weeks ago. He had nearly skipped it in exchange of catching some sleep. But upon his arrival home, he ran into his father who had reminded him of his obligation to not disappoint his uncle’s request. Or in other words, to not be an embarrassment for the family.

Fugaku had said it the same way he said everything. With sure expectation that Sasuke would be just that. An embarrassment.

So here he was.

Tired and annoyed, he made his way through the various faces that made up the council. Most ignored him. Being the second, lesser son of Fugaku, his presence seemed insignificant. But there were still a few raised brows and curious eyes to which he ignored or returned with a glare. After what felt like an eternity of wading through an amount that bordered on a mob than a council, he settled down into the empty seat next to his brother.

“What are you doing here?”

Unlike his father, Itachi did not sound degrading, only curious and perhaps slightly alarmed.

“Trying to prove to father that I am capable of not always being the disappointing failure that he sees me as,” Sasuke said perhaps a bit more roughly than Itachi deserved. “Though I am sure I could sit here without moving or speaking anything and he would find something worthy
criticism.”

Sasuke’s words had changed from rough, to biting bitterness. He watched his brother frown deeply at his remarks.

“You know he does not think that,” Itachi assured. “He just…”

Words failed Itachi as he struggled to explain the complicated and more often incomprehensible person that was their father. Sasuke gave him a pointed look as if his falter only seemed to silently confirm Sasuke’s earlier comment.

Itachi frowned. He did not like that his brother thought such things of himself.

Their father was hard and harsh with their upbringing but he had his reasons, albeit poorly justified, it was still what he thought was best. Fugaku expected a lot of them because he wanted what was best for his family. He cared and loved for his family deeply, he just didn’t show it well. And to some, like his brother, it seemed it did not show at all.

But right now he had other worries.

Such as why exactly Sasuke was here. He had never shown an interest for council meetings or the politics of their world before. Yet, suddenly, when things were just beginning to escalate, he was here.

“So what else has brought about this sudden interest in meetings then?”

Sasuke looked at him from the corner of his eye before he moved his black irises to lay upon a point across the room. Itachi followed his direction until his eyes fell upon none other than their uncle, Madara Uchiha. A trickle of dread trailed down Itachi’s body, leaving everything in its wake, numb and buzzing.

“Apparently Madara has requested that I started attending,” Sasuke said with a shrug.

The confirmation left a bitter taste in Itachi’s stomach. Madara Uchiha was one of the oldest
seraph’s that was still alive. He had the most experience and knowledge in the ways and histories of their kind. He was also the closest stem from the original roots of any bloodline. That meant he was also the most powerful. And the last person he wanted near his brother.

Itachi was still very young when the war ended but he still remembered it vividly. Any child scared by the horrors of war would, and if he ever got close to forgetting, he could always rely on his nightmares to refresh him.

Madara had been strong even then. He had led legions through blood slaughter at the command of Tajima, Madara’s father and Itachi’s grandfather. At the time, it was he who had been the leader of the fallen. Tajima had been determined to wipe out all of the blessed. Many believed his son to share the same views given the ferocity in which Madara fought on the battlefields.

But Itachi remembered the few times when he saw his uncle’s mask fall and he could see the pain that such wasted life caused him. It gave Itachi hope, and that hope grew when Madara himself claimed leadership and established peace almost immediately. It was the first time Itachi realized what life was supposed to be like. It was also the first time he was truly able to go about his true purpose in servitude.

For a time, Itachi considered his uncle a hero. Many still did. But itachi had lost faith in his uncle long ago. No one would dare say it, but Madara was unstable.

Many excused his slaughter of Hashirama as a grief stricken moment of weakness. But Itachi could see it. Like a thin veil hanging over Madara’s head. His sanity was being suffocated. He saw it in his eyes. The cruel unsteady way he examined everyone with paranoia and as a possible threat. It is why he eliminated nearly the entire population of Senju. His actions seemed somewhat stable since then, but Itachi believed they were just dormant. That worried him. For there was no telling when it would stir again and who or what would be destroyed when the beast was unleashed.

Just before Sasuke was born, Madara had once taken an interest in Itachi. He had been fascinated with his proficiency and the quickness in which his sharingan evolved into the deeper, more dangerous stages. His uncle had tried to take him under his wing, claiming he wanted help him develop those skills and prepare as his beneficiary. But Itachi knew better. Madara did not want a successor, he wanted a weapon, a minion. He wanted a means to rule not just their realm, but all the realms.

But Itachi had made it clear long ago that he wanted nothing to do with Madara’s dark musings. For awhile he thought that was the end of it, but then Sasuke was born.
Over the years their father had disregarded any effort Sasuke ever made. But while Fugaku watched blindly, Itachi had always seen the potential Sasuke held within him. Sasuke held within him a great power. A power that could to great things, but also greatly terrible. His younger brother had just not found the right motivation and focus needed to reach that potential. However, it seemed Itachi was not the only one who had noticed this.

Madara had taken notice in Sasuke’s potential not long after he mastered his wings. As soon as Itachi realized this, he had taken action to keep Sasuke away from Madara. For a while it had worked, decades had passed since then but it seemed his precautions had worn off. Madara was taking an interest again.

As if Madara sensed his stare, he suddenly turned from the Hyuga clan member he was speaking to and met Itachi’s eyes. A glint of victory flashed across Madara’s eyes as his attention flickered slightly to his left where Sasuke sat. Itachi felt his fingers curl into fists when he caught the ghost of a smug smile twitch at the corner of his uncle’s mouth. Itachi sent him a heated, silent threat until Madara turned away to continue speaking to the Hyuga. Itachi’s eyes remained on the back of Madara’s head for another heated moment before moving his attention to his little brother.

“It would be best you stay away from him,” Itachi said in a warning tone.

Sasuke looked back at his brother, confused as to why Itachi would request such a thing. Itachi rarely did anything without warranted reasoning. It was the way he was. But his brother was also supportive of him, he was one of the few who believed in him. This recognition from Madara was a big step for Sasuke.

Yet, his always supportive brother was requesting that he disobey and disregard their uncle’s acknowledgment. Was it not a good thing that their leader would want his presence at councils? Was his brother not proud that for once in his life, he was getting recognition as an asset to their world?

“Why?” Sasuke inquired, curious for his brothers reasonings.

Itachi stayed silent for a long moment as he continued to stare back at him with a black face. Eventually he looked away. His black eyes swept across the council members as they began to settle into their seats.

“Just stay away from him,” Itachi repeated.
And with those words hanging between them, the meeting began.

Despite the riveting and wholly detailed tale of an emperor's daughter, her guard, and the explicit encounters that happened between them in the dark, Kakashi found himself unable to give his full attention to the pictographs, beautifully composed on the scroll that Juriya had recently finished. Instead, his eyes were fixated on the little nymph that Naruto and Sasuke had managed to catch a two months ago.

They had claimed she was a mortal and Kakashi had believed it until he lay his one visible eye on her. Since then, he was beginning to become a believer of the myths and legends passed between the mortals of these lands. She was quite exquisite, and he now understood why she caught the attention of the two young seraphs.

It would not have taken much for Naruto, but it had been Sasuke’s subtle, but increasing involvement that had made Kakashi curious about the girl. And today he was granted a glimpse into those mysteries when upon their designated training time, he found himself sitting slightly adjacent to the girl in question.

At the moment she was preoccupied with watching Naruto and Sasuke spar with awe. Her eyes flicked from one point to another as she followed the black and white blur of wings as the two boys wrested, collided into, and chased one another. They had conversed a little when the session had first begun and with the small exchange of words, Kakashi felt he had already gathered enough to make a general assumption of her.

She reminded him a lot of Rin. Infectiously cheery with a bright smile, large eyes that displayed every emotion that was felt, and an instinctive need for healing others who were damaged in more ways than physical hurt.

He just hoped this girl would not also share the same fate as the other. Because despite all the wonderful traits that Sakura shared with Rin, there was one that worried him. She was a mortal. A mortal who seemed to be caught up in a world far beyond hers, and more deeply immersed than any of her kind should.

There was nothing truly wrong with mortality. At times Kakashi felt envious of mortals. Immortality, at times, could feel tedious.

Then again, for a sinner like him, maybe immortality was the damnation he would inevitably face when it finally came for him to be granted death. But for a bright spirit like Sakura, death seemed
like such a punishment. Not just for her but to the world. Warm, comforting spirits like hers should be eternal like the shining stars. But then again, even the brightest of stars eventually dim and fade.

“Why are you wings grey?”

It took him a moment to realize that Sakura was no longer watching Naruto. At the moment, said seraph was flying around like an irritant fly as he threw insults down to an annoyed Sasuke. Sasuke himself looked ready to do more than swat at him.

Kakashi looked away from the pair to give Sakura his full attention. Her green eyes looked innocently at him, completely ignorant of the highly personal question she had just asked him. Then again, it was a valid curiosity. He himself was an anomaly of his kind, just the way she was one her kind with her rosette locks.

“It's because I am old,” he supplied, pulling his scroll up to hide his face and hoping she would accept the answer.

But when he peeked back over the scroll, she was eyeing him suspiciously.

“I thought seraphs were immortal,” she pointed out. “What is the point of living forever, if you still have to deal with aging?”

He could not help but let out a small chuckle. It seemed that there was another trait she and Rin shared. Too smart for their own good.

“Careful Sakura,” Kakashi teased. “With that kind of thinking you might realize that you mortals are better than us immortals.”

She gave him a mischievous smile before going back to watching the rivalry that would never be settled.

Watching the three interact was the most intriguing. They all sat together with their feet dipped into the small stream of water that ran through the glade. Both boys sat with their wings sprawled out as if sunning themselves while Sakura’s hair shone rosy in the life giving light. It was an odd
and amusing sight. An angel, a demon, and their little mortal. It brought a happy sadness in Kakashi’s heart. To see that such things could still be formed, no matter the history that had happened in the past.

Sakura let out a lilting laugh before a relaxed silence fell between the trio. Kakashi heard her let out a happy sigh before linking her arm with Naruto’s and then lay her head on his shoulder. She murmured something but her words were too low for even his heightened senses to catch. But it appeared that Sasuke had heard as his attention was drawn to the pixie sitting beside him.

Sasuke’s dark eyes locked on her arm looped through Naruto’s, then they trailed to her smiling face as she leaned her head against Naruto’s shoulder. Kakashi watched as Sasuke’s face hardened and frowned at the pair, a flash of unmistakable envy flashing in his eyes.

Kakashi let out a small chuckle and wondered if the dark haired fallen even understood what he was feeling. As if sensing the dark jealousy, Sakura’s left arm moved and looped through Sasuke’s. As she fully linked her arms with his, he was forced to move closer as she sat up, moving her head from Naruto’s shoulder as she pulled the pair closer to her. Kakashi watched as Sasuke’s earlier sour look evaporated. Uncertainty surfaced at first, then it smoothed over with a relaxed contentment. The silver haired seraph could even swear there was a ghost of a smile on his lips.

“Interesting,” he mumbled to himself.

Sakura certainly was a special mortal.

Eventually Sakura announced her intended departure, claiming she had to check on a neighbor who had recently given birth the night before. Naruto gave her a hug goodbye to which Sasuke interrupted as he pulled her away to give a warning to be home before dark. Sakura returned his words with a roll of her eyes and assurance that she could take care of herself. When he gave his own words of doubt she happily reminded him that she had been doing it for seventeen years before he had shown up.

It was a statement that Kakshi could see grated on Sasuke as his jaw tightened and the corner of his eye twitched. He took several steps closer to Sakura. With each step, Kakashi could see the earlier confidence of Sakura slightly falter, but it never fully gave away.

They stood toe to toe for a growing moment, as if it were only the two of them. Kakashi watched with surprise as Sasuke lifted his hand and poked her in the middle of the forehead. Sakura’s head jerked back as she blinked several times in surprise. Once recovered, she narrowed her eyes at him.
but Sasuke seemed unphased as he whispered something so low, Kakashi was certain even she could not hear the dark haired boy’s words. And then Sasuke stepped back, and the odd, almost intimate exchange, was broken.

“Go and don’t dawdle,” Sasuke commanded.

Sakura’s cheeks puffed as she pursed her lips.

“Fine,” she spat then turned to the other two.

Kakashi was taken aback by the instant and abrupt change in her face. One moment, hardened and defiant, the next, warm and sunny as a brilliant smile consumed her features.

“It was a pleasure to meet you Kakashi,” she said with a small bow of her head. “Hopefully our threads of fate will cross again.”

She gave a final wave to Naruto, a dark look to Sasuke, then skipped off towards the small farming settlement on the other side of the woods. Kakashi watched as Sasuke’s dark eyes followed her until she disappeared from sight.

“So annoying,” Sasuke muttered under his breath.

It was an utterance not meant to be heard by anyone else, but in his agitation, it came out strong enough for both Naruto and Kakashi to hear.

“Oh come on Sasuke,” Naruto chimed, earning a dark look to be cast towards him. “You’re just mad because she won’t do everything you tell he and you can’t control her.”

Kakashi raised a brow at this. “What do you mean can’t control her?” He asked curiously, causing both boys to look at him.

Sasuke’s face was in a glower while Naruto’s curled mischievously.
“Sakura is immune to Sasuke’s sharingan,” Naruto supplied with glee.

Kakashi’s single visible eye quickly darted to Sasuke who was busy trying to burn Naruto alive with his eyes. It was a good thing Sasuke’s eyes were not as advanced as they could be, otherwise Kakashi was certain there would be sure black flames consuming the golden seraph.

“Is this true?” Kakashi inquired, drawing Sasuke’s heated glare from Naruto to their teacher.

“Of course not,” Sasuke denied through his teeth.

“Yes it is,” Naruto argued. “She did it on the first day. Sasuke went to erase her memory of us but she broke out of his pull.”

“That was only because I let her,” Sasuke snapped back. “It was a fluke, a one time thing.”

“So you have used it on her since then?” Naruto asked, his voice holding a bit of a threatening edge.

Sasuke hesitated before giving an answer.

“No,” he proclaimed truthfully. “I have not needed to.”

In truth it was because he was afraid that it was not a fluke. That it would turn out that she truly did resist his pull. Because that would mean he was weak. So weak in fact, that even a mortal could overcome what was supposed to be his most powerful attribute. If this was so, what did that mean for him if a mere mortal could beat him. Perhaps there was validity in his father’s dissatisfaction.

His eyes flashed to his teacher who was looking at him with an eye that was too observing. The rest of the silver seraphs face was covered, but he could see the pull of cloth over his mouth that indicated he was deep in thought.

“What?” Sasuke growled.
Kakashi’s brow rose at his tone. “It’s nothing, just…”

“Just what?” Naruto encouraged.

Kakashi mussed up his already untamed hair. His mind raced. He had heard things, rumors and stories of mortals with certain souls. But that was the problem. They were rumors. And rumors were like feathers, it was rare they held any weight. And that weight was truth.

“It’s probably nothing,” Kakashi said as casually as always.

But his nonchalant tone did nothing to lose the interest of his students.

“Tell us anyways,” Sasuke demanded in a tone not normally used when speaking to superiors. Then again, Sasuke hardly ever held respect for anyone. “If it’s nothing, then there is nor harm in humoring us.”

Kakashi gave him a look that silently stated his dislike for the tone. But his immediate denial of the request died on his lips when he saw the emotion in Sasuke’s eyes. A depraved hunger of desperation. He had seen that same look in the eyes of young scholars who craved knowledge. He had hardly seen Sasuke have a need for anything other than power.

Interesting.

“Very well, but it would be best that you keep this thought to yourselves.” Kakashi warned, then waited until they each nodded. Once he had their promise of silence, he continued. “It might be possible that Sakura possess a true soul.”

There was a long pause of silence as Kakashi studied each of the boys for a reaction. It did not surprise him when their faces remained vacant of any understanding. Not many believed in true souls. They went against the nature of a seraphs purpose.

“A what?” Both Sasuke and Naruto questioned after a short while.

“More specifically, a true pure,” Kakashi clarified. “There are two types of a true soul.”
His words hung in the air again before Naruto let out a suppressed snort. “Of course her soul is pure, anyone who has looked at it will see there is not a single maring. She’s too nice to do anything wrong. And I don’t know if you noticed, but this island is not exactly the biggest lure for demons. Most people around here have good natured souls.”

From the corner of his eye, Kakashi saw Sasuke shift uncomfortably but he brushed it aside as nothing. Instead he shook his head, focusing on Naruto.

“There are plenty of nice mortals in the world that go their entire lives without much of any sinning without the coaxing of a fallen. But a true soul is different. Unlike other mortals, they are not drawn to our influences. They could be surrounded by a hundred demons and not feel the draw of temptation to do their bidding. Same goes for angels as well. They are, in a sense, immune to us.” He looked at Sasuke. “It would explain why she could break away from your sharingan. It was not that your hold was not good enough, it was because she had a true choice. I would imagine she would be immune to any sharingan for that matter.”

The relief Sasuke felt with that information was surprising. And it was not just the fact that it meant he was not weak, it was the fact that she was safe from any other sharingan holder.

“That is so cool!” Naruto crowed.

“Perhaps,” Kakashi agreed with a slightly grey tone. “But it also means that she will be sought after all the more.”

Sasuke’s eyes snapped to Kakashi, his eyes alert with apprehension. “What do you mean sought after? And by whom?”

“True souls are extremely valuable. A single true soul would be the same worth of a thousand others. Meaning whomever claimed her would be granted a great amount advantage.” Kakashi explained. “For example, if a rogue seraph were to claim her soul, they could live for several millennia without having to claim any other soul during that time without their powers or life forces weakening.”

At this he saw Sasuke’s already pale face grow ashen.

“Hang on,” Naruto interrupted. “I thought you said a true soul couldn’t be influenced by anyone.
So how would anyone be able to claim it?”

Kakashi looked at Naruto who was giving him a skeptical expression, then to Sasuke who looked slightly relieved at Naruto’s point.

“She cannot be influenced but she can still choose.”

“Psh,” Naruto waved away Kakashi’s words. “Then there is nothing to worry about. Sakura would never give her soul to some rogue. She is nice but she isn’t stupid. And why would anyone choose to let their soul go to the demons? No offense,” he quickly added to Sasuke who glared, but gave no counter remark.

There was nothing to say in defense. What mortal would chose an eternal damnation of misery over the eternal peace and serenity that the heavens provided? Sasuke looked at Kakashi, his eyes narrowing with suspicion.

“Naruto’s right,” he said the words with difficulty but managed them all the same. “Sakura is a good person. She cares for others and would never hurt another person intentionally. She is innocent and kind and she would never change. She’s too stubborn.” His last words were more to himself anyone.

“Let us hope that you are right then,” Kakashi replied. “But in the meantime, I wouldn’t go around telling others about her,” he warned.

No response came from either boy but he hoped they took his warning to heart. He could see that they each held Sakura in close regards. Which was good for the mortal girl. She would need as much protection as she could get if she was a true pure.

The counterpart of a true pure, were not as coveted. Their souls were just as priceless but those on the market for such souls were limited. Angels had no interest in tainting the god tree, and the inherently evil attributes of a true pure’s counterpart would automatically find its own way to the statue of outer path, thus negating the needed pursuit from a fallen. This only left rogues, but those souls were dangerous to a rogue. A rogue seraph was just as susceptible to being consumed by a true evil as he was in claiming said soul.

But a true pure. That was an entirely different market.
There was something about corrupting the incorruptible that demons loved. Therefore, if Sakura was truly a true pure, and word was to get out of her existence, every rogue seraph would be swarming this country side. It was an unspoken rule that true souls were left alone. Their natural affinities would ensure their souls would find their way without the guidance of a seraph. True pures returned to the god tree and their counterparts of true evils would find themselves drawn to the statue of the outer path, thus nullifying a seraphs purpose to collect them. But Kakashi had no doubt, that if Madara himself were to get word of her, he too would send an army, or worse, come to collect her himself.

While immune to influence, she could still choose if given the right motive. Kakashi had seen the unfortunate occurrences of mortals torturing each other to the point of begging for death. A seraph could do the same and so much more for the chance to claim such a soul. Sakura my be defiant to Sasuke, but Sasuke did not seek any ill intent towards her. She was strong willed, she would have to be if she could resist the powers of a sharingan, but even the strong had a breaking point.

It surprised him that she was not assigned a guardian angel to protect her already. But then again, perhaps it was unnecessary seeing as how fate had already bestowed protection upon her. He looked at Naruto, his sunny features scrunched with thought. He was perhaps too hot headed and impatient, but he took those flaws and let them fuel is bravery and dedication.

Kakashi then looked to Sasuke. His attention was pointed to where Sakura had disappeared to giving only his profile to be examined. There was very little written on his features but Kakashi had seen enough today to know that he too cared for the well-being of Sakura.

“I’m going,” Sasuke suddenly announced.

“What!?! But we are not done with our training!” Naruto protested.

Sasuke’s wings burst from his back. “I’m bored,” he stated. “And I have more important things to do.”

As he took off into the air Kakashi could not help but smile as Naruto sputtered out insults that went ignored by their target. Yes, it seemed Sakura would be alright. With Sasuke and Naruto watching out for her, she would be okay. For he could not think of two other seraphs more dedicated to their goals. And if keeping Sakura safe was a goal of theirs, they would see it out.

But even as he watched Sasuke fly towards his destination that Kakashi was certain would possess a rosette mortal, a sinking feeling of doubt seeped beneath his skin. It was a simple task keeping her safe, and as long as it stayed simple he had no reason to fear. But life was not simple, especially
when mortals and immortals mixed. Already they had a complexity. What other complexities would arise and how quickly? It was those thoughts that left Kakashi wary.

He did not wish anything upon the charming young woman. But that was perhaps the problem. She was a charming young woman that had managed to make even the most indifferent person he knew care.

Days turned into weeks, weeks into months and before they knew it almost an entire year had passed by since the two immortals first met their little mortal. Since the day they went to the view point, Sasuke’s presence became more and frequent. As always Naruto and Sakura’s relationship continued to flourish into a warm and comfortable friendship.

While he knew their bond was strictly platonic, Sasuke could not help but always wonder and question the bond between angel and the mortal. Each time this questioning was renewed, he was filled with a confusion to how he felt. At first he thought it was because of the ultimate disappointment it would lead to, but as time grew on, he could not help but notice his competitive resentment growing with each passing day. In the end, Sasuke decided to write it off as a part of the rivalry between himself and Naruto as there were more important things to worry about.

It was not often, but Sasuke had crossed paths with several more rough seraphim wandering the countryside of the island. He had yet to come across Suigetsu again, but there was no telling if these additional rogues were part of Orichimaru’s followers as well. Whether they were or not, it did not matter. Because they never had the chance to return to whatever dank hole they had originally crawled from. Sasuke had seen to it that their fates ended long before the thought could ever cross their minds.

It was a temperate spring day. The cloudy sky and the occasional glimpse of the sun left a warmth upon one’s skin that brought about a sleepiness and the soft breeze that shifted through the tall grass kept one from becoming overheated.

The trio were camped out in the middle of an abandoned field. Both Naruto and Sasuke were laid out on their backs as they relaxed in the afternoon warmth. Sakura sat with her legs tucked neatly to the side, her dress spread out across the green blades of grass as she gathered flowers and wove them into a fragrant crown.

Sasuke let his chest rise and fall in relaxed breaths as he listened to the light humming from Sakura as she sat by his and Naruto’s heads. Another wave of air rushed across the long grass causing it to rustle and drown out Sakura's melody and disrupting his already unruly hair. As the breeze died down, Sakura's humming had been replaced with a small giggle and he noticed the light from the sun penetrating through his closed lids had dimmed. Something tickled his cheek then his nose.
Cracking a single eye open, he found himself face to face with an upside down Sakura as she leaned over his head. The bright green of her eyes were highlighted by the fresh green stems of colorful crown of flowers that decorated her already colorful and flowing hair. In her hand, she held a piece of grass that was poised above his nose. He glared at the source of the irritant tickle.

She moved to tickle his face again but he was too fast for her. In a swift movement he snatched the blade of grass from her hand and crushed it.

“Hey!” She protested.

It had taken a while for her to even dare such an action but over the past year, such actions had become normal from Sakura. He would never admit it, but it pleased him.

“Go back to your flower weaving,” Sasuke grunted as he shut his eyes again.

Instead of finding herself more flowers, Sakura instead began to run her hands through his hair. A pleased hum nearly escaped his throat but Sasuke caught himself just in time.

“There aren’t anymore flowers in this area,” she complained. “We need to move to another spot.”

“Hn,” Sasuke let out, his hum lacking any empathy.

He was not about to let the soothing petting cease. So instead, he shifted himself until his head fell into her lap. For a moment he felt her stiffen and her hand froze mid stroke. He could still feel her fingers trapped in the tangles of his hair. For one bated breath, he panicked. He had never initiated contact with her that was inessential of purpose. And he only ‘tolerated’ any contact that she made because he needed her to get comfortable around him.

He was just about to sit up and move away when her hand moved again and he felt her slightly relax.

As soon as her hands began running through his hair, all the worries of overstepping his boundaries vanished. Pushing the boundaries he had set up at the beginning was something that had been occurring more and more frequently. The distinct lines he had drawn were becoming smudged so thinly, they could hardly be considered lines anymore. And these fading lines were not the worst part.
What worried him the most, was the ever growing lack of concern he had for the disappearing lines themselves. He had set those lines in place to make sure he did not become too involved. It was not a seraph's purpose to sympathize with mortals. It was a weakness.

“Do they not have combs in the underworld?” Sakura suddenly asked as she tugged on a piece of his hair.

Sasuke’s eyes snapped open and glared up at her as Naruto burst into a fit of laughter. A swift kick of Sasuke’s leg caused the angel to quickly changing his tune.

As Naruto grumbled and whined Sasuke watched as Sakura's attention moved to the whining seraph. From his position in her lap, he could not make out her entire features but he watched as her head tilted to the side as if in thought.

“You know your hair is not any better Naruto,” she commented. “And Kakashi’s is a mess as well. Do seraphs in general just not know of the concept of grooming?”

Naruto’s whining ceased as he crossed his arms and began pouting. Sakura shook her head and looked back down at Sasuke. She paused upon finding him already watching her.

With the sun haloed over her head, he could not ignore the fact that she looked like the images he had seen many civilizations paint when depicting their heavenly messengers. She was still smiling demurely from her earlier amusement and her green dress reflected and highlighted her eyes making them look lush and full of life.

She was beautiful.

The statement flashed across his mind faster than he could deflect such thoughts. But even as it registered, he could not deny nor refute it. It was truth. She was stunning in that moment.

After awhile, he found himself looking past her green irises to beyond the anatomy of her eye to where her soul lay. It was the first time he had ever done this, looked directly into her soul.

When any seraph looked at a mortal, demon or angel, one could usually see a partial glimpse of the
The essence of the soul. Each mortal emitted a general feeling of where they lay upon the alignment of morality. But to truly get an accurate reading, one would have to look through the windows of their soul.

Their eyes.

Anytime Sasuke had attempted this on Sakura, he found himself so lost he never managed to make it this deep. Or in other cases like their first encounter, she had resisted him. But today, he felt no resistance, no hesitation. She was letting him in. Consciously she would be unaware of this. It would seem like a few seconds to her mortal mind but for him, it felt like an eternity as he gazed upon her soul.

It too was beautiful. The shimmering essence of golden light swirling, untarnished and wholesome. It was breathtaking. He had never seen a soul so pure. Immediately Kakashi’s words of warning from three seasons ago came to his mind. At first he had been skeptical of Kakashi’s proclamation that she was a true soul. He had never heard of such a thing.

Despite his lack of belief, he had still taken full precaution to the warning that she needed to be protected. But now that he gazed upon her soul, he found himself becoming a true believer.

This was a soul to be desired.

A strange feeling crept into his mind then slithered down to his pulsing heart. He was demon. It was he who was supposed to be the tempter. But as he gazed upon her soul, it was he who felt the pull of desire.

He wanted that soul.

He wanted to possess it, to hold it, to capture it and never let it go.

He jerked up and in a blur he had put himself on the opposite side of the small circle they had created in the grass. His chest raggedly rose up and down as his heart thundered within his rib cage. Both Sakura and Naruto where looking at him with wide eyes. Perspiration formed on his skin as the heat of his earlier...feelings caught up with him.

“Sasuke,” Naruto called as he sat up from his laid back position. “Are you okay? Your eyes are
kind of wigging out.”

It was then that he became aware of the discomfort in his eyes as they flickered back and forth between black and red. He blinked furiously, trying to regain control until he felt as if he were going cross eyed. He let out a growl, and rubbed them vigorously with the heel of his palm.

“Sasuke?”

The quiet sound of her voice made him still. With restrained movement, he looked up at Sakura. She was still sitting on the ground like before but her face was crumpled into concern. He saw her move. Untucking her legs as she moved to stand.

“I have to go,” he quickly excused.

Both Sakura and Naruto where standing now. He heard Naruto ask him what was wrong but he was distracted by Sakura’s movement as she took a step towards him.

“Don’t come near me,” he growled, causing her to pause.

He saw a flash of hurt confusion run across her eyes as her head flinched back at his harsh tone. He wanted to comfort her, to assure her it was not her, it was him. But that would be a lie. It was her fault. Never in his life had he ever been compelled to collect a soul outside of duty and never had he been tempted to keep one for himself.

For the past summer, autumn, and winter, he had been watching her. At first it was to gather answers, but after Suigetsu’s appearance and Kakashi’s warning, it had changed. His motivations and actions had been more out of protection than observation. He had been prepared to defend her from the worst. Been ready to face Orochimaru himself if he or any of his cronies showed an interest in her.

But never, never in the three full seasons that he had known her, had he thought it would be he who would be the danger.

With that realization he leapt into the air. The wind whistled against his ears and the change in air pressure became nearly painful, but he did not slow. He needed space. He needed to clear his mind and stay focused on his task. He had been careless and let his mission to find what was so
intriguing get side tracked. But now it seemed he had accomplished that.

He had found out what is was about her that drew his curiosity. Her soul. Her perfect and pure soul. Now that he knew, he could be rid of her. That is what he had promised himself before and that is what he would do.

It was just unfortunate that fate was against him. Because as soon as he began to make a decent towards the portal that would seal him in the world beneath her world, he felt a tug. It was gentle and small but it was persistent and promising. In the back of his mind he could hear the whispering of fate as it gave the solid promise that this was far from done.

Chapter End Notes

Okay so now we kind of have an idea why Sakura could resist Sasuke. I hope the whole True soul (true pure/true evil) made sense and was not confusing. We also just had a big time jump in this time period. Sasuke thinks he found the answer he was looking for but...did he really???? Now only two years away from Sakura's death. Next chapter will be back to present day.
Broken Pulls and Imprisoning Fears

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Ten: Broken Pulls and Imprisoning Fears

Present Day

Sakura landed on the rooftop much harder than she normally would. The encounter had left her shaken and feeling lost, among other things. But there was no sorting the emotions that coursed along with the racing adrenaline in her veins. Distinguishing one from another was unachievable, as they had all merged and fused into one, singular bundle. A bundle that no amount of pulling and twisting would untangle.

Breathing heavily, she stared down at the cracked pavement of the crumbling warehouse roof. The surface crunched slightly as the loose gravel beneath her feet slid and scratched beneath the souls of her shoes. The sound was strangely comforting as it helped her reign in her thoughts tightly enough that she could focus.

There was still no processing the emotions she felt, so instead Sakura focused on the facts. She was an intellectual, she could deal with facts far better than her emotions. Those she had never been able to control. So as she focused on the cool air that passed through her hair and the crunch of rocks, she listed the facts of tonight’s events.

Deidara was at the club. That meant their informant was to be trusted. Sakura had been able to keep him by her side for the majority of the night. But he disappeared. That meant either he had an agenda tonight or she was not as intriguing as Kakashi had thought when he assigned her as the bait to lure him. These first facts were simple and easy to glean insight from. But once she had easily processed these particulars of the night, she came to the more difficult events.

Sasuke Uchiha had picked her out of the crowd and confronted her. He had spoken to her, called her by name, and touched her. At this thought, the place on her arm where each of his fingertips had rested seemed to burn.

Her own hand raised to her forearm and traced the lingering heat that haunted her skin. She closed her eyes tightly as she tried to focus back on the factual and not emotional.
He had chased after her when she ran away. And when she escaped, he lashed out in frustration. He had lost control and risked exposing himself to mortals. To other observers, his upset manor and loss of control would appear to be the final piece of data worth taking note of. But for Sakura there was one more fact that she could not ignore. He had not given up.

Instead he had taken to the skies and continued his search. For how long she did not know, she had not stayed long enough to find out. For all she knew he was still out there, flying around and searching, looking for her. Despite this missing information, there was something she could gain from this fact, he was desperate.

Why?

How?

Each question was paired with each fact she listed about the Uchiha and she could not produce a single intelligible answer for any of them.

She was a seasoned guardian who had just barely been selected to join the ranks as an archangel. Her lineage was of no significance. In fact, she did not even know from what branch she originated from. She was close with Tsunade but she was not a confidant in any political business in which the Senju collaborated in.

In other words, she was of no use in gaining any intelligence from. She had no special powers or bloodline that could not be found somewhere else. And she was certainly not a person of significance within the seraphim community.

So why would someone of such famed power pick her out of a crowd? How would he have even known that she was a seraph? How did he know her name? What, in all of the gods names above, would Sasuke Uchiha want so desperately?

“Sakura.”

Dazedly she looked up to see Kakashi walking hurriedly towards her.

“What happened?” he asked, his eye quickly scanning her over. “Is something wrong? Did we miss the signal?”
Numbly she shook her head.

“No, I’m fine there was no signal,” she managed to say breathlessly.

At her words he gave a final appraisal then looked around the building, flaring his chakra in signal as he surveyed. Immediately Sakura felt a response, followed by the appearance of Naruto as he dropped out of the clouds where he had been circling above. As Naruto landed, he looked between Sakura and Kakashi, his eyes alert and looking for a reason as to why he had been called down.

“What’s going on?” he asked. “Did we miss the signal? Where is Deidara? Sakura are you…”

“No you did not miss the signal and I am fine,” Sakura quickly interrupted as her brain finally began to truly catch up. She looked between the two. “I am sorry but I lost him. He was there, I had him, and then he stepped away and I don’t know where he went. I swear I looked everywhere for him but then…” She paused unsure of how to explain.

As her words slowed, faltered, and then stopped, Kakashi took in her face. Her mouth was pulled into a deep frown as the point between her two eyebrows bunched together. It was a tell tale sign that he knew well. Something was bothering her conscience.

He thought back to when she first arrived. Even then he had noticed something off by the way she had landed. He hardly ever saw her land so ungracefully since she first learned to fly. Only when something was truly upsetting her did she lose control of the strength Tsunade had given her.

Automatically Kakashi’s mind filled in the reason. She was feeling guilty for losing Deidara. His mouth turned down at this. He admired Sakura’s tenacity in perfection but too often it was a flaw. She put too much on herself and did not give herself enough credit. She could not blame herself for losing a demon such as an Akatsuki member.

He let out a quiet sigh.

If anyone was to blame it would be him for putting too much on her. It was easy to forget who and what she really was. She blended so well with their kind that it became easy to forget that she was not one. At least not fully. She may have gained their gods given powers and immortality, but there were still traits that made her still very human.
As these thoughts ran through his mind, he could not help but catch on to the unusual way she was looking. Small tremors were coursing through her body. They were quickly calming but he could still see the shake of her fingers in between the clenching of her fists at her side.

When Sakura was guilty she got twitchy and refused to make eye contact. It was what made her a terrible liar. But her fingers were trembling, not twitching. The closer he looked, the more he was beginning to think that it was not guilt that she was feeling.

His eyes flashed back up to her face and he caught her eyes. There was staggered dazed look to them as if she was switching in between the wanderings of her mind and focusing on conversing with them.

Kakashi pondered this as he took in her features again. She was disturbed but it was not from guilt. There was something else that was causing her to struggle her usually adept focus.

“Sakura,” Kakashi said as he neared her and laid a hand on her shoulder. Sakura looked up to meet his eyes and she saw his single visible eye looking at her closely. “Did something else happen tonight?”

Her mind parroted his words within her head.

Did something else happen tonight?

A hysterical laugh nearly escaped her lips at the question. She was not sure why her mind found any amusement in this query. Perhaps it was because she was such a nervous wreck at the moment or it was the heavy irony weighted in the truth.

But what exactly was the truth?

Her mind reformed Kakashi’s question. What exactly had happened tonight?

It was a question she was not sure how to explain. A fabled rogue demon had approached her, called her by name, looked at her so...so...
She did not even have the knowledge on how to interpret what she had seen in his eyes. But what she did know, was that it had frightened her. The intensity of his presence and the potential of what could have happened had caused her to flee.

A shiver ran down her back as she recalled the anger he had expressed upon failing to catch her.

What kind of ire would he have displayed had he caught her? Or a far more terrifying, yet plausible question, what kind of wrath would he rain upon her when he did catch her?

It was not a thought she wanted to even dare introduce to her imagination. But like a person afraid of scary things when alone in the dark, she could not seem to think of anything but that.

This time the shiver that ran through her body was fridged, making goosebumps rise along her skin as the likelihood of such an event happening was calculated within her mind. In the span of approximately two weeks she had happened to run into twice. Statistics would suggest that she only had a week before the inevitable would occur again.

There was an unwritten and unscientific law that mortals quoted to each other when hoping for a certain outcome.

*Third time's the charm.*

Sakura wondered if that certain law would be granted to a seraph as well. But the question was, which seraph would be granted the charm. Usually the third outcome was the opposite of the first two results and she had just evaded him twice.

She thought back to those evasions.

The first time he had been so indifferent. He had hardly taken any notice in her until the end. And even then it was nothing more than a casual curiosity. She could hardly label that has an escape. There had been nothing trying to capture her.

But tonight. Tonight was something else entirely. And Kakashi was asking her to describe it.
If she did, what would be his reaction? What would be the result?

It had been a week and a half since she had been allowed to come back to hunt. Thirteen consecutive nights in which she had felt locked and trapped in the skies above. It was a funny thing, she had never felt trapped until she experienced the freedom. And what would happen to that freedom if she revealed that not only had she ran into the reason of her imprisonment, but he had singled her out.

Internally she shook her head.

No, she could not let it be known. She could not risk being locked up. She had been lucky enough to even be allowed to the mortal realm during daylight hours.

Sasuke was out there right now. Soaring across the city looking for her, searching for her. For what she did not know, but that would not matter to Tsunade. And if she were to tell Kakashi, he would tell her.

She looked directly into Kakashi’s eyes. She could not remember a time when she had ever lied to him. Or at least tried to lie and never had it been for something as big as this. It hurt and she did not like it. But she could not risk it.

With that thought, she moved her head.

“No,” she said, shaking her head from side to side as she focused on keeping eye contact and holding her hands steady. “I am just…” she looked down at her feet. It was harder than she expected. Mortals made it look so easy. Other seraphs made it look easy. So why was this so difficult? She swallowed then met his eye again. “I am sorry I failed. I know you worked hard to convince Tsunade to let me come to night and I failed.”

She was tempted to look away again, but she held fast. She needed to him to believe her. She watched as his eye slightly narrowed as he scanned every inch of her face. Her heart beat hard against her rib cage when it darted to her hands. She resisted the urge to tighten her grip, it would be a give away that she was trying to hide her usual tell of untruthfulness.

In reality her heart had not slowed since she encountered the Uchiha and the lie was prolonging its return to a normal palpitation. And she hoped he could not see the racing beat of her pulse.
After a prolonged and stressful bated breath, Kakashi finally pulled her towards him. He rested a hand on her cheek as his head tilted sympathetically.

“It's alright,” he assured her. “It's not your fault. It was a long shot and the fact that you even made contact with the target goes beyond what I was expecting.” His hand moved to pat her on the head. “You did well tonight. I am just glad you are safe.”

Guilt stung her at his words. Was she safe?

“Let's head home,” Kakashi announced, turning to Naruto and giving Sakura a chance to let out the breath she had been holding.

“Can we get some Ramen before we go!?!?” Naruto exclaimed.

Sakura felt something heavy fall on her and she looked up to see Kakashi looking at her strangely. She always wondered how he could manage to have so much force in a single eye. But she did her best to not blink as she held his stare.

“No,” Kakashi said, his eye not leaving Sakura. “We need to report back. Tsunade will want to know as soon as possible how the mission went. We need to let her know that we at least made contact and that our sources were correct.”

Sakura swallowed as her heart sped up even more. He knew. She did not know how, but that look told her everything. He knew that she was lying. Kakashi finally looked away and she felt the weight of his stare lift away.

She shook her head.

No, she was being paranoid. She was feeling guilty for lying. Everything was fine, she was fine. For all she knew she was being paranoid about everything.

As much as she wanted to believe those thoughts there was only so much she could ignore. She wanted to believe it was all just her imagination, that it was her ego being overly inflated that such a creature so dangerous and powerful would want anything to do with her weak and insignificant
self. But as much as she clung to that belief, something inside her whispered something far differently. And what scared her the most was the desire within that whisper.

It was a desire that was far too persuasive and wanting that she was tempted to give into it. She was not sure, but it was almost as if that whisper had come from the deepest depths within her heart. It was almost as if that desire was her own and not some invasive foreign thought as she hoped it to be.

The first rays of the sun were stretching in the early morning sky, painting it a golden color as it took over the midnight blue that twilight had dyed it.

Sasuke sat perched atop one of the eagles heads of the Chrysler building. It was a wondrous overlook but it went unnoticed as the demon stared down at his hand. Even now, hours later, he could still imagine the feel of her skin and the fragrant smell one would think would be forgotten after a few hundred years. His eyes projected his memories vividly and he scrutinized every image of her, comparing memories from long ago to last night, looking for flaws or evidence that proved he had been mistaken.

He had spent the entire night searching, covering the area of the club numerous times. Sweeping back and forth every street between there and a ten mile radius. But she was not to be found anywhere. It was as if she had just disappeared into thin air.

He had even tried to hone in the pull that he had felt earlier but there had been nothing to follow. The line was silent, he was cut off.

The only evidence he had to prove tonight’s encounter were his memories and the knowledge that he had touched her. The last one was the most important. He had physically touched her. Which proved she had not been some manifestation made up by his half sane mind. She had been real and when he had spoken her name she had reacted, she had been surprised and caught off guard that he knew it.

His brow furrowed deeper and he traced the lines on his hand with a finger. The tingling sensation brought back the faint memories of her arm in his hand. As he finished tracing the last lines in his palm he clutched his hand, nails biting into his skin as his eyes lifted to the horizon.

The impossible had happened. He had no sound knowledge that could explain what had happened last night. But he had theories.
Slowly he stood up, his bones cracked and popped from his stiff posture for the past hour of deep thought.

He needed information. Information that was limited to only a few certain people who could provide him with answers. At least answers he felt could be true and not just overheard rumors.

He thought of each candidate and let out a breathy curse as he realized that there really was only one option in which he could get answers. The idea of it made him feel sick but desperate times called for desperate measures. It had been a long time since he had entered his home realm.

“So has the prodigal son has decided to return home?”

The familiar voice almost caused him to regret even stepping a single toe into this realm. He squeezed his eyes tight before turning around to face his guest. He should have known his brother would be aware the moment he wandered beneath the Earth’s surface. He had just hoped he would have had some time to acclimate to the place he once called home. But perhaps it was for the best. The fewer who saw him the better.

It had only been a few years since Sasuke had last seen his brother. A small time frame when compared to the decades that used to pass between them. His father had forbidden anyone in his family to speak to him. But Itachi had never been able to fully obey his father when it came to Sasuke.

At first Itachi had sought him out in an attempt to ‘save’ him. And despite Sasuke’s great lengths to prove to his brother that he needed no saving, Itachi had never given up. Many times Itachi had interfered with Sasuke’s actions and plans. At one point, it had been one time too many and Sasuke had vowed to kill Itachi. He almost succeeded over seventy years ago but with Orochimaru’s death, also came the death of his vow.

Why his brother would even want him back now was beyond him. But every few years or so, Itachi would seek him out and make an offer. And each time, Sasuke refused. Deep down he was not sure which day to dread the most, the one when Itachi gave up, or the one when he accepted and gave home. Because despite how much a person could push others away, even the lonest person needs someone. Sasuke hated that fact but he could not deny it, be needed his brother. But going home also felt like giving up, it felt like betrayal. And given recent events, it was certainly no longer an option.
Sasuke took in the familiar face of his brother. It surprised him how much he seemed to have aged, especially for an immortal. The stress lines beneath his eyes seemed deeper and his body looked weaker, thinner. If they had been meeting for any other reason, Sasuke would possibly be concerned. But he had other pressing matters.

Itachi’s eyes moved down him in examination.

“You look good little brother,” he said with a nod of his head. “I would be happy if the circumstances were different but I worry what you have done over the years to look so...healthy.”

Sasuke sent him a dark look. “You know I have no need to collect souls to survive.”

Itachi nodded in agreement. “Yes, but there is still a price.”

There was a drawn out silence between them. There was no denying Itachi’s statement but Sasuke would not let his righteous brother have the satisfaction of being right. So he did the alternative.

“I did not come to talk about me,” he said, changing the subject.

Itachi cocked his head to the side, intrigued. “Then what did you come to talk about? It must be something important for you to come here and talk to me willingly.” He said. “That or you had no other options.”

“I had options,” Sasuke said.

An amused smile pulled on his brothers thin lips. “So I am the lesser of two evils,” he said wryly. “My what an honor. I shiver to think who else you could possibly know that would be more vile of an option than myself.”

Sasuke felt his brother look at him closely. His words were sarcastic but his tone had a hidden worry.

“What do you know of reincarnation?”
It was obvious that the topic was nothing Itachi was expecting by the surprised expression on his face. But the surprise hardly lingered as guarded suspicion took over.

“Why?” Itachi asked.

“That is my own business,” Sasuke quickly replied harshly.

“The last time I let you to your own business I lost my brother,” Itachi shot back in a hardened tone. “I won't make that mistake again. So unless you tell me why, I suggest you go find that other loathsome source you avoided by coming to me.”

Sasuke gritted his teeth. His irritation to his brother growing.

This was the exact reason why he had been dreading this. Itachi was not one to give answers freely. He was the type to give one and take two.

But Sasuke was desperate. He needed his answers and he was much more willing to pay Itachi’s price other than the price that would be required by his other only reliable source.

“I found her,” he stated bluntly. “In New York. Walking, talking, breathing, living,” his last word was emphasized.

Itachi stared at his brother, disbelief sweeping through his body. There was no need to ask who his brother was referring to.

There were many things that led Sasuke to his wayward road of destruction and travesty. Itachi felt he could have prevented or protected his brother from most of them But he had failed his brother in too many ways to count. However there was always one in which he could never blame himself for. One that he always wondered if it had really been the true cause of it all.

Sakura.
The mortal girl that had bewitched and entranced his brother so much, that when she was lost, he
too became lost in a different sense. Itachi had never met the girl, but his brother had confided her
existence. Sasuke had never claimed his true feelings but he did not need to. Itachi had seen it in his
eyes when speaking of the ‘annoying mortal’ that did stupid things out of the kindness of her heart.
However he had not realized the depth of Sasuke’s feelings until the mortals untimely death.

Perhaps there was something Itachi could have done before. But at the time, Itachi had thought it
harmless. His brother had found something that brought him happiness, who was he to take that
from him?

Now that he knew of the consequences, Itachi would have personally removed the girl from
Sasuke’s life early before anything could evolve too deeply. But even as early as Sasuke had told
Itachi about the mortal girl, he was already far too late.

Itachi was not a believer of fate, at least not for his kind. There was no logical explanation of the
need for destined intervention to interfere with their balanced world. They were the makers of
intervention. But then again, gods were easily bored and they were fickle creatures.

So if he did believe that a thing such a fate existed, he knew would be no stopping it. Whatever his
foolish brother had done to deserve his tapestry of fate to be entangled with another, it must have
been a truly dark mark against the weaver. Forsooth it was a cruel fate his brother had lived.

And it seemed he was still being punished.

“That’s...impossible,” Itachi finally uttered in a tone just barely above a whisper.

He was having a hard time believing his brother was still fixated on the girl. He had thought he had
given up on her long ago. But here they were, two and a half thousand years later and he was
speaking of her existence with more life and hope in his eyes than he had seen reflected in his
brothers face for just as long.

A part of him had a small hope that what his brother was saying was true. Because then maybe he
could regain his foolish, but beloved little brother. If anything could cure him it would be her.

But there were two problems.
The first being that Sakura had died. It had been an early and unfortunate death but it was a death all the same. The second problem was that along with hope and life, there was also desperation in Sasuke’s eyes. And desperation was dangerous.

Desperation planted false hope and convinced people to see things that were not there. It caused a person to find solutions that only resulted in more problems. Decisions were made without any thought. Actions were taken that had dire consequences veiled as insignificant. Desperation was the fuel for poor choices. It had been desperation that caused his brother to seek out Orochimaru, which had been just the beginning of his brothers downfall.

“I know it sounds unbelievable. But it was her. That is why I need to know,” Sasuke insisted. “What do you know of reincarnation? Is it real?”

“Yes,” Itachi replied. “But it would be impossible for her,” he quickly added when he saw the shift in Sasuke’s eyes.

Sasuke’s brow furrowed. “Why for her?” He demanded.

“Because reincarnation is for the souls that are uncollected. If a soul goes unclaimed it is recycled until it can be harvested.” Itachi said softly. “You told me yourself she was a true soul. If she was, her soul would have automatically found its way to the god tree. There was no need for it to be collected by seraphim.”

Itachi hated the dimming of hope in his brothers eyes as he watched Sasuke’s shoulders sink and his eyes lower. But he would not feed him false hope. That was what the snake seraphim had done.

Silence passed between them until Sasuke shifted. His body stiffened with a set posture as he lifted his eyes to meet Itachi’s. It was then that the older brother saw that desperation flicker again.

“Maybe she wasn’t a true soul. Maybe she was just a good person,” Sasuke challenged. “What if we had been wrong. Naruto and I were the only ones close to her and neither of us claimed her soul because we thought there was no need. Otherwise—”

“Otherwise what?” Itachi interrupted, his tone taking on a sharp edge. “You would have claimed it? Dragged her down to hell where she would spend an eternity of sorrow and punishment?”
Sasuke said nothing and Itachi let out a heavy sigh. He wanted his brother back so badly but not this way. If he gave Sasuke any hope in thinking he could somehow bring her back there would be consequences that he was not sure the world could survive again. The actions of his brothers past had already put a strain on not only to their realm, but all. While there were many other factors to the delicacy between the underworld, heavens, and earth, there was no denying Sasuke had played his part in weakening the fragile balance.

It was just recently that things had passed from hostility to abrasive tolerance. And no matter how strained their relationship was, Itachi could not afford to lose him. The man in front of him was hardly a fraction of the little boy who used to follow him around, eyes always so full of that dangerous desperation as he pleaded for him to train him. Itachi could not help but let a wane smile adorn his lips but it quickly disappeared when he saw the expression on his brothers face.

Itachi sagged.

“Sasuke,” he said gently. “I am sorry, but Sakura is gone. Had it not happened then, it would have happened a few decades later. Disease, war, old age, childbirth.” A flicker of anger raced across Sasuke’s face at the lay causes. “Humans died for many reasons back then. But the reason would not matter. What matters is she was a mortal, her fate was inevitable. Her time was limited.”

Sasuke was shaking his head before Itachi had even finished.

“You don’t understand though,” Sasuke replied. “I saw her, I touched her.”

Itachi let out a sigh and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Even if she was reincarnated, she would not remember. She would not have any knowledge of you. It may be the same soul but it is a different life, a different family, a different name, a different...”

“She has the same name,” Sasuke quickly interjected. “She looks exactly the same.”

Itachi paused for a moment contemplating this oddity but he finally shook his head.

“Coincidence,” Itachi brushed off.

“Is it though?” Sasuke questioned. “I have heard that some mortals have visions or dreams of people from history or other lives, their other lives.” Sasuke was quick to counter. “If this is true
that means when a person is reincarnated they still possess their memories. They just can’t remember fully. If I could just make her remember—"

Desperation was dangerous and Sasuke’s entire being was overflowing with it.

“Sasuke,” Itachi cut him off in a pleading tone. “Please, let it go, let her go. She is mortal. Mortals die, if this truly is her, what hope do you have than to lose her again? Has the past not taught you enough of the consequences that befall mortals that get involved beyond the guidance and temptation of seraphim? There is a reason there are no records of a bonded mortal and immortal have a happy ending. It is because there are none. Even if Sakura where to remember you, would you truly risk her being hurt again?”

“I won’t let that happen again!” Sasuke growled. His voice quivered with anger.

“She’s mortal!” Itachi growled back. “All mortals die. There is no escaping her fate.”

“Orochimaru knew how to do it.” Sasuke defended. “He made mortals immortal. I have seen it myself!”

“Then perhaps the one good thing that came from your fall was his death,” Itachi snapped back.

He saw Sasuke’s eyes flicker back and forth as if searching for a rebuttal. And then they paused and Sasuke looked up at him, determination setting into his eyes.

Itachi felt his stomach drop. Determination paired with desperation was even more dangerous.

“Kabuto,” Sasuke stated. “Kabuto would do it.”

Itachi’s face crumpled is disgust. “The man that you have been hunting down for over half a century? You would let him near, nay touch Sakura?”

His tone was sharp and full of disgusted accusation.
“Nothing good will come from that leech,” Itachi continued. “If you truly cared for her you would see to it that she stayed far away from him, not take her to him for guaranteed suffering and damnation.”

Sasuke glared at him.

“I would not make the same mistake as last time. As soon as he is finished I will end him.”

Itachi shook his head. “There would be consequences.”

“Fuck the consequences!” Sasuke growled. “I am already scheduled for the worst parts of hell. If I reserve more suffering then so be it.”

“You may be willing but is she?”

Sasuke said nothing in return. His eyes fell to the ground.

“Sasuke,” Itachi called lightly. “If she truly is living, then let her do that. Let her live her life in peace. Let her live a long and happy life full of all the wonderful experiences that come with mortality. Dragging her into our world will only hurt her.”

For a long moment, Itachi thought he had broken through to his brother. He had thought he had finally brought sense to him. But then Sasuke looked up and all earlier thoughts were erased. The look in Sasuke’s eyes told Itachi that he had thought wrong.

“I don’t care,” Sasuke said firmly before adding, “I need her.”

Itachi was not surprised. Despite the many changes and dark things, there were somethings that had always been a part of his brothers personality. Sasuke was both stubborn and selfish. Always had been and it seemed he always would be.

As Itachi stared back into Sasuke’s face, he watched it morph into a long forgotten expression. It was the face his brother donned when he wanted to bargain for something. When Itachi had last seen it, Sasuke had asked him for piggy back rides and flying lessons. Usually the offer in
exchange was Sasuke’s already unwanted dessert or a shiny knick knack that he had found while exploring a certain cavern.

Itachi had never been able to say no to such innocent trades but he was not so sure this time. For as familiar as this expression was, there was still a hardness to it. A sign that told Itachi that he would not like what would be requested of him.

“You want me to come home?” Sasuke tempted. “Then help me.”

Itachi looked back into his brother's face. Moving his attention from side to side as he looked into each of his brothers eyes. Itachi did not desire many things. Bringing his brother home and seeing him healed from his wayward years of destruction was one of those few.

But this was not the right way. It went against so many laws of nature. His shoulders sank and his eyes fell down in sorrow.

“I am sorry Sasuke,” he said to the ground. “But I cannot help you in this. I cannot stand next to you and watch you destroy yourself.”

There was a long pause that was broken by a single word.

“Fine,” Sasuke bit out.

There was no need to look at his face because his tone told Itachi everything. Sasuke’s tone held betrayal and anger. But when he spoke again it was gone.

“Will you stop me?” He challenged.

“No,” Itachi whispered quietly.

He could not condone it, but deep down, he would not deny what could heal his brother. The outcome would most likely destroy what was left of his foolish little brother, but perhaps Itachi was plagued with the same thing as his brother. Desperation.
“Good,” Sasuke let out. “Because if you do, I will not fail to do what I meant to do seventy years ago.”

Sasuke stood in the shadow of one of the several, small maple trees that decorated the Brooklyn neighborhood. It was one of the more quiet neighborhoods in the city. Occasionally a taxi or personal car would drive by but nothing compared to the constant stream of skyscraper metropolis outside of the residential district.

The occasional jogger or hipster passed by. Each one too focused on their rectangular devices to pay him any mind. And if they did, Sasuke did not take notice. His entire focus was on the apartment building across the street.

His sharingan blazed behind a dark pair of sunglasses as he moved his eyes from one window to the next. Many had their curtains drawn but if there was even a crack in a drawn window, Sasuke took in every detail and movement within the small flats.

A flash of sunlight being reflected by glass caused his eyes to snap from the third floor to the front entryway. The glass door was pushed open fully and with a thundering heart of anticipation, Sasuke waited for the resident to come into view.

“Damn it,” he cursed the moment he saw the pale boy with dark hair step out into the sunlight.

All anticipation erupted into irritation. It was him, again. The boy he had run into in the street a week ago.

There was something off about the mortal in more ways than one. Normally he would not have given the young man anymore mind if it were not for the fact that it kept leading him to this particular mortal. It being the pull.

Sasuke was certain it was broken. After Sakura got away from him, he was left with nothing. She was at a club and the pull was what had lead him there, it had led him to her. It was his only source. His only hope. So he had followed it. But something was wrong now, the pull was broken. It had to be, because each time he followed it, he found himself running into the pale faced mortal with the awkward mannerism.
The first time he had not even taken notice of the boy. His eyes had passed over him without a
thought in their search for pink and green. The second and third time he had brushed it off as
coincidence. The fourth had brought about the suspicion and the fifth confirmed it. He had
purposely followed the boy around for the past three days, hoping that perhaps he would somehow
lead him to Sakura. He had thought it worth it only because of the drawing he had seen when he
first ran into the awkward boy.

Sasuke had brushed it off not long after and had nearly forgotten about the picture until a few days
ago. He had been watching the boy at a coffee shop he had followed him to and the recollection hit
him when the boy began sketching the barista.

At the time, Sasuke had easily refuted the possibilities that the drawing was of Sakura from a
couple sound reasonings. It had been black and white making the coloring of the girl any
possibility and the hair had been too short. With that he had easily forgotten about the boy within a
few minutes. He had just been another insignificant mortal like the thousands he had passed in the
street that day.

But then he had seen her that very night, stepping out of the crowd with the very same short hair.
After that, coincidence could not be ignored. And after finding himself drawn to the pasty artist for
a week, Sasuke could not help but ignore the possibility that Sasuke knew Sakura.

But alas, after two days of following the boy, all Sasuke had gained was more than a lifetime's
worth of watching painfully awkward interactions between the boy and the rest of the world.

The more Sasuke observed him the more he learned of the boys habits. He was always drawing
people, strangers to be exact. The deli man behind his cold cuts, the child flying a kite at the park,
the woman waiting on a bench for the subway. Sasuke was not pleased with this discovery as it
meant that even if it had been Sakura in the drawing, the raven haired boy had most likely sketched
it while staring at her from across a cafe.

Sasuke watched the boy pull his phone from his pocket and answer it. The conversation was short
and brief before the boy hung up and began to make his way down the street. As he turned the
corner, Sasuke ignored the aggravating tug that insisted he follow.

Sasuke gritted his teeth as he did his best to ignore it.

No, today he would not follow, it seemed pointless. But he would not give up entirely. He had to
know for sure that the picture was just a coincidence and not a possibility.
So after waiting an extra five minutes, Sasuke crossed the street and made his way into the building. Strange as he was, the boy had connection to Sakura. The question was what kind of connection. Was it a brief sighting? A chanced moment when their paths crossed and he thought her an image worth capturing. Or was she more than that? Perhaps a friend or coworker. Which ever it was, Sasuke was going to find out.

Sakura was regretting omitting certain details of the night with her run in with the Uchiha. It was a funny thing. She had kept quiet about her meeting with the Uchiha for one reason. Her freedom. And yet, it turned out paranoia and fear was doing the same job she had thought Tsunade and Kakashi would have done had she said something.

For the past week she had avoided and neglected her guardian duties to Sai. Too scared of what should happen if she ran into Sasuke again without Naruto or Kakashi only a signal away. So instead she spent most of her time in the past week, deep in the achieves of the library, trying to find out all she could about Sasuke Uchiha. And there was not much. There was plenty about his family but nothing much about Sasuke specifically. To make things worse, what she learned about the traits and patterns of the more famous of his ancestors did not help her confidence of safety. An Uchiha enemy was one to be feared.

She had tried to subtly gain some knowledge from Naruto but it was difficult to keep him focused between his short attention span and the strained history of their relationship. In short, she gained nothing from the blonde seraph. Kakashi would have been a reliable source but Sakura was currently avoiding him at the moment.

Perhaps it was her paranoia but Sakura was almost certain that Kakashi knew she was keeping something from him. From the look he had given her before their departure that night, to the hawkish way he seemed to be watching her now, Sakura knew she needed to tread lightly. She had given the excuse of not meeting Sai for the past week under the pretense that she was “testing him”, seeing how he did for a few days without her influence.

Well those few days turned into a week and now there was no avoiding it. Sakura could not put it off any longer.

It was not as if she had not left the heavens realm. She had come with Naruto and Kakashi at night to do the usual hunting. She had skipped the first night with the excuse that she was too tired. But there was no avoiding the other nights under the same excuse and there were no new ones to be made. So for those night she had swallowed her fear and gone with them. She had been fidgety and cautious, always looking over her shoulder the first few hours. But it soon faded into an eased repetition as she stayed near them as the night progressed. It was easy to forget about the dangers with the knowledge that Kakashi and Naruto where close by. So easy that she had nearly lost all
She had stood at the portal, staring down at the swirling void of light for nearly an hour before cowardice took over and she found refuge in the library. She had hoped that gaining knowledge of the unknown would help quell the fear but after a week, everything still seemed a mystery. But she could not put it off any longer. Today was the day, she had to go and hope that should anything happen, luck would bless her again.

She was standing at the void’s edge again.

Taking a deep breath she tried to calm her racing heart as she wiped her moist palms against her thighs. Her attempt did little to dry the damp skin as this was the third time she had done this and the fabric of her dress was beginning to feel more like a damp kitchen towel than a fashionable garment.

“You can do this Sakura,” she whispered to herself. “There is nothing to be afraid of. You are a strong, independent woman. You can rely on yourself—”

“Rely on yourself to do what?”

Sakura jumped at the sudden interruption of her private pep talk. She turned around instantly to find the owner of the unexpected voice walking lazily down the path.

Kakashi stopped a few feet away from her, his hands in his pockets and his head cocked the side, observing.

“Uh,” Sakura stalled. “Nothing, just talking to myself.”

Kakashi raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Instead his head tilted back as he stared up at the warm sun and the clouds that covered the heavens sky.

“Bit late in the day for you to be headed down?” He finally commented as his attention fell back down to her. “Trial finally over?”
She was not sure but she detected a hint of sarcasm in his voice. All she could do was nod dumbly until she realized he was waiting for her to make some sort of explanation.

“Yeah,” Sakura said, her voice sounding not quite so sure. “I slept in and had a bit of a late start. Guess a week of slothfulness formed some bad habits.”

She let out an awkward nervous laugh that fell heavily between them.

“Anyways…” she began when Kakashi only managed a tight smile of social conduct. “I should probably head now.”

She took a backwards step and tried to turn away but was stopped by the call of her name.

“Sakura.”

She turned back to see Kakashi looking at her with a worried expression that made her feel guilty.

“Is everything alright?” He asked slowly. “Because you can tell me anything. I might be a glutton for gossip but am also known to keep a secret or two. If that is what you wish?”

She almost let everything slip from her lips from the incident with the Uchiha to her centuries worth of yearning for answers to her past. But she did not. Despite the good sense of self preservation and her trust that Kakashi would keep his word if she asked, she kept her tongue still.

Finally she managed to shake her head and give him a tight lipped smile. “No,” she managed to say. “I am fine. Just still a little disappointed with myself about Deidara and stressing over Sai. I feel like he is really close to a breakthrough. That's why I wanted to see how he does on his own and did some research this week instead.”

She was not proud of the half truths she was feeding him but what else could she say. She was not exactly lying. Sai was close to a breakthrough. Although she did feel guilty that she hardly gave any attention to his actions the past week nor did any of her “research” have anything to do with the subject of her guardianship.
And it seemed Kakashi was not thoroughly impressed either. Disappointment crossed his face which only served to fester her earlier guilt. But he said nothing on the matter.

“Very well,” he said dismissively. “Run along then I am sure you have plenty of work waiting for you after abandoning Sai for a week. Or at least enough to cure you of your slothfulness.”

She was not sure if his phrasing was purposeful or accidental accusation but it stung all the same. However, she swallowed the thick bitter taste of her half-truth lies and pretended they settled heavily in the pit of her stomach and not on the conscience of her heart.

As she tried to ignore the guilt she bid him farewell and using her escape as a cloak for her fear, she passed through the portal.

Kakashi watched as Sakura jumped down into the portal. Her pink hair swirled as the whirlpool of white and golden light absorbed her until she disappeared into the mortal realm. Like a pool of water settling from the ripples of disruption, he watched the portal as the warm colors settle into its normal gentle flow. He stared at the calming swirl for a moment longer before giving out a heavy sigh and running a hand across his face.

He was worried.

He had looked into what Sakura had been researching and it had nothing nothing to do with helping Sai. She had spent the past week reading just about every archive available regarding the Uchiha Naruto had also mentioned she had been asking about Sasuke and Kakashi was certain she was avoiding himself as well as lying.

But the most worrying of all was the cause of this sudden obsession she had with the Uchiha. Was it just a random curiosity or was it more? Was there something internally drawing her curiosity?

Sakura had never gave any particular attention the the Uchiha for the multiple centuries that he had known her and now, suddenly it was like an obsession.

No, he mentally corrected himself. It was not sudden nor random. In fact he could pinpoint the moment of her odd behavior beginning. It was the night they had run into a particular Uchiha.
It only had drastically changed in the more recent week but now that he thought about it, she had been off ever since that night they had run into him.

Had that meeting triggered something within her? Brought about memories that had been buried and a sealed away?

Kakashi was confident the seal placed upon her her mortal memories was still in tact. But he questioned how in tact it was? Could something strong enough like a brief meeting between them be enough to weaken it just enough to let something slip through? If not, could it just be residing emotions that lingered for centuries? Dormant and awaiting to be reignited by the person they belonged to.

With a heavy sigh he turned around and began walking back up the pathway.

He often times questioned the decision to not let Sakura know of her true past and how she came to be. He also questioned keeping it from Sasuke. Yes Sasuke was unpredictable and untrustworthy, but that was because of the loss of Sakura in his life. Before he was neutral but if it meant keeping Sakura safe, he believed Sasuke would have done anything. There were other events and situations that led him down his wayward path, but Kakashi believed Sakura could have been enough to keep him stable. But that would all remain a mystery he supposed.

His oath had kept him from saying anything from the beginning. He both dreaded and praised the day when it all came to revelation. Tsunade believed that day would never come but Kakashi knew better. He had always known.

There was a force that had drawn those two together. He never knew what it was or where it came from but it was there. Be it the will of the gods or something far beyond even the will of the gods, it was inevitable, Sakura and Sasuke belonged together. And Kakashi had no doubt in his mind that force would eventually draw them together again.

He looked forward to that day because he was tired of the lies. He saw the hurt and confusion that Sakura bore from her mysterious past. It bothered him that a piece of her was missing. Yes she would be angry with him when she realized the degree of truth he had kept from her, along with Tsunade and Naruto. But Sakura was forgiving and when the truth came to light, he was sure she would eventually come to an understanding. He did not like it when Sakura was angry with him but thankfully it was never for long. It was not in her nature, even things such as secret keeping of her true existence were forgivable in her book. At least that is what he hoped for.

But what he truly feared was the connection between her and Sasuke. If her memories returned
they would be of a boy who, despite his grumpy nature, loved far more strongly in a subtle way. She would see a boy who had protected her and sought out everything to keep her safe. She would see the boy that had a heart dispute the icy core that held it. Her emotions that were dormant would finally make a connection and he feared what she might do if those unclaimed emotions were finally attached to something tangible.

The Sasuke now was not the Sasuke she had known and he was fearful that Sakura would realize that the hard way. She would seek out that boy and what Kakashi feared is that she would find herself face to face with a monster. And there was no telling what that monster would do to her.

The worst of that fear was what would happen if that connection drew them together before she knew the truth of anything.

What would be the result? Sasuke loved her fiercely but he was also selfish.

Kakashi shivered at the thought as his imagination made the worry on his mind increase ten fold. There would be no telling what Sasuke would do to Sakura, where he would take her, or what he would tell her. Even if she had no idea who he was, Sasuke would not care because he would have her.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the long delay. Had to deal with that annoying this called life (boo). Anyways got some of my crap together so I finally had time to finish this chapter. Truthfully this is only half of what I planned to post but its ending up way longer than I planned so I split it into two parts. So next post will be another present day chapter and there will be some interaction again!!!

*Note I edited this on my phone so forgive me if there are more errors than usual. I was just really wanting to get this chapter up this week and was gone from home all day.
Chapter Eleven: Park Walkers and Stalkers

Present Day

Sakura found a secluded spot to dip down out of the sky and land without being spotted by any mortal eyes. As soon her feet touched the cracked cement of the ally way, she moved towards the opening that led to the street.

A rush of people were coming down from the high rise platform of the train and she quickly fought her way against the current of bodies until she reached the deck. With the train having just unloaded and reloaded, the platform was relatively vacant. There was a homeless man laying on one of the few benches and a pair of teenagers that seemed to have been too preoccupied with their lip locking than getting to their destination. The rest of the train stop was deserted. Her eyes moved to the opposite end where she spotted some vending machines next to a payphone and overflowing garbage can.

After depositing several folded bills into the sleeping homeless man's coat pocket, Sakura made her way over to the vending machines. On the left was a snack machine with an assortment of salty and sweet treats as well as some questionable looking sandwiches. Taped to the front was a water wrinkled piece of paper with the smudge words ‘out of order’.

Knowing better than to test fate, Sakura turned to the humming Coke machine beside it. She slipped a dollar into the feeder only to have it promptly spat back out at her. She let out a grumble of annoyance and tried it again.

Again the bill was denied and Sakura gritted her teeth as she glared at the machine, her dollar hanging out of the feeder like a stuck out tongue and making it seem as if the machine were mocking her.

The pop of knuckles cracking sounded as Sakura resisted the urge to smash the machine into smithereens. With great restraint, she snatched the wrinkled bill from the soda dispenser and rubbed it against the corner a few times in an attempt to iron it out. After one last rub for good measure, she stuck the green paper next to the slot and slowly fed it in.
The bill was sucked in and after some whirring and other mechanical noises, Sakura deemed it accepted and promptly hit the coin release button. Another moment later the distinct tinkling of coins being dropped into the change dispenser sounded. Immediately, her attitude change and with a pleased smile, Sakura reached into the small tray and pulled out her hard earned change.

Sakura stared down at the three quarters and round object that looked more like a washer than currency. The pinkette let out a sigh as her happy mood was dragged back down.

There was once a time when the seraphim were far more advanced than mortals. But in the more recent century, the crafty humans had somehow surpassed them in technology.

Many a time Sakura had tried to convince Tsunade that perhaps it would be best to adopt some of their communicative inventions but the Senju dismissed it, declaring that they already had a dependable way of communicating.

While receiving and sending notes via summons was efficient in the seraphim world, it did not mix well with the mortal realm. As a seraph, the goal was to be as subtle in their mingling with mortals as possible. Talking toads and dogs that used fluorescent shampoo were not exactly the definition of blending in. So with no cellular device, Sakura had to resort to this tedious method. And with the dwindling number of payphones still in service, it was making this process even more grueling.

Change in hand, she moved to the phone and picked up the receiver. She slipped one of the quarters into the pay slot then listened for a dial tone before punching in the only number she had needed in the past few years.

It rang twice before the familiar voice of her charge sounded in the ear piece.

“Hello?” he asked, sounding uncertain if the unknown number was legitimate or just another spam call.

“Sai, it’s me,” Sakura replied.

“Oh, hello Sakura,” Sai replied. His tone held a sharpness to it. As if he were angry with her.
Sakura did not like the thought of him angry at her but she could not help but appreciate the moment. Him being mad meant he cared, which meant he was making emotional connections, which meant he was making progress. And to be fair, she felt he had a valid reason to be angry with her.

“Sorry I have not been around,” Sakura began in an attempt to smooth things over. “I know I should have told you I would not be around but I was...preoccupied.”

“Were you working with someone else who needed help?” Sai asked, his voice held a small hint of what Sakura could only interpret as jealousy.

“No. No. Nothing like that. In fact I was not even really here all this week. I had to do some work back at home.”

“Oh,” there was a pause. “Well good. I don’t like the idea of you working with someone else.”

Sakura raised a brow even though Sai could not see her.

“That sounds a bit selfish Sai,” she chided. “You should always be happy when someone else is getting help.”

She heard a sigh on his end of the line.

“I know,” he mumbled. “I just worry about you finding someone else more worth helping.”

Sakura’s face pulled down sadly. It surprised her in moments like this how much Sai’s self confidence lacked and she took note that perhaps they should have some lessons on self worth.

“Sai you know better than to think that,” she assured him. “You are worth saving and I promise I will never give up on you.” She waited for a reply but when he said nothing else she continued. “Hey why don’t we meet in our usual spot at Prospect Park. We can rent bikes and ride around for a bit then maybe go over what happened for the last week.”

“Okay,” Sai finally responded, sounding enthused at the idea.
Sakura smiled knowingly, she could always lift his spirits with this suggestion. Prospect Park was one of his favorites as it provided the perfect access for two of his favorite things. People watching and the small zoo full of animals for him to draw so detailed that they seemed to come out of the paper with life.

“Do you think you could meet me there at noon?”

“Hang on.” There was a pause and Sakura could nearly visualize Sai pulling the phone from his ear to look at the time. “Yes,” he finally answered.

“Great,” she replied with a happy grin. “I will see you then and I will treat you to some lunch as we review the week.”

With an exchange of goodbyes, Sakura hung the phone up and began to walk towards the stairs. As soon as she made it to the ground, she began to walk across the pavement to the fastest route to her destination.

As the golden sun warmed her skin and the clean breeze freshened the usually stale city smell, Sakura could not help but let her happy smile linger. Why she had been so fearful to come all week was beyond her. Perhaps it was good weather or the fact that she was back to work instead of sitting hunched over in a gloomy library, but at this moment, Sakura could not remember exactly why she had been so afraid.

It was not difficult for Sasuke to find out which apartment belonged to the mortal. A simple description of the boy’s mannerism and the old woman pushing a cat in a stroller knew exactly who he was looking for.

His name was Sai and it seemed most people felt the same way as he did. He was an odd boy and regularly disliked. The few neighbors he passed by and questioned all said the same thing. He had no friends and they had never seen or heard anyone else at his apartment.

This fact was quite disrupting to his investigation. He had been hoping to hear of at least one memorable woman to have been there but no one recognized his descriptions.

After questioning a handful of neighbors and gaining no more insight than he had collected
himself, Sasuke made his way to the top floor. The apartment was at the end of a short hall. With each step the floorboards of the aged building creaked until he stopped at a paint chipped door.

It did not take much to force the door open without damaging the lock. While he could care less about the mortals home security, he did care about leaving any traces of his presence.

The apartment was small but the spartan lifestyle of its tenant gave it a more roomy atmosphere. It was a studio floor plan, with a small kitchen area that provided the bare necessities for a person cooking for one. A small dish rack with a single plate, cup, and fork suggested that there was only one occupant taking their meals within the meager home. The bathroom was just as simple. A toilet and sink with a small mirrored cabinet to hold a single toothbrush, toothpaste, and comb. Only a small shower just large enough to allow a person to step in and step out was set up across from the toilet and sink, giving just enough space for the door to open and shut freely.

Sasuke spent little time observing these areas. He lingered and snooped just long enough to ascertain that there was only one person dwelling within the four walls of five hundred square feet. Next to the bathroom was a small closet but that too was given only a small glance before the dark haired intruder focused on the living space of the flat.

Next to the kitchen area, set up in front of the only window in the apartment was a drawing desk. Currently it was laid flat and on top sat stacks of loose papers and notebooks. A chipped mug with the words ‘I heart New York’ held several drawing pencils and broken pieces of charcoal. It was here that Sasuke began a more in depth search.

He started with a stack of delicate water colors. Each painting had captured the colors and shapes of everyday life. Each brushstroke had been flawless but it was obvious that it had taken little effort. Sai was truly a mortal with a gift, it was an appraisal that Sasuke would have bequeathed him if it were not for the circumstances which brought him here.

He had not come here to admire the artwork as if he were touring an exhibit at the MET. He had come here for only one purpose. So instead of taking in the details of each work of art, Sasuke took seconds to glance over each painting, Giving just enough attention to note the lack of pink or the lack of a certain green shade on each piece.

Painting after painting was revealed and with each image, stranger after stranger looked back up at him. He quickly finished the stack of paintings and moved on to a notebook. The first one was just a sketch pad, it was old and worn, with several of the pictures roaming loosely within its bindings. Sasuke leafed through it, occasionally pausing to take in a certain person's features before deeming them not a match and moving on.
It took him longer to go through the notepads and journals. With no color, he found himself forced to pause on nearly every page and take in the details instead of quickly scanning for Sakura’s unique coloring as he had done with the watercolors. And it did not help that the loose pages kept falling out and he had to pick them back up and place them back in the book. With each delay in progression and with each sketched profile of a nameless face, Sasuke found himself becoming more and more irritated.

She was not in any of them. Not it a single book or loose page did he find anyone who was remotely similar to Sakura.

Sasuke let out a growl and slammed the last journal back down. Breathing heavily, he began to rifle through the drawers of the desk. But all he found was extra art supplies and random knick-knacks that he found mortals liked to collect for no apparent reason. Dead batteries and takeout menus but no evidence of Sakura.

Slamming the last drawer shut Sasuke paused to breath in and out of his nose as he let his eyes run around the room. There was no real reason to have his sharingan activated as there was minimal furniture or possessions to be seen. But it had activated in his frustration.

Doing his best to not destroy the wooden desk as he slammed his fists down on the rickety surface, Sasuke glared out the window. It was cracked just enough to let a small breeze through, bringing some fresh air and calmness to Sasuke’s mind. He breathed in slowly and let his head bow as he stared down at the piles of already searched artwork.

While he was angry he found no evidence that could connect Sakura with the odd artist, he was more angry with himself for putting hope into the idea. He had told himself to ignore it but the tick in the back of his mind had kept persisting and the pull had been too insistent. So he had given in and now he had wasted an entire week watching and following some mortal freak instead of looking for her.

He let out a sigh and turned around to lean against the desk.

For a moment he stood with his eyes closed as he tried to rein in his emotions. He did not like losing control, for many reasons, but the main reason was because bad things happened. Either to him or because of him. His eyes peeled open and he found himself staring at the unsearched area of the studio.

On the far wall, opposite of the kitchen and bathroom was murphy bed. At first Sasuke had given this part of the apartment no thought as it seemed insignificant. But now as he stared at the stained
wood that neatly disguised the bed as a closed cabinet when put away, he took notice of the shelves and side cabinets on either side of the large doors that hid the bedding.

On one shelf was a small tantō that looked far too realistic and worn to be just a decorative piece of blade ware. On a couple others he found an assortment of self help books and sociological topics. A small bonsai tree sat on one side while a bamboo plant grew on a high shelf on the other.

While each of these items seemed relatively normal, it was what was mixed in amongst these items that caught Sasuke’s attention. Picture frames. Rectangle after rectangle made of wood, metal, and plastic covered and filled every extra space of each shelf. While still nothing unordinary, it was the photos in which they held that had truly caught his eye.

He flashed stepped and was standing face to face with a shelf of frames within the blink of an eye.

There were three photos sitting next to four books on the behaviors of humans. Each frame was a tacky colorful frame that each featured a different location that could be found within the city of New York. Despite the horrendous lettering or gods awful glitter that sparkled in the design of the empire state building, Sasuke’s eyes fixated on the people within the frame. Or more specifically, one of the people.

Sakura.

Sakura with her head pushed closely to Sai’s as they squeezed together in the frame to fit themselves and the overlook of the city from the top of the Empire State building. Her hair was loose and several strands blew across her features but she smiled widely as if her rebellious locks went unregistered.

The second frame was colored black with small drama masks surrounding it. And again, there she was. Sakura standing next to a stranger dressed in a costume while Sai stood on the opposite side, the three of them standing in front of the Broadway Theatre as the sign above announced the musical being performed. Sai stood with the smallest hint of his awkward smile while Sakura and the actor made a dramatic face at the camera.

The third frame held a picture of Sakura standing next to Sai on a boat. In this picture her arm was linked through Sai’s as they stood together at the bow of the boat. Behind them the Statue of Liberty held aloft her beacon of enlightenment above the frigid looking upper bay.
It must have been winter at the time when the picture was taken. They each stood bundled in heavy wool coats and scarves as they each held a steaming cup of coffee. Sasuke paid little attention to Sai but he took in every detail of Sakura. She wore a pair of leather boots and jeans beneath a heavy woolen pea coat. The coat was an emerald green that he knew would perfectly match her eyes if they were open. But her eyes were closed for the picture but it was difficult to tell if it was because she had just blinked when the picture was snapped or if she had been so content in that moment, they had closed on their own to savor the moment. Her hands were gloveless and one was thrown up into a peace sign as she posed for the camera. Beneath her knitted cap Sasuke could see the short strands of rosette color poking out from beneath the cream colored yarn.

His eyes took in the rest of the image.

Sai was standing awkwardly next to her. His body stiff as if he did not know what to do with it. On his face was the awkwardly shaped smile but it looked to be even more forced and construed than the others. And there was something different in his eyes than the others, they were empty and tormented.

Sasuke knew that look, he had seen it many times in his numerous years. It was a look he had seen in both seraph and mortals that had endured haunting experiences. He knew it, because he had seen in his own reflections.

Sai also looked significantly younger in this picture than he did in the others. Sasuke had judged the young man to be just barely in his twenties but in this picture he looked hardly even seventeen.

Red eyes trailed back to Sakura’s face.

She looked older than him but only by a few years. In fact, she looked the same as she did in the more recent pictures. But this thought was fleeting as he focused on other thoughts that came creeping into his mind. The smallest of satisfied smiles pulled at the corner of his mouth.

He had found her. Or at least he had found a connection to her. Now it all made sense. The pull was not broken, it was just leading him to her through another route.

As if summoned by the thought of it, Sasuke felt a tug. It was so familiar and so strong it almost felt physical.

Pulling his eyes away from the picture he moved across the room and was out of the building.
within seconds. He paused only a moment to reorient himself with the direction in which he needed to go. He felt a strong pull to follow to his left, the same direction in which Sai had departed earlier.

Whether it was because of his recent discovery or because there was something unusually forceful about the pull today, Sasuke found his heart pounding wildly as he made his way down the street. When he reached the end of the neighborhood, he paused at the crosswalk.

The street was busier than the last few blocks he had just exited from and it took him a moment to hone in on the pull again. He closed his eyes and focused, trying to reach out and decide which direction to go. As he muted the chaos around him and refocused on the tugging sensation that had dulled earlier, his eyes suddenly snapped open when he felt a sharp jerk.

His feet automatically moved forward. Following his instincts, he walked to the crosswalk that would cross over the busy street. After waiting impatiently for the stick figure man to appear, he made his way toward the large park that was located on the opposite side.

The trails and paths of Prospect Park, while numerous and winding, were easily marked. And for any tourist or newcomer, they would easily be able to find their desired attraction hosted in the park. But Sasuke’s destination did not have a marked spot on a map. All he had was a feeling, an incline to go right, left, or straight. And to make things worse, it seemed to keep changing locations.

He felt like he was going in circles. When he passed by a park bench that he was certain he had passed by three times already. He let out a long string of curses when the reality hit him. He felt like he was going in circles because he was going in circles.

Pausing himself, he took in the scene before him.

It was strange, the pull seemed to have dulled but not like the other times when it seemed to disappear. It was not entirely gone, nor did it feel like it was leaving. It was just not as persistently urgent like it had gone loose. He could still feel the phantom knot around his finger but it was like the string had gone limp, as if he had ventured too closely to its tether and the string was no longer taught.

At this thought, Sasuke began to scan the area. Three main paths meet together forming an intersection close to that of a center square. To his right stood a pavilion where carousel music played and children gathered in lines, each of them eagerly begging their parents for sweets and toys from the street vendors that had gathered in the area. It seemed there was some sort of festival or holiday going on for the mortals. But that fact was disregarded as Sasuke continued to let his
eyes sweep around the area until he spotted something that paused them in an abrupt stop.

Standing off to the side and away from the busy crowds was Sai. Looking as awkward as ever he stared into the crowd of celebrators as he stood poised with a bike on either side of him. At first Sasuke felt the annoyance begin to rise up, but then he acknowledged something.

Two bikes, that meant two people.

He was not sure if it was a coincidence or by some mystic power, but the moment he made the connection she appeared.

His breath paused as he stared.

Despite all the evidence he possessed to prove he had truly seen her, there had been plenty of doubt in his mind and heart over the past week. But there she was, weaving in and out of pedestrians with a near angelic stride as she avoided absentminded walkers and the occasional trip wire of a leash when a curious dog tried to wander to the end of their owners reigns.

Her pink hair just barely grazed her shoulders as the skirt of the summer dress she wore moved with each step. In her hands she carried two hot dogs, one of which she passed over to Sai who in return handed her the second bike as they began to walk down the path away from the crowded area.

In a moment of panic, Sasuke’s feet surged to flash step to her side, grab her, and launch up into the sky. He could already feel his wings beginning to push out from beneath his skin when he finally caught himself.

His half crazed mind seemed to scream violently at him in protest but the other half, strangely taking on the tone of his brother, caused him to stay firm.

He watched as Sakura walked with her head turned to the side as she spoke to Sai. The warm happy smile as she conversed with the artist was both calming and infuriating. She looked happy, her lips moving quickly as she chatted away, flashing her white teeth as she smiled in content.

Itachi’s words surfaced to his mind.
Let her live her life in peace. Let her live a long and happy life full of all the wonderful experiences that come with mortality.

For the briefest of moments, Sasuke considered the idea. But it was gone as quickly as it came when he watched Sai reach out and pick something from her hair. It was not necessarily an act of affection, more so than one out of innocent and purposeful action. But Sasuke knew all too well the results that such strictly purposeful acts could lead to, because he himself had been tricked into such a mindset.

As he watched the boys pale fingers graze her strands as he pulled a fallen blossom petal from her pastel hair, a darkness grew within Sasuke. The words of his brother were abruptly extinguished as the less stable portion of his mind began to make a battle of dominance.

Sorry brother, he apologized mentally. But he could not let her be and he would not let her go.

Oh, she would live a long and happy life, he promised.

In fact it would be much longer than she would ever think possible. And it would be full of wonders she could never dream with the dull life of a mortal. Sakura did not belong in this world of casual strolls in a crowded park with a boy too awkward to form a compliment worthy of her. She belonged with him in the transversal world of his homeworld and hers, like he had always planned.

His feet began to move as he stalked after the couple, his eyes blazing with heated criticism of their every friendly action as he followed from a distance.

He was not sure which part of his mind was dominating his thoughts and actions but there seemed to be a strange order to his chaotic mania that usually governed the more irrational side of his mind. He knew he could not act out on instinct like the last time. Last time he had scared her off by being too impulsive. But he had been off guard then, surprised by her appearance. Now that he knew how to find her, he could take his time much more easily.

He needed to learn more about her and assess the best way to approach her. The last time she had adapted well to the knowledge of what he was, but that was when she lived in a world where mythology was much closer to the truth. In this modern world their mythologies were fantasy, fairy tales told to children.
So he followed the pair and learned all he could of this new Sakura. He watched them return their bikes to a kiosk where they had rentented them, then followed them to a duck pond where Sakura fed that last few bites of her hot dog bun to a mother duck and her ducklings. He watched her comfort a crying child as Sai climbed a tree to untangle the small girls lost kite. Then again he watched her sit with an elderly man on a bench, talking with his faded mind as Sai went off to search for his caretaker. While he never understood her need to always care for those who were strangers to her, he could not ignore the fact that her nature did not seem any different than before. And that gave him hope.

For an hour Sai and Sakura continued to walk and talk, the topic of their discussions went unheard but it seemed almost business like in the way the communicated.

Only when they paused to speak by a lamp post did Sasuke venture closer, taking up post in the shadows of a tunnel not far from where they stood as he tried to listen in on their conversation. But then a chatty pair of mothers pushing strollers passed by, and the wailing of children and one squeaky wheel droned out any of the words being exchanged.

Annoyed, Sasuke sent out an influence to every mortal within the perimeter to suddenly have the urge to leave and seek out a deep, sinful desire. All but the pair that he was watching. Those two he let stay but not without casting an illusion when he saw the pale artist look in his direction.

“Why don’t we spend the afternoon at the zoo,” Sakura suggested. “Then after we can…”

Sakura lost her train of thought when a peculiar sensation passed over her. Like a cold wind passing by but heavy with something sinister. It was the sensation that one would feel when standing in a dark alley late at night with the unnatural sense that something was watching from the shadows. And then a movement in her peripheral sight grabbed her attention and she found herself looking at the bridged tunnel nearby. But she could not quite understand why her attention had been drawn to it.

It was a sunny day at the park, everything was moving. The trees rustled in the wind. Birds fluttered around the ground as they picked at the morsels of food left behind by picnickers. Squirrels scampered up trees as they foraged for food and ran away from dogs. Children ran ahead of their parents. Couples strolled hand in hand. A herd of cyclists raced passed by where her and Sai stood off to the side of the path. A jogger slowed down to a trot before taking a break to stretch beside a bench. No matter where one looked, something seemed to be in motion.
But there was something off about this one particular movement.

They were standing beside a lamp post near the Cleft Ridge Span. Normally, this path would be highly trafficked at this time on a day such as this. But at the moment, it was unusually vacant.

Sakura stared at the shadowed arch that supported the heavy stone that made up its often disregarded architecture. As she peered into the shadows, she realized another oddity.

It was unnaturally dark.

She could still see through to the other side. And where the sun light managed to peek beneath the archway, all seemed safe and normal. But the line between shadow and light contrasted far too much. There was no gradient fade from light to dark, just a solid line where sunlight touched and shadow began. And the sheer density of the shade was too thick to even make out the walls or cobblestone path. A void of darkness in the picture of reality.

She felt like she was looking at an unfinished puzzle. Everything picturesque and connected to create an image. But in the middle, a missing piece, a hole in the image, and something within it was moving.

No , that was not right.

Something was not moving in the darkness. It was the darkness itself that was moving, dissipating.

It was like watching the timelapse of a thick fog evaporate. At first there was nothing to be seen, but as the darkness thinned and softened, it took on the normal hue of any other shadow found in the park. It was as if someone had placed that final piece into the puzzle and everything was restored to normal.

At least for anyone else it would have, but for her, everything within her body was set on edge as she stared at the figure who stood in the middle of the archway.

A flutter in her stomach made her feel on the brink of either passing out or throwing up. She tried to swallow down the sick feeling, only to find her throat dry. She licked her lips which felt uncomfortably dry as well but it brought no stability.
He was here. With arms folded over his chest, his face tilted upward to appraise the carved ceiling and walls that gave the structure its delicate design. But the moment her eyes fell on him, his head slowly tipped forward until his eyes met hers. Red glowed for only a second until he blinked and only a dark, glassy abyss was left behind. His eyes were a lingering reminder of the thick darkness that she had just been looking at.

And then he took a step forward and then another.

With his hands in his pockets and the casual pace in which he was taking, Sakura almost believed he was just another park patron taking a leisurely stroll through the park. She wanted to believe that perhaps it was true. Maybe he was just walking through the park and he would pass by her like every other soul had done today.

It was just unfortunate for her nerves that there was no mistaking his features. The dark hair and angular face, there never would be mistaking Sasuke Uchiha as another average person.

Her desperate mind formed another hope that perhaps he did not recognize her. Perhaps he would eventually look away from her and keep walking as if she were nothing but another piece of the scenery around them that was meant to be observed then move on from. But that hope sputtered out quickly when his eyes never moved away from her. With each minute passing moment that he neared, not once did they waver from her.

How he had managed to find her? Had he tracked her? Was she being watched this entire time? What was she to do now?

Her logic screamed at her to run, to flee. She now had a well versed knowledge of what this man walking towards her could possibly do. She should fly away from this place, take to the sky and escape into the safety of the heavens.

“Sakura?”

The sudden sound that was not the rushing of her blood in her ears, startled her. She barely managed to drag her eyes away from the approaching demon to look at Sai. His normally flat face was pulled up in what could only be interpreted as an attempted look of concern. And then it hit her.
How could she have been so selfish. While she was busy contemplating her flight for her own safety, she had completely forgotten about her charge. She was his guardian angel. Guardian being the key word. How could she have been so negligent?

It was then she knew what she had to do.

“Sai,” she said carefully, her eyes darted towards the approaching demon then back to her mortal. “Um, why don’t we take a rain check for the rest of the day?”

She saw Sai’s brow scrunch with confusion. Her eyes darted back to check Sasuke’s progression then back to her charge. Sai was looking towards Sasuke now, his head cocked to the side with intrigue as a small frown pulled at his lips. She grabbed his hand, causing him to look back at her.

“Go home now,” she said, her tone full of warning.

“But what about…”

“I will be fine,” she quickly assured him. She was not sure how she managed to sound so confident, but as she said the words, she could not help but feel the truth. Where this truth came from she did not know. “I will see you tomorrow okay? We will go to the zoo then, I promise.”

Sai looked back to where Sasuke was, then back to her. His charcoal eyes searched her face and it was obvious why Sai was hesitant.

He knew what Sasuke was.

“Go,” she urged, sending all of her will in hopes that her influence would be able to penetrate into his mind.

She did not like using her influence against her charges. She wanted them to make their own decisions. But Sai’s safety went beyond the guilt. If something were to happen to him she could never forgive herself.
It felt like an eternity before she received a minute nod of his head and she watched him go as she urged him to hurry.

When Sai had disappeared into the more crowded pathways of the park, she turned back around and her heart skipped a beat. Sasuke was standing right before her. His dark eyes dancing wildly with emotions as his thin lips curled into what she could have sworn was a soft smile.

His plan to stay to keep his distance had fallen to shambles. He had no intention of approaching her today, but the moment she had looked over to the archway with such a perplexed and investigative intensity, he realized his mistake. She was not seeing the same illusion that every other mortal was seeing. He should have known better that the illusion he had cast would not work on her. They had never worked, she had always been able to see that something was off and more often, see past them. However his failure only brought a small smile to his lips. It was just another testament that she was truly his Sakura and not just a similar faced vessel for a soul.

Although it was obvious that she was not seeing past the illusion, at least not fully as her face indicated that what she was seeing was not right with the world. He had almost kept it up just to see what she would do, to see if she would eventually see through the curtain, but his eagerness got away with him.

He wanted her to see him.

He was being impulsive again when he needed to stick to the original plan.

Observe, just like the last time. Watch and learn, try to understand and take note of any differences. It was like what Itachi said, she may have the same soul but the memories and person he knew before was not the same. Yet so far from his observances, she was like her old self in nearly every way, like she had never died and became reborn, just continued to exist.

However, there was one thing different about her that he could not quite place. It was nothing to do with her personality or appearance, those were the same except her hair length. But there was still something changed. It was more about the aura around her. She had always been ethereal looking but now it was almost as if it had been intensified to the point that she no longer looked, but was.

It was but a thought and he played it off as nothing but his maddend fantasy’s. While all of this was surreal, Sasuke knew better than to believe that fate would gift him such a thing. Waving away
the idea, he focused on the task at hand.

Despite his original plan, Sasuke could not resist the urging temptation to approach her. He needed to be closer to her. Needed her to look at him, to hear her voice. So he took a step from the shelter of the tunnel, then took another.

She watched him like a deer in headlights. Her vivid eyes so wide he could almost see into her mind as the wheels of her cognitive whirled to make a fight or flight decision. Only when her companion spoke to her did she seem to finally find a course of action to run. He overheard her urge him to leave, he hesitated at first but then something changed. Sasuke was not sure what came over the boy, but his mind seemed to suddenly switch when he nodded and left her side, retreating down the path to leave her alone.

*Excellent.*

Sasuke took advantage of her distracted attention as she watched Sai depart, quickly moving, Sasuke stopped to stand only a few steps away from her. When she finally turned he watched her startle at his sudden and unexpected proximity. He watched her throat bob up and down with a nervous swallow as her eyes trailed slowly from his chest to meet his face. He knew he needed her at ease so he offered her a smile.

She seemed puzzled at first but then determination appeared giving her a look of bravery.

His soft smile turned into a smirk as the memories of this same look played in his mind. This was always his favorite version of Sakura. Whenever she managed to summon an inner strength that gave her courage, it electrified his entire being making him feel alive. His favorite past time was to challenge and lay siege to that courage, push her boundaries and test her strength. She was no weakling which made it all the more satisfying when he managed to take over.

“Hello,” he greeted with a sinfully smooth voice.

There was a pause as her hold on that inner strength seemed to falter.

“Hi,” she replied in a breathless tone.

“Yes.”

“Do you remember me?”
Sakura looked at him carefully, doing her best to read him.

At the moment, she did not sense she was in danger, in fact she seemed strangely calmed by his presence. It was like having that nagging sensation in the back of your mind that you forgot something suddenly erased. Instead, she was acutely aware of the feeling that she was being drawn to him. Like the pull of a magnet, she wanted to attached herself to him and never let him go.

It was terrifying.

Sakura had only ever felt this feeling one time before. It was on the night of the club, when she watched him fly away as she hid herself on the rooftop. She had felt it then too.

However, despite the lack of danger she felt from him, she had to be cautious. She was a moth and he was a flame. Come too close and she would get burned.

Sasuke’s motives were unknown, and she needed to find them out. How he knew her and what he wanted from her were her first priorities.

But she had to be careful. She could easily say something that could change things. Say too much and he could become suspicious, say too little, and he may realize that she was not worth anything to him.

She had heard of his unpredictability. She needed to tread lightly.

The trouble was that the last time she had run into him, he must not have been expecting to run into her. At the time he must have been taken off guard because now she was having a very difficult time getting any amount of information from his body language. That night he had been an open book of emotions, today he was near the opposite. Not entirely sealed off but certainly regulated.

He controlled his expressions with such precision that it was impossible to read his emotions or his thoughts. Anything that gave a hint of what was going on behind his mask was obviously put there with a purpose. Each raise of his brow, movement of his lips, and blink of his eyes was done with designed intention. It was an obvious tactic to manipulate a person’s perception of him. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing. And right now, Sakura was feeling very much like a lamb.
Slowly she took in a deep breath in an attempt to clear her panicked mind. She needed to stay calm, she needed to think, she needed a plan. She took her time putting on a show of taking in his face.

Of course she knew exactly who he was, but she could not let him know that. As far as she knew, he knew her name and thought she was a mortal. That told her that his knowledge of her had to be limited to an extent. Unless he was too was playing a naive roll. Whichever the case, it all went back to her second priority. What did he want with her?

Slowly, she moved her head in a nod.

“Of course,” she said as she let a hint of a smile grace her lips. “How could I ever forget you,” she caught a glint in his eye that could be interpreted as excitement that quickly dissipated with her next words. “You were at the club last Saturday.”

“What about before that night?” he inquired further.

Sakura felt a slight unease as he set his eyes on her, watching every move.

It made it difficult but she continued with her original plan. She was just an innocent mortal that he approached at a club, until she knew more of his motives, she would not let it be known to him that she knew of the seraphim world. And unless he found out for himself, she would not let him know that not only did she have a knowledge, but she had a place within that seraphim world.

“...no,” she answered, hoping that the uncertainty in her tone would be attributed to innocent ignorance and not a sign of a lie.

He took a step forward and it took everything within Sakura to not retreat. But even more, to resist the temptation to minimize that space herself. Her mind whirled with some sort of explanation for this. Never had she felt this kind of a force. Was it attraction or was it some strange temptation?

She had grown quite an extensive knowledge of the Uchiha over the past week. They were powerful. Could it be that their powers went beyond just the influence of mortals? She knew their sharingan could gain control over both mortal and seraphim. It is what made the blessed so afraid of the fallen leaders.

She was relatively well versed in the Sharringon and its effects because her time spent with
Kakashi. For some reason, Sakura had a knack for resisting his. A skill she was well versed for as long as she could remember.

Her earliest memories of Kakashi were mostly of him using his Sharingan on her. Time after time he had tried to bring back the memories lost on that fateful night due to her injury. Each time she felt them move as if to come forward, but just before they could come fully to her recollection they were stopped. It was like there was some sort of wall or barrier that was imprisoning them.

It had been awhile since he had tried this, only every few decades when Tsunade requested it.

She found it strange, but Sakura almost felt like the consistency of it was almost purposeful. As if to assure her surrogate mother of something. It was almost as if Tsunade was afraid she would remember.

It hurt Sakura at first but then Shizune made the comment that maybe she was afraid that with the memory of her real parents, Sakura would no longer see Tsunade in that light anymore. It made sense, but at the same time, Sakura could not imagine herself changing the way she saw Tsunade. She was grateful for everything the woman did for her and provided for her. Love and a home being the most cherished. Nothing could ever change that.

But there was one thing that she kept pondering in her mind over the past week. One fact she had learned was that there were different levels of the Sharingan. Each one possessing different powers. With this in mind, Sakura could not help but wonder if maybe all she needed was a stronger Sharingan.

She did not doubt Kakashi’s skill with his borrowed eye, but she could not help but question. Kakashi was not a full Uchiha, nor did she believe it was as evolved as others. Kakashi could stir up her memories, she knew this, she felt them begin to surface each time. But each time they slammed against that wall. So Sakura wondered, what if she found a more powerful Sharingan? Could it be strong enough to break through that wall?

At the thought, her eyes automatically moved up to meet Sasuke’s.

Panic struck her when she realized what she was doing and she stopped herself just in time. If he did have a powerful enough Sharingan to bring back her memories, there would be no telling what he would have her do if he had her under his influence. The panic settled when she half met his eyes and was greeted by the charcoal hue which were narrowed in focused attention.
“Are you sure?”

Sakura swallowed and subtly slid her foot back in hopes to widen the space between them if but only by a fraction. She was having difficulty breathing and there was not enough space between them to provide the air she needed. Her eyes moved down to his lips, the intensity of them too much for her to handle at the moment. She needed to stay focused.

“Yes,” she replied in the most confident tone she could muster. She was going to leave her answer at that, but her curiosity got the better of her. “Should there be another time that I remember?”

For some reason, she felt like he was not just referring to the first night on the rooftop with Kakashi and Naruto.

Her question seemed to echo over and over in his mind.

**Should there be another time that I remember?**

Sasuke nearly laughed at the bitter irony of such an innocently stated inquiry. Another time, another place, another life. If only she knew the half of it. But instead of giving into the construed humor of the situation, Sasuke kept his face blank and focused on her movements and body language.

She seemed jittery and nervous, much like the early days of when they had first met, the original time. But there was something about the way she would not meet his eyes longer than a second or two that told him something was off. Why would she be afraid to look at him unless she knew truly what his eyes could do. So he decided to question her further.

“Be honest with me Sakura, were you there that night on the rooftop?” he asked in a steady, stern voice. “Are you the mortal that Kakashi and Naruto were protecting?”

She gave no immediate answer but he noticed her brow slightly twitch just before her mouth turned slightly downward.

“Rooftop?” she repeated slowly with a slight look of confusion. Then she shook her head. “I am sorry but I don’t know what you are talking about. Who are Kakashi and Naruto? And what do you
mean by mortal?"

He was not sure what to make of her answer. Her tone was even, almost too even. He was not sure if this was because she was consciously lying to him or he was reading into things. She was certainly acting odd. But then again, it could just be the circumstances.

You are a stranger, he reminded himself.

But there had been a glint in her eye when she spoke. Something akin to familiarity. Was this some kind of subconscious recognition or was she purposely holding something back.

He took a step forward, this time he noticed that she did not try and hide her retreat as she slightly stumbled backwards a half step before he caught her arm. She froze at his touch and her eyes darted up to him, for the first time meeting his fully since he approached her today. He could see the alarm and twinge of fear radiating from them as her throat moved as she swallowed deeply.

Instantly, he let his grip loosen.

“Be careful,” he cautioned before letting her go fully.

You are a stranger, he reminded himself.

After he released her, he noticed her relax slightly. If only a little. But it was enough to urge him to push forward.

“If the other night at the club was our first meeting,” he began again. “Then why did you run away from me?”

Sakura did not answer immediately, it was impossible as she struggled to form thoughts let alone words. Her emotions were far more out of control than she could remember them being in a very long time. His closeness brought about his scent, a mixture of smokey sandalwood and musk. It was intoxicating, making the draw of him even more irresistible. But it was the familiarity of such a smell that had her truly confused.
In addition to this, her mind was frantically trying to stay ahead of the conversation but at the moment she was hardly keeping up and was quickly falling behind. Sasuke was drilling her, looking to catch her in a lie and she could not let that happen. So her mind formed a plan. Distract and play innocent. It worked for most of the devious demons she hunted, why not him?

“Why wouldn’t I?” She began. “A strange man grabbed me and spoke my name. I thought you were a stalker or something,” she paused for a minute as she eyed him. “And at the moment, I am beginning to think I was right.”

Her last comment she dared to utter almost jokingly. She was not sure why, but there was something about his presence that set her on edge but calmed her as well. It was as if she had hyped herself up in her secluded hiding for the past week for nothing. He seemed so...harmless.

As a guardian, Sakura had grown well attuned with reading other people’s intentions. And while reading a mortal was juvenile when compared to a demon, she sensed nothing sinister coming from Sasuke towards her. He was holding something back, that she could tell, but it was not ill intent, just cautious.

Her comment however did not seem to amuse him as she caught the tightening of his jaw muscle.

“Do you know what I am?” He asked.

“Aside from being a creep?”

The teasing words had left her mouth without a second thought. It seemed so natural, like this was something she had done before. And it was not helping her situation in trying to play the role of an ignorant mortal that had been approached by a stranger. Sure he was tall and handsome with an alluring darkness, but he was still an unknown stranger all the same.

Any other mortal woman in the same situation would have pulled out her mace, given him a good roundhouse kick, and ran for it. Or at least she hoped every other woman would have done this by now. Yet here she was, still standing in front of him, and making jokes about his behavior as if they were long time friends.

Sasuke however did not seem to feel the same way.
His eyes narrowed, obviously annoyed and frustrated. Lips pursed together, she suddenly began to feel like prey as he looked her over, the slight tilt of his head not helping him look like a hawkish predator and she a mouse.

“What has Naruto and Kakashi told you about me?”

“Nothing,” she automatically answered.

A glint came to his eyes and his tight face moved into a smirk. Sakura’s stomach dropped the moment she realized what she had just admitted to. She tried to swallow but her throat had grown too tight she could barely manage to get the air she needed to breath to pass through.

_Shit_, she internally cursed. She did not like to use foul language but in this case, _double shit_, as Naruto would say.

He had caught her off guard, caught her in a lie. Here she had thought she was doing so well, despite the feeling that she was swimming upstream the entire conversation. But he was just so...distracting.

In all her years, Sakura had never felt a true attraction to another. She had often found plenty of men handsome and many of their companies enjoyable, but anytime it came to having a desire for more, she could never find a place for them in her heart. For many centuries she fretted that her heart was broken, that she was incapable of any kind of romantic feelings. It hurt to break others, but she felt it would hurt them more if she tried to give them what she could not. It would be unfair.

But there was something different about Sasuke, and his penetrating eyes and gods divine features were only half of it. However, attraction or not, she was in dangerous territory. Flashes of Naruto’s half torn wings ran across her mind and she shivered.

What kind of punishment did Sasuke Uchiha, a demon from the underworld where eternal punishment was dealt, would have instore for a liar? Would he rip her tongue from her mouth, flash his red eyes and make her see horrible things, or simply end her life with no more effort than he would a bug. She imagined everything and anything, everything but what he actually did, and Sakura began to understand the true unpredictability of Sasuke Uchiha.

He smiled.
Oh so wickedly and toe curling sly that she felt a warm heat build in her lower abdomen.

*Gods he was so beautiful it was a sin,* she thought in her mind.

The thought brought about a whole new fear towards Sasuke that she had not even considered over the course of the week. Despite the comforting ease and lack of hostility that she felt from him, Sakura realized he was still, possibly even more dangerous than she originally thought. It was just in a way she had never expected. And to make things worse, she had no idea how to defend herself from such dangers.

Sasuke could not help but revel in the glee that came from catching her in a lie. And the expression on her face was well worth the aggravating accusations of being a stalking creep. She was a rabbit caught in a snare and she knew it. The question was, was she going to fight against the trap or accept her fate and give in.

“So you do know them?” He pushed. “You know what they are?”

He watched her eyes dart around as if searching for inspiration.

“I um…” her eyes met his then quickly moved away as she focused her attention at his forehead. She let out a nervous laugh that caused the predator inside of him to shiver with anticipation.

“Sakura,” he purred, causing her eyes to move down to his lips. He moved them into a side smirk that grew further when he watched her tongue to dart out and wet her bottom lip.

Reaching out, he boldly grasped her chin to tilt her face up until green orbs met his dark ones. He noted the way her chest heaved with breaths and her pulse throbbed against her throat, telling him her heart was beating wildly.

A hunger grew within him that had been dormant for far too long. It was so strong and pressing that it was difficult not to consume what he was craving, Sakura. He was starved for her. Her lips, her mind, her soul, everything.

The need for her was so pressing he nearly swooped down and claimed those parted lips that were held open as she stared up at him. The monster inside him roared its approval and even the sanity
portion of his mind could hardly give a reason not to do it. For despite its stability, even his sane side knew that he needed her.

_She doesn't know who you are._

Those words were his damnation but also his saving grace. He needed to be careful, he could not scare her.

“How do you know me?”

Sasuke broke out of his thoughts and looked down at her, clarity flushing into his mind as her soft and soothing voice anchored his sanity. His hand fell slowly from her chin as he tilted his head to the side.

With those green orbs wide open, it was like he could see into her mind. He was tempted to jump in and search her familiar depths but he resisted. He saw confliction and want as she stared back at him, almost as if she were pleading him to tell her their history.

He felt his brow narrow as he tried to understand this. He felt the words begin to build but a pair of familiar chakras in the distance caused him to pause. Looking over her head he starred in the direction as an annoyance began to rise up. He wanted more time but it seemed that life would not be quite so giving today. However, he did not let it bother him too much.

He knew how to find her now, or at least someone who could lead him to her. With that thought, his dislike of the pale artist decreased marginally. His mind raced with a way to leave her without letting her easily forget him.

An idea sparked in his mind.

His eyes settled back down on her and he gave her a smirk as the thought of what he was about to do played out in his mind.

“I have to leave,” he announced.
“What?” She blurted in protest as a hand shot out and grabbed ahold of his wrist. “No! I need answers!”

Her protest caused something inside him to purr with content. And the feeling of her touch enthralled him, tempted him. He nearly snatched her up and took him with her, but he feared that if Kakashi and Naruto were involved, that plan would backfire. Or at least prove to be highly inconvenient.

“Hn,” he hummed as he took a step closer, taking caution of how she reacted to his proximity.

When she gave no indication of discomfort, most likely distracted by his announced departure, he raised his hand and ever so slowly, extended his middle and forefinger.

Her eyes followed his hand with every movement and her brows creased in wonder as he poised his fingers just above her brow. With a small jab, he taped the middle of her forehead.

He felt a warm, genuine smile take over his face as she did her familiar flinch. Then her eyes opened and she looked at him with a strange expression. He held her gaze, searching and hoping that he was not mistaking the familiarity that shone in her eyes.

“Sorry Sakura, maybe next time.”

And with those words he departed from her. Flashing his red eyes to capture the moment before he flash stepped away, leaving her alone with nothing but a confused expression to keep her company.

As he took to the air his mind raced with excitement. She was alive and he was going to have her back. How he wanted to take her with him then and there but he would be patient. When she came with him, she would come with him willingly.

Soon, he cooed to the creature that lived within him.

His assurance seemed to settle its stirring and give him clarity to formulate his next step.
Wow long chapter but hope you all like it and it made sense. Also hope the switching back and forth was not too confusing and I was able to describe everything well enough for you to envision. Next chapter will be back to Ancient Greece! Thank you all for your kind words and support!
Painful Anniversary and a New Neighbor

Chapter Notes

*bows head in shame* my absence and broken promises is inexcusable...its only a half chapter but I figured ya'll have waited enough and it was running long so in the spirit of Halloween here is a little treat! Next post will be the second part of this which I have pretty much finished just needs some fine tuning.

Ancient Greece

It was but a blur both when it happened and it was still unclear to her when she recalled it in her mind later. They had been lazily enjoying the abandoned wheat fields near her family's olive grove. Sasuke had his head in her lap while she had been enjoying the moment and feeling of the days lethargic pace when she looked down at him. For a moment, for one solid and paused breath, time seemed to slow impossibly more.

Dark eyes looked up at her with onyx color that was such a rich luster that it was like gazing into the midnight sky. She felt far more trapped in that moment than when she had ever gazed into them when they had bled into red pools of hypnotizing allure. But that was when all clarity was ceased and blurriness took over.

The moment was short lived. In the blink of an eye, he had removed himself from her lap. It had happened so quickly she had thought he had dissolved into nothing. But then she spotted him standing on the opposite side of their small sanctuary of flattened grass, looking at her with nothing less than horror. Before she could even be alarmed by what could cause such an expression to appear on his apathetic face, it transformed.

Confused, she had made a move to stand and that was when he had shouted at her to not move. That was when it hit her and the hurt of the rejection was nearly physical. Disgust was what she saw on his face, disgust and contempt and it was all directed at her.

Naruto had gone after Sasuke not long after his hasty and unexplained departure, thus leaving Sakura alone, feeling confused but mostly hurt.

It had all been a blur but there were two things that remained vivid in her mind. The look of near worship as he gazed up at her from her lap and the repulsed expression he wore as she attempted to shorten the smallest of space between them. She had folded into herself and wept until Naruto returned an hour later. Her eyes had long since dried up but the red and puffy swelling, as well as the salty tracks, told Naruto all he needed. After many cursings of a certain bastard, Naruto took her home, told it would be alright, and to not take Sasuke's actions to heart.

"That bastard has more mood swings in a day than he has brains," Naruto had yelled. "Tomorrow he will show up as if nothing had happened. He might even be the one weaving flower crowns for you as he frolics through the field."

She laughed when her mind produced an image of such a thing, even though she knew that it was an exaggeration. Sasuke would never frolick, he would stomp. But all the same, she felt better after Naruto's assurance that Sasuke would be back within a day or two and acting like nothing had
happened.

So she had gone to bed that night feeling very much lighter than she had felt earlier that afternoon. But the next day passed and then the next, and Sasuke had yet to make an appearance.

The metallic glint of reflected moonlight was all he needed to make a quick descent and land precisely where he wanted. Taking station on a cobbledstone wall that ran along freshly tilled farmland, Sasuke glared down from his vantage point as his purposefully hard landing captured the attention of his prey.

Purple eyes gazed back up at him, a predatory smile resembling that of a shark spread across his face. "Ah, Sasuke Uchiha, just the demon I was looking for," he commented as he hefted his large sword from his shoulder and propped it into the ground to lean on. "You know you're a tough one to find. You would think with such raw power it would be easier."

Sasuke allowed an arrogant smirk to shape his lips. "I am only found when I want to be found. You're lucky that I was in a giving mood tonight," he replied before his tone and face turned frigid. "Now what are you doing here? This is not your territory."

The threat in his voice seemed to have no effect on Suigetsu as he grinned toothily. "Yes well," he responded. "As a rogue technically I am encroaching on someone's territory no matter where I am so I figured why not choose this charming little countryside."

Sasuke moved from his perch, wings making a flutter as he landed on the ground. His knees bent with the abrupt force only minimizing the small fissures that spread through the ground beneath his feet.

As he straightened, his eyes bled red in unvoiced threat. "Both of us know that you have other places in the world in which you would want your beady little eyes to rove over," Sasuke remarked darkly. "Now do us both a favor and don't waste our time, why are you here?"

Suigetsu's casual display only faltered slightly as he shifted his body, taking a subtle stance of defense that ceased to escape Sasuke's observance. "Orochimaru would like to seek out an audience with you. He has an offer to extend."

Sasuke's brow raised. "Never thought you would sink so low as to become that serpents messenger boy. Even for you that's low. Who would have thought the lone shark would ever be so weak and desperate to sell out for servants work."

Suigetsu's lavender eyes darkened to violet but despite the hate reflected in his orbs, he pasted a crooked grin on his face. "He made an offer I couldn't refuse."

"And now you claim he has one for me?"

Suigetsu nodded.

"Tch," Sasuke scoffed. "Don't bother wasting your breath, I already told him I am not interested."

He shoved his hands in his pockets and began walking away.

"You know," Suigetsu's voice echoed from behind, causing Sasuke to slow his steps. "I couldn't help but notice you have been spending a lot of time on this little rock the mortals call inhabitable land. Makes me wonder what's on it that would cause you to linger so long."
Sasuke did not turn around as he stared down the dark road before him. Gritting his teeth, he moved to take a step forward but was stopped by the next words that echoed through the night.

"I couldn't help but notice you seem to hover around a particularly enticing mortal. I haven't seen her myself but her soul's aura calls out so sweetly. I can't even imagine what it actually looks like."

Sasuke's fist was tightly clenched as he did his best to not show a single sign that would give away that Suigetsu's words struck a chord far deeper than intended.

"Well, I guess now you know why I have been spending time here then," Sasuke remarked back, his head turned to the side to eye Suigetsu threateningly. "Just also know that you are to stay away from it. That souls is mine to claim."

Suigetsu let out a scoff. "Please Uchiha, we both know that if you were going to claim that soul you would have done it a long time ago. It's not your style to play cat and mouse. You arrive, you corrupt, and you leave. Which makes me wonder... what exactly is so special about this one."

Sasuke swallowed, he did not like the unease that such a threat brought upon him. He should not care. Not this much.

"Tch," he let out, turning his back to Suigetsu. "There is nothing special about this one. I just felt like trying something new."

"Nothing special eh," Suigetsu repeated. "Well then I am sure you wouldn't mind if I—"

Before Sasuke could even form a thought, his body had reacted on its own accord. One moment he was standing while facing the darkness and in the next, he was crouched over a more than stunned Suigetsu with his hand clasped around the demons neck. His mind was dizzy with rage and movement as he glared almost nose to nose with the violet eyed demon. He could feel the tomoe patterns in his eyes swirling so quickly they were just a blur to the rogue demon.

Teeth clenched, his seething breaths came out labored and hot as small flecks of spittle fell onto the demon beneath him. His body shook, he had never felt so out of control that had his mind been able to cognitively acknowledge it, he would have been worried. But in this moment, worry was but a fleeting thought. Instead he felt powerful and territorial. Like a lion who had found another lion trespassing in his pride, he wanted to rip the other creature apart.

It was just fortunate for the slippery eel that Sasuke needed a message delivered. With great restraint, he was able to calm himself enough to unclench his jaw to speak the words he needed.

"If I see you so much as look in the direction of this island ever again I will chop you up so finely that you wouldn't even be considered chum for the bottom feeders," he growled darkly before standing up, dragging the rogue demon up with him. Once standing, he shoved him. "Now run along before I change my mind."

Suigetsu no longer held any ease that he posed earlier. With caution, he nodded his head and stepped towards his sword, pausing in his crouch when Sasuke spoke again.

"And tell your master and any other demon you come across that they will share the same fate as you if they come near here. I want nothing from that snake nor will I ever."

Sasuke did not wait to make sure Suigetsu left. He did not need to. The look in his eyes was enough. He had seen that look many a time caused by his brother, father, and most often by his uncle. It was always terrifying but also inspiring to see such fear from another's power and presence. Tonight was the first time Sasuke had ever seen such a look and have him be the reason.
To say he liked it was false.

He loved it.

Despite her warm attitude and caring heart that made people like her, Sakura did not have very many friends. The island she lived on was small and the area she dwelt was low in population. While she got along with everyone, she could not call any of them true friends. Most were either too old or too young to be considered peers.

Over the past year, Sakura had grown overly fond of having both Naruto and Sasuke in her life. Despite his pervy habits, she had even grown fond of Kakashi's presence. But the silver seraph was not the same. For when it came to the sunny angel and midnight demon, she had found a special place in her heart. Naruto pretty much carved his own name in that place with how easily he contributed to their relationship but Sasuke had been much more difficult. It was like a small seedling had been planted and while on the surface it looked like nothing more than a small sprout, beneath the surface was a complex and deep rooted system. The kind that would do damage if uprooted. And uprooted it had become.

On that day in the abandoned field, she had thought she had finally broken through to him when he had laid his head in her lap as if he did not have a care in the world. It was not as if Sasuke completely avoided touching her, and it was not as if she were hoping for his touch. But his habit of only touching her purely out of necessity had not gone unnoticed by her. Sasuke had always been careful around her.

Yes, he had his tendency to be slightly too close in proximity that left her unnerved every time. But rarely was there actual physical touching. Sakura was positive he did it on purpose. She had a suspicion he liked to make her feel uncomfortable. But that aside, actual physical contact was left to be far and few occasions.

That day he had so easily been trusting and open for the briefest of moments. It was what she finally marked as his acceptance of her. The budding of the tiny plant that had steadily grown over the changing months and seasons within her heart. It had warmed her so much that she felt a flutter within her heart and stomach that she could not help but beam down at him.

Sasuke had looked at her with his eyes and for the first time, his face had been completely open to her. He had looked at her like no one had ever looked at her before, as if he were in awe.

There was no denying that such an expression coming from him was not flattering, and it stirred something within her. Sasuke was by every means the most handsome being she had ever laid eyes upon. Although his personality seemed cold and abrasive, Sakura had learned in the past year that it was just a front. While his methods and delivery was not always a mastery, Sakura knew that his actions and demanding aura where always directed in the preservation of those he cared for. A category in which she had thought she had finally earned a place.

But before the bud could even begin to bloom, it had been ripped out of her chest, roots and all. Leaving her feeling like there was a giant hole in her heart. Initially, Sakura had been confused and hurt but those feelings had been steadily changing over the days. Changing into something she rarely felt.

Anger.

It had been a month since she had seen a single spiked hair of the demons head. She had interrogated Naruto about it but the blessed seraph seemed to be just as confused as her. After the
third week, she seemed determined to focus on being angry with the demon. It made his absence seem more like her idea than the uncontrolled reality that Sasuke seemed to have removed himself from her life. Or phrased more painfully, removed her from his life because it seemed she was not important enough.

Sakura understood she was just a small countryside mortal. Her life was dull compared to only what her wildest imaginations could derive from what little she really knew about the seraphim worlds. But all the same, without the anger to mask it, it hurt.

She had done well to not let Sasuke's absence bother her for the past week, but on this particular morning, she found herself having difficulty pushing thoughts of him from her mind. It was the anniversary of their first meeting. Like that fateful day a year ago, Sakura had awoken before the sun had come up to carry her families offerings to the temple and return with the fresh spring water that was blessed by the gods.

It was something she had always done with her father but in recent years the trip up the mountain had become too rigorous for his bad knee. So it was a task Sakura took upon herself to make sure her family's prosperity remained blessed by the gods. Last year had been the first time to do it on her own, this year was her second.

Waking up before the sun had even begun to show signs of its approach, Sakura gathered her offerings in a basket and a light shawl as the morning air was still cool despite the warmer season they were currently in. With the basket tugged neatly beneath her arm and her shawl wrapped around her shoulders, she lit a small oil lantern and made her way out the door.

As always it was quiet on the mountain side and the stars above were exceptionally visible tonight with the lack of cloud cover. Sakura had always loved this day. But despite the fond memories of the many years of tradition, there was a subtle melancholy this particular morning. Although she had done this alone last year, she had not felt lonely then. Today was different.

It was the year mark from when she first met her seraphim. Yes, her seraphim, for that was how she had come to know them over the year. They were always around it seemed. Even when they weren't there, they were there. She didn't know how to explain it but it was like their presence was ever felt.

But not today. Today she was alone. She felt nothing.

Doing her best to push aside the eerie loneliness, Sakura took up a swift pace in order to make it to the summit before dawn. With the dim light of her oil lamp and the full moon, it was easy to make her way up the winding path. However there was something about the way the light cast shadows all around her that left her uneasy. While darkness kept her from seeing dangers, the light made her visible to predators.

It was a silly notion as there were no predators in the area but Sakura still couldn't help but feel uneasy. As if something were watching here.

The memory of a wandering demon came rushing back to her and she found herself hugging her shawl closer to her as if it were a Spartan shield. A crack to her left had her whirling so quickly her lamp was nearly extinguished from the wind she had caused. Its illumination flickered and then slowly grew back to light her surroundings.

"Hello?" she called out, doing her best to keep the quaver from her voice.
She swallowed deeply when there was no reply but the distinguished flutter of cloth confirmed that something, or someone was there.

"Sasuke?" she called out, hating how much hope was present in her tone, *she was supposed to be angry with him.*

Again there was no reply.

Whether it was self preservation or stupidity, Sakura found her earlier fear being replaced by irritation as she lowered the lamp slightly and placed her belongings onto the ground. As she straightened she grabbed a few rocks that were near her feet.

"Sasuke if you are out there this isn't funny," she growled. When she received no answer again she threw a rock into the brush. "You have some nerve to not show your face for the past month and then decide to try and scare me!" She tossed another rock, this time throwing it harder than the first. "I'm serious, this next one is going to hit you right into that arrogant mouth of yours that I know—"

She was cut off from her rant when a rustle of leaves sounded and dark figure stepped out into the light. But it was not Sasuke she saw standing before her with his hands raised in defense and a gentle but defensive smile on his face.

"Wait, wait," the stranger protested as he eyed her arm that was poised and ready to throw. "I came out, don't throw. I didn't mean to frighten you!"

Sakura stared at the stranger as her brow wrinkled. She did not recognize him at all, and while the island ports brought in a constant flow of new faces for trade and work, none of them ever wandered this far from the main islands hub.

"Who are you?" she asked in a guarded tone. "Why were you lurking in the bushes?"

"Can you put the rock down first?" he requested gently, eyeing the drawn back arm that held the stone. "That first was throw not bad but that second one makes me not want to know how much harder that third one would be."

Sakura studied the man for a long while. After a moment she lowered her hand but kept a firm hold on the stone. The stranger nodded and gave a small grateful smile.

"I am sorry to have startled you, my name his Oberon," he said taking a step forward but stopped when Sakura retreated back a step herself.

"What are you doing here?" she asked suspiciously.

"I live here," he answered. "I am new to the island," he explained quickly when seemed to not buy this piece of Information. "I live with my uncle you may know him. He owns the barley farm just a stone's throw from here."

Sakura knew the man he was speaking of. Aetós was a middle aged man who liked to keep to himself most of the time. However he had grown sick last winter and she had helped him recover and learned more about him than any of his neighbors. However she didn't recall him ever speaking of any family.

"Oh," she said slowly. "I did not realize he had a nephew."

Oberon rubbed the back of his head as he made a show of looking uncomfortable. "Ah yes well, I
would not think that. Not too many people like to speak of the bastard son of their sisters. I assume he probably never mentioned he had a sister either?"

Suddenly Sakura felt guilty as she shook her head and quickly moved closer to him again. "Forgive me, I didn't mean to be so ill mannered and callous," she quickly apologized while stretching forth her hand. "My name is Sakura, I live in the manor a few kilometers from here, where the olive grove is."

Oberon took her hand and gave her a charmed smile. "No need to apologize," he said, accepting her hand and drawing it up to lay a kiss atop her knuckles. "A pretty maiden such as yourself should always be cautious when coming across a stranger at any hour."

Sakura felt a warmth grow in her cheeks. She hadn't always been one to fawn over men but then again, her experience with handsome men within her age was limited. Sasuke and Naruto did not count. Since they were already over a century old and not exactly young men. And then there was their ethereal beauty. She knew better than to even hope that they would look upon her with any attraction.

However, now that she was eased, she could not deny Oberon's own attractiveness. It was a bold statement but she almost felt as if he could give the seraphim a run for their money when it came to handsome features. Slightly long dark brown hair curled around his ears and the nap of his neck, the fringe of his bangs just barely framed his dark brown eyes. In his mouth he chewed a piece of grass that gave him an easy going but roguish look.

"Well all the same, I apologize," she managed to say as she withdrew her hand and busied herself with collecting her belongings in an attempt to hide her flushed face until she could compose herself. "I just wasn't expecting to meet anyone and you caught me off guard hiding in the dark like that."

"Ah yes, well, it's a bit embarrassing but it seems I got a little turned around," he answered. "I couldn't sleep so I thought I would take a walk. But it seems I got turned around. Seems I somehow wandered off the path."

"I can see how that can happen when wandering around it a strange new place, in the dark, without a light," Sakura pointed out. It was perhaps a harsh judgment but Oberon did not seem to be too bright when it came to common sense. Taking pity on him, she held out her oil lamp. "You may take this if you would like to guide yourself home."

"I couldn't take away the only light of a beautiful thing like you," he protested with a tone that held almost too much flattery.

"I couldn't take away the only light of a beautiful thing like you," he protested with a tone that held almost too much flattery.

Beneath the flowery words was an underlining of second meaning that seemed malicious. However Sakura ignored this. She never liked to be one to judge too quickly.

Sakura shook her head. "It's nothing. I know my way well enough, I could get to my destination blindfolded," she insisted as she offered the lamp again.

Oberon reluctantly took the lamp. "How about this, I can escort you to your destination, then perhaps you could walk me back when you finish with your things. I wouldn't feel right knowing you were out here all by yourself. There could be other things that are lurking in the dark besides lost city boys."
Sakura couldn't help but give him only a polite smile. In any other case she would have been fully amused but his words had reminded her of another handsome, dark haired man that gave out similar warnings of what lurked in the darkness.

Immediately Sakura frowned at the thought of Sasuke. She was not supposed to be thinking about him. Thinking about him made her miss him and she would not miss someone who walked out of her life without a care. She was moving on. From what exactly was a bit grayed but all the same, she refused to dwell on it.

With this determined reminder, Sakura faced Oberon and forced a more genuine smile. "I would be happy to have your company," she said as she looped her hand through his offered arm and began to walk with him, setting her attention up the darkened path.

As she began to talk animatedly and inquire of Oberon's life before coming to the island, she failed to notice the dark desire that flamed in his eyes. Little did she know that Oberon was just the name of the last mortal soul claimed by the demon walking alongside her. Little did she know that he was in deep need of a soul to keep him going a little longer since his recent banishment from the underworld.

As the rogue demon supplied fanciful answers taken from stories he had stolen from the mortals he preyed upon, he failed to realize who the true prey was in this situation. For little did he know just what a precious jewel he had crossed paths with. Most rogues stuck to the cities where there was an abundance of souls. But there was a risk of running into seraphim, both blessed and fallen. Muso, the true name of the demon, was young, he had yet to even collect a century to his name, therefore he was weak.

He would not have lasted more than a decade before being hunted down by an archangel or demon lord. So he resorted to the outskirts, making his prey far and few. Normally he would not have come to such a remote island but something had drawn him here.

He had thought it was desperation but the moment he sensed her soul, Muso knew that it had been her. This ignorant little mortal girl that had him practically drooling with how delectable her aura was.

The rogue had thought himself lucky in finding a diamond in the rough. He had yet to fully look into her soul but he could sense it had a strong purity. It would last him far longer than the murderous soul he had last claimed. However, little did he know that this diamond was guarded by a creature far more menacing than a dragon in its treasure trove.
Ancient Greece

Excessive blandishment aside, Sakura could not help but feel charmed by Oberon. Her experience with young men was limited and she could not help but feel flattered by his pretty words and chivalrous manners. As they walked together, Sakura listened to his wild tales and encounters of city life on the mainland. Her attention was wrapped and enthralled with his words as she dreamed of the day when she would have her own stories to tell.

They had just passed the small shrine that marked that halfway point to her destination when it all happened. One moment Oberon was matching her steps as he carried her heavy basket, and then the next, pottery and wicker was being smashed and broken when a black blur came from the darkness and pounced on her new acquaintance.

She only had a moment to see his dark brown eyes look up before his body was blocked from her sight by another. Leathered wings were poised and spread like a cobra's hood when reared up to strike. Tense muscles, bulged from the strained weight of the massive appendages of aviation and she could see the figures body shaking as tremors of anger rushed through his body. Although he had just been a blur and now all she could see was his posterior, Sakura knew who this new arrival was and he was no stranger, despite his absence for the past month.

“Sasuke!” There was no mistaking the spikey ebony hair that was silhouetted against the moonlight. “What are you doing!?!?” Sakura exclaimed as she scrambled up from the ground where she had been knocked over in his abrupt entrance.

If he heard her, he paid her no mind as he reached down and lifted the slumped form from the ground by his neck. He let out a small choke that was replaced by a grunt when Sasuke slammed his back against the pillar he had just recently been thrown against. Brown eyes widened as Sasuke’s bled red and a strangled gasp escaped his lips.
“Uchiha,” he managed to whisper, a deep fear echoed in his voice as his face mirrored that turmoil.

Sasuke took a moment to smirk as he relished in that new found power he had been tasting in the recent month. But it did not last long as his face menaced and he began his interrogation. “Who are you?” he demanded.

“M-Muso,” the struggling demon stammered.

Sasuke heard a questioning hum of confusion come from Sakura but he paid her no mind. The name meant nothing to Sasuke and he held no recollection of this demon.

“Did Orochimaru send you?” Muso only gave him a look of confusion which Sasuke responded in return by the tightening of his hand. “Who sent you?” he growled.

“Sasuke stop it!” her shout fell upon deaf ears again which spurred Sakura forward.

She raced to his side and only when her small hands wrapped around his forearm did he acknowledge her. His head angled to look at her, blazing red eyes glowing forebodingly down at her. Jet black bangs shrouded most of his face but she could see his features soften, if only a little, as he caught sight of her. But his attention hardly lingered. He avoided her wide eyes as she looked up at him with alarm as he fingers clutched at his arm. Automatically his attention went back to Muso and his grip tightened even more.

“What are you doing!?!?” she demanded again. “Let him go! You’re hurting him!”

Sasuke’s face immediately darkened again as a hiss seeped between his clenched teeth. “Sakura,” he began firmly, “go home. You do not need to see this.”

“No, I said stop it!” she protested as she uselessly pulled at his arm in an attempt to pull him away from Muso. “Oberon is a friend!”

“His name is Muso and he’s a demon,” Sasuke spat, keeping his attention on Muso.
At this revelation, Sakura was taken aback. From the corner of his eye, Sasuke could see her earlier foundation crumble. He watched as her eyes, a forest green in the dim light, darted from him to the demon in his hands, then back to him. Slowly, her head began to move from side to side.

“No...he’s a friend. He lives with—”

“He’s a demon,” Sasuke cut her off with an exasperated tone. “An outcast from the underworld and judging by the miniscule level of chakra, he is in desperate need of a soul. If you were not so gullible you would have seen past his ruse and saw that he was taking you for a fool. You’re not his friend, you’re his next meal.”

Sakura said nothing in response, too stunned to speak. Taking advantage of her silence, Sasuke continued, turning his attention back to the squirming demon in his hands.

“He is nothing but a leech, a parasite in need of eviction from this world...from all worlds,” he said darkly as he moved his free hand towards his waist.

Sakura watched as his hand moved to beneath his cloak. She had not noticed it at first, but now as his hand wrapped around its long handle and the sound of metal being drawn began to ring, she realized he was armed with his sword. It was not the first time she had seen him with it, but never had she seen him use it. It did not take long for her mind to realize what was about to happen.

Her body moved automatically. Letting go of his forearm, Sakura ducked under his outstretched arm and planted herself between the two demons.

Blazing red eyes snapped down to her and for the first time, he finally met her eyes full on. He paused in the withdrawing of his sword as she stared back at him, mesmerized by the swirling tomoes, but not entranced. Her eyes moved over the rest of his face, taking in the furrowed brow and downward pull of his lips. It was strange, in terms of a lifetime a month was not much, even more insignificant for one who lived for eternity. Yet, there was a noticeable change about him. It was not physical, but there was something about his countenance, it was different. And Sakura was unsure if it was good or bad.

“She’s a friend,” Sasuke began in a stoney command, “move.”

She shook her head.
“Sakura,” he repeated in warning.

“No, Sasuke,” she said firmly. “I don’t want you to kill him.”

He gave her a look of utter disbelief. “Sakura, he was going to destroy you.”

“But he didn’t,” she said firmly. “You stopped that, I am safe now.”

“And he never will because now he dies,” Sasuke spat. “He is a rogue, a traitor of his people, of my people, my family. As an Uchiha it is my duty to ensure scum like him know there is no mercy when they disband and disobey.”

He moved to continue withdrawing his sword but was stopped when Sakura shoved him. It was not strong but given the unexpectancy, she managed to push him back a few steps until he reclaimed his balance.

“I said no, Sasuke,” she yelled.

Sasuke’s eyes narrowed and his face pinched in annoyance. “He isn’t innocent Sakura, nor will this sudden saving turn him into a saint. He isn’t like you and your fellow mortals where he can repent. He has forsaken his duty to the gods, he has defiled his purpose. In our world there is only duty or damnation. We are immortal for a reason, we are not meant to die. That means he will do everything in his power to ensure he escapes that fate. Today would have been you but if you let him go it will just be someone else. Can you live with that?”

He watched as she hesitated for a moment but as soon as her eyes narrowed, he knew what would come out of her mouth.

“I said no, Sasuke. I will not have you kill someone because of me.”

Sasuke’s lips drew back as he bared his teeth. “I am not doing this for you,” he lied. “I am doing this because it is what I do. I condemn mortals and kill traitors.”
He withdrew his sword and took a step forward, but he stopped when she did not move.

“Sakura,” he began, his voice barely controlled, his patience was wearing paper thin. “He may have been kind, charming, and flattering but that is how he works. He first gains your trust before he turns on you. Seduction is his tools and empty promises are his lure.”

Slowly, his free hand moved up and for the first time in a month, he closed the final remaining space in which he had so painstakingly kept between them. His finger outlined her hairline, stroking the floral strands before sweeping down to touch her cheek then outline her jaw.

“It may seem impossible now,” he said gently, “but he would have had you doing your darkest imaginations and more. He would have found your weakness, your vice, and then he would have exploited it. You mortals have no idea what your truest desires are until you are bathing in the blood of innocents or writhing in pleasures of the flesh. You would find yourself giving yourself away to anyone without any care or regard to the sacred temple of your soul. He could have shown you the path to a seat of power where you would end up razing nations and leaving nothing but soot and bones. And if those were not something you craved, he would have found it. Everyone has a darkside, even the purest, they are usually the worst.”

He was not sure if he truly believed the last part or if Sakura was capable of any of it. It was impossible to imagine. But if it brought her to reasoning, he was willing to let only lies pass from his lips for the rest of his life. Why he was willing was unanswerable, he just knew it was true.

His fingers paused as he found himself staring directly into her eyes. “All mortals have a weakness Sakura. You are lucky he did not find yours today but if he goes free whose will he find instead? Your mother’s? Your father’s? The carpenter boy’s?” At the mention of Pyrro, Sakura let out a small gasp of either shock or surprise. Whichever, Sasuke did not care. All that mattered was that he finally seemed to have her attention. “They will be next Sakura, and if not them, someone else’s beloved...would you truly allow that on your conscience?”

She hesitated in giving an answer, telling Sasuke that she was indecisive. Slowly, he tucked a piece of hair behind her ear.

“I will make it quick,” he assured. “There will be no suffering in his death.” His eyes flickered up to look at Muso from over her head. “Only after,” he said darkly, his eyes boring into the rogues eyes, as if promising that he would go to purgatory himself to ensure the demon’s suffering.
“No.”

Her words were soft and contrasting to his preceding ones and it took him a moment to even register that she had spoken.

His eyes shot down to her. “What do you mean—”

“I mean I won’t let you kill him.”

Her voice was firm as she reached up and grasped the hand that had settled onto her shoulder after tucking her hair away. His thumb, which had been slowly stroking her skin on its own accord, stilled as he brought his full attention to her. But she did not reciprocate such actions as she twisted and turned her back on him. Her hand still clasped his, keeping him in place as she faced the demon who was looking between herself and Sasuke with an expression of intrigue.

“Leave this island,” she instructed in a monotone.

The demon gave her a lingering look before starting to move, only to be stopped when not only Sasuke, but Sakura moved as well. It was Sakura’s arm being pushed in front of him that caused him to pause, and it was the glowing red threat that he saw hovering right behind her that made him freeze.

“Do not prey on any of its inhabitants nor any others you may cross upon in the farthest of lands,” Sakura said, drawing the demons eyes to her. “Swear that you will never take, nor corrupt a single soul on this earthen land for the remainder of your existence.” The demon nodded but Sakura did not move her arm. Her eyes narrowed. “I want an oath. Swear upon the creators of my world and yours and make a covenant that if you do any of this, you will be taken by Jashin himself to be punished for a thousand times a thousand.”

Sasuke stared at the back of Sakura’s head, surprised by her demands. How she knew of a covenant oath or of the minor but ultimately feared god of the seraphim, he did not know. His only guess was that Naruto had been going into far more in depth topics of their world than normally accepted. A covenant oath was rarely spoken of and made even more rarely. If the promise of the oath was bent, a seraph would lose their wings. If broken, they would lose their life instantly and delivered to the god Jashin, who hungered for souls.

“Are you insane!” the demon demanded. “If I don’t claim souls, I die! I can’t agree to your
“You’ll die anyways if you don’t,” Sasuke responded, looking straight at him from the top of Sakura’s head. He wasn’t sure if she would protest or not but given the tightened silence that lingered, he assumed she agreed. Part of him, the new found desire he had recently awakened, begged for the demon to refuse. It both excited and sickened him.

After a prolonged debate, the demon finally nodded. “Fine,” he spat, starring darkly at Sakura with contempt. “I solemnly swear that I shall never take, nor claim, a single human soul from this earth. May my wings shrivel and shed if I am tempted, and may my life be claimed and soul delivered to Jashin for my thousands times thousands years of pain and suffering.”

Sakura gave a nod and after sending them both a venomous glare, the demon departed, tripping over his feet and taking a faulty lift off before disappearing into the night. When she turned around Sakura was presented to a skeptical looking Sasuke.

“What?” She spat, her tone taking on a harshness at her conflicted feelings.

She knew she had just condemned the demon to a slow and painful death. But the thought of letting someone be killed because of her or another soul facing the fate in which Sasuke described, it seemed the lesser of two evils. Was it truly bad if it was done with the intention of stopping something worse?

Sasuke let out a tsk, breaking her from her inner turmoil. Sakura gave him a glare then moved to brush past him to collect her offerings, which were now spilled across the darkened path. As she picked through the broken shards of pottery, she did her best to salvage what was left. The basket in which she had carried most of the offerings had been smashed but the contents in which it held were still salvageable. She frowned at the bent wicker and did her best to reshape it to functionality.

A pair of familiar black sandals came into her vision. Sasuke was not even attempting to avoid smashing the preserved olives that she had brought in offering in hopes for another abundant year.

“You know you just condemned him to a worse fate than I would have given him. At least mine would have been swift and painless.”
She continued to work around his feet, salvaging what few olives were left. “You don’t know that,” she said quietly after a prolonged silence.

Another tsk made her brow twitch in annoyance but she refused to look up at him. Apparently being ignored was not satisfactory to him as she found herself face to face with him. As he crouched down, he stilled her hand. It was only then that she allowed her eyes to drift up and meet his.

“He will break his oath,” he assured her. “They always do. Therefore you cursed him to damnation with Jashin which makes the standard damnation look like paradise in comparison. Not only that but an innocent soul will be taken from its mortal body when desperation of survival sets in.”

She did not respond immediately and he cocked his head to the side. Having difficulty to form words, Sakura swallowed and looked down at the ground. She was overwhelmed. Overwhelmed with guilt and conflict. She looked up at Sasuke and she suddenly became aware of the sensation of being pulled towards him. Conflicting emotions where forgotten as she was overcome with a single overwhelming sensation. His presence.

Sasuke’s entrance had been so rushed and unexpected that it had not even set in until now. Sasuke was here. A month of his absence had taken a strange toll on her and forced her to feel emotions that she was not used to. It had been exhausting. And now he was here and acting as if the past month had not even passed. He was still the same bossy grouch without so much as an explanation or apology.

Sasuke watched Sakura as she stared down at the ground. From the tilted angle of her face he could only see her half lidded eyes and forehead. At first he could see a small sadness within her green irises as her brow worried. He could tell she was feeling guilty and suddenly thought that perhaps he should not have rubbed salt in the wound with his earlier words. But it was a thought he batted away like he would a pesky fly. She needed to learn. This was a lesson she needed to know.

She blinked and something shifted. Sasuke watched as her head slowly moved up and he was able to finally see her face in its entirety, giving a full performance as her expression morphed into new emotions that were taking over. Her brow furrowed, her eyes narrowed, and her jaw clenched.

“Why are you even here?” she demanded.

Sasuke raised a brow at her tone. “Saving you from your naive stupidity obviously,” he responded dryly as he got up.
She followed his actions. “Well then I guess I was lucky it happened tonight instead of two days ago, or two weeks, or any day within the past month.”

Sasuke narrowed his eyes as her arms wildly gestured in the air as she responded with heavy sarcasm. He was not appreciative at being mocked by the animated pixie woman.

Her face was flushed and her eyes seemed to glow like the bioluminescent flora and fauna that illuminated the underworld. The glow was alluring, a small reminder of the true beauty that this already beautiful vessel held within it.

Sasuke suddenly became aware of his thoughts and the danger that they brought.

His instinct was to grab hold of her and shut her up. However, if he were to grab ahold of her, he was not sure if he could trust himself to let go. Already he felt his body being pulled towards her as if she were a magnetic field and he was a hunk of iron. It was taking everything he had to keep the minimal space between them and her wild arms and advancing steps were not helping in his endeavors. He needed more control, which meant he needed more space, more distance. He needed to be away from her.

“Where in hades domain have you even….?”

Sasuke heard her rant falter when he took an abrupt turn and began to walk away without so much as a glance back. He heard her scrambling around as if she were picking up her belongings and for a moment, he thought she was letting him go without a fuss. It was an unexpected but relieving reaction on her part. However it did not last long.

The sound of her sandaled feet following after him brought a twitch to his eye but he did his best to ignore it. Picking up his stride, he attempted to out march her, but the transition of her following pace of walk to a jog, told him it was futile.

“Excuse me!”

Her voice did not hold the soft and gentle tone that she used with others. Instead there was annoyance and if he was not mistaken, Sasuke detected a bit of anger. An emotion that he had thought she was incapable. A small whisper of smugness appeared in his face as he continued to
ignore her, proud that he could summon such emotions from her. He figured only a few could manage such a feat from a pure heart and even fewer from Sakura specifically.

“Stop following me,” he called half heartedly.

He heard a growl followed by the quick stomps of a run which allowed Sakura to catch up to him enough to step in front and cut him off. With her arms folded in front of her chest and cheeks puffed out, Sasuke found himself more amused than intimidated as she tried to stretch herself to be tall enough to reach his shoulder.

“Move,” he commanded, but she did not even bat an eyelash.

“If you really did not want to be around me you would fly off,” she pointed out with a confident tone. “For the past month you had no problem not being around me so why are you delaying it? Why don’t you just fly off and leave? You don’t need me to move, just go above.”

His amusement turned sour at her words. Deep down, he knew she was right. If he took to the sky she could not follow. What bothered him about that fact was that he already knew that, yet, he had lingered.

The past month had been horrible. Yes he had watched over her from afar, but he had come to find that it was not the assurance of her safety he needed. It was her presence. However, that was something he would not admit. Not to himself, not to her, even to the gods themselves he would never utter the truth. And it was not his blatant ignorance that kept him distant, but the danger.

His face darkened and his body tensed, causing Sakura’s earlier brisk manner to become shaken. A ripple coursed through his body as his wings burst from his back. His teeth gritted in annoyance with his moment of weakness to bask in her presence. But his irritation was fueled by more than just that. It was her infuriating determination that had him on edge as well.

Sasuke did his best to keep his own firm determination in his voice as he spoke. “Go home Sakura,” he said in a warning tone. “It’s not safe for you to be here.”

“No,” she refused firmly with a stomp of her foot. “I have things to do and I am not going to put those things on hold just because you say so. However if you are so concerned then why don’t you just escort me. You never had a problem with it before. At least you never used to! Which brings me to my original question. Why are you avoiding me? Did I do something to offend you? Did you
He let out a feral growl and grabbed onto her shoulders, giving her a frustrated shake as he did his best to not harm her. “Do you not realize that maybe I’m the one that you need to protect yourself from?!? Do you realize what I could do to you? What I would do with your soul?” When her stubbornness failed to recede he gave out another snarl. Pushing her away slightly as he ran a hand through his hair. He paced a few steps away then turned back to face her. “You have no idea how much your soul beckons to my kind. You are like the forbidden fruit sitting in the garden, just waiting to be partaken of. It is most likely the reason why that demon even came to this island in the first place. He had been drawn to your soul. If you even had an inkling as to what I could do with your soul you would run away to the other side of the world to escape me.”

His words did nothing to alter her challenging stance except to force her pouted lips into a frown. “You can’t scare me away Sasuke,” she replied stubbornly.

He stepped closer to her, towering over her as his chest rubbed against her crossed arms. His hand moved up to caress her cheek, his long index finger tracing her jaw before gripping her chin almost too tightly in his frustration.

“What do you not understand about the part that I am a demon! I am a creature of the underworld, are you not afraid of the eternal suffering that I can bring you?!?”

“No.”

He looked at her in disbelief. “Then you are a foolish little girl,” he spat as he released her chin with a flick of his hand and turned his back on her.

Her face scrunched in anger at his words. “You might be the superior being but this is my world, my life, therefore I chose what is and is not good for me,” she stated firmly. “And I need you Sasuke.”

Her words stirred something within him. He had never been needed, for anything. His father had Itachi as his heir, therefore Sasuke was nothing but a spare should anything ever happen. But nothing would ever happen to Itachi. Fugaku Uchiha would be disappointed if he lost his favorite and cherished son, and Itachi did not disappoint their parents. His brother, despite how much he said he loved him could hardly give him the time of day. Then there was his mother. There was no argument that she did not love him, Mikoto loved all of her family equally. But did she need him?
There was something else about her words that altered him. She sounded so sure of herself but how could she understand? She was a mortal, limited by a feeble body, short life span, and weak mind. She may be smart when compared to other limited mortals but when compared to his kind she was naive. Her understanding of what lay behind the veil of death was far beyond what she was capable of grasping.

Did she think that she was so special that he would dedicate himself to her for the rest of her life? And if he did, what would come of it? She would die and her soul would pass on to the god tree, no assistance or guidance needed due to her true soul status. He had no role to play in her life but a villain. That was what he was born to do, that was what the gods designed him to be. How could he be the good and needed being she proclaimed him to be for her if it went against divine design? The answer was plain and simple, he wasn't. Unless for some reason she thought he would change for her.

He let out a growl as a hand went up to tug on his silky dark locks in irritation. “I’m never going to change. This is what I am,” he said suddenly as he spread his arms out as if to put himself on display. “I was designed by the gods to be this. Only they have the power to undo what they have created and we know that will never happen.” He shoved his hands in his pockets and tilted his head, narrowing his eyes at her. “And even if I could change, I wouldn’t. Not for them, not for Naruto, not for you. I like what I am, I like what I am becoming.”

His words hurt her just as he meant them to. But the result was not as satisfying as he hoped. He watched her flinch as her eyes fell down to the ground at his feet.

“I’m not asking you to change Sasuke,” she said in a quiet voice. She wrapped her hands around his forearm as she took a step and looked up into his eyes. “I know you are dangerous, but not to me. I trust you.”

“Tch,” he scoffed but he made no move to separate himself. Instead he turned to face her full on. His free hand moved up to tuck a piece of hair behind her ear. “And what if I break that trust?” He pondered aloud, letting his eyes move from her hair to meet hers.

She raised an eyebrow. “Then that is a risk I am willing to take,” she said in a firm voice that left no room for questioning. “The fact that you try to protect me even from yourself tells me you are not as selfish or evil as you like to think. I like you in my life, please don’t take that away from me.”

Her spring fauna eyes stared up at him with such pleading that Sasuke swallowed thickly. The
pleading look made them even larger, widening the windows to her soul. That \textit{oh so delicious} soul that was the whole reason why he was keeping his distance.

At the reminder, Sasuke found himself beginning to withdraw from her grasp but her grip on his arm tightened to a strength that he felt did not match the little nymph latching on to him.

His brow creased. “Why?”

Her pleading look morphed into slight confusion. “Why, what?”


She looked at him in complete bafflement, as if he had just asked her if the sky was blue or the grass was green. “Because you are my friend and those who abandon their friends are worse than scum,” she stated firmly. Sasuke rolled his eyes, she had been spending far too much time with Naruto and Kakashi.

He gave her a hard look, his annoyance at her stubbornness grating at his patience. Did she not understand that this was for her sake? Did she not realize just how much she lacked in knowledge of him and his world? If she truly understood him, she would run far away from him. She would not care for him, she would not want anything to do with him.

He managed to extract his arm from her hands and began to walk away. “Don’t worry Sakura, you are not abandoning me. Your reputation will not be tarnished by my absence,” he assured with hardly any care. “You already have plenty of friends, trust me, you don’t need me.”

He heard a foot stomp on the ground and he turned around to see her standing with her arms folded and heel pressed into the ground.

“You don’t get to make that choice for me Sasuke.” The way she said his name was full of so much emotion and authority that Sasuke found himself feeling very much like a subordinate. She marched the small distance between them and stopped toe to toe with him, her head angling up to glare at him. “You cannot just come in and out of my life on your choosing. This is my life, I get to dictate who my friends are and when I will let them go.”
“And what about my choice?” he asked with a slight amusement and raised a brow.

Sakura’s determined face instantly split into a grin that paired all too well with his home in the underworld. “You’re just a seraph,” she said as if it were she that was the supernatural being and he was the one far beneath her, “your choices don’t matter.”

With those words, she began to walk up the mountain path that led to the temple. Pushing her basket into his arms for him to carry as she promptly began to tug him along with her in her trek up the slope.

Sasuke could have easily stopped her from dragging him along with him, but there was something about the bossy side of her that he could not help but condone. So he gave into the tug and with an amused smile, he followed along side the girl, cherishing the close contact and the seemingly peaceful presence that she brought him when her mouth was not open in defiance.

Muso had only heard rumors about the corrupted seraphim named Orochimaru. Many banished and rogue seraphim from both realms sought him out for solutions of survival. Most rumors seemed either unbelievable or too frightful. Therefore Muso had never sought him out and actively avoided those who associated with him. But things had changed. Now, he was desperate and vengeful.

The Uchiha that was with the vile little mortal, that trapped him in this pit of desperation, had mentioned Orochimaru. Muso didn’t know what to make of the fact that a member of such a powerful clan was lingering in a place of insignificance. But two things were clear to him.

The first was that the Uchiha was protecting her. His little tussle with the higher demon had nothing to do with territory or claim. He had seen the softened look the Uchiha had given the mortal when he looked at her, and there was no intention of claiming the soul in which she carried within her. No, that demon was not just protecting his property, he was protecting her for her own sake.

Which brought him to his second conclusion. The Uchiha was protecting her from Orochimaru. How a mortal came to be wrapped up in such seraphim business he did not know. Nor did he care. All he cared about was that if he was right, it had value. And he needed value. He needed a bargaining chip if he wanted to survive. Taking a soul meant instant death, not taking a soul meant a prolonged death. Neither choice was acceptable.

Of all the rumors he heard of Orochimaru, one stood out to him the most right now. The snake seraph had a method to attach himself to life forms without consuming human souls. If this was true, Muso would be able to survive. There was a slight possibility that it would bend the rules of the made covenant. If this happened, the result would be the loss of his wings. It was an idea that
made him shutter, but it was better than the fate of breaking such a covenant or the chance of no existence at all.

The mortal would pay for that. But he would not dare do the deed himself, not with an Uchiha protecting her. So instead he would leave that up for Orochimaru. Any soul being sought out by the snake seraph was in for a world of undesirable suffering that one would not even wish upon their enemies. Which was why it was the perfect fate for her according to Muso. It was what she deserved after what she had just done to him.

The seraphim called them covenants, sacred oaths made rarely and reverently. The rosette mortal had just made a blasphemy of such a thing. She saw it as just a promise but for him it was a curse. And it was for that reason he was standing before the most decrepit looking seraphim he had ever laid eyes upon and letting the encounter flow freely from his lips.

“Ku, ku, ku,” came the sinister chuckle from Orochimaruui. The scales that melded in with the patches of exposed skin glimmered as he leaned forward. “Interesssting,” he cooed. “And you say the Uchiha was protecting thisss mortal?”

Orochimaru watched the demon before him nod his head. “Yes, though I am not sure why,” he spat. “That little mortal girl is more demon than even you or me.”

“Yesss,” Orochimaru agreed with mocking sympathy. “It would take quite the mortal to have managed to enslave a sssuperior being with a covenant and achieve the protection of an Uchiha…”

Orochimaru went silent as his musings became muted and private within his mind. His reptilian skin shivered and made him want to shed in his excitement. He licked his lips with all the wonders he could do with this information. But he desired more information. He needed to know why Sasuke was protecting the mortal.

“So will you help me now?” Came the inquiry of Muso, drawing Orochimaru out of his thoughts.

“Help you with what?” He responded innocently.

Muso scowled. “Show me your secret. How do I keep living without breaking the oath?”

Orochimaru cocked his head to the side, his neck bent unnaturally farther than it should. “And why
would I give such a secret to you?"

“Because that was the deal. I give you information in exchange for a loophole.”

“Ku Ku Ku,” he Chucked. “Wasss it now? Tell me, do you know the nature of the relationship between the Uchiha and hisss mortal charge?”

Muso shook his head.

“I see, then it seemssss you are lacking in information.” He flicked his hand in gesture and two henchmen stepped forward to seize Muso

“What do you mean!” Muso protested as he thrashed to free himself. “We had a deal!”

“Oh no we didn’t,” Orochimaru chimed calmly. “You had an assumption. But don’t worry. You won’t sssuffer the fate the mortal cursed you with.”

Muso’s screams and threats echoed, muffled, and died as he was carried away to one of the many rooms in which Orochimaru would conduct his experiments. Orochimaru’s yellow eyes closed as he leaned his head back and enjoyed the melodious sounds of Muso’s frantic screams as if they were music to his ears. When the symphony of screams came to a finish he opened his eyes when the door to his throne like room was opened.

“Go to the island that our lovely Sasssuke has been spending time on. Do not let yourself be detected or sseen. Find out as much as you can about the mortal girl with rosette hair. Most importantly, find out what she is to Sasssuke Uchiha.”

Orochimaru watched his minion leave as he settled back into the carved throne he had claimed for himself. His body shivered with anticipation and excitement for what was to come. If everything was as it seemed, he would have Sasuke Uchiha more than willing to cooperate with him once he was given a little inspiration. He was intrigued to learn of this mortal girl and what value she had to offer. However is interest in the girl did not exceed his interest in the Sharingan that would come to his possession because of her. If needed, he would use her by any means to earn it. She was leverage, nothing more.

Sasuke watched Sakura from the threshold of the temple as she kneeled down before the statue depicting a female form. If he remembered correctly, it was a representation of the goddess
Tenderly Sakura pulled out the few olives that she collected then a small candle which she lit from a lantern that hung from the statues outstretched hand. With care she lit several incense and placed them at her feet before muttering a few prayerful words under her breath as she bent before the statue and moved onto the next deity that she owed prayers. This time she gave prayers of thanks to Athena for the gift of olives that she brought to their world. Finally, she went to the small pool that lay at the feet of Poseidon. Here original pottery that she would have used to carry the water back down had been smashed but it was as if the gods had been looking out for her and she had spotted an abandoned jug that while chipped, would suffice for her needs.

When she stood back up she took note that Sasuke was watching her from the doorway. She had offered for him to help her but he had rejected the offer and instead took a stance at the doorway, like a dutiful century dressed in black uniform.

“Are you done yet?” he remarked when he realized she was looking at him.

She nodded, trying to hide the faint smile that crept onto her lips as she dipped her head. She had missed his ever annoyed presence. It was a strange thing to miss, but she did. It was what made Sasuke, Sasuke.

“Good,” Sasuke grunted as he pushed off the doorway and began to make his way down the few steps that had brought them into the temple. “Let’s get you home.”

Sasuke started to make his way towards the path that would take them down the mountain. But when the soft patter of Sakura following behind paused, he turned back around to see her stalling as she looked out over the countryside and its coast. She eclipsed the sunrise which painted a picturesque backdrop that formed a glowing halo around her body. The rising temperatures had caused her to lose her shawl from earlier and the cream dress she wore soaked in the colors of the purple and pink sky, giving it an ombré hue that shifted and transitioned from one color to another. Her already colorful hair was glowing as the round sun matched up perfectly with her head and surrounding her with a majesty. In combination, the sight was was like looking at the personification of a goddess.

Again Sasuke was reminded of his thoughts that she did not belong in this world. When compared to his own kind, mortals were very plain creatures. However, as he watched her face smooth into a relaxed smile, he found his throat suddenly dry. He tried to swallow and let out a small cough, causing Sakura to look at him. The action only served to elevate the image as she added a splash of green to the work of art that she was currently painting.
With her no longer distracted by the scenery, she made her way over to him. Her happy smile never faltering as she neared.

Sasuke scowled, he didn’t like what that smile was doing to his stomach. “What are you so happy about?”

Sakura seemed to ponder then wrapped her arm though his. “I am just happy you stayed today.”

Sasuke let out a tsking sound. “Common,” he mumbled, not bothering to pull himself free as he began to lead her down the path. “No more dawdling, it’s annoying.”

Sakura stayed quiet for awhile and Sasuke enjoyed the quiet until a soft question broke the peace. “Sasuke,” she began tentatively, causing him to look down at her. “Promise me you won’t leave again.”

Sasuke was not one to grant requests. He didn’t do favors for others. At least not unless there was something in it for him. But as he looked down at her face that silently pleaded to him, he found himself unable to form the denial. He thought about the events of this morning and the nuisance she had caused because he had not been there soon enough. He wondered how many other times when he was busy trying to keep his distance that she had been close to making other idiotic choices like befriending soul sucking rouges. It was this reason that he decided he would agree to her request. Because it certainly was not because he missed her. That would mean he had a weakness and Sasuke Uchiha did not have weaknesses. He had power, raw power that he had just recently been able to tap into.

“Hn,” he let out.

It had been awhile since she had heard that sound but Sakura could not help but smile at the hummed syllable. It wasn’t a proper word but she knew what it meant. Concent. Sasuke was allowing her request. Automatically her arms squeezed his tighter.

“Thank you.”

Her words were so quiet any person with normal hearing would have missed it. However Sasuke was not normal. He caught the words of gratitude and while he made an effort to show no
acknowledgement of the tightening around his arm or her words, he still failed to stop the small half smile that spread at the corner of his lips. Perhaps it would not be so bad if he stayed around.

He walked with her until her home was in sight. With a quick to her forehead, he made his leave with simple but cherished words. “See you,” he murmured before taking flight and disappearing with the cover of the low cloud coverage of the day.

Sakura watched him leave, shielding her eyes as she squinted against the bright sun until she could no longer see him. For a moment she felt a tugging to follow but she knew this was a sensation of her imagination. It was impossible for her to follow, she had no wings. Therefore she was at the mercy of Sasuke coming to her. A thought that did not sound quite so bad as the lingering feeling of his two forefingers against the skin of her forehead. She didn’t understand the action, but she was growing fond of it. She was growing fond of him.

Chapter End Notes

Sasuke didn't get to go stabby stabby on Oberon/Muso but I kind of needed him to live...at least long enough to cause more trouble. As always thank you all for your support and feedback I love hearing what you think or how your feeling! Next time we will be back to present day.
Present day

Madara watched as the hunched form of a withered looking man came before him.

“I’ve seen you take better vessels in the past,” Madara remarked with disgust. “I hope you are not becoming so weak that the body of an old man, who already had a deteriorated mind and no will power, is all you can achieve Sasori.”

Sasori gave a sneer before an exhausted cough escaped his lungs. “Every vessel I collect serves a purpose,” he defended. “While this body may be deformed, it has served me well in collecting some of my greatest masterpieces. These mortals take pity on vulnerability and as a result let down their guard. As the mortals good book says, there is a time and place for everything. That goes for my puppets.”

Madara gave a disinterested nod. He could care less about the empty bodies that Sasori preserved and wore after sucking out the souls that they once housed before coming into his clutches. All Madara cared about was that the puppeteer was still of use to him.

“Very well,” he acknowledged. “Then tell me, what has Sasuke been up to? Where is he now?”

“He remains in the city,” Sasori reported.

Madara lifted an eyebrow, intrigued by this information. “You are sure of this? It is not like my nephew to linger.”

Sasori nodded. “Well linger he has. He has been spending a lot of time wandering the city. Sits outside of buildings, watching, waiting.”

“For what?” Madara pressed.
Sasori shook his head. “That I do not know. But recently he has made contact with some mortals. I assume perhaps he found himself prey.”

Madara pondered this but did not look convinced. “Perhaps, but Sasuke has no need for souls. Unless boredom has driven him to it but I doubt it.”

It fell silent as Madara went deep into thought, the only sound coming from his pacing as he walked along the wide window. The club’s day time workers went about in preparation for the coming weekend. He paused and stared down at a sound crew member who was flirting with a bartender. The woman looked thrilled to have the attention of the man and Madara sent out an influence of lecherous intent towards the sound crew man. He couldn’t help but smile as the man leaned in to whisper something in the woman’s ear who looked shocked, then heartbroken before anger rose to her face. The bartender slapped the sound crew man then stomped away.

It was pathetic really. But it was in his nature to steer mortals away from what would be good for them. However the juvenity of it caused him to suddenly gain a frown on his face. He had so much more in him, but now he had resorted to simple broken hearts.

It disgusted him.

He was a lord of the underworld. Not just any Lord, but the Lord, the ruler of the fallen. It was time he took his place back. His sister's husband, Fugaku, had run the fallen to a shameful mockery of what they once were. Making alliances with the blessed and following their rules.

It was time he returned. It was time he finish what he always meant to start. Unfortunately he needed Sasuke. Sasuke was the catalyst, the match, the spark that would start the fire. There had always been an underlying of dark power within his nephews. At one point Madara had thought Itachi would be the one to unlock it but he proved to be more in control. Lucky for him, Sasuke had proven to be less in control and to top it off, Sasuke had a hunger for it. Unlike his pacifist brother.

Unfortunately, Sasuke was too much like Madara himself. He was driven by selfish desires which had been the delay in Madara regaining his full power. He needed Sasuke, but before that, he needed motivation for Sasuke. A weakness, a desire, a benefit. Whatever it was, Madara would find out what it was and then he would exploit it.

He took a slow sip from the rich amber liquid in his hand as he took in the face of the sound man.
The poor mortal was preoccupied with questioning why he had gone with such an offensive pick up line on the sweet girl he had finally found the courage to ask out. Not bothering to take his eyes off the confused and heartbroken man, Madara gave instructions.

“I want you to find out why Sasuke is lingering. Find out what has caught his attention and report back to me.”

Sasori gave him a low bow before making his way out of the club and into the streets of New York. He would first start with the mortals he had seen Sasuke approaching over the time he had spent watching him. But before then he needed to make a stop. It was time he found himself a new form, and the young red headed boy that lived in the apartment next door, who took pity on his crippled form, would do just nicely.

*Tap.*

Methodically and repeatedly, Sakura’s index and middle finger hit the center of her forehead as she stared up at the ceiling.

*Tap.*

There was something eerily familiar about the gesture. But she just could not seem to place the time, nor place that such a thing would occur.

*Tap.*

Everything about this situation had a heavy sense of familiarity. The forehead polk, the promising words, the sudden departure of a dark haired demon, the lingering confusion, the pondering of meaning. It was all familiar, down to even how she ended up laying half way on her bed with her feet hanging over the edge.

She wondered if this was how mortals felt when they claimed to experience deja vu. Whatever it was, it was infuriatingly irksome.

With each polk of her fingers, Sakura hoped it would somehow trigger something in her mind. So far all she had managed was a buzzing headache.
Her fingers landed on her forehead and she felt herself go cross eyed as she glared up at her paused hand. Her mind felt numb from the labored straining she had put it through for the past hour. It was like having something at the tip of her tongue but she just could not quite form it into something tangible. It was just a fuzzy, buzzing, blur that did not help with the dull throbbing that was forming at the point just right behind her skull. At the very spot where her fingers where now resting.

“Urg!”

The frustrated groan escaped her as her body lifted from the bed and she glared at the reflection of herself in the window across the room. With another huff she pushed off from the bed and moved towards the window bay and sat down. Shoving the panes wide open, she gazed up at the constellations that shone down upon the heavenly realm. Again she was hit with an odd sense of familiarity.

As she looked and identified her formations of stars, her mind wandered.

There were too many mysteries in her life that she was suddenly becoming aware of. For a long time she had let things go, whether it was out of trust to her pseudo family members, or her own blatant oblivious naivety, Sakura had never bothered to seek answers. At least not in ways that would break the rules. But with the sudden trend of current events, Sakura couldn’t help but think all of these mysteries revolved around one thing.

Herself.

Perhaps it was a bit conceited but it was how she felt. She hoped it didn’t but until she could find the proof, she wouldn’t be able to let it go. Her tolerance for being kept in the dark was growing to its end. Over the centuries it had been rubbed and worn thin. Now it was threadbare and about to completely unravel.

The tingle of fingers dancing up her spine made her arch into the touch. The caress continued at her response, moving along her rib cage as the touch moved towards her right shoulder. Goosebumps followed in the tracing fingers wake, like bread crumbs they marked the path of the wandering fingers. They moved along the edge of her scapula where her wings would sprout but as they did, she was hit with a knowledge that there was nothing but flesh and bones beneath her skin. There were no dormant feathers waiting to be summoned to take flight. Her wings were gone.
She would have panicked at such a nightmare but there was something oddly familiar about the plain emptiness. She would have pondered more had the feeling not been overshadowed by another realization.

Her shoulder was bare of any clothing. And it was not just her shoulder, but her entire body. She was naked and the feeling of the wandering fingers were nothing short of intimacy that she knew she had never experienced. Not that she did not want it but she had never been given the opportunity, never found a partner in which she felt right about. There had always been something missing and always a layer of guilt. As if she were betraying someone.

Her thoughts became muddled as she was lost to the sensation of the fingers as they rounded her shoulder and moved up her neck. They found purchase as the hand moved up the nap of her neck and gently tangled in her hair. Tugging gently, she felt her head being guided to tilt to the side and her eyes closed as the fingers combed through the strands of her hair. Strands that were far longer than she had ever allowed her hair to be. Combing her hair to the ends, her hair was released as the large masculine hand ran down her bare arm.

Something solid and warm pressed up against her back and she could feel the steady rhythm of mans breathing as his bare chest pressed up against her. A second hand curved from the top of her hip to her waist where it curled around to her stomach. A soft breeze grazed her left ear just before the gentle caress of a pair of warm lips brushed against her neck. The sensation lingered as she felt his lips draw away only a fraction of space and hover just above the surface of her skin. Her skin prickled and the hairs on the back of her neck rose as she felt his heavy breath trickle from his parted lips down her neck and brush her clavicle.

Her hand moved of its own accord as it reached up and behind her. As if she had performed such a movement countless times to make it a natural habit, she found herself grasping onto a mess of soft locks. She felt a rumble vibrate against her back from the man pressed against her. The rumble was her undoing and she pulled her arm down, her grasp on the silky locks tugging the mystery persons head, forcing the teasing lips back down to her neck.

The moment they made contact all teasing was lost to hunger. No longer was it just a brush of the lips but instead it was a hot open mouthed attack. His teeth scraped at her skin before she felt the warmth of his tongue trace her pulse, latching on a giving it a suck. When he released her skin his cool breath rushed over the moistened bruise that she knew he left to mar her skin. But she didn’t care.

“Sakura.”

It was a worshiped plea of longing that she felt was reciprocated by her own body. She felt that
need and want within her core. The feeling was so overwhelming it ached. She needed to be closer, she needed to partake herself, she needed him.

Her eyes snapped open but it made no difference. She was in darkness, complete, suffocating darkness. But that did not matter. She did not need to see or breath. She just needed to feel.

She extracted her hand from the silky hair and turned her body.

Sakura froze the moment she turned.

Two orbs of bloody swirls of red and black stared back at her. A faint glow ebbed from the gleaming red giving just enough illumination to see the mess of black hair above and the twisted smirk of lips beneath.

Sakura bolted from her bed, her heart beating wildly in her chest as her breaths came out ragid. With each beat of her heart, her head pounded with a near splitting pain. Raking a hand through her sweat dampened and bed tangled hair, she took in an uneasy breath as she tried to recall the strange dream she had.

Unfortunately it was like trying to grasp sand. The tighter she tried to hold onto it, the faster it seemed to flow from between her fingers. Soon it was empty with only a few grains that seemed to cling to her skin. The few grains she managed to cling to where just snippets and flashes that seemed to have no connection from one to the other.

While she was at a loss for what to do with what remained, there was one image that stayed well into her mind. Unruly, dark hair above scarlet irises that were swirled with a piercing black. And then there was that predatory smile. A smile she knew from more than just dreams. She had seen that smile hours ago on a man that had matched the features of the man from her dreams.

Sasuke.

The fact that she was dreaming of the rouge demon prince was odd. However what struck her as the most odd was the feel of the dream. It hadn’t felt like anything she had dreamt before. The lingering emotions made it seem like she had lived it rather than dreamed it. Even now, even though she failed to bring up what she had seen, she still felt the residual feelings that were left behind. Lingering heat and desire that made her cheeks grow warm. She wanted to label it as lust but that felt too superficial. This was deeper, more meaningful. It was not a means to satisfaction
but survival.

It all befuddled her even farther with her already confused mind. But despite the mirky thoughts and confusion, one thing, one fact seemed solid and clear. Sasuke had promised her answers. At least that is what he led her to believe just before his departure the day before. Whether they were the answer she sought, she did not know but it was worth asking.

Logic told her to avoid him at all costs, but curiosity made her question that action. And all too soon she was laying her head back down as her mind pondered what she would do if she were to cross paths with a certain Uchiha in the future. Would she run or would she linger?

Sai was in the process of unchaining his bike from the bike rack outside of the public library when he approached him. Him being the man from the other day in the park. Sai had not gotten a full look at the man but it was his presence that was far more identifying. There was a coldness in the air, despite the warm spring sun and high humidity of the day. As if his body possessed a sixth sense, Sai felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise before he had even looked up and saw the dark haired demon standing next to the line of bikes with his attention set on him.

Slowly, Sai stood and freed his bike from the metal bars that kept it standing. With steady steps, he wheeled it over to where the demon stood in obvious wait. He cast a wary glance around, suddenly worried about being alone. Sakura had taught him a lot, he knew better than what he once thought was right and wrong. But the heavy presence escaping the demons body before him seemed to beckon all too enticingly. He knew he needed to stand his ground and resist. It would prove that he had grown stronger. But another part of him wanted him to run away. Too afraid to disappoint Sakura by falling prey to temptation and too unsure if he would or wouldn’t do just that.

“It’s Sai right?”

The fact that the demon knew his name made him uneasy. A fact that must have shown on his usually unreadable face.

“My name is Sasuke,” Sasuke introduced in an attempt to make the mortal before him relax. “I believe we saw each other the other day in the park. You were with a friend of mine...Sakura.”


“Good,” Sasuke said with a sharp smile. “So you have known Sakura long?”
It was more of a statement than a question in the way Sasuke’s tone inquired and again Sai was wary. “A few years,” he replied in a vague answer. Sai was sure that in all his years he had never met this demon except for a few brief bumps and passing. But the way Sasuke seemed all too familiar with him made him wonder if perhaps his recollection was failing him. Did he know him from his darker years as a youth? If so, Sai wanted nothing to do with this demon.

“And how is it that you came to know her?”

This Sai was unsure of how to answer. As far as he knew, demons and angels were not friends. That meant, whatever he said could possibly serve to hurt or endanger Sakura. To top it off, Sasuke seemed to know things about him, and Sai was unsure of the extent of that knowledge. Did he know that Sai had once been nearly fully corrupted to the point of no return? Did he know that Sai was aware of what he was? Did he know that Sakura was his guardian angel? He had never had to deal with or interact with divine and damned beings that knew each other aside from Ugly, Dickless, and on the rare occasion the grey haired sex obsessed angel.

As a precaution, Sai decided to go with the assumption that Sasuke knew none of this. When Sai had first met Sakura she had given him specific instructions to never reveal what she was. When it proved to be difficult, she gave him an alibi that he could use should anyone inquire of her. At first he had questioned the morality of it as he felt it was very much like lying. It was then that Sakura had explained how on rare occasions, keeping the truth to protect someone who was innocent was okay.

“She is my councilor.”

“Seems a bit young to be a psychologist,” Sasuke commented, obviously not believing his words.

Sai shifted uneasily. No one had ever questioned the validity of the cover up. “It is more of a peer mentoring,” Sai explained, doing his best to remind himself that his lies were good and not bad if they protected Sakura.

“And what exactly is she mentoring you about?” Sasuke pressed.

“I um...got into some trouble several years back,” Sai answered hesitantly. “Sakura has been showing me how to make better life choices.”
Sauske rolled his eyes. *Of course*, Sakura would see the good in someone and think she could save them. If it wasn’t a demon then she found the next best thing to “fix”, a corrupted soul. If he didn’t already know she was mortal, she would have been an annoyingly perfect candidate for an angel.

It was odd how similar she was to her original self. Sasuke wasn’t completely familiar with reincarnation, but he felt that the nearly identical personifications was an abnormality. She wasn’t just another vessel for a soul, it was like a complete carbon copy.

However this fact did not dissuade him as it made him hopeful. It would make his task of slipping into her life very easy if he already knew exactly what would make this version of her tick and think.

“So your relationship is only on a professional basis?” he asked hopefully, recalling the all too casual way he saw them interacting in the park and was now hoping it had only been his imagination.

“Maybe at the beginning,” Sai found himself saying, unable to hold back some truths. “But with time I have come to find her to be a fine companion for friendship.”

It was an odd way to phrase it, but in the time that Sauske had spent watching this particular mortal, he had noted that he was an awkward soul. Awkward, but obviously precious to Sakura. That he had no doubt. Sakura had always valued anyone who was bestowed the title of friend, whether they wanted her friendship or not.

“And where could I find her place of residence?” he found himself pressing.

Sauske watched closely as Sai suddenly seemed to become even more nervous. After fidgeting for a moment, the mortal managed to look him in the eye as he narrowed his dark eyes.

“I thought you said you were a friend of hers,” he said with a tone of suspicion. “If you were, wouldn’t you already know where she lived?”

Sauske’s jaw tensed in irritation. It seemed this mortal was smarter than he thought.
He forced a smile to his face. “An old friend,” Sasuke said. “It's been awhile since I last saw her and it was by chance that I ran into her the other day. I unfortunately had to depart from her before I could get her contact information. But since we share her as a mutual friend, maybe perhaps you could oblige me. After all, any friend of hers is a friend of mine.”

Sai felt the familiar feeling of influence wash over him. Like an invisible nudge, he felt himself wanting to let the information flow from his mouth. He pressed his lips together, resisting the urge to open his mouth and give all his secrets to the demon standing before him.

Painted on his face was a smile that most would think friendly. But Sai could only see the dark intent behind the mask of friendliness. “I am sorry,” Sai said, struggling to form the words that were not what Sasuke was asking for. “But I am not comfortable with giving that information away. If she wanted to be contacted she would have given that information to you herself.”

The unthreatening smile turned into a gritted sneer that Sasuke quickly checked. This mortal’s resistance to his influence was impressive. Especially for one who had such a spotted and tarnished soul.

He sent out another influence, much stronger than the one before and tried again. “As I said before,” Sasuke said, doing his best to keep his temper. He would like nothing more than to hold the boy over a ledge until he uttered everything but he resisted the urge. Sai was important to Sakura and unfortunately, that meant Sasuke could not afford to let any harm come to the mortal. At least not yet. “I had to leave before we had a chance to exchange information.” He sent out another pulse of influence. “I have been trying to reconnect with her for quite some time. I was only lucky that I ran into her at the park.”

“Then perhaps you should invest in a charm?”

“What?” Sasuke asked, taken off guard that Sai had managed to resist his influence yet again.

If it were not for the nuisance of it all, he would be impressed. Though judging by the bead of sweet that was forming at his temple, Sai was struggling. Which meant he was consciously aware of the influence that Sasuke was sending his way as he mentally battled the urge to follow Sasuke’s draw.

_Interesting_, Sasuke thought to himself. It seemed that Sai was aware of the existence of seraphim. It made sense given that fact that Sakura seemed to have a knowledge of them as well.
“A lucky charm,” Sai said, breaking Sasuke from his thoughts. “You should get one, then perhaps you will be lucky again in running into her. Now I must I apologize but I will take my leave first. I have things to attend to.”

Before Sasuke could respond, Sai and taken off far too quickly than needed. Sasuke could have followed but he chose to linger behind and process this new information. If need be, he at least knew where to find the mortal again.

It took him two days to find her again. Or at least that was how long had passed when he decided to make an appearance. It was strange to Sakura. Only three days had passed but it had felt far longer, and the anticipation for when he would appear again had surprised her.

She was making her way through the streets with Sai when she spotted him. Leaned against one of the legendary buildings of New York, his eyes stared at her through the throng of pedestrians that passed between him and herself. Not once did his stare leave her as he watched her.

The moment she spotted him she knew that he knew. Despite the distance between them she could still make out the smirk that graced his lips and the glimmer in his eye was unmistakable invite.

Sakura had had three long days to think long and hard about what she would do if she ever crossed paths with him again. Up until this moment, she was undecided. But now, she felt as if there was never any other choice. The promise within his eyes was too enticing and she couldn’t resist.

She liked to think it was because he had answers but there was a deeper, nearly carnal reason. There was an ache within her that would only ease with the closing of space between them.

She turned to Sai who was oblivious to the entire exchange as he dug around in his messenger bag. They had been on their way to a job interview for him. Recently they had been working on being a contributing and functional citizen of society. This meant having a job, being self sustainable, and making something of himself. Sai had had many jobs in the past since he had been on his own nearly his entire life. Unfortunately his lack of social skills made it difficult for him to keep said jobs. So Sakura had been focusing on finding him a place in the world that he could thrive.

Art was where he thrived so art was where she decided he belonged. Perhaps it was cheating but she had influenced a small marketing company to give him an interview in helping with their graphic designs. The job came with the needed training, all a candidate needed was the artistic eye. This Sakura knew he had.
As she watched him fumble around, she took in his black slacks and dress shirt that he had already rolled the sleeves up. It looked less professional but she allowed it since it gave him a more artistic look and she hoped that they would see that too.

He paused in his rummaging and withdrew what he had been looking for. A small key chain that Sakura had given him last year as a good luck token. Content that he had it, he careful stuffed it in his pocket then looked up at her.

She couldn’t help but feel the proud swell in her chest and smiled fondly as she noticed his tie was crooked. “Be sure to give them a firm handshake and speak clearly, no fidgeting,” she recited as she adjusted his tie with nimble fingers. She brushed his shoulders, clearing them of invisible lint as she took a step back to look him over entirely. Happy with what he presented, she gave him a nod and met his eyes. “Be yourself, just not...too much yourself,” she added hesitantly. “Mind your Ps and Qs.”

“Do I not pronounce those letters right?” He asked and Sakura rolled her eyes.

“No your letters are just fine.”

“But you said—“

“It’s just an expression,” she explained. “It just means to be polite.”

“Then what does P and Q stand for?”

“Never mind that,” she brushed off, not about to admit that she had no clue what Ps and Qs meant. She had picked up the expression with the last mortal she served as guardian to but she herself didn’t understand the origin of expression. Only the meaning. “Do you have your portfolio?”

He nodded and tapped his messenger bag.

“Good,” she nodded, then fell silent for a moment. “Goodluck and I will see you later.”
“You are not coming with me?”

She hated the slight disappointment in his voice but she did her best to try and ignore it. It was the hardest part about being a guardian. Guidance, too often turned to dependence, and she always felt like she was betraying them when the time came to set them free. Sai was still far from no longer needing help, but he was at a point that there were certain things he had to do on his own.

Sakura shook her head, doing her best to focus on Sai and not the heavy feeling of the pair of eyes boring into the back of her head. “This you must do on your own, but you can tell me about it after.”

“This evening?”

Sakura hesitated. She wasn’t sure what would become of her day when she left him and approached the lurking man not more than one fifty feet behind and slightly to the left of her. However, the eager look in Sai’s eyes made her not want to deprive him of this. This was important. If it went well he deserved celebration. And if not, he would need someone to bring him back up from the defeat.

“Yes,” she said, determination in her voice to keep the promise. “I will see you later tonight. We can go out to get that tofu cake you like in celebration of your new job.”

He cocked his head to the side. “But I don’t know if I got it yet.”

Sakura rolled her eyes. “But you will,” she assured, doing her best to stir up some confidence in him. “Now go on so you won’t be late!”

She gave him a gentle nudge to send him on his way. Obediently he walked towards the tall office building and she watched him until he disappeared past the revolving door. Then with a deep breath, she turned around and began to make her way, her feet moving faster than she was prepared for as the invisible pull seemed to eagerly spur them forward.

Sasuke watched her every move until she was standing before him.

“You do know this really doesn’t help with clearing you of being a stalker?” She said with her
hands on her hips. The sass she had managed surprised her but he seemed unperturbed by it. If anything he looked gleeful.

“And what exactly is *this* that goes against my case?” He said playfully.

He was in a better mood today than the last time he had spoken with her and she accused him of being a creeper. His talk the other day had set him at better ease knowing the relationship between her and the mortal boy she had been with. He had been watching them both particularly closely today. Checking to see if what Sai had told him added up.

“I mean you showing up and watching me from across the way.”

Sasuke rose a brow. “What? A man cannot sit in the city square and appreciate beauty. I thought such actions were romantic?”

His words brought a tinge of pink to her cheeks and he smiled, causing her to frown as she placed her hands on her hips. “Not in this day and age,” she replied. “It’s creepy.”

“Ah yes well, is it really stalking or creepy if you already knew I was coming.”

Sakura opened her mouth to retort but was left gaping when she had no response. He had a point. He had told her he would see her. And it wasn’t as if his appearance was unexpected. She had been on the lookout for him constantly for the past seventy-two hours. She crossed her arms instead.

“You said you had answers for me,” she accused.

“I do,” he assured. “But let’s go somewhere more quiet and private.”

He extended a hand, his long thin fingers splayed out for her to take. Without a thought Sakura’s hand moved upwards to accept it. Just as her fingers where about to touch the tips of his, she caught herself. She quickly retracted her hand before making contact, taking note of the physical strain it seemed to take in order to pull her hand away.
When she looked up she noticed the action had not gone unnoticed from his eyes. Even now he stared at her clasped hands that she was holding against her torso in fear that her hand would move on its own accord if she did not physically restrain it. Self-conscious of his gaze she moved her hands behind her. The action broke his gaze away from her hand and he met her eyes once more.

As naturally as he could, Sasuke let his own hand return to him where it found itself stuffed into the pocket of his trousers. A smile came to his lips that looked forced to Sakura.

“Follow me then,” he said with a tilt of his head before turning his back to her and began walking away.

They had walked in silence. With every turn down another street, Sakura found it to be less populated than the one before. With each turn they took, he would glance back to be sure that she was following him. As if expecting that she would change her mind. The idea had passed through her mind more than once but each time her curiosity won out over self-preservation.

Soon he abandoned the streets and took to alleyways and parking lots until finally they reached what Sakura assumed was their destination.

He had led her to a pier. It was vacant, secluded, and certainly private as he promised. As they reached the end of the boardwalk, Sakura gazed out across the water. Near the opposite shore a sailboat moved through the marina on the opposite side of the harbor. The breeze it sailed on brought in a salty air as a handful of seagulls sailed around, squawking occasionally as they searched for any scrap of food. The hollow thud of the wood against wood, along with the squeak of rusty metal and the wet slapping of water accompanied the fowls noise with each bobbing of the dock as the waves washed into the shore.

Grasping the wooden railing that was worn and weathered by the sun and salt, she cautiously turned around to face Sasuke. Despite the fact that she knew he was behind her, his presence still unnerved her in the way he intently watched her. Not once did his attention move from her.

Suddenly feeling self-conscious, she searched for a way to lighten the mood. “So is this were you murder me and throw me into the bay for the fishes?” she asked, thinking about the numerous crime shows that Sai found a fascination with. Initially she had disapproved of them but it turned out they served a purpose in educating him on the definitely wrong things to do. It was a poor attempt at humor that even she failed to laugh at, mostly because a small part of her knew the suggestion was not as far-fetched as she wanted it to be.

Sasuke forced a stiff smile to his face and took a step closer to her. Like a startled cat, Sakura jerked from the wooden railing and attempted to keep the distance between them. Taking a side
step, she moved away from the edge and towards the direction that would give her a straight shot to get off the floating wharf and onto solid pavement. At her action Sasuke paused, tilting his head to the side in contemplation.

“Um…” Sakura fumbled for something to lessen the awkwardness. “So...how exactly do you know me?”

Sasuke gave her a contemplative look, tilting his head to the side. “Would you like to hear a story?” He asked, ignoring her question.

Sakura gave him a confused look.

“Long ago,” he began without waiting for her answer “in an ancient land that was once the prime glory of the world-” he started to circle her- “there lived a young maiden. She was beautiful. With jewels for eyes and floral hair.”

She felt a tug on the back of her head and turned her neck just enough to see that Sasuke had paused in his prowling and was now fingering a section of her pink hair.

“Her long locks were velvety soft, just like the petals it mimicked.”

His eyes were focused on the pastel strands, his mouth slightly frowning at the short ends between his fingers. Sakura took in the odd expression. His words seemed much heavier and melancholy than the sultry tone he usually spoke in.

Suddenly, his eyes shot up to meet hers. He held her gaze for a heart beat before his mouth twisted darkly, replacing vulnerability with predatory. He started his circling again, eyes roving over her body as he came around the front of her.

“She was a special girl with powers unknown to her.”

“What kind of powers?” Sakura could not help but ask as he passed behind her for a second lap.
“Beguilement.”

Sakura startled when his breathy answer was given closer to her than expected. He gave out a small chuckle as she whirled around to face him.

She looked at him quizzically. “You mean like a seductress?”

Sasuke sneered at her wording. “No,” he said, a hint of contempt in his voice at the lack of decorum in her delivery. It was as if she were suggesting the woman in his story was nothing but a common whore. “She drew people in with her aura. She was lovely to look upon but that was not what attracted them. It was her pure kindness and gentle touch. She had a gift for seeing the good in even the lowest of creatures.”

He paused for a moment as he seemed to drift off in thought. For a long moment he seemed to nearly forget she was there. When Sakura could no longer stand the awkward feeling of being intruding on his private moment, she cleared her throat. Snapping out of his thoughts, Sasuke blinked a few times before looking directly back at her. There was a small delay before his smug smile took over again.

Back to his unnerving predatory self, Sasuke continued with his story. “She dwelt upon a small island where she blissfully lived in ignorance that her home was really a prison. She lived happily in peace but she was meant for so much more. Her closed and small world held her back. Despite her yearnings, she resorted to being content with her simple and quiet life in the countryside. She would have lived and died wastefully and in vein had fate not stepped in.”

He began his circling again, each time he passed in front of her, Sakura’s eyes followed him. And each time he circled behind, her body stiffened in apprehension of an unexpected touch or close breath. It was not until he appeared on her other side where she could watch his every movement again that she managed to breath.

“One day she crossed paths with a creature that became intrigued with her,” Sasuke continued. “She was different from others and he wanted to know why. So he befriended the young mortal maiden. Day after day he agonized over finding his answer but it was not until many months later that he discovered it.”

“What was it?” Sakura asked, her voice breathy as she became engrossed with his story. It was strange, yet, so...familiar. She wanted to think it was one Tsunade told her back when she used to tell her all the ancient stories, but something about that did not seem right.
“She had a soul of the purest intent,” he said, stopping again only a few inches from her face as he gazed into her eyes.

Sakura felt herself go nearly cross eyed as she stared back into the black pools before her. He was looking at her expectantly, as if waiting for some kind of understanding to hit her. But even if her mind was not already fuzzy from his close proximity, and the powerful scent that came with it, she was not sure if she could find what he was hoping she would.

A crease formed on her forehead. “Why would that be significant?” She asked, causing a slight disappointment to glaze over his eyes. But when he blinked, it was gone.

“Because he was a demon of the underworld,” he answered. “Born and bred to corrupt and drag down any and every soul to the underworld where they would spend an eternity paying for the sins that he had enticed them to commit.”

A shiver ran down Sakura's spine at the intensity of his words because there was not a single doubt in her mind, that the man before her, did the same things. Demons craved corruption and chaos. They thrived in watching a souls downfall. The farther the fall, the better. If this girl had been as pure in heart as Sasuke led her to believe, she could not imagine the allure she would have for any demon with enough ambition.

Sakura had looked upon thousands of souls, each one unique according to the deeds and intentions of each ones hearts. Some were blacker than Sasuke’s own eyes, while others dull and grey like Kakashi’s wings. Others she had seen shined with a pearlescent beauty and light that flowed with life and true joy. Very few went untarnished. In fact, she had yet to ever see one that did not have at least a few spots that were slightly dulled. If she was correct in assuming what Sasuke was describing, she could barely imagine what that soul would look like.

“Did he?” She whispered, sorrow in her voice as her heart went out to any soul that would be targeted by a creature that would want to taint such a holy thing.

“Did he what?” Sasuke asked tilting his head to the side.

Sakura swallowed as she watched his eyes roll across the plains of her face. “Did he claim her soul? Drag her down?”
A dangerous smile crossed his lips and Sakura dreaded the answer that would bring about such a smile. “No,” he said, surprising her. “She claimed his.”

Sakura’s face pulled into confusion. “What do you mean?”

His hand moved up to caress her face and she made no move to avoid it, too eager for his answer to register what he was doing before it was already happening. She felt his fingertips graze across her cheek as he leaned closer. Her heart began to pound against her rib cage, growing in rapid speed and strength with each inch he grew nearer.

“I mean,” he purred lowly, his warm breath ghosting across her skin.

When he came to a stop, his lips were poised so closely to the left of hers that if she made even the smallest of movements, they would brush against the corner of her mouth. Sakura remained frozen. A petrified statue that could be mistaken as a sculpture of marble made by Michelangelo himself.

“Despite what he was and what he wanted to do to her, he had grown too attached to her. So he tried to separate himself from her, worried that he would some day lose control and give into his greed. But,” he interjected, his voice taking on a soft vexation, “she was annoyingly tenacious in keeping his company. Regardless of his many warnings, she still saw a goodness in him. Despite the damnation that she risked, she deemed him worthy of her own goodness. He belonged to her, and she…” his voice grew soft as he drew away from her face to look her in the eyes again. “…to him.”

A silence fell between them as Sakura stared back at the demon. Gone was the predatory look in his eyes as they softly washed across her. Instead he held the expression of someone who had lost something precious and was intent on finding it before ever returning home.

“So they fell in love,” Sakura concluded.

Sasuke let out an amused breath.

“Hn,” he hummed. “Love is something that mortals like to attach to their precious people, but those bonds are so often broken with the boredom of time or death, easily replaced with another.” He shook his head. “No, what these two shared went beyond the definition of love. There are no
As he spoke Sasuke’s eyes blazed so fiercely that Sakura could barely hold his gaze. But his hand that still remained on her skin kept her from looking away. There was something in his voice and in the way his eyes held so much intensity, she began to question this stories origins. It sounded like the beginning of a myth. Some romantic saga written by a whimsical mortal but Sasuke’s eyes told a different story.

And then it hit her.

The intensity in his eyes, the heat that fueled it. It did not come from an appreciation of such a tale. It came from an understanding that went beyond empathy or sympathy. It was the look of someone who lived it. This was not just a fairy tale Sasuke was telling her, it was a memory. His memory.

Sasuke was the demon.

With this realization, Sakura was flooded with more questions than she could sort. If this demon had such a treasured and pure love, how could he be so heartless in his actions. Perhaps his past deeds had been embellished but even if they were significantly less drastic, the actions of Sasuke Uchiha were still far and beyond sadistic. And what kind of mortal could tame such a beast? Who was this woman?

“What happened?”

She saw Sasuke swallow hard as if pushing down the emotions she knew he had to be feeling. “She died,” he said quietly.

Despite her suspicions of such a tragic ending, Sakura could not help but feel her own sorrow for the anguished heartbreak of such a travesty. It was as if she herself had suffered the loss. Her eyes burned as she stared back at him but it was nothing like the heat of intensity like Sasuke’s. Instead it was from the tears that built up in her glossy green eyes.

“I’m so sorry,” she said in a broken tone, causing the first tear to fall down her cheek.

Sasuke watched, mesmerized by the glistening drop of salty sorrow that fell from her long lashes. It
intrigued him, made him wonder if this was just a part of her natural empathy or because it was something deeper. When the second tear dropped from her lashes he caught it. Wiping his thumb across her skin and drying her cheek.

He dared to take a step forward so that she was forced to tilt her head nearly straight up as he brought his other hand to her other cheek. Cradling her face in his hand, he let his head fall forward, stopping just as his long bangs touched the top of her head. His black fringes danced in the small breeze that managed to flow between them. He could feel the heat of her body radiating from the two inches that separated him.

“Why are you sorry?” He asked.

“Because you lost her,” she answered. “I can’t imagine what that would be like. To have loved so deeply and to lose it.”

There was a taste of bitterness that flooded his mouth at her words. He knew he should have known better than to assume a simple story would bring back her memories. And yet...there was something in her eyes that said otherwise. It was as if she possessed the emotions and feelings but the real experience was veiled by the lack of memories. He attempted to see something tangible through the opaque veil but only continued to see muddled shadows, nothing of true clarity or understanding. At this he concluded his eyes were just seeing what they wanted to see.

Empathizing had always been her strong suit. When a person cried, she cried with them. It was a pity he saw in her eyes, not recollection. And it hurt. It hurt his heart and his pride. The later pain sending him into a natural instinct of defense.

He did not want her pity.

He let his hands drop from her face and took a step back. “Tch,” he scoffed, giving her a look that accused her of silly naive. “Why would you be sorry for me? It’s just a story.”

The flatness in his tone made Sakura flinch at the ability in how quickly he switched. One moment she felt as if he were bearing his soul to her, the next he was cold and aloof, making her feel like a fool.

He took another step away, shoving his hands in his pockets as he looked out across the water. She could tell she had done something to displease him but she was unsure of what had caused such a
change in his tone and body.

“Perhaps,” she conceded, her tone treading lightly but she could not help but query on. “But are not all stories stemmed from some truth?”

Sasuke’s attention moved back to her at her words, his body turning along with his head. For a moment Sakura nervously bit at her lip as he looked at her blankly. Tucking her hands behind her back, she dug the toe of her sandal along the boardwalk. He could not help but let the small smile come to his lips at the action.

“So they are,” he stated with a fondness in his voice.

A demure smile crossed her face and his warm tone gave her bravery to close the distance between them herself. As she moved up to the railing she wrapped her arms around the weather worn wood and gazed out at the water. Sasuke joined her, taking position at her right and leaving just enough space to allow the breeze to travel between them.

The amount of time that passed between them went unchecked as they stood in silence and watched the ferry boats cross over the bay. Or at least Sakura watched the boats as Sasuke watched her.

“What happened to the demon?” Sakura asked suddenly, breaking their relaxed silence.

When she received no immediate response, Sakura looked up at him to find that he was already turned toward her with a pensive expression. As if he were struggling to find the right answer to her question.

“Unwilling to let her go, he vowed to bring her back, no matter the cost.”

“And what was the cost?”

“Does it matter what the cost was? No price was too high.” She raised an eyebrow, unsatisfied by his answer. Sasuke let out a sigh a turned more somber, his eyes moving to the water. “Without her light, he fell into darkness,” he replied. “A darkness he had never imagined and there he dwelled for centuries.”
There was a pause when Sasuke finished, and Sakura waited for him to continue. When she realized he had no more to add, her nose scrunched up. “I don’t like the ending of your story.”

Sasuke let out an amused breath and leaned closely to her, his nose coming to a stop just inches from her own pert nose. He grinned at her.

“Who says it’s the ending and not just the beginning?”

His words brought a knot to her stomach and she took a step back. Unnerved in the unknown underlying of his words. She swallowed thickly. “So what is the ending?”

He turned his body fully so he was facing her frontly as he rested his arm against the railing. “That, my dear Sakura,” he began, raising a hand to poke her in the middle of her forehead, “...has yet to be written.”

She let out a surprised grunt at the action and he retracted his fingers as she stared at him. He smiled at her, his eyes shining with a sparkle that left Sakura even more uneasy. It was an unhinged look like someone on the bridge between sanity and crazed actions.

“But do not freight,” he assured her, thinking the unease was from the displeasure of receiving no conclusion to his tale. “I have a feeling you will get your ending very soon when all the stars are finally aligned.”

His eyes glanced up to the sky.

“You should go now. I believe you have a promise to keep and it will be dark soon. It is not safe for you to wander around in the dark.”

Sakura frowned at his words. Not only because she realized he had been eavesdropping on her conversation with Sai or because she felt like she was being treated like a child, but the familiarity of it. It was like she had heard the warning multiple times.

As an angel, she knew the dangers that came with the departure of the sun. But it was a danger that
everyone knew about, it was instinctual for their kind. There was no need to voice it. Yet, the warning sounded like a broken record, a repeat of something she had heard a thousand times.

“Wait,” she protested when he looked as if she were about to leave. He paused and looked at her. “You said you would give me some answers…”

He smiled oh so sinfully. “And you trusted to word of a demon?”

Sakura stared at him in disbelief, her green eyes wide as her mouth hung open. They had both alluded to the fact that she had a knowledge of what he was, but it was the first time either of them had so blatantly acknowledged it.

“Well…yeah,” she said dumbly, hating herself for admitting that yes she had in fact trusted the word of not only a stranger, but a demon.

“Hn,” he hummed. “Still just the same.”

Her face scrunched. “What do you mean—nhg.”

She was cut off when he suddenly jabbed the center of her forehead again. “Next time,” he said as he withdrew his fingers. “I promise.”

“When will that be?” She questioned, rubbing her forehead as she glared at him. “Two days, three weeks?”

He smirked. “Tomorrow,” he answered as he waved his hand gesturing to the area where they stood. “Same spot.”

He was gone in a blur, leaving Sakura alone to make her way to find Sai and hopefully congratulate him on his new job.

Chapter End Notes
Thank you all again for your supports and comments. It means the world to me. Next chapter will be back to Ancient Greece. Let me know how we are feeling!
Ancient Greece:

“Sasuke, promise me you won’t leave again.”

“Hn.”

“Thank you.”

Sasuke kept his promise and he did not leave her. At least not without a promised return that was sealed with a poke of her head. Each time she felt the jab to her forehead, she believed him. And each time she believed him, she was never disappointed, as he always came back.

It was not everyday they met, but it was enough.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months. And soon the spring months had transitioned into summer. Their time together varied in attendance and activity but with each moment and day they spent together, Sasuke grew a little warmer, Sakura grew a little bolder, and together, they grew a little closer.

“Tell me the one about the two brothers,” Sakura requested.

Sasuke let out a lazy droll. “Why? You hate that one.”

Sakura rolled over onto her side, her lips pulling up into a pout and she rested her head on her hand. She glared at Sasuke who was laying beside her, stretched out on his back with arms tucked behind his head and eyes closed.
It was dark out.

Naruto had left hours ago. Sakura had expected Sasuke to send her home not long after before the curtain of night fell, but to her surprise, he didn’t. So she lingered until the first star began to glow in the night sky and before long, the sky had been splattered with the twinkling of many heavenly lights.

“I don’t hate it,” she insisted.

Sasuke’s eyes cracked open to look at her from the side. Seeing her pouting face, he closed his eyes again, letting out a grunt of annoyance as he rolled his eyes and shifted himself to mirror her body. With his head propped up, he leveled himself with her to look her in the eye.

“Every time I tell it to you, you complain about the ending.”

“That’s because I don’t like the ending,” she commented. “It’s sad and lonely.”

“Well it’s how it happened,” Sasuke retorted, giving her forehead a poke.

She frowned at him as she rubbed the surface of her forehead. “You could change it. That’s the point of stories isn’t it?”

Sasuke gave her a pointed look. “All stories stem from something real. The further away you move from the original, you lose the lesson to be learned. I’m not changing the ending. If you don’t like it, then choose a different one.”

“But all your stories have bad endings.” She commented dryly. “Don’t you have any happy ones?”

“No,” Sasuke answered automatically as he rolled his body back to stare up at the stars.

The truth was that he knew plenty. His mother was just like Sakura, always looking for a happy ending and coming up with sickeningly sweet fantasies. But he didn’t want to encourage Sakura. She was already annoying enough with her constant nagging for a story. If he complied, he would
never have peace. She would insist for more and more. She was a glutton with an insatiable craving for imaginations that went beyond her pebble of a world.

“Then I want the one with the brothers,” Sakura demanded, causing him to give her a side glare at her tone. Her demanding face quickly morphed into one of pleading.

Sasuke cursed her. He hated it when she made that face. He found it difficult to say no and he was suspicious that she knew it. He tried to will himself to deny her but then he looked at her large eyes and all fight dissipated in him. He was the one with the Sharingan, yet it was she who manipulated him with just a single look.

He rolled his eyes. “Fine,” he sighed out. “So annoying,” he muttered under his breath.

Immediately Sakura’s pleading look brightened as a bright smile came to her face. Like an eager child she rolled onto her back and shifted herself closer to him. Automatically his free arm shifted to let her lay on his shoulder and his fingers began to trail through her hair. He wasn’t sure how this came to be a natural habit, but it had.

He took in a deep breath, looking up to the skies, he pointed to two stars. He felt Sakura’s head adjust to look at the pair of gleaming stars. He wasn’t sure why he bothered, by this time Sakura had learned them well enough she could find them blindfolded. But when he caught her smile from his peripheral, he stopped questioning it.

“Long ago,” he began, “there were two brothers. Indra the oldest, and Ashura….”

“You didn’t have to come with me.”

“Hn.”

“I do this by myself all the time.”

“Hn.”
Sakura let out a heavy sigh.

It was market day and she had been sent to oversee the stall that her father vendored at the port. It was something she had done by herself hundreds of times since she was old enough to handle such affairs. However, as of late Sakura had been accompanied more often than not.

It was a side effect to his more frequent attendance in her life. Sakura knew Sasuke was a little paranoid. He manifested it every time he chastised her for roaming outside of her family's manor after dark and unaccompanied. However, recently it had gotten even worse. Now it felt like he thought something would happen to her even in the brightness of mid day sun.

It was endearing but also inhibiting.

And perhaps accompanied was not exactly the right word to define Sasuke’s presence. Sasuke more lurked behind her, than escorted at her side. While his foreboding presence was good for detering any ill intentioned people, it was not so great for business. Shoppers would begin to approach the stall only to catch sight of his scowling demeanor as he stood in the shadows behind her. Once they saw his glare, they would automatically seek business elsewhere, some taking a simple change of course while others seemed to flee.

As she watched the third young man run away, tripping over his feet and leaving a trail of dust, Sakura whirled around. With her hands on her hips she took in the brooding demon. His dark eyes were still narrowed and focused on the spot were the young sailor had just disappeared from. While his obsidian eyes were as dark as ever, Sakura couldn’t help but have a sneaking suspicion that he had just recently flashed his bloody orbs at the potential customer.

She cleared her throat and Sasuke finally moved his eyes to her. But that was the only movement. The rest of his body remained firmly locked and rigid. With his arms crossed and feet placed at a stance, he looked at her with the stoney frown on her face.

“If you’re going to insist that you be here can you at least stop scaring the customers away.”

“I’m not scaring customers away,” Sasuke said dryly.

“Then what would you call that?” Sakura questioned, her arm flying behind her to indicate the now
settling dust that was the only evidence of the young sailor.

“Tch,” Sasuke scoffed. “He wasn’t a customer.”

Her hands went to her hips. “Of course not, because you scared him away too soon to buy anything. And even if he wasn’t going to buy he could have been looking...”

Her voice drifted off as a smirk that looked more like a sneer came to his lips. “Oh trust me Sakura,” he said in a dark tone. “He was certainly looking for something...but it wasn’t olives.”

Sakura stared back at him, not understanding his meaning. When she failed to catch his drift, he let his eyes meander down her body, taking in the dip of the neck line, the curve of her waist, and the width of her hips. When Sasuke realized he was taking far too long to make his point clear, he snapped his eyes back up to her face, just in time to see his meaning dawning on her.

Her face flushed and she quickly wrapped her arms around herself in a hug. “I um…” Her eyes fluttered around the small stall, every once in awhile landing on him before she flushed deeper and looked away. “I don’t think….he was just a….he was probably supposed to meet vendors for possible trade deals…”

She drifted off when she caught Sasuke’s look of skepticism. “Trust me, it had nothing to do with trading...although I am certain he was looking for some kind of offer…”

She flushed even deeper. “Stop it,” she protested. “No one would ever think that…”

Sasuke felt his brow raise and then he scoffed. It baffled him how oblivious she was. When he had first met her, it was plain to anyone that Sakura possessed a unique beauty. Her coloring had been intriguing and bright, making her stand out. However, over the time that he had known her, Sakura’s unique coloring was not the only thing that made her stand out.

She had grown taller and filled out in all the right places. In the course of a year, Sakura had grown from young woman to woman. It was a realization that had become more and more apparent to Sasuke in the more recent times. He had first noticed it after the month of absence. And when he started accompanying her to the market, he realized he was not the only one who noticed the changes of her body. Everyone had. Everyone...except for her.
It was annoying as hell. She was too naive and innocent for her own good. Sasuke understood that vanity was considered a sin but even a blind man would be able to see just how enticing she was. The sailor boy had no intentions in any business transactions, he had been headed this way purely out of his own lustful drives. All the young men had been. The first boy had perhaps innocent intentions but the hopeful admiration in the boys eyes was just a diluted version of the lustful want that the other two had harbored in their minds...or at least in some more southern region of their body.

“Sakura,” he began, his voice taking on its usual annoyance when he was frustrated with her. “Do you forget that I can sense every intention that man had? Stop being so humble, it will get you into trouble. The sooner you become aware that people will take advantage of a pretty face whenever they can, the better. You have to be more aware of what your looks do to people...especially men.”

Sakura looked down at the ground. She hated it when Sasuke chastised her like a child. But then suddenly his words sunk in and her green eyes snapped up to him. “Y-you...you think i'm pretty?”

Sasuke froze. “That not what I…” he stopped himself, and ran a hand over his face. “Is that really all you took from that?” he groaned into his hand as it slid off his face and revealed a frowning Sakura. He let out a sigh. “Yes...you are pretty...for a mortal,” he added when she beamed up at him too happily from his proclamation.

She grabbed his hand to which she earned an impatient look from him. “Come on,” she encouraged, tugging him in the direction that would lead them into the busy street.

“Where to? I thought you needed to manage the stall?” Sasuke asked, but taking a few steps to follow her anyways.

“It's not like I will make any sales with you chasing everyone away,” she said dryly over her shoulder.

“I let the old woman buy a pitcher of oil and the old man and his grandson linger,” Sasuke defended, to which he only received a shaking of Sakura’s head as she continued to pull him around the busy market.

“Here, try this,” Sakura directed eagerly as she shoved a piece of bread into Sasuke’s face.
Sasuke looked at the morsel of food, drenched in a golden honey that was beginning to run down her fingers. He had never cared for such delicacies before. But as he watched the shining stickiness begin to glisten down the back of her finger towards her knuckles he suddenly felt oddly enticed. He licked his lips and just as he found himself preparing to partake of the offering, the sickly sweetness hit his nostrils and brought him to the realization of what he was about to do.

Caught off guard, Sasuke batted her hand away, causing her to let out a yelp as she nearly dropped the treat. “What was that for!”

“I don’t like sweet things,” he proclaimed.

Sakura let out a scoff that mimicked the one she was exposed to frequently in his presence. “Tch, do you like anything,” she mumbled under her breath as she began to pick at the sweet treat and eat it herself.

Sasuke watched her take a piece of the honeyed bread and close her eyes as she savored the sweetness of each bite. “I like tomatoes,” he suddenly answered, causing Sakura to pause with a finger in her mouth as she tried to clean the sticky residue left from her treat.

Her face scrunched into confusion. “Tomato?” she asked, the word sounding foreign on her lips. “I’ve never heard of them...what are they?”

Her ignorance was another reminder of just how small her world was. Sasuke had forgotten this part of the world did not produce his favorite fruit. He frowned, annoyed at himself for forgetting that Sakura was not like him. Her world was the island and her knowledge was limited to that world.

“It’s a fruit found in a land far across the sea,” Sasuke explained.

“Oh…” she said, “well maybe I can look for it at the market. There is a charming old vendor down the street that travels around the Mediterranean, collecting exotic things.” Her face brightened. “One time, I had something that had come all the way from a land in the Far East of Asia. They called it Lychee and it was delicious,” she said almost proudly in an attempt to sound more cultured.
Sasuke gave her a sympathetic smile. “I doubt your merchant friend would find this,” he said, skeptical at her ‘connections’. “This is a land that has yet to be known by anyone within you or even your empire’s knowledge. Across the ocean.”

Sakura looked at him as if he were speaking in tongues. “There are lands across the edge of the world?”

Sasuke smiled again. “Oh sakura, there are more than just lands across the sea but whole wonders and worlds…” he paused for a moment as he took in her awe. “...you know, I could take you there someday.”

So looked at him in surprise. And then a glint of excitement flashed across her face. She looked eager as if she would accept his offer. The thought of showing her such worlds stirred something within him. He would show her the world. They would see every wonder and every scene. Not just of her world but his. He was just about to grab her and take her with him then and there. But then the spark of adventure dimmed.

“Certainly sounds fantastical,” Sakura said with a sad smile. “Something like Odysseus’ voyage...maybe perhaps that is where the great sea took him before he returned. Though I don’t think I could sail a ship, nor would I be very brave fighting off any creatures that may cross our epic journey.”

Not willing to let the spark of adventure dim completely, Sasuke prodded her. “We don’t need a boat, and I promise I would not let any harm come to you. I would slay all the creatures that should set themselves before us.”

Sakura stared up at him. Unsure if he was being serious or mocking her. A part of her, wanted, even hoped, it was true offer. But then she recalled what he was and what she was. She was just a mortal girl.

While many of the hero’s in most of the legends and myths of her time were just mortals as well, she still failed to sell the idea to herself. She was not like Perseus or Hercules who descended from gods. She was no warrior like Achilleus who had been dipped in the River Styx. She was not like Odysseus, cunning and brave. She was a daughter of a farmer, with a humble education and a lack of any knowledge beyond the shores of her tiny island. She was no heroine.

“Maybe someday,” she said noncommittally.
Sasuke let his attention linger on her, his heart slightly sinking in the change of her continence. He nodded. “When you wish it, I will take you anywhere you desire.”

Sakura was in her families olive grove helping with the grafting when he found her. She was crouched down at the base of the trunk, grafting in a healthy branch when suddenly something was shoved into her face. Sakura reared her head back to take in the rounded red object held out to her by a pale hand. She followed the arm attached to said hand and found herself looking up at Sasuke, who casually leaned against the tree she was working in. She was surprised but more than happy to see him.

He had been gone for a week and it had been a long and slow one. It was why she was more than eager to help in the grove to hopefully pass the time more quickly. With her work easily overshadowed by his presence, she quickly stood to her feet, taking the offering from his hand.

It was smooth and round like an apple but soft like a ripened plum. “What is it?” She asked curiously as she rolled it around in her hand, inspecting the green stem and the minuscule yellow lines that appeared here and there like veins.

“It’s a tomato, try it,” Sasuke encouraged, taking note of her eyes as they lit up at the name.

Giving it one last inspection, Sakura bit into its plump flesh. Immediately her eyes went wide as the unexpected juiciness took her for surprise. She pulled it from her mouth, her hand coming up to her chin to whip away the juices that had escaped as she chewed.

Sasuke watched her closely. She gave no indication as to what she thought of it. Finally she swallowed. His eyes followed every action as her throat bobbed and then flickered up to her face again.

“It’s not very sweet,” she commented with slight disappointment.

She liked her lips, the action caught his attention and he noticed a small seed lingering. Smoothly he lifted his thumb and dragged it across her lower lip. She froze, her green eyes snapping up to meet his dark ones. For a prolonged moment he let his finger linger and then he pulled it away and snatched the bitten fruit from her hand.
“Tch,” he scoffed. “Do you like anything that isn’t sweet?” He asked with a roll of his eyes. “Not everything has to honey coated to be edible.” He took a bite from where she had just bitten. Savoring the taste he looked at her, questioning how she could not enjoy such a delicacy.

She let out a small laugh making him pause in his chewing. “You haven’t a lick of sweetness to you but I still like you,” she did teasingly before bending down to finish her work.

Sasuke chose to not respond as he watched her fasten a rope around the trunk to stabilize the switch in which she had just grafted. However he didn’t stop the small smile that came to his lips by her words.

“What are you doing!” Sakura practically screeched.

Sasuke paused in removing his shirt. When he caught the crimson tint that was quickly overtaking her face, he smirked. He finished pulling the black linen over his head and tossed it to the ground.

“Don’t tell me you live on an island and don’t know how to swim,” he said as he lifted a foot and pulled it free from his sandal. He let it fall next to his shirt then removed the other.

Once clothed in only his trousers Sasuke put his hands on his hips, his thumbs snaked between his skin and the waistline. He watched with amusement as Sakura's eyes widened even more.

She thrust a hand up. “Stop!” She screamed, averting her eyes.

Sasuke smirked. “Calm down Sakura, don’t worry, I will let you keep your innocence today.”

She gave him a wry look. “Now answer me, do you know how to swim.”

She gave him a hardened look. “Of course…” Then her face turned nervous. “But it isn’t safe in this area. The tide and the current...”
He didn’t give her a reply to her worry. Instead he grasped her hand and began to pull her towards the coming waves that were gently sweeping the stoney beach.

“What are you doing?” She questioned as she immediately dug her heels into the ground and tried to pull free.

Her sandals did nothing against the seaweed slicked stone and his strength. She slid forward, grasping onto his arms as she let out a yelp.

“Sakura,” he whispered into her ear. “It’s okay, trust me.”

She looked up at him. “But the-”

“Trust me,” he emphasized again. “I won’t let anything happen to you.” Sasuke watched her gaze up at him and slowly nodded her head in consent. He smiled. “Then let’s go.”

He grabbed her hand, steadying her as they walked across the flat rocks. Every once in awhile Sakura’s foot slipped, until Sasuke kneeled down and removed her shoes for her. “Your feet will have better traction,” he said as he tossed her sandals farther up the shore where the waves did not reach. Sakura said nothing, only nodding her head as she grasped his arm and followed.

They reached a point in the rocky ledges where a large black circle gurgled and rippled. A wave lapped up onto the rocky ledge they stood on and rushed past them. Salt water sprayed up onto Sakura’s bare legs as the tide hit against her ankles and calves. The tickle of seaweed skimmed the top of her feet making her want to squirm. As quickly as it came, the water was pulled back as the current retreated back to the sea. Soon the ledge was no longer submerged with the exception of the circular drop off that they stood at the edge of.

It was when Sasuke began to enter into the dark pool that Sakura began to be hesitant again. Sitting on the edge with his feet dipped into the dark hole, Sasuke looked up at her and gave her hand a tug.

“Common,” he encouraged. “Trust me just a little bit longer, I promise it will be worth it.”

Warily, Sakura crouched down and sat at the ledge. The water was shockingly colder in this spot
than the shallow waves that she had grown used to. The deeper her feet went the colder it got.

“What exactly are we doing?”

Saskue grinned. “How long can you hold your breath for?”

Sakura stared at him blankly then shrugged her shoulders. “I don’t know.”

Saskue nodded. “You’ll be fine. Just hold on to my hand and don’t let go, no matter what.”

Sakura’s eyes bugged as he scooted off the ledge and plunged into the pool. A wave of water rose out, disrupted by his body mass, it rushed over her legs and thighs before trickling away. A rise of bubbles made their way to the surface just before his head broke through as well. Weighed down by water, Sakura took in the odd look of his flattened hair. It was such a foreign look that it made her want to reach out to ruffle his hair and reshape it to its normal form of messy spikes. Instead, his hand rose and took hers.

“Common, we have to time it just right.” With shaking hands, Sakura grabbed his and slowly lowered herself into the pool. Her dress swirled and floated around her legs as she submerged herself but she thought nothing off it, too distracted by the suspense of what they were about to do. Just as her body settled, a crash of waves came over the ledge and she felt her body being pushed away from Sasuke. Panic flooded her mind but before she could drift away, she felt the tightening of his hand with hers as he pulled her close to his body.

Clinging to his arms with her chest pushed against his bare side, she looked up at him. There was something in his stare that left his eyes rich with a shiny luster. Unable to hold it, she looked down, only to be met with an eyeful of the bare skin of chest. Her attention lingered far longer than what should have been appropriate and was only pulled away when he spoke.

“When I say, take the deepest breath you can manage and keep holding on.” Wide eyed she nodded. The waves began to recede back and just as the pull of the current lessoned Sasuke gave her hand a tug. “Now,” he said before dipping beneath the surface and pulling her down with him.

It was darker than Sakura had ever experienced. Her eyes were pinched tightly, but she knew that
even if they were open, she would see nothing. All she felt was the buoyant current which seemed to suck them deeper and deeper and the tight grip in which Sasuke held her hand. The brush of sea kelp made her fear being tangled and trapped but all it ever did was tickle her skin as she swam on.

She wasn’t sure how long they had been under, in her panic to take in a breath when Sasuke had instructed, she had forgotten to start counting. However long it was, she was beginning to feel the burn in her chest. Despite Sasuke’s assurance, she couldn’t help but panic. They were no longer swimming down but horizontal now, there was no telling how much further they still had to go.

The burning in her lungs began to intensify, reminding her that her body needed oxygen as her heart began to fluctuate more rapidly in panic. Instinctively her body moved to go back, to return to where she knew the exit from this soon to be watery grave was, but Sasuke held tight and continued to tug her along. Whether it was by his assuring squeeze, or the fact that she realized she was disoriented and as a result, really did not know which way would lead her to the exit, Sakura followed, kicking her feet to go faster in hopes to convey to Sasuke the urgency of her need for air.

Just as she was beginning to think Sasuke truly was dragging her down to hell and heat in her lungs was not from lack of oxygen, but from the fiery pits of the underworld, she felt herself being tugged upwards and without warning, her head broke through the surface of the water. She took in a deep breath that was cold and refreshing despite the salty taste that came with it. Coughing a few times, she wiped her eyes before opening them. Sasuke popped up right before her, his red eyes shining brightly in the dim light.

“Are you okay?”

She shook her head automatically, unsure if she really was or not. It was then that she began to look around. Black rock surrounded them in a small cave. The pool of water being the entrance. Judging by the draping of seaweed and mollusks that had fastened themselves to the walls, Sakura assumed that at high tide this place was flooded.

“Why are we here?” She asked, doing her best to hide the panic that came with the danger of being caught in such a place at the wrong time.

Sasuke gave her a secretive smile. “I want to show you something.”

He pulled himself up onto the ledge then reached down to pull her out of the pool. “But what about the tide,” she couldn’t help but stress.
“Don’t worry about it,” he assured as he steadied her then began to make his way down the narrow passageway.

It was then that Sakura realized the faint light that was allowing her to see. Farther down where Sasuke was leading her, there was a pale blue light, tinted with green that seemed to almost glow.

“What-”

“Just wait,” Sasuke cut her off.

Sakura nodded even though Sasuke was not looking at her as she continued to follow. The floor of the cavern was cushioned with a small path way of small grained sand, making it easy to step. With each step she felt the gritty wet sand shape and reform into a perfect imprint of her foot.

When they reached the end, Sasuke turned to her. “Close your eyes,” he instructed.

She gave him a quizzical look but when he said nothing else she slowly let her lids fall. She heard Sasuke step around her before his arms suddenly snaked around her. She startled but stilled when she realized he was doing it with a purpose. With a gentle nudge, he guided her forward a few steps then turned sharply.

“Step up,” he said into her ear.

Blindly, Sakura lifted her foot higher then slowly set it down. Setting her hands to the cavern side to steady herself, she stepped up then waited for Sasuke to join her before moving forward again. Soon the echoed splashing of the waves from where they entered where muted and all she could hear was the shuffling of their feet and the small dripping of a different water source.

“Are you ready?” Sasuke whispered into her ear. She nodded. “Then open your eyes.”
There were no words that she could use to describe it. It was like nothing she had ever seen or imagined to ever exist. It was of another world.

He had led her to a hollowed out portion of the cavern. The floor was flooded in a pool of water that was surprisingly warm. Sakura was standing at the pools edge, her toes just barely brushing the water and savoring the warmth it gave to her numb feet. From the center of the cavern roof, water dripped in a soothing trickle to feed the small pool below it. Centuries of this constant flow of water had deposited a build up of minerals and as a result, stalactites hung from the ceiling like a great chandelier.

While the natural architecture of the room was beautiful, this was not what awed Sakura. Instead it was the glowing light that illuminated the cavern with an iridescent blue light that had her speechless. Stings of it hung from the formed stalactites like beaded strands of glass, adding to the whimsical strangeness of the room.

“What is this?” she asked in a small breath.

“The light is created by a pubescent species of insects.” She felt rather than heard Sasuke take a step next to her as his arm brushed up against hers. “You once asked me what my world was like,” Sasuke began, “This—” he gestured around the room- “is not even a fraction of its beauty. But it is the closest thing in your world that I have to compare it to.”

Sakura took a few steps forward into the pool of warm water. She relished the warmth that seeped farther up her legs the further she became submerged and without thinking, she sat down, bending her knees as she rested herself on her ankles. Her dress pooled around her like a jellyfish as it floated near the surface. The light color seemed to absorb the blue-green light from above, giving the illusion that she herself was glowing as it reflected the light.

Sasuke watched as she stared in awe at the water around her. Her fingers skimmed the water's surface as she softly smiled down at the glowing fabric of her dress. Her neck turned as she looked back at him.

It felt like he had run into a wall all full speed as a wave of strange, but not entirely foreign feelings hit him. He had felt this once before, several months ago when he had looked upon her soul. But this time it was different. He wasn't looking at her soul, he was looking at her physical being, yet the image of her sitting in the pool was just as beautiful. Her face, cast in shadows in some places then highlighted in others looked so delicate and smooth in the lighting. Her skin, which had darkened with the warm season contrasted against the light color of her dress that in its wetness, clung to her body in a way that Sasuke thought was all too intimate for anyone to see. Yet, with this knowledge, he made no movement to look away at the sheer drapings that had molded to her skin.
and left little to the imagination. Instead of averting his gaze, his eyes wandered to her waist where the water line began, and then they traveled to the skirt of her dress where it floated around her like petals on a sweet lily. He could see the beginning of her thighs, paler than the skin that was regularly exposed to the rays of the sun.

He felt a tug within him, forcing his body to take a sudden step forward. The splash of his feet caused him to come back to himself somewhat. He looked down at the rippling water at his ankles then back up to Sakura. She was still looking at him, but there was an odd expression to her face.

Slowly, she stood. The sloshing of water turned to the unsteady dripping as the excess water seeped from her skirt. Sasuke looked her up and down. The unhidden shape of her legs and body as her wet dress clung to her skin doing nothing to help quell the urging feeling within him. He felt the tug again, it was insistent and powerful but this time he was ready for it and resisted the step his feet seemed to insist upon.

Something was wrong with him. His heart was beating irregularly and he felt uncomfortably warm and breathless. Had he caught some sort of mortal disease? Sakura began to walk towards him in an almost rushed pace. Her hurried feet stumbled through the water, unbalanced, as if she were being tugged towards him by an invisible force. In her rush she seemed to trip over her own feet and began to fall forward. In a flash he was grasping onto her, catching her before she could fully fall.

With surprised eyes, Sakura looked up at him. Her lips parted slightly, the movement catching Sasuke’s attention. “Thank you.” He saw rather than heard her lips form the gratitude.

Another movement caused his attention to move from her lips to her hand as she reached up to tuck a clump of wet hair behind her ear. His eyes lingered there. Taking in the curvature of it and the shape of her ear lobe.

“No, thank you for bringing me here,” she added. “It’s….” Her voice trailed off as she failed to express what it was to her. He watched as she looked around the cavern and met her stare when she looked back to him. “I never would have known there could be anything within the caliber of this beauty if it were not for you.”

Sakura’s heart fluttered when Sasuke’s hand moved to her face. With the back of his fingers he gently caressed her cheek with a strange look upon his face. “As would I, had it not been for you.”

Sakura stared back at him blankly, her mind struggling to comprehend the meaning of his words.
Surely they meant something other than what she was reading it as to be. Her stomach fluttered and flipped as she opened her mouth to say something, anything to try and settle her nerves, but she did not want to break the moment. It was too precious.

There was no denying the building of her feelings for the man before her. It had started innocently enough. He was handsome. Any maiden would have fallen for him initially. But most would have left it at that, a fickle attraction for a handsome face.

However, Sakura had passed the point of admiring and moving on. It was after his month of absence that she realized her feelings for him. It had been when she was trying to understand why she had been angry and hurt. The answer being because her feeling for him ran far deeper than she had ever imagined. Upon this revelation she had done her best to quell such things. It had always been easy due to his indifference as well as her presence and actions seeming to always be an annoyance to him. And then there were the far more cosmic reasons. Those being that they were of other worlds. He was an immortal seraphim, and she, she was merely a mortal being.

Sakura may have whimsical and romantic dreams, but that was just it, they were dreams. She was not so small minded to think that anything of a romantic nature could ever occur between herself and the dark haired seraphim standing before her. And even if they did...she knew better than to think it would end happily, no matter how deeply she felt for him. She knew the story of Eos and Tithonus. Mortals were not meant for an immortal life.

However, in moments like this, moments in which he looked at her the way he was now, or touched her in the way that was gentle, it was easy to forget those reasons.

“Sasuke,” she said so faintly and delicately it was just another breeze in the cavern. “I…”

“We should go,” Sasuke quickly interrupted as he withdrew his hand away from her cheek faster than any normal eye could see. “The tide will be coming back in soon and if we linger any longer…”

He did not finish his sentence. He did not need to. They were both aware of what would happen should she remain. It was a subtle reminder of exactly what made them so different, even if their bodies and flesh seemed to be made of the same things, they were not the same.

Chapter End Notes
A/N Yes I am aware glowworms are not in that region but for the sake of this story, we are going to pretend. Who knows maybe they once were and became instinct in that region or something. But I am confident in the accuracy of the tomatoes. I am giving and taking.

Anyways, sorry this seemed a bitter filler. Things will certainly progress in their relationship in the next ancient greece chapters but I needed this for the next chapter in present day as there will be some paralleling to the events. Thank you all to those who gave me feedback and welcome new followers! Hope you all had a happy new year sorry about the delay in update, December was kind of hectic and I did not get around to getting the last part done until now.

Also sorry for the lack of response on comments this past chapter, I read them all an appreciate every word of praise and input!

End Notes

This is my first Naruto work that I have posted. It is just an idea and I am still figuring out exactly where I am going with it and seeing if it is worth exploring. It will be switching back and forth between two time periods, both connected and centered around SasuSaku. Hopefully you enjoy it and any input is welcome!

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