Heat Wave

by hinata22

Summary

Sasuke and Naruto are part of a subset in society who have inner animals which are revealed as they grow up. The revealing of their animal often happens alongside the showing of whether they are givers or receivers.

Sasuke's is a cat and he learns quickly to control and gain strength from it. Naruto is a fox, and not just a normal fox but one with nine tails, for someone who has always wanted to fit in and have friends it is devastating. But even worse he is also told that he is a receiver which means he is effectively barred from the relationship he's always imagined with his dream girl, Sakura.

Adulthood proves to be no less difficult than childhood and Naruto dreads navigating the period in spring when everyone goes into heat, but it may be that his once best friend Sasuke could help him out.

Notes

This is a story that popped into my head after seeing a really cute drawing of Sasuke as a cat and Naruto as a nine tailed thing. It is a different thing for me to write, but I thought I'd give it a go and share and see what other people thought of.

Thank you so much for giving it a chance, I appreciate it so much.
Prologue

Naruto folded his arms and glared across the table at Jiraiya. The smell from the plates of food between them was almost impossible to resist. His tummy gurgled with hunger, reminding Naruto of every single day that had passed since he’d last had a proper cooked meal. But he couldn’t eat anything that his sometime foster father had brought for them to share. That would be the same as saying they were friends just like normal. And things were the very opposite of normal.

In contrast to Naruto’s best scowls and refusal to eat, Jiriaya smiled and deftly picked up food with his chopsticks.

The big man’s voice was light and teasing, ‘Hey, kid, you’ve read enough of my books to know how these things work. I know it wasn’t what you were expecting but it’s who you are so…’

‘So nothing. I can’t believe you’re too busy to come back for my birthdays, or when I was starring in the village play, or to help me with any of my applications to the academy, or to make sure I’m not lonely crying myself to sleep in my room alone every night, but when Princess Tsunade calls you into back up her hideous lies you appear immediately!’

A look of undeniable pain appeared in Jiraiya’s eyes before Naruto had even finished his tirade. It made his chest ache knowing he’d hurt the man in his dreams he called Dad. But he couldn’t regret what he said. He couldn’t apologise. No one took him seriously as it was. He had to remain strong.

Remaining strong in this case meant throwing a bowl of ramen at Jiraiya and running as fast as he could, not just out of the restaurant, but out of the whole damned cursed village that had hated on him since he was born.

A couple of times he looked over his shoulder, but no one was coming after him. The longer he ran, the further he got away, the more he looked, actually pausing, and eventually slowing to a walk.

He kicked at the long weeds at the side of the dirt road. Why hadn’t Jiriaya come after him yet? It wasn’t because Jiraiya didn’t love him, or because Jiraiya didn’t want him after he’d said those mean things. It couldn’t be. He couldn’t believe that. It had to be because now Jiraiya knew what he was he didn’t think Naruto was worth the effort of training and helping any more.

Naruto started running again. His feet pounding hard against the ground. He’d go somewhere no one would ever find him, where no one would ever tell him lies about what he was and wasn’t ever again. He didn’t know exactly where that place was in his mind, but his body had senses beyond his conscious ones. Without planning it, his feet had taken him to the huge lake on the edge of the Uchiha estate. The place where the youngest Uchiha could frequently be found.

Naruto grinned when he saw the familiar spikey hair and dark blue top sitting at the end of the pier. He bounced forward with extra speed despite how hard he’d already run. Sasuke was the most annoying, arrogant, stupid, stuck up person in the whole wide universe, and also his very best friend, so who better to spar with and use up all his extra energy and anger on?

Naruto hurtled towards him, waiting for Sasuke to leap up in defence which Naruto would skilfully predict and ignore. But Sasuke didn’t move and Naruto skidded past him into the water with a strangled scream of ‘Help’.

He splashed about trying desperately to remember what Jiraiya had taught him in their swimming
lessons. What he remembered was the best spots and times to see the prettiest women in the smallest bikinis. He did not remember a single stroke.

Water filled his mouth. His clothes were becoming bloated and heavy. It was over. He was going to drown. And his last conversation on this Earth had been an argument with his foster dad. Naruto flailed his arms and kicked out. It felt like the water had an iron grip around him, that it’d never let him go. He fought until he could fight no more. Everything blurred and faded to black.

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An angel with beautifully soft lips was kissing him. For a moment Naruto was filled with a sense of perfect peace and happiness. He opened his mouth wider to kiss her back, but instead found himself spluttering out water, his whole chest aching as if it had been squashed flat.

Naruto’s eyes began to focus. He wasn’t floating on a cloud, but laying on the pier. And there was no angel but only Sasuke staring down at him, not with his usual stick-up-the-butt look, but with wide eyed concern.

‘What were you doing? Why did you dive in like that if you can’t swim? And fight me so much when I tried to rescue you?’

After more coughing, Naruto decided to ignore all of Sasuke’s very reasonable questions which he had absolutely no reasonable answers for, and managed to ask something of his own instead. ‘Did you kiss me? While I was unconscious? That’s sick, dude.’

Sasuke’s face settled into its usual superior expression. ‘How is it possible to be ignorant in so many areas? I saved you, idiot. Or maybe I didn’t give you the kiss of life, maybe I find the sight of a bedraggled idiot too difficult to resist and I was desperate to seduce you. And now I’ll continue by removing all your wet clothes.’

Naruto automatically wiggled backwards, cheeks flushed as Sasuke reached for his zipper.

Sasuke rolled his eyes. ‘Don’t get shy now, I’ve seen you naked hundreds of times, and I am not attracted to you at all. But you will get a chill if you don’t get changed soon.’

‘I’m not shy…I just can take my own clothes off. Pervert.’ It was only as he tried to pull at his zipper that he realised how much he was shivering and how numb and useless his hands were. The piece of metal was suddenly tiny and impossible to get a grip on.

Without saying anything Sasuke pushed Naruto’s hands to the side and undressed Naruto with indifferent efficiency. But as Sasuke moved Naruto’s limbs about as if he was a toddler to be firmly managed, Naruto’s own body didn’t respond with the same indifference.

The first thing he realised, when he nervously touched his hair was that the tingling in his head wasn’t a strange headache from the near-drowning, but his ears showing. He tried to squash them down and subtly cover them with his hands, maybe they’d look just like extra bits of his hair? But when Sasuke pulled his jumpsuit down his legs, a tail shot out and whipped around as if it wanted to touch Sasuke. Sasuke pulled Naruto’s underwear down with the same disinterest he’d handled the rest of the blonde’s clothes. Another tail leaped into existence.

Naruto grabbed his tails with both hands and tried to sit down in such a way to push it under his legs. He somewhat succeeded, but then the tingling in his head increased and he quickly put his hands back to squash his ears down, which left his tails to escape again.
Most of his body might be shivering, but his face felt like it was glowing with the sun’s heat. He waited for Sasuke’s mockery and put downs.

Sasuke laid out Naruto’s clothes along the peer, spreading them out carefully. ‘You’re fortunate it’s a hot day and the sun will dry everything out. Otherwise I’d be angry at you for making me save you.’ He picked up a holdall that Naruto hadn’t noticed before and carried it beside Naruto. Sasuke opened the bag without looking, keeping his eyes on Naruto, he pulled out a towel and began drying Naruto in the same uninterested manner that he’d removed his clothes. ‘You’re also fortunate that I brought spare clothes with me. I’m not the type of cat who likes to swim. Whereas now that you’ve finally revealed it looks like you’re some type of…’ Sasuke leaned back and eyed him critically. ‘Fox? A canine certainly, and they traditionally prefer the wet more than cats, so I should not be having to rescue you.’

‘Why do you hang here all the time if you don’t like water?’ Naruto tried to sound like this was a normal conversation as he slapped one hand down on his head and tried to catch his tails with the other.

‘It is important to gain power over the things that make you nervous otherwise they’ll always have power over you.’ Sasuke took a blue jacket out of the bag and wrapped it around Naruto’s shoulders. ‘I’d give you my trousers too but I think your tails would rip through them at the moment.’

Naruto bit on his lips. He couldn’t bluster through this one. ‘No. I don’t have control yet.’

‘I noticed.’

‘I…you know, they just pop out all the time. It’s nothing to do with…you know…if you thought they were appearing because I was turned on by you undressing me. It’s not anything to do with that. It’s like totally not. I am as unturned on by you as you’re unturned on by me. It’s probably the, you know…shock of…’

‘When did you reveal?’ Sasuke looked out over the lake.

Naruto shrugged, unsure whether Sasuke believed him or not, but grateful that the Uchiha was changing the subject. ‘A few weeks ago.’

‘Hnnnn. So long. I thought you’d have come and told me’ Something flickered in Sasuke’s eyes so quickly it was difficult to say what it was, but it made Naruto’s chest ache in the same way that seeing pain in Jiraiya’s eyes had.

‘You’ve been waiting so long and boring me with your endless talk about how desperate you are to reveal.’ Sasuke continued. ‘Maybe now you’ll be a better sparring partner, if you can learn how to harness your animal power of course. It’s been difficult to lower my level to your capabilities.’

For once Naruto’s temper didn’t ignite at one of the Uchiha’s assertions that Naruto wasn’t as good as him. Instead he found himself talking in an apologetic tone. ‘It hasn’t turned out…right. It’s like everyone’s always said to me I’m not right. I don’t know why you’re not mentioning it, I guess it repulses you and you don’t want to bring attention to it? Don’t worry about my feelings I…’

‘I don’t worry about your feelings. You should know me better than that, dobe. If you’re talking about the fact you’re displaying a second tail, I’m not repulsed, why would I be? Merely curious, but patient for you to explain it if and when you want to.’

Naruto stared into his friend’s face. There was plain honesty there. Naruto swallowed, he couldn’t
let himself be happy or relieved, not yet. ‘It’s not just two tails. I went to bed, and I had this really amazing great dream about…’

‘I don’t need the details of your wet dream.’

‘No! It wasn’t like that, bastard, it was just you and me having like this great adventure together, fighting side by side and being equally awesome. Then when I woke up…I don’t have two tails, Sasuke. I have…nine.’ He took a deep breath waiting for Sasuke’s reaction. There wasn’t any, just those dark eyes looking at him with silent interest.

Naruto licked his lips and pulled Sasuke’s jacket around him a bit tighter. The longer the silence lasted the more energy his tails had making them even more impossible to grab and sit on. So he continued talking.

‘I stayed inside, yaknow, waiting to wake up again, hoping it was like part of my dream, one of those dreams inside a dream things. But I didn’t wake up. So I waited for the tails to disappear. And they didn’t. I guess the advantage of having no proper friends is that no one came and checked up on me and saw what a monster I am.’ He flashed a grin at his friend. ‘But you know I’m not the kinda guy who let’s himself get too down for too long. So I comforted myself thinking it must be some sort of rare illness as I’d never heard of anyone having more than one tail before, let alone nine. So I was all happy phoning Tsunade and…’

Naruto stared down at his hands. At some point during speaking he’d stopped trying to push the ears and tails back in. In a fiercer voice he said, ‘And well that didn’t help but made things worse. Granny refused…refuses to amputate the extra tails, she says they’re part of me and it’d risk killing me to remove them. And that’s not all. She insists that I’m not only a freak, but I’m a freak receiver!’

In an angry voice as he battled again to restrain the disobedient things that were now part of his own body Naruto told Sasuke about all the endless arguments he’d been having with Tsuande, about how she didn’t know him, and how she’d got everything wrong, right up to her calling Jiraiya home from whatever important scouting mission he was on, that suddenly wasn’t so urgent when she needed someone to tell Naruto how all his dreams of being like everyone else were shattered.

He even told Sasuke everything he remembered from his conversation with Jiraiya, his voice only faltering when he recounted the last things he’d said.

* I can’t believe you’re too busy to come back for my birthdays, or when I was starring in the village play, or to help me with any of my applications to the academy, or to make sure I’m not lonely crying myself to sleep in my room alone every night... *

Sasuke pulled both of Naruto’s hands away from where they were trying to contain his ears and tail, and held them between his own.

‘Usuratonkachi, you should have come to me. Or I should have come to you. I’m sorry.’

Naruto’s eyebrows shot up. He’d never heard Sasuke apologise to anyone before.

‘I could’ve told you that the gods have given you extra tails out of kindness as they knew a dobe like you needs to have something incredibly special about you to impress everyone and make up for how utterly useless you are at normal life. And I also totally agree that you cannot be a receiver, because everyone knows receivers are much stronger than givers as they bear the babies and nourish the children. And that’s not you is it? I can knock you senseless with a flicker of my
little finger.’

Naruto’s eyes narrowed in concentration. ‘I can’t tell if you’ve being nice or nasty.’

Sasuke actually laughed. ‘Then assume the latter. You always want people to be better than they are when it’s much safer to think of them as the worst they could be.’

A grin lit up Naruto’s face. ‘I’m not going to do what you say, teme. I know you’re trying to make me feel better when I’ve been feeling so bad and lost, and it’s worked. You being nice to me means that I don’t care any longer what other people say.’ He squeezed Sasuke’s hands and suddenly realised how cold they were. ‘Hey, you’ve been looking after me, but you’re wet through too!’

‘I suppose I am.’ Sasuke stood up and undressed, tossing his clothes to the side in stark contrast to the careful way he’d laid Naruto’s out.

Naruto looked at the heap of garments and thought about how neat and precise Sasuke always was about everything. He looked back to his friend with a frown on his face, which was immediately changed into open mouthed surprise. Sasuke was standing there stark naked. As the Uchiha had said earlier they’d seen each other naked countless times getting changed together, but something about the way the light was catching his porcelain skinned friend, or the thoughtful expression on his face, made it seem like it was a completely new and perfectly beautiful person who was in front of him.

His body jolted as if it had received a shock. Not just two, but all of his tails swirled around him in a mass of energy that he didn’t even try to contain. He gave a sigh, he’d wanted so long for his inner animal to reveal and now he wished somehow he had a normal form like everyone else so that Sasuke wouldn’t be ashamed to be his friend.

Sasuke turned his head to gaze at Naruto.

‘Go on, say it. I know you must have used up all your niceness for the day. I’d rather hear you say how ugly I am then just think you’re thinking it.’

‘You’re beautiful, Naruto,’ Sasuke said quietly.

Naruto wasn’t sure he’d heard correctly but all his tails were certain, pushing upright and wagging as if he was a pet dog not a wild fox thing.

He rubbed the back of his head sure he was blushing once again. ‘I, yaknow, my body reacting like this, it’s not because of, yaknow, you, it’s just…it’s just…’

‘When the animal self first emerges it’s often erratic.’

‘Did you have problems?’ Naruto said with too obvious eagerness. ‘Yaknow, when you saw your friend who you’re not attracted to at all naked did you just start purring? And it might’ve looked like you’re attracted to your friend you’re not attracted to at all, but really it was just coincidence?’

Sasuke sat down next to Naruto. ‘Will you be more comfortable if a little of my cat shows?’

‘You just want to show off how much more controlled you are than me?’

‘Naturally.’ Sasuke stretched out his fingers, little claws appeared. Then cat ears with pink insides grew from his head and a black tail curled around his body.

Seeing Sasuke’s animal did somehow make Naruto feel more calm. He sniffed the air which didn’t
just smell of damp clothes and lake air. ‘You smell….good? Do you always smell that good in kitty form and I couldn’t tell because I’m too human?’

‘I’m a cat, dobe, not a kitty. Don’t ever call me that again.’

Somewhow the familiar rebuke of Sasuke’s voice made Naruto focus again on the contrast between that and how unusual his friend had been acting most of this time.

‘Are you okay today? That’s a genuine question. Not that I’m not liking this not-fighty not-mean you, but just…are you okay?’

Sasuke’s dark eyes met his. ‘When you ran past me and threw yourself in the water I thought you were making some strange flamboyant suicide attempt.’

Naruto opened his mouth to speak but Sasuke held out a hand to silence him.

‘I know, it was a ridiculous thought, more to do with my state of mind than yours. I was worried seeing you depressed about your reveal as I’ve not seen you depressed before though you have so many reasons to be. But I think I’ve worked out that you were coming to attack me and expected a defensive move I wouldn’t have used even if I was in the mood to engage with you, and with your hopeless body control you couldn’t stop and went straight into the lake. As I said, the suicide mistake is a reflection of me not you. I’ve been thinking about death a lot lately. You haven’t heard because you’ve been presumably shut up with Tsunade and her team arguing about your reveal. Adults have this way of letting us find out things on our own rather than telling us the truth outright, claiming it is for our own benefit, then being shocked when we don’t react the way we’re supposed to.’

Sasuke gazed at him seemingly expecting a response though Naruto didn’t quite understand what Sasuke meant, but it was rare for his friend to speak this much so he nodded encouragingly.

‘My clan murdered Itachi. They say he was a traitor and was going to kill me.’

Naruto’s mouth fell open. He waited for Sasuke to say more but Sasuke just gazed silently at him. Naruto’s head was a chaos of questions, but he ignored them all and pulled Sasuke in for a big hug, wrapping his whole body, tails and all around his friend.

‘Sasuke. I am so sorry.’

‘Don’t say that. Everyone says that and it’s meaningless. What happened is nothing to do with you, there’s nothing to be sorry about.’

‘No. I meant, I’m sorry that I’ve been blathering on making a fuss about my tails and being a receiver when you’re dealing with this. I’m sorry I was so selfish and causing you all this hassle because I fell into the lake.’

Sasuke stroked a hand over one of Naruto’s tails. ‘Don’t be sorry for that. I’m grateful to have someone talk to me like you have today, as if we’re both the same people we were when we last saw each other. Don’t ever repeat this, but I’ve liked looking after you too, to feel useful when I’ve been so…helpless.’

Naruto held Sasuke harder until Sasuke finally pulled away though one hand kept seemingly absentely stroking through his tails.

‘I’m happy for you that you’ve finally revealed,’ he said.
‘Thank you,’ Naruto said quietly.

Sasuke gave a soft laugh. ‘You thanking me sounds too formal. Don’t do it. And don’t say sorry to me either. I like all your boasting and over confidence, insisting that you are better than me when you’re clearly not. And let’s talk about what you said to Jiraiya, I allowed it to pass earlier, but did you really yell at him for not coming to see you in your starring role in the play?’

Naruto paused, he wanted to pull Sasuke close against him again, as if by holding him he could protect his friend now from what had already happened.

But Sasuke obviously didn’t want that. What he’d said was that he liked Naruto talking to him before he knew what had happened to Itachi. Naruto couldn’t think about it without his body filling with pain, why would a clan kill their prodigy, the serene, supesmart, supereverythinggood, Itachi? What must Sasuke be going through? But his duty as Sasuke’s friend wasn’t to ask questions, it was to do and be whatever Sasuke wanted him to be right now. Which was the boasting and over confident dobe.

‘It was a starring role.’ Naruto gave an exaggerated pout. ‘Iruka sensei said Sheep Three was a really important role, and that my baaing was the best on the night.’

‘He said loudest, not best.’

‘Loudest is best! Gods know how you got the lead when you acted it exactly like you talk in real life, as if you don’t care whether anyone hears you or not!’

They sat on the end of the pier teasing each other and bantering as if the sun shining in the sky above them presided over a perfectly happy world.
This chapter is set when the characters are now much older than the prologue and are now at college.

Spring should have been the best season of the year. The days getting longer. All the blossom and flowers peeking through green grass. The world finally getting warmer. Girls shedding their winter layers to reveal all their prettiness. But Naruto hated it as much as it was possible for him to hate anything. From March through to May he lived in dread of what was happening right now all around him: everyone going into heat.

Maybe if he’d been born in the body he was supposed to, and been a giver rather than a receiver, maybe it would have been different. Maybe if he’d been a guy with a dominant scent that the love of his life Sakura would get a whiff of and be desperate to grind against, then spring would definitely be the best time of the year. But it wasn’t like that at all.

What it was like, was that he was the only male receiver in his college year, and no matter how quiet and polite and lovely everyone was for the rest of the year, as soon as his pheromones, (or whatever it was that caused lust madness, he maybe should have paid more attention in life sciences so he understood this crap that made his existence a nightmare), zinged off, the whole world became populated with jerks who assumed he’d be hot for them because that was the way things were supposed to work. Even if they had no intention of having children, receivers’ hormones went crazy, their bodies were a bundle of sensitive nerves, and they yowled for sex until enough givers had satisfied them and they could return to normal relationships until next year.

He’d been a later developer than all his peers, and that had just made things worse. He’d gone too long believing that soon his sexual identity would shine through and Sakura would finally desire more than holding hands and chaste kisses on the cheek with him. When his status as a receiver first become apparent, it’d needed every adult he knew sitting him down and telling him again and again that he was a receiver and that was the way it was going to be so he needed to accept it. Jiraiya had written a book especially for him to explain it. Kakashi had set up an elaborate role play/game to prove everyone had a place in the world and needed to occupy it and work together. Tsunade had rolled her eyes, shouted at him and shown him some very detailed medical diagrams. Iruka had treated him to so many ramen meals that it had almost made it worth it. Most embarrassingly Sakara’s parents had insisted on having a serious talk to him, saying how much they liked him and believed in his love for their daughter, but long-term relationships between two receivers were difficult, followed by lots of questions about how he’d feel raising another male’s cubs and not being able to sexually satisfy his girlfriend.

The only person he’d been comfortable around for so long had been Sasuke, not just because the Uchiha was the only person who didn’t insist he was receiver, although his reasons were different from Naruto’s. With his annoying smirk and in that stupid arrogant voice of his, Sasuke said things like: ‘I believe for the first time in your life you’re right, idiot, you can’t be a receiver. Receivers
are supposed to be mentally stronger to be able to bear children, and you crumple to the floor crying from the lightest touch.’

This generally resulted in one of their regular fights which they had learnt early in their friendship to label as ‘sparring’ to satisfy any of the adults who tried to separate them.

A slight flush warmed Naruo’s cheeks as he remembered how much he’d enjoyed testing his strength against Sasuke, and how much he’d enjoyed being the only person able to break through Sasuke’s nonchalant shell, even if it had involved him being covered in bruises on more occasions than his pride wanted him to count.

Thinking about it now, years later, Naruto chuckled. He’d never been close to normal, but he realised how really outside of the box he was, when bang in the middle of heat season, when he was supposed to be on all fours calling out for attention from the sexiest scented giver, he got more pleasure remembering his old tussles with his arch rival than contemplating having sex with anyone, even Sakura.

He tutted his tongue wishing for a moment that Sasuke and him had never matured past their physical arguments. He didn’t know how it had happened, but at some point they’d gone from daily fighting to barely talking to each other, it turned out that if they were too old to yell at each other they didn’t actually have anything in common. Or to be accurate that’s what he guessed Sasuke thought. It was hard to know for sure with the dude stopping talking to him and all.

Like a lot of things in life Naruto struggled with what he was supposed to do in this situation, compared to what he wanted to do. His early years had been lonely, devoid of parental figures to guide him wisely, or friends to teach him how to play with his peer group. Until Sasuke. It was hard to describe it, even with an adult mind that should understand these things better, but despite being an arrogant rich bastard who barely deigned to talk to anyone, Sasuke had been the first, and for a long time, only person who treated him like an equal. Unlike every other boys, and lots of the girls too, he never mentioned what Naruto’s was wearing, (whatever cheap tattered hand me downs came his way), but he did notice that Naruto rarely had lunch. Wherever Naruto was hiding to avoid sitting foodless amongst the lunch crowd, Sasuke always found him, and without making any fuss, shared his luxurious Uchiha spread.

When they worked on their animal transformation, Sasuke didn’t jeer at his nine tails like everyone else, he didn’t seem to care at all. Once when Sasuke found him after school after one of the more violent bullying groups had finished with him, Sasuke more or less carried him home and helped him tend the worst of his wounds, and even went and brought him food. All the time he talked to Naruto as if nothing was amiss, using his normal superior arrogant tone, and never once asked what or why it had happened.

But the next day, a book on unique and special spirit animals appeared in his locker with a little card inside with a picture of a beautiful nine tailed fox drawn on the front and the message inside written in Sasuke’s perfect calligraphy was: Dobe, be happy you’re not like everyone else. You’re better than them.

Naruto shook his head, it was stupid to reminisce about a friendship long gone, when he had real practical problems to face.

What was he going to do with himself until things had calmed down? He wasn’t exactly the only one attending lectures at the moment, but he was in the incredibly unusual position for him, as being the most diligent student in the room. He’d once comforted himself that things would get better when he got older and had honestly believed that age would magically transform him into someone who could easily deal with this time of year. But what he’d found was that things had got
worse.

As a younger person he’d been only of interest to his age group, and even then no one really gave him a second glance and that was fine, but passing the official age of manhood had turned him into open game for anyone who was interested in a male receiver. The way Professor Orochimaru had licked his lips and praised his attentiveness in the mornings lecture had made him feel like he was sitting there naked with a ‘please fuck me’ sign hanging around his neck. He physically shivered thinking about the way the teacher had invited him to stay afterwards to learn some beneficial off-curriculum things.

If any of the other professors leered at him so openly, he’d be quitting college by the end of the week. So lectures were out. Hiding out in his room was also out, about a dozen times in the last couple of days, Kiba had turned near full on dog and tried mounting him. He always stopped himself without Naruto having to throw him off, but it made them both blush and go quiet and then get extra loud talking over each other. He didn’t want to lose his bestie over the awkwardness of Kiba turning animal because of being close to Naruto’s scent.

It was impossible to leave campus, as bad as it was dealing with familiar faces turning into lustfilled doms, it was seven levels of hell worse having to trust to horny strangers understanding that however he might smell to them, he was not in the least turned on by the idea of being pulled into the nearest alley and ravaged.

Then suddenly he grinned as he thought of the one place no one would ever be. With a new bounce in his step he raced towards the place that he was certain would be his haven through the whole of this madness.

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Sasuke hated spring. Absolutely hated it. All his mental discipline and training to remain calm and logical threatened to become meaningless as soon as the first buds appeared on the trees.

He’d been assured by people who he’d once believed were wiser than him that as time passed and you matured everything became easier and things which confused you as a child would make sense.

But with each passing year it became worse. He became angrier at the emptiness of it all. The cherry blossoms had been in full bloom, the world displaying all its beauty and promises of happiness and fertility, when Itachi had died.

The cold stone of the university buildings could only offer limited sanctuary at this time of year. Sasuke could avoid the rich green and blooming of nature, but people were harder to escape. A serious centre of learning was unfortunately not immune to the excesses of heat season. In fact, it was worse. After all the long nights of studying, everyone was more desperate to throw themselves into the excuse of heat to give into their wildest urges.

He normally didn’t care what other people did, but everywhere he went the air was near suffocating, heavy with courtship yowls and the stink of sex. And far too many receivers were convinced that all they had to do was rub against him to send him insane with lust for them. Even the most tolerable people he’d found at college, (purposely seeking them out to become his housemates to dissuade the presence of other far less tolerable people), became unbearable. Although he recognised it was a two way thing. Karin went close to madness being close to him and not having him react to her. Jugo and Suigetsu should have been immune both being givers too,
but Jugo took a long vacation to see his boyfriend when heat begun, openly saying it’d be bad for his relationship if he spent too long near Sasuke’s scent, and Suigetsu screamed at Sasuke to just go and fuck someone to use up some of his hormones and stop himself smelling so irresistible.

Fortunately there was one place at this time of year (and most of the rest of the year) which was always deserted. A place where he could be quiet and alone. Where the doors were airtight, in theory to protect the precious documents within, but no other preservative measures had been put in place. No one cared enough to question this. The only reason Sasuke knew was that Itachi had cared. It had been him who had tracked down and campaigned about how badly the historical documents were being kept and he had got further than anyone else would have. He personally chose and started renovating the old attic space that had become a junk room for things that didn’t fit anywhere else. But then he died and again no one cared. Sasuke knew it was mere luck that the room hadn’t turned back into junk but was still here for him to sit out the heat season and study in peace without his scent escaping and leading anyone up here to him.

He opened up the door to the small room that housed antiquated scrolls detailing the history of the unevolved and took a deep breath anticipating the calming aroma of ancient documents. Instead his senses were hit by a distinct scent that shot disjointed sensations of orange, ramen, yellow, loud laughter, blue, friendship, through his mind.

‘Naruto,’ he murmured.

A face peeked out from under the one table in the room. ‘Sasuke?’ Followed by a huge grin and a much more confident, ‘Teme!’

If it’d been a different time of the year and his logical side had more control, he’d turn and walk away. But he remained where he was, concentrating to ensure that his exterior displayed none of the turmoil that his body was experiencing at seeing and smelling Naruto again. How long had it been since the two of them had been alone anywhere? Three years and thirty five days.

‘How did you know I was here?’ Naruto asked with those big blue eyes of his staring up at Sasuke.

If Naruto hadn’t changed, and Sasuke had watched him enough to believe he hadn’t, he could be grouchy and bad tempered and say and do things so perfectly wrong that it could seem like he was actually an evil genius, but just a glimpse of those eyes and Sasuke knew that he was in the presence of a kindness and generosity that went far beyond anyone else.

‘I didn’t,’ Sasuke replied simply. He felt he had control of his body now, but was still cautious, unsure how a conversation would go with this unpredictable person he’d barely spoken to for years. And normally Sasuke was sure of everything.

‘You said my name when you came in? Is there another Naruto? Someone you were expecting to meet here? Do you want me to leave?’ Naruto’s brow creased up in confusion.

*How could there be another Naruto?* Sasuke thought, just the idea made him feel dizzy.

Aloud he said, ‘The only thing I expected was to be alone. I come here to avoid everyone. As soon as I opened the door I could smell you. You must realise how strong your scent is.’ He gave a sniff of the air, although in truth it was completely unnecessary and only for effect. ‘You haven’t mated with anyone this season…or perhaps ever?’

Naruto’s cheeks flushed and for a moment he looked shy, but his nose screwed up as it did when he was ready for his loudest rants. Being the complete idiot that he was though, he appeared to have forgotten he was currently positioned under a table and jerked up, presumably intending to square
up against Sasuke, but succeeding only in banging his head hard against the wood.

With one hand Sasuke lifted the table, the other he offered to Naruto who took it with a bashful grin. Despite the fact that Sasuke was the one helping the dobe up, the initial feel of Naruto’s strong grip combined with how much larger Naruto’s hands felt from when they last touched, flashed something through Sasuke that made him for a second believe that Naruto was meant to be a giver.

But that scent was unmistakable and Sasuke recognised that he was pleased to see a bushy tail standing upright in the air when Naruto fully emerged.

The blonde rubbed the back of his head. ‘Yaknow, it’s hard to keep control of your body when everyone’s in heat, even when I don’t want anybody. And that’s the reason’s my tail’s out, it was just like coincidence it happened when you said my name, yaknow?’

Sasuke suspected he should probably explain to Naruto that hiding under a table did not make him harder to find with the scent he was emitting. It’d be more likely in fact to cause him problems as he could get trapped under there if a pushy giver was around. But for some reason he was distracted from sense by the fact that boastful determined to succeed Naruto would still rather be considered a complete idiot with no ability to maintain his own body, than for there be a suggestion that he was attracted to Sasuke.

He swallowed back a sigh and went over and closed the window that the idiot had obviously opened before he clambered under the table.

Naruto jumped in front of him with a speed and grace that shouldn’t belong to the same clumsy oaf who moments ago had crashed his head into a table.

‘Nooo, leave it open, this room stinks of dusty old books, we need fresh air or we’ll suffocate on like deadbookdust. That is a real thing and not something I’ve made up right now.’

Sasuke had incredible senses, but he couldn’t smell anything but the other man. Yesterday Sakura and Ino had ran all the way across campus when a breeze had wafted Sasuke’s scent in their direction. Was Naruto the one person who was completely impervious to him? Were the times when Naruto’s animal came out in his presence, just as Naruto always claimed, coincidence?

He wasn’t certain what to think about that. So he focused on what he did know. He sidestepped Naruto and pulled the window to. ‘I am here because I don’t want anyone to bother me in a manner I do not wish to be bothered with. I assume you’re the same. And our combined scents is sure to attract notice so the window is closed. If you don’t like it you are free to leave.’

‘We’re right at the top of a building which no one in their right mind would come anywhere near because it’s a library and really really boring,’ Naruto protested, but he didn’t physically fight Sasuke as he would have done when they were younger. Maybe he was different now?

Then a slow grin lit up Naruto’s face and his eyes sparkled. ‘If I like wanted to keep the window open, I bet I could beat you now. You seem kinda skinny and I work out sooo much. Kakashi has been training me super hard.’

_I know. Because I’ve spied on you as if I am timid little Hinata, needing to keep hidden as if I’m too frightened to speak to you_, Sasuke thought with an inward curse at himself.

‘Always so falsely confident, dobe. You do realise there are many different builds of body and it is possible to be slim and strong?’ Impulsively he did something that he’d never have done if he
thought for a second about it, he pulled his shirt out of his waistband and flashed his perfectly sculptured abs at Naruto.

His spontaneity was rewarded by Naruto’s fox ears appearing and two more tails springing up and standing to attention. Sasuke’s personal rule had always been to behave indifferently to Naruto’s animal side as he knew how self-conscious his friend was, but maybe because they were in the middle of heat and no one functioned correctly, or because it’d been so long since they were together that Sasuke had forgotten his own standards, or perhaps because Naruto smelt so good and looked too cute, whatever the reason the result was the same Sasuke openly smirked at him.

Naruto’s face shone red and he smacked and battled with his own body as if he was still the little kid fighting his identity on the pier all the years ago when Sasuke learned for the first time that Naruto had revealed. Which was also the same day when Sasuke realised he could truly have a life even though he was never going to see his brother again.

An emotion rolled through him, he didn’t know how to label it, but he recognised it as the one he only felt in Naruto’s presence and how it made him want to make Naruto happy and safe.

‘Stop playing with yourself,’ he said in a firm voice.

Naruto growled at him. ‘I’m not doing this for fun. Stupid tails. Stupid ears.’

‘Stupid you,’ Sasuke finished for him. ‘It’s only you and me here, Naruto, let your body take whatever form it wants. You’re safe here, I don’t judge you and I certainly won’t jump you. Don’t you remember how relaxed you always were with me?’

Naruto stopped trying to restrain his body and let his arms hang at his side. ‘Yeah, of course I do. But I didn’t know if you did? I’ve no idea how things are with you and me now? You just blanked me and stopped being my friend.’ He gave a chuckle and thankfully continued talking before Sasuke had to make a decision whether to give an explanation or not. ‘You’ll think it proves how much of an idiot I am, Sakura’s told me plenty of times how it’s normal for people to grow up and grow apart, but in my heart I still think of you as my best friend even though we’ve hardly spoken for ages. I know that no one will ever be as close to me as you are. That’s ridiculous, right?’

Sasuke looked out of the now closed window at the clear spring sky with its white fluffy clouds. ‘There’s something I should confess to you,’ he began in a faraway voice that didn’t sound like it originated from his own body.

‘What?’ Those big blue eyes staring at him.

So many people spent so much time looking at him, but no one ever saw him in the way Naruto did.

It wasn’t what he’d initially intended to say, but for Naruto right noe it was, probably, more pertinent. ‘When we were younger I used to scent you during heat time.’

Naruto’s eyes got even bigger, but not in happiness, his face was pure shock. ‘What! You pissed on me? Without me noticing?’

‘Yes. That is exactly what I did.’

‘Really?’

‘No. Of course not really.’ Naruto had to be the most annoying person in the world, no one could disturb his calm with their stupidity like he did. Why was he even trying to help him? Sasuke
decided not to answer that question, instead he continued speaking in his most controlled voice.
‘All I did was put something that smelled of me about your person. You’re so messy you never noticed. When you were younger it could be just a bit of cloth I’d held put in your pocket, then when you developed more, I put a t-shirt I slept in in your schoolbag. I thought even you might discover that, but I should’ve known, not ever doing your homework meant you never actually took anything out of your bag.’

‘Why?’ Naruto asked.

Sasuke stopped himself rolling his eyes at the dobe and remained composed. ‘I know you’re purposely detached from your animal side and avoid learning anything that could be useful to understanding your own body, but surely even you know that my scent on you would…’

‘Yeah, yeah, I get that a receiver’s scent on a giver is like you claimed them.’ Naruto spoke quickly and stared down at his feet.

It hurt something inside him to see the normally loudmouthed dobe as an adult still so uncomfortable with his own identity that he could barely pronounce ‘receiver’.

‘But why would you do that for me?’ Naruto said.

‘Because I knew you didn’t like the attention and it was a simple way of taking the edge off it for you.’

‘Exactly, so why didn’t you just tell me about it instead of hiding things in my things?’ Naruto looked more confused than normal.

‘I knew you were sensitive and I didn’t want to embarrass you.’

*Was that the truth?*

It didn’t matter, the answer immediately calmed Naruto, although both of them were surprised when another of Naruto’s tails appeared at such a strange time. But this time the loud man laughed at it rather than fought it.

‘I came here to try and hide from my animal side, but my fox is popping out more than it has for ages! Life’s never like it’s supposed to be is it? Just glad this is happening with you and no one else. Kiba is like the best roomie ever, but if I have to wake up one more time with him humping my leg…gods know what he’d do right now if I like turned full on fox around him…hey, Sasuke…’ Naruto leaned forward and peered at Sasuke’s face. ‘Are those a new thing that’s happened? I don’t think I’ve ever seen you with little catty teeth before?’

Sasuke touched his mouth and felt two sharp and elongated canines. Yes, that was definitely new. But he wasn’t going to deal with it now. It was enough just to focus on Naruto’s unexpected presence.

Ignoring the teeth as if they were an irrelevance, Sasuke spoke in a clear voice, ‘I mentioned this because I can scent you now. If you’d like? It’d have to be stronger because you’re an adult and the fact that you haven’t mated has made your aroma quite…desirable. I assume you’re still so cut off from your animal that you’re even unaware of your own scent?’

‘Yep. I don’t know why, but you’re the only person I’ve ever been able to smell, you know, in that way. So, um, I’m up for this scenting thing if it makes things easier, but what does it involve? Do I need to take off my clothes and you piss on me or something?’
This time Sasuke did roll his eyes. ‘What is it with you and urinating?’

‘Well, that is the most obvious scenting thing, and you said it had to be stronger and…’

‘Dobe, did you truly learn nothing in life sciences?’

Naruto stared at him with blank blue eyes.

‘If you want to indulge in water sports I’m sure there is a dating group to cover that, but I am a cat, I have scent glands in my cheek, I can claim you by nuzzling you.’

‘Nuzzling me?’ Somehow the dobe looked more nervous at this idea than at his own suggestion of being pissed over. What sort of person was Sasuke dealing with?

But still he persevered. He had started this so he would finish this. Letting his cat out was easy, the concentration was all in keeping control of the transformation so the cat didn’t take over. The more he let his feline show the more irresistible Naruto smelt.

‘You’re such a sweet kitty. I wish I was a kitten and was all soft and furry like you rather than having all this like coarse fox hair.’ Naruto patted Sasuke on top of his head even though Sasuke’s hair was his normal human hair.

‘I am a cat, not a…’

‘Kitty. I know, I know, you’ve told me enough times, but it always slips out because you’re so kitty….I mean, cute looking compared to normal you. Not that normal you isn’t cute. Not that I find normal you cute, but, yaknow, I could imagine other people might possibly find…’

‘For best results I should scent all your pulse points against your bare skin, but if you prefer I could do just your wrists and neck and we could see if that works.’

Sasuke watched as Naruto’s face visibly showed him trying to remember what all the pulse points through. Inwardly Sasuke shook his head. In truth, Naruto was an incredibly skilled fighter, if they were sparring he knew that Naruto would know all the best places to strike, but it was all instinct in the moment. Give Naruto anything that sounded vaguely academic and his mind blanked. It was a miracle he had made it to college. A miracle no doubt helped by the fact that he had influential friends in Jiraiya, Tsunade and Kakashi, plus dozens of others; everyone liked Naruto. And the existence of sports scholarships.

Whether Naruto had remembered the pulse points or not was up for debate, but the man grinned and started pulling his clothes off.

‘If you’re offering, I’m going to take the full works. It’ll be such a relief to be able to walk about campus without worrying about givers chasing after me.’

Sasuke allowed his eyes to appreciate the tanned muscles of his childhood friend’s body under the pretence of appraising him for scenting.

‘Should I take my boxers off, or is it okay leaving them on?’ Naruto asked.

‘Hnnnn.’ Sasuke’s gaze went immediately to Naruto’s groin. ‘Your choice.’

‘I might as well take them off then, my tails have ripped all through them. And don’t be giving me your lecture about wearing different clothes or having holes or flaps or whatever. I’m going to wear what I want to, not want the damned fox wants to wear.’
Sasuke smirked. ‘I assume your fox is similar to all other animals and doesn’t want to wear anything?’

In his mind Sasuke had always found this one of Naruto’s most ridiculous points of stubbornness. Naruto had never had the money or developed the sewing skills to wear nice clothes, but despite being bullied, it had never bothered him in the way that the late reveal, or his nine tails had. He preferred bright things, but would cheerfully throw on whatever he found on his bedroom floor in the morning. Yet on this one point he remained argumentative despite the fact that far more fashion conscious people who had far better control of their inner animal, wore clothes with suitable adjustments for a tail, or spines, or hooves, or whatever it was, making an appearance.

In a secret place in his heart Sasuke admired this stupidity in his friend, this refusal to accept practical facts and to choose to deal with ripped clothes rather than to give in to the truth that he didn’t have control of his animal.

Naruto threw the remains of his boxers to the side. ‘So what do we do now then?’

With his gaze travelling over Naruto’s naked form, there was a very real part of him that wanted to give a very different answer to the one he did.

‘Sit down and let me work.’ He pulled a chair out and pushed Naruto down by the shoulders into it.

Naruto’s tails danced as Sasuke dropped onto his knees in front of him.

‘I’ll begin with the dorsalis pedis.’

‘Isn’t that something fishy people have…like, you know shark guy?’

‘You’re thinking of Kisame and a dorsal fin I believe. Whereas I am referring to your feet.’

‘Why didn’t you say that then? You’re the same, always having to show off with your smart words.’

‘Yes, since we last had a proper conversation I’ve dedicated myself to learning smart words just to impress you. I’m so glad you gave me so long to learn the biological terms that are taught in starter life sciences, three years was barely enough time.’

‘Three years and thirty five days,’ Naruto said immediately. And then blushed a deep crimson and looked everywhere but at Sasuke kneeling in front of him. ‘I mean, you know, roughly that long since maybe we spoke last. Could be three years and thirty four days, Or three years and thirty six days. I’ve got no idea at all. Because I’m stupid and would no way remember something totally useless that I’m not ever thinking about ever.’

Then as he sometimes did when he became nervous Naruto started talking and didn’t stop. His chosen subject today was everything that Sakura had done and said and worn and eaten in the last three years. And thirty five days.

There were some things that he’d never missed about his friend, and the tri-daily updates of Sakura’s life was one of them. But now they were useful. As Sasuke took one of Naruto’s feet in both his hands and bent over rubbing his cheek over both sides, he did not think about how Naruto’s skin felt pressed against his own, or the sensuality of covering his once truest friend in his scent, he focused entirely on that loud voice blabbering on about the woman he’d frequently declared his love to.

Sasuke was able to continue in this efficient manner, no more involved than a doctor tending to a
particularly annoying patient, even when he rubbed close to Naruto’s femoral pulse point and the blonde’s voice had stopped for a beat before becoming even faster and more devoted to the minutiae of Sakura’s life.

Everything Sasuke was feeling being so close to a friend he had not been close to for so long, he boxed up to deal with later. He kept the doctor-patient analogy at the forefront of his mind, and added to it with the concept that this was nothing more than a test of his control. Just another part of the training he’d done all his life, a continuation of his father holding his head underwater to force him to face his fear of drowning. Or being thrown into the ring against older, stronger Uchihas as you could only learn by facing those better than you. Or sitting alone naked on the floor, his human body bleeding, not being allowed to go to sleep until he’d learned how to retract and display his cat claws at will. Yes. It was exactly like that. Another exercise in control. Except for the fact he’d wanted all those things to end, whereas when he rubbed his face into the crook of Naruto’s neck he yearned for his friend to wrap his arms around him and hold him there forever.

He moved on to Naruto’s temples and then did each side with a quick tilt of his head.

‘Done,’ Sasuke said.

‘Already? I mean, yaknow, I want it to be done properly, I don’t want to have to search you out and get you to be all kneeling in front of me and rubbing your kitty cheek over me every five minutes. Unless, that’s what I need to do? Because, if you say for it to work properly we have to do this all the time, then I’ll obviously do whatever you tell me to do.’

Sasuke made a sound at the back of his throat which he turned into a grunt. ‘You are incapable of doing what you’re told. If it works, it should hold through heat season. No need to find me again. Now get dressed.’

Naruto gazed at Sasuke, his mouth open as if he was on the verge of speaking, but then he started pulling his clothes back on. ‘See I am soooo capable of doing what I’m told when it’s something that makes sense and I should do.’ He stuck his tongue out.

‘Hnnnn.’ Sasuke sat down at the table and pulled the nearest book off the shelf to study. He was incredibly interested in a long dead professor’s opinion of an ancient unevolved society. He was not interested in catching last glimpses of Naruto’s body as it disappeared back under layers of clothing.

When he was dressed, Naruto stood staring at Sasuke, obviously waiting for Sasuke to say something, but who knew what with that idiot?

‘You don’t have to hide up here under tables anymore. Now you’re claimed, no one will be interested in you. You’re free to go and do whatever you normally do with your days.’

_Which around this time was make his single bowl of ramen last as long as possible while his friends ordered more and more food and drinks around him._

Naruto rubbed the back of his head. ‘But it’s only pretend claimed, isn’t it? Will there be some animals that can sniff that out, like Kiba says he can sniff fear and...tons of other things that I’ve forgotten, but, yaknow, are there people I should still avoid as they’ll know I’m not really yours?’

‘As far as I’m aware, there’s no one out there with those skills. If you find someone who can tell the intricate differences in my scenting of you, then come and share that information with me.’

For some reason, Naruto’s face lit up with his brightest grin and his tails moved with frenetic
energy. ‘I’ll do that, Sasuke, I promise. I’ll learn all sorts of things you don’t know yet and come and find you and show you how much smarter I am than you.’

The fox-man bounced out of the room, and a very large part of Sasuke, more than his animal’s lust responding to Naruto’s sweet scent, wanted to run after him. With sheer force of will Sasuke turned his whole attention to the book in front of him. He focused on every single word and what it meant, but he could not entirely banish the images of Naruto naked and displaying his full nine tails which were dancing through his mind. For the first time in such a long time he allowed himself to hope that despite all the obstacles Naruto could become his one true friend again.

Chapter End Notes

Hi! Thank you so so much and massive Naruto foxy tailed hugs for reading this story. I've nervously posted two stories today that I've been thinking about for a while to see if anyone is interested in me continuing either of them.

Normally I try and avoid spoilers, but just so you know where this might be heading, my working plan for this one is that Sasuke has a very difficult relationship with his family and his relationship with Naruto is his escape. There'll probably be mpreg, little cute furry babies, Naruto learning to accept completely who he is with Sasuke encouraging him not to be trapped by the label other people try to put on him. There will be some angst, as I'm learning it is impossible for me to write a story without some painful soul searching, but I think it'll mainly be about love conquering all. And maybe a bit of fighting.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Strong insistent hands shook Naruto awake. He half opened his eyes to look up into the eager face of his roomie.

‘Grrrrurrggghhhhhh,’ he groaned. They knew each other well enough for Kiba to understand that meant, just as it had on all the preceding mornings, ‘I don’t care how inviting my scent is, I don’t want to fuck. Nothing personal, I don’t want to fuck anyone. Leave me to sleep in peace.’

Kiba ruffled Naruto’s hair, an unusually affectionate gesture from him. Kiba showed he liked you with bear hugs and hard thumps to the arm. Pouting, Naruto pushed his hair back to how it had been, as if Kiba had ruined an expensive hairdo rather than the barely-awake mess that was even more chaotic than his ready-for-the-day look.

Kiba laughed. ‘Has the Uchiha locked you down so tight, I’m not even allowed to touch my best bro anymore?’

Now came the thump to the arm which was hard enough to make Naruto regret being put out by the hair ruffling thing.

Naruto made a grunt that was not as coherent as his last one but he hoped conveyed that no one had ‘locked him down’, he was a free wild spirit who did exactly what he wanted.

‘Hey, man, I know it’s something that you’ve never told me outright, but it’s always been obvious that you’ve refused everyone else because you’re so hung up on that guy and been waiting for him to claim you like he did when we were at school. I’m really happy for you. He wouldn’t be my choice for you, but I know how loved up you must be on him to hold out for so long. And if anyone deserves to get the person they want, it’s you. But anyway enough of that sappy stuff, I woke you up for serious reasons, I’ve heard a particularly tasty rumour that Ichiraku’s is having an all you can eat bonanza before they do a menu change.’

Naruto shot out of bed immediately alert. ‘Tell me everything! How all you can eat do you think it really is? You remember what happened at that bbq place? I was glad when we got a lifetime ban. But, not important, what is this about Ichiraku’s is having a menu change? They’re still doing ramen?’

‘Dude, the place is called Ramen Ichiraku, I think it’s a safe bet they’re still doing ramen.’

Naruto darted around the room collecting what he needed for his morning, (or seeing the clock more like his afternoon). He bombarded Kiba with questions about what changes were going to be made, how long the all you can eat deal was running, how reliable were the sources of his rumours.

‘I’m going to have the quickest shower ever known in the history of the world, the water will barely touch my body, so don’t you dare go without me,’ Naruto commanded when he’d searched across the bedroom floor and finally found the orange jeans he wanted to wear today.

‘Don’t waste time telling me about it, just get going and get back here faster.’

Naruto bounced out into the corridor, licking his lips as he thought of all the delicious ramen he
was about to eat. He was so determined and focused, he wouldn’t have noticed the group of girls standing in the opposite direction of the bathrooms if Sakura hadn’t called out to him.

‘Naruto! We were just…passing, how strange to see you out here.’

A couple of girls behind her picked up their bags and one stood up with a huge yawn. But Naruto wasn’t going to go Sakur and her friends a hard time for hanging out in the male dorm corridors. Normally they were good friends regularly hanging out, but everything changed in heat season, so right now he was just pleased she was here without bothering about the reason why her and a whole gang of pretty girls appeared to be waiting to ‘accidentally’ bump into him.

‘Hey, Sakura, it’s great to see you. What you been up to?’

He rubbed the back of his head as he realised he actually didn’t want to know what Sakura was doing at the moment. However many times he told himself it was just natural behaviour, and he was the odd one for not joining in, it never stopped the painful knot of jealousy forming in his gut that other guys who just met her, could do things with Sakura he’d never be able to.

‘We’re actually more interested in what you are up to.’ Sakura smiled what he was almost certain was a flirtatious smile. Directed at him.

Naruto blushed. They’d kind of dated. But it was the kind of kinda dating where you hung out a lot, laughed and talked a lot, but never did anything more intimate than holding hands.

Sakura had never looked at him like she was looking at him right now. The old hope bloomed back into life. Maybe just maybe it would turn out after all that the labels put on him would be a big mistake, that the nine freakish tails weren’t part of him and Tsunade would safely remove eight of them leaving him with a respectable one, and all prompted because Sakura had recognised his true nature as a giver and her one true love.

Naruto cleared his throat. ‘Me and Kiba are going to get ramen after I get dressed, I like promised him, but you’re welcome to come. I mean, I’d love you to come. And we could hang out afterwards too? Without Kiba. If you want?’

Ino stepped forward. ‘Will Sasuke be there?’

Ino’s question stamped Naruto’s hope back down into the forgotten, cobwebbed parts of his unconscious. He noticed now that all the girls had a similar expression to Sakura’s, hungry and lustful, and of course it wasn’t thoughts of him that was making them feel that way.

‘Nope,’ Naruto answered with a forced grin. ‘Just me and Kiba.’

‘When are you seeing Sasuke?’ A girl he didn’t know asked in a honey voice that suggested they were best friends, or more. ‘It’d be fun if we all met up then.’

‘Sasuke isn’t much for big groups,’ Naruto said trying to keep the cheerfulness in his voice.

‘Are you saying he’ll just want one of us?’ Another girl said.

A murmur of panic went through the group, hard edges entered their voices as they began to argue over who Naruto would choose to take to Sasuke.

Naruto backed up slowly towards the safety of the male bathroom. All he wanted to do was have a quick shower and go eat ramen with his roomie. Nowhere on his to-do list for the day, or ever, was acting as some sort of pimp for Sasuke.
‘That’s not what Naruto is saying,’ Sakura said firmly cutting through her friends. ‘But if it was, it’d clearly be me he’d select. Naruto and I are very close.’ She gave Naruto a challenging look. ‘Whenever he plans to see Sasuke he’d be certain to bring me along too.’

Naruto kept backing away, he gave a small chuckle and rubbed the back of his head, much as he loved Sakura he wasn’t blind to the potential violence of her temper. But if it was a choice between being thumped across the room by his pink haired friend, or immediately ruining the renewal of his friendship with Sasuke by releasing a gaggle of girls on him, then Naruto knew he had to be prepared to be hit. Although as it was, he didn’t know where Sasuke was, so there was no choice to make but be honest.

‘I’ve got no plans to see Sasuke at all today,’ Naruto said. ‘Just a shower and Kiba and some ramen. No Sasuke plans at all. Zilch. Zero. Nada. And as I’ve no idea where he’s going to be so I won’t be taking anyone to see him.’

‘You’re so loyal, that’s so sweet,’ someone said.

‘That must be why Sasuke chose him,’ another girl said. ‘It’s hard to see any other reason.’

‘Sasuke does value his privacy. He told us that, it was so beautiful, we’d only been following him for a month and he spoke to us. Kelly and her skanks have been stalking him for more than six months and he’s never ever said anything to them.’ Two of the girls high fived.

Naruto bit his lip. Somehow he’d backed himself against the wall and the girls had advanced on him faster than he’d managed to retreat. He was surrounded. There was a moments silence as if the women were digesting the fact that they had their prey trapped. A couple of swishing tails appeared, one girl’s eyes became distinctly reptilian. Naruto swallowed. He’d been in these situations before and knew how quickly a simple human exchange could transform into something animalistic. He’d be more confident if they were males; he had experience of kicking and shouting out of those situations. But what was he supposed to do here? He was hardly going to punch Sakura and tell her to stay the fuck away from him.

‘Please tell us where, Sasuke is,’ Reptile eyes said. The ‘please’ sounded like a demand rather than a request.

‘He doesn’t know,’ Sakura said. ‘Naruto doesn’t lie, he’s a very honest person. If he says he has no plans to meet Sasuke, he hasn’t. Sasuke’s obviously fully in control, he doesn’t make dates, he only calls Naruto when he wants to fuck him.’

The women sighed with audible lust.

‘That’s so hot,’ Ino said. ‘Tell us how you did it, how you got Sasuke to claim you? Is it your hair he likes? Does he tell you how much he prefers fair hair to any other colour?’ She pulled on her own long blonde ponytail.

There were a few worried frowns on the darker haired girls, but mainly everyone looked at him with wide eyed anticipation anxious for this secret treasured information to be revealed that they thought he possessed.

Sakura glared at Ino, ‘Sasuke’s not that shallow to care only about hair colour.’ But she looked back at Naruto with doubt in her eyes. ‘Has he said anything to you about…if he might…want to claim someone else? Maybe someone he’s known a long time like he’s known you a long time, is a trusted friend his preference?’
‘He doesn’t really talk to me about…that…it’s a new…thing between us.’ He rubbed the back of his head and scrambled about in his brain to find the little bits he remembered about mating traditions, anything that might help him escape these women. ‘But, yaknow, anyhow, I thought there was a code thing, like that we never talk about the details of our…’ Naruto’s voice failed him, it was too strange to talk as if Sasuke was his lover in front of these people, most of whom he didn’t know.

Ino laughed. ‘That’s what we let them think. But us receivers always support each other, we’re all the same, we have to stick together. Sakura always said you had this odd sense of honour, and that’s why you never mentioned what was going down between you and Sasuke in the past when he scented you. We were kids then and I didn’t really know you, but we’re adults now, Naruto, and if he’s interested in you again, this is important. You’re clearly not Sasuke’s choice for a longterm mate, but you can help us, your friends, by giving us all the information you can to make sure he ends up with someone who truly deserves him. So what did you do to make Sasuke want you again? Spare no details no matter how insignificant they seem.’

One of the girls, the one who had boasted earlier about Sasuke talking to her, got a notebook out and began earnestly writing before he even said anything.

‘Look, I just want to have a shower and eat some ramen, okay?’ He managed to sidle a couple of inches along the wall, but the women moved closer in around him.

He sighed heavily. He’d been wrong when he thought all he had to do was be honest, but Sakura was right, lying didn’t come naturally to him.

‘Don’t ever let Sasuke know I said anything to you, but he made it clear to me that he likes me always to be showered because yaknow with being a cat he’s all about being clean.’ He glanced around the women, who all seemed to accept this. Which was lucky, Sasuke might have been his oldest friend but he really didn’t know much about cats generally.

But it wasn’t enough, the group were still looking at him, waiting for more information about their beloved Sasuke and how to impress him.

‘And I need to get to lunch because he likes me to eat a lot too because…because…’

‘He wants you to be plump?’ Ino stared at him with shocked eyes.

Bile rose in his throat, this is what guilt tasted like. Would all these girls now try and put weight on, just like they’d all tried to grow their hair when the rumour went around that Sasuke was attracted to long haired girls?

‘No, I mean, well, he wouldn’t care if I was fat because he um likes me so much. But he likes me to eat a big lunch so I’ll have lots of energy and we can, yaknow, all night without any pauses to get food because he hates that. Like you said before, he doesn’t want to do anything date-like, he just wants lots and lots of…sex…with me. Because that is what we do together, lots and lots of really fun sexy things. Now I have to go because he’ll be all angry if I’m not ready for him when he calls me…and he’ll be all angry at you for keeping me from getting ready for him.’ The last bit seemed mean but it was the most effective thing he said. All the women immediately jumped back from him and Naruto didn’t wait, he took his opportunity and dashed to the bathroom.

In the shower he forgot about telling Kiba he’d be as quick as possible. He put the water up as high as it’d go and scrubbed hard with a brush over his skin.

Hell, why had he thought Sasuke was helping him yesterday? The bastard had known this would
happen. He’d always been arrogant and this had been his devious plan, make Naruto have to put up with all the hot girls coming up to him and asking about Sasuke, just to rub it in how much more desirable the Uchiha was than him, how they all wanted the handsome giver, not the freak-tailed receiver.

The bastard had probably scented him in a special way that made him smell like he was Sasuke’s bitch…or whatever the equivalent in cat terms was. After so many years of unexplained silence, this was why Sasuke had spoken to him in the library yesterday: to have the opportunity to humiliate him. That made far more sense than the proud Uchiha literally getting down on his knees to help out the friend he’d ignored for ages.

Naruto growled, the anger building in him was as much directed at himself for being so quick to believe in Sasuke’s kindness, but he had to control it, one of his tails had already emerged and was whipping around. When he started to scratch at his nether region, he saw another part of his body had a completely different reaction to thoughts of Sasuke. He scowled at his own erection. The heat of rage was much easier to deal with than the other type of heat. It’d been thinking about Sasuke on his knees that had done it. Naruto let out a small groan as the image of Sasuke rubbing his cheek all over Naruto’s body became more and more vivid. And more and more irresistible. How had he managed to restrain himself and not spurt all over Sasuke’s perfect face when he’d had the real, beautiful person in front of him?

He bit his lip to suppress another moan. But he hadn’t felt erotic at the time, at least he didn’t think he had. Well, not overly so. His tails and ears had been all over the place, but it had been more awkwardness than anything else, the fear that if he did anything wrong Sasuke would return to blanking him.

There couldn’t be many people who could effectively blank you in the confines of a tiny library room after rubbing their face all over your naked body, but Naruto was certain that Sasuke was one of them.

He shook his head, this was going to be a good day, he wasn’t going to waste it worrying about Sasuke’s cold moods and mean motivations. Or how gorgeous he looked kneeling in front of Naruto. For once, Naruto was going to be able to afford to eat all the ramen he wanted. And whatever the other effects of Sasuke’s actions, at least Naruto would get to spend time with Kiba without his friend going glazed eyes wanting to hump him every time he got a whiff of Naruto’s scent. And if anyone came asking tips about how to win Sasuke over he’d come up with the most extremely stupid things possible, if Sasuke wanted to play games, he’d show him who the master of being annoying was. He’d tell everyone Sasuke loved sweet gooey chocolates. Yeah, that would teach him when he had boxes and boxes of food he hated gifted to him.

Perhaps that wasn’t the best plan after all though. Naruto’s mouth twisted to the side, it was painful thinking of food going to waste. And if Sasuke was the same as he’d been in the past, he’d just chuck all his unwanted gifts away. Which was everything anyone gave him.

Although thinking about it, Sasuke had always kept the stupid things Naruto gave him. He couldn’t give Sasuke things often, all he had for Sasuke’s birthday were homemade cards, what with the cashflow problems and everything, but there were occasional things, like the big frog teddy he won at the fair which Naruto had insisted on giving him as it was Sasuke who had paid for Naruto to keep trying at the throwing hoop game until he got the knack of it and finally won the teddy. That had taken a lot longer than Naruto had thought it would, but Sasuke had stayed by his side all night and had been really patient and instead of being all teasing and mean like normal and had told Naruto to keep going for as long as he wanted as he’d get there in the end and then he’d brought Naruto candyfloss to celebrate his win and had probably spent way more than the raggedy teddy
cost but Sasuke didn’t complain and…

Naruto shook his head. Why was he thinking about this rubbish when Sasuke had purposely made an idiot of him under the pretence of helping him? He had more important things to deal with. He needed to get control of his body and have a great day not thinking about Sasuke and eating ramen with Kabē.

It took ages, but his tail finally retracted. His erection took a little longer to go.

‘Stupid cock,’ Naruto said to his penis. ‘You should never ever get excited at the thought of that mean bastard who can’t even be bothered to talk to us…I mean me, for years. Just because he rubbed his face all over my thighs and so close to you yesterday that his gorgeous soft hair brushed against you, that’s no reason to get all hard and imagine what his beautiful lips would feel like wrapped around you. And you shouldn’t care at all what his eyes would look like gazing up at me as I thrust you harder and harder into his mouth. Got it? Be normal and floppy so I can go eat ramen with my real friend.’

His erection twitched at him.

‘I’m in charge, not you.’ Naruto wagged his finger at his hard on. ‘I did really well yesterday when Sasuke was actually with me. I talked all about Sakura just like I did when we were friends before. And I didn’t even get close to being hard. So don’t think I’m going to give in and wank you off today because you’re being all delusional wanting to rub up against a man we don’t even like anymore.’ Naruto tilted his head to the side. ‘Okay, we’re always going to like him, but he doesn’t like us and we don’t want to, not in anyway at all that you can think of and I know you’re thinking of lots of perverted things right now, but just stop it, as we are not going to do anything sexual with anyone, least of all him.’

The speech didn’t have the required effect. But the sound of sexual yowling starting up outside in the corridor did.

Naruto stepped out of the shower proud of himself for not giving into the urge to wank thinking about his gorgeous friend who he wasn’t attracted to at all. He hadn’t given into whatever mad hormones were trying to control him in heat season.

He grinned as he shook the water off him, before he remembered he was a human in total charge of his own body and used a towel.

Back in his room, Kiba moaned about how long he’d taken, and then after Naruto explained about being cornered by the girls, moaned some more at how useless Naruto had been in failing to convert all that female interest into actual dates.

‘Not that you care with the Uchiha name basically tattooed on your ass, but you could look out for your buddies. It’s been hours since my last hook up and Inō is super hot.’

Naruto managed to hide it, but somehow the casualness with which Kiba referred to him as Sasuke’s possession bothered Naruto and all the anger he thought he’d managed began swirling within him again.

It was so bad that at Ichiraku’s he found he didn’t want to order anything. He was glad that they met up with Shikamaru, Shino and Choji, so that he wasn’t deserting his friend alone when he complained he needed to leave because of a stomach ache.

He pretended that he didn’t see their smirks and knowing looks. It was harder to ignore what they
‘Only one day claimed and already lovesick,’ Kiba grinned. ‘Never thought anyone could get to you so much that you’d lose your appetite.’

‘Don’t tease him,’ Shino said. ‘We all wish we had such a dedicated receiver.’

Shikamaru gave an exhausted sigh. ‘Yes, it’d make it so much easier if Temari came running to me.’

The conversation moved to bantering about Shikamaru’s long term relationship with a woman who was far bossier and more dominant than him.

Naruto slipped away with only murmured protests that he really did have a stomach ache. It was true. But unfortunately it was also true that he was desperate to see Sasuke. Just not for the reasons they thought. When he was out of sight of his friends, he broke into a run and zig zagged around the campus to in case any of Sasuke’s fangirls were spying on where he went to learn where Sasuke was. But he could only stay away from his destination for so long. He’d given up ramen he was so angry at this guy!

He burst into the library and shouted out, ‘Thought you could hide out from me here, did you?’

Sasuke didn’t look up from the scroll he was studying. ‘Yes, with your flawless intellect you realised that my only purpose today was to hide from you. I thought I’d fool you by being in exactly the same place where we met yesterday, but your brain power never ceases to astonish me and you somehow found me.’

If Sasuke hadn’t spoke, Naruto would almost believe that the Uchiha was entirely oblivious to his presence in the small room, Sasuke’s body language was so undisturbed by his arrival.

‘Don’t act all innocent.’ Naruto stomped forward. ‘You deliberately made everyone think I’m yours with your rubbing-cheek-scenting thing.’

Sasuke still didn’t look away from his studies. ‘Hnnnn. Again you astound me by your incredible reasoning. How did it only take you a day to understand something that we agreed together yesterday? I believed that the whole purpose of me scenting you was because you desired…’

‘What made you think I desired you? I didn’t say anything about desiring you. My cock didn’t get hard and I talked about Sakura the whole time you were touching me which proves I am not attracted to you whatever my tails and ears did.’

Now Sasuke chose to look up with raised eyebrows and an infuriating smile on his face. ‘I was going to say that you desired to be scented to repel potential lovers, not that you desired me.’

‘Good. Because that is exactly what I did want. Not you. The bit about repelling other dudes.’ He crossed his arms across his chest.

‘And did it work?’

‘You know exactly how it worked. It’s what you planned all along. You knew I’d get pounced on and it’d be more than I could deal with.’

Sasuke leapt up, the chair crashing to the floor behind him, his normally immaculately styled hair stood on end, claws appeared and scratched into the hard wood of the table. ‘Who pounced on you? Who hurt you? What happened, Naruto?’
His voice was a hiss, so different from his usual indifferent tones that Naruto would have been scared if it was anyone else. But it wasn’t anyone else it was Sasuke. Naruto walked around and stroked Sasuke’s back.

‘Sorry, I may have maybe jumped to the wrong conclusion and got angry with you for no reason and then got you angry with no one for no reason.’

‘What are you talking about, dobe? If someone has hurt you don’t you dare try and protect them from me.’ Sasuke’s hands turned into fists, he didn’t even seem to notice his own claws digging into his skin causing blood to cover his palms.

‘When I said people pounced me, it was just, yknow, Sakura and your fangirls because now I smell of you they want to know the secret of getting with you. And I thought you knew this would happen and you’d fooled me into being scented by you as, I don’t know, a kinda oneupship thing to remind me that I’m a receiver who can’t get the girl I love, and you’re the almighty Uchiha giver and everyone wants to have your kittens. But now I’m saying this out loud and you’re staring me with those fierce eyes…and why do you have red eyes when you’re a cat, shouldn’t they be green or something more cat like? And yes I know I’m rambling but I was desperate not to fuck things up with you, Sasuke, now you’ve finally started talking to me again, and I’m scared I have fucked everything up already on only like the second day of being your friend again. Because I think you were being my friend after all and not screwing me over by making all the girls come for me because they want you.’

Naruto waited hoping for some kind of reassurance, but Sasuke remained silent and staring at him with a look that Naruto couldn’t identify. The normal black Uchiha eyes were hard enough to read, let alone these red animal-beyond-animal eyes.

He opened his mouth a few times but didn’t trust himself to say anything that wouldn’t push Sasuke into full on enraged cat mode. Unconsciously he picked up Sasuke’s hands in his own and began licking at the wounds Sasuke had given himself. When he realised what he was doing he dropped Sasuke’s hands and his face flushed.

‘Sorry…That’s disgusting. I don’t know why the hell I’m doing that…I…’

‘You’re doing it because it’s natural.’ Sasuke raised his hands to Naruto’s mouth and Naruto found his tongue flicking out against his will before he could step away from his friend.

‘What’s natural about licking your blood up?’ Naruto wiped his mouth several times on the back of his hand. ‘I’m not a cannibal!’

‘I believe you’d be a vampire if you enjoyed licking my blood, a cannibal would be biting my fingers off.’ Sasuke sighed. ‘You’re too old to be this stupid about what you are. Many species, including canines lick wounds. Their saliva is bactericidal against certain bacteria and may help with wound healing through blood coagulating agents in the tissues that saliva contains.’

‘What?’

‘You saw I’d hurt myself and your instinct was to help me. Anything that is instinctive will be linked to your animal side. You need to know these things without being constantly surprised and confused by them. How have you managed through these years without me looking after you, Usurantonkachi?’ The last question was said in a tender voice that was even less like Sasuke’s normal tones than the earlier hiss.

Sasuke’s eyes had returned to normal but Naruto looked everywhere around the room but at his
friend. This was not going how he planned. Although in truth he hadn’t really planned anything, he’d wanted to shout his anger out at Sasuke. But now he wasn’t angry, just confused.

He wished they weren’t in this library, what did Sasuke find to keep himself occupied among all these boring books? There was nothing for Naruto to be distracted by, no prop for him to easily change the subject away from him being stupid and lapping up Sasuke’s blood. There was nothing to do but confess everything to Sasuke.

‘So, um, I may have told the girls that you liked me all showered. And that you also liked me fed before we meet so you can fuck me all night without a break for a meal.’ He rushed the words out, but Sasuke didn’t seem to care.

The Uchiha righted the chair he’d knocked over earlier and straightened out the books and scrolls on the desk.

‘And I didn’t say this, and tried to tell them different, kind of…but they might have got the idea that you liked blonde people and that you wanted me to eat a lot because you’d like me to be more…cuddlier than I am.’

‘Hnnnn.’

‘Cuddlier in that they might think you want me to have a cuddly body, rather than that you want me to like cuddling. Because I do like cuddling. Or at least, I think I’d like cuddling, if I had a person to cuddle. When Kiba’s out for the night and can’t see me, sometimes, yahow, I’ll cuddle my pillow, or Manda. Manda’s a bit harder to cuddle than a pillow, yahow, with him being a big purple snake teddy thing, and he’s still all coily even though you gave him to me ages ago he’s never lost his coiliness. So I have to stretch him out, which I can if I hold the bottom bit between my thighs and wrap my arms around his middle and then his head is like level with my head and….fuck, I’m rambling again. Please pretend you didn’t hear any of that.’

Sasuke was of course now staring directly at him with one of those smirks on his face. ‘I didn’t hear any of that. But if I did I’d be happy that when you’re alone you like to keep my big purple snake squeezed safely between your thighs.’

Naruto’s face was a mixture of embarrassment and frowning. ‘Are you making a sex joke? Since when do you make sex jokes? Since when do you make any jokes?’

‘Since I didn’t find out that you are still so attached to my snake that you play with it when Kiba’s out.’

‘It’s not like that! Whatever you’re thinking, it’s not like that. I’m probably only thinking about Manda because earlier I was remembering that time we went to the fair and I won Gamabunta for you.’ Naruto fiddled with his fingers. ‘Do you ever cuddle him?’

‘Why would I bring a child’s teddy with me to university.’ Sasuke sat down in the chair and focused on the scroll he was looking at when Naruto first arrived.

Naruto plonked himself next to him and swept Sasuke’s books away. ‘What’s going on? Why are you all angry then all jokey and then all cold with a million different things in between? Are we friends again? Or are you one word away from blanking me for another three years? I can’t cope with all these emotions in one conversation, my stomach is all twisted up, I couldn’t even eat at Ichiraku’s because I was thinking about you, and it was a special all you can eat buffet thing.’

‘You chose to see me over eating ramen?’
‘Don’t mock me! I’ve already had all that, what a good receiver I am running off to be with my all controlling giver. Kiba even said to me how he knew I’d always wanted you which is why I’d never been with anyone else as I was waiting for you to claim me! Everyone knew you’d scented me when we were younger, apart from me! I hate not knowing. You should’ve told me.’

Sasuke’s voice was calm, even kind. ‘Yes. But I was young too. I know my reputation says I’m perfect, but you know me better than that. I made mistakes then and I make mistakes now. Yesterday I should’ve foreseen that some of my ardent admirers might see you as a path to me, and we should’ve discussed whether you’d prefer their attentions or the people who react to you sexually.’

‘Don’t be all reasonable with me, I want to be able to be angry with you, it’s easier.’

‘Easier than what?’

Naruto rubbed the back of his neck. ‘I don’t know. This is just a crap time of year. I can’t wait until it’s over than I’ll be able to think better about things. Everything is confusing now.’ Naruto licked his lips. He could taste Sasuke’s blood in his mouth, it didn’t taste metallic like it should, but kind of sweet and enticing. Another freakish thing about himself he didn’t want to think about. ‘But now I’m prepared, and I know it wasn’t part of you being mean to me, I’d take your fangirls over everyone trying to hump me. Maybe you could like top your scent up a bit? If you don’t mind, even though I’ve been an ass, and don’t deserve it, I hope you forgive me and will help an old friend out? I had a really hot scrubby shower today and might have washed it away?’

‘You truly need to open up to your fox, you have to know whether you’ve been scented and how strong the scent is on you. That should be basic self-knowledge, the same as knowing whether you’ve brushed your teeth and what clothes you’re wearing.’ Sasuke touched his hands to Naruto’s so their fingers grazed against each other. ‘We both know Kiba is wrong thinking you were pining away for me…’

‘Yes! Exactly! I’m always talking about how much I like Sakura, why would anyone ever think I’m into you?’

Sasuke ignored Naruto’s interruption and continued. ‘The reason you’ve avoided any sexual relationships is because you’re scared of the nine tailed fox part of you and what’ll happen if your human side loses control. I’m aware more than anyone else how long you’ve had feelings for Sakura, but you know she doesn’t reciprocate them, and you’ve not got the personality to pursue someone who isn’t romantically interested in you. Is it possible that you’ve remained fixated on her, because she’s your friend and she’s safe? Nothing is ever going to happen between you sexually as you’re not compatible. Whereas say, if your friends were right for example, and you were attracted to me, someone who is compatible with you, that is much more frightening as something could happen between us, and then you’d be forced to face your inner animal.’

Naruto swallowed. He pulled his hand away from his friend. ‘I didn’t ask for your psychobabble, I just asked you if you were going to top up the scenting thing on me. Or you could just be nice and simply tell me whether it needs topping up or not. But things are obviously too weird between us. It’s stupid thinking we’re still friends when we haven’t spoken for so long. I’m going back to do what I should be doing, eating ramen.’

He was telling his body to get up and walk through the door, but it was remaining stubbornly sat next to Sasuke.

‘Have you like….can you do a thing where you release a more…a scent that is more….I couldn’t smell you before and I can now and it’s….distracting,’ Naruto stumbled over his words.
Sasuke shook his head. ‘Nothing has changed with me. But are you aware that your ears and two of your tails appeared when I mentioned the mere possibility of you and I having sex.’

Naruto rubbed the top of his head and felt the ears. He didn’t bother to reach for his tails, now Sasuke had pointed them out, he had no idea how he could’ve missed them ripping through his clothes. He gave an embarrassed chuckle.

‘You don’t need to play any tricks to humiliate me, I do a good enough job on my own. Here am I trying to give a great storming out speech, and I don’t know what my own body is doing. Proving your point about how useless I am.’

‘You’re not useless. You’re stupid,’ Sasuke replied. ‘If your animal side scares you, that is even more reason to find out everything you can about it, not ignore it as if you can make it disappear by not learning about it.’

‘Like you with water?’

‘Similar, but more pertinent as I don’t have to spend my life diving into lakes, I don’t even have to take baths if I don’t want to, but you do have to live in that body.’

Naruto frowned, Sasuke sounded passionate, Sasuke never sounded passionate about anything. ‘You talk like you really care about me? Do you care about me still? Why did you stop talking to me?’

‘I can help you with the learning. I’ll try not to get too impatient with you, but you are infuriating so expect me to lose my temper with…’

Naruto caught Sasuke’s chin in his hand and pulled it around to look at him. ‘That’s not a question you can ignore. I don’t mind about your temper like you don’t mind about mine. But I need to know without any confusion or doubt that you’re my friend and you’re not going to blank me again.’

‘I am your friend,’ Sasuke said pronouncing each word carefully. ‘I care about you.’

‘But you can’t promise you won’t just one day decide never to speak to me again?’ Naruto released his hold on Sasuke’s face but they remained staring at each other for a long time.

It was Naruto who finally looked away. His voice came out quieter than he intended, and the words were wrong. He meant to say that he couldn’t have a meaningful friendship with someone who left him feeling so confused, someone who could offer to help with Naruto’s deepest problem but not commit to saying ‘hi’ to him every time they met.

What he said was, ‘We should have sex. Everyone thinks we’re having sex so we might as well do it.’

Sasuke replied immediately in his coldest voice as if he’d been waiting for Naruto to say something so idiotic, ‘I’m not going to fuck you because you don’t like misleading your friends about the nature of our relationship.’

‘If we actually had sex though, wouldn’t it save you having to rub your face all over my body to scent me? I’d just smell like yours, the normal way.’

‘Having sex with someone doesn’t automatically mean you’ve claimed them. There is another example of something you should know. And it takes far less energy scenting you with my cheek than fucking you, so that reason is somehow even less valid than your first one.’
‘What is a valid reason then?’ Naruto’s voice was much gruffer than he suspected a receiver was supposed to use with a giver they were trying to seduce.

Not that he was trying to seduce Sasuke, he didn’t know what he was trying to do, but it definitely didn’t involve any seducing. Why had he suggested it in the first place? Why was he pushing it when he should just be walking away? Was it just kneejerk arguing with his old arrogant friend? Or did he actually at some level, not the in-heat fox part of him, but the Naruto part of him, want to experience what it’d be like to be with another person in that way?

“We’re united in not wanting to be part of heat season, so I believe the only valid reason for us having sex at this time would be a much much deeper attraction and connection to each other that we can no longer resist.’ Sasuke turned his dark eyes on Naruto. It felt like the other man could see secrets in him that Naruto himself didn’t yet know.

Naruto’s heart was beating fast, his chest rising and falling at a far greater rate than normal. He didn’t even want to know how much of his fox was showing.

‘You’re my best friend. And you still know me even though we haven’t talked for ages. I’m not asexual like you, I am sexually attracted to people, it’s just like you said, I am…scared. Whatever is inside me isn’t like anyone else’s animal, and what if it all goes wrong if I tried to have sex? What if I hurt someone? What if someone hurts me? I’ve tried to bury all these fears because I really want to have friends and people like to be friends with normal happy people, not a receiver who feels sick at the idea of bending over and have someone put parts of their body in him.’

Sasuke put his arms around Naruto, pulling him onto his lap. ‘Real friends will like you exactly how you are, dobe, they won’t care about how normal you are. And besides, anyone who doesn’t like you is not worth shit so you don’t ever need to concern yourself with them.’

‘You’ve always accepted me, right from the beginning, you didn’t even blink when you saw I had extra tails.’ Naruto rested his head on Sasuke’s shoulder. ‘You saw it, didn’t you, when I had no idea, you’re the only person I truly trust enough to want to try and have sex with. I know you won’t judge me if things go wrong and I know you’ll look after me and can look after yourself.’ Naruto chuckled. ‘Hell, life is not fair. There’s only one guy I want to have sex with and he’s the hottest guy in the whole world who can get the hottest girls in the whole world, but doesn’t want to have sex with anyone, least of all me.’ He nuzzled against Sasuke’s face. ‘I’m glad you’ve made me face the truth about myself, it’s better to know than be repressing all this crap. And is that why you avoided me, because you knew I’d just be a pain like everyone else and turn into someone wanting to jump your bones all the time?’

Sasuke lifted Naruto away from him and sat the blonde on the table in front of him.

‘I’m not asexual, Naruto. I wanted you to realise on your own, but you’re never going to get there, are you? What Kiba said about you is true about me.’

‘You’re in love with Sas…yourself? You don’t have sex with anyone else because you only want yourself? What do you do? Just look in the mirror and wank and no one is as beautiful as you so you can’t bear the thought of anyone else touching your body and….’

‘Idiot! No! I’m in love with you. I close my eyes and wank and imagine your hands on my body because no one is as beautiful as you. I’ve tried with other people, but it makes me want you even more. You are the only person I’ve ever been attracted to. You. Just you.’

Naruto’s mouth formed a large ‘o’, but he was incapable of saying anything.
'That is why my moods flip so much talking to you today. Being close to you causes a turmoil I struggle to control. I want you completely. But I know you’re not comfortable with your sexual identity so I fight to repress my lust. Meeting you here after so long…and in heat season, with you smelling so inviting, I have to constantly remind myself that the last thing you want is to be propositioned. And it is difficult. I want you more today than I did yesterday. When you asked me to scent you just now, I was desperate to say yes even though it wasn’t strictly necessary and I knew that if I did I wouldn’t be able to resist your erogenous zones. Yet, I couldn’t say no as it caused me physical pain to refuse an opportunity to see you naked again. But I will gain control. I will be a good friend to you, Naruto, and help you become comfortable with your animal side.'

‘Teme, is there a problem I’m too dumb to see? I’ve realised you’re the only dude I want to have sex with, you’ve confessed you’re in love with me and want to have sex with me. Doesn’t that meet your valid reason criteria and result in us, yaknow, having sex?’

‘Don’t tempt me, dobe. You need more time to think about this and what it means. You’ve gone so long avoiding sex, you shouldn’t just decide on a whim you suddenly want me.’

Naruto growled. ‘Sasuke, you’ve got me to this place I didn’t know I was going to get to when I came and found you up here, now I swear if you don’t do the sex thing with me soon, I’m going to go out there and offer my ass to anyone who wants it.’

Even as he spoke it, Naruto thought it was the most ridiculous, unbelievable, ineffective threat his dumb brain could have made up. But before he could even draw breath to laugh at himself, Sasuke was on the table, on top of him, pinning his hands above his head. A tremor went through Naruto’s body as he realised this was actually going to happen. Two days ago Sasuke wasn’t even talking to him, but today, right now, him and his best friend were going to fuck.

Chapter End Notes

I will definitely write another chapter of this, but I’m not sure when! I hope you enjoy this update until I’m able to write the next one. Thank you for being patient and reading, and extra hugs to everyone who leaves kudos or comments, I can never say how much I appreciate it and it really touches me x
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Naruto and Sasuke begin their sexual exploration of each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Naruto stared at him with wide expectant eyes a happy smile on his face. They were both naked. That had been the easy part, having Naruto pinned beneath him on the table, ripping their clothes off fuelled with the anger of Naruto threatening to give his ass to other people. Then he’d pulled Naruto to his feet, in the heat of the moment expecting his stupid friend to know what to do. But Naruto had stood there with a grin on his face too obviously waiting for Sasuke to do something else. Sasuke supposed he should be grateful that the blonde was remaining silent and hadn’t started yacking on about his favourite subject, Sakura, again.

But silence wasn’t Naruto’s style. ‘So is this like part of what we do when we fuck, just stand here and stare at each other for a while?’

There was none of the sarcastic annoyance that would have been in those words if Sasuke had spoken them. Naruto was genuinely curious and completely ignorant. He must have seen people mating before, it was impossible not to, especially at this time of year. He must have some instinct somewhere telling him that he should be presenting to Sasuke.

At the moment Sasuke was very aware of his own instincts conflicting with each other in strange and unpredictable ways. On the table, it’d been his human side that accepted Naruto’s vocal assent to sex and urged him to lift the blonde’s legs and fuck him hard in that position. However, the animal side had balked needing it done properly on this first mating with a new partner. He was well trained in suppressing his animal’s desires, but that was because they were always reckless and wild. What was he meant to do when the animal wanted to follow protocol and it was pure human longing that wanted to devour Naruto?

Naruto continued speaking in the same cheerful voice. ‘I do really like looking at you, I mean, who wouldn’t, you’re even more gorgeous in the nudie than you are with clothes on. And I hope you’re liking looking at me. And I can carry on doing this as much as you want to, I just want to, y’know, check this is what people do before they fuck and there’s nothing else I’m meant to be doing?’

Sasuke eyed the other man, yes, he couldn’t deny he was definitely liking having Naruto naked in front of him. He should be used to the toned torso, Naruto frequently worked out and played sports without a shirt on, but it felt like he’d never seen any part of Naruto’s bare skin before, the effect of the whole was so great. The strong muscular thighs, the tan lines begging to be explored, yelling out that this was an area of his body that no one else saw and he was gifting it to Sasuke, wild yellow curls, a thick cock, heavy round balls; it all made even the broad shoulders and rose-pink nipples he was incredibly familiar with, appear new and exotic.

But the eroticism was scraped through with growing frustration, at himself, more than Naruto. His human side could clearly see Naruto’s hard cock, all nine of Naruto’s tails, his fox ears, his enlarged pupils, his smiling face, everything indicating that he was comfortable with Sasuke and
would welcome any advances Sasuke made. But the animal was insisting that unless Naruto presented, Naruto didn’t want Sasuke. And somehow the animal was winning against all logic and sense, as if anything sexual belonged to it and it would conduct Sasuke’s body according to its rules, even though right now they contradicted painfully with the primal lust that had got Naruto naked in the first place.

‘What do you want me to do?’ Naruto asked. ‘Do I stand here like this, or should I do some posing, maybe turn around?’

Yes! Turn around and stick your ass in the air, dobe! Sasuke’s body yelled out, but his lips remained closed. If Naruto desired Sasuke he was supposed to do it instinctively, a Giver could be dominant and commanding later if that is how the dynamics worked out, but it was essential that the receiver gave this very clear signal of acceptance before initial penetration could take place. Even though Sasuke’s brain was telling him that his chosen lover needed to be guided in this as he was that ignorant and shut off from his sexuality, the animal insisted that if Naruto couldn’t get there on his own than he was not ready to be Sasuke’s partner.

Naruto did turn around and Sasuke exhaled with relief, but it was not a seductive positioning of his rear for Sasuke’s enjoyment; it was a quick wiggle of his butt and then spinning around to face Sasuke again.

This was going on too long.

Especially for someone who thrived on action like Naruto did.

Especially for a complete idiot who had spent all his life being scared of his sexuality and decided on impulse he wanted to have sex with Sasuke. He could just as easily decide on impulse that this was an embarrassing mistake.

Sasuke noticed that Naruto’s cheeks were beginning to redden, he was no longer gazing at Sasuke with such brazen anticipation, but staring down at his feet. Most telling, his hands were trying to uselessly stomp his ears down and tame his tails. Sasuke bit his lip. The shyness creeping into Naruto’s posture had an appeal that made him want to hold his friend tightly against his chest. And he had that old familiar tingling that Naruto had created in him long before any consciously sexual feelings had emerged. He wanted to groom Naruto. Frequently, when they were young and sleepy after a day of playing in the sun, before he’d been taught better, Sasuke had followed his instincts and licked Naruto. After experiments losing his tongue in the mass of Naruto’s blonde messy hair, he’d found that Naruto liked it when he licked the palm of his hands, giggling and telling Sasuke it tickled.

Could he, should he, try that now?

Sasuke gave an imperceptible shake of his head. He wanted Naruto to respond to him as an adult, not have him laughing at Sasuke tickling him!

But he needed to do something quickly.

If confident Naruto wasn’t going to present for him, shy Naruto definitely wouldn’t. In fact, shy Naruto would soon be reaching for his clothes and running from the room vowing never to repeat this again.

Somehow fate had given him a chance with Naruto, a chance that no one else had had. He couldn’t
waste it. It should be so simple to tell Naruto he needed to present to complete the courtship between them. But although he could open his lips he couldn’t say anything. He ran through ideas of trying other forms of play to try and manoeuvre Naruto into the right position, but his animal protested, insisting that he couldn’t touch Naruto in any sexual way until Naruto presented and that anyway, if it was Sasuke who bent Naruto over it could never be accepted as Naruto inviting Sasuke to penetrate him.

Sasuke could scream in frustration, why was his animal so strong today? He had had encounters before that hadn’t followed the rules his animal side wanted to obey and he’d not heard a mew from his inner beast. But today when it mattered, he felt the full conflict between his natures as if a war was being fought inside his head. And the animal was winning.

It must be because of Naruto. How strong his scent was? How Sasuke felt for him? How important it was that this went well? The annoying blonde was slipping past all Sasuke’s logic and pulling out Sasuke’s soul.

He opened his mouth again to try and explain to Naruto what Sasuke needed him to do. But the sound that emerged could only be described as a begging meow.

Naruto tilted his head to the side. ‘Are you okay? I mean, is this how we do it? Should I be making fox noises? What noise do foxes make? Can foxes and cats even mate? You’re not even showing any animal though, whereas I’m all tails and ears, will I go full animal? What happens if I turn totally into a fox and you’re still all human? Do we…’

Naruto’s questions streamed on, the blonde’s voice getting faster and louder.

Moving swiftly before his animal could stop him, Sasuke bent himself over the table, pressing his shoulders down into the wood and standing on tip toes to raise his ass as high as possible. If he couldn’t speak the words, he could at least demonstrate to Naruto. Seeing Sasuke demonstrating had to remind Naruto of what he as a receiver was supposed to be doing.

It did definitely have an effect on his friend. Naruto made a short sharp sound that was more woman screaming than dog barking. Then he was on top of Sasuke and Sasuke had no idea what was happening.

No, that wasn’t true, he had every idea what was happening, he just didn’t want to believe it. Naruto was rutting furiously against him.

Sasuke was squashed into the table, the one advantage of the shock of Naruto jumping onto him was that his brain couldn’t fully process the pain of his erection being flattened into the wood. Naruto, who had remarkable moments of finesse and grace on a sports field, was right now acting like a clumsy oaf. He wasn’t standing firmly as he should, his feet were off the ground rubbing up and down Sasuke’s calves as if he was seeking a foothold, leaving all his weight heavily rocking against Sasuke. The idiot’s hips were moving with the speed of an all-star athlete though with each thrust his cock prodded in a different place. Sometimes it got near Sasuke’s entrance making him gasp with its hardness pushing against his sensitive skin, but Naruto seemed happiness when he was pushing between Sasuke’s thighs. When that happened, his movements got even faster and he made more of the woman-screaming sounds, but he was incapable of staying in one place and his next thrusts were as likely to land in the small of Sasuke’s back in the middle of a buttock. A couple of times Naruto even somehow managed to miss Sasuke completely and hit the table. On these occasions he made pained yelping sounds which were not that different from his happy sounds, but continued with undiminished enthusiasm.

That was Naruto’s problem, it had always been his problem in every area of life, so why should
this be different? He had too much energy. He didn’t know how to be quiet, how to think. He didn’t work problems out he ran straight through them kicking and punching.

As Sasuke was thinking this, he felt Naruto’s tails curl around him, the rough warm hair pressing against his bare skin, holding him in place. They worked like extra limbs, feeling as strong as Naruto’s arms and Sasuke was struck for the first time by the fact that he could be helpless against the power of Naruto’s body. The truth was that Naruto was probably more powerless than Sasuke, he had absolutely no conscious control over his tails. They were both at the mercy of the electric lust that sparked between them. A tremor went through him, and the breath caught in his throat as he recognised excitement not anxiety in his emotions. He forced himself to face the problem in his own behaviour: why hadn’t he immediately bucked Naruto off him, told him to stop, explained that this wasn’t how things were meant to be between them, receivers never jumped onto the back of givers, why hadn’t he done a million simple things which would have calmed Naruto’s ardour?

He realised that despite the discomfort, awkwardness, Naruto’s complete lack of finesse or anything resembling sensual prowess, not to mention the absolute wrongness of it all, a part of Sasuke was as happy as it’d ever been, here and now with a naked Naruto scrabbling over him. He breathed in Naruto’s intoxicating scent, felt the drops of sweat dripping from Naruto onto him, the heat of the body pressed against him, listened to Naruto’s panting and yowling and it was heaven. He didn’t care that he had no control, in fact there was something free and liberating about just letting Naruto do whatever it was that he was trying to do, which Sasuke was certain Naruto himself had no more idea of than Sasuke did.

However, Naruto’s actions were starting to feel more purposeful. He paused in his frantic thrusting as his tails pulled Sasuke’s hips up near to what they’d been when he first bent over. And Naruto was taking time to line himself up. Sasuke clenched his stomach but still did not ask the other man to stop.

Naruto’s hardness prodded a couple of times around Sasuke’s hole, Sasuke couldn’t breathe. But then Naruto adjusted so his cock slipped between the top of Sasuke’s thighs, rubbing against one of his most erogenous zones and thrusting into the back of his balls. Naruto made a little yipping sound that Sasuke heard as, ‘I like this, do you like this, can I continue?’

After the roughness of Naruto’s attentions, it was odd to suddenly feel him trying to communicate with Sasuke, the blonde must be fighting hard attempting to get control of his beast. Sasuke knew this was definitely the time when there was no excuse, he had to say no that this wasn’t how things were supposed to be, instead he heard his answer coming out as a very contented purr.

Apparently satisfied Naruto continued with his fast thrusting. It wasn’t even close to anything Sasuke’d experienced before, and he knew he’d never do it with anyone else, but Naruto’s cock pressing against him so intimately, the warmth of the tails wrapped around and supporting him, the pounding of his balls, somehow it all worked.

There was no obvious rhythm to Naruto’s movements, just an incredible pace, but Sasuke enjoyed the unpredictability, he couldn’t relax into the stimulation, each thrust hit him in a slightly different way. He didn’t know how long it’d lasted, but when Naruto with a couple of shuddering jerks came, Sasuke felt a thrill that he’d given the other man that much pleasure, but also a sinking disappointment in his stomach as he didn’t want it to be over. And he definitely didn’t want to have to have the post-coital conversation about what they’d just done. If it was anyone else he’d quickly get dressed and leave without saying anything. But as he’d already acknowledged as a deep truth, the point was this couldn’t have happened with anyone but the stupid blonde.

Naruto flopped down on top of him, his hot panting breath caressing Sasuke’s ear before he spoke
in his human voice, that was only slightly huskier than normal.

‘Oh, hell, I’m squishing you! I’ve got all my weight on you! Sorry!’ He rolled off Sasuke in such a klutzy way that he somehow managed to fall backwards onto the floor, the tails still wrapped around Sasuke pulling him down with the dobe.

‘Yes, this is much more comfortable thank you.’ Sasuke was grateful that his voice came out dry and disinterested. His emotions were such a mess he was afraid he’d speak in confused little yowls.

‘Sorry, sorry, my legs kinda gave way I think. I didn’t know you actually did go weak at the knees, yaknow, when you do something like we just did. That was so amazing what you did for me. I can’t even say how you’ve made me feel.’

Sasuke’s immediate response was that Naruto didn’t need any words, the thick scent of his come covering Sasuke’s testicles and drowning out the Uchiha’s own scent made it very clear how happy the dobe was. But he needed to think, be careful with what he said, this was a delicate situation. He’d allowed someone to mount him. He’d enjoyed someone mounting him. And just to make the situation even more fragile, the person he’d broken natural laws with was a sexually inexperienced idiot who had no idea how his own body worked.

He couldn’t think about anything logically though while he was laying on the floor entwined with the man who sucked all the good sense out of him. He tried to straighten himself out and move away from Naruto, but Naruto’s tails tightened around him.

‘Oh, hell, what are they doing that for? Are they supposed to do that? Is that normal? How do I make them let go of you?’ Naruto tugged violently on one of his tails and actually managed to loosen it for a moment, but then it sprung back around Sasuke with a force that made Sasuke gasp. Naruto repeated the performance, swearing and cursing at his own body, with all his energy now focused on attacking his tails, he floundered about rolling around on the floor with Sasuke trapped with him.

It should have been humiliating torture, he should have been furious with the indignity and the idiot’s sheer lack of control that had dragged Sasuke into his ridiculousness. Except he was writhing about on the floor naked with Naruto, smelling of Naruto, pinned down against Naruto’s muscled body, so how could he be unhappy? And Naruto’s unpredictable stupidness had always somehow appealed to Sasuke even at the times when it had most frustrated and annoyed him.

Perhaps being so closely connected to the dobe infected him with some of Naruto’s impulsiveness, Sasuke forgot his vow of mere moments ago to think carefully about how he dealt with the situation and just responded how his body wanted to. With the little room he had to move, Naruto’s struggles had put his tails into full constrictor mode, Sasuke managed to gently caress Naruto’s thigh, brushing his fingertips over the firm muscles.

‘Idiot, relax. It’s okay, I’m not leaving you, I just need to stretch out,’ he said in warm tones that were as new to his ears as they were to Naruto’s. ‘I’m having a lot of fun with you and I want to have more fun with you, but I do need to breathe. Relax. For me. I’m not going anywhere, I want to stay with you.’ He repeated variations of the same words in an even slower voice and Naruto’s tails finally released him and fanned out around Naruto’s body.

Sasuke stretched his arms and legs out, but he did not stand up or move far away from Naruto, he kept a part of his body always brushing against and touching the blonde’s. He silently thanked whatever instinct inside him had recognised that Naruto’s body was reacting to his fear that Sasuke would leave him. It made sense after not speaking for so long that Naruto would be scared that
Sasuke would shut him out again, but it hadn’t been something that Sasuke had worked out consciously. Although looking at the contours of Naruto’s body, Sasuke wondered why he’d ever want to be released, there were much worse fates than being held against the dobe for eternity.

Naruto’s cheeks were flushed, he rubbed the back of his head and looked at Sasuke with embarrassed eyes. ‘Have I ruined it? You gave me something real special and I…’

‘No. I told you. I’m having fun. You should know by now that I never say things I don’t mean.’

‘You might do when someone’s stupid tails are trying to strangle you,’ he mumbled, attempting to punch his tails. They dodged easily away from his blows. He dropped his heads into his hands and looked the picture of dejection.

‘You look incredibly cute.’ Sasuke stroked his hand through Naruto’s hair, savouring and memorising the feel of it against his fingertips, the change in textures between soft fluffiness at the ends and the more matted sweatiness near the scalp. He’d seen Naruto finish long strenuous workouts looking as fresh at the beginning at the end; it flattered him that this incredibly fit man was covered in sweat from a short session with him. ‘But I prefer it when you smile. Tell me, Naruto, what can I do to make you smile again?’

Sasuke was surprised how slutish his voice sounded, he hoped he concealed his own surprise better than Naruto did though, whose head shot up and he gazed at Sasuke with wide eyed, open mouthed wonder.

‘You want to do…more stuff like that? I really haven’t fucked it up with my tails being all mad? What do we do? Is it always that amazing?’

‘It’s more amazing. I have a lot to teach you.’

Normally Naruto would balk at Sasuke being able to teach him anything, but now he was the perfect student, all parts of his body alert and ready to learn. Including his cock which sprang back into eager hardness.

Sasuke licked his lips, genuinely concerned that he might be drooling at the sight of Naruto’s thick erection. As far as he allowed himself to be sexually attracted to anything, bottoms had always been what caught his eye, he had no interest in male genitalia. But as with everything, Naruto was the exception. He’d happily lay his head in Naruto’s lap and overwhelm his senses with the smell, taste and feel of his member.

‘What are you going to teach me?’ Naruto asked in a voice of pure lust.

‘First.’ Sasuke drew the one syllable out as he scooped his hands over his balls, his fingers catching Naruto’s come. ‘As enjoyable as your rubbing against me was, and it truly was, but you have to know when someone presents to you, they expect to get a cock inside them.’

Sasuke moved so he was on his knees, his ass in the air. He balanced on one elbow, with his other hand, he reached around and lubed himself with Naruto’s come. He moved with total confidence, but his heart thumped. He didn’t know whether animal or human was in control at the moment, but he couldn’t stop to think about what he was doing. He got frustrated at Naruto’s deliberate ignorance, but at least that was an excuse. Sasuke had no excuse, he was deliberately going against everything he’d been taught about how sexual relations were supposed to work. He was a giver, and Naruto was a receiver, it was simple and clear how it was supposed to work. But he was realising, more than ever, that this thing between him and Naruto wasn’t about following other people’s rules. It was about freedom and discovering truths about themselves and each other.
By having a massive cock stuffed in you. Right. Be honest with yourself, you’re willing to go against all the honour of generations and generations of your family, in a sluttish attempt to please this idiot man who’s never had the sense to accept he’s a receiver.

He bit his lip hard, but even if the cynical voices in his mind were true, he didn’t care. Making Naruto happy, made him happy in a way he didn’t think was possible.

Unsure if he was being selfless offering himself to Naruto, or selfish yearning only to share pleasure with this man, he shut off all doubt in his mind, and swayed his hips at Naruto. ‘Follow your instincts. Do what you want to do.’

Naruto leapt on him, but as this was Naruto, again it wasn’t what Sasuke was expecting. Instead of his first experience of a cock pushing inside him, Naruto’s mouth was slurping and probing all over his ass. Firm hands grabbed his cheeks and spread them giving Naruto more access. Sasuke felt claws, not the comparatively blunt claws he associated with the canine family, but sharp pins digging into his skin and making him bleed.

Sasuke rocked back into Naruto, he thought he was speaking telling Naruto how much he liked what he was doing, but he realised he was loudly purring. The other man understood well enough to attack Sasuke’s ass with even more vigour. Sasuke closed his eyes and breathed deeply. He’d never complain again about Naruto talking too much and too loudly, if all his constant prattering had honed the jaw muscles that were capable of doing what he was doing right now. Naruto’s mouth was all heat and wetness, it felt like Naruto’s tongue had doubled in size and was reaching every part of Sasuke’s body. Sasuke fell down onto his shoulders and listened to the newly discovered most erotic sound in the world, his best friend licking his own come out of Sasuke’s ass.

A sudden yearning, that outweighed even the pure pleasure that was making his skin tingle, shot through Sasuke. He kicked Naruto away from him, flipped onto his back, then reached out and pulled Naruto by his shoulders on top of him. He wrapped his arms and legs around the other man and kissed him like he’d never kissed anyone in his life. Naruto kissed back his tongue fighting with Sasuke’s as they pushed into each other and tasted every part of the other man’s mouth. Sasuke moaned as he savoured the mixed scents of him and Naruto on Naruto’s tongue. His body writhed under Naruto’s, their cocks pushing into each other in a way that should have been painful, but just fuelled Sasuke’s lust.

Sasuke pulled away from Naruto long enough to hiss, ‘You’re supposed to be fucking me.’ Then yanked Naruto’s head back into the kiss before Naruto had a chance to respond.

For once in his life however, the dobe didn’t seem to need to hear the sound of his own voice. Without breaking his lips away from Sasuke, he lifted the man’s hips. Sasuke helped by hooking his legs backwards on his arms. Naruto prodded his cock around, and Sasuke thought it might be a repeat of what happened when he was bent over the table, but sometimes Naruto could surprise by being a quick learner, especially when the motivation was strong enough. This time he used his hands to feel where he wanted to be and guided his cock into Sasuke’s entrance. Sasuke yowled as Naruto pushed into him.

Panting Naruto put his hands either side of Sasuke’s head and gazed down at him. Sasuke knew that they weren’t speaking with human voices but they understood each other more clearly than if they had been using normal words.

Do you want me to pull out? Does it hurt?

Of course it hurts, dobe, your cock is massive and my body isn’t made for receiving. Maybe it’d be
better if you hadn’t licked all your come away which was supposed to act as a lubricant.

I’m sorry, I couldn’t resist, you told me to do what I felt like doing and I wanted so much to taste you.

Idiot, you know better than to take my anger too literally. I’m not angry at you licking me out that was incredible, I’m cross because I want you so much inside me and I don’t know if I am capable of taking you. But I want to try, go slow with me, okay? This time I need you to hold your animal in check.

I am! Can’t you tell how well I’m doing? Your ass is so tight around me I can barely breathe. I thought wanking myself off was good, but being with you it’s like something else completely different.

Thank you for that compliment. I am so glad my virgin ass is better than your clumsy calloused hands.

Virgin?

Yes, **virgin**. You think I’d let anyone else do this to me?

No. Yes. Well, you’re always so experienced and know all about everything that I don’t. Oh, all the gods in all the heavens, I can’t believe you’re letting me be your first.

**First makes it sound like they’ll be others. You’re my only one, usuratonkachi. And I am asking to be yours, so it is only fair we share the full experience with each other.**

Big tears appeared in the corners of Naruto’s eyes and fell down onto Sasuke’s face. His tails moved around and started stroking over any part of Sasuke’s body they could reach. Naruto moved his hips with slow tender movements in complete contrast to the frantic thrusting on the table.

The pain was irrelevant as he looked up into the most beautiful blue eyes. Then the pain was gone and all was pleasure. Naruto’s cock had found an erogenous zone deep inside him and Naruto immediately adjusted so he was continually massaging the place with his cock.

Sasuke arched his back and repeatedly cried out his friend’s name. The feeling was so intense that he had no idea how his body would respond. He was equally disappointed and relieved when Naruto came in a sudden burst and fell forward onto Sasuke’s chest panting and sweating.

‘Sorry,’ the blonde mumbled, ‘I wanted to make you come but I couldn’t hold off any longer. You are so beautiful. I couldn’t hold my orgasm and my animal back. I’ll get better. I’ll improve. If you give me another chance?’ Even though his eyes were the brightest sparkling blue, somehow they contained a puppy dog worried expression as he raised his head and looked up at Sasuke.

Sasuke tugged on a tuft of Naruto’s hair. ‘You’re so stupid. Are you listening to anything I’m saying to you? This thing between you and me isn’t anything to do with a quick release in heat, this is the beginning of something important.’

Naruto nodded. ‘Give me a moment to get my breath back and then I want you to fuck me. I want you to feel as happy as I do.’

Sasuke ran his thumb over Naruto’s lips. He wasn’t sure if it was possible for anyone to feel as happy as Naruto, but he was sure that he’d never felt as hopeful and excited and filled with joy as he did right now.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry for any mistakes, I did not have time to edit, but I wanted to post a chapter as it's been a while since the last one. Hopefully I'll have time to go back over it soon.

After surprising himself by submitting to Naruto's lust, the next chapter will be Sasuke, well, being more Sasuke like!

Thank you for continuing to give my stories time in your life, I appreciate muchly x
‘Is it easier if I bend over the table, or am on the floor?’ Naruto meandered around the tiny library as if it was a grand palace overflowing with sexual opportunities. ‘Maybe the chair could work?’

‘Wherever you’re most comfortable.’ Sasuke stood still, only his eyes moving watching the blonde.

Despite the beauty of what had happened between them, all Sasuke’s muscles were tense, waiting. He had just done something which he’d never thought of doing before, he still couldn’t quite believe it, but now he was on the edge of doing something he’d dreamed about for years and for some reason that made him more nervous not less so. He wasn’t used to the sensation of nervous energy blazing through his being, when Naruto finally did present, Sasuke was going to explode inside the breath-taking receiver, but until then he needed to remain calm and not destroy this fragile moment.

Naruto’s tails swished around his body, Sasuke allowed himself a small smile, relieved that all nine of them were on display. Naruto had come twice but still showed all the signs of wanting more. So why was he delaying presenting?

‘Can I have these as a souvenir?’ Naruto dipped down and picked up Sasuke’s underwear from the floor and held them to his nose. For a moment he breathed deeply and looked blissfully happy than his face and neck blushed and he dropped his hand down to his waist. ‘Is that too odd? Am I too odd?’

‘I’ve no particular attachment to any of my clothes. You’re welcome to whatever you want.’

Naruto frowned. ‘But, you didn’t answer, do you find me too odd? I remember how angry you used to get with everyone stealing your things, I thought you were going to straight out kill Kiba that one time you caught him taking your socks out of your gym bag to sell to Ino. I like felt really sorry for him, even though I know you were right, that he should keep his paws away from your stuff. But I mean is that how you feel about me?’

Sasuke sighed. He didn’t want to think about anyone but Naruto, so why would the blonde bring up some stupid school memory at a time like this? Next he’d be sympathising with Sakura’s long-time obsession with him.

Somehow Sasuke maintained his calm. ‘I’m assuming anything you want of mine is for your own personal pleasure?’

Naruto paused then gave an embarrassed nod. ‘I like the way you smell,’ he spoke in a small voice as if he was confessing a crime.

‘Then it is nothing like school, is it? I’m attracted to you and the fact that you want my underwear turns me on.’

The blonde immediately brightened and picked up the remnants of clothing that his tails had torn through. ‘Do you want mine too then? Swapsies. You’re in luck too, normally I just wear jock straps, yaknow, I like my junk all held in place not flapping about, but in heat seasons I wear boxers as, I don’t know, it just feels like it covers more. But like, I guess if I’d got to the part
where they know what undies I’ve got on, the difference between a jock strap and boxers isn’t going to make any difference?’

Sasuke obediently took the scraps of fabric that Naruto passed him, and as Naruto stood expectantly smiling at him, he raised it to his face. Whether it was the images tumbling through his mind of what Naruto would look like in a skimpy jock strap, or just the pure scent of the man who was newly his lover, intense pleasure pulsed through his body.

‘Good, hey? I like that we like the same things.’ Naruto grinned.

Hell, what other kinks was Naruto going to introduce him to before the day was out? Not only was he a Giver who enjoyed the feel of his body spreading for another man’s cock, but now it turned out he was also an underwear sniffer.

‘What else do you like?’ Sasuke asked in a voice that was half wary and half lust.

‘I don’t know yet,’ Naruto replied. ‘I’m learning with you.’ He wound his hands within Sasuke’s underwear. ‘I want to like you being inside me, but, um, you may have noticed, I’m like delaying a bit because I’m a bit…I don’t know.’

‘You’re scared?’ Sasuke was surprised at how quickly his own desire abated and was replaced with a need to ensure Naruto was comfortable and happy.

‘No. Not exactly. Not of you doing it to me. Because you let me do it to you. So I can’t be worried about that.’

‘Of course you can.’ Sasuke dropped Naruto’s boxers and pulled his own underwear out of the blonde’s grips so that they could entwine fingers. ‘If anything doesn’t feel right, we won’t do it. It’ll be different for you than me because your body is formed for it, but that doesn’t mean we have to…’

‘No. No. It’s not the physical side…it’s…I’m scared it’ll change things.’

‘I hope that things have already changed between us, that the bond between us has been reformed and strengthened.’

‘Yes!’ Naruto nodded enthusiastically and squeezed Sasuke’s hands within his. ‘That’s why I’m scared. After so long of you blanking me, suddenly you’re offering me the world, and that’s enough to make a guy feel jumpy, y’know? You made me so horny before that nothing else mattered, but now I’m thinking again, and what I’m thinking is that you gave me something so special that no one else would’ve even thought of offering me, so what if it goes really bad when you’re inside me? Then that’s what we’ll remember from today, not how beautiful what we’ve just done is.’

Sasuke took a deep breath. He wanted so desperately to truly claim Naruto as his, it felt like a basic need such as drinking and eating. But if it wasn’t to be…well, he’d lived years without his friend in his bed, he’d have to survive a lifetime if that was how it was. However, now Naruto was back in his life he couldn’t let go of him completely.

‘Naruto, I respect your decisions and I’m never going to be a person who’ll try and talk you into sex, it has to be something you feel and want for yourself. But I hope even without any more sexual play you would like to spend more time with me. Perhaps you could come to my place and allow me to cook for you? If we’re lucky my housemates will be out making the most of heat season and we can have a quiet time together.’
Sasuke felt a constriction in his chest. Did he sound too formal? Too desperate? Would Naruto think that Sasuke wasn’t attracted to him, that he was willing to let go of the chance of sex too easily? Sasuke’s own body definitely was cursing the part of him that was not doing everything in its power to hump the gorgeously scented blonde.

Naruto only left Sasuke in painful doubt for a moment, then he wrapped his arms around Sasuke and kissed him passionately. His body pressed against Sasuke’s all hard muscles and bulging cock. His tongue pushed into every area of Sasuke’s mouth with undeniable hunger.

When Naruto stepped backwards, Sasuke was glad for the supporting hands on his shoulders. All the times he’d imagined being with the Uzumaki, he’d never once pictured it being like this.

‘You’re right, I’m stupid to hesitate. The reason we started this was because I recognised how much I trust you and only you to fuck me.’

Sasuke tried to mumble something about how that wasn’t even close to what he’d said, but Naruto spun around and bent over at the waist.

‘Is this right? Is this what I should be doing?’

Sasuke barely heard his eyes were fixed on the curves of the ass presented before him, the tails fanning out around it somehow emphasising the beauty of the bottom they surrounded, like a precious jewel in the perfect setting.

The animal rose in him, at last Naruto was doing what it’d wanted from the beginning. Yet Sasuke gave a small smile, if Naruto had behaved like a normal receiver then they would not have experienced all the unique things they’d just done together. Now though, it was time for Sasuke to be in control and do what he knew how to do.

Of course, it wasn’t that simple though.

Naruto stood up again and turned to face Sasuke. ‘I can’t see you. I’m like looking over my shoulder but I can’t see you, my stupid tails are in the way. Can we do it like you and I did?’ Without waiting for a reply, Naruto plonked himself onto the table and tried to raise his legs up as Sasuke had when Naruto pushed into him. ‘Fuck, this is not comfortable. How did you hold it for so long?’ Again without waiting for a reply, Naruto slid off and this time bent over the table with his ass up and his body twisted as his hands tried to fight his tails. ‘Could you like tie them up or something so they don’t get in the way?’

‘Sure. Oh no, wait a minute, I brought paper and pens to the library, but somehow forgot to bring any rope, chains, or handcuffs, out with me today.’ Sasuke’s voice was at its driest. He immediately regretted sounding so harsh when he knew what a big step this was for Naruto, for both of them.

But Naruto laughed happily. ‘Hey, there’s the bastard I know. You’re being so patient and kind to me that I’m seriously freaked that you might’ve been taken over by aliens and seducing me is part of your master plan to take over the planet.’

‘Because every aliens’ masterplan would begin by seducing you?’

‘Naturally.’ Naruto grinned. ‘They spied me from their spaceship and I’m the only reason they’ve bothered to come down and decided to go all mad conqueror.’

‘Wouldn’t it be simple just to kidnap you and leave the rest of us in peace then?’
‘Nope. Once they’ve got the planet, they’re going to gift it to me as a present because they know I’d be the greatest leader in the universe and make everything right. It’s like you know nothing about how aliens think and work. Who’s the idiot now?’

‘Me, it seems.’ Though not following Naruto’s fantasy logic was forgivable. Not concentrating on what was important about this whole thing wasn’t. He was too focused on the joys of Naruto finally wanting to have sex with him, that even though he was doing his best to be understanding, he’d missed what Naruto had said before they’d even begun.

_I’ve tried to bury all these fears because I really want to have friends and people like to be friends with normal happy people, not a receiver who feels sick at the idea of bending over and have someone put parts of their body in him._

It made Sasuke’s own stomach swirl, thinking that Naruto wanted to vomit at the mere idea of what should be a fun experience. To question him any further would only be disrespectful, Naruto had made it clear this was his decision, he’d shown the courage to explore something that scared him with Sasuke, now Sasuke needed to think beyond his cock and his inner animal to ensure his friend wasn’t mistaken in trusting him.

If Naruto could see him, wasn’t bent over, and had the power of when and how much of Sasuke went into him, hopefully that’d stop him feeling sick.

Sasuke pulled a chair out and sat down on it with his legs parted. ‘Ride me,’ he commanded.

Naruto’s whole body was a pink blush as he turned to look at Sasuke. ‘You know I don’t know how to.’

‘You just said you’re learning with me, so learn.’ Sasuke gazed into the wide blue eyes with his most unrelenting stare.

If Naruto wanted Sasuke to act like the familiar bastard he knew, that’s what he’d get.

‘I’m waiting, dobe. Don’t worry, even though you’re supposed to be a receiver, I don’t expect you to take my cock as well as I took yours.’

Sasuke thought the taunt was too obvious, but Naruto responded with a growl and immediately launched himself at Sasuke’s lap.

‘You didn’t even take the whole thing! You see you’re going to be buried so deep in me that you…that you…that you will think that I’m the best most experienced receiver you’ve ever met.’ Naruto rushed the last words out. Straddled over Sasuke with their erections pressing against each other, the blonde lost a bit of his natural bluster. In a quieter voice he asked, ‘Does one of us need to come first…to, yaknow, make some lube stuff?’

‘No. That was because I’m not a receiver. Your body will accommodate me much easier.’ Sasuke stroked his hands up and down Naruto’s strong thighs. He was so attracted to this man that he felt like he could come just from being this close to him. Being surrounded by Naruto’s bushy tails increased the heat between them, and made it feel as if they were enclosed in a cocoon away from the rest of the world; a situation Sasuke would like very much.

Naruto stared down at their cocks as if fascinated by how they looked next to each other. Something Sasuke could relate to as he felt the same way. Though when unaroused Sasuke’s appeared longer than Naruto’s, their erections were similar in width and length. It wasn’t unheard of for a receiver to be as well-endowed as a giver, but it was certainly unusual. Sasuke licked his
lips thinking of how that was the cock that had pushed into his ass, and anticipating how his own cock would know the ecstasy of being enclosed by a loving body soon.

‘Wow. I really really never thought this would happen. I mean, I wanted it to, but I didn’t think I’d ever be with someone who made me feel relaxed enough, and like you were there by my side all the time. Apart from when you weren’t talking to me, bastard.’ Naruto bumped his forehead against Sasuke in what could have been a nuzzle or a headbutt, it was impossible to tell with the idiot blonde.

Naruto gripped a hand around the base of Sasuke’s cock making him gasp. Then he lifted his hips and with a surprising deftness after all of the fumblings of their encounter, he guided Sasuke’s hardness to his entrance. The blonde audibly swallowed and stared up at the sky muttering one of the prayers for blessings they’d learnt as very young children before gazing into Sasuke’s face and pushing himself down on the other man’s cock.

They both took sharp intakes of breath before emitting low animal sounds; Naruto a kind of yip and Sasuke a long purr. Naruto began tentatively but quickly got confident mixing up and experimenting with speed and movement. Sasuke resisted the urge to grab the other man’s hips and hold them still while he fucked out all his years of lust and longing exactly how he wanted to. In truth, Naruto’s body gripping around the length of his cock was so perfect that in one sense it didn’t matter much what Naruto did, from the moment that Naruto encompassed him, Sasuke was in an internal battle with himself not to orgasm until Naruto had finished playing. It was essential that Naruto built his confidence up and began to explore his own sexuality, without Sasuke imposing what he wanted on the inexperienced man. But later Naruto would find himself bent over with Sasuke fucking him so hard the blonde would forget his own name.

Sasuke bit his lip, it was difficult enough holding off from coming with the pleasure of the moment, without adding in fantasies of how he’d use Naruto’s fine body in the future.

Naruto had fallen into a grinding motion that was pleasing the blonde enough that drops of precum were dripping off his cock onto Sasuke’s stomach.

‘Come for me,’ Sasuke wanted to say. It came out as a deep purr, but from the look in Naruto’s eyes he understood.

Naruto’s grinding became more manic, he arched his back and threw his head back with a yowl. He grabbed Sasuke’s shoulders, claws digging through the skin into his bone. The pain somehow increased the erotic sensation of Naruto’s hips pushing into his groin with all the man’s immense vigour and energy. The blonde’s head snapped back, and his eyes were pure lust as he stared at Sasuke. More than anything that look of pure release in Naruto’s blue eyes pushed Sasuke over the edge.

Naruto’s arms and tails wrapped tightly around him as they came together in a sweating panting mess.

Sasuke had never had an orgasm like it in his life. He may have blanked out, he wasn’t even certain of that, but he couldn’t remember the mechanics of moving from the chair to the floor, or work out how long Naruto’s tails had been wrapped around him, or why the blonde was so diligently licking Sasuke’s shoulders. The only thing he was certain of was that his friend now smelt of Sasuke and Sasuke smelt of Naruto.

‘That was…’ Sasuke murmured but he couldn’t finish his sentence. He took a deep breath and tried again. ‘I’ve dreamt so much about being with you, but that was nothing like…anything.’
For once Naruto didn’t speak but kept on lapping at Sasuke’s skin. Sasuke closed his eyes and let him. He was in no hurry for this closeness to end.

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Naruto’s tails and ears had disappeared but as he looked at Sasuke sprawled out on the floor of this musty little library room, he felt as full of lust and longing as he ever had. Now he knew what it was that he’d avoided all these years, and that he could share it with his best friend, it made him want to grind against the other man until they were both hard again. But Sasuke had an arm covering his eyes and appeared like he was totally satisfied. Naruto wondered how long you had to wait between sessions? He’d come three times and was still full of energy, Sasuke had come once but was happy laying there being still and silent. Was it a difference between him and Sasuke or a difference between givers and receivers? He wished he’s paid more attention in class or listened to any of his friend’s stories instead of blocking it all out because in moments like now, when pure reckless desire wasn’t driving him, he was feeling lost and a little unsure.

He did know that during heat receivers often moved through lots of sexual partners very quickly never staying with one person, even people who were in a couple for the rest of the year would bounce around different mates.

Probably the normal thing would be to gather up the parts of his clothes that were still more or less wearable and leave Sasuke alone?

But his heart ached to curl up on top of the other man, to continue licking and fussing over the places where his animal nails had pierced poor Sasuke’s flawless skin, and to cuddle and talk about what had happened between them.

Sasuke had offered to cook for him earlier, was that still on? It was such a simple thing to ask, he’d ask any of his other friends without thinking and not be offended if they’d changed their minds. But then he hadn’t, and wouldn’t ever, do what he’d just done with Sasuke with anyone else. Why was it when they’d been so intimate, staring into each other’s eyes while their bodies were connected, that Naruto felt so shy?

It was because they’d been inside each other though that he felt so shy now. It was what he’d been scared of, something changing between them and him having no idea if it was good or bad, or how he was supposed to react around the giver who had fucked him. Naruto bit his lip, but Sasuke had done more than that, he hadn’t just fucked Naruto, first he’d let Naruto fuck him.

He felt physically dizzy with the largeness of it all and for a time just remained still watching the other man, hoping Sasuke would do something and give Naruto a clue what he should do. He hoped Sasuke would be like he always was, challenging and arrogant and superior, Naruto knew how to respond to that. When Sasuke was tender and sweet it made his heart feel like it was being tightly squeezed. But he hoped Sasuke wouldn’t be like he always was, cold and unreadable, if Sasuke rejected Naruto now, he’d need to run fast away so Sasuke never saw him crying.

Naruto’s stomach rumbled and with a heavy sigh he took that as a sign that he should leave Sasuke in peace and go get something to eat. He knew it’d be tough, but if receivers were supposed to leave givers alone once they’d pleased each other, then he’d just have to get used to it.

Until things are a bit more familiar with Sasuke, then we’ll start doing things the Uzumaki way.

He smiled at his inner voice and got dressed with a slightly lighter heart. He paused a moment
when he saw Sasuke’s underwear, then with a grin grabbed them and stuffed them in his pocket, the bastard had said he could have them, and if Sasuke blanked him in the coming days, Naruto could use returning them as an excuse to seek the Uchiha out and stuff them down the arrogant snob’s throat.

Naruto’s grin widened as he imagined beating up the imaginary Sasuke who could possibly think he’d get away with not talking to Naruto again after what they’d shared. He’d had probably a very unhealthy amount of fantasies about getting into fights with Sasuke’s over the years, but his cheeks blushed as this one flowed out of his control into ripping Sasuke’s clothes off and holding the Uchiha’s pretty head down on his cock.

He rubbed a hand over his eyes. Sasuke had been really sweet and kind, why would his mind create images of him dominating his first ever lover? He needed food. Then he’d get help from the real Sasuke, not the one in his mind that he was scared would dump him before they even started dating, but the Sasuke who had been so passionate about how Naruto needed to understand his sexuality and his animal.

Naruto walked with purpose to the door but as soon as his hand was on the handle, he turned and jogged back to Sasuke and kissed him on the lips.

‘Should I go now?’ he whispered.

‘Do you want to?’ Sasuke’s voice was crystal clear, Naruto had assumed he’d been dozing, but now changed his mind and decided he’d been awake the whole time. Why hadn’t the bastard said anything? He probably liked the fact that Naruto was bumbling about unsure and completely reliant on him for cues on how to act.

‘Yeah, I do, now that I know I have the skills to fuck the great Uchiha, I’ve got to track Sakura down and show her we’re not as incompatible as she thought.’ He’d meant it to sound like a joke, the kind of sarcastic thing that Sasuke himself would say, but all his worries came out in his voice as gruff hardness.

‘Go.’ Sasuke said without uncovering his eyes. ‘Just go.’

‘I am. Not because you ordered me to, but because I want to.’ Naruto stomped out of the library and all the way back to his own room.

He threw himself face down on his mattress and suddenly all his anger disappeared, he had no idea why he’d got angry in the first place.

Because Sasuke hadn’t found his joke funny? When he knew if Sasuke had broken the moment between them by teasing Naruto about needing to go and fuck someone else, let alone Sakura, Naruto would have kicked him in his very beautifully formed nuts.

Because Sasuke had been all silent after the sex? Now being more logical though, he could see Naruto hadn’t said anything, in fact he’d said even less than Sasuke because he was all busy touching and kissing naked Sasuke, and Naruto was normally loud whereas Sasuke in his way was a kind of quiet guy, if Naruto was going to get offended when Sasuke didn’t speak they could never be friends again, let alone lovers.

Because Sasuke hadn’t held him when he was desperate to be held? But it was Naruto who had been the one to get self-conscious and move away, Sasuke had stayed laying there, if he’d been brave enough to put his head back on Sasuke’s chest he was certain now that Sasuke would have held him for as long as Naruto wanted.
Naruto growled into his pillow and then growled again. He wanted to run back to Sasuke and sort this out, but knew he needed to be sensible for once and give Sasuke a bit of space, and really importantly he needed to sort out all the confusion in his own head before he rushed in and made everything worse. With a final growl, he went and got the snake teddy Sasuke had given him when they were still children and cuddled deep under the covers with it.

Chapter End Notes

So if you've read some of my other stories, you'll all know that things rarely go simple for these boys, even when they are on the verge of being really happy together x

Thank you as always for giving my work a chance, and I hope you enjoy it even when it is a little wrong and difficult between these perfectly matched guys.
Sasuke remained in the tiny library room alone waiting for the idiot to return. He tilted his head back and stared up at the ceiling. Sasuke knew in his core he wasn’t a patient man, when he wanted something he wanted it now, but he could give enough of the appearance of being able to wait indefinitely that sometimes he almost believed in his outer façade himself, that he really was a cold creature untouched by the world, not just someone who had been trained to be an Uchiha. Anyone seeing him now (if they weren’t too distracted by his dishevelled naked appearance) would have no idea about the fire that burned in him. But the truth was that he wanted to roar and scratch and hiss, chase that stupid blonde down, dig his claws into Naruto’s bare skin, and drag his new lover back here.

From all the options available to him why had all his lust always been centred on such an annoying creature?

He drew his hands through his hair. No, it wasn’t lust, that would be easy to deal with and contain. He knew too well, had known for what felt like his whole conscious life, that his heart and soul had chosen Naruto and his lust had obediently fallen in line with the rest of his being and targeted on the boy with the nine tails.

And it had finally happened between them in a way that Sasuke had never dreamed possible, but instead of being entwined together enjoying the afterglow of what had been the most intense experience of their lives, Naruto had stormed off as if Sasuke had grievously offended him.

‘I let you inside me, dobe,’ Sasuke whispered to the empty room.

Despite knowing there were no other options for his heart, Sasuke’s mind thought of the dozens, probably hundreds of people by now, who had propositioned him since he sexually awakened. All of them would have clung onto him for as long as he allowed them to. But the only person he wanted had fumbled around getting dressed and then said he wanted to fuck someone else.

Sasuke emitted a long growling sound at the thought that Naruto had actually gone and found Sakura to display his newfound skills.

He dropped his head into his hands. His logical mind had enough control to insist that what had happened between them was as important to Naruto as it was to Sasuke, it had certainly not been just a release of heat lust. But still the jealousy remained biting at the edges of his calm, that now Naruto’s sexuality was awakened he would naturally want to go and explore it further with the girl he’d crushed on for so long, that maybe not consciously but it felt the same anyway, Naruto had been using him.

The image of Naruto thrusting and grinding with Sakura as he had with Sasuke was too vivid.

Why had Naruto said such a repulsive thing?

Because he was Naruto, an idiot.

The question was more why had Sasuke reacted so negatively and told the man he loved to go, when all he wanted to do was hold him close?
After the incredible release of his orgasm, he’d yearned to curl up on Naruto’s lap and go to sleep with Naruto stroking him. He’d managed to resist, thinking that this was Naruto’s first time and he should let Naruto guide how they behaved post coitally. And Naruto had been affectionate for a while but then he’d got restless and Sasuke had waited still and silent for him to resettle. That had been a mistake. Naruto might not be a receiver who craved a dominant giver, what they’d done together proved that, but his long disconnect with his sexuality meant that he definitely needed guidance and constant reassurance.

Their coupling had been the perfect culmination of years of longing for Sasuke. For Naruto it was a sudden decision going against a lifetime of repressing himself.

Sasuke touched his body where bruises showed up against his pale skin. Naruto’s tails had held on so tightly to him. A shiver of pleasure went through him. Even in the moment with his chest being constricted and his body squeezed beyond what it could take, he’d felt the joy of being so close to Naruto, and in the fact that he could bring out of kind compassionate Naruto a fierce animal that wanted Sasuke so much, that he’d break him rather than let him go. He suspected it was not an emotionally healthy decision, but being alone with only Naruto’s scent left, he was certain from the centre of his soul that he’d choose being squashed into oblivion by Naruto’s lust over living out a long life separated from him.

He got dressed with his usual efficiency, as if he was choosing clothes out of his closet rather than picking sex scented garments off the floor. He smiled at seeing his underwear was missing. The vision of Naruto getting turned on inhaling Sasuke’s aroma was much more pleasing than the imagined one of him seeking out Sakura.

The smile remained on his face as he collected up his possessions and returned the scrolls that he’d been studying. When he left the room, he did not need to think about anything, he instinctively followed Naruto’s scent as if it was the only thing he could sense.

Without surprise he found himself at Naruto’s dorm block, but in the corridor outside Naruto’s room, touching the door handle, he paused. He of course knew where Naruto lived, he had been inside this building visiting other people and thought about how close he was to his former friend’s room, but he had never been here.

The board on the door was covered in writing, messages crashing into each other, even scrawled over the top of other ones, making it clear that it was the task of the reader to put in all the effort to try and decipher and separate the scribbles. The door itself was scuffed and marked making it look like people made a choice between kicking the door open or hurling their whole body at it.

Sasuke knocked. Silence. He knocked again. This time he heard a snuffling snore that he recognised from long childhood days in the sun where Naruto collapsed straight into sleep as if there were only two states of being and no grey misty area in-between as your conscience fought awake or drifted into blackness. He felt slight annoyance that Naruto was asleep when his own emotions wouldn’t let him have any rest until he saw the Uzumaki again. But it was a much preferable option to the one his jealousy had created.

His heart thumped as he turned the handle and walked in. He took deep breaths dismayed at how nervous he felt at something so simple as entering the room of the man he’d claimed as his lover.

The bedroom was not as messy as he’d guessed it would be. The smell of pure dog would have raised the fur of his inner feline if it wasn’t currently so overwhelmed by Naruto’s sleepy scent of happiness and peace.

The man’s clothes were strewn across the floor, he was naked entwined around the sheets and that
oversized snake teddy that Sasuke had gifted him so long ago. Sasuke pressed his teeth together fighting back tears that were appearing in his eyes for no discernible reason. He approached Naruto slowly. At first carefully, then seeing that Naruto was in a deep sleep and wasn’t going to wake, with more vigour, he pulled the twisted sheets away from Naruto’s body and placed them over his lover. He no longer was in danger of crying but looking down at Naruto’s sleeping figure filled him with an emotion he had no name for. He bent down to tuck the sheets around his lover, but Naruto suddenly moved throwing them off onto the floor. Sasuke tried three more times to cover Naruto’s body but each time Naruto tossed them off.

‘Why are you always so difficult?’ Sasuke said with a soft smile.

For answer Naruto’s body curled towards the sound of Sasuke’s voice. Sasuke stepped backwards and after a moment Naruto cuddled back into his snake.

Sasuke sucked his lips into his mouth. He wanted more than anything to lie down beside Naruto and hold him, but it was because he wanted it so much that he’d drawn away. He felt vulnerable in his desires. The library was technically a public space whereas this was a private room, but in reality, it felt like the reverse. Naruto had as many friends as people he’d met and all of them were made welcome any time they wanted to roll up into his room. The thought of people he didn’t know seeing him tenderly holding the man he loved made his body feel like stone. Technically it shouldn’t matter, especially at this time of year two people cuddling was beneath notice when any open area could be filled with dozens of receivers yowling for attention. But it did matter.

He stood beside Naruto’s bed the passing of time marked by the room heating up with the afternoon sun but not cooling as the evening sky of blues and deep purples began to appear.

If he didn’t know Naruto he’d be worried by how long and deeply he was sleeping for. But always running on such high energy meant that when Naruto fell asleep it had to balance out all the bouncing around like a maniac on ecstasy. Or in this case bouncing about on Sasuke’s cock as if he’d been desiring Sasuke as long as Sasuke had been desiring him.

His cock hardened at the thought, but his Uchiha training showed through and he was able to contain it. The attraction was impossible to suppress, but his body getting physically aroused when Naruto was within touching distance and completely naked was not an option. His inner animal may have been insistent on the protocol of Naruto clearly inviting him for the first time that they had sex, but now Naruto had been claimed by him, he did not want to know what the animal would do to his sleeping receiver if it was given any opportunity of taking control.

Sasuke was so focused on both maintaining his own restraint and watching the small movements of Naruto’s body as he slept, that Kiba was in the room before he’d sensed his approach.

Kiba bared his teeth and growled.

Sasuke stopped himself hissing back. It was no effort compared to the willpower it took not to snuggle with Naruto, but still he was naturally offensive to Naruto’s best friend.

He supposed it was natural that Naruto and Kiba should gravitate together, they shared similar characteristics and they both were connected to the canine family through their inner animals. But Naruto had never caused the reaction in him that Kiba did. When Naruto was awake Sasuke would have to ensure Naruto learnt all the similarities foxes had with cats.

‘What are you doing here, Uchiha?’ Kiba growled moving close to Naruto’s bed.

In fairness to the dogboy his posture was one of defence and he had not even glanced at Naruto’s
firm behind which was clearly visible with the idiot laying on his side.

‘You know why I am here,’ Sasuke said with disdain.

Kiba now glanced down at Naruto, his cheeks blushing. ‘Oh. Yeah. Not sure how I forgot, Naruto is way excited that you claimed him, he ran away from all-you-can-eat ramen.’ Then he looked back at Sasuke his eyes narrowing. ‘How come you’re just standing there staring at him like some sort of freak stalker? You better treat him right, Naruto is really special, I mean that, really special.’

Kiba reeked of sex and alcohol and he was smiling at naked Naruto with a fondness that made the jealousy rise in Sasuke again. They shared a room, they must see each other in states of undress all the time. That thought flamed the jealousy rather than calmed it. Carefully Sasuke put a sheet over Naruto which thankfully the idiot let rest there this time despite the heat in the room.

With Naruto covered, Sasuke took a slow step into Kiba’s personal space. He stared at the dogboy for a long moment before speaking.

‘Don’t worry about the intricacies of mine and Naruto’s relationship. Keep guard on yourself. I do not want to hear that my receiver can’t relax in his own bed without fear that his roommate doesn’t have the most basic self-control and my poor Naruto will wake up with an ugly stinking creature humping his leg.’

Without a flicker of emotion on his face, Sasuke let his human fingernails curl into sharp feline claws.

Kiba’s expressions revealed his every thought, sizing up whether he could take Sasuke, realising he couldn’t. Wondering if it’d be worth the satisfaction of getting a few punches in even if he came off worse in a tussle. Thinking it would. Then glancing down at Naruto and realising that Naruto would not react well to Kiba and Sasuke getting into a fight at the start of his new relationship when he’d brought his giver back to his room for the first time.

‘Look after Naruto and you won’t have any problems from me.’ The words would have sounded more conciliatory if they hadn’t come out in an angry growl.

‘Then allow me to look after him and give him what he wants. Naruto isn’t like anyone else. He likes privacy.’ Sasuke stared pointedly at the door.

He could smell the anger coming off Kiba in sharp pungent waves. Warning Kiba to stay away from Sasuke’s receiver wasn’t the same as telling Kiba to leave his own room, effectively his territory. If Kiba was part of Naruto’s close friendship group though he’d be seeing a lot of him and it was important that Sasuke showed his superiority from the start.

With a shake of his head, Kiba backed out of the room. ‘Naruto might like your company, but I don’t. Just to be clear though I’m leaving because I know Naruto does have strange ways and I don’t want to get in the way of his happiness. I don’t get a gnat’s piss about you.’

‘Noted.’

Sasuke kept his gaze on Kiba until he was out of the door and it was slammed behind him. Then he exhaled and looked back at Naruto. That was exactly how Naruto would react in that situation, all hot tempered but ultimately thinking of his friend and when he left making it clear it had nothing to do with the person who’d antagonised him.

It was natural to assume that Naruto might think the same as Kiba regarding other things. What had dogboy said?
How come you’re just standing there staring at him like some sort of freak stalker?

Would Naruto wake up and think the same? Instead of seeing how much love there was that kept Sasuke close but not touching his lover, would Naruto just think it was odd? Naruto who was literally in the first day of accepting his sexuality, had always been anxious about being different and not fitting in, he’d want Sasuke to reassure and guide him, not make him feel like more of a **freak**. At least at the beginning. In time he wanted Naruto to embrace fully how beautifully different he was from other people. And the things that they’d done in the library hopefully showed that it wouldn’t take long for Naruto to fully enjoy the wonderfulness that was him. But all that could be ruined if he woke up to be shocked and annoyed by Sasuke being in his room standing by his bed staring at him.

He leaned over and kissed Naruto on the forehead. ‘Thank you for today. You are everything to me. Come and find me when you wake up. Please.’

Reluctantly he walked away from the sleeping man. Just before he was out of the room, Naruto threw his covers onto the floor again.

Sasuke smiled. ‘Don’t worry, dobe, I know how gorgeous you are, you don’t have to keep flashing me.’

In the corridor he considered if it’d be more acceptable if he waited outside the door until Naruto woke up. He decided it might actually be worse and kept on walking. Then outside the building he had serious thoughts about waiting and looking up at the window so he’d see when Naruto awoke. Finally, he forced himself to go home. Naruto had trusted Sasuke with his body, now Sasuke had to trust Naruto with the weight of his love.

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Naruto woke up with a huge yawn. At some point when he was napping he had stripped his clothes off, thrown his covers on the floor, and entwined his naked body around his snake teddy. He blushed thinking what Sasuke would say if he saw him. Well, being Sasuke he wouldn’t say anything, he’d just give him **that** look.

Naruto hated Sasuke’s superior and smug face, so why were casual thoughts of the Uchiha making his cock so hard it was painful?

Even though the room was silent and he was sure he was alone, he glanced guiltily over at Kiba’s bed double checking it was empty. With that extra bit of visual reassurance though, there was no restraining what he longed to do. His hand crept down to his groin and wrapped around his prick. He let out a prolonged groan thinking how the skin he was now touching had been inside Sasuke’s beautiful body.

Exhaling deeply, it truly felt like he was breathing freely for the first time in many long years, perhaps the first time ever. He’d been underwater limbs flailing, lungs bursting, oxygen deprived, and the worse thing was he hadn’t even realised it. He’d become so adjusted to the constant pain, to not seeing or sensing clearly, that he hadn’t known there was another way of living. It was humiliating and annoying, but most of all exhilarating, that it had been **Sasuke** who had leapt into the water and pulled him up to the surface.

His fingers remained wrapped around his cock but he did not reach for the tissues and wank himself off, despite the hungry desire that pulsed through his being.

For so long sex had been something that was part of his every day life, in his yearning for Sakura,
in his fear of heat season, in the suppression of his tails, but now it was part of him. He’d been scared that having sex would change him somehow, he’d never been close in any of his imaginings to how it’d truly make him feel so different.

Maybe he wasn’t smart enough, or maybe they were no words to describe this, either way alone in the silence of his room he couldn’t explain or understand how he felt.

The closest he could come to encompassing his emotions was: peace.

But that seemed such a strange idea when he was so alive with energy and desire.

Naruto gazed down at his cock with a smile. He’d been inside Sasuke. He’d actually been inside Sasuke! Sasuke had bent over for him and encouraged him to explore that beautiful body with all his untamed lust and desire.

Years ago, Jiraiya had fought to educate him about his sexuality, luring him in with ramen and sweets before ambushing him with one horrible lecture after another. Naruto literally covered his ears, sang at the top of his very loud voice, or if he wasn’t too hungry, plain ran away. But still bits had filtered through and stuck in his mind however much Naruto tried to scrape them out and forget about them. The worst and the most persistent warning being about givers being rougher, too rough, with male receivers either because they thought the male could take it, or just because they felt more of a need to prove dominance over a male. That idea had morphed into something that woke him flailing from nightmares where faceless givers held him down and made him feel powerless.

Thinking about the idea of dominant givers now was the first time he felt detached and not anxious. He actually wondered about the context of when Jiraiya had originally warned him about them. With the clarity Naruto was feeling now, he knew Jiraiya was always open about sex and how enjoyable it was. He would never have wanted to say something that added to Naruto’s hatred of being a receiver, it’d probably been part of a longer speech about choosing the right partner, or what to expect from different animals, all the stuff that would have been really useful to know, but he’d spent his whole adolescent deliberately blocking out. He should have had the common sense from looking at all the givers he knew and who were his friends to work out for himself that most people were great. Sure, when they were drunk or it was dreaded heat season, Kiba might occasionally hump his leg, and Choji would say how he was more lickable than the sweetest flower, but that was it. In fact, of all his friends, it was Sasuke that he’d have guessed would be the only one who’d be a commanding douche during sex.

But he hadn’t been.

Naruto’s back arched and he let out a low moan as his body surged with two opposing visions. One was what had truly happened between him and Sasuke, the other man’s thoughtfulness and care. The other one shocked him by filling him with as much yearning as the reality had. He imagined Sasuke tying him up and pounding relentlessly into him, calling him his bitch and using him hard.

Beads of perspiration appeared on Naruto’s brow, he fist his cock with more purpose, spinning the image so that it was Sasuke who was bound and Naruto who was pressing his cock into Sasuke’s tight hole.

He gritted his teeth and forced himself to stop, digging his hands into the mattress. He wasn’t ready for those thoughts to be something that turned him on. Not yet.

For a moment he considered seeking out Jiraiya and saying that he was finally ready to be taught all the old man knew. But then he thought of Sasuke and smiled. He didn’t need any other teacher.
Sasauke had made it so clear that the thing between them was not a one off. He’d be able to explore all these feelings with the man he was now so happy to think of as his lover.

He laughed out loud, ‘That bastard is my lover.’ He laughed again and shouted out to the empty room, ‘I had sex with Sasuke!’

The joy at his own words was overwhelming. He wished he had wings instead of stupid tails so he could soar through the skies twirling and whirling and showing the world how happy he was.

Then a smidgen of doubt scratched through his being. Him and Sasuke had had amazing sex, so why weren’t they together right now having more amazing sex? Why had Naruto woken up alone in his bed wrapped around a teddy instead of his beautiful man?

‘Oh,’ Naruto said softly as he started to recall how things had ended between them. He cursed a few times in the same soft voice, each word sounding sadder than the last.

Why had he said that stupid thing about wanting to fuck Sakura? Everything had been so perfect between him and Sasuke, and it’d been him that had ruined it. He thought of how Sasuke had looked laying naked on the library floor, Naruto must be the only idiot in the whole world who could stomp away like a toddler having a temper tantrum from such a vision of beauty.

He let out a low groan and covered his face with his hands. There was a very real part of him that wanted to retrieve the bedcovers from the floor and just hide under them for the whole rest of his life. How would he ever apologise for his childish behaviour?

So sorry, bastard, that you gave me the most unbelievably awesome experience of my whole life and I joked about fucking Sakura and then stormed off. Yeah, please forget about all that and let’s go to bed again because now I’ve had sex once I know what’s I’ve been missing and want tons more.

Hell, that sounded awful, but he knew in reality he’d probably blurt out something even worse. However, he wasn’t someone who could ever plan out what he said and as important as this was he knew he’d just give himself a headache if he tried to work out the best thing to say to Sasuke. He needed to get back to the library, hope Sasuke was still there…Naruto licked his lips with the distracting and lustful hope that not only would he still be there but that he would still be naked like he left him and that the Uchiha would be in a relaxed and understanding mood to receive Naruto’s apology. And if Sasuke didn’t want to see Naruto again…well, Naruto would deal with that when he was faced with it. The main thing was to get to Sasuke and let him know that Naruto wanted to be with him not storms away from him.

With his new resolve, Naruto swung his legs off the bed ready to get dressed and was struck by a double attack of dizziness and nausea. He steadied himself to prevent himself slumping back on to the mattress and forced himself to continue on his mission despite the weakness of his body. But such was the wooziness that he had to move slowly and carefully. He tentatively rubbed his belly. He remembered skipping out on ramen to go to Sasuke, this oddness must be caused by lack of food.

However, he’d spent a lot of his life being hungry, he knew too well what it felt like, hollow rumbling dryness, not like this. This feeling was caused by something else. Nervously he slid his hand between his buttocks. It wasn’t an area he was used to touching himself and it felt strange, more sensitive if anything, but surprisingly not sore. If receiving made you feel ill surely someone would have told him by now? He blushed aware that someone may well have told him and he’d just blocked them out and not listened. But why would everyone rush to do it if it is had bad side effects? That question was stupid even by his standards. Even with feeling rough when he started
moving, he was still glowing from what him and Sasuke had done together. The pleasure was more intense than all his other happiest days put together, and this sickness wasn’t even close to his worse hangover.

As he fumbled around getting dressed, he found the underwear he’d taken off Sasuke. Without thinking he raised them to his nose and breathed in the scent of his lover. Immediately he felt better.

Was this what it meant to be claimed by someone, that you felt physically ill if your senses weren’t filled by them?

If he’d been told that before he’d have been even more determined that he wasn’t meant to be a receiver, now he grinned, stuffed Sasuke’s garment in his pocket and bounced off determined to find his very own giver.

He was only halfway down the corridor before he collapsed in a pool of his own vomit.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you as always for continuing to read. This chapter didn't contain all the plot that I planned (that happens so often with my writing that I don't know why I bother with plans!) but I hope you still enjoyed this snippet of Sasuke and Naruto after their first time together.
Sasuke sat completely still and impassive alone on one side of the long table. Under ordinary circumstances he’d be confident that no one would see any emotion in his demeanour. But this was the opposite of ordinary. The seven Uchiha men that sat on the other side of the table could discern weakness in the micromovements of a single eyelash.

It was probable that he’d already unconsciously revealed the rage that was ripping his insides apart. But then it was also highly probable that they all knew how angry Sasuke would be about this summons before they even saw him.

No matter what he did he was never quite Uchiha enough.

He wasn’t Itachi.

It was an ironic truth he’d lived with since that spring day so long ago; Itachi who had rebelled and rejected Uchiha rule would always be a better Uchiha than Sasuke who did everything his parents told him to. Or at least he worked hard to create the impression that he was a perfect dutiful son. Including obeying a summons when his whole being was fretting about Naruto.

Sasuke had stayed up all night waiting for Naruto to come and find him. The next day he had rushed between the library and his home desperately worried that wherever Sasuke was, Naruto was searching for him in the other place and they were doomed to keep missing each other. But that was a baseless worry as the library only carried the sweet aroma from their previous activities and the only smell of Naruto at Sasuke’s home was in Sasuke’s dreams.

He had initially avoided seeking Naruto out himself as he wanted his new receiver to come to him, and not have to face the humiliation of finding Naruto laughing and chatting in his favourite ramen place surrounded by friends and obviously not giving a thought to Sasuke. However, the sleeplessness mixed with the hours ticking away without seeing Naruto soon destroyed his pride.

But the widening of his search made no difference, Naruto was nowhere. Sasuke couldn’t even catch a fresh scent from any of Naruto’s close companions to go and question them about the Uzumaki’s whereabouts.

Thus, when he saw Sakura across the campus, he immediately ran to her. As if they’d been lying in wait, within seconds he was ambushed by a horde of females stinking of jealousy and determined that he wouldn’t speak to Sakura on her own. Although it was clear that Sakura wouldn’t of been any use even if he had managed a private conversation. She was shyer than normal and blushing about her hair and going into unnecessary detail about how she’d spent all day dying it, and how it had taken lots of attempts to get the right colour, and much more boring completely irrelevant crap.

He noticed that all of the girls ganging around him had also recently coloured their hair in shades of yellow. They also were all wearing bright orange tracksuits in a colour that Sasuke thought was manufactured in some godforsaken place especially for Naruto. Unlike Naruto though the girls had tied their tops up to reveal their midriffs, and were all wittering on at the same time about how much they’d eaten and how much energy they had for Sasuke to make use of.

The fire rose in him as seemingly every female on campus amassed around him. His urge was to
scratch at their eyes and rip out their tongues until only one voice remained who could tell him uninterrupted where Naruto was.

He would never lower himself to violence, but normally he wouldn’t hold back the rough words that sprung from the darkness of his anger onto his tongue. Today he did though. Being reunited with Naruto must already be having an effect on him. Or maybe it was a new empathy with the lovelorn caused by the strangling pain around his own heart and going into a panic at what was actually a very trivial occurrence: someone he’d had sex with hadn’t contacted him the next day.

Instead of just seeing these women as shallow objects that were a constant source of annoyance, he empathised with them as people who for whatever reason had fixated their desire on someone they were never going to have. If things had been different, if Naruto had been a desirable giver with a group of fans following him around, would Sasuke have been one of them? If he’d heard a rumour about what Naruto found sexually attractive, would he have immediately changed his appearance and lifestyle and tried to get Naruto’s attention however hopeless it seemed?

Such thoughts forced him to be patient, to listen to their chattering as if he was interested and he only politely excused himself when he really couldn’t take any more.

Leaving the women, he’d forced himself to maintain his Uchiha calm and stop chasing around trying to find someone who didn’t want to be found. Not by Sasuke anyway. He cooked dinner and spent time creating an elegant table for when Suigetsu and Karin returned, Juugu was still away visiting his boyfriend.

As soon as he saw the elaborate meal, Suigetsu launched into what could be banter or could be a genuine question about whether Sasuke was romancing him with, there was little difference between Suigetsu’s sharp toothed smile whether it was displaying happiness or sarcasm. Sasuke didn’t care enough to ask or to even reply, so Suigetsu was still prodding the same issue when Karin returned. The argument that ensued lasted through the whole meal, with Karin insisting that if Sasuke was romancing any housemate with his cooking it’d obviously be her.

With the dinner plates cleared away and the other two enjoying their desserts while Sasuke sipped on a peppermint tea, Karin and Suigetsu finally came to an agreement that Sasuke wanted both of them for a threesome.

Sasuke remained silent, but their presence did what he hoped it would. Both their constant quarrelling and their assumption that he’d cooked a lavish meal to romance them into sex when he was certain, especially in heat season, he could have either of them with a simple click of his finger, amused and distracted him enough to stop him running around madly searching for the receiver who’d decided to ignore him.

Then Karin said the name he’d been determined not to speak himself.

‘I’m so happy that you’re not limiting yourself to Naruto and are willing to explore how much I can meet your needs.’

‘How much we can meet your needs.’ Suigetsu flashed Sasuke a quick amorous smile and gave Karin a long glare.

‘A man like you, Sasuke, must have so many needs. And you must be so disappointed that you finally claimed someone and your receiver wasn’t physically able to take you. Please don’t let what happened to Naruto make you hold back, you don’t have to be gentle with me…’

‘With us,’ Suigestusu snapped.
‘You can do whatever you want to me, I don’t care if I get hospitalised,’ Karin continued.

‘We don’t care if we get hospitalised.’ Suigetsu tilted his head. ‘Actually, scrap that, do whatever the fuck you want to Karin, but hot as your scent is, I’m not breaking bones for you. So get all your freaky stuff out on her then you and me can…’

‘What are you talking about hospitals for?’ Sasuke didn’t bother keeping the ire out of his voice. These two had been amusing a moment before, but as soon as they mentioned Naruto’s name it was like the top layer of his heart was being slowly peeled away. Their sexual pain fantasies belonged nowhere near his sweet receiver.

Karin and Suigetsu exchanged a raised eyebrow glance.

‘Sorry if I offended you by mention the failures of your chosen receiver,’ Karin said, ‘but no one blames you, if he couldn’t take you, he shouldn’t have let you claim him.’


Suigetsu answered this time. ‘What I heard is that you fucked your Naruto so roughly that he had to be hospitalised and you were so pissed by him being useless you just left him bleeding out in the corridor for his friends to find.’

‘You’ve got it wrong as usual.’ Karin rolled her eyes. ‘Sasuke destroyed the receiver in his own room and left him there. Then Naruto crawled out into the corridor crying and weeping just because he wanted to make sure everyone knew how much pain he was in.’ Karin turned to Sasuke with what she probably thought was a sympathetic smile. ‘Heat makes us all lose our reason, anyone of us could end up with someone so…weak. But don’t worry, I won’t disappoint you in any way.’

‘We won’t disappoint you,’ Suigetsu corrected.

Sasuke walked away from their continuing bickering and left the room in a daze. It was a stupid rumour. Nothing more. He’d left Naruto safely snoring away in a deep happy sleep.

But it was suspicious that both Karina and Suigetsu had, if not quite the same, very similar stories even though they mixed in different circles outside the house. And they’d talked with such certainty as if it was verified accepted fact.

His chest constricted with thoughts that he couldn’t allow to grow in his mind as they’d surely break him…but if someone had gone in after he’d left and found Naruto in his deep sleep naked and defenceless laying there so vulnerable so sweetly scented….

Sasuke thumped the wall, he’d actually smiled when Naruto had thrown the sheet off before he left the room. What was he thinking leaving his newly awakened receiver alone in heat season when mad lust ruled?

He needed to get to the hospital. Now.

Without bothering putting on his outside shoes he ran out of the front door and straight into an Uchiha elder who showed no reaction to Sasuke’s disarray and in an emotionless voice informed him he’d been summoned.

So here he was sitting in one of the Uchiha’s meeting room with no idea where the man he loved
was. No one had spoken to him, leaving him internal space to mentally keep going over and over all the things he'd done wrong. He was even silently going through all the old prayers and blessings his mother had taught him when he was a child, hoping that his lack of faith was wrong, and that a caring god was listening and would ensure that Naruto was out partying, blissfully ignorant of the rubbish that was being said about him.

This morning it had felt like the worse thing would be that Naruto had gone out with all his friends and was indifferent to seeing Sasuke. How innocent that fear seemed now.

He realised his left big toe was tapping up and down betraying his inner impatience at being stuck here when his soul was crying out to be reassured about Naruto’s wellbeing. He tried to convince himself that Naruto was fine, and it was easier, quicker in the long run, to do what these powerful men wanted. But it still jarred with all his emotions to be sitting here doing nothing while Naruto might be in pain, might need him.

Finally, he broke and spoke.

‘Father, why have I been summoned?’ His tone was perfect Uchiha coldness, but it didn’t matter as the words revealed everything. Calling the highest member of their clan ‘father’ in a formal setting was the same as being a whining child clinging onto his parent’s hand and begging for his daddy to help him.

A long pause was left for him to reflect on his lack of restraint.

When his father did reply it was in a more careful voice than he usually used. Sasuke knew it as the tone his father used when there was a real danger his anger would spill out. He’d used it a lot after Itachi died.

‘It has come to our attention that you have claimed the Uzumaki boy as your receiver.’

Sasuke’s mouth was dry and it showed when he spoke. ‘I would not think who I claim in heat season would be of much interest, and certainly not important enough to make you all gather for a meeting.’

‘Uzumaki is the nine tailed fox?’ One cold voice said barely managing to make it sound like a question.

‘He’s the orphan mongrel,’ another replied.

Sasuke’s stomach clenched, ‘mongrel’ was a harsh word which should have no more place in a formal meeting than ‘father’ did. Less so in fact because these men would already know everything they wanted to know about Naruto, this exchange was rehearsed and was purely to test him. But he couldn’t prevent himself rising to it.

‘He’s my friend. I’ve claimed him before when we were younger. Why am I being summoned now?’

‘Yes. Exactly. You are a young desirable giver, yet I believe this fox is the only person you’ve ever claimed?’

‘Isn’t it true that you’ve gone more than three years without claiming anyone?’

‘You’ve maintained an attachment to this Naruto since you were a child, haven’t you?’

Sasuke remained focused on his father, refusing to look at the men with their prying questions that
they already knew all the answers to.

His father expression appeared completely impassive, but Sasuke thought he could see fire in those dark eyes.

What had he done wrong? He’d never heard of anyone being summoned because of who they claimed during heat season. It’d be the equivalent of being pulled in every time you took an alcoholic drink. Uchihas were supposed to keep control at all times, but in practise exceptions were expected and, in a way, even encouraged. For some sex could prove to be an acceptable release of passion that allowed them to keep their calm in all the other areas of their lives.

The men were asking more of the same questions with only slightly different wording, probing his long friendship with Naruto with others adding comments about how Sasuke was not known to have any other bonds with receivers.

He should be paying more attention, they were all gazing at his every reaction, but his heart was thumping and he was struggling to concentrate. He needed to discover why he was here.

Their interest in Sasuke only ever claiming Naruto was worrying. But they couldn’t know with any certainty that Sasuke wanted to claim Naruto for his life mate rather than just for heat season. Naruto had a big mouth but he wouldn’t have told anyone about the tenderness Sasuke showed him, there was privacy guaranteed by the sacredness of a bond between a giver and his receiver, but more than that he was certain Naruto would never betray him with idle boasting about Sasuke being in love with him.

If they had been worried about Sasuke’s feelings for Naruto though, wouldn’t they have at least watched and waited until the end of heat season to see if Sasuke dropped his receiver as soon as the intensity of the lust passed?

That is what he’d planned for when he’d thought about his long-term relationship with Naruto. Although he had to admit there hadn’t yet been much real planning since Naruto and him had actually reconnected, the emotions and hopes and desires had overwhelmed him. All he had to rely on was the quiet planning from the years when they weren’t speaking and Sasuke had hoped and dreamed that one day they could be together. Despite Naruto’s total lack of interest in him as anything other than a former friend. Despite the Uchiha’s intense interest in him as the sole surviving heir to his father.

‘Are you listening to us?’ One of the men asked.

‘Do you realise the seriousness of the situation?’ Another asked.

There were touches of anger audible in their voices.

This couldn’t be about him claiming Naruto, that wouldn’t be worthy of a summoning. It’d be left to his mother to quietly warn him. Like last time.

Was there any chance that they knew what had happened between him and Naruto in the library? He had been so focused on his lover, was there a chance that they’d been spied on and he hadn’t noticed? These men couldn’t possibly know that Naruto had mounted him, could they?

Sasuke’s cheeks flushed. He was now only managing to restrain the extremes of the violence and panic of his thoughts. A blush was better than leaping over the table and punching the life out of these men for talking about his relationship with Naruto as if it was something dirty that he should be ashamed of, but it was still a blush.
'No, I do not at all understand the seriousness of the situation. I have better things to do than discuss a receiver I’ve barely spoken to for years.' Sasuke knew the ice of his voice couldn’t cover the warmth of his cheeks, but it was something. ‘I noticed him a couple of days ago and that’s it. What is the point of all this?’

‘You do not even possess the sense to ask the relevant question,’ his father said.

‘Obviously not, so why don’t you stop wasting time and tell me why you summoned me.’ If he was younger Sasuke would have been locked in his room for sounding so insolent, he didn’t know what the punishment was now.

His father showed no reaction, and spoke again in perfect Uchiha tones. ‘How do you think we know who you’ve claimed? As you’ve correctly noted, it should be beneath our concern.’

Sasuke breathed deeply, his father was right. He hadn’t asked the only question that mattered. If these men knew this much, there was a very real possibility they were better informed than Sasuke himself. He no longer cared about appearances or what his father thought of him.

‘Has something happened to Naruto?’

The men exchanged questioning glances. But not his father who kept staring straight at him.

‘Is it possible that you are so foolish you do not even know what you have done?’

‘Please, father, can you just tell me if Naruto is okay? Whatever you need from me afterwards I’ll do without hesitation but…please…’

His father’s face didn’t seem to move but still somehow with every pleading word Sasuke spoke, Sasuke felt his father was looking at him with an increasing mixture of disdain and disappointment.

‘Your ignorance astonishes me, but it is better this way,’ his father said as if he was announcing an incontestable truth. ‘Your receiver is in hospital. Pregnant. His body has reacted badly to the conception. He has with absolute certainty named you as the other parent. He may be lying; he may not even know whose young he is carrying. It doesn’t matter. The fact you claimed him and he’s now named you is enough. And it’s unacceptable. You will go to the hospital and use your authority to terminate this disagreeableness while it is still an easily contained problem.’

The meeting didn’t end there. More was said, mostly about responsibility to his lineage and blood line, but Sasuke hardly heard, he was in a daze. The lectures from the Uchiha men blurred into him and his father being alone in the room and his father speaking almost kindly to him.

‘I’ll be honest with you, Sasuke, it is a relief to see by your reaction that this wasn’t a deliberate act on your part. Now that you’ve been formally reprimanded, I can tell you that you mustn’t feel guilty about bringing shame to the Uchiha clan by impregnating such a creature. It is not unheard of for even the most controlled person to make mistakes due to some of our baser instincts. In fact, sometimes it is beneficial to have moments of such weakness to understand them and better guard against them in the future.’

His father’s voice blurred into Sasuke sitting at the kitchen table with his mother. He watched in the same dazed state as she crushed three green flower heads into a flask of homemade soup and slid it over the table to him.

‘It’ll be better this way,’ she said. ‘I don’t doubt that you’re capable of convincing Naruto to go the medical route, but this will be kinder to him. If the man he is is similar to the child he was, it’ll scar him forever to be scared when he’s in a vulnerable state into making a choice he’ll always
question and regret. But this’ll make it seem natural. From the information I could get out of Tsunade, he is completely unprepared and shocked and his body is not handling it well. It’ll be unsurprising if the problem immediately solves itself. The soup is full of nutrients and goodness which will help him to recover from the discomfort.’ She paused, then said, ‘You will take my advice on this?’

Sasuke focused on her face for the first time and saw it was twisted in pain.

‘The people that’ve already been informed are creating a narrative where a deceiving receiver used the cover of heat season to try and catch a prestigious Uchiha through trickery and lies. But it wasn’t like that was it?’

If it wasn’t for the distress in his mother’s eyes, he would think that she was working for his father to gain more information. Instead he decided to trust her and gave a small shake of his head.

She covered her expression with her hands. ‘I respected his parents; they were good people. If I was a good person, I would have stopped your friendship so much earlier. But he was the only one you smiled with after…after Itachi. That was a warning sign, but I let it go telling myself that it didn’t matter how attached you were to him as you were both so young. Then when you got older and I saw the way you looked at him when you thought you were alone, and I knew I’d waited too long that your heart would break, but that he still had so much joy within him that I thought I could at least still save him for the sake of Kushina and Minato. He deserved, deserves so much better than to be claimed by an Uchiha.’

Sasuke struggled to understand what his mother was saying to him. His mind was caught on the name of Itachi, to his knowledge she hadn’t spoken it out loud since his brother died. Why would she say it today, on such a night, when he could barely cope with the knowledge that Naruto was pregnant, let alone revisit the horror of that loss?

But as he picked up the flask she’d prepared, he tried to blank Itachi out and remember the conversation more than three years ago when his mother had spent an hour explaining to him why Sasuke must stay away from Naruto. He didn’t remember anything about it being because of what Naruto deserved. He recalled it being similar to the lecture he just received from the Uchiha men, about the importance of choosing a suitable mate to breed with to continue the purity of the Uchiha line. It was nothing he wasn’t aware of, but it’d convinced him, though not for the reasons she thought. If his mother had noticed, then the person he spent more time with than anyone else, Naruto, would surely notice too. And how would Naruto who ran from anything remotely sexual react when he had a moment of clarity and realised that Sasuke’s friendship was not as pure or innocent as Naruto’s?

That had been his prime reason for stopping talking to Naruto, to preserve the memories they had made together and not have it all ruined and overshadowed by an argument which there’d be no coming back from.

Had it been an act of true friendship, or an act of cowardice?

He’d been nervous about how Naruto would react to Sasuke desiring, dreaming, going near mad with fantasies about Naruto being the thing the idiot rebelled most against: his identity as a receiver.

But he’d also been nervous about how his father would react if he learnt that his son was in love with the nine-tailed fox.

Now he didn’t have to be scared of the imagined and unknown, he knew what both Naruto and his
father’s reactions were when they learnt about who he’d been secretly in love with for his whole life.

He gave his mother a small nod then walked away from her. As soon as he was out of the house he started running towards the hospital.

Chapter End Notes

I wrote this quicker than normal, so I hope that there aren’t too many mistakes and that it all makes sense.

Thank you so much as always for giving this story your time, it truly keeps me inspired and happy.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

These last three chapters have been the quickest I've been able to write since I've started this story, I usually try and wait a bit before posting to do some edits but there were lots of questions after the last chapter and I wanted to answer some of them and not leave you in suspense for too long. So please forgive mistakes and hopefully there are not too many?!

Thank you for all the comments, they have been what kickstarted my inspiration and enabled me to carry on writing, if you do have a moment please do leave some feedback as it is so incredibly helpful, but I understand totally of course to all the readers who don't comment as I know I have read so many stories on this site without leaving any comments as I don't know what to say :)

Naruto was in a private room, but it didn’t feel like it. Even Naruto’s beautifully strong scent was in danger of being overwhelmed by the bodies crowded around him. Sasuke recognised all of them, they were people they’d both known since they were young children. Although Naruto at some point got struck down with a huge case of amnesia about how these people used to treat him and decided they were all his closest friends. Sasuke had never forgotten.

The name calling was the easiest for Naruto to deal with, it gave him something to react to. Even the times when they were young, before Sasuke had learnt effective ways to protect his friend without hurting Naruto’s stupidly sensitive pride, and Naruto got bloodied and bruised and sometimes even broken, Naruto was able to bounce back, channelling all his emotions into his energetic personality. He’d actually boast to Sasuke about how well he’d done against five other kids rather than worry about his safety. Too many adults turned away and described it as ‘normal boisterous bonding’ or ‘a healthy display of animal spirits’ when the little abandoned orphan child was the one being beaten on. Maybe that was why Naruto had provoked so many physical scuffles with Sasuke; it had been ingrained into young Naruto too deeply that that was how he got attention, that fighting really was a sign of friendship. Although for a long while Sasuke had hoped Naruto secretly liked being stripped to the waist sweating and wrestling together for the same reasons as Sasuke did.

The name calling and the physical attacks had given Naruto something to react to, far more devastating was the other form of relentless bullying: being ignored. People edging their desks away from him, turning away or pinching their noses whenever Naruto passed as if he was nothing but a bad smell, rolling their eyes and slumping forward in resignation whenever a teacher forced them to group up with him, never inviting him to parties while the rest of the class rushed around with excitement at the upcoming celebration, and so on and so on. The petty cruelties that children could inflict on each other seemed endless but Naruto had endured it all.

When Sasuke entered the room though, these boyhood tormentors turned with bared teeth and visible claws, growling at him as if he was the one that had no right to be near Naruto.

‘I warned you, Uchiha.’ Kiba muscled away from his position at the head of Naruto’s bed and stood in front of Sasuke. ‘I warned you not to hurt him.’
A fist punched into his stomach. Not a muscle of Sasuke’s body flickered.

‘All of you leave now.’

‘No way. Naruto’s our friend and…’

‘And he’s my receiver. Leave.’

Saying that should have been more than enough, but instead the group formed into a more organised protective formation as if they’d all morphed into pack animals led by signals Kiba was giving.

Sasuke did not have the patience for this. His mind was working fast calculating how much damage he could do to these goons without upsetting Naruto, when from behind the wall of bodies Naruto’s voice croaked through.

‘Hey guys, thanks for staying with me all this time, but Sasuke and I really need to talk by ourselves.’

‘What Sasuke needs is my teeth ripping through his jugular.’ Kiba’s lips snarled back revealing animal canines.

Sasuke’s pulse quickened. Tearing through these beasts would give him the release he desperately needed. But as he moved forwards towards the dogboy, his bag swung and he felt the weight of the flask his mother had given him as if it was made of pure stone. He wasn’t here to get into a scrap in his lover’s hospital room.

In a steady tone he pronounced, ‘I swear by Uchiha honour that I am here for Naruto’s benefit and if he asks me at any time to leave, I will immediately leave.’

No one moved.

The fact that he’d mentioned his clan’s honour and this gang was still ignoring his request now obliged Sasuke to attack them. He assessed their abilities with cold eyes, but there was a doubting thought whispering through his heart, if Naruto was capable of fighting would he fight beside Sasuke or be one with his friends?

‘Guys!’ Naruto called out. ‘He mentioned Uchiha honour, even I know that’s a big deal, clear off so I can order him out of the room and he has to obey me.’

Naruto’s laughed but it quickly turned into coughs. The sound caused Sasuke’s chest to constrict with pain.

‘I’ve told you I am here for my receiver’s benefit,’ Sasuke hissed. ‘If any harm comes to him because you fools delayed me with your ridiculous posturing I will kill each and every one of you. Slowly. And with great enjoyment.’

The group exchanged glances and then finally walked past Sasuke with much growling. Sasuke knew it wasn’t the threat that dispersed them, but the fact that Sasuke had spoken with the anger of his feline, these men were so riled that the Uchiha clan meant nothing, it was only animal passion that could convince them.

Only when they were gone and the door was shut behind them did Sasuke look over at the patient laying on the bed.
His initial thought was that there’d been a mistake, a miscommunication. Beneath the hospital blankets, Naruto’s stomach looked as flat as always. In confusion his mind fogged with disappointment before he asserted his logic over his untrustworthy emotions.

Firstly, the lack of sleep and turmoil of searching for Naruto, with the Uchiha summoning on top of it, had made time stretch out, had made him visualise the receiver suffering with a huge belly heavy with young. When the reality was that any pregnancy would be in the very early stages and obviously only discovered by others because of Naruto’s averse physical reaction to it.

Secondly and most importantly, if it transpired that Naruto wasn’t pregnant Sasuke would obviously be glad and relieved. He definitely would not experience a sinking feeling of overwhelming loss akin to deep grief.

‘Wow, how come you look worse than me?’ Naruto shuffled over to one side of the bed and patted the space he’d made. ‘Wanna sit down?’

Now he’d passed the ridiculous expectation that Naruto would actually look pregnant, Sasuke examined his receiver more critically. He had an IV on one of his arms and was wearing a pale green hospital gown which served to emphasise Naruto’s pallid complexion and the sweat beading on his forehead. On another person it might not look like much, but Naruto didn’t do illness and pain. His body recovered quickly from all the beatings he’d taken and he grinned and laughed however bruised and cut up he appeared. But on the hospital bed he looked small and hurt.

‘I don’t look worse than you,’ Sasuke said. ‘Why didn’t you stay with me in the library, idiot, I would’ve looked after you.’

Two dots of colour appeared on Naruto’s cheeks. He stared at Sasuke open mouthed for a moment than gabbled out too many words in too little breath. ‘I am so so sorry I didn’t want it to end like that between us it was so special and I was so so happy I think I got nervous but I don’t know are you really angry with me is that why you took so long before you came to visit me I am soooo sorry Sasuke I…”

Sasuke put a finger to Naruto’s lips genuinely afraid that the idiot would use up all his oxygen in a needless stream of words.

‘You don’t need to apologise to me, dobe,’ Sasuke said softly. ‘We’re both at fault. Or neither of us are at fault. As has recently and repeatedly been pointed out to me, my experience at claiming a receiver is the same as your experience with being claimed. There are going to be misunderstandings and mistakes. But there will always be forgiveness. Always.’

He traced his finger around Naruto’s lips before letting his hand drop back to his side.

‘Me too. I will always forgive you. Everything and anything. There is nothing you could do that I couldn’t forgive.’ While the rest of his face had lost its colour, Naruto’s eyes seemed bluer than ever.

Sasuke gazed into that trusting face until he had to look away. He needed to stay logical. His emotions couldn’t be trusted. Not tonight. His irrational expectations that Naruto would have a pregnancy belly proved that his emotions sunk him below even Naruto’s level of ignorance. And Naruto needed Sasuke to be at his wisest and strongest right now.

‘If you’re not angry…why have you waited so long to come see me?’ Naruto spoke slowly and carefully, especially compared to his usual voice.
‘I didn’t know where you were,’ Sasuke said.

Naruto looked confused, then chuckled. ‘Yeah, I mean that makes sense, I don’t know why, I guess I kinda, yaknow, felt, without properly thinking it out or anything, that after what we did we were like psychically linked together or something. Stupid, right? I should’ve got someone to contact you, that’s what a normal person would have done, isn’t it? Instead of just waiting and feeling super lonely even though all my friends have been with me all this time.’

‘It’s not stupid. Some couples do say they have an innate sense of each other. But I think it depends on your inner animal and how long you’ve been together.’

‘Do cats and foxes get that? I’d like that, I’d really like that.’

Sasuke thought about giving Naruto a much needed lesson about animal identities, but instead he sat down on the edge of the bed and simply said, ‘Me too.’

For a while they sat in silence, Sasuke had to hold onto Naruto’s hand with the IV in the arm as the idiot kept trying to rub the back of his head in his habitual nervous gesture and Sasuke was scared he’d get it all tangled up in his messy hair. Naruto’s skin was both cold and clammy to touch. It was a strange sensation for Sasuke, from one moment to the next he changed from thinking that his stomach was swirling with nerves for Naruto’s well-being to feeling that his stomach was light with excitement at being so close to the man he loved.

He was unconflicted about liking the quiet between them though. Sitting close to him and breathing in his scent, Sasuke had no doubt that Naruto had conceived his child. The difference was subtle but definite. If Naruto was a meadow full of vibrant flowers blooming in the hottest part of the day, there was now a slight summer breeze. Or perhaps it was the trickle of a gentle stream just becoming audible. It was impossible to pin it to one image, but Sasuke was certain. The longer he sat beside Naruto the more he was aware of a change within himself. He believed his senses were honed to their peak, but he’d been wrong. He was more alert than he’d ever been before. His being was entirely focused on the man in the hospital bed, but somehow he was aware of everything that was happening in their vicinity. He heard the conversation of doctors several rooms away without consciously zoning in on them. He could smell people, judge them as non-threatening, before they were even close to strolling past the door. He could see the veins on the leaves of trees some distance from the window.

While they sat peacefully together like this, Sasuke could be calm, could believe that they had been together for many years, were deeply devoted to each other and that the pregnancy had been planned and yearned for by both of them. He could be certain that he could protect his receiver from the whole world, that no one, least of all a few stuck in the old ways Uchihas, could ever harm them or their young.

But the unreality, the dream, couldn’t last.

Naruto spoke first. ‘I hope you don’t think I’m being a coward, not saying anything and just enjoying being with you, but, yaknow, I was just enjoying being with you. I wasn’t being quiet because I was scared. Though I am a bit scared. And a lot tired too. Yaknow, being tired makes it’s harder to be sensible and grown up, well, it does for me anyway. But I have to say this to you before I really do fall asleep. I kinda have something I need to confess.’

‘It’s fine, Naruto,’ Sasuke said. He reached into his bag and ran his fingers over the cold metal of the flask his mother had given him. ‘You don’t have to say anything to me.’

‘Um. Yes. I do. You’re here so you obviously know something, but not everything, And you say
there are going to be misunderstandings between us just because that’s how it is, so we’ve got to do
everything we can for there not to be more than we can help and be totally honest with each other,
right?’

Sasuke paused but then gave a small nod of agreement.

It was enough for Naruto to continue seemingly satisfied. ‘I didn’t mean to storm out on you like a
kid who dropped their ice cream, that was like the opposite of what I wanted to do. And I regrett
it as soon as I reached my room. But I thought I’d give you time to cool down, so I had a little nap.
And then I woke up and remembered what a brat I’d been…’

‘You weren’t a brat.’ Sasuke caressed his thumb over Naruto’s forehead. ‘When I think of us in
that library, I think of the most beautiful giving person I know who I am proud to call my lover.’

Naruto’s face flushed and he mumbled a few words which made no sense even with Sasuke’s
newly enhanced senses.

More clearly but still quietly Naruto said, ‘You were um pretty beautiful and giving yourself.’

Naruto licked his lips nervously and Sasuke yearned to kiss them. He only restrained himself
because the stirring in his loins warned him that a kiss would not be enough and Naruto was in no
condition to fight off Sasuke’s animal lust.

‘But, yaknow, don’t be distracting me with those hot thoughts of you laying there all naked and
you standing there all naked and you bending over the desk all naked. I need to get this out so we
both know what’s going on. So yeah, I thought I’d only had a short nap and I felt a bit woozy but I
feel a bit woozy now actually, can you pass me my jacket please? I couldn’t do this when everyone
was all surrounding me but it’s what makes me feel better.’

Sasuke found what Naruto called a ‘jacket’ and what anyone else would call a threadbare ugly
orange trackie top. But he passed it to his receiver without a single sarcastic word or look.
However, his face displayed all his emotions when Naruto pulled Sasuke’s underwear out of the
pocket and inhaled the scent with a big grin as if it was a drug. In fact, the way Naruto behaved and
looked afterwards further made it look like he was a kitten rolling in catnip. His eyes dazed with
happiness, his muscles relaxed as if he had no idea what pain was, and when he spoke his voice
was the brightest it’d been since Sasuke had arrived.

‘Smelling you makes all the sick feeling disappear. When I was talking just then I was starting to
worry I was going to vomit all over you, but now I feel all glowy and fine. I tried to discretely tell
Granny all I needed was your boxers not all her injections and crap, that now you’ve claimed me
you’re my best medicine. Is it not like that for everyone, because I don’t think she understood?
Don’t get too cross because she was just worried about me, yaknow with me never getting properly
ill before, but she was even all angry saying that it’d be a lot better for me if you never came near
me again.’

It was almost too much to process. He’d read tales of couples bound so close that they had healing
power over each other, but they were always connected through the same animal species. And he
shouldn’t get ahead of himself, it could just be that Naruto’s brain was so small that it could be
easily distracted away from the body’s ailments by his underwear fetish.

What Lady Tsunade said was probably more relevant. It echoed what his mother had said, that
Naruto deserved better than an Uchiha.

Sasuke tried to focus on the important thing. But somehow, he found himself half undressed and
placing a new pair of silk boxer shorts in Naruto’s eager hands. He tried to take the older pair away but Naruto made a sound at the back of his throat which clearly said, *Mine!*

‘You can have the clothes if you want, but you’ve got me here in the flesh now to make you feel better anyway I can,’ Sasuke said.

This was definitely not what he should be doing, but Naruto was staring at his revealed cock with such greedy eyes that centuries of Uchiha training could not have given him the strength to resist.

It was Naruto who turned out to have more restraint. Naruto, who had never spent a week locked in a dark room with no food and then been taken to a banquet and ordered not to eat a thing, told Sasuke to get dressed (*sans* underwear) as they needed to talk before they did *other things.*

With his clothes on, Sasuke perched back on the bed and tried not to think about the sex that they weren’t right now having. He tried to reassure himself that he wouldn’t have let it go too far with Naruto in his current state, he’d have just let Naruto touch him, and perhaps have nuzzled his sweet receiver a little bit…and

And he was not able to fool himself. If Naruto had indicated he wanted Sasuke inside him, Sasuke would have fucked him on the hospital bed not caring about the IV drip. He *had* to be better than this.

‘So I guess if I was a proper receiver I’d have just known to wait in my room until you wanted me or whatever.’

Sasuke tuned into Naruto’s voice aware that he had missed part of what Naruto was so desperate for him to hear. But, no, he hadn’t missed it. His ears had listened and gave the words to the brain to process now he’d finished chastising himself. It was fortunately more of Naruto going over what he’d already said. Then he clicked into what Naruto had just said.

‘I don’t need you to be some imaginary traditional receiver waiting around for me to call you. I want you to be *you* and do whatever feels right.’

Naruto beamed. ‘Thanks for saying that, it’s kind of you.’

‘Don’t thank me. And it’s not kind. It’s an entirely selfish want to have all of you, not some puppet version of you that you’ve created for me as you think that’s how receivers are supposed to behave. And as you are entirely ignorant of everything sexual the one certainty I have about what you think receivers should do, is that it’ll be wrong and it’ll be bad.’

Naruto stuck his tongue out. ‘That’s two things genius, wrong and bad.’ He counted them on his fingers as he said them. ‘And the only thing that I know is that you’re the *wrong* one, I could so be an amazingly normal receiver if I wanted to be, got it? And maybe I do want to be, and then you’ll have to drop to your knees and beg forgiveness for insulting my receiver honour and being such a rude and bad giver thing.’

‘A traditional receiver would not stick their tongue out or ever correct their giver. Is that what you want to be?’

‘What even if their giver is a messed-up bastard like you?’ Naruto frowned. ‘You’re making that up just to see if you can taunt me into accepting all the crap you say, aren’t you?’

‘Yes. That is exactly true. I was hoping to trick you into accepting lies such as all traditional receivers are incredibly rude to their givers.’ Sasuke smirked.
It was so easy to be happy, to be silly, around Naruto, to not worry about anything. But this conversation was the same as being on the verge of sex, or the silence earlier, all of them were delaying the seriousness he had to face.

Gently he told Naruto to continue with his story.

‘Yeah, so, it’d have been better if I had waited for you, yaknow, and just kept still and well.’ He brought the underwear to his nose again but this time his smile was sad. ‘I ran to find you, I thought you were still in the library, I didn’t realise I’d been asleep so long, and then I think I collapsed. I know I was sick, Kiba and Choji and Shikamaru found me and they thought, at first anyway, that I was just really really hungover. I don’t remember any of this, but they said they showered me but when I kept vomiting and was apparently all floppy and not making any sense, they called Granny. Like I said, I only know this because they told me. I’m just really glad that however sick I was and however dopey I managed not to vomit on your undies and brought them with me somehow.’

‘Yes, that is clearly the most important thing.’

Naruto’s eyes lit up with an expression he’d never seen on the yellowhead before, a kind of shy pride. ‘I treasure all the gifts you give me and this is the first thing you gave me after you claimed me so it’s extra special.’ He held up the older one of Sasuke’s underwear as if it really was a precious gift. ‘And now you’ve already given me another present even though we haven’t even had a real date thing yet.’ He ran his fingers lovingly over the new piece of clothing.

Sasuke stared out of the window concentrating on the leaves he could see in the dark night. Why should he feel like crying when Naruto was so obviously happy?

‘What happened when you came to the hospital?’ Sasuke clenched his stomach. Soon they’d get to the reason Naruto was here. The reason Sasuke was here. The reason there was a flask in his bag.

‘Granny did lots of odd tests and asked me tons of questions which I vaguely remember but it’s all foggy, I told you already about her being angry at you for no reason…um…was there anything else? She said she needed to keep me in for observations, and all my friends kept coming in to visit, but not you, but, obviously you know that. Then Granny shouted at everyone to leave me to rest. And they were all just saying goodbye when you arrived so that argument thing they had with you was extra odd.’

‘Naruto, you said you had something to confess.’ Sasuke succeeded in keeping all his dread out of his voice.

‘Oh, yeah, that.’ Naruto looked like a guilty child, not someone about to say he’d let himself get pregnant. ‘Granny said that if you did turn up, I was to tell you to go straight and find her. But I didn’t want to say that to you as now that you’re finally here, I don’t want you to leave me. I thought maybe I could just ask you to stay until I fall asleep, but I think I am going to fall asleep soon, but I don’t want to if you’re going to leave as soon as I shut my eyes. I mean, I get the reality that you might need to piss sometime or something, but maybe you could do it out of the window, so that I can still see you?’

Sasuke couldn’t help smiling. ‘What is it with you and pissing? When I wouldn’t scent you with urine like you wanted, you’re now trying to devise ways you can watch me?’

Naruto’s face was a strange mixture of annoyance, embarrassment and affection, that made him look almost unbearably cute to Sasuke’s eyes.
‘Oi, bastard, don’t tease me when I’m all laid up with some mystery bug or whatever and can’t punch you like you deserve to be punched right now. I’m opening my heart up saying that I want you to stay with me even while I am sleeping even though Granny will be furious with me.’

‘She’ll be mad with me, not you. You’ve delivered her message and I’ve refused to leave my receiver’s bedside. She can find me if she wants to talk to me.’

Naruto smiled.

Sasuke didn’t. He’d said what Naruto wanted to hear not what Sasuke needed to ask. Even recognising his weakness, it was at least a minute, probably two, of caressing Naruto’s cheeks and hair and forehead and hands and any part of him that was above the covers and didn’t have needle sticking in it, before Sasuke spoke again.

‘What is making you ill? Have you been told? You mentioned a…mystery bug?’

Naruto’s eyes were hooded and drifting into sleepiness under Sasuke’s soft touches. Despite his tired eyes, he grinned a wide-awake grin. ‘Are you worried about me, Sassykitty? You sound like you’re worried about me.’

He refused not to be distracted by the ‘Sassykitty’, and said in a serious voice. ‘Of course, I am worried about you. You’ve had bones broken before and still refused to stay the night in hospital.’

‘Maybe, I’m like a proper grown up now, doing proper grown up things, like letting myself be looked after when I need looking after.’

‘Did Lady Tsunade say you needed looking after?’

‘It’s not a mysterious thing. They know what the problem is. Apparently she explained it all to me, but I wasn’t….what’s the posh word for not being properly awake? Ah, doesn’t matter, whatever that word is, she thought that I was it, all awake and listening to her but then she realised I was still in some sort of hazy state and hadn’t taken it all in, so she’s going to let me rest and go through it all in the morning and how I need to look after myself better. Don’t be cross, but thinking now at why my friends were so weird with you, I think I was trying to explain to them how I reckon I’ve got ill because I didn’t eat and then we had all that sex and it obviously drained all my energy, more than I realised at the time, and that’s what made me sick. But I think they didn’t get it, like Granny not understanding that I just needed to smell you to be well again, I think they even got the idea that you had strange sex with me that used me too hard. Like, as if, you have the strength or the stamina to wear me out. I’d be seriously offended if I wasn’t so tired.’ Naruto chuckled but his eyes closed. He reached out for Sasuke’s hand and rested his on top of it.

Naruto didn’t know he was pregnant.

Sasuke knew. Tsunade knew. Too many Uchihas knew, but Naruto didn’t. Sasuke thought of what his mother had said, about Naruto being scarred for life, about taking the decision away from him. Surely this would be even better. Naruto would think he was getting a little worse, his system purging itself. And then it’d all be over.

‘If not eating has made you ill…my mother made some soup for you. Filled with nutrients. To help you.’

Naruto’s eyes opened wide. ‘You have food? You have homemade food? Why didn’t you lead with that? Are you holding out on me? I’ve not been able to eat anything since I arrived here, it’s all turned my stomach, but wow homemade cooking would be amazing. That’s so kind, your mom
made it especially for me? She remembers me? I always loved your mom but I love her extra more now. What flavour soup is it? Has your mom taught you all her special ingredients yet? Please say yes, I so want you to cook that meal you promised me before.’

‘I don’t know if it’ll still be warm, it might not be edible.’ Sasuke took the flask out of his bag. He unscrewed the lid, steam rose.

Naruto tilted his head back and breathed in. ‘That smells almost as good as your undies.’

‘I’ll be sure to pass that compliment on.’

He passed the flask to Naruto who clasped both his hands around it. ’Next time remember you’re supposed to be a giver and give me the food first.’

Naruto raised the flask to his lips.

Sasuke punched it out of his hands, soup when flying across the ceiling and walls.

‘You are pregnant. That is what Tsunade told you and you’re such an idiot that it didn’t stay in your stupid head! So it’s left to me to tell you. My mother’s secret ingredient is something that causes a miscarriage so that it’d look natural and you wouldn’t have the stress of going through the medical option. You said she was kind and seeing you laid out I was close to believing her, but it’s not kind, it’s the opposite of kind. You are sensitive and sweet and somehow innocent and I want to do everything I can to preserve all the good in you, but this isn’t the way. It’s not my choice, it’s not my mother’s choice, it’s not Tsunade’s choice, it definitely isn’t the Uchiha elders’ choice, it’s yours, Naruto, all yours. And whatever your decision is, I won’t leave your side and to use your expression, if you run off like a toddler who dropped his ice cream again , I’ll chase you down and stay with you and hold you until you’re happy again.’ Sasuke was panting as if he’d gone through the most gruelling workout.

What had he done? It should’ve been simple, easy, already over.

But Naruto’s face was sunshine. He threw the covers aside and knelt up in bed. He pulled his hospital gown up and stared in pure wonder at his belly.

‘Are you sure, Sasuke? Are you really really sure?’ He put a tentative hand on his stomach. ‘It like looks and feels exactly the same as normal? Shouldn’t it like be all big if I’m really really what you said? I can’t say it out loud in case I jinx it. What do you think?’ He took one of Sasuke’s hands in his and placed it on the firm defined abs of his belly.

Tears flowed from Sasuke’s eyes. ‘We only just had sex, dobe. It’s barely even past conception. It’s only because you’re not strong enough to be a real receiver and your body is making such a fuss that anyone knows yet.’

Naruto leaned in to Sasuke and kissed the tears off his cheeks. ‘I’m trying not to cry. The baby might not like it, it might think I am sad, when I am so not sad. It’s like I thought you’d already taken me to the peak of happiness and then there’s even more unexpected happiness. I never knew life could be like this.’

Sasuke wrapped his arms around Naruto’s back and rested his head on his shoulder, he wept without any Uchiha restraint. At some point Naruto’s tails appeared, all nine of them, in contrast to the tight roughness of when Naruto and him had had sex, now the tails were soft stroking and holding Sasuke’s whole body.

‘I’m sorry, I’m so very sorry, usuratonkachi.’ Sasuke didn’t know what he was apologising for; the
fact he’d almost given Naruto what was effectively a poison, or the fact that he hadn’t gone through with it and had placed this huge burden on Naruto’s ailing shoulders.

‘I’m not,’ Naruto said. He put his hand under Sasuke’s chin and raised it so they were gazing into each other’s eyes. ‘Just, yaknow, I’ve got a lot of questions and you’re going to have to teach me tons real quick. But before all that I’m going to yell at you for telling me I am pregnant by throwing soup everywhere and shouting at me. And then before that you’re going to squeeze up on this bed with me and cuddle me while I sleep. But right before that we’re going to kiss.’

Sasuke pressed his lips against Naruto’s. They were dry so Sasuke slowly lapped at them. Naruto opened his mouth, not much, but a clear invitation for Sasuke to slip his tongue through, which he did. Their tongues touched and stayed touching for a long time.

When Naruto was comfortably snuggled up on top of Sasuke, and Sasuke was satisfied that the IV was secure and not going to get pulled and tangled within their bodies, they both started to fall asleep. Naruto immediately vanished into his happy dreamland, Sasuke took longer. Thoughts he didn’t want to think jagged through his head. Until with their own will his hands found where Naruto’s gown was ruffled up around his waist. He explored the curves of his lover’s bottom, touched as lightly as he could over the shape of Naruto’s sex, then his fingers danced upwards and came to rest on Naruto’s stomach. Only then did Sasuke fall into a peaceful sleep.
A door slammed. Sasuke’s eyes flicked open. He slid out from under Naruto and jumped into an attack position between his receiver still snoring on the bed and the doorway. His hair was on end, his claws out, his heart thumped, pumping blood to his muscles ready to fight. His whole body primed to protect his sleeping lover. But it was only Tsunade standing in front of him.

He relaxed his posture, leaving himself open for the fist that pummelled into his chest and sent him flying backwards. She picked him up, pincering her fingers into his shoulders as if he was weightless and pinned him against the wall.

Sasuke had never seen Tsunade show the slightest sign of her animal, Naruto had assured him she was some sort of healing slug thing which matched up with stories from when she was younger and she’d fought in one of the great territory wars. But what kind of slug had the sort of strength she did? Her blow was easily ten times more powerful than dogboy’s strike of the preceding evening.

And what sort of slug could put such growling anger in her voice?

‘Your father has been phoning me all night, Uchiha. Your mother at least was more discrete in her prying. I do not want either of them, or anyone from your clan disturbing my brat. Is that clear?’

‘You’re the one who told them, you should’ve just told me,’ Sasuke sounded petulant, but at least he hadn’t yelled out from the force of Tsunade’s attack.

‘Don’t play ignorant, it doesn’t suit you. As soon as Naruto’s friends came in here one breath away from calling you out for rape, I knew your Uchiha spies would be informed and all over my boy. I suspect that your clan got the news of his blood results and screenings before I did. Now if you want to tell me who your police are, that’s what you call your network isn’t it, then I can break their arms instead of yours. If not, then get this sorted and go back to staying well away from him.’

‘I didn’t rape him.’ The word ‘rape’ got stuck in his throat, the image of Naruto being hurt that way was too horrifying.

Tsunade looked at him with disdain. ‘I don’t care what clan you belong to, if I believed for a moment you had purposely hurt him, you’d be dead by now.’ She stepped back and thrust books into his chest. ‘Make sure he reads these. I won’t let him go through this with the next giver who has their fun with his innocence, not caring or thinking about what the consequences are for Naruto.’

Sasuke looked down at the books. There were four of them, all aimed at people half Naruto’s age with big bright pictures and bubbly writing, all basic beginner guides about how receivers should interact with givers and how to manage their bodies and not get pregnant until they were ready. Sasuke held them back out to Tsunade.

‘He doesn’t need these; he needs information about pregnancy and birth.’

Tsunade stared at him. ‘I told you not to play ignorant. If your family thought that someone they didn’t approve of was going to give birth to Uchiha children you know what would happen.’ She folded her arms across her chest. ‘I got the impression that your mother had given you some sort of tea that…’
‘A soup.’ Sasuke pointed to where it was splattered over the room. It had faded a little from the initial explosion but was still very visible.

Tsunade sighed heavily. ‘Naruto threw it? That child, he was doing the same with other food he was offered. Moaning about how he wasn’t ill, he only needed to be with you, then getting angry with any food saying it all made him feel sick.’

Sasuke’s heart constricted both at the thought of Naruto refusing food, and at him wanting Sasuke to be there for him. In a controlled voice that betrayed none of his inner turmoil, he said, ‘No. I’m afraid I made that mess. I realised I was making a mistake. Naruto’s not a child, he’s a man, and he deserves to make his own decisions.’

Tsunade’s face creased into a frown. ‘Does he also deserve to be cut open in the middle of the night by a masked assassin? What in all the hells are you thinking, Sasuke? I took you for the selfish bastard the brat always complains you are, but this is so much worse than that. This isn’t about sex for you, is it?’

She paused gazing into his eyes, but continued speaking before he’d summoned up a reply which would appease her.

‘You love him. You probably always have. And now, what? You think your dream has come true and you can have a family with him and be together forever? With your murderous clan just magically accepting it because you’re the genius first son and they want you to be happy?’

Tsunade shook her head. ‘You’re more of an infant than he is.’

She was about to say more but a nurse opened the door and quickly gave the information that a child was in trauma after trying to fly because they were convinced their inner animal was a bird.

Tsunade immediately marched out of the room, shooting questions at the nurse, but she still found time to look over her shoulder and snap a last warning at Sasuke, ‘Don’t make this worse. I’ll be back to deal with it myself.’

Sasuke listened to her run down the corridor.

He stood still for long minutes after her footfall had disappeared, then he suddenly moved sharply, hiding the books away at the back of Naruto’s bedside cabinet. He took off his own shirt and put it over them covering them completely. Naruto didn’t need information about how not to get pregnant with his ‘next giver’, Sasuke was going to be his only giver. Ever.

He stood up and thought, *Fuck, she’s right, I am behaving like a child.*

With a sigh, he retrieved the books and put them on top of the cabinet in clear view if Naruto wanted to read them. Then he crawled back into the bed to snuggle with his lover. It wasn’t the most practical response to Tsunade’s warnings, but he could still think of a plan for how to proceed while breathing in the warmth of Naruto’s scent.

Damn Tsunade for not being on their side. He thought she’d be a powerful ally to help convince his clan, but she was effectively asking him to do the same as his father was, even if her reasons were different. In a way it was exactly the same as his mother’s warning, Naruto deserved better than being involved with the Uchihas.

He thought of all the times people had remarked on his intellect, all the times he’d aced exams without needing to revise, year after year finishing the top of his class. And none of it meant anything. His learning was useless, he’d swap it all for the certain knowledge of how to keep
Naruto safe. In fact, he’d swap everything for a guarantee that Naruto would come out of this mess the same man he was before he met Sasuke in the library.

But that was the future. Right now, he just hoped the kid Tsunade had rushed to was seriously injured enough to keep her busy for a long enough time for Sasuke to come up with a workable solution.

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Naruto woke up singing the song he’d been singing in his dream.

Sasuke’s really sexy
And he loves meee
We’re really happy
We’re going to have a BABY
Life’s super great yay!

Somehow it didn’t sound quite as perfect now he was awake, even the rhymes weren’t right, it must be the acoustics in this hospital room.

Something else was wrong.

Sexy Sasuke was supposed to be snuggled up in bed with him.

Naruto sat up his head jerking from side to side, he sighed with relief to see that Sasuke was on all fours cleaning the floor from the soup that had been spilt the previous night. While his heart beat with excitement to see his lover hadn’t left him alone, and his brain pondered the curiosity of Sasuke cleaning, (the Uchiha’s room had always been immaculate but somehow Naruto had never thought that Sasuke actually ever did any menial work himself), his animal lust leapt out of bed and straight onto the irresistible sight of his beautiful man on his knees.

He reached around to Sasuke’s chest and grabbed through Sasuke’s clothes for the nubs of his nipples. He bit at Sasuke’s neck breathing in the full scent of Sasuke’s hair. It was pure happiness.

So why did he need more? Naruto was quickly realising that he had developed an insatiable hunger for something other than ramen.

His hands moved to get Sasuke out of his pants as if the sole reason he had hands was to touch Sasuke’s naked body. Naruto didn’t even mind his tails which reached round and touched and held his lover. Who’d thought the thing that had most visually screamed out freak to his classmates, would now be an intrinsic part of getting close to the most wonderful man in the world?

Sasuke remained still allowing Naruto to bare the beautiful curves of his rear to Naruto’s greedy gaze. Naruto wanted to just stare at his wonderful lover and bathe in the awesomeness of the fact that he had someone in his life he wanted to touch and miraculously they wanted to be touched by him. But he found himself raising the hem of his hospital gown and thrusting his cock against
Sasuke’s puckered entrance. Sasuke’s body didn’t open for him but Sasuke was making a loud trilling purring sound that was even sweeter to Naruto’s ears than his dream song. He kept doing exactly what he was doing, rubbing his cock against Sasuke, no longer desperate to satisfy the needs of his hard on, instead more interested in the even stronger pleasure of making Sasuke happy.

But before either of them reached the intensity of the library Sasuke stopped him.

‘No, Naruto. We don’t have time for this.’ Sasuke’s voice was almost a whine. Naruto had never heard him be so pleading. ‘Please.’

The ‘Please’ sounded like ‘please don’t stop what you’re doing’, which caused a moments confusion in Naruto’s body where he remained still, but only for a moment before his brain convinced him that Sasuke was really asking him to stop and then he stepped away and perched back up on the bed.

Sasuke emitted a low groan and collapsed down on his elbows, which again confused Naruto as it appeared with his butt so high in the air that Sasuke wanted Naruto back grinding against him. Before he could decide either way, Sasuke began pulling up and adjusting his clothes with the usual Uchiha efficiency.

Naruto swung his legs back and forth as he waited for him. ‘Sasuke, I think there’s kinda something in me that wants to obey you. Because I’m not thinking about whether I want to do what you tell me to, I’m thinking about exactly what you want me to do so I can make you happy with me. Is that a claiming thing or a pregnant thing? It makes me feel…I don’t know….peaceful doing what you tell me to do even though I really wanted to be inside you. But I’m not peaceful at all, you know, if you can tell me whatever to do and I have to do it. Maybe we should try it out, because you telling me to stop yaknow doing what I was doing isn’t much of a test because I’d stop doing that anyway if you didn’t like it, order me to eat yucky chewy vegetables or something and see if it makes me feel good to do that?’

‘We don’t have time for this. But for your information, I will be putting you on a healthy diet from now on, which I expect you to obey and I don’t care if it makes you feel peaceful or not.’

‘Fuck, you look so hot when you’re being all commanding. Has that always been a thing and I just didn’t notice it? Or have you like magicked me into thinking everything you do is damn sexy? Because I used to remember when you got all arrogant just wanting to punch you but now I...’

‘Idiot, listen to me we need to be focused.’ Sasuke was now fully and flawlessly dressed. ‘You’re lucky the IV was taken out while you were sleeping, or you would have ripped it out jumping on me so recklessly like that. If we’re going to get through this, you have to be more careful.’

Naruto glanced down at his hand which now only had a bandage on it. He looked back at Sasuke, beaming. ‘I knew I just needed you around to make me feel better, none of these injections or fluids or stuff, just you. Why are we still hanging around here then? Let’s go and...I don’t know, be somewhere else together where you can look all super sexy ordering me around and telling me to be healthy and I can be all cute and maybe-obedient if you promise to get naked again and cover me in your scent. And then we can talk about babies and wow, babies!’ He put a tentative hand on his belly. ‘Am I glowing? I feel like I am glowing. I thought you getting with me was the best thing ever, but then this. How do you cope with so much happiness?’

He met Sasuke’s dark eyes which didn’t look all that happy now that Naruto was focusing on his lover properly without being (too) distracted by thinking how great Sasuke’d looked kneeling on the floor. Irritation growled through him. And in a way it was a relief, he was glad that he could still be annoyed by the Giver that had claimed him, that whatever Sasuke had done to him it didn’t
mean that Naruto was completely charmed into thinking that Sasuke was perfect.

Although Sasuke was of course perfect and he’d punch anyone who said otherwise.

But it seemed perfect could still be annoying. Especially when Naruto wanted sunshine and celebrations and Sasuke was all serious and unsmiley.

‘We’re going to have a baby, why do you look like someone’s taken away your favourite ball of string?’

‘You are so stupid. I actually have to be clear on this point, I do not have a favourite ball of string,’ Sasuke said.

‘Then I’ll buy you one! Problem solved. Will you be happy then?’ Naruto launched himself at Sasuke wrapping his arms around the other man’s neck and covering his face with kisses.

A small smile broke onto Sasuke’s face, but the stubborn bastard smothered it almost immediately. ‘Sit back down and be still.’

Naruto’s body obeyed going straight to bed and sat rigidly, his muscles freezing in place even though he wasn’t comfortable. So that was that tested then, Sasuke now had some sort of control over him, because if he’d had free will he’d have started kissing Sasuke in other places to make sure the Uchiha smiled an even bigger smile.

Sasuke stared at him with wide eyes. ‘I’ll be more careful what I say. You can move if you want to.’

Naruto’s muscles relaxed and he breathed easier. ‘What’s happened to me? What’s going to happen to me?’

‘My best guess is that you’re experiencing something that is rare but not unheard of in pregnancy.’ Sasuke sat down on the bed beside Naruto and placed his hand over the blonde’s. ‘A receiver who wants their mate to stay with them but is nervous that they are going to leave may become suddenly passive and compliant beyond their conscious control.’

As he spoke Sasuke played his other hand over one of Naruto’s tails and the colour rose in Naruto’s cheek at how unexpectedly pleasurable it felt. It was almost enough to distract him from what Sasuke was saying. *Almost.*

‘I am not passive and I am not scared that you’re going to leave me after we had such great sex and I’m having your baby, so your best guess is…’ Naruto found that his mouth would not form the expletives his mind wanted to hurl at the other man. ‘Not very good,’ was all he could manage after a lot of spluttering.

With a sigh Naruto fell back onto the bed, balancing on his elbows. ‘Why did I have to be a receiver, Sasuke? Being with you made me think it could be fun, lots and lots of fun, but I don’t know anything about anything.’

‘Hnnn, that is nothing to do with you being a receiver, that is to do with you being an idiot.’ With a frown Sasuke leaned over and picked some books off the bedside cabinet. ‘Lady Tsunade left these for you on the first of her many visits. I can’t believe how heavily you sleep, she tried several times to wake you and you didn’t move. Luckily there is a plethora of dumb people injuring themselves today and keeping her busy. We have so much we need to talk about, and I’d rather have this chance to talk to you alone before she crashes in again.’
Naruto barely listened to what Sasuke was saying, he turned the first few pages of the books Sasuke had passed to him. He opened the second book in the middle, stared at the bright picture for three seconds. And that was the end of his patience. He hurled the books across the room, immediately regretting it as it’d have been much more satisfying to smash them on top of Sasuke’s stupidly perfect head.

‘What in all the hells, bastard! Why are you giving me things meant for toddlers? I refused to read those things when I was a kid, why would I want them now? I show you my heart and ask you why I am a receiver, and you give me crap about how to grow up to be a good little receiver. And they’re all about meeting givers? Did you think I wouldn’t notice that oh so subtle hint? Like seriously what the fuck? You and I are forever. I don’t want anyone else. I thought you understood and felt the same way, that what we did was special, and here you are trying to teach me how to find some other giver. No way!’ He crossed his arms across his chest and pointedly turned his body away from Sasuke.

Then just to be that bit more awful, Sasuke actually started laughing. Sasuke who hardly ever even smiled, was laughing when Naruto was getting angry!

‘I hate you,’ Naruto growled. ‘Just because you make my cock hard and all my tails pop out, don’t think that changes the fact that I really really hate you.’

Sasuke caressed Naruto’s cheek with the back of his hand. ‘I’m not laughing at you, I’m happy. I felt the same way when Lady Tsunade brought those particular books for you, but I was trying to repress my natural possessiveness and be responsible by showing them to you. And more than that, I like every aspect of your personality, but…’

‘But what?’ Naruto was struggling to hold onto his righteous anger and not nuzzle into Sasuke’s touch.

‘But even though I’ll admit that the sexual possibilities of you being completely obedient does match many fantasies I’ve had, and in truth still have, I’m relieved that the bad tempered, shouting, throwing books around, side of you is not being suppressed by your pregnancy.’

Naruto let go of his fury without another thought. He didn’t just turn back to Sasuke but swung himself around so he was sitting astride his lover with his hands wrapped around Sasuke.

‘You get turned on by me doing what you tell me? I can do that for you, if you like it, y’know, for real, not because of weird stuff going on in my body. What happens in these fantasies? What do you do to me? What do I do to you?’ He was aware of his animal body more than he normally was, his fox ears twitching listening for every word that Sasuke might say, and his tails fanning out ready to explore Sasuke if the other man gave the slightest indication that was what he wanted.

‘Dobe, I’ve liked you for years, I’ve had every conceivable fantasy imaginable about you. Everything two people can do together I’ve thought about doing with you.’

There was a slight blush to Sasuke’s cheeks. Naruto couldn’t resist swooping in and licking his tongue over the coloured parts of his skin. And then he couldn’t help licking all over Sasuke’s face, savouring the taste of the man in his mouth but yearning for more and more.

Sasuke dug his fingers into Naruto’s waist. ‘If you keep being this naughty, I will take advantage of your instinct is to obey me.’

Naruto pulled away, more to stare into Sasuke’s face again than anything else. ‘Naughty’ wasn’t a word that Sasuke would normally use and the way he’d pronounced it made an uncontrollable
shiver go through Naruto’s whole body. Which was the only possible explanation for what he said next.

‘I am a very naughty boy, and I’m going to keep on doing very naughty things until you tell me all your fantasies about me.’

Both their faces were flushed and their lips parted. Naruto was as certain that Sasuke wanted Naruto to be naughty as much as he was certain of anything, but when he tried to lean into nip at Sasuke’s neck, Sasuke put a firm hand in the centre of Naruto’s chest.

‘I am sure that the things I have thought about you are exactly the same as what you’ve wanted to do with Sakura, you’ve had a crush on her for as long as I’ve been attracted to you.’ Sasuke’s voice had a hard edge to it.

Naruto’s face blushed for another reason now, why had he wasted so much time when he could have been with Sasuke? It felt like he’d betrayed Sasuke in some way by not immediately recognising and returning his desire. And there was also the embarrassment of how innocent and ignorant his fantasies had actually been. But there could be no secrets between them.

‘I mostly just wondered what it’d be like to kiss her. I always maybe daydreamed about feeling her boobs, I always wondered what they’d be like to touch.’ His voice disappeared into a mumble.

‘Hnnn, well, I can’t help you with fulfilling that ambition, you may have noticed I have no breasts for you to feel up.’ Sasuke’s voice remained hard.

‘I think it turns out I kinda like your man chest and your man nipples which are like a really sexy pinky colour compared to your white skin which makes me want to kiss them lots,’ Naruto blurted out. ‘Not that I was looking at them or anything, not too much anyway, definitely not more than a totally normal person would.’

‘Idiot, you’re the one person who is free to look at any part of my body for as long as you want.’ Sasuke’s eyes softened. ‘I know what a big leap this has been for you, going from dreaming of being a giver with Sakura to being…pregnant with my child, and I am in awe with how fast you’re accepting it and adapting, but we both need to be responsible and stop being distracted by things that are not important right in this minute.’

‘Okay. I get that. And I do want you to teach me how to be a good pregnant person so I can look after our kid the best I can. I’ll even eat all the healthy gunk you think I need without complaining. Just, yaknow, give me your favourite fantasy about me and then after that I promise I’ll be so focused and responsible you won’t believe it.’

‘Hnnn, you’re right there, I don’t think I can believe in you ever behaving responsibly. But I can see you’re not going to let this go.’ He brushed Naruto’s hair off his forehead. ‘I’m afraid you’ll be disappointed but my favourite fantasy is very simple. I’ve lain awake many nights imagining going to sleep and waking up with you naked in my arms, thinking about what it’d feel like holding you and having you always close to me.’

Words got stuck in Naruto’s throat and before he could even think to express how much he wanted to be with Sasuke, Sasuke’s sharp voice cut through his thoughts.

‘Now enough of that. You promised to be responsible. Correct?’

Naruto nodded. ‘Can I just ask another question before you start lecturing me about whatever you want to lecture me about?’ He continued not waiting for Sasuke to deny him when he was unable
to disobey the Uchiha. ‘How did I get pregnant?’

Sasuke’s mouth dropped open. If it wasn’t so serious, Naruto would laugh at how shocked the naturally calm man now looked.

‘We had sex,’ Sasuke said in a voice that seemed to doubt itself.

‘Yeah, obviously, I know that, and I get the whole heat thing of people being more…fertile? But everyone has sex, way more than me and you did, and no one else is pregnant.’ He stared down at his hands and in a quiet voice asked. ‘Did I do something wrong?’

‘No. Nothing wrong.’ Sasuke put his arm around Naruto’s shoulders. ‘You just didn’t know about the preventative methods to stop conception.’

Naruto snuggled his head into Sasuke’s shoulder breathing in his scent. ‘I’m so happy. I knew it was like that, but I just needed to hear that you wanted this baby with me and got me pregnant on purpose. I mean, I feel dumb that I didn’t understand what you were saying to me, or read your signals that that is what we were doing, I just was so excited being with you, I didn’t get what us being totally committed to each other meant. But I’m glad that my body somehow gave you the right answer even if my brain is too stupid to get it straight away. And then with me storming off like that, I guess that’s not what newly pregnant people are supposed to do, so you didn’t think it had worked after all…and hell I’m tired.’ He gave a big yawn and cuddled further into Sasuke. ‘Will I be this tired all the time?’

‘You can’t go to sleep again. We truly need to talk.’ Sasuke pushed Naruto away and gazed at him for a moment. But then suddenly his head was alert and his eyes were darting in all directions.

‘Conversation is on hold. We need to go. Now.’

Sasuke grabbed Naruto’s hand and dragged him to the door, before changing his mind and pulling him over to the window. He let go for a moment to pry the window open wide enough for them both to climb out.

Naruto frowned. ‘What are you expecting me to do? You remember I’m a fox right, not a cat who can jump out of hospital windows and land on his feet? You get I go splat, right?’

Sasuke showed no signs of hearing Naruto as he yanked him through the window as if they were going through an ordinary door out onto ordinary flat normal ground. Both Naruto’s shins got bashed and his forehead crashed into the frame, Sasuke either didn’t notice or didn’t care. He kept on pulling Naruto forward.

‘I thought you were meant to look after me. You better be planning to kiss all these bruises better,’ Naruto grumbled.

Grumbling was familiar and way better than thinking about the fact that he was allowing Sasuke to drag him along a tiny ledge. Why they weren’t on the side of the wall with beds and cuddling and nice safe things like floors was a mystery that Sasuke didn’t seem in any hurry to share. Naruto’s heart was thumping, but somehow, he was not as scared as he should be.

He should be secure in the room, using his greater weight and muscle to prevent Sasuke from going anywhere. But here he was, his body pressed against the wall, his skin getting grazed by the wall as Sasuke continued forward with ruthless determination. There was absolutely nothing to hold on to, nothing to stop him crashing headfirst downwards apart from Sasuke’s slender fingers entwined in his.
'We’re going to jump for the tree,’ Sasuke said.

‘Which tree? Where?’

‘The nearest one.’

‘There is no nearest one!’

‘We can make those branches easily.’ A slight movement of Sasuke’s head indicated where he meant.

Naruto gazed at the tree that had to be at least a gazillion miles away. Now he was beginning to feel scared. He trusted Sasuke implicitly, but what if being a parent had a strange effect on the other man, like it was making Naruto suddenly be obedient? Whatever scent he was giving out could be turning Sasuke into a maniac who wanted to get rid of his receiver and unborn child in the bloodiest way possible?

But the fear didn’t, couldn’t last long. Naruto’s trust was stronger than anything else.

‘Okay. If you think I can leap from a slither of a ledge onto a tiny twig, I believe you,’ Naruto said.

Sasuke turned his body towards Naruto with all the easy grace of his inner cat. ‘Get your tails out again, they’ll help with balance and even gripping.’

‘You haven’t got your tail out,’ Naruto mumbled. Which was easier than saying what Sasuke already knew if he thought for a millisecond, that Naruto had no control of when his animal side physically appeared.

To his surprise, Sasuke understood Naruto’s embarrassment and said, ‘Sorry.’

To his greater surprise, barely balanced on the edge of a building Sasuke leaned in and kissed him with hungry passion, his tongue tasting every part of Naruto’s mouth.

But the greatest surprise, even more than the apology and the kiss was Sasuke’s hand dipping under the hospital gown and starting to wank Naruto with fast strokes.

Naruto groaned, he could feel the pleasure in him rushing to centre on Sasuke’s touch, but as quickly as he’d started, Sasuke stopped.

He gave Sasuke a smirk which would be infuriating under normal circumstances let alone clinging to the side of a building with a lover who got him hard but didn’t finish him off.

‘Now we have your tails,’ Sasuke said. ‘Time to jump. That’s an order.’

Sasuke tightened his grip on Naruto’s hand and without any countdown or last words of reassurance, he did jump. And Naruto kind of jumped too. They were together, but not exactly. Sasuke was lithe and acrobatic in front of him. Naruto was flailing and struck with terror, not for himself, or even the baby inside him, but for Sasuke. Even if this was all the bastard’s stupid idea, Naruto knew with every part of his soul that he’d rather fall alone to his death than pull Sasuke off balance and be responsible for his lover being hurt.

Sasuke landed perfectly sure footed on a branch that looked too slender to carry his weight. For the first time in his life Naruto was truly grateful for all of his nine tails as they gripped and wrapped around any bit of tree they could reach.
‘I’ve always thought you’re part monkey,’ Sasuke said as he helped Naruto to straighten himself and sort out his tails, which responded better and untangled faster under Sasuke’s gentle fingers than they did to Naruto’s swearing and tugging.

Naruto was certain that he was being insulted, but Sasuke was looking at him with unguarded tenderness and besides he was too breathless to snap anything back.

There was no rest. Sasuke wasn’t prepared to accept the miracle of surviving their leap of death, nope. That had apparently merely been a soft introduction to the Uchiha’s preferred means of travel. He dragged Naruto through the treetops as if it was the most natural safest thing in the world. And just to keep things interesting, Sasuke occasionally landed on a rooftop and ran over the slippery sloping tiles, holding onto Naruto’s hand the whole time, so Naruto had no choice but to follow.

He wasn’t sure if it was this pregnancy obedient thing that was keeping him with Sasuke, or if it was lifelong determination to not be surpassed by Sasuke in anything. Though his tussles with Sasuke to prove he was a better fighter than his Uchiha trained friend now seemed distinctly sensible when compared to his adult self, a pregnant nine tailed fox, chasing his cat lover around trees and rooves for no apparent reason.

When they were finally allowed to touch solid ground, they were far out of town and it wasn’t to rest or walk normally. Sasuke pulled him down from the treetops into a fast-flowing river and without pause started running against the current. This should have been easier. Well within Naruto’s physical capabilities. But without the adrenaline of feeling as if he was going to tumble to his death any second, the tiredness that had hit him ages ago in the hospital room now caught him. His limbs were heavy and fatigued, and although he whined about being fine and much fitter than the Uchiha, he was relieved when Sasuke scooped him up in his arms. And he didn’t fail to notice that Sasuke moved faster carrying him than he had dragging him along.

When they finally did stop in a cave that stunk of bear, Naruto didn’t ask any of the questions that he guessed a normal person would, he curled up against the warmth of Sasuke’s chest and went to sleep.

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Sasuke didn’t do regret. For years he’d done yearning, but hoped he’d never fallen into straight out pining. In all that time though, even as he dreamed of a life with Naruto, he accepted the decision he’d made to heed his mother’s warning and cut contact with the person he loved.

In the short days since he’d reunited with Naruto, he doubted everything. Everything that had led the bouncy blonde to be shivering and wet in a dark cave alone with Sasuke when he should be out laughing with a gang of his equally loud friends.

In the hospital, he’d been too focused on getting Tsunade to support Naruto’s decision to keep the baby. He hadn’t considered anyone from his clan would be sent after him. Until the distinctive Uchiha scent had arrived at the hospital.

As soon as he’d smelt a Uchiha his instinct had been to flee, and that is exactly what he’d done. Taken his pregnant lover on a treacherous chase that had nothing to do with logic and everything to do with plain fear. Sasuke’s whole body felt hollow as he thought of all the danger he’d put Naruto in, when he could have simply stayed in the hospital room and confidently bluffted out any Uchiha that had been sent to investigate why Sasuke hadn’t yet reported back to his father with a ‘mission
complete’. But now he’d dashed away from an effortless conversation, dragging his lover deep into the forest with Naruto naked aside from a hospital gown…. nothing was going to be easy now. Could he somehow explain it as a sexcapade with his lust overcoming him coincidentally, and obviously unknown to him, at the exact moment someone came looking for him?

A small light of hope rose in him, but even if by some miracle his lies were believed, it did not change the fact that his family would not accept Naruto’s pregnancy.

Physical pain twisted his stomach at the idea of Naruto being in the same room as any of his clan. His blue-eyed lover had looked so happy and peaceful when he’d decided that if he hadn’t done anything ‘wrong’ to become pregnant then it must have been what Sasuke planned and wanted. Contrary to his usual randomness, for Naruto it actually made perfect sense. From the interrogation he’d got from his father it was clear that it was also what his clan had presumed too before Sasuke’s ignorance of the pregnancy had convinced them otherwise.

The two key facts were:

Sasuke knew how determinedly stupid Naruto was about anything relating to his sexuality, they’d even talked about it before anything had happened between them.

Sasuke had had sex with Naruto, in the middle of heat season of all times, without once discussing any of the precautions that were necessary to avoid pregnancy.

It was probably just the excitement of the moment that had made him forget the basics to check before such an encounter. His time with Naruto was certainly unlike anything else he’d ever experienced. But he remembered too well how his animal had been reluctant waiting for Naruto to present in the proper fashion, so how could he pretend it was wild lust that had driven him forward? There had been plenty of time before they coupled to go through practicalities and make sure his receiver was comfortable with whatever method they chose.

Was Naruto correct? Had he on a subconscious level wanted Naruto to get pregnant with his child? It wasn’t a question he trusted himself to answer. The guilt of just thinking of it as a possibility made him want to sink to his knees and beg for his fox’s forgiveness.

But there was no time for such self-indulgent weakness. Naruto had been asleep since they’d stopped running and arrived in this cave. He’d moaned a little but not woken when Sasuke had pried himself away from his lover and tried his best to use the driest of his clothes to warm Naruto. But it wasn’t enough. He’d forced himself to leave the cave to gather materials for a fire, but it still hadn’t been enough. Naruto was curled up, all his tails wrapped around him shivering even as he slept.

After making the mad decision to run away, Sasuke now needed to sneak back and get provisions for them. And come up with a plan which didn’t involve anyone freezing to death in the woods… or worse. Lady Tsunade had come to the hospital room several times while Naruto slept and each time she had berated Sasuke worse for putting Naruto in such danger, not just from the Uchiha clan, but from Naruto’s own body not being prepared for a pregnancy.

Sasuke stroked a hand through Naruto’s hair. ‘Sleep a bit longer. Until I get back. I’ll make this right, somehow, my love, I promise.’

He pressed his forehead against Naruto’s then disappeared out into the wilderness before his emotions caught him and made it impossible for him to leave this man he loved so irrationally.
Chapter End Notes

So sorry that this chapter hasn't answered all the questions that have been asked in the comments, they will talk on more practical matters next time and not get distracted by each other's hotness!

I hope you still enjoy and am so grateful for all of you continuing to read and leaving me helpful and encouraging feedback x
Hi, thank you as always for staying with this story. I wanted to post something as it has been a while, so as way too often happens with me, this chapter doesn't contain as much as I planned, but I hope you enjoy what's here and I'll try to get the next update posted sooner x

Naruto woke up shivering. Probably because he was in a cave wearing nothing but a hospital gown and Sasuke’s shirt draped over his shoulders. He wrapped his tails tighter around him, totally forgetting the fact that normally he hated the feel of his freakish tails touching him. He sniffed the air, once, twice. Then despite the chill, he uncurled his body and turned his head sniffing in all directions.

It made no difference. There was no Sasuke. He couldn’t catch the scent of the man. All he could smell was bear. Despite the chill he took Sasuke’s shirt and held it to his nose. He breathed deeply for several moments. The fabric had absorbed Naruto and lost all but a hint of the Uchiha. Naruto wrapped it back around himself with a sigh of frustration.

Why couldn’t he smell his lover? Sasuke had definitely been here, Sasuke was the reason he was in this cave, so why didn’t Naruto have any of the skills needed to track the bastard? He was supposed to be a fox, which was kind of like a dog, wasn’t it, and Kiba was amazing at finding things. However messy their room got, Kiba could always find his favourite hoody under a big pile of laundry, or the supply of emergency sugar-hit candy when Naruto couldn’t remember where he’d hid it.

It was becoming more and more obvious that he should have paid more attention to well everything. He could hear Sasuke in his head saying, ‘No shit, dobe.’ It sounded so real that Naruto looked around the shadowy cave, and saw nothing. He was pretty sure, almost sure, that foxes were nocturnal critters, so surely he was supposed to have some great night vision thing going on?

One thing he did know from watching his friends combined with all the lectures and lessons he’d had over the years, was that it took lots of practice to hone in and perfect the skills of your inner animal without losing control to the primal beast. It didn’t just suddenly happen because Naruto had decided a couple of days ago he was maybe okay after all with not being a giver and containing a nine tailed fox thing if Uchiha Sasuke found it hot.

‘Urghhhh,’ Naruto groaned. His thoughts were exactly the receiver-like thoughts he’d never wanted. Waking up and thinking about Sasuke straight away, yearning for Sasuke so much it physically hurt, being happy with himself if his giver gave him a compliment…not that the bastard was even the type to give him compliments…but then again, having the always in control Uchiha do what they’d done together in the library meant way more than anything anyone could ever say.

Naruto immediately forgot about his problems and concerns as he envisioned Sasuke bent over the desk inviting Naruto to experience him in a way no one else ever had. The material of the hospital gown tented tellingly around his groin. Naruto bit his lip unsure if he was relieved the arrogant Uchiha wasn’t here to see how quickly the mere thought of him got Naruto hard, or desperately frustrated that his new lover wasn’t here doing what he was supposed to and keeping Naruto
happy. The memory of Sasuke nuzzling his cheek over Naruto’s naked body, settled matters in Naruto’s mind. If Sasuke had woken all these feelings in Naruto, then he should at least be by Naruto’s side all the time so that he could please Naruto whenever it was needed.

The blonde put his hands behind his head and his earlier groan was now a big grin, imagining Sasuke following him around everywhere and dropping to his knees to suck Naruto off every time Naruto got hard. Which would probably be every time he looked at Sasuke.

Naruto glanced down at where his cock was twitching beneath the thin material. True, he was cold, he was alone, he was in a cave, he had no idea what was going on, but he was also turned on. And what else was he going to do until the Uchiha bastard decided to turn up and give him some sort of explanation?

A new warmth pulsed through Naruto, the simple realisation that although he wasn’t exactly happy, he wasn’t angry like he’d normally be at being abandoned, because he believed there’d be a reason for all this. He had an iron certainty that Sasuke was going to return to him and make everything make sense with that calm voice of his, then once Naruto understood the facts of their situation, they’d be able to look after each other and everything would be all right. After the years of not talking, it was a comforting blanket around his soul, his total trust in his chosen lover.

It might just be some pregnancy mojo, like the wanting to please and obey Sasuke thing, but Naruto didn’t think so. This felt deep and true and forever.

With these emotional thoughts, rather than the more obvious sexual ones, Naruto reached a hand down and began caressing himself.

It was then the creature stepped out of the shadows.

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Sasuke took a different longer and more convoluted route back to the cave, hoping he’d done enough to cover his tracks, knowing that he hadn’t. He was highly skilled compared to an average person, but if an Uchiha caught his scent none of his tricks would matter.

And that was if it was Uchihas themselves looking for him. Normally Uchihas didn’t like involving anyone else in internal issues, but as Naruto’s hospitalisation and its connection somehow to Sasuke was already known outside the clan, they may consider privacy had already been breached. Therefore there would be no issues of breaking clan secrecy when discussing hiring the services of one of the clans who specialised in tracking. Sasuke could not outwit an expert, it’d come down to outfighting them.

There were enough territory wars for the Uchihas to always be prepared for them. Sasuke was taught the necessity and the psychology of killing alongside his numbers and letters. It was something that he’d always wondered about himself, would he be capable when the moment came of taking another life, of wiping away another person’s dreams and smiles and loves forever? All his life he’d worried that there might be weakness in him, that he might shame his parents and fail, that he was destined to be a disappointment not just compared to his superior older brother, but just because he himself was not good enough to be an Uchiha. Until he’d smelt the pregnant scent of his receiver, his Naruto. Then he no longer worried about shaming his family, he worried about how easy it’d be for him to kill them all to protect the man he loved.

But he hoped it wouldn’t come to that. Not for his sake. Not for his family’s sake. Purely for Naruto. He had enough to learn and to deal with, without knowing that if it was needed Sasuke would become a cold-blooded murderer.
Sasuke put such thoughts out of his mind and focused on the current issues. He had to educate Naruto. And quickly. He had to tell Naruto his plan and convince him it was the right course of action, when in honesty Sasuke himself was not sure what was right to do. He prided himself on keeping the lines between the animal and his human separate, but never in any of the Uchiha training exercises had he been tested like he was being tested now. Was it logic or emotion or something entirely different that was pushing him forward?

When he thought about the things that his bags were packed with, the objects that were weighing him down and what he’d chosen were most important to have in this time of crisis, he couldn’t answer that question the way he wanted to.

When he was within sight of the cave, he approached with caution. The reason he had had no problems at either Naruto’s room or his own home, could be because his family would assume that he wouldn’t be stupid enough to return to either so had left them unguarded. Or it could be because they had already found Naruto.

Sasuke’s stomach clenched at the thought. The fear became so strong, that it allowed the animal to take over and Sasuke rushed forward with the desperate need to see his lover was still safe.

What he saw made him freeze in the entrance of the cave.

Naruto was dressed in brown furs sitting in front of the glowing embers of a fire, all nine of his tails wagging happily, and his ears upright and alert. He didn’t even notice Sasuke’s arrival as he was too occupied happily chatting away to an animal that had the appearance of a tanuki but was far too big.

‘Dobe,’ Sasuke said softly, his eyes flicking between the strange animal and his receiver. There were many questions he could ask, but he went to the most pertinent, ‘Who is this?’

‘Hey, Sasuke!’ Naruto leapt up and bounced over to Sasuke wrapping his arms around him. ‘I’ve missed you.’

The fox nuzzled his head into Sasuke’s neck, his ears tickling Sasuke’s face, and there was a part of Sasuke that wanted to give into and return the affection, but there was no ignoring that they were not alone when they should be alone. He stepped away from his love and carefully put his bags down, which Naruto took as a signal to dive into them as if looking for souvenirs and presents from a holiday. Sasuke stopped him with a firm hand.

‘First, tell me what has happened since I left, specifically why you are talking to that animal as if it is your new best friend.’

Naruto grinned widely. ‘Sorry, I’m being rubbish not introducing you properly, I was just so excited to see you. Gaara, this is Sasuke who I’ve been telling you all about. Sasuke, this is Gaara, and he’s totally amazing, he can do everything. I mean, everything. This is his cave, he like scents it to smell like bear so anyone looking for him won’t know he’s here. And he has so many supplies, he got all these furs for me, and he got me this fresh spring water, I didn’t even know water could taste good, but this water was like super water and tasted A-mazing. And he caught some fish for me, and you know fish is yuck unless it’s covered in salt and sauce, but all Gaara did was cook it on this fire…this fire he made by rubbing a couple of twigs together, that was seriously wow in itself…and the yucky fish became like almost as tasty as ramen.’

Sasuke gazed at the animal in front of him. Apart from its unusual size, it looked like any other dumb animal. Was Naruto suffering from some sort of delusions? Somehow doing and finding all these things himself but creating a ‘friend’ who was keeping him company and looking after him.
It’d be the sort of thing that Naruto did, he hated being on his own.

‘Gaara looks like a tanaki…can you see that?’ Sasuke spoke slowly.

‘I told you Sasuke was smart, didn’t I?’ Naruto said to the animal. ‘You knew straight away what he was, but I was like guessing he might be a dog, or a badger, or a raccoon, or a bear. The bear, you know, because of the smell and everything, and he’s so big. Though Gaara’s been telling me I am not stupid because dog was my first guess and tanakis are part of the same family as foxes and dogs so he’s probably going to be great friends with Kiba as well as me.’

Sasuke didn’t bother telling Naruto that recognising a tanaki did not make anyone smart, he creased his brow trying to solve this puzzle that had been placed in front of him.

‘Naruto you’re tired, this is all a big strain that you weren’t prepared for. You’ve obviously over exerted yourself making yourself comfortable while I’ve been away, but if you take a minute to think I know that you are fully aware that most animals are just animals, they are not linked to humans in anyway.’

The blonde frowned. ‘Yeah, of course I know that. I think you’re the one who’s overtired, bro. Are you not listening to what I am saying? Gaara did all this, not me. And he’s going to teach me all about how to control my animal, he can do a complete transformation whenever he likes, and he says he can see in me the potential to do that to if I pay attention and everything.’

‘No one can do a full transformation, you’d know that if…’ Sasuke’s voice trailed off as the tanaki turned into a red haired, blue eyed man.

There were no visible in-between stages with fur retreating back to reveal skin, or legs becoming human limbs, one moment there was a tanaki, the next moment there was a man. Sasuke had never witnessed anything like it, but his first reaction was not to be astounded at the power, it was an automatic feeling that he much preferred the tanaki. His second reaction was to be astounded at the power. This Gaara looked to be the same age as him and Naruto, Sasuke had never come across a contemporary who unsettled him like this one did. The way Gaara gazed at him made him have sympathy for the people who caved under an Uchiha stare.

His attention was so fixed on Gaara that he did not notice Naruto next to him pulling things out of the bags he’d brought.

‘Manda! Gamabunta!’ Naruto cuddled his arms around the two teddies. ‘You’re such a bad kitty, you let me believe that you didn’t like Gamabunta anymore…what did you say about not bringing a child’s toy to university, and here you are bringing him all the way to this cave. And what are these?’ Naruto reached further into the bag and with his innate ability for doing the worse possible thing emerged with some of Sasuke’s most precious and personal belongings. ‘Are these all the cards I made you? You’ve kept all your birthday cards from me?’

Naruto stared at Sasuke with a wide-eyed gaze that would have made him cover his receiver in kisses at any other time. But instead he grabbed the cards from Naruto and replaced them back in the bag. Naruto held on too tightly for him to repack the teddies away out of Gaara’s sight without getting into an undignified tug of war. But it didn’t matter anyway, he knew he had been judged. The first words the redhead said to him were merely confirmation.

‘You left your pregnant receiver alone in unknown territory to gather sentimental objects.’

‘Naruto is very capable,’ Sasuke said.
‘Naruto is very lucky that I found him,’ the man replied in a voice that easily matched Sasuke’s for coldness.

Sasuke was not used to being in the presence of someone of his own age who was more powerful than him. It wasn’t a feeling he liked; it was a claw tracing the line of his spine before ripping it out. But somehow even stronger than that, was his growing lust for Naruto.

No, it wasn’t lust. Lust was what they had done in the library, the sudden undeniable need for each other. It was connection and pleasure which between them was mixed and ignited by love and friendship. What he was experiencing now was a deep swirling desire to sexually destroy Naruto in front of this other man. He wanted Naruto on all fours, howling, trembling, sweating and panting, screaming out Sasuke’s name while Gaara watched. He wanted to fuck every drop of come out of his receiver, he wanted to fuck Naruto limp, he wanted the blonde to smell more of Sasuke than he did himself, he wanted to leave his hole gaping and stretched and display the physical proof of his dominance to the stranger. Sasuke knew what he was experiencing was pure animal possessiveness. And he also knew that the thing that was holding him back was not human sensitivity to his receiver’s feelings, but his inner animal reacting enough to Naruto’s pregnant scent to be worried about damaging the body that was carrying his kittens.

Naruto was claimed and pregnant, he shouldn’t be sexually attractive to anyone but Sasuke. Yet this Gaara was giving off the aroma of an interested giver. If it was true, he could disguise his own scent, this had to be a purposeful challenge to Sasuke. Plus there was the clear difference between the way he looked at Naruto and the stare he gave to Sasuke. Naruto himself of course didn’t notice anything. He was chatting away about the teddies, how long they’d had them, where they came from and the usual nonsense that could not be of any interest to this strange man, but he listened as if Naruto was speaking deep philosophical truths.

Sasuke wanted to rip off the clothes Gaara had given Naruto and throw them onto the fire that Gaara had so amazingly made. But he stood still his face impassive letting Naruto’s loud happy voice fill the cave as inwardly he cursed his clan that wouldn’t let Naruto bear his children and had forced him to run to a place where he met this powerful tanaki. With everything going on, the last thing Sasuke needed was his inner animal becoming enraged with possessive jealousy. He needed to be calm and collected and get his receiver to safety. And then, and only then, would he fuck Naruto so hard that his fox would forget every other man, including and especially, Gaara.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Time was passing, incredibly valuable time being wasted in this cave as Naruto chatted on in an endless stream of happiness. But Sasuke still couldn’t get an accurate read on the tanaki. It should be reassuring that Gaara had looked after Naruto and made absolutely no overtly aggressive moves, but there were many animals that relished playing with their prey in countless depraved and different ways before they went in for the kill. Naruto was telling this stranger everything about the two of them, but Sasuke was yet to learn anything about Gaara. Gaara didn’t have the aura of someone who helped without some expectation of reward. What did he want from Naruto? Would he let him and Sasuke leave? Even if he did, would he follow them? How long could Sasuke afford to ponder these questions before he told Naruto the plan he’d worked out and dragged him far away from this redheaded man?

One thing that was definite about the tanaki though was his power, a power that Sasuke didn’t understand but he could feel it like a scratching and clawing deep within his bones. If Sasuke made a wrong move then all the plans he’d made to protect his beautiful idiotic friend would suddenly mean nothing.

But he had to do something. Everything, absolutely everything, he’d ever dreamed of could be lost or won in these next few hours and he wasn’t going to watch from the side while his fate was formed.

He interrupted Naruto’s warm flow of words with his coldest voice. ‘Is this where you live, Gaara?’ He pointedly looked around the cave. ‘Or have you simply discovered it to be a useful lure for lost and foolish new friends?’

‘Rude, Sasuke!’ Naruto glared at him. ‘Don’t mind him, Gaara, he can’t help being a mean bastard, yaknow, like other people can’t help breathing.’

Nothing in Gaara’s face changed, Sasuke was seriously concerned he could outUchiha Sasuke.

‘I’m not offended. He’s only nervous about protecting you from an unknown person.’

Naruto crossed his arms across his chest and grumbled something about not needing protection and how Sasuke’s animal senses were obviously rubbish if he thought Gaara would hurt him.

Inwardly Sasuke wanted to copy Naruto’s petulant body language, he did not like being called ‘nervous’ by this man. But even in the strain of this situation, he was able to keep a steely gaze on the redhead and not show his emotions anymore than Gaara did.

‘I am in fact the rude one, Naruto,’ Gaara continued. ‘We two have had a long conversation and know so much about each other, but Sasuke knows nothing.

Sasuke clenched his jaw. It was this this man knew nothing! Whatever they’d talked about, one chat did not even compare to a lifetime of knowing his Naruto. How dare this arrogant creature imply otherwise. But if Sasuke attacked him, even though he was entirely justified now, he was certain that Naruto would not understand, would insist Gaara was just being nice and Sasuke was being the sort of possessive giver that made Naruto hate being a receiver.

‘Yeah, we definitely do know each other, or you know waaaay too much about me anyway,’
Naruto chuckled. ‘Guess what, Sasuke, I should have told you straight away as it’s so funny, but I was actually about to start wanking, yaknow, had my hand on my cock and everything, when Gaara said hi to me! Poor Gaara said he didn’t know whether it was politer to wait until I’d finished or not!’

Naruto laughed loudly and, more surprisingly, the stern faced Gaara did too.

Sasuke had to use all his Uchiha restraint to stop himself hissing at Gaara.

‘Yes, it was a difficult decision to make!’ Gaara wiped actual tears of laughter from his eyes, him and Naruto found this meeting so amusing.

Naruto, whose sexuality was so repressed, that even in his daydreams, while other couples roughly rutted, Sasuke had only imagined the height of Naruto’s public affection to him being a tender kiss. That same Naruto found it hilariously funny that a complete stranger had interrupted him masturbating and presumably seen his erect cock.

‘You see, Sasuke, I am in hiding, and have been for a long time. I won’t bore you with the long story of my past I trusted Naruto with, he can fill you in the details if you are interested, the key point is I am originally from Sunagakure. I move around a lot and mastered being able to disguise my scent before I even left, I have more tricks, but I believe the main point to my survival has been to avoid as much contact with others as possible. Naruto and you are the first people I’ve seen in almost a year. I was as shy of you, as you are nervous of me, I intended to keep hidden and only watch you, but when Naruto started…’ Naruto and Gaara both laughed again before Gaara got his breath and continued. ‘Naruto has such a sweet honest scent, it’s impossible not to be relaxed around him.’

Sasuke did not want to think what that last sentence meant, he wanted to snap that Naruto had a sweet honest, claimed, pregnant scent, but managed to ask the pertinent question, ‘What are you hiding from?’

Gaara’s face returned to its previous intent seriousness. ‘Something you will relate to. My father decided I was too powerful and that my personality was flawed so I needed to be destroyed.’

Naruto growled. ‘Can you believe that? Gaara was only a little kid, having normal little kid temper tantrums or whatever, and instead of guiding him and looking after him, his own family wanted to kill him!’

‘Of course, Sasuke believes it, we talked about what the Uchihas do to each other, which is why it’s so important he gets you to safety and quickly.’ Gaara put a calming hand on Naruto’s back. ‘And we also talked about how important it is you do not get upset about these things, I know it’s against your nature, but you have to allow Sasuke to take control and carry the burden at this time. Your cubs are relying on you to remain calm and surround them with love.’

Sasuke felt the heat in his cheeks. What the hell hadn’t they discussed in their ‘long conversation’? He felt some sort of clan indignation to think of this man, who openly said he was from Sunagakure of all places, the instigator of so many territory wars, casually gossiping about and judging the Uchiha practises, but more than that he felt shame that after all the years they’d known each other (not even considering their recent coupling), it was a stranger who had revealed Uchiha secrets to his beloved friend. Sasuke didn’t question for a moment that what Gaara had told Naruto would be accurate and the truth, but he did hope that Sunagakure spies hadn’t yet discovered all the things Uchihas did to their young to maintain clan strength.

‘So, um, yeah, I get that I need to keep happy hormones or whatever pumping through my body,
but can I at least hear your plan, Sasuke? I think knowing what’s going on will keep me happier than just being randomly dragged about? And Gaara’s already said he’ll help us, which makes me feel totally better, as he’s super amazing and it’ll make up for me being kinda useless at the moment.’

Whatever bond had formed between Naruto and this creature, Sasuke now saw it as pointless to wait for some privacy to speak to Naruto away from Gaara. Time was now the most pressing issue, Gaara was an unknown he’d have to deal with as it unfolded.

‘Thank you for your offer of assistance, but it is unnecessary,’ Sasuke said in clipped tones to the redhead. Then he turned to Naruto. ‘We are not staying here, this was just a temporary escape. While I was away, I was fortunately able to talk to my…’ Sasuke hesitated over the word, there had only been ever one person he’d describe this way, but he knew it was a word that would immediately chime and comfort Naruto…’friend, Suigetsu. He has a boat, we will take that and travel overseas and that will be our permanent escape.’

‘What’s overseas?’ Naruto frowned. ‘I know that I didn’t exactly ace geography, but I’m pretty sure I remember the maps, and in case you’ve forgotten what with concentrating on all your genius level stuff, Sas, we live on one massive land blob surrounded by water.’ Naruto tilted his head to the side. ‘Do you mean we sail around, rather than go over land, and go to another territory that way? Because that’s smart, avoiding tracking and everything, but why do you have to say it in such an odd way to make me look stupid for not immediately understanding you? I get you’re the all-powerful giver and I am your little pet receiver, you don’t have to rub it in with weird words.’

Nothing that could be excitement lit up Gaara’s face. ‘I think what Sasuke is talking about is going beyond the map.’ He looked with bright eyes directly at Sasuke, and yes, there was definite excitement in his expression. ‘I’ve heard the rumours too. It is something I’ve thought of myself over the year, risking it, it’d be worth it to finally be free. If there is room on your boat, I’d definitely like to come with you. I’ll do whatever it takes to earn my passage.’

‘Of course, there’s room. I’m sooo happy you’re coming with us to this overseas place, it’s going to be really fun, I promise.’ Naruto threw his arms around Gaara and pulled the redhead in close so there was no air between their bodies.

The close hug that would normally have pressed all Sasuke’s jealousy buttons, (and in his short time with Naruto he was quickly learning he had a lot more triggers for jealousy than an in control Uchiha should have, in fact, more than just a normal person should have), but his mind was focused on something more important. Naruto had surely missed it, but the way Gaara had pronounced ‘whatever it takes’ had sent a clear message to Sasuke. Sasuke had been in the presence of killers before, he was familiar with the subtle differences in their auras, taking another life always changed you, some more than others, but whatever the degree there was always a change. There was so much in the balance, one wrong decision could destroy it all, but if people had to be taken out, he’d rather Gaara did it than him. He didn’t want Naruto to look at him and see a murderer. It was a pitiful reason for agreeing to a powerful stranger from an enemy territory to accompany him and his pregnant lover, but it was a reason that dominated his heart so in his tiredness he accepted it rather than fought against it.

‘We need to move now,’ Sasuke said more to Gaara than Naruto. ‘We’ve already spent too long in one place it is dangerous.’

‘Moving can also be dangerous, it gives the enemy more opportunity to catch your track,’ Gaara said, but he gave Sasuke a nod that seemed to answer a question Sasuke hadn’t asked. ‘I will need to gather some essentials, but the benefit they are to us on our journey will be worth the small
Gaara didn’t wait for any agreement, he detangled himself from Naruto’s hug and was gone, leaving Naruto and Sasuke alone. It was what Sasuke had been waiting for, but now he felt illogically awkward, staring into the embers of the fire rather than at the man he loved.

Fortunately, Naruto wasn’t so reticent, he jumped into Sasuke’s arms and nuzzled furiously against Sasuke’s cheek. ‘I missed you sooooo much.’

Then with equal speed he leapt back and roundkicked Sasuke in the stomach. ‘Teme leave me to wake up alone again and whatever pregnancy rubbish is going on with me won’t matter, however tired I am, even if I do have stupid hormones telling me to be all obedient and docile to you, I will chase after you. And when I find you, I’ll beat you so hard, you’ll be wishing you’d claimed anyone but me.’

Sasuke ignored the not inconsiderable pain in his gut and pulled Naruto back into a close hug. ‘Impossible.’

‘What you don’t think I can take you on, Uchiha?’ Naruto growled refusing to be appeased by physical affection.

‘Hnnnn.’ Sasuke smirked. ‘I was referring to the fact that it is impossible that I’d ever want anyone but you.’

‘Oh, um, I guess that’s all right then.’ Naruto’s cheeks blushed and he rubbed the back of head while his tails twirled in what Sasuke hoped was contentment. ‘But, yaknow, as you’re kind of my…thing now, you need to be teaching me real fast. Me being pregnant has kind of put a bit of pressure on my…yaknow not knowing stuff that I should know.’ He said the last words really fast so they blurred together, but took a deep breath and continued in a calmer voice, ‘Gaara was saying so much to me, and when I was honest and told him I didn’t get it, he was all like ’hasn’t Sasuke told you this yet?’’ and even though Gaara is obviously amazing I had this urge to punch him whenever I thought he was judging you, and I didn’t want to do that as he might take it the wrong way, so I had to pretend like I knew all this stuff I don’t know so he wouldn’t think you were one of those bastard givers who keep their receivers ignorant to they can at least feel superior to one person in the world. So, anyways, if you can quickly tell me everything before he gets back that would be great please.’

Sasuke raised an eyebrow, he was secretly happy that Naruto had felt an urge to punch Gaara on his behalf, but forced himself to focus on what was important here. ‘I know that I have been remiss, but this has all happened incredibly quickly, Naruto, and I was waiting for a time when you’d be fully awake and we had hours of interrupted peace together. We haven’t got that, so you’re going to have to narrow everything down to what you really want to know.’

Naruto stared at him blankly. ‘Aren’t you supposed to know what I am supposed to know?’

Sasuke’s brow creased for the briefest moment as he tried to unpick the meaning from what Naruto had said. ‘I know what I think is important, but it is your body, dobe, you need to tell me what most concerns you, while we still have time for a private talk.’

‘Hells, Sasuke, Gaara said so much that is still whirring through my brain, including tons about your family that I don’t want to be true, and he was asking about my birthing plan as if I should know what that is and have it all planned out, and then he said…’ Naruto tilted his head back and stared up at the ceiling.
Sasuke took both the other man’s hand within his, softly caressing his thumb over Naruto’s skin. Even though he thought he was more concerned about time being wasted than anything else, he didn’t rush the blonde but waited patiently until he was ready to speak.

‘And he said…well I guess I was talking about my baby and he asked me, because, yaknow, I’d chatted about being in hospital and Granny being a good friend to me, so he asked as I knew there was only one baby had there been scan to show the young had already killed each other. He talked really casually asking how many babies there were to start with and when they’d devoured each other, and then he just went on to talking about whether I knew if it was a kitten or pup that had won, and if my ummm getation? Is that the right word? Well, some long word would be fox or cat timed…I didn’t even know they were different. But I don’t care about that…I care about…I just want you to tell me if we’re going to have more than one baby they’ll be friends and not…hurt each other while they’re inside me, before they’re even born.’ Naruto pulled his hands away from Sasuke and touched his stomach gently. ‘What do I need to do to make sure they’re friends? Don’t let me do anything wrong.’

There was such a look of distress on Naruto’s normally bright face that Sasuke’s chest hurt with physical pain. What madness had overtaken him that he had made a man who didn’t know the basic word ‘gestation’ pregnant?

He watched Naruto’s large, strong hands caress his own stomach with tentative strokes.

‘Gaara doesn’t know everything. I prefer kits to pups as the name for young foxes,’ Sasuke put his hands on top of Naruto’s.

‘Kits? Like kittens?’

‘Like kittens.’

Naruto smiled and Sasuke half hoped that the redhead would return then and he would not have to say anymore to his receiver, not yet. But of course, Gaara would not do anything that useful. And Sasuke could not mislead Naruto for long.

‘But it does sound like what Gaara said about how young behave in the womb was correct.’

‘You mean…’

‘I know you deliberately didn’t learn anything about how our bodies and mating works, but if you think of our animal natures for a moment. Foxes on average have four kits or more, cats will have around five kittens. And those numbers are typical for many species. But how many people do you know with a sibling born in the same litter? In fact, how many people do you know with a sibling?’

‘Kiba has an older sister, and you had…’ Naruto let the sentence hang in the air before he met Sasuke’s eyes, then he said firmly, ‘And you had Itachi.’

Sasuke’s heart did something like it always did something at the mention of his brother’s name, but he continued speaking in a calm voice. ‘Two examples out of your incredibly large social group. Most people you know will be the single surviving child. Our culture is based upon survival of the strongest with the weak being left to wither. The strongest foetus consumes the weakest one. If more than one baby survives birth, the larger and healthier one will be nurtured and allowed to take its weakest siblings food, and if weaker ones can’t fend for themselves they die and it is seen as the natural order of our society where only the strongest will be of use in territory wars and continual survival.’
Naruto’s face was pale, he looked like he might vomit. Sasuke reached out to comfort him, but the blonde flinched away.

‘Is that what you and I did? Kill our siblings and steal their food? Is that how we earned our right to live?’

‘It is not something we are supposed to retain memories of.’ Sasuke shrugged. ‘Me possibly. Probably. You are different from anyone else, so I do not know.’

The well trained Uchiha inside Sasuke looked at Naruto’s reaction and knew instinctively how easy it would be to manipulate him into going back to the hospital and aborting the young that were murderers who would kill each other anyway. That would end the fatigue and uncertainty of these days and restore him back to the life he was familiar with. Naruto would be safe again. And this dream would be over.

But Naruto surprised him with a big grin. ‘Thanks, Kitty, I didn’t get it, but you knew just what to say to me. You’re right as usual, Mr Smartypants. I am different from anyone else, and my kits and kittens are going to be different too, they’re going to be friends and all of them are going to be born and I am going to look after all of them, and that’s my way.’

And Naruto was back to the fierce nuzzling, this time with his tails wrapped tightly around Sasuke, keeping him in place under Naruto’s vigorous affection.

‘Oh, this is what I wanted for so long,’ he sighed as Naruto rubbed into his neck. But it wasn’t just the closeness he meant. He understood why Naruto was always the only one he truly wanted to mate with. It’s why he hadn’t once thought of contraceptives when they’d finally had sex. Because deep in his soul, a long way beyond any conscious or rational thought, he’d known Naruto was the only one who would defy convention and protect all his kittens. He wanted to explain this to Naruto, and so much more. Not just the things he needed to teach Naruto, but everything. He wanted to bare his soul to his receiver, because he knew Naruto would accept him and hold him, and Sasuke would no longer be afraid of not being good enough to be an Uchiha, as being good enough for Naruto was of far more importance. What did he care if his father wished every day that Itachi was his surviving son not Sasuke, when Naruto didn’t want anyone in his arms apart from Sasuke?

There was so much to say, but not now. The cave filled with Gaara’s scent; it wasn’t the bear of earlier, but closer to the general aroma of a giver being aroused by a receiver.

Sasuke immediately put Naruto to the side and slid in front of him. Was he making a mistake allowing Gaara to travel with them? Neither his heart nor brain were certain, but when they were beyond the cave there was no denying the usefulness of a third member of their party. Naruto tried to hide it with his usual loud gusto, but Sasuke’s eyes were quick to see his fatigue. Dashing through foliage, while following Gaara’s guidance about routes to take, while being constantly suspicious of Gaara’s motives, while trying to explain to an incredibly stubborn man, that it wasn’t an issue of being weak, Naruto’s body was unexpectedly pregnant and having to nourish growing life, did not work well. Finally, Sasuke straight out ordered Naruto to let Sasuke carry him. He could see the fight in Naruto’s eyes, but the animal won over the man and Naruto had to submit to his giver. Although it didn’t stop Naruto moaning and being constantly insulting, which in truth Sasuke did not mind; he took it as a sign that Naruto, with everything considered, was in good spirits.

If they’d been alone, Sasuke knew he would not have been able to support his lover and keep moving at speed and keep a thorough lookout for any Uchihas tracking them. But he trusted Gaara, even as he didn’t trust him and had to continually fight the desire to hiss when the redhead glanced
The trip was longer than he’d counted on, but then he had ignorantly thought of Naruto running beside him as he had on the escape from the hospital over much more difficult areas. Instead he had Naruto that was so physically tired that he managed to snuggle his head into Sasuke’s chest and fall asleep. Even as Sasuke’s heart pounded, not with the exertion, but with the constant knowledge of what was at stake.

When they finally reached the small cove, Suigetsu was waiting, pacing back and forth impatiently.

Sasuke did not bother with introductions or asking how Suigetsu made his escape from town without being seen; water creatures were notoriously difficult for land ones to track and besides, unlike his uncertainty with Gaara, he knew Suigetsu and what his capabilities were.

‘The boat,’ Sasuke said.

‘No apologies for being late? Or gratitude for me for waiting for…’

‘The boat,’ Sasuke repeated.

Suigetsu gave a small nod indicating for them to follow him. They walked around the edge of the beach until they could see anchored some distance out a sailing vessel.

‘How do we get to it?’ He asked. Although he already knew the answer.

‘Swimming.’ Suigetsu smiled revealing his little pointed teeth. He pulled a bag out from behind a rock. ‘I came prepared for you, to keep your clothes dry. Strip off.’

There was no point debating about how far out the boat was, it looked far from land, and Sasuke knew that the distances felt a lot further when you started swimming. It’d be nothing to Suigetsu and the rest of them would just have to manage. Or not manage. Sasuke gave Gaara a side glance hoping the tanaki would change his mind when he saw what was involved. The redhead was already completely naked. He didn’t even retain his underwear but put his clothes in Suigetsu’s bag with a blank expression.

‘I like the way you ride, red,’ Suigetsu said. Even though he sometimes showered fully dressed so he could have wet clothes clinging to him through the day, Suigetsu now decided to follow Gaara and also go fully naked. He put his hands on his hips and grinned at Sasuke. ‘Why are you hesitating, Sasuke, you’re not the shy type.’

Suigetsu winked and with a laugh jiggled his hips to make his cock circle around.

‘Domestic felines are known for their dislike of water,’ Gaara said, ‘Have you thought out the practicalities of your plan, Sasuke? Are you capable of reaching the boat, and then spending considerable time with the knowledge that it’s only a few inches of timber between you and the sea?’

‘If you’re scared, Sasuke, I’ll protect you.’ Suigetsu’s voice was openly mocking, but Sasuke was too distracted trying to gently wake Naruto, to be sure whether he was mocking Gaara for thinking Sasuke would be scared, or was emboldened enough by Gaara referring to Sasuke as a *domestic* feline, to actually tease Sasuke himself.

Before Sasuke could give an appropriate biting reply to both men, Gaara had disappeared. It was the same feeling as when he’d done a direct transformation between human and tanaki, there was
no natural divide. One moment Gaara was standing there, then possibly Sasuke saw a slight blur of red, and then there was nothing.

Suigetsu stared agape. ‘Fucking flying fish, what just happened there? Who is he? What is he? Where did you find him? Where can I get myself one?’

Suigetsu dropped to his knees and examined the footprints in the sand where Gaara had been standing.

Sasuke turned all his attention to Naruto who was batting away Sasuke’s gentle attempts to wake him up. Sasuke should shake Naruto awake, but somehow he paused looking at the peaceful face resting against his chest. If something bad was about to happen, was it better that Naruto slept through it, rather than Sasuke selfishly expect him to fight by his side? It was a strange thought and Sasuke didn’t know what to do with it.

As quickly as he’d vanished, Gaara returned, this time dragging something…no someone…behind him.

‘This dog tracked us to here, do you want me to deal with it?’ Gaara asked Sasuke.

Sasuke squinted his eyes at the unconscious dog. Kiba in a half hound form. He should have known from the scent straight away, if he wasn’t so fatigued. And it was that fatigue that was letting the possessive animal in him have such a loud voice, wanting to reply ‘yes, deal with it’ to Gaara and have one less rival for Naruto’s attention in the world.

‘Hey, I think I recognise that dude,’ Suigetsu piped up, seemingly already recovered from his shock at Gaara’s abilities, ‘doesn’t he hang around campus with your babe?’

Sasuke sighed, unsure if it was with relief or annoyance that Suigetsu’s recognition took away the option of….he decided not to follow that thought.

‘We’ll have to take him with us,’ Sasuke said.

‘Is that you asking me really nicely if I can swim a big heavy dog all the way over to the boat?’ Suigetsu said.

‘No. That’s me telling you,’ Sasuke replied and focused fully on finally waking Naruto up.

Finally awake, Naruto was all excitement at Kiba’s presence, if the dangers and risks of the fact that they’d been tracked crossed his mind, it did not bother him. Instead he chattered on about what an amazing tracker Kiba was, but he also had a temper so he might not be to happy with Gaara when he woke up, but it’d be okay as Naruto would smooth it over and make sure they were all friends. And lots of other rubbish that should have been annoying, but was somehow comforting.

The blonde stripped off without hesitation, chatting all the while as if too many unspoken words had built up in him while he was sleeping. Suigetsu gave Naruto’s naked form a clearly appreciative look and then grinned at Sasuke his approval of Sasuke’s choice.

As the last to undress, Sasuke was the focus of the other three men’s attention. Something that was of no concern to him, especially with everything else that was at stake. But he couldn’t help being pleased to see how Naruto reacted to Suigetsu’s open admiration and comments on Sasuke’s nudity. Naruto clearly got flustered, his cheeks flushed, his tails swirling in aggravation, little claws and canine teeth appearing. He planted himself as close to Sasuke as he could get, wrapping his arms around him and pressing against him. Receivers weren’t supposed to be possessive, generally they were supposed to be proud of having a desired giver who coupled with many people, they
especially shouldn’t be jealous of another giver admiring their lover. It was impossible to tell how conscious Naruto was of why he was acting as he was, whether it was man or animal controlling his behaviour, but somehow it made Sasuke warm inside.

Warm enough that he swam through the sea with something akin to content despite the horrible conditions and Naruto laughing at his flattened wet hair. Sasuke kept pace with his giver, who despite his clumsy splashy doggy paddle strokes propelled through the water with speed and with enough surplus breath to chat to Sasuke the whole time.

The swim over was not good. It was never going to be good. It was cold and it was salty and it was wet. But it was not bad.

In the boat the men sun dried before putting on their dry clothes. Apart from Suigetsu who stayed naked and kept diving over the side the lure of the sea proving too irresistible after all the time he’d spent on dry land.

Soon Sasuke would have to order him to remain onboard so they could go at full sail instead of drifting along as if they had no destination. They might not be certain what it was, but they did have a destination, far away from here and all other Uchihas.

But for the moment, Sasuke let Suigetsu enjoy himself as he was enjoying holding Naruto, who despite his energy on the swim was now having a nap. Sasuke could bear the gentle swell of the waves, but knew it’d be more difficult once they began travelling at a proper speed. There was no choice though, he would deal with it, he would be strong for Naruto who had so much more going on in his body that it wasn’t even comparable to Sasuke having seasickness.

Soon Sasuke would have to deal with the fact that he had decided the best option for his future was putting himself in a boat that’d make him feel ill, with his ignorant innocent receiver and three other givers. He held Naruto a little closer to him. Soon he would think through all the things that could go wrong in this situation, but not now. He buried his nose into Naruto’s fluffy hair and breathed deeply.

Chapter End Notes

Hi, thank you so much for reading and I really hope you enjoyed this update. Sasuke still has a lot more information to reveal to Naruto, but at least he's started, kinda :)

I don't know when I'll be able to post the next chapter as the second half of this month will be busy, I had a plan to finish this by the end of the year, but sorry I don't think that is going to happen :( I do write whenever I have time though, so it will be finished at some point, promise!
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The boys on the boat start getting to know each other for worse and worse and then better.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The one bit of luck about the dogboy finally waking up from whatever Gaara did to him, was that it happened at a time when Naruto was curled up asleep on Sasuke’s lap. Admittedly it was not so much lucky as likely; since being on the boat, Naruto had been more often asleep than not. The idiot even claimed he found the tumultuous rocking that was wrecking Sasuke’s stomach calming. But if Kiba had emerged from unconscious at the wrong time and ruined the little awake time he got with his receiver, then the Uchiha would have got angry. Seriously angry.

Of course, with anyone else, it wouldn’t have mattered that they started asleep, the racket Kiba made yelling about Sasuke kidnapping Naruto and ruining his life would have woken ghosts from their century old graves. But this was Naruto so he snored through the whole thing.

Sasuke did not bother to defend himself against any of the many accusations the dogboy threw at him. He considered the fact that he had restrained himself from ordering Gaara to dispose of Kiba when he’d had the chance and in doing so had doomed himself to a journey into the unknown with the stinking pooch, more than enough concession to Naruto’s friendship for Kiba. This sea trip was torture already without adding in having to make conversation with a meathead.

Not that Kiba seemed to care, he appeared to be more the shouting until he was hoarse type of guy than someone looking for intellectual debate. Gaara and Suigetsu were more interested in Kiba than he was.

‘When you’ve finished growling at the Uchiha, I’d like to know the details of how you tracked us and what your purpose was.’ Gaara said at an opportune moment when Kiba had stopped for breath after an incredibly long tirade.

Sasuke clenched his jaw. He knew that was the type of thing he should be attempting to discuss with Kiba, this after all was his mission, his family, his kittens, his Naruto. Gaara had only become involved by a chance meeting and Naruto’s ability to make everyone and anyone his best friend within seconds.

Kiba turned narrowed eyes onto the redhead as if noticing him for the first time. ‘You’re the thing that knocked me out? I don’t know how you did it, or what you are, but you’re going to tell me. Don’t worry, I will be getting to you soon, freak.’

‘Use that word again to describe anyone on this boat and I’ll rip your throat out.’

Sasuke held up the hand which wasn’t stroking Naruto’s head, to display the sharp claws that had appeared. However, he was as much shocked by the red raw fury that pulsed through him as Kiba who stood mouth hanging open was, but he wouldn’t show it.
‘Keep your fur on. It doesn’t mean anything. It’s just a word.’ Kiba was immediately kowtowed, his tail disappearing between his legs, just like a pack animal to make a lot of noise but backdown whenever he thought the crowd wasn’t on his side.

‘If it is just a word then you will have no problem refraining from using it. Which I would appreciate as I would rather not have the inconvenience of explaining to my receiver why the deck is covered with his roommate’s innards.’

Sasuke gave Kiba a final cold glare then lifted Naruto up in his arms and took him below decks.

Sasuke preferred, or rather hated slightly less, being above deck. Seeing the waves had somehow turned out to be better than just feeling them. And there was the not inconsequential advantage of being able to vomit over the side of the boat, rather than have to squeeze into the tiny bathroom and be surrounded by the acid stench of his own body which managed to permeate everything no matter how many times he flushed.

But the fire roaring in his chest made him fear that he truly would not be able to prevent himself hurting Kiba if he stayed near him. He calmed himself, not through any of the Uchiha methods that had been installed in him from his earliest days, but by simply sitting still and gazing into the innocent face of his lover. The beauty of Naruto’s spirit glowed around him even when he was fast asleep. And this good generous man had chosen Sasuke to be his lover. Focusing on that fact alone could banish all unrest from his mind and give him a deep peace that he’d yearned for but never known before.

He just wished he could have clung onto the feeling for longer. Someone had followed him down, and he didn’t need any of his inner animal senses to know who.

Suigetsu who could be so inappropriate had lived with him and had learnt how to behave. Gaara had only just met him but obviously had superior instincts just as he possessed superior everything else. But of course, dogboy who had only just woken up was determined to both metaphorically and literally rock the boat. He came stomping after him when it was clear Sasuke didn’t want to be anywhere near Kiba.

‘Hey,’ Kiba said. He slumped down on the sofa next to Sasuke, unconcernedly lifting Naruto’s socked feet out of his way and placing them on his lap. His fingers rubbed up and down Naruto’s toes. ‘I get it you know.’

Sasuke didn’t know anything except that another giver was familiarly touching his man. He honestly didn’t know what store of deep restraint was stopping him from ripping Kiba’s arms off.

‘Yeah, I totally get how Naruto can make a dude feel. He can be so stupid, it just makes a guy super protective of the idiot. And, I thought you were just being a jerk like normal getting your hackles up just now, when I am the one whose got the right to be furious at you. But then I remembered. Some days I want to punch myself, when I think about calling him a freak all those years. We were just kids, right, though, we didn’t know any better.’ Kiba’s hands absently moved upwards stroking Naruto’s calves.

Naruto was wearing thick fleecy red pyjamas that Gaara had given him. Normally Sasuke hated Naruto wearing Gaara’s clothes, but if it had been one of the times that Naruto complained of being too hot and Sasuke struggled to get him to wear enough clothes to protect his receiver’s modesty from the greedy gazes of Gaara and Suigetsu, if it had been one of those times and Kiba was sitting next to Sasuke so casually touching Naruto’s bare leg, Kiba would be dead by now.
It might be that Kiba would be dead very soon anyway. Only Sasuke got to call Naruto stupid or an idiot. And why did Kiba think he could chat to him about the abuse Naruto suffered as if they were friends?

Sasuke had come down here to be alone, to try hard to calm himself and block out the memories of how many people had called Naruto a freak over the years, how the blonde had moved over the years from being angry, to laughing and accepting it as his identity, as if the only way to have friends was to let them mock him and pretend it didn’t hurt. In fact, it had become so ingrained in him that Naruto would punch and lash out at Sasuke when Sasuke defended him.

_Naruto used to scream. ‘Why do you fight against it, are you that ashamed of being friends with a freak like me that you can’t handle it when people just call me what I am?’_

‘You’ll accept being called a freak because your animal happens to have nine beautiful tails, but you won’t let anyone treat you like the receiver you’re born to be?’ Sasuke would reply.

_And then somehow Naruto resisted magically leaping into Sasuke’s arms, having been awakened into a realisation by Sasuke’s poetic, and not at all badly chosen badly timed, words into a certainty that he actually really wanted to be Sasuke’s receiver. Instead the blonde simply punched him again._

But Naruto was in his arms now, or to be precise mostly snuggled on his lap. Sasuke never had to relive those long nights of pining. They were over. Replaced with a family who wanted to kill his unborn children, possibly his lover too, and would never let Sasuke forget this transgression if they ever caught him.

Kiba was still talking, and it was probably best for the dogboy’s chances of continual survival that Sasuke had stopped listening, judging by the words he was tuning back into.

‘If I’d known Naruto wanted to be claimed, I definitely would have claimed him myself, but I always guessed with so little experience, when he decided to start having sex properly, he’d go mad fucking lots of people before choosing to be with just one. But you moved smartly and got him all to yourself, though once the pups are born and out of the way, there’s going to be even more interest in him now it’s known he’s available and finally up for fun.’

Sasuke grabbed Kiba’s hand and yanked it off Naruto’s legs. He squeezed it as tightly as he could without actually breaking bones. To give Kiba credit he didn’t cry out and managed to meet Sasuke’s gaze despite the telling tears of pain escaping from the corner of his eyes.

‘Naruto is my mate for life. He’ll never be available.’

‘I am trying to be nice to you. But don’t feed me that line. Everyone knows how you Uchihas do things, this is your rebellion or whatever, but I’ll be here for Naruto long after you’ve skittered back to your family. Dogs are loyal, not like cats who do whatever they want, not caring who they hurt.’ Kiba’s voice was scratchy but it was impressive he’d managed to speak so much.

‘I am more than a cat. And I am more than an Uchiha. Naruto knows this. What you think is unimportant.’ He dropped Kiba’s hand, scooped his lover up and made his way back up on deck with the final hissed words, ‘Stay. If you follow me again, I will end you.’

As he came up the cabin stairs, Gaara went down, presumably to get the answers he wanted from Kiba. But who knew? If Gaara kept Kiba busy and out of his way hopefully for the rest of this trip,
hopefully for the rest of his life, then Sasuke had no qualms about what Gaara chose to do with the dogboy.

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For a while he had peace on deck, but the mysteries of sailing this vessel could only keep Suigetsu occupied for so long. He sidled over to where Sasuke was sitting with Naruto. The sharp toothed man approached slowly and carefully, if Sasuke hissed at him he was sure that Suigetsu would back off without making a big deal. But completing this journey safely was reliant on Suigetsu’s skills, and Suigetsu always attacked things with more energy when he felt appreciated. Though it wasn’t just prudence that told Sasuke to keep Suigetsu happy, it was genuine gratitude that Suigetsu had given him a way to protect Naruto. Hopefully.

‘You want to talk.’ Sasuke said.

‘Hell yes! Whatever your problem with the dog is, at least he has a voice. You and Red are just happy staring. All fucking day. Just staring. You’re making me miss Karin. That’s how bad it is.’

‘Hnnn.’ Sasuke smirked.

‘Don’t look at me that way! I know you think Karin and I have a thing, but we don’t have a thing. If I wanted to get hot and heavy with someone who’d leave me bruised all over, you are definitely my one and only choice.’ Suigetsu grinned. ‘And that is an offer by the way, if you want some fun while your receiver needs to be treated with a more gentle hand, we are stuck on a boat in the middle of nowhere, sailing to a place that doesn’t exist, so with my limited options, I choose you.’

‘You’d choose me in a campus full of people in heat.’ Sasuke’s voice was dry but he returned the smile. Amongst all the unknowns that were now his life, there was an undeniable comfort in having a familiar conversation with a familiar person.

‘I know! You don’t have to rub it in, it’s so annoying. And frustrating. I am pretty sure we’d be an awful match and the sex would be terrible, as there’s no way I want to be with another giver, but you smell too good, Sasuke. And I thought it was because you were all pent up from not fucking anyone, but you smell even better now you’ve claimed your sweet little receiver. What the hell is that about? I even found myself fucking daydreaming about how fierce little shark-kitten-babies would be. I mean, what in all the hells and heavens do you do to people? I should be completing my thesis, but I am instead helping you upset your family, who happen to be the most powerful clan that ever lived. Have you even thought what you’re going to say to them when this all fails and you have to go back to them with little mongrel pups that are officially Uchihas? Though I guess in all likelihood no babies are going to survive. Unless of course, Red has magical midwife powers amongst his mysterious skillset, because I am betting dogboy doesn’t know what to do. And this is really disconcerting. Why are you letting me talk for so long?’

‘It’s nice to hear your voice. You’re right about it being too quiet,’ Sasuke replied. It wasn’t a complete lie. It was the words Suigetsu had said that were the problem. Not his voice.

‘Wow, what has finally getting a decent fuck done to you? Although Naruto must be way more than decent to get you to claim him. Once you’ve finished with him, I’m definitely going to look him up and take a ride.’ Suigetsu grinned showing all his white teeth as he gave Naruto’s sleeping form an appreciative gaze.

‘Hnnnn.’

Nothing changed in Sasuke’s expression or posture, but inside, Sasuke was on fire. So much so that
if there had been the tiniest patch of land visible in any direction, he was certain he would have leapt into the sea with Naruto and swam and swam until he reached it.

There was nothing but water though, so Sasuke sat and patiently listened as he allowed Suigetsu continue to chatter on until it felt like there could not have been another word left in the young shark’s entire being.

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The sky above was a beautiful shade of purple-blue, the first stars were showing and Sasuke was alone above deck with his sleeping receiver in his arms.

Suigetsu had shown surprising reluctance to teach the others how to man the boat, he was enjoying too much having knowledge that Sasuke didn’t. Just like he was enjoying splashing about in the water knowing that the waves were turning Sasuke’s stomach. But Suigetsu did need to sleep and it turned out he also got an inordinate amount of enjoyment from instructing Sasuke as if he was a dobe child. So after much overexaggerated deliberation, Sasuke was deemed ableseman enough to allowed to remain on watch.

Despite Suigetsu’s attitude, which at any other time would have resulted in him never talking to his ‘friend’ again, Sasuke was grateful. He got some peace while the other men rested.

Although he couldn’t help wishing that one man wasn’t sleeping so much. He bent his head down and nuzzled his face in Naruto’s hair. He considered, not for the first time, trying to wake him, but like all the other times just held him closer against his chest. If Naruto needed to sleep, Sasuke wouldn’t be the one who disturbed him. And besides, he smirked to himself, short of them coming across a ramen food boat, he wasn’t entirely sure what could actually wake the blonde up. Naruto appeared to be capable of sleeping through everything.

Sasuke turned his head to the side to rub his cheek against Naruto and saw that he hadn’t been given the solitude from the others that he so yearned for.

Gaara sat mere inches away. Sasuke’s senses had been heightened since Naruto became pregnant, even tiredness and seasickness had not dimmed them, but Gaara could still approach him unnoticed.

‘What do you want?’ Sasuke’s voice was colder than the night air.

‘As we are to be travelling together, I wish things to be clear between us,’ Gaara said.

‘Hnnn.’ Sasuke would not admit to this stranger that he was already far beyond the normal levels of his patience from Kiba and Suigetsu blurting their minds out to him.

Gaara had been scentless before, a trick like so many of Gaara’s abilities that Sasuke had not thought possible before, but now the aroma of a giver strongly attracted to a receiver filled the air around them.

Sasuke’s hands tingled with the sensation of his nails turning to claws, but he restrained himself to just pulling Naruto even closer against him. With effort he concentrated on his inner calm and prepared for this man, who had so many abilities he didn’t understand let alone being able to compete with, to make the same declaration as Kiba and Suigetsu: how much he was looking forward to mating with Naruto after the pregnancy was finished.

Gazing forward and speaking in a constant tone, Gaara said, ‘I’ve known about you for a long time. Within my clan, knowledge of Uchihas as our most formidable foe is taught from the moment
we start speaking. When I spied you coming towards my lair, I believed the gods had finally
favoured me. I watched you and was shocked you had no knowledge of my presence, such are the
tales of Uchihas I expected you to be my match, maybe even stronger. But all your attention was on
your receiver.’

Sasuke swallowed, Gaara’s intentions to couple with Naruto was even worse than the other two, at
least Kiba and Suigetsu hadn’t felt a need to inform him he was a failure as an Uchiha before
telling him that they wanted his receiver in their bed.

‘My plan was to give the receiver a quick end, subdue you, and take you as prisoner back to my
father. He couldn’t reject me if I gave him an Uchiha as a gift. He’d finally see that I am loyal and
can be trusted to control my power and use it for the good of my people.’

Sasuke looked directly at the other man who was still gazing forward. ‘Your plan obviously
changed. What is it now?’

Gaara continued speaking as if he hadn’t heard Sasuke’s question. ‘I always had a sense you and I
would be similar, being near in age and having been brought up in strict clans. My father, when I
was allowed in his presence, made it a point of pride how his children would be stronger than the
Uchihas. I suspect your father was the same.’

It hadn’t been a question, but Sasuke took some satisfaction in saying, ‘My father has never
compared me to anyone from Saunagakure.’ No need to add, that every time his father deigned to
look at him it was with disappointment that he wasn’t Itachi.

Gaara turned to look at him now, the surprise in his eyes clear even in the starlight. ‘I thought we
were born to be mortal enemies, but it seems my nemesis didn’t even know of my existence?’ He
gave a smile that was small but had the same genuine warmth as one of Naruto’s big grins. ‘But
that barely matters, does it? We have ended up here together, journeying towards lands that few
have heard of and even less believe in, because against logic, instead of attacking you, I chose to
help you.’

Sasuke caressed his hand over Naruto’s shoulder, it made more sense than he could ever explain
that Naruto’s naturally generous and happy spirit could unwittingly turn an enemy into a friend.

‘Naruto has an undeniable and immediate charm.’ Gaara looked at Sasuke’s hand stroking the
receiver. ‘After being alone for so long he was the company I didn’t even realise I was missing so
much.’ Gaara caught Sasuke’s hand in his own and held it. ‘But it was my attraction to
you that has
changed my destiny.’

A small sound escaped Sasuke’s mouth.

‘I want to be honest. I feel an attraction to you that I haven’t felt before. I think it is because you
represent something to me. We were both raised to be killers, but I am praying that you are the
reality of my deepest hope. First seeing you so tender with Naruto, and then the crux for me was
how against all logic you risked capture to fetch him a stuffed animal that he likes. You’ve freed
yourself from your clan. I ran, but I am not free.’ Gaara bent over, kissed Sasuke’s hand then
dropped it. ‘It is important to me that you succeed because I need to believe in love. It is what I’ve
yearned for all my life, to love and be loved, to possess the bond that you and Naruto have. I want
to be looked at like you look at Naruto. And even if I can’t have it myself, I want to at least know it
exists for someone else. So that is my confession. I am attracted to you because you are deeply in
love with your receiver. I do not believe I have any desire for physical consummation with you, but
I have a warmth and happiness being close to you that I have not experienced before.’
They sat in silence for a long time before Gaara began a conversation about what Sasuke expected to find beyond the map. Sasuke responded in detail to Gaara’s questions and neither of them mentioned Gaara’s feelings for Sasuke again that night.

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Naruto bounced awake, sniffing the air. It took him a long moment to remember this wasn’t some strange dream, he was supposed to be on a boat in the middle of the sea with Sasuke curled around him. He stared down at his boyfriend, yep, his boyfriend, he had the right to think about the Uchiha in that way, Sasuke was lightly snoring and drooling. He had no idea the man could be so not-perfect, but being Sasuke it made him somehow even hotter than his normal superhotness. Naruto was filled with so many urges that he wasn’t used to having. His face flushed and he was relieved when he heard Kiba’s voice above deck as it gave him an excuse to runaway before he started doing things to a sleeping man that he wasn’t certain you should even do to someone who was wide awake and consenting.

‘Kiba!’ Naruto wrapped his arms around his friend and lifted him off the ground.

Kiba laughed and hugged him back. ‘Finally got enough beauty sleep. Nope, looks like you need another few years yet.’

‘You’re the one who has been unconscious for years and years, but still look as if you’ve been partying all week.’ Naruto chuckled. ‘I’m sooooo glad you’re here. Thanks so much for coming.’

‘I didn’t get much choice, your new friend, Gaara, saw to that. My aim was to stop Sasuke kidnapping you, not to get kidnapped myself!’

Naruto waved over to Gaara. ‘Thanks for kidnapping my friend, Gaara, it was very thoughtful and kind of you.’

Gaara gave Naruto a nod as if he’d been addressed seriously.

Suigetsu, who was standing near Gaara, flashed a shark smile. ‘You look even more tempting when you’re not attached to your giver, Nar-u-to.’

Naruto’s cheeks blushed, it wasn’t even close to the most sexual come on he’d had directed at him, but this was Sasuke’s friend and Sasuke had so few people whose company he was willing to tolerate and if Suigetsu was one of those few, Naruto had to make sure he also became the fish’s friend. Plus they were all stuck on a boat together which meant no easy escape from any arguments. He had no idea how to respond under those circumstances so he turned his attention back to Kiba. ‘I can’t believe you came after me.’

‘You were in hospital, dude, and then you weren’t in hospital because Sasuke had whisked you away. Of course I came after you.’

‘Do you have any idea what you’ve got yourself into?’ Naruto asked, half joking, half hoping his loud friend would explain the things no one else was telling him.

‘You’re pregnant. Sasuke’s family are crazymad, but being feeble cats don’t like water so Sasuke’s talked his fishfriend into taking you as far across the sea as he can until they calm down. Is that about it?’

‘I guess so. That sounds like a decent plan. Doesn’t it?’ He rubbed the back of his head.
‘Why’d you mate with a clan that would make things so difficult? You could’ve just fucked Sasuke out of your system and then found someone to claim you without any murderous relatives.’

‘That’s not you then, your sister and mom are always super scary.’ Naruto laughed.

But Kiba’s face fell. ‘They only get angry at me, they adore you. You know that, right? If I had pups with a fox they’d think I’d been really lucky and made a good match.’

Kiba’s drop in mood, made Naruto lose his own cheery tone for a moment. ‘I don’t think anyone would be happy at risking having freaky nine tailed grandkids.’

Kiba nudged him. ‘Don’t use that ‘f’ word, your sweet gentle giver threatened to tear me a new one when I said it.’

‘What, really? Why? I say it all the time about myself. You think he’s feeling sensitive about how our kids might come out?’

Kiba stared at him for a moment, then shook his head. ‘Your kids could come out looking like alien blobs and Sasuke would think they were the most beautiful creatures this world has ever produced. I think his problem is with me. I tried to be friendly but he wasn’t having any of it.’

Naruto nodded sympathetically. ‘He is a mean cold bastard, no doubt about it, don’t take it personally though, it’s just him.’

‘You’re not supposed to talk about your giver like that,’ Kiba grinned. ‘When you’re my receiver I hope you’ll have better things to say about me. I mean…did I say when? I meant, if you were my receiver. Obviously.’

Naruto felt the heat in his cheeks again, he was sure he normally didn’t blush this easily. ‘Yeah, obviously,’ he mumbled. ‘I know you like hump my leg every now and again but I know, yaknow, that you’re not really interested in me, not like the way Sasuke is.’

‘Yeah, right, that’s right.’ Kiba stared out at the sea. ‘You get it. We’re friends. Though, I was making an effort and being extra friendly and letting Sasuke know that you’d be safe after he finishes with you, I’d look after you. I’m not one of those givers who cares if a receiver’s been claimed before, or even got knocked up like you have.’

Naruto punched Kiba in the shoulder, not hard, but a definite punch.

‘What’s that for?’ Kiba said his eyebrows shooting up.

‘What you doing talking with my giver about him finishing with me? He’s mine for good. He claimed me. Proper grown up having sex and getting pregnant claiming.’

Kiba laughed. ‘It’s just the way givers speak to each other, little receiver.’ He patted Naruto’s head. ‘Him claiming you means he doesn’t want anyone to get with you while he’s with you, but he’s a Uchiha cat, if he ever gets a lifemate it’s determined by what his parents tell him, not who he wants to mate with in one heatseason of his youth. You get that, don’t you, this is just a fun adventure we’ll remember in a few years when we’re all paired up with who we’re supposed to be with.’

‘Is that what you think Sasuke thinks? Is that what he told you? I’m going to talk to that bastard now. I don’t care how supersweetandsupercute he looks while he’s sleeping. He’s waking up and answering questions right now!’
Naruto spun on his heel and leapt back down below deck to confront his giver.

*S*

Sasuke woke with a shiver. He felt sharp cold cutting across his body even though he was below deck and it couldn’t be the sea wind chilling his bones. He fumbled around with his hands before he consciously registered that his dobe was missing. His senses immediately honed in on Naruto, out of sight but not out of hearing, talking to Kiba. But he still felt the same hollowed out pain that he could only compare to when Itachi had died. Him and Naruto were almost in constant physical contact, he shouldn’t feel such loss just because when Naruto had a rare moment of being awake he ran off to see his friend. It made perfect logical sense for the garrulous man to want to talk to his best friend rather than stay beside his sleeping giver.

Sasuke kept telling himself that as he stumbled towards the bathroom, letting all his usual grace slip away. At least without Naruto here, he didn’t have to try to appear composed and keep swallowing back the bile that was wrecking his stomach and making his throat burn.

He’d been in the tiny bathroom for less than a minute and was bent over the sink rinsing water over his face, when the door was kicked in, flimsy lock shattering, and Naruto was squeezed in behind him, all hands-on-hip righteous anger.

‘Why did you tell Kiba you’re going to be done with me once our kitties are born?’ he shouted.

Sasuke straightened up and met his lover’s eyes in the mirror. ‘Why would you listen to and believe such crap? You know you would not be pregnant if I didn’t love and believe in you with my whole being.’ Without dropping the mirror gaze, Sasuke reached around and caressed his fingers over Naruto’s. ‘Your problem has always been you’d rather fight me than fuck me.’

‘I think that’s been more a problem for you than me, my problem was being too dense to know I could fuck you.’ Naruto’s anger immediately dissipated and he laughed his warm laugh. ‘And I didn’t say I believed what Kiba was saying, it just hurts you’d have that type of yaknow, giver conversation thing, letting my friend believe you’re not serious about me, when you are.’

‘I don’t feel the need to justify myself to anyone but you.’ Sasuke ran his hands through his hair. ‘And unlike you, I don’t want to go around shouting at everyone when we are stuck together on a small vessel for an unknown time, when from their perspective, they’re being complimentary to me by saying they admire my taste in receivers so much they want to mate with you in the future.’

‘Ha! I am not buying into you being a peacemaker. Kiba said you got all grrrrrr when all he did was say the word freak.’

‘That’s different,’ Sasuke said.

‘No, it’s not. It proves my point. You get all uppity when you want to, but let the things go that matter to me because you can’t be bothered to let everyone know you’re mine forever.’ There was a growl in Naruto’s voice, but it wasn’t anger. Gazing into Naruto’s eyes in the mirror all he saw was lust.

‘I think you’ll find that most people would consider you as being mine, not the other way around. If you paid any attention to the world, you’d know a simple fact like that, dobe.’ Sasuke kept his tone ice and was rewarded by Naruto thrusting his hips against Sasuke’s making them slam against the sink.

Sasuke’s response was a deep unrestrained purr.
‘I want you so much.’ Naruto nipped all around Sasuke’s neck and shoulders. His hands made short work of pulling down both his and Sasuke’s pants.

Sasuke stared in the mirror at Naruto’s fox ears, his whiskered face, and the nine fluffy tails that filled the room. Then all he could see was the heat of his own breath as the mirror misted over.

Naruto’s hardness pushed between his buttocks. Sasuke closed his eyes and breathed in the scent of his lover, but Naruto made a sound of frustration.

‘How do I do this?’ His voice a pleading and shy whisper which contradicted the confident movement of his hips grinding against Sasuke’s. ‘I want to…touch you, but I can’t.’

Sassuke opened his eyes and Naruto held out his beclawed hands.

‘How do I make them human again so I can…do things without hurting you?’ Naruto nuzzled his head against Sasuke’s ear.

Sasuke bit back his immediate reply, that he didn’t care if Naruto scratched his skin to shreds, he wanted Naruto inside him now. It was one thing feeling it, another saying it out loud. Instead he reached for the nearest thing that could be used as lube, toothpaste, and methodically lathered it over him and Naruto. Which was difficult because the bathroom was so small and Naruto was unwilling to lose physical contact with Sasuke even for the amount of time that it’d take to manoeuvre into a better position. In this position with this limited space, Naruto’s muscular body had all the power.

‘I’m trying to make it easier,’ Sasuke hissed.

‘I know….but…’

He didn’t have to finish the sentence, the simple ‘but’ contained all of the useless struggle of trying to fight against animal lust. Especially for Naruto who was so new to these feelings. Though if he was honest, however long he had wanted the fox carnally, the actual act of being together was making Sasuke question his own relationship to his body. Who knew he could get dizzy with desire from his receiver brutally thrusting against him? The first time in the library could be excused from the unexpected overwhelming emotions of Naruto suddenly wanting him, he’d managed to stop Naruto in the hospital when the blonde had leapt on him, but now nothing would make him stop his receiver doing whatever he wanted to to Sasuke’s body.

Despite the difficulties Sasuke managed to get some toothpaste on both him and Naruto. Some still functioning part of his logical brain told him that toothpaste was an awful lube, but Naruto was responding with little howling noises to the tingling of the mint, and as long as it eased the friction enough for Naruto to plunge into him, Sasuke didn’t care.

He used one hand to spread himself enough to make entrance possible, and with the other hand guided Naruto into him. Thankfully it was all the encouragement Naruto needed, the fox rammed into him. Sasuke made a noise that was half screech, half meow. Naruto yelped and barked. The animal lust had total control of him now. He wrapped one arm tightly around Sasuke’s chest, the other hand gripped the Uchiha’s hip, oblivious now to his claws digging into the delicate pale skin.

Their bodies moved in desperate union, Sasuke squeezing around Naruto, not caring about the pain, just wanting to feel the closeness of his man with every inch of his being.

‘Too good…too good,’ Naruto breathed in his ear.

Naruto’s speed increased. If Naruto wasn’t literally fucking the breath out of his body, Sasuke
would have been screaming. The heat of Naruto’s orgasm flooded through him and left him still trembling after the two men had collapsed, limb entwined, down onto the cold floor.

The same as in the library, post-coitally, Sasuke could barely breathe but Naruto was all attentiveness, twisting his body with a flexibility that Sasuke made a mental note to make use of when there was some normality in their relationship and Sasuke was the one stretching Naruto’s body to breaking point and beyond. He watched panting as Naruto stroked and licked him, making sorrowful little whining noises when he saw the bruises and bleeding he’d caused Sasuke with the fury of his lust.

‘I wanted it, idiot, don’t you dare regret what we’ve just done together,’ Sasuke hissed. ‘I don’t care how long you sleep for, if you have the energy to do that to me when you’re awake.’

‘Am I sleeping too much, sorry, I don’t want to leave everything to you. I know this is all a big burden…’

‘At what point did I say you slept too much? Your body is nurturing our young,’ Sasuke growled. ‘You being with me, pregnant with my kittens, that is my dream, Naruto. You can never be a burden to me. Don’t say things like that. Especially after what we’ve just shared.’

Naruto glowed with happiness. ‘Thanks for saying that. I do feel guilty about the amount of time I’m spending with our kits, when I know you’re going through so much and needing my support, but I can only chat to them when I am asleep, and after what you said about kids, you know, hurting each other, I wanted to make sure ours know that they’re supposed to look after their siblings right from the start all the way through. So I check in all the time, making sure the bigger ones aren’t stealing all the food from the tiny ones, because the foxes all are like me, big healthy appetites, whereas the kittens are like you all prissy and delicate.’ Naruto patted his tummy. ‘I’m saying that with sooo much love, little guys, your daddy is like the prissiest thing in the world and he’s also my most precious person, so see, it’s not a bad thing when I call you that, though you do need to be less fussy and eat more.’ He turned back to Sasuke with a beaming smile. ‘I don’t know why I am talking to them now, just habit, they can only hear me when I talk to them inside my head, and they’re all sleeping now, otherwise I wouldn’t have done you like I done you, because that would be too embarrassing thinking they knew what I want to do with you. They don’t know do they, Saskitty?’

Having a conversation like this when he didn’t feel like a single muscle in his body was working properly and he just wanted to curl up in a ball on Naruto’s lap, was definitely not ideal. But when would he next be able to talk to his lover freely?

‘How do you talk to them inside your head, Naruto?’ Sasuke asked slowly.

Naruto shrugged. ‘The same as every other pregnant person does, I guess. You know I haven’t read any of the guidebooks, so I am just doing what feels right for me until you tell me to do different. How am I supposed to be talking to them?’

Sasuke licked his tongue over his lips. It was best to find out more information before (if) he told Naruto that he’d never heard of a pregnant person being able to chat to their young.

‘Describe to me what it’s like for you,’ Sasuke said.

‘I sit inside like a lake in my head as a human, and my nine tailed fox is there too as like his own person, and the babies all sit around me. And I can talk to the fox like you and I talk, but the babies can’t talk, we don’t need words, we just understand each other, like when you and I are fucking and…’Naruto slapped his hand over his mouth. ‘Oh, no no no no, not like that at all. I didn’t just
compare talking to our kids to fucking you, did I? You understood what I meant, didn’t you, and I didn’t mean that, I meant…”

‘Calm down, idiot, there’s no need to be so prudishly sensitive. When you and I are physically connected we are one body, the same, although obviously not the same, as you are one body with your inner animal and the young you are carrying. You’re talking about telepathic communion that is possible between people who are as well matched as we are.’ Possible but not at all likely in the real world that everyone except Naruto lived in. If Naruto said he could communicate with their unborn children though, Sasuke somehow didn’t doubt him, it just made him nervous that he didn’t fully understand it. ‘What do you and our kittens say to each other?’

‘I don’t know how to say it in normal words. Just how pleased we are to be together, and like I say I tell them they need to look after each other. And they like it when I sing to them and they’re starting to sing back to me.’

‘You sing to them? Oh no, please please don’t teach them to sing. They’ll all be born tone deaf and yowling.’

Naruto thumped Sasuke on the arm. ‘They’ll all be born happy and healthy and in perfect harmony with each other.’

‘Hnnnn,’ Sasuke smirked, but the thought of Naruto singing to their kittens softened his face into a gentle and content smile. ‘What are they like?’

‘Well, all seven of them are very different and…’

‘Seven?’ Sasuke sat upright, muscles tense and alert.

‘Yep, seven. The two of us together are like super fertile. It’s a good number, ain’t it? But I think they’ll keep us busy forever as they’re very lively, so once they’re born you’ve either got to teach me how not to get pregnant or never put your cock in me again.’ Naruto laughed. ‘I’m kinda liking putting my cock in you a lot, so even if you choose option two, I won’t cry too much.’

‘Seven? Seven. Seven.’ Sasuke couldn’t even visualise having that many people to look after. Completely helpless people. He was not even confident he was making the best decisions for his adult, if ignorant, receiver, let alone having so many kittens reliant on him for protection, education and love. ‘Seven?’

‘Cutiekitty, you’re even paler than normal, you’re not unhappy, are you?’ Naruto wrapped his warm strong arms around him.

‘No. Not unhappy. Just petrified I’m not good enough.’

Naruto licked the side of Sasuke’s face. ‘You’re more than good enough. You’re my Sasuke. You’re perfect.’

‘I’m not. But for you, I will be.’ With those words, in this too tiny bathroom, Sasuke gave into his desires and curled up on Naruto’s lap and gently started licking Naruto’s hands.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for sticking with this story, I hope you like this new update and that there
aren't too many mistakes as I wanted to post it for you as soon as possible and haven't done much (as in any!!) editing. If I get time I will have a read through over the next week. Unless you tell me it's too awful and I'll take it down and having another go at writing this chapter!
But aside from that I am grateful for all of you reading and encouraging me with this mad little story, it does make me so happy to write and share it with you and is the break I need from a lot of the other things in my life.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Naruto nuzzled his head further into Sasuke’s lap. He was pretending to be asleep, but he somehow knew that Sasuke knew he was fully awake, and he also knew that Sasuke knew that he knew. But those thoughts were confusing and he had no idea where it ended, so it was easier to keep on pretending and keep breathing in Sasuke’s scent and to keep feeling the contour of his lover’s sex against his cheek while he could. Because when Naruto was fully openly awake, Sasuke was not permitting Naruto anything but the most chaste touching. Naruto had no idea what he’d done wrong. Despite Sasuke’s reassurances that he’d teach everything to Naruto that Naruto needed to know, the bastard was proving to be barely more communicative in a romantic relationship than when the Uchiha had flat out blanked him for three years and thirty five days.

A situation that was made worse by the fact that Naruto needed his friend so much, too much. He was feeling and thinking things he’d never even dreamed of experiencing before. It was no exaggeration to say that he’d never been turned on by anyone in his whole life the way that he was turned on by Sasuke. His crush on Sakura was so forgotten now that he was both ashamed and embarrassed. Then there were strange random stabs of guilt that all these complex emotions that had been overwhelming Naruto may be new to him, but Sasuke had maybe felt this way for years. How hurt and hopeless his friend must have been listening to Naruto blabber on constantly about Sakura without ever once realising that Sasuke’s heart was pining in a much rawer and real way for him.

Naruto wished he could express all this to Sasuke, to show him how much he now desired and appreciated his friend. But since that time in the bathroom, Sasuke had made like he didn’t notice Naruto near permanent erection. Despite the fact that every single other bastard on the boat clearly saw the state Naruto was in. Suigetsu and Kiba constantly commented on it and had the worse conversations about how well endowed he was for a receiver. Which wasn’t even as bad as when they openly questioned Sasuke about him. Kiba at least was sometimes curtailed by Sasuke’s icy looks, but Suigetsu appeared to think he had some sort of privilege of friendship or having provided the boat, as he kept on going past the point when Sasuke truly looked like he was going to shred the fishman apart with his sharp kitty claws.

‘How much do you make your poor receiver beg for it, Sasuke kun?’ Sauigetsu was way too fond of saying in a mock servile voice. ‘Oh, please, all mighty Master, please let me come. Please ram your cock in my ass so hard that I come screaming out your name with the first thrust. Oh Sasuke, Sasuke, Saaaassssuke.’

And even that wasn’t the baddest that it got. Both Suigetsu and Kiba had in their unique and equally humiliating ways, offered to ‘service’ him if Sasuke had already got bored of his pregnant receiver.

Gaara thankfully didn’t say anything so obvious, but when they were talking, the normally perfectly controlled man’s eyes kept dropping to Naruto’s crotch and his face turned the same shade of red as his hair every time he caught himself doing it. Which in turn caused Naruto to blush and rub the back of his head and murmur crap about it being a weird pregnancy thing and that Sasuke kept him totally satisfied. Which Gaara was nice enough to accept, but Suigetsu burst out laughing at and kept laughing at for hours afterwards.

That was the thing about being stuck on a boat to nowhere together with four dudes all with way
better animal sense than him, they knew fricking everything he was doing with their eyes and their noses picking up all the secret messages that Naruto didn’t even know he was sending. Though to be fair, Sasuke had warned him to speak quieter several times (or much better not speak at all) when Naruto had rushed into the bathroom after Sasuke and begged Sasuke for more sex. And it was indeed not long after the first time he did that, that Suigetsu started his impressions of Naruto pleading for Sasuke to ram him.

Mostly though, it was just super annoying, but there were weird moments when Naruto was aware in the hairs raising on the back of his neck that things could turn into something far more than annoying.

The most recent one was when the stupid slippery slimy fish that Suigetsu had given him in the place of real decent food like ramen, did what stupid slippery slimy fish always did, and slipped out of his hands. He simply bent down to pick it up and Sasuke was behind him so quickly that Naruto lost his balance through sheer surprise. When he straightened up Sasuke was standing in a defensive stance with all three of the other men around him with one identical glazed look in all their hooded eyes. Naruto couldn’t give the threat any words but he felt it moving up and down his spine like a tangible thing. He decided to remain ignorant rather than explore it. These people were his friends, they were all helping him and Sasuke out of kindness and comradery. These weren’t anything like the rough strangers, creatures that were more animal than human, that given a quarter of a chance, would grab and grasp at him, and drag Naruto in alleys, and push him against walls. These were his friends, so that’s how he’d treat them. He wouldn’t show a flicker of worry or concern. He stepped to the side of Sasuke and chattered on about how much he hated fish and he was never going to eat fish again and talked and talked in his loudest and brightest voice until the tingling in his spine vanished and Kiba was laughing with him about the time he’d eaten a fish covered in sugar when neither of them had any food left in their cupboards apart from an old tin of sardines and the sugar cubes they were both prone to steal from any café they went to.

Sasuke didn’t say anything, but he stared at the others with guarded eyes and didn’t drop his defensive position for a long time.

Strangely, it was the times when he was really asleep that he actually learned the most. The nine-tailed fox who he’d spent so much energy trying to suppress, was now a constant companion in his mind. The first thing the kyubi had said to him was, ‘Finally, kit! I’ve been waiting for you for a long time! You better be ready to listen, because we are going to have to work very hard to protect our young.’

After the incident with the fish, although Naruto had already forgotten it, actively pushing it from his thoughts, the fox had greeted him with one of his fiercest expressions and growled, ‘Don’t bend down in front of givers.’

Naruto glared back at him and indicated the children playing tag around them. ‘If you’re trying to have one of those conversation, I’ve told you not to talk about things like that in front of innocent ears.’

‘If I worried about innocent ears, I wouldn’t be able to say a single word to you!’ The nine-tails gaze softened as he looked at the young spirits gambolling around. ‘And we are going to raise our children better than you were raised, they’ll be knowledgeable and smart, and definitely not suffer any surprise pregnancies!’ The red eyes hardened again as he returned his attention to Naruto.

‘There’s nothing wrong with surprise pregnancies! Well, there is, but not in my case, as I am very happy and Sasuke is very happy and our babies are going to be loved and cared for and never feel lonely because they’ll have us and each other and…’
‘Yes. Yes. Point made. We are all very happy. So keep it that way and don’t bend over in front of givers.’

‘Why not? I was picking up an ugly fish! it’s not like I was waving my ass around all naked and asking to have sex with them or anything.’

Kyubi rolled his eyes. ‘Be sensible. In an ideal world you’d be fine. In fact, normally it’d be fine. You’re strong thanks to me and can handle yourself. But you have to deal with the reality that you are a lone receiver in an enclosed space in heat seasons with givers who would be having as much sex as they wanted if they weren’t stuck here with you.’

‘But I’m pregnant,’ Naruto protested, pouting and folding his arms. ‘I can’t be attractive to them. I do remember learning all that junk about how the core of sexual attraction was all about mating, and I’ve already been mated, so there.’ He stuck his tongue out at the animal.

‘Even you must have seen by now that you don’t work the same as others. Any giver who encounters you at the moment will sense a receiver who wants sex. And your desire for sex is so great that it masks both your pregnancy aroma and the fact that Sasuke has claimed you.’

‘But I only want sex with Sasuke, no one else. Can’t they tell that from my stupid scent thing?’

‘Some maybe. And some maybe won’t care.’

‘What do you mean?’

The nine-tails sighed. ‘Do you know what Sasuke does while you sleep? He nuzzles you and rubs as much of his scent over you as possible.’

‘Huh. Why can’t the bastard do that while I’m awake? All I want is more attention from him.’

‘He’s terrified he can’t protect you,’ the fox said in his deepest growliest voice.

‘Huh, your wrong, stupid fox, Sasuke is not scared of anything. Now this conversation is over, you’ve frightened the little ones.’

The young had stopped playing and Naruto held his arms out to them. They all leaped over to him and he began singing to them. After a few bars the kyubi joined in and even smiled, but he didn’t stop gazing at Naruto with the clear warning in his eyes.

Now with his head in Sasuke’s lap, Naruto thought of that conversation with his inner animal and wished he could form the right question to ask Sasuke about it, and wished that Sasuke would give him the right and truthful answer.

‘Sasuke?’ he said after a long while.

‘Naruto,’ the Uchiha immediately replied.

Naruto paused, and when he did speak it wasn’t the question he’d intended. ‘Why don’t you want me to tell you more about our kits and kittens?’

‘I don’t believe I’ve ever said I didn’t want to know about them.’

‘But you know I am spending lots of time with them and you never ask me any more about them, how they’re developing, what they look like, not that I can really describe that as they’re not
exactly solid like me and the nine-tails are, it’s more like their spirits are with me, but I could still
tell you lots that you don’t know. And you never give me messages to tell them, or…anything.’

‘Hnnnn. I know there’s seven. That’s enough. For now.’

Naruto nodded even though he didn’t understand he knew there was no point pressing Sasuke. It
was better to let it go and relax. For now.

He let all his more troublesome thoughts sink away and focused all his senses on the pleasure of
being close to his lover. And then very soon he did really fall asleep.

*

Sasuke held a constant rhythm stroking both his hands one after the other through Naruto’s hair.
His receiver was sleeping. The sheer amount of time his lover needed to rest had caused him both
real concern about Naruto’s health, as well as the strange frustration of missing his boyfriend even
when they were technically almost in constant physical contact. But now, although the concern and
frustration were still there, both emotions were overwhelmed by a sensation of pure relief that
Naruto spent most of his time in his dreams of a nine tailed fox and seven babies.

Because awake Naruto was a problem.

Because awake Naruto was pure lust.

It would have been so much simpler if Naruto was like the majority of receivers who only wanted
cuddles and kisses, sometimes not even that, when their bodies were exhausted from the toils of
pregnancy.

Though, in anything resembling normal circumstances Sasuke would have been quietly pleased,
maybe even proud, that his chosen life mate desired so much affection from him.

But this wasn’t anything even close to resembling normal circumstances. He was on a boat with a
pregnant, sexually inexperienced, sexually awakened, mate and three other givers whose animals
couldn’t help but respond to the fact there was a receiver amongst them who clearly wanted to be
fucked.

If that was even the correct way of thinking about it. The truth could be nearer to the fact that
Naruto wanted not to be fucked, but to be the one doing the fucking.

On the surface of his mind he liked to explain Naruto’s surplus of obvious sexual desire as a result
of the chaos of pregnancy hormones and his need in his vulnerable condition for reassurance and
connection that linked easily with his new unconscious obedience to Sasuke. There was also the
easy to forget detail in the mess of everything that was happening, that Sasuke and Naruto were a
fresh couple. They had been friends since childhood, but they also hadn’t spoken to each other for
years. This should be a period of discovery and exploration and excitement in each other. They
should be holed up in Sasuke’s room screwing each other into a stupor.

All those things were true, and no doubt part of the reason for Naruto’s sexual eagerness, but when
Sasuke was stripping himself mentally bare, there was the undeniable fact that Naruto’s
uncontrollable erections had started after Sasuke had allowed himself to be fucked in the bathroom.
That was the clear point when things changed and Naruto slipped into an even more precarious
position than the incredibly precarious position he already was in.

Sasuke’s cheeks heated remembering how he’d allowed himself to be fucked hard against a bathroom sink. Sasuke still had the bruises across his hips and pelvic region; purple-blue marks showing vibrantly up against his pale skin. If he’d had the time and luxury to indulge himself, he’d have stood in front of a full-length mirror for hours dancing his fingers across them, the visual story of lust and deviancy that Naruto had left on Sasuke’s body. But there was no time. All he could do was steal a second’s glance in the bathroom, which was the only thing close to privacy on this vessel. And that was not much privacy. Especially not after Naruto broke the lock. And especially not for Sasuke. Every time he went to the bathroom, some internal alarm seemed to go off in Naruto and he’d wake up and come bounding after Sasuke.

The blonde clearly wanted a repeat of what had happened before, yet he behaved more like a whining over-eager puppy dog than the animal that had thrust relentlessly into his giver with insatiable hunger. There was a very real part of Sasuke that was disappointed in this, it couldn’t be his animal side, so it had to be the human that had this cowardly fantasy of having all the responsibility of trying to make the right decision and behave in the right manner taken away from him. Naruto at full strength with all his tails pinning Sasuke down was irresistible.

Which was an explanation of why Sasuke hissed at Naruto to be quiet, but never directly ordered his receiver not to fuck him again.

If he could bring himself to say an absolute ‘no’ to Naruto, Sasuke knew the receiver’s ardour would vanish and things would be at least easier for the other men on the boat. But the years of pining for his friend were too raw in his emotional memory, he couldn’t bear even the idea of the way Naruto looked at him changing back to be the same as he looked at Kiba or any of his other dozens of friends.

There was no way to have the lengthy conversation he needed to have in privacy. Naruto’s sexuality was such a fresh and potentially vulnerable thing, and Naruto had been so ignorant for so long, Sasuke had no idea how to even explain to his receiver that he didn’t want anyone else to ever know that he’d let Naruto penetrate his body without it sounding like he was ashamed of having Naruto as a lover and the things they naturally did together.

Naruto was so loud and excited. His attempts at whispering to Sasuke about how hard Sasuke made him were the equivalent to shouting it in the face of the other three givers. Sasuke had barely managed to cut his lover off before he let everyone on the boat know how amazing Sasuke’s hole felt.

‘You’re thinking too much.’ Gaara was sitting beside him. Who knew how long he’d been there? Not Sasuke and that was the point.

‘I am not thinking enough,’ Sasuke replied.

They remained in silence for a long time. Sasuke’s senses heightened. He became more aware of the movements of the waves, the creaks of the boat, the weight of Naruto against his body like a steadying force, and the absolute quietness of the tanaki.

When Gaara did speak again, only his lips moved, his body retained its stillness. ‘What we spoke about.’

Sasuke gave a small nod to indicate he immediately knew that Gaara was referring to the conversation when he’d confessed his feelings.
‘It has not changed.’

Sasuke nodded again.

‘However, you would have noticed, that my attraction to you may have confused my animal.’

Gaara turned slightly towards Sasuke and Sasuke mirrored his movement leaning a fraction towards the redhead. Unlike the other three men on the boat, Gaara didn’t feel the need to blare out his every thought so when he did speak Sasuke gave him his full attention in a manner that was unusual for him.

Again, there was silence.

Sasuke wanted to be patient but that was a hard thing to be when he had no control over when Kiba or Suigetsu might interrupt them and break this moment apart.

‘Please say what you wish to say to me. You are the only person on this boat that is worth listening to.’

Naruto stirred on his lap and in his sleep made a loud angry disgruntled sound. Immediately, Sasuke stoked Naruto’s forehead with absolute devotion.

_Can you hear my thoughts, my fox? Do you talk to me in your dreams along with our kittens and your nine-tailed inner animal? If it sounded like I was dismissing you as irrelevant, the same as Suigetsu and Kiba, I’m sorry. I do want to listen to everything you say, but you say so much sometimes that it is more just the joy of hearing your voice than the need to attend to every word you utter. Whereas Gaara is an unknown and it’s important that I concentrate so I can try and understand him better so I am more confident in keeping you safe. Do you understand?_

There was another small grunt, not so disgruntled, and then the sleeping receiver snuggled his face deeply into Sasuke’s body.

Sasuke pulled his head back the tiniest amount. _However horny you are, you do still need oxygen, idiot._

‘Forgive the personal nature of the question, but watching you together I have wondered do the two of you possess a telepathic connection? It may be useful information to have when we become engaged in combat.’

‘Hnnnn.’ It was a sound that was neither denial or confirmation. Internally though Sasuke hissed at the thought of how much easier it would make his life if he could communicate with Naruto without fear of anyone else on the boat overhearing.

Gaara gave no sign that he minded his question being dismissed as he asked something else which was even more personal. ‘Why are you refusing to give your receiver any sexual satisfaction? Seeing everything else you are doing for him, giving up for him, it is strange that you do not perform your basic duty as the giver that claimed him.’

Sasuke’s eyes widened fractionally. No one else would have noticed, but he was sure Gaara did.

‘Suigetsu thinks you’re bored of him but too stubborn to admit to us this has all been a mistake and you want to return to your family already. Kiba thinks you’re impotent and Naruto is actually pregnant with someone else’s babies, but Naruto is letting you pretend they are yours to cover your shame as a giver. Or at least I think that is his theory, it is long and a little hard to follow.’ Gaara gave a small companionable smile. ‘But both are obviously wrong.’
‘What do you think is *right* then?’ Sasuke’s heart thumped, did Gaara *know* what he let Naruto do to him?

‘Naruto is clearly not an ordinary animal and Kiba has said enough to confirm that Naruto isn’t an ordinary receiver. That he has never publicly mated with anyone, and Kiba is certain that he hasn’t privately mated with anyone but you.’ Gaara smiled again. ‘Despite his theory that Naruto is pregnant with someone else’s young. Don’t ask me how that is supposed to work.’ Then the redhead’s smile disappeared and his face was serious. ‘So, what I think is that Naruto is so precious to you that you want your coupling to happen away from eyes that see and ears that hear. I think you have been gifted an incredible rarity of a receiver no one else knows and you are jealous and possessive of him.’

Sasuke hoped the relief didn’t show on his face. For some reason it made his stomach feel hollow that this unknown man who had confessed his love, would know that Sasuke let his receiver fuck him, even more so than imagining the loud mocking of Kiba and Suigetsu if they discovered his secret.

‘But in this enclosed setting, all of us trapped together, you are aware of how dangerous it is to Naruto…the scents he is giving off.’ There was an unusual hesitation in Gaara’s voice. ‘I believe you’d be able to defend against Suigetsu and Kiba if their animals overwhelmed them, but…It has been a long time since I’ve spent so much time with other people. I did not anticipate this weakness in me. I’d not have come if I’d known. With each passing day I am more certain that the feelings I have for you are love, but it just makes me more terrified that the strength of my animal’s lust will break me and I’ll hurt your receiver.’

Without thinking, Sasuke put his arm around Gaara and drew the man’s head into his shoulder.

‘You would not touch me if you knew the dreams I had, Sasuke. My animal haunts me in my sleep with a blood lust to claw Naruto’s babies out of his stomach and devour them as if they were nothing but an easy meal. Then I keep him as my fuck slave until he is pregnant with my young.’

The sensation of ice went down Sasuke’s spine though his blood seemed to roar with fire. But he managed to retain his exterior calm.

‘Gaara, you are more in control of your animal than anyone I’ve ever met, than anyone I’ve ever heard about, even in the legends of the most ancient powerful warriors. It torments you with such violent images because it is angry in the certainty that you are too strong to ever allow it a moment of freedom.’

‘That is what I’ve trained and aspired to, but I’ve never felt like this before. It scares me.’

Sasuke glanced down at Naruto’s face snuggled into his lap. *You’re not the only one.*

‘And I do not believe it’ll ever come to this, but to reassure you I’ll tell you, that even if your animal could get past me, it’d be no match for Naruto. His love has no limits and is brighter than the sun, he will *never* let anything hurt our children.’

Gaara nodded and looked up at Sasuke with grateful eyes.

With the conversation hopefully resolved, for now at least, Sasuke waited for Gaara to move away but he remained with his head resting on Sasuke’s shoulder. Unsure what to do with this unfamiliar situation, across his whole life Naruto and Itachi had been the only two people he’d ever been happy having physical contact with, Sasuke found himself with one hand stroking Naruto’s hair and the other’s Gaara’s. Gaara’s body relaxed against his and after some time the red head’s
breathing fell into the steady rhythm of sleep.

Sasuke leant his head back and bit his lip. Had he made things better or worse? The one comfort, and it was a big comfort, was that he realised when he spoke the words about Naruto that he believed them completely. Naruto’s love was far stronger than any of Gaara’s mysterious tricks, Sasuke had chosen the best person imaginable to bear his kittens. He just had to somehow make sure he was worthy of his amazing receiver and he did everything and anything possible to ensure Naruto didn’t have to fight that fight.

*

Sasuke carried the sleeping Naruto into the tiny bathroom. The others were all occupied above board following Suigetsu’s instructions to guide the boat through choppy waters. However much he tried to hide it, they all knew by now that Sasuke’s body was not coping well with sea travel, so him disappearing at a time when he could be of help went uncommented on. They were all, hopefully, for once too busy, to pay him and Naruto, and what might occur between them, any attention.

He clenched his stomach, determined that he would make best use of this time and not acutally succumb to seasickness. Or seaplague as Sasuke had mentally renamed it, ‘sickness’ didn’t even begin to cover the depths of pain that wrenched through his body at times, he had genuinely thought he was going to vomit up his whole stomach on more than one occasion.

But no, he’d been trained all his life to raise above the physical complaints of his body. He had too many important things to do, to give in to weakness at a time like this.

He pressed Naruto against the wall and shook him awake. Which wasn’t an easy thing to do, but bright blue eyes did open and sleepily focus on Sasuke.

‘WhatsupSaskitty,’ Naruto murmured.

Then the half-lidded eyes obviously registered where they were and opened wide.

‘At last!’

Sasuke opened his mouth to explain to Naruto as efficiently as possible that having sex with Naruto was too risky, too personal, so he needed to fuck the others to at least take the edge off their animal lust so they wouldn’t be overwhelmed by Naruto’s aroused scents. Depending how Naruto reacted, Sasuke was willing to be negotiated down to the necessity of only fucking Gaara, but he was going to argue about the need to turn off all his senses and do the deed with all three of the other men, including the dog, to keep Naruto safe. Before he could say any of that, a demanding tongue was thrusting into his mouth, arms were around him pulling him close, and nine fox tails were filling the room twisting around to touch him.

The boat lurched, but Naruto used his hands to brace against the wall and wrapped his tails around Sasuke, so instead of feeling tossed about on the merciless sea, Sasuke felt nothing but warmth and protection.

Now it was Sasuke with his hands fisting into Naruto’s hair pulling his lover in for a deep kiss that left them both panting as if they’d done much more together.

‘I need you sooo much,’ Naruto breathed. His tails hold on Sasuke loosened enough to give Naruto room to pull at Sasuke’s pants.
‘We’ll reach land soon. Then we’ll be free. Just wait a bit longer. Please,’ Sasuke whispered.

Slowly, very slowly as if it was a great effort, Naruto took his hands away from Sasuke’s body and pressed them into the wall, but his eyes were pleading. ‘Why do we have to wait? We did it before and it was amazing. For me. Was it not good for you? Did I do it wrong? Will you give me another chance? Do you want another lover? Or are you really, yaknow, fed up with me like Suigetsu…’

Sasuke gripped Naruto’s face between his hands and kissed him hard. ‘Don’t talk like that. You’re my everything. It hurts that you’d even think that let alone say it out loud as if it could ever be a real thing.’

‘Sorry,’ Naruto said, his head bowing. ‘I just, yaknow, am really new at this and would get if you don’t feel like I do and need to be with other people to feel good.’

‘This is new for me too, dobe. I am not getting random people pregnant with my kittens every heat season. It is you and no one else. Understand?’

Naruto’s answer was to pull him into a tight hug of two arms and nine tails.

Sasuke blushed realising that he had had one purpose in bringing Naruto in here and within minutes he had somehow done the exact opposite of what he needed to. What was he supposed to say now... hey, what I just said, I mean it completely, but entirely for your benefit, I think I need to have sex with every other man on this boat even though they are all givers and not even meant to match with me…

‘Am I hugging you too tightly?’ Naruto released Sasuke and stared concernedly into his face. ‘You look kinda red.’

To distract Naruto from being worried about him, yes, that was the reason, the only reason, Sasuke reached down and rubbed Naruto’s erection through his clothes. The receiver howled in pleasure. Whatever they were doing on deck, they all must have heard that. But there was no stopping Naruto now. He pulled his own pants halfway down his thighs and Sasuke’s almost forgot everything else staring at his lover’s cock. Why was he doing anything else in the world when he could be staring at Naruto’s body all day? In a daze he dropped to his knees and took Naruto into his mouth.

This was not helping anything. In fact it could make everything worse, seeing the last time they did anything sexual it had created these problems, and if the others found out he knelt before his receiver and pleasured him...Sasuke right now didn’t care.

He took as much of Naruto in his mouth as he good and sucked and licked on the most delicious thing he had ever tasted.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading my story, the feedback and support has truly been such an important part of my year and made me smile when other things have been going wrong, so thank thank you thank you xxx
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

The one where Sasuke gets jealous (surprise surprise!) and learns how to give a massage in weird Sasuke and Naruto stylie ;)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

At any point on any day some part of Sasuke’s mind was thinking about how stretched his mouth had felt with Naruto’s cock filling it. Which was distracting and frustrating but still desirable as it took the edge off all his other thoughts.

Some of which were important: how far were they from land, what would they find when they found land, how long the canines on this boat would survive eating fish, how Naruto’s pregnancy was progressing, whether him and the kittens were in the best health they could be, whether the Uchihas had made any attempt to follow them…

Some of which were arguably less important: why were Kiba and Naruto always grooming each other?

Every time he saw them together he was aware of all the years he’d missed out on because of obeying his mother’s warning. He should be the one that Naruto was so relaxed and easy with. He should be the one that Naruto always turned to. But it wasn’t working out that way.

As Naruto’s stomach was growing, his body was hurting and he whined and whimpered occasionally about it to Sasuke, but when he wanted actual help, he wondered casually over to Kiba to ask him if he could give him a massage. As if it was the most natural thing in the world to get a massage from your friend rather than your lover.

‘What sort of massage? Like when you dislocated both shoulders trying to do that mad dance move? Or like when you twisted your ankle dressing up in those big heels for Sakura’s party that you insisted was fancy dress and I told you wasn’t they were just pranking you and I was right? Or like when you pulled your groin playing catch with me?’ Kiba grinned at him also like it was the most natural thing in the world.

‘More like that time when we brewed alcohol with everything we had in the fridge and you dared me to drink it all and I was convinced that I was a twenty foot robot that could fly.’

‘Wow, that bad?’ Kiba had said. ‘I better give you the full works straight away then.’

And thus started the routine of Naruto stripping down to his underwear and Kiba putting his hands all over Sasuke’s receiver’s body.

Sasuke often wondered how people without his Uchiha training in control would have coped with their boyfriend sighing and moaning while another man touched him.

‘Ooooh that’s sooo good,’ Naruto breathed in his most husky voice. ‘You’ve got amazing hands, Kiba.’
Sometimes he actually believed that Naruto was punishing him. And that was a preferable option to the clear truth that Naruto enjoyed Kiba’s massages and was so used to them, he never even thought of asking Sasuke for one.

It may have been able to accept it calmly if it was only one way, seeing Kiba as a lowly server who had a skill that his lover needed temporary use of during the ache of his pregnancy with Sasuke’s young. But feeling rejuvenated by Kiba’s massage, Naruto always insisted on returning the favour.

They clearly knew each other’s bodies, not just rooming together, but being close friends who happily shared every stupid thing they did with each other, and who had witnessed as teammates on the sports field many of the injuries the other had taken. They knew everything and their bodies were familiar maps that they instinctively knew how to navigate, where to knead with firmness, where to caress with the lightest of touches. It hurt Sasuke’s chest as if his heart was swollen up and going to crack his ribs apart, to see such loud and brash men as Naruto and Kiba being so careful and gentle with each other.

On more than one occasion, Sasuke had to mentally fight himself, to prevent the casual intimacy between Kiba and Naruto appearing more important and significant than the fumbles he and Naruto had had. Twice Naruto had fallen asleep while he was being massaged, and Kiba had lay down and slept too, resting his body over Sasuke’s receiver.

Enough of Sasuke’s supposedly impenetrable mask must have slipped that Suigetsu of all people had rubbed Sasuke’s arm and actually tried to reassure him saying, ‘It’s just a dog thing, pack animals like to sleep close. We all know Naruto’s crazy, and I mean literally crazy, about you.’

The idiotic thing was that Sasuke did know how Naruto felt about him. He didn’t doubt for a moment that Naruto was committed to his forever with Sasuke. And if Sasuke seriously confessed his jealousies to Naruto, Naruto probably wouldn’t understand, but he’d definitely immediately stop asking for these massages that gave him release from his great pain just because they niggled Sasuke’s insecurities. Insecurities that Sasuke hated himself for having and made no logical sense.

In a horrible twisted way, Sasuke wished that boundaries of his claiming of Naruto were being overstepped. Anything that would give him a genuine reason to hiss and claw, and if he was extremely fortunate, justify him pushing Kiba overboard and leaving him to paddle in the cold rough sea all alone. Yes, with all the genuine raw threat to Naruto being a sexually ignorant receiver trapped in an enclosed space with three givers who could lose control of their desperate animals at any moment, Sasuke wished for something extra, just so he could beat on Kiba as Naruto’s saviour rather than as an irrationally jealous boyfriend.

But Kiba, who made no secret of the fact that if Naruto were carrying Kiba’s pups he’d be safe with Tsunade getting the best care and support possible rather than drifting lost in the middle of an ocean with no one knowing what was going on, was nothing but a friend when he actually had free reign to touch Naruto’s body.

And Naruto who was always hungry lust, never showed a single sign of desire when him and Kiba were almost naked casually grooming each other, which is what they did amongst the more professional touching of the massages.

A pathetic little whine grew in Sasuke’s body, Cats like grooming too, dobe, give me a chance please to please you. However, whatever problems his clan had caused him, at least the intensity of the training meant that Sasuke was more than capable of ensuring that he never said something so weak out loud.
Even though he was denying Naruto the sexual release the receiver wanted, Sasuke spent a lot of time remembering the few times they’d had together.

When Naruto woke up when it was only the two of them below deck, and the first thing he did was look around for Kiba and the first thing he said was, ‘You think Kiba’s too busy to give me a massage? I don’t want to bother him, I know I’ve been asking a lot lately,’ the only thing that calmed Sasuke was thinking about how he, and just he, Uchiha Sasuke, was the only person who knew what it felt like to push inside Naruto’s body.

And it was that memory that enabled him to reply in his normal voice, ‘You can always ask, Kiba is not shy of saying no if he’s too tired, and Suigetsu is not shy of saying he needs Kiba’s muscle for sailing. No one will be offended by your request.’

Naruto beamed, ‘You’re right. They’ll just tell me to get lost right if they don’t have time, so I don’t have to worry about imposing on anyone, do I?’

‘You have nothing to feel guilty about,’ Sasuke said. ‘The only thing you could do which would make me angry, is suffer in silence when there are people around you who are happy and capable of helping you.’

‘Thanks. You always make me feel better about everything.’ He pecked Sasuke on the forehead and started to bounce off presumably to find Kiba.

Before he’d bounced more than two steps though, Gaara appeared before them. ‘I thought I heard you waking up.’

Nothing flickered on Sasuke’s face confronted yet again with Gaara’s mysterious power. But he couldn’t deny it disconcerted him. Naruto was loud, but he hadn’t been particularly loud in the few words he’d just spoken, so Gaara must have been waiting somewhere and listening for this moment for who knows how long.

As always Naruto appeared nothing but happy to see the tanaki though. He hugged Gaara as if they hadn’t seen each other for years.

‘These little rascals want more attention from me and they get it by using my spine as a slide and my kidneys as punching bags.’ Naruto laughed, but Sasuke watched him carefully for any signs of extra distress. It should be obvious but it was difficult to know if Naruto was joking. With his stories of playing with the kittens in his mind Sasuke couldn’t even guess what was happening inside his lover’s body, after all it was Uchiha young that Naruto was carrying.

‘That is what I wanted to talk to you about, if you have a moment? You may have noticed I’ve been meditating more than normal...’

Naruto interrupted with a big laugh. ‘Sasuke probably did, but I didn’t even know you meditated at all! I just thought you were a quiet kinda guy who likes to sit in the corner a lot!’

Sasuke remained silent hoping that Gaara would assume he had noticed, and not see the truth that Sasuke’d presumed the same as his idiot lover.

‘I’ve been going through my travels in order to collect all the knowledge I have of pregnancy and birth, and I believe I’ve recalled in enough detail the ancient technique of...’ Gaara said a word that didn’t sound like a word.

Naruto got him to repeat it a few times, but even the blonde had a limit to how ignorant he could appear before he started to get embarrassed, especially regarding anything to do with sex facts that
he guessed he was supposed to already know. Sasuke, however, had no more idea of how to
pronounce Gaara’s word than Naruto did, let alone knowing what it referred to.

‘Although I’ve never performed it myself, if we take it slowly, I believe I have studied enough of
the technique to be of use to you now.’

Naruto shrugged, rubbed the back of his head, and looked over to Sasuke for guidance.

Sasuke gave a small nod. He hoped that Gaara’s powers didn’t extend to hearing how much
Sasuke’s heart was thumping giving his consent with no idea what he was giving consent to.

‘If we can get it right, it is a form of massage that is perfected for the relief of pain in pregnancy,
and it’ll give you far more respite than Kiba’s sports massage will.’

‘Oh! It’s a massage?’ Naruto grinned. ‘That’s cool of you to think of me, but Kiba gives more than
a sports massage. We’ve honed it over the years, it does undereating when we’ve run out of money,
evereating when ramen’s on offer, all levels of hangover from…’

‘Yes. I’ve seen that Kiba is very familiar with your body, and studying how he touches you has
greatly increased my confidence that I’ll be able to apply the technique successfully to you.’

Sasuke felt a warmth in his cheeks that he knew he couldn’t disguise. A man who had been a
 stranger until very recently, with a bit of meditation and watching, now believed he could touch
Naruto with more expertise than Sasuke could.

‘Okay. Sure. Go for it. Do you thing. It’s you, Gaara, so I know it’ll be amazing.’ Naruto stripped
off the loose clothes he’d been sleeping in with no more hesitation. ‘Do you want me sitting or
lying down? I can lie on my back or side, but front is out now. I can’t wait to see what you’re going
to do to me.’

Gaara gave a small shake of his head. ‘I won’t be doing anything to you. My role is to pass my
knowledge on. I’ll be instructing Sasuke how to massage you.’

There was no doubt that Sasuke was blushing now, but maybe Gaara wouldn’t notice with the red
glow flushing Naruto’s face and torso.

Naruto was rubbing the back of his head and staring fixedly at the ground. ‘No…um…no…that’s
not going to work…you see, ummmm, Sasuke isn’t into anything like that…it’s not his bag at all. If
you don’t want to do it…you could teach Kiba this new technique thingy and he might give it a
go…. but Sasuke…. ummmm…. no.’

‘How can you be so certain what I am into or not?’ Sasuke snapped forgetting Gaara’s presence. ‘If
you don’t want me to massage you, have the courage to say it outright rather than making it sound
like it’s my decision.’

‘You know how much I want you to touch me,’ Naruto pleaded, ‘But you always say no, that the
time isn’t right, that we have to wait…”

‘A massage is not the same as that.’

‘No. Yes. I don’t know. You’ve never offered, even though I am always going to ask Kiba to help
me out. And that’s not a problem, as, yaknow, you’ve done a lot of things that have surprised me,
but I don’t need you to be someone you’re not, yaknow, you look after me so much, I don’t need
you to be even more touchy feely when I know you’re not that guy, and it probably takes a lot of
effort on your part to be as caring and cuddly with me as you are.’
'Is that what you truly think? That it takes a lot of effort for me to care for you, and cuddle you, and do the things that givers naturally do for their claimed receivers?'

'No. Yes. I don’t know.’ Naruto gazed at Sasuke with wide beseeching eyes. ‘I get confused. It’s all confusing. Some moments you are so tender. When you hold me, I think the whole world could break open and it’d make no difference to you, you’d keep on holding me just the same. Other times, you’ve given up everything for me Sasuke, and that’s scary, and it’s like how can I moan to you about my back hurting and ask you to rub it, when you’ve left your whole family just to be with me. Everything I want is so small compared to what you’ve already done for me.’

‘You are my whole family. After my brother…you were all I had left to keep me feeling real and worth something. You’re carrying my kittens. Something that neither of us planned, but you’ve embraced pregnancy with joy and happiness. Nothing you want is unimportant. I haven’t given up everything, I’ve gained everything with you as my lover.’

Sasuke was glad that Gaara asserted his presence again with a discrete cough, as Sasuke didn’t know what he would have done next. Naruto could access his hidden emotions so easily, that Sasuke feared he’d end up on his knees weeping, declaring his love for Naruto in the most pathetic terms, or sucking his receiver’s beautiful cock not caring who saw. Probably all three at once.

Gaara continued talking as if there had been no interruption. ‘Normally both of you would be naked, complete skin to skin contact is considered essential. But you’re also supposed to be in a place of calm where there’ll be guaranteed peace, warmth and soothing sounds of nature. So for now we’ll have to accept this isn’t ideal and work with what we have. If you are comfortable though, it may help the success of this first attempt if you are willing to be in less clothes, Sasuke?’

Sasuke shot a glance at Gaara. Was this all some strange plan for Gaara to perv on his naked body? But Gaara took the veil away from his face and looked back at Sasuke with the honest vulnerability of his emotions. Sasuke and him may be similar in many ways due to the expectations and hardness of their clans, but Sasuke saw that Gaara’s love for him was not shadowed with the jealousies and possessiveness that Sasuke’s love for Naruto was. Gaara wanted Sasuke to be happy, and he was pleased to help increase the bond between Naruto and Sasuke even though he ached that Sasuke would never touch Gaara the way Gaara could guide him to touch Naruto.

Sasuke gave Gaara a small smile, not much acknowledgement for someone loving you enough to break their own heart just to increase your happiness, but Gaara gave him a small smile back and Sasuke knew they understood each other.

He did undress down to his underwear and followed Gaara’s instructions to sit down with his legs stretched before him, and parted enough that Naruto could lay straight between them with his head resting in the heat of Sasuke’s groin.

Lacking the requited conditions of the perfect temperature to relax in, Gaara put blankets around Sasuke’s shoulders and over Naruto’s body. Naruto yapped on about what was the point of being naked and then covered up again, and his body temperature being all over the place anyway depending on how much the kittens were dancing and singing about inside him. But Sasuke knew his receiver was just nervous. The words they’d exchanged had created an intensity that was only increased by the strangeness of Gaara directing them how to be with each other.

‘Naruto, I know your natural state is to converse, but for this you need to be still and quietly calm. You are a receiver and it is that receptive part of your nature you need to focus on. Think of how it felt when you received Sasuke’s seed in your body and accepted the power of his love for you. A love so powerful that it created new life within you.’
Naruto blushed and wiggled and Sasuke waited for the torrent of words about how Naruto had been the reverse of still and quietly calm when they’d been doing what caused Naruto to get pregnant; the lecture which perhaps Gaara hadn’t been privy to yet, of how Naruto wasn’t a true receiver, his body might mistakenly think it was a receiver, but in fact Naruto knew he was in actual fact a giver; and observations that you didn’t need a powerful love connection in order to get pregnant, lots of people could get kittens through just random hard sex with anonymous couplings.

But Naruto settled silently into peace, his eyes closed and his body relaxed completely against Sasuke’s. If Sasuke wasn’t so familiar with the pattern of Naruto’s breathing he would believe Naruto to be in a deep sleep of beautiful dreams.

Even though Naruto appeared as still as it was possible for a non-sleeping Naruto to be, Gaara continued to give instructions. ‘Relax your jaw, Naruto. Let your tongue rest touching nothing, tasting nothing but the air in your mouth. Be aware of your whole body and focus completely on where Sasuke touches you.’

As Gaara gave instructions to Naruto about how to breathe, Sasuke found himself automatically obeying them too. So that when he was directly addressed by the redhead, Sasuke barely noticed the segue.

‘Sasuke, lightly touch the centre of Naruto’s forehead with your right forefinger, softly stroke down on the right side to his hair line. Leave that finger resting there and put your left forefinger in the centre of Naruto’s forehead. Let it remain there for a moment, then softly stroke down to the left side and place your right forefinger in the centre and repeat.’

In Gaara’s voice it sounds like a clinical procedure, but this gentle restrained touching of his lover felt more sensual than anything Naruto and him had done together so far. As he continued to stroke Naruto’s forehead, one finger at a time, he saw the tenting of the blanket at Naruto’s groin and felt an echoing hardening within his own underwear. But it was nothing like the desperate hunger or lustful yearning he was used to feeling, the only way he could think of describing it was as a physical representation of his eternal devotion to this other man. It didn’t matter that his cock wasn’t getting release any time soon, the connection and the pleasure between him and Naruto went so much beyond the explosive moment of an orgasm.

Over time it felt like Gaara was not separate from them, but was a voice in Sasuke’s own head that instinctively knew how to be with Naruto. One at a time he added in extra fingers until his whole hand was caressing and soothing Naruto’s brow.

The illusion was only broken when Gaara said, ‘The softness of your cat fur will feel particularly pleasing to Naruto at the moment, can you transform your hands to paws and stroke Naruto with the fur side.’

Sasuke had to shake his head. He could do it, but he didn’t want to. Even though it had been years ago, the memories of being trained and punished and trained and punished until he could produce claws ready for attack at will, were not something he would bring into this moment. Gaara might want his fur, not his animal weapon, but it felt too much like the same process to Sasuke.

‘Your tail…’

Sasuke shook his head before the request could go any further and disturb Naruto’s calm with doubts about why his supposedly super controlled giver could not do these simple things for him.

Gaara continued smoothly as he had before. ‘Trace the line of Naruto’s nose with the tip of your forefinger.’
The massage continued slowly over Naruto’s face. Each place Sasuke touched felt as if it was an entirely new and beautiful discovery, his breath caught in pure wonder several times. And he genuinely asked himself searching questions about how he had pined after Naruto for so long without ever noticing how delicate and perfect the blonde’s ear lobes were?

He was rippling his fingers over the curve of Naruto’s neck, only vaguely aware that the deeply content purring sound was coming from his own throat when Gaara gave him the next instructions.

‘Now we can start the           .’

Sasuke no more understood the word this time than he had before, but he felt more peaceful than he had in a long time, perhaps ever, and for once his own ignorance did not disturb him. He barely even blinked at Gaara indicating that the massage hadn’t even started yet when he had been touching Naruto for what felt like a heavenly eternity. He merely obeyed, Gaara’s voice, pulling the blanket down Naruto’s chest, and then in contrast to the gentleness thus far, gripping his hands tightly around Naruto’s shoulders.

‘Feel the pulse of life within this person you love,’ Gaara said, ‘And add your life and your strength to his. You are filled with fire, Sasuke, visualise the fire of your energy passing from deep in your belly up through your torso, down your arms, down to the very tips of your fingers and merging with the flow of Naruto’s own life force.’

It was only words. But Sasuke could feel the heat surging through him desperate to join his lover. And the moment he felt it leave him and pass into Naruto, Naruto’s eyes opened wide and pure, he arched his back, and he let out a primal cry of ecstasy.

Sasuke did it twice more. Moving to touch Naruto’s wrists and then his feet. Sasuke experimented with timing of his ‘fire’, holding it within for as long as possible before it raced into his lover. Each time Naruto reacted at the exact moment Sasuke felt the energy leave him and meet Naruto.

‘I’m so glad it worked. We shouldn’t overwhelm Naruto on the first occasion, but now you know the technique, you can use it for all parts of his body. Avoid the belly completely now, although if you are confidence it can be used during childbirth to give the babies extra energy and make the process safer and quicker for everyone.’ Gaara looked down with possibly the slightest blush warming his cheeks. ‘It is traditional for it to end now with you giving your heat to your lover’s groin area but I’ll let you decide whether you want that or not.’

With a small nod of his head, Gaara turned and disappeared up deck again.

Sasuke remained still for a while, unconsciously licking his lips as he contemplated doing this thing, whatever it was, to Naruto’s sex.

‘Sas, come lie down with me, please. It’s going to sound really odd I know with the way I am always wanting you, but I just wanna be cuddled up with you right now, for as long as we can stay together before, yaknow, we have to do other things.’

‘I have maybe been too strict thinking we couldn’t do certain things until we had more privacy. We could go to the bathroom now and that would be private enough.’ Sasuke spoke quietly. ‘We are both hard. We both want each other and it’ll make it easier for the others if you’re somewhat satisfied and not giving off your lust scent so strongly.’

‘That’s it. I don’t want to squeeze into a bathroom with you. And then however amazing it feels be on edge, waiting to see if you’re going to be all cold and distant on me yet again as you’re all disappointed in yourself for giving into your desire and all ashamed in front of the others. I feel so
peaceful now, I just want to hold onto that together for as long as we can.’

Sasuke wanted to reassure Naruto that he never felt ashamed, but the truth was nearer to needing to apologise for Naruto being able to realise how uncomfortable Sasuke was about the fact that he enjoyed Naruto being dominant and fucking him. He chose to say nothing, instead laying on the floor, or deck, whatever it was called in a boat, and pulling Naruto into his embrace.

After kissing for a while Naruto pulled away with a rueful grin. ‘I can taste your fire. How could I not taste that before? It sucks that Gaara, whose never been near you knew you were full of fire, and me who has been very near you, didn’t. When you going to start educating me properly?’ He punched Sasuke not entirely jokingly on the shoulder.

‘When we have time,’ Sasuke replied.

‘We are stuck in a boat surrounded by sea and more sea. We have nothing but time. My fox tells me more than you do. Should I ask him how Gaara’s energy fire thing works if you can’t be bothered to teach me basic biology?’

‘That is not basic biology.’ Sasuke looked into Naruto’s eyes. He’d been meaning, later, to ask Naruto how he knew when to react, had there been a change in Sasuke’s touch that Sasuke himself hadn’t been aware of? But Naruto obviously believed totally that Sasuke had given him some of his own deep reserves of magical fire energy. And maybe he had. But just because something felt real didn’t mean it was real.

‘See you’re doing tons of thinking and you’re not sharing any of it with me.’ Naruto ran a finger over Sasuke’s forehead, not quite as softly as Sasuke had done at the beginning of the massage.

‘Hnnnn.’ Sasuke caught Naruto’s finger and kissed it. ‘There’s nothing to share. I don’t understand even a fraction of the things Gaara can do. He was educating me today. There is a whole world of things I don’t know, dobe, there are so many answers that I am lacking.’

Naruto stared hard at him as if he didn’t believe him. Then he sighed and rested his head on Sasuke’s chest. ‘I liked what you did. It felt really good, different,’ he said in his quietest voice.

‘Thank you.’

‘I liked it too. You never have to thank me for anything, but especially not when it involves touching you.’

Naruto nuzzled his head against him. ‘Sasuke?’

‘Yes?’

‘My peace is already fading and I am starting to get worry bunnies jumping through my brain.’

Sasuke almost smiled at the image of even Naruto’s worries being cute bouncing bunnies, but he kept his voice serious. ‘What’s bothering you?’

‘The thing Gaara said at the end about, yknow, you touching me with your fire to help the kits have the energy for being born…how exactly will they all be born safely? I am not like entirely dumb, I know….I think I know how it works with female receivers…but, well, you do know, that I purposely avoided learning anything about how male receivers are supposed to work.’

Sasuke spoke quietly. ‘It varies. Egg laying is the easiest and most common, but that obviously isn’t the case with us as you have live babies in you.’
Naruto nodded vigorously against Sasuke’s chest. ‘Yep, they’re definitely not eggs. Eggs don’t sing and do somersaults, do they?’

Sasuke bit his lip. He should have told Naruto about these things at the beginning, but he recognised that he was deliberately putting them off as he didn’t want to face them himself.

‘Sometimes when pregnancy occurs the male’s sex organs change to female ones.’

‘What my cock disappears?’

‘No, it temporarily changes. Although in full honesty there have been permanent changes. But that hasn’t happened with you. Yet. I am hopeful that you’ll be one of the cases where it’ll be a late change that is used as an indication that the babies are ready to be born.’

‘You want my cock to disappear? I thought you liked it.’

‘I do. Which is why I prefer it to the other options. Hyenas as receivers do not exist because birth was so difficult and painful, first time mothers often died even with medical attention.’

‘I am not a hyena. What’s that got to do with me.’

‘Hyenas are felines but with dog tendencies.’

‘So? You’re cat, I am fox, neither of us are hyenas.’

Sasuke wrapped his arms around Naruto. ‘Sorry. I shouldn’t have mentioned it. It is distracting and pointless and isn’t an example, but just another way of avoiding what I need to say. If your genitals stay the same, there are cases where the babies fight to be born as if they are in a female, they get stuck and die, and the receiver gets ripped apart from the inside and dies slowly and painfully of blood loss. To avoid this, your stomach would be cut open. It is an operation that someone as skilled as Tsunade could perform with a chance of most of the kits surviving. But we don’t have Tsuande. We don’t have anyone with knowledge of birthing babies in normal situations. And you have seven kits, which is more than normal.’

‘Oh.’ Naruto said. ‘Oh. That’s why you don’t want me to talk about them. You don’t want to get attached because you don’t think they’re all going to survive.’

‘I don’t want you to get attached to them.’

‘That’s impossible.’

‘I know.’

‘But you chose me to bear your kittens because you had total faith in me being able to keep them all healthy and make them all friends and love them all and not give up on any of them.’

‘Yes.’

‘So I’ll do that, Sasuke. I promise you all our kits are going to be born healthy and happy.’

‘And can you promise you’re going to survive birthing seven kittens and be healthy and happy too?’ Sasuke’s voice was painfully small. It was his job to look after Naruto, and here he was desperately seeking reassurance of something none of them could promise.

‘Of course! There’s no way I’d leave all our kits with you in charge of them. You’d get them reading boring books and not sing with them or play tag or anything fun.’
‘Naruto, I promise you, that if you keep our children safe while they are inside you, I will sing and
dance and play tag and whatever game you all think is most fun when they are born.’

‘I’ll keep you to that.’

‘I know.’

They were silent for some time clinging onto each other.

‘So, ummm, tell me more about these hyena things then. Or whatever will stop me thinking about
things I really really don’t want to think about now. Seeeee I was soooooo right not to pay
attention to anything, otherwise I never ever would have let you get your cock anywhere near me.’

Sasuke chuckled softly. ‘Sure about that?’

He reached his hand down and found Naruto’s bottom and was immediately rewarded with a loud
moan of pleasure before he even did anything remotely sexual.

‘Sure!’ Naruto said with a gritted teeth determination, which Sasuke was pleased to be able to tease
and poke at because it was much easier than thinking about the things he should be thinking about.

Beyond Gaara’s magic fire massage, Sasuke was truly awed by the fact he’d obviously somehow
managed to keep Kiba and Suigetsu above deck for so long. But however much longer he had
alone with Naruto he knew he had to make the most of every second. He pulled Naruto in for a
breathless kiss that he wished could last forever.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you super muchly for continuing to read this story, it is the feedback and kudos
that keeps me dedicated to writing something that originally might have just been a
couple of chapters.

I hope you're all having an amazing start to 2020 and awesome things are happening
wherever you are and whatever you're doing...special hopes that you all know
someone who has magic fire hands :D
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

I am never sure how to tag these things, so feel free to leave a comment if you feel I need to do it differently, but so you are prepared this chapter has a dark moment. I know for some of you it'll be enough trigger warning to say that there is a lot of Kiba in this chapter...but seriously Kiba may justify your dislike of him as he attempts to sexually assault Naruto :( 

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kiba wept and Naruto held him. The sea air swept across their faces stinging their cheeks. The world felt cold and bereft even though the sky was blue and the land they were anchored near was lush and green.

Damn Sasuke for dumping all this stuff on them at once. They’d been stuck on this boat for so long, a normal guy, a nice guy, would have eeked out everything they needed to know. Letting one new mindbending, headfucking, fact sink in before attacking with the next one. But Sasuke wasn’t a nice normal guy. Sasuke was someone who transformed the excitement of finally seeing land and being able to escape from this boat and be free, (and Naruto hoped personally have lots and lots of sex in somewhere private and warm and well stocked with ramen), into a long terrifying lecture about how the world was not at all how they thought it was.

Damn and damn Sasuke again! Naruto hoped that this dumb exploring/scouting/leaving him and Kiba alone to be emotionally devastated /mission thing that Sasuke, Gaara and Suigetsu had slithered off on ended with them…. all returning safely and as quickly as possible...especially Sasuke.

Damn himself. He couldn’t even be properly angry at stupid sexy smart Sasuke.

To make up for his lack of vengeful thoughts, Naruto hugged Kiba a little tighter. His friend didn’t even seem to notice.

This had all hit Kiba the hardest. Naruto had never seen him like this. Sure, he’d shed a few tears when sports results didn’t go how they wanted, and they’d both had emotional drunk moments watching tear jerker films in the middle of the night, but nothing even close to this outpouring of raw grief.

And the strangest thing was that Naruto understood why.

Naruto was well aware how dumb he was in too many areas, and how oblivious to obvious emotions he was, like Sasuke being in love with him for years and he’d never even considered it as a possibility of a possibility! But something had changed within him. He didn’t know if it was permanent or if it was just another one of the strange side effects of being pregnant. Something to list alongside all the aches and pain, the constant tiredness, his belly button changing from an inny to an outy, and also, way more annoying than any physical hurt, the fact that he constantly wanted to both please and fuck the iciest kitty who ever did live.
He hoped it was a real development from all the chatting to his fox, and his relationship with Sasuke, but wherever it came from, Naruto was certain he had a greater insight into the people around him than ever before.

When Sasuke had called them all together and started speaking, and gone on speaking and speaking and speaking, until you could have confused him with the chattiest chatterbox in the whole world, (if you’d ignored what he was saying and the dry tone he was saying it all in), Naruto had looked around at his friends and known intuitively who they were and what they were feeling in a way he never had before.

Sasuke should have been the easiest and most instinctive for Naruto to read, but there was a residual anger, that he still couldn’t quite shake, about why Sasuke had dumped all the information on them at once rather than spread it out in a more sympathetic manner. Plus, (and this was a bit of inner insight, which was also fairly new in its clarity), Naruto recognised that alongside his mad love for Sasuke came pain and frustration. His need for Sasuke was so great at the moment, that when Sasuke continued to physically reject him it hurt. Even on the rare occasions that Sasuke had given him sexual relief, rare meaning twice, it had hurt. Because, despite obvious physical appearances, Naruto couldn’t fully enjoy it. He remained on edge, waiting to being rejected again. Always knowing that Sasuke had introduced sexual pleasure to him, and was now completely in control of when Naruto experienced it again, made Naruto feel vulnerable in a new and fragile way that wasn’t even connected to the previous feeling he would have called ‘vulnerable: when there were unknown givers about in heat season all assuming that Naruto wanted some because all receivers who smelt like him were supposed to bend over for every giver that walked within a country mile of them.

Naruto remembered, though admittedly not too well, his favourite teacher Iruka, giving a class about literature, specifically about some famous poem which apparently after pages and pages could be summarised by just saying, love and hate are entwined, or you always hurt the one you love the most, or the one you love will kill you in the end, or being in love isn’t as good as eating ramen….OK, that last one was definitely only Naruto’s personal interpretation, it turned out he probably didn’t remember Iruka’s lesson at all accurately. But the point was, that if Iruka felt like giving him a lesson on that poem now, he might actually get it.

He loved Sasuke completely. He was certain that if Sasuke had told him at any point in their friendship that he cared for Naruto like a giver cares for a receiver, Naruto’s adolescence would have been completely different. If they hadn’t met by chance in the library, and years more passed before Sasuke revealed his feelings to Naruto, Naruto knew his reaction would always be the same. Maybe, Naruto could have even been the one to approach Sasuke, he may have got there on his own eventually, realising that you didn’t think about someone every single day, even when they were constantly blanking you, unless there was something more than friendship going on. It didn’t really matter, what mattered, was that the bond between Sasuke and him was indifferent to Time, the only way it could change was to get stronger, there was something real and eternal between them that neither could have ever found with anyone else.

Being that much in love, being so happy and content and certain, had an underside of pain, and doubts, the knowledge that now Naruto knew what it was like being with Sasuke he couldn’t emotionally survive without him. If Sasuke got pulled back into the Uchiha clan and blanked Naruto, it wouldn’t merely be a return to the life he’d lived before the library, it would be total and utter devastation. And that was before even thinking about the fact of their kits.

Naruto’s new understanding didn’t extend to the why and the how of it all, it was just an acknowledgement of the complexities of love. His natural spirit wanted to bounce along beside Sasuke until it was time to sleep and then he’d curl up with Sasuke, surrounded by joy and sunshine.
forever. However, he knew that somehow, although it made no logical sense, but, hey, when had Naruto ever done logic, having complete confidence in Sasuke’s love for him, came with a sharp blade of constant pain that his happiness was reliant on another person remaining in love with him forever.

All these feelings, sometimes made him irritable and harsher on Sasuke than Sasuke’s actions ever deserved. Not that Naruto ever showed it. He didn’t suppress his annoyance, he just understood that it came from his own emotions and not Sasuke’s behaviour, and that calmed his tongue before he blurted his anger out.

Though when Sasuke had been lecturing them all, he had been severely tempted to punch his lover firmly in the mouth. And the thing that stopped him was not some new mature inner harmony, but simply that it wouldn’t be fair.

Naruto could beat on Sasuke until his body was so sore and he hadn’t got the energy to deliver another punch, (which would currently be about ooooh ten seconds at a push), but Sasuke would not lay a finger on Naruto because Naruto was Sasuke’s receiver. And again, that was before even considering that Naruto was currently pregnant with Sasuke’s kits. Sasuke wasn’t completely traditional, (luckily or life would be really difficult), the cat was rejecting his whole family for Naruto’s sake, how much more untraditional could you get than that! But he was still an Uchiha who had been raised a certain way, and however much Sasuke had moved beyond parts of his clan, other things were still embedded in him, as they were embedded in most people who hadn’t even had the benefit of the strict Uchiha upbringing. After claiming Naruto, Sasuke’s role would be to protect him, and as far as he could, he’d never do anything to hurt Naruto. Which was good. Which was freaking fandabbydosey amazing. But a part of Naruto couldn’t help missing the fun of being able to provoke the ice prince into rolling about on the floor in scrappy teenage kid brawls.

Though he knew it was for the best, (what would have been the fall out of Naruto and Sasuke going at each other on this teensy boat?!), Naruto still wished he could have punched Sasuke and stopped him saying everything he said. The childish option of simply ending everything with violent outbursts, seemed far better than holding a broken Kiba in his arms.

Having discounted fighting as an option, that only seemed to leave listening. And trying not to get too angry at his lover’s thoughtlessness. Which had been surprisingly easy. Because he looked at Sasuke, the aloof superior Uchiha, and saw the man who had put off for as long as he could telling Naruto how dangerous pregnancy could be to a male receiver. Sasuke carried the whole burden of knowledge himself, because he didn’t want other people to be frightened and worried. No one would ever guess it from his exterior, but Naruto knew that Sasuke had a kind generous spirit and would only cause pain to others when it felt like it was the only option left. He was cold, not because he didn’t care, but because he cared too much. When he let someone in, when he loved someone, he loved someone completely and selflessly. And loving that intensely, it was just self-preservation on Sasuke’s parts to keep his barriers up. Until someone like Naruto came along who crashed through them as if they weren’t there.

That was Sasuke, the love of Naruto’s life, who Naruto couldn’t be cross at even when he was cross at him. But he could still empathise with the poor people who were stuck on a boat and had to listen to him saying things they didn’t want to hear. Gaara, Suigetsu and Kiba were all strong individuals but Naruto had seen strange connections between them that linked them emotionally together.

Gaara didn’t show any shock at what Sasuke said, which with Gaara, didn’t necessarily mean much, as like Sasuke he was an expert at covering his inner emotions. But Naruto guessed even for Gaara, some of what Sasuke told them was totally new information. Yet the redhead didn’t care.
Not for himself. He’d chosen to embark on this journey and he would be with it to the end whatever happened.

For the same reason as Suigetsu.

Suigetsu was like Kiba in that he’d openly said that this was some sort of mad but fun trip which would end with Sasuke returning back to his family. He hoped that the Uchihas, having been given time and space to consider things due to Sasuke’s sea escapades, would choose to accept Naruto. But was perfectly happy telling Naruto that he thought it was far more likely that frustration at Sasuke’s absence and disobedience would make them more determined to pull Sasuke back into line and make certain that Naruto was completely out of the picture.

Suigetsu’s one possible concession to the raw waves of Sasuke’s anger when he voiced these opinions was to shrug his shoulders, grin his pointy toothed grin and say, ‘At least with Naruto’s fat belly showing now, it’ll make it more difficult for your family to deal with him. Most assassins won’t want to take him out. Only the most psychotic and blood thirsty ones like killing pregnant receivers and children.’

And it was that same sharp toothed man who could ride across the storm of Sasuke’s moods pretending not to notice them, that was absolutely devastated when they saw land. He’d made a humming noise, shaking his head and repeating again and again that there shouldn’t be land there.

Him and Kiba had both stared in wide eyed, mouth agape disbelief as they’d drifted towards the clear shape of a world beyond their’s. Suigetsu had tried to explain it as a group illusion caused by the madness of being cooped up together for so long. The man who was easily the crassest of them, was suddenly full of eloquent and intellectual language about a mass of psychological experiments and neuroscientific theories, all well beyond Naruto’s grasp.

However, Sasuke could follow everything Suigetsu said, and rebuffed and refuted it all. Then Suigetsu retreated to the safety of something he knew more about than the Uchiha. He pulled out maps and charts and compasses and pencils and rulers, things he had not touched for the whole of the rest of their journey. The cocky, always confident man chose to hit his own ego by declaring he must have made massive mistakes and lost his bearings, rather than face the truth that Sasuke had been correct all along. There were whole land masses where there should just be sea.

Then he’d kept looking at the land and looking at his map and seemed to give in. For a long while Suigetsu sat still, his mouth opening and closing giving him an appearance of a goldfish rather than a dangerous predator. Kiba, who hadn’t shown any liking for the shark boy before now, had sat beside him and held his hand, sharing in his shock.

Although little did either know that that was just the beginning of having their world view destroyed.

So on one side was Suigetsu and Kiba in an unlikely union, and on the other Naruto and Gaara. Naruto had total faith in what Sasuke told him, once he’d understood Sasuke’s plan to escape to a different unknown world, that is exactly what he’d been expecting to happen. And whatever Gaara had believed, it’d take more than there being land where elders had told him there shouldn’t be, to shake his composure.

But even as Sasuke laid more crap on them, Naruto had had the realisation that in reality Kiba was all on his own in his devastation. Suigetsu, could and would, recover quickly from his life view being toppled, because the person doing the toppling was Sasuke.

On one hand it didn’t make any sense if he tried to work it out, but if he followed his instincts, he
knew it was true, Suigetsu was in love with Sasuke. As was Gaara.

But it also made perfect sense and explained why they were here on a journey that was of no benefit to either of them, whatever Gaara said about wanting company after being alone for so long, or Suigetsu treating it like some sort of college hijinks. There were much easier ways for either man to get what they wanted from life without setting off on a sea trip to nowhere. Unless what they wanted more than anything else was to be close to Sasuke.

They were both givers, and Naruto knew that the animals inside them would always choose Naruto as a receiver for sex, but for some reason their human hearts had chosen Sasuke to love.

So, it wasn’t Suigetsu and Kiba together in their shock against the other three. It was Kiba alone. And what he’d realised about Kiba had caused Naruto the most sadness, even more than anything Sasuke was saying.

As Suigetsu loved his roomie, Sasuke, Kiba loved his rommie, Naruto.

All the remarks recently and over the years that Naruto had taken as jokes, or Kiba just having a horny day, were real. Kiba wanted to have pups with Naruto. And he’d believed it would happen. Like Suigetsu, he thought Sasuke would return to his family and abandon Naruto as a childish mistake, a regrettable mad fling. Then Kiba would be there as the loyal reliable friend who’d never put Naruto through what Sasuke had.

Kiba accepted Naruto loved Sasuke, probably always had and always would, but was confident that Naruto would eventually settle with him and they’d be happy together. Seeing that Sasuke had been right about there being worlds beyond their world, wasn’t just a shaking of Kiba’s core beliefs, it was a breaking open of his dream. Sasuke wasn’t going to return to the Uchihas; he was going to stay in these strange new worlds. Sasuke was actually going to do what he’d been telling them all along, he would make a new home in new lands. With his receiver and his children. And Kiba would be forced to accept that Naruto would never be his.

All these new realisations were a lot to process. Naruto would like to retreat inside himself and chat to his fox about it all. But there was no time. Sasuke took Suigetsu and Gaara off almost immediately to ‘explore’, and once they were gone Kiba released all his grief into the arms of his friend.

With them out of sight, Naruto made a quiet decision. The only person he needed to be concerned about was Kiba. Sasuke, who spoke things that weren’t even in the outer shadows of other people’s thoughts, must know that Suigetsu and Gaara had feelings for him and be dealing with that in his own way. Whatever that was it wasn’t Naruto’s problem to worry about. Kiba was Naruto’s sole concern.

Kiba’s current distress was not only revealed through his tears, his tail and ears were showing and when he looked up at Naruto his eyes were more dog than human. Sharper than normal canines flashed as he spoke.

‘Do you think Sasuke was right? He can’t be right!’

Naruto stroked Kiba’s hair. ‘There’s definitely land, Kiba, we can’t deny what we see with our own eyes.’

‘But the rest! The rest of what he said! It can’t be right!’

‘I believe him,’ Naruto said quietly.
Kiba jerked away, his legs wobbled slightly even though through their long time on a boat he’d never had any problems with being at sea.

‘I don’t know why I am asking you, you’re so dumb for him you let him knock you up. And then act like it’s a good thing even when it involves the all mighty Uchiha clan wanting to murder you and your young.’ Kiba scrubbed the tears from his face, anger obviously now being an easier outlet for his twisted up emotions than crying. ‘Why would you want to be with that sort of maniac, Naruto? Were you actually listening to anything the bastard was saying, or were you too busy gazing at his pretty face and praying that he’ll ram you soon? Not that you have any gods to pray to anymore, according to him we were created by the unevolved for sex objects!’

‘We were designed for war first. Sex came later when they discovered how much we like it when we’re in heat. See I was listening.’ Naruto risked a grin at his friend, but Kiba wasn’t ready for the mood to be lightened.

‘And were you also listening to that part where we rebelled against them, almost got exterminated, but then they decided we might be worth keeping for observation, in case they want to use us again at a later date, so we were given an island to live on and stay on forever…and Sasuke tells us all this after he’s taken us into enemy territory?’

Naruto nodded. Even he was short of words today.

He knew there was a lot to agitate a person in Kiba’s simple summarisation of what it had taken Sasuke an eternity to explain.

They’d always believed they’d been created by the gods because the unevolved were such a disappointment to their creators. They were supposed to be superior in every way, like the unevolved had been a practice run and the gods got it perfect with them, second time lucky kind of thing. And because of their many gifts they were blessed and loved by their gods.

But according to Sasuke, there were no gods. Or the unevolved were their gods. Because it was the unevolved that had made them in science labs as weapons and toys and whatever in hell the unevolved wanted to use them for.

Then, giving no time to absorb that soul destructive bomb, Sasuke had added in the information that their life home, what they thought had been the whole world, was in fact a prison the unevolved had put them on to keep them safely away from what they considered to be decent humanity.

And then on top of all that, there was the new knowledge that instead of the unevolved being wiped out and completely replaced by them, (aside from the odd throwback that was born fully human without any animal characteristics), the unevolved outnumbered them and actually monitored them to check their population didn’t increase beyond certain limits: hence the encouragement for only the strongest of a litter to survive, and the constant threat of territory wars. Sasuke had even said that some of the worse diseases that had hit them through their history had been part of population control by the unevolved.

‘How can you just sit their calmly and accept all this?’ Kiba growled. ‘That our whole culture is one big science experiment for scum that aren’t even as advanced as us! Fuck knows what twisted game the Uchiha is playing with us, but everything he said, everything he’s done is a lie! I know you’re stupid, but you have to be able to see through him!’

‘Sasuke knows what he’s talking about. There’s no other reason he’d warn us with all this stuff, unless he was certain it was the truth. And in a way, it’s not a new thing out of the blue. You
remember when we were kids and he did his free presentation at school on the unevolved and even the teacher was really bored? He always spent a lot of time researching the unevolved, he never told me why, though I just put it down to him being smart and knowing how smart he was, and wanting to show off knowing things no one else did. But it all makes sense now, you know, when he mentioned overhearing things his dad said when he was little and wanting to know what it meant. And now he believes his dad is one of the few of us that knows the whole facts and liaises with the unevolved in their monitoring. It totally explains why, when no one else gives a piss, Sasuke dedicated so much time to studying them.’

Kiba snarled. ‘Is that all you care about? That your blasphemous boyfriend saying there are no gods explains his fucking studying habits?’

Naruto blushed. He bit his lip. He was not saying the right things. Whatever enlightenment and growth in wisdom was happening within him, it wasn’t putting the right words into his big mouth. Kiba was the most broken he’d seen him because of what Sasuke had said; Kiba possibly had real feelings for him and was extra broken that he was claimed and pregnant by Sasuke; and what was Naruto doing: blabbing on about Sasuke!

‘I’m sorry. You know how much I care. I just, you know, am probably too dumb to absorb it all and what it means straight away. In a couple of days when everyone else has settled down, I’ll be having a mad hissy fit and you’ll have to be looking after me and telling me it’s all going to be all right.’ He gave a self-deprecating smile and held his arms out offering Kiba a hug.

Kiba paused with narrowed eyes for a moment before he relented and stepped into Naruto’s hug.

Naruto ruffled Kiba’s hair, which was more doggy than human at the moment. ‘I know this isn’t good whichever way you look at it. And I know you shouldn’t even be involved in any of this crap. You just got pulled into it because you were looking out for me.’

Kiba snorted. ‘I need to, because you can’t look out for yourself. It’s hard work being your friend.’

The insults about him being stupid and useless were tending to be nearer to things icy Sasuke said to him than boisterous Kiba, Kiba and him were usually more jokey in their banter than the bickering him and Sasuke indulged in. But now wasn’t the time to react to anything like that, Naruto had even just admitted himself how dumb he was. Kiba needed comforting, and a lot of it, to get him back on track.

He gave his widest grin. ‘Believe me, I’m grateful for it, bro. There’s no one else I’d have chosen as my roomie.’

‘What, not even your beloved Sasuke?’

‘Ha! Sasuke wasn’t even talking to me then, so definitely not. It’s you all the way. No doubts about that.’ Naruto managed to respond immediately without pause, and almost honestly. His mind clouded though with thoughts of what him and Sasuke could do if Sasuke hadn’t blanked him and they had been living together for as long as him and Kiba had. They’d probably have a hundred kittens by now!

Kiba smiled a canine smile, ‘No doubts, hey?’

Maybe some of his lustful thoughts had shown on his face and his friend had misinterpreted them because Kiba lunged at Naruto’s mouth and had his tongue halfway down Naruto’s throat before Naruto could react and push him away.
‘What the fuck, man!’ Naruto managed to stop himself spitting to get the taste of the unwanted kiss out of his mouth, fearing that that was not what Kiba needed to see at the moment, but he couldn’t stop himself furiously wiping at his lips with the back of his hands.

‘Exactly, what the fuck.’ Kiba prowled back and forth in front of Naruto. ‘You were my best friend and then Sasuke shows you his cock and suddenly you turn into Sasuke’s little bitch. I used to respect you. But that’s all you are in the end isn’t it, a teasing little bitch.’

With every second Kiba was becoming more animal and less human. Naruto stood uncertain. Kiba’s manner, what he was saying, how he was saying it, Naruto could process Sasuke stripping away their whole religion better than he could process what was going on with his best friend. So much for thinking he had new insight. Later he’d tell Kiba about his thoughts and they’d laugh together; how Naruto had been hanging around Sasuke too much and it was rubbing off on him to the point that he actually arrogantly believed he understood what was going on with his friends’ emotions, and was even certain that Kiba was in love with him! How Kiba would laugh about that. But that was later. Now Naruto’s mind was stuck trying to work out why Kiba was pronouncing ‘bitch’ as if it was the worst insult he could think of rather than simply the name of a female dog.

‘Have I done something really wrong? More wrong than normal. Like the time when we…’

‘And you’re such a dumb little bitch you can’t even choose a giver who wants to fuck your pretty plump ass like it needs to be fucked.’ Kiba snapped across Naruto’s attempt to draw him into the safe ground of one of their shared silly memories.

‘Kiba?’ Was all Naruto could croak out.

‘Don’t look all innocent like that as if you don’t know what’s going on. I can smell how desperate you are for cock. You’ve always had a sweet inviting scent, but this is like times a thousand. I guess I should thank Sasuke for waking you up and you should thank whatever gods you believe in now that I like dumb teasing bitches and am going to give you the fucking you deserve.’

The attack should have been obvious from what Kiba was saying and how his animal had taken over, but Naruto’s muscles were frozen in shock as Kiba hit him across the face and easily flipped him down onto his front. Naruto did thank the gods that some instincts kicked in and he was able to brace himself enough against the fall to protect his belly. But that was all he could do, fight to keep himself in a position to stop his stomach being thumped into the ground as claws and teeth tore at his clothes and steel like muscles forced him to stay hunched over.

A sharp wind cut across the newly bared flesh of his back and buttocks. He felt a multitude of stings where his skin had been clawed at.

‘Kiba, you don’t want it. Not like this,’ Naruto gasped.

Kiba replied but it was growls and snarls that Naruto couldn’t understand. He remembered how different it had been with Sasuke in the library when he’d felt the happy vibration of Sasuke’s purrs through his whole being and felt their meaning through to the depths of his soul. He also remembered how rough he’d been with Sasuke in the bathroom of this boat…if Sasuke had asked him to stop, would he have been able to?

Naruto heard a howling noise and knew it came from him. There were tears in his eyes, not from the physical pain, but from the pounding return of the fear that had been in him since he was so young. He thought being with Sasuke had provided him a safe emotional relationship to finally explore and learn about his animal side. But the truth was, what he’d always known, that nowhere
was safe if you were a receiver who didn’t want to be mounted.

His fox had tried to warn him about the position he was in surrounded by givers, but Naruto had ignored it, not thinking that something like this could happen with people he knew and liked and in Kiba’s case, even loved. His fox had even tried to educate him about something that he hadn’t missed at school, because it apparently was deliberately never taught, that givers had the ability to release chemicals that would make a receiver dopey and at the mercy of the giver. Naruto had disobeyed it, not bothered to check with Sasuke, because if it wasn’t even taught at school, it wasn’t real right? Apart from the fact Sasuke had only just today dropped a whole bunch of facts on them that no one was supposed to know about. Was that today? It seemed so long ago. So long since he’d last seen beautiful Sasuke.

Naruto could feel his mind slipping away from him. If the chemical thing was real what was he supposed to do? He could feel the kitties kicking out within his belly, responding to the panic and fear pulsing through his body. Would it be better just to let go, to let Kiba do what he wanted, rather than fight it and risk his babies being injured?

It wasn’t as if he was putting up much of what could be called a fight. He guessed that it was Kiba his best buddy internally struggling back against Kiba the enraged animal that was what was saving it all from already being over. And not in Naruto’s favour. Yep, his best hope was in a mad animal being able to tame himself.

Kiba was mainly focusing on parting Naruto’s butt cheeks with only an occasional thump to Naruto’s back or legs, and just one time, grabbing Naruto’s hair to yank his head back before smashing it down into the deck. Naruto was so far managing to resist through the natural tension in his muscles and small movements that were way more painful than they should be, a slight crawl forward, a tiny kick backwards. He knew how to fight, he knew how to protect himself, but he didn’t know how to protect his babies.

Even before his mind had got as fuzzy as it currently was, Naruto hadn’t been able to think of a fight sequence which wouldn’t potentially expose his belly and put his little kittens at risk. In a way he was glad that Kiba was focused on his butt. He didn’t want to turn around giving Kiba an unignorable reminder of his condition, and have Kiba forget his lust and instead remember how angry he was that Naruto was pregnant with another giver’s babies.

Naruto gritted his teeth. Today was obviously the day of learning things:

All the stuff Sasuke had said about the unevolved.

His own insights about the people around him.

His own insight that his own insights were very limited and he was still way too naïve.

Kiba’s inner animal was much more dangerous than an occasional unwanted leg humping.

And then the most recent piece of learning about himself, that even if he had no chance, even if it’d be less pain and safer, even when his limbs were trembling and his mind was fading, he was incapable of giving up.

Summoning the reserves of his strength, he jerked backwards into Kiba. It was pitifully weak for the amount of energy it took, but it surprised the dog and knocked him off balance. Naruto desperately wanted to take the opportunity to get properly to his feet and run. He hadn’t thought where he’d run to in the limited space of the boat, his mind was still alert enough to know he couldn’t go overboard into the water, he just knew he wanted to run. But he couldn’t even do that.
His legs couldn’t take his weight and he toppled forward onto all fours.

Well, if all he could do was crawl. Then crawl is what he’d do. He dragged his body forward, his nails digging into the decking. All he could concentrate on is one small movement at a time. And then the next. And then the next.

It felt like he had to have travelled miles. That he was no longer on the boat but had found a magical planked gateway and crawled all the way to Sasuke and safety. Before his mind went into darkness, his eyes focused on the scratches he’d made in the wood, he’d barely moved a couple of inches. He hung on long enough to twist onto his side and not fall flat onto his tummy. The last thing he saw was a snarling dog towering over him, globs of saliva dripping from its hungry mouth. Then all was black.

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‘Naruto! Naruto, baby, please. Please. Answer me. Please be okay, my dearest darling.’

‘Darling?’ Naruto spoke before he managed to force his eyes open. They felt like they were burnt shut.

For a moment everything had a red hue, he saw a blob that was knelt before him holding his hands…no holding his paws, and his skin wasn’t skin, but orange fox hair. He blinked a couple of times. Hell, his eyes felt sore and crusty. He went to wipe them, but the blob that was starting to look more like Sasuke, complete with pointy hair and perfectly placed bangs for maximum mysterious sexy allure, caught his hands before he could touch his eyes.

Naruto gazed down at his hands which were paws and saw the giant claws where normal chewed ragged fingernails should be. Yep, probably best not to put those anywhere near his face.

‘What happened?’ him and Sasuke asked at the same time.

They smiled at each other. At least Naruto hoped he smiled. His mouth felt weird like it couldn’t move in the normal mouth ways.

‘Gaara and I found you and Kiba, both in near full animal form, passed out. Gaara is checking on Kiba who is completely unconscious, and I’m sorry, Naruto,…. He looks seriously injured. You seemed more to be sleeping, dreaming even, your tails were moving wildly and you were growling. I’ve never seen you like this before.’

Naruto instinctively tried to put his hands protectively on his belly before he remembered he had claws not hands. ‘Are our babies okay?’

Sasuke stroked Naruto’s belly for him. ‘Whatever is going on with your outside, your body is obviously still doing a great job of caring for them. They’re fine. I’m surprised you can’t feel them, they seem to be even more lively than usual. I can even see your tummy move with them. It’s both very cute and very frightening.’

Despite being more fox than he’d ever been in his life, Naruto felt strangely calm. He leaned in and nuzzled against his mate. Of course, his babies were fine, he’d know if any of them were hurt, he could feel their spirits safe inside him.

‘Why did I change, Sasuke?’

‘Hnnnn. That’s what you are supposed to tell me. You don’t remember anything?’
Naruto shook his head. ‘I remember you talking for ages and ages. Everyone being sad and shook. You guys going off to explore and leaving me and Kiba here because Kiba was extra sad and shook. Me being a great friend and comforting Kiba. Then…’ He shook his head again. ‘I don’t remember anything else.’

Sasuke continued to stroke his belly. ‘I was scared that the unevolved had found you and attacked, but there’s no signs of that anywhere. I don’t know what else it could be.’ Sasuke tilted his head back with a big sigh. ‘I’ve not been a good giver to you, have I? I take you from one dangerous situation to another.’

Without thinking, Naruto put his arms around his lover, he stopped when he remembered the humungous claw things he was currently stuck with. But Sasuke didn’t seem to mind, leaning into Naruto’s touch, despite the fact Naruto must be scratching him up really badly.

‘You know your stuff, Sasuke, and you made the decision that we’d be safer with the unevolved than anywhere else, so trust yourself. I trust you.’

‘Thank you, Naruto.’

‘You mean Darling. Call me Darling again, that’s my name as far as you’re concerned, From now on in I’m only going to answer to my dearest Darling.’

It had to be sign of how worried Sasuke was about him, that the Uchiha laughed and immediately said, ‘My dearest darling, completely adorable, most beloved lifelong mate, Uzumaki Naruto, will you please allow me to take you downstairs and give you something to eat? Transformations like this take a lot out of you, especially an unexpected one, you’re going to need some food. I think you’ll be very pleased with what we managed to scavenge and bring back to you in airtight containers.’

‘Why are you wasting time with all this talking, take me to the food!’ Naruto licked his lips, that did not at all fill like lips, mainly due to being hairy and hard. But he’d think about all those things later. He had Sasuke and his sweet sweet scent right next to him and the promise of food that wasn’t slippery ugly fishies. What more could a fox-boy want?

*

Sasuke stroked his hand through his sleeping lover’s hair. Naruto had more or less returned to normal now, but he still had orange streaks amongst his normal yellow hair, two twitching fox ears and three bushy tails wrapped around Sasuke’s back.

For once Sasuke was alert to Gaara’s approach and looked up as the redhead came towards him.

‘Kiba is going to survive,’ Gaara said in a plain voice.

‘Hnnnnn.’

‘You smelt it,’ Gaara stated rather than questioned.

Sasuke somehow kept his own tone as neutral as Gaara’s. His parents would have been proud, if they were in place that they’d ever be proud of him again.

‘Not at first. I was too concerned about Naruto, and focused on looking for signs of the unevolved.’
‘But later you realised. You know what happened.’

Sasuke stared past Gaara. ‘Naruto doesn’t seem to have any memory of it.’

‘That can be one of the side effects. I suppose it helps keep it secret.’ Gaara with surprising tenderness stroked Naruto’s shoulder. ‘I’d heard of it in my travels, but even with the things I’ve seen, I didn’t believe in it, that givers would have such an ability to use against receivers. But somehow as soon as I caught the scent on Kiba I knew what it was, what he’d done, or at least tried to do. There was no damage to Naruto there?’

Sasuke could only shake his head. As Naruto’s human form had returned, bruises and welts were revealed over the tan skin. Sasuke hated what he’d had to check for as Naruto slept heavily in his arms.

‘I didn’t think so from the scents. Either Kiba was able to gain control of his animal. Or from the scene we found, the far more likely option, Naruto’s animal took control.’ Gaara’s eyes lowered and his voice softened but filled more with raw emotion. ‘It sickens me that this happens to anyone. I can barely stand that it happened to Naruto. I knew he was in danger from our animal desires, but after talking to you, I was confident he’d be able to protect himself. That this occurred now, when we finally found land and will no longer be living on top of each other…’ Gaara’s voice trailed off.

‘Naruto did protect himself.’

‘Yes, his fox must be powerful to fully emerge and be resistant to Kiba’s pheromones.’

‘Naruto is powerful, the fox is part of him.’

‘I’ll be eternally grateful for the fact that he was able to defend himself when we left him so unknowingly in such danger. It was obvious that Kiba was most badly affected by the information you imparted, but I did not realise for a moment he was so near the edge. I thought Naruto would be able to comfort him as they are such close friends.’

‘I presumed the same. It is not on you alone,’ Sasuke said.

Gaara was silent for a while he sat down next to Sasuke and after a moment quietly asked, ‘Does it worry you? That we may have that in us too? That if something pushes us too far in the wrong direction, we’d do the same as Kiba?’

‘No.’ Sasuke reached out and put his hand overs Gaara’s.

Gaara gave him a grateful smile. ‘Do you think this occurs often? To receivers unable to resist. And no one ever knows.’

‘I am sure no one wants to hear more of my research, but it is unfortunately relevant. The unevolved have a word for it, rape. When I first came across it I thought it was an aberration in unevolved civilisation. Now I see that they acknowledge this darkness, whereas we act as if a receiver will always want the attentions of a giver, when we know that is patently not the case.’

‘It goes both ways; I am certain you as a giver must have had attention you didn’t want.’

‘Not like this.’

They were silent again. Sasuke gave Gaara’s hand a gentle squeeze then returned to stroking his sleeping lover.
When Gaara next spoke it was in his normal voice, similar to Sasuke’s own customary tones, devoid of emotion. ‘If it is relevant to what you want to do next, Kiba was probably completely unaware of what he was doing. I suspect he’ll have no more memory of it than Naruto does. However it got to that point, something broke in both of them.’

‘Hmmnn.’

‘What do you want to do? Certain courses of action will be easier now with Naruto asleep and unaware.’

Sasuke gazed down at his lover, his friend. ‘I’ll be honest with you, Gaara, as you have often been honest with me. If Kiba had…penetrated Naruto, whatever the circumstances I’d kill him. If it was consensual, I’d kill him quickly. If it was the other way, I’d kill him slowly. I’ve no doubt about that.’

‘It makes a difference that he wasn’t successful? Even though it is sadly clear what his intent was and our assumption is that it’s only Naruto’s strength that stopped him, not his own conscience?’

‘Yes. I wouldn’t have thought so if you asked me hypothetically before, but living through this, this is how I am experiencing it and it does make a real difference. If I found Naruto smelling of Kiba, I know I would not be able to restrain myself.’

‘So what do you want done then?’ Gaara’s voice was pure patience, but his eyes were more questioning, and filled with the pain of the attack on Naruto.

Sasuke gave a small smile. ‘Am I right in thinking you think I am wrong? That Kiba deserves to die?’

Gaara echoed Sasuke’s smile, though there was no happiness in either of them. ‘Yes. If I didn’t respect you as much as I do, I would have finished him myself. But I considered it’s up to you to deal with the punishment yourself. I didn’t consider you would let him live though, only that you may wish to prolong his death.’

‘We are very similar. Because those are my thoughts. You defer your anger to me because you think it is my right as Naruto’s giver to punish Kiba. And I know it’s not my right. It’s Naruto’s.’

Gaara’s brow creased up. ‘Sasuke, I don’t want to disagree with you, but I have to. Naruto has suffered enough when he should be in complete peace being pampered in his pregnancy. You cannot put the burden on him of choosing the fate of the man who was such a close friend to him! And as he doesn’t remember, are you going to deliberately awaken all that trauma in him?’

Sasuke’s facial expression didn’t change. ‘Before my senses had pieced together what had happened, I told him Kiba was unconscious and badly injured, yet Naruto didn’t ask once after his friend. The Naruto I know would have been crawling over to Kiba, holding his hand, desperately caring for him however much pain he was in himself. But as I said, Naruto didn’t mention Kiba once. At some level he knows that Kiba attacked him. If these memories surface in more solid form they will surface naturally. I won’t force anything.’

Gaara continued to frown at him.

‘To be clear, what it means, is that if Naruto wakes up now with no conscious memories of anything amiss between him and Kiba, I will not be in a position where I have to explain to him that I killed his friend because I suspected Kiba of attacking Naruto. And if he wakes up today or tomorrow, or in ten years time with a sudden recollection of events, then it’ll be his choice, and his
choice alone, how he wants Kiba to be punished.’

Gaara shook his head. Sasuke had never seen the other man so clearly upset. ‘You are his giver, it is your responsibility to protect him, not leave something like this hanging in the air indefinitely!’

‘We both chose not to follow the traditions of our family and the rules that were dictated to us…’

‘This is not the same! This is Naruto’s emotional well-being. Naruto is like a child in so many ways. He can’t be pressured like this. And he is also so full of love, he wants the world to be good so he imagines it is good. You know he’ll forgive Kiba and Kiba will go unpunished.’

‘Gaara.’ Sasuke put a soothing hand on the redhead’s shoulder. ‘It is the same. We had families that decided they had the power and wisdom to make decisions for us, and that we were helpless children who were ungrateful outcasts if we didn’t meet their expectations. Naruto is the one who was attacked, not us. If he remembers, it has to be his decision. It doesn’t have to be something you or I would agree with, it has to be what feels right to him, and if that is to forgive Kiba then I’ll support him.’

‘You can forgive Kiba for what he tried to do to Naruto?’

Sasuke sighed heavily. ‘No. I don’t think I can. I don’t even want to. I’d be relieved, if that is the right word, if Naruto woke up full of vengeful anger and shouted at me for not ripping Kiba’s guts out as soon as I realised what had happened. But I have to try to be the best I can for Naruto. I’ve done so many things wrong, and I am fully aware this might be another thing I am doing wrong, but I still have to try my hardest to resist my own needs to make that mongrel suffer and instead do what I think my stupidly kind Naruto would want.’ He tilted his head towards Gaara and said in a soft voice. ‘You don’t think Kiba will remember either? Fuck, I don’t even know if that’ll make things better or worse.’

Sasuke looked down at tears falling on his lover’s body and realised he was crying. This should have been a happy day, a celebration that he’d been right, there was a whole world out there who had never heard of the Uchihas, where Naruto and him could live out their lives peacefully together.

But that wasn’t to be. Not today. Not yet.

‘Hnnnn.’ Somehow he managed a small smirk. ‘I guess I should be thankful for small mercies. I have no idea what would have happened if Suigetsu hadn’t chosen to continue scouting. There would be no possibility of keeping it quiet then.’

‘Maybe that’d be for the best,’ Gaara said. ‘But it is your choice to give Naruto a choice.’

There was no disguise of the discontent in Gaara’s voice, but he put his arms around Sasuke and they pressed their heads against and the two men who hated showing their emotions cried together as Naruto slept blissfully unaware of the grief they were feeling for him.

Chapter End Notes

This was a very difficult chapter to write and took me a long time. I don't know if I'll edit it at some future point or just leave it be now. I hope it works. I thought this would be a light fluffy story when I posted the first chapter, but dark things always creep into
my writing somehow :((((
Naruto woke up to the sound of Sasuke’s heartbeat. And Suigetsu yelling out, ‘What the fuck happened to Kiba?’
Whatever Gaara’s response was it was too quiet for Naruto to hear, but he couldn’t ignore the tension in Sasuke’s body. He knew he should be asking the same question himself. Instead he closed his eyes and went back to sleep.
‘I should tell you,’ the fox said, eyes red and narrow.
Naruto shook his head and danced around with his little children.
‘You cannot pretend you don’t know forever,’ the fox said.
‘Maybe not forever. But not now. Not yet. I need to concentrate on my babies. Nothing else.’
Naruto gathered his children around him and sang out the happiest songs he knew. The children joined in clapping and laughing, filling Naruto with joy and reassuring him that this was all that was important. Everything else could be forgotten for as long as possible. Which hopefully was a very long time indeed.

Naruto kept his eyes closed as the other argued around him. He focused on how gentle Sasuke’s hand was caressing through his hair, even as the Uchiha was at his iciest with Suigetsu. He tried just to think about the warmth of his lover’s fingers and how good they felt massaging over his scalp. But he couldn’t shut all the words out. He listened without wanting to listen.
Sasuke and Gaara were trying to ‘encourage’ Suigetsu to sail back home. And take Kiba with him. Suigetsu was refusing.
They were saying variations of the same thing again and again.
‘How the fuck are you expecting me to play nursemaid and control a ship all by myself?’
‘This isn’t a ship. This is a boat which has always been too small for all five of us.’
‘All this time you’ve been boasting how useless we are and you are effectively doing everything yourself.’
‘You’re deliberately ignoring the part about me playing nursemaid. I am not a medic and have you seen the state of him, he needs a medic, not me throwing a bit of antiseptic cream and bandages on him when I have time.’
‘Exactly. Kiba needs to be taken home to get the proper medical attention he needs. I think it is safe to assume we are not going to be coming across a friendly unevolved doctor who will be capable of treating one of us anytime soon.’
‘You leave him with just me caring for him he’ll die before we get half way home!’
Gaara and Sasuke were both silent for a beat after that. Before Sasuke spoke again in an almost soothing tone.
‘Suigetsu, you’ve done an amazing thing for me which I’ll never be able to repay. But I don’t want you to be drawn any further into this. You’ve taken us safely to newlands, there is nothing more I can ask from you.’
‘Oh, so now you’ve got what you want from me, I’m dismissed from your Lordship’s presence? Is that it? You’ve got no further use for me so I can go? And do what? Return home with a dead dog and just continue my studies as if none of this has happened, as if I don’t know that everything is
‘That’s what you always planned. You’ve viewed this as an adventure and adventures have ends.’
‘But this one hasn’t ended yet! I thought we’d all be going home together once everyone saw there was just sea and more sea. But now there’s land, and there’s unevolved, you can’t seriously expect me to be able to return to normal after finding that out. I’d always be thinking of you and wondering what you were doing and where you were.’
‘Once we are settled I am sure we can find a way to safely contact you.’
‘But to return to the main point, Kiba needs medical help from doctors who’ll understand him and you’re the one who is best equipped to get him home as fast as possible.’
‘That argument would work a hell of a lot better if this whole thing wasn’t about taking a pregnant receiver away from a hospital and people who’d care for him, and then taking him to a place where we’re seen as freaks that need to be isolated alone on an island! Do you want me to rush Naruto back to get the medical attention he needs too, Sasuke, because if no unevolved can help Kiba, there’s no one to help Naruto either.’
‘We have some time with Naruto to settle in and look for what we need.’
‘Yeah, because trustworthy unevolved with medical training to help a male receiver give birth sound like they’re all over the place from the way you described it, Sasuke. Maybe an extra person helping you with spying and scouting might be more useful than sending me off on an errand which will be useless, because Kiba is going to be a goner way before I get home! He’ll be better rested up in one of those empty cabin things we found. After the initial journey, there’ll be no movement, someone with him around the clock keeping him hydrated and whatever else you’re supposed to do, because in case I am not making this clear, I don’t have a fucking clue how to nurse a dying dog!’
‘Suigetsu, this is not a negotiation. Gaara and I will stay and find somewhere safe for Naruto. You’ll take Kiba back.’
‘That sounds like a typical Uchiha thing to say. I bet when they hear I’m back, and they’ll hear pretty damn fast, the rest of your clan won’t want to negotiate with me anymore than you do. You say you’re grateful to me, but you and Gaara, who are shithot powerful, ran from the Uchihas, whereas you’re sending me back alone to face them. What the fuck is that about then? How about you start telling me what this is really about and how Kiba got so injured in the first place?’
‘We told you we don’t know. We’ve described the scene we found. Don’t push it.’
‘Our best guess is that the information Sasuke gave us all, caused some sort of mental breakdown which resulted in the humans losing all control and the animals running wild to the point of exhaustion. I think Naruto has an incredibly fast natural healing rate, and perhaps coupled with his primal instinct to protect the young he is carrying, he did not break as badly as Kiba did. But it is all speculation and not our immediate concern or worth discussing any further than we already have. We are in foreign unknown lands, one of us is pregnant and Kiba is severely injured. We need to make a decision quickly and act on it.’
‘I’ve made a decision, stop arguing with me and we can get Naruto and Kiba hidden and safe rather than us all drifting about in the middle of the ocean, clearly visible to anyone who happens to come this way.’
‘Fine,’ Sasuke said. ‘We’ll do it your way, Suigetsu, but don’t ever complain to me about anything that happens from here on in.’

Naruto wasn’t sure how much time passed, but when Suigetsu was busy doing something somewhere else, Gaara spoke in a low voice to Sasuke.
‘We agreed that if you aren’t going to punish Kiba, we need him gone.’
‘Suigetsu made a valid point. I was focused on getting rid of Kiba, but what my clan would do to get information out of Suigetsu…he wouldn’t want to, but he would tell them everything. Once they know for sure what I know, and where I am with Naruto…it is not how either of us would wish it, but it is still better this way.’
Shadowy creatures of red and black with sharp canine teeth started howling at the edge of Naruto’s
mind. He ran away from them towards the bright sunshine of his babies and within minutes had forgotten that he’d ever seen or heard them.

* From somewhere, Naruto didn’t ask where, Suigetsu had procured a rowing boat to take them to shore. Naruto was relieved there would be no swimming like there had been at the other end. His body was hurting in a way he hadn’t ever experienced before. He was trying not to let it show too much, but the other day, pain-in-the-butt-notice-everything Sasuke had looked him directly in the eye and asked, ‘Why aren’t you complaining about all your aches anymore?’ Naruto had inwardly groaned; he was so useless at subterfuge! He should have carried on as normal, rather than stopped mentioning anything at all. Part of him had definitely enjoyed way too much the whining at Sasuke and guilting Sasuke into giving him lots of the hot-hand massage thing that Gaara had taught him. And Sasuke was of course fully aware of Naruto’s ulterior motives, probably given away by the amount Naruto grinned and rubbed up against Sasuke when he was moaning about how much agony his body was in. So instead of covering up in a top-secret spy way, he’d done the opposite and just raised the cat’s suspicions.

‘I guess I am in the part of pregnancy that is all glowy and bloomy now. But don’t let that stop you giving me oodles of attention,’ Naruto had said. Fooling exactly no one, but luckily Sasuke hadn’t pushed it.

Still however obvious he was being, he couldn’t help being glad for Suigetsu and his boat. He watched impassively as the other men packed the little supplies they had left after their zillion year journey to find this place. Sasuke kept looking over at him and giving him little awkward smiles. For some reason, having Sasuke smile at him so much was making him feel uneasy. He got that Sasuke was being extra protective with them about to enter new unknown lands, and probably with Naruto’s pregnancy pushing against the seems of his clothes, but still it was strange to see Sasuke openly looking at him so much, as if he was scared that Naruto would disappear if he looked away for too long.

Or maybe Naruto’ strange unease was due to just sitting watching the other’s work. He hadn’t done much on the sea trip but sometimes his strength had come in handy and Suigetsu had smiled his shark smile and said how glad he was that there was someone with real muscles amongst them. Which had been stupid flattery as all of them were pretty sturdy people, even skinny Suigetsu himself, still it’d made Naruto happy to feel useful. But today Sasuke had out and out ordered Naruto to do nothing, and Naruto had obeyed without argument because that was how it went with them at the moment. He guessed he was really fortunate that Sasuke may be a bastard, but he wasn’t an evil fuck, as whatever hormonal thing was going on with him could be really badly abused by the wrong person. Being ordered to do nothing was way better than other things he could be forced to do.

Naruto bit down on his lip. The random thought had sent a physical tremor through his body. ‘We’re ready for you now, babe.’ Suigetsu smiled and held out a hand to him. Naruto grinned back at him and gave Suigetsu an impromptu hug he was so grateful for the distraction from his thoughts.

‘Woah, don’t give a guy ideas!’ Suigetsu laughed. ‘Not when Sasuke is so nearby anyway.’ It was similar to things Suigetsu had said to him for the whole journey, but Naruto found himself stepping back with flushing cheeks stuttering out some sort of nonsensical apology that made no sense.

‘I didn’t mean to….yaknow….touch you….if yaknow….you didn’t want….I won’t…’ Suigetsu laughed even harder at Naruto’s embarrassment. ‘A blind mole living it’s whole life underground can tell how hot you are, but until now I didn’t realise you could do cute too!’ He pulled Naruto back into an even tighter hug.

‘Stop screwing around,’ Sasuke snapped, suddenly right next to them. ‘We want to get through this quickly. Just because we haven’t seen anyone yet, don’t assume no unevolved will appear.’ Suigetsu released Naruto. He rolled his eyes at Sasuke and winked at Naruto, who could feel the heat in his cheeks increase.
Getting into the boat didn’t make things better. He wasn’t allowed to simply jump in like he wanted, but thanks to another of Sasuke’s direct orders had to endure being slowly lowered into Gaara’s waiting arms and placed down in the pointy end of the boat as if he was a piece of super delicate irreplaceable porcelain.

He settled down waiting for the others to join him and row him to shore, because he already knew by where they’d stowed him that Sasuke would be ordering him to keep still and let others do all the work. Moving bits of wood about in water seemed to be beyond him, along with everything else, according to Sasuke today. The worst thing was, that Naruto feared Sasuke might be right to be so over protective.

Naruto put both hands over the swell of his belly as he waited for the others to cast off or whatever it was called. Then he saw what they were doing. Lowering Kiba into the boat. And Naruto leapt over the side into the water.

The physical shock of the cold was nothing compared to the mental shock of what he’d just done. The others obviously felt the same as Kiba had been dropped into the boat making it rock so much that even Gaara lost his balance.

‘Ummm…I felt like a swim instead,’ Naruto chuckled.

They all stared at him as if he was mad. Which he maybe was. How had he forgotten about Kiba? And why had he jumped away when he was reminded that his best friend existed? He should be the number one person caring for him, rather than his mind somehow completely erasing his roomie.

But he couldn’t explain that. And nor could he bring himself to get back in the boat now that Kiba was laying prone in it.

‘So, yeah, I’ll start swimming,’ Naruto said.

Though it obviously wasn’t even that easy. One of the little babies was mewing in anguish at him. He didn’t normally hear them this clearly when he was awake.

‘Hey, these kitties are definitely yours, Sasuke. Well, one of them is anyway.’ Sasuke gave him such an odd look that Naruto felt he had to explain further.

‘I mean, he does not like my decision to swim. As in he doesn’t like the sea at all and wants to be dry like NOW! So, yeah I better start swimming.’

‘Or you could get back in the boat?’ Suigetsu raised his eyebrows.

‘Nope, swimming is good.’ Naruto started splashing in the direction of the shore before Sasuke ordered him to return to the boat.

Within just a few strokes, Naruto’s body was complaining, the water felt so heavy and hard to push against, and all his clothes were wet and cold chafing against his skin. And he was trying to calm the kitty down but he wasn’t sure how to talk to his babies without disappearing completely in his mind. He wished the other babies were helping but they were all disturbed too, not necessarily about being in the sea, but something had put them all on edge. And the fox was useless too, all he was getting from the animal was raw red anger and Naruto definitely wasn’t going to poke at the cause of that for fear it’d explode and he’d turn all fur and claws again.

Wow, the shore looked like it was getting further away. But this was what he was doing, so this was what he was doing: swimming instead of staying on the nice dry boat.

There was a splash behind him and a stripped down Sasuke elegantly glided next to him and wordlessly took him in his arms.

Naruto didn’t even bother complaining about Sasuke so effortlessly taking control of him. The cat was already going faster pulling Naruto with him, than Naruto had been going on his own.

‘You feel like a swim too?’ Naruto grinned, doubt and confusion immediately leaving him as he let himself enjoy the sight and feel of Sasuke’s naked skin.

‘It seems so.’

‘Hey! You mammals don’t get to be in the water while I’m stuck in a boat!’ Suigetsu dived in and was twirling and whirling around them, leaving Gaara alone to row Kiba ashore.

When Suigetsu was playing around in the water diving down far below them, Sasuke quietly spoke.

‘If the kit is still scared you could try reassuring him that being in the sea is no more than a larger
version of him and his siblings being in the amniotic fluid in your belly. And just as they are safe and happy there, you and I are safe and happy in the sea.’

Naruto closed his eyes and reached out for his little baby. He translated what Sasuke had said to his own words.

‘It’s okay you’re scared of water. I so wish it wasn’t like this, but there are a lot of things in the world that can be scary, so it’s a feeling you’re going to meet through your whole life. But there’s a way of dealing with it. You always have to remember that you are loved, and what being loved means is that however scared you get, you’re never alone, there’s always going to be someone looking out for you and doing everything and anything to care for you. You can feel that love right now in this actual real moment. Your Daddy isn’t keen on water either, but when I did this stupid thing of jumping in, he came in after me. He did the same thing when we were kids when I thought I was doing this cool attack move, but ended up falling off a pier. But maybe forget about that, as I want you to think that I’m amazing for an ickle bit longer. The important thing is that your Daddy is here getting us safely to shore when he’d much rather be on that boat. And more than that, he hasn’t even met you yet, but he’s already worrying about you and thinking about what he could say to you that’d make you feel better. And it doesn’t matter that he said some weird thing about the sea being the same as being in my belly, which it soooo obviously isn’t, the part that matters is that he wants you to feel safe and know that you’re loved. And being in this sea is just a temporary thing that’ll be over soon. Whereas love is forever. And that’s what you need to remember. It’ll give you a glow of happiness to get you through even when the world does seem scary and sad.’

Not just the scared kitten, but all the babies snuggled into Naruto and he held them all tightly close to him.

‘None of you are ever going to be lonely. Me and Daddy will always be here for each and every one of you,’ he promised.

Maybe despite the freezing cold and wet he had some sort of micro sleep, because the next thing he was fully aware of was being on the beach.

Sasuke pulled off Naruto’s wet clothes and dried him briskly with a towel Gaara had unpacked from their supplies.

‘You’re wet too,’ Naruto protested, tugging on bits of the towel to try and dry Sasuke until Sasuke ordered him to stand still.

Even when Naruto was dressed in dry clothes, he found himself shivering. He walked up the beach collecting pretty shells as the others discussed the practicalities of transporting Kiba and their belongings to the place they’d discovered on their scouting trip. He only returned to his friends when Sasuke called him back. Sasuke explained the plan of hiding their belongings and coming back for them, and concentrating with this first trip on just getting Kiba and Naruto safely settled there.

Something in Naruto wanted to reply that couldn’t they hide Kiba and take their things instead, but luckily his brain intervened and warned him what a totally odd thing that was to think, let alone to say. Instead he went overboard yapping on about how insulting it was that Sasuke had grouped him and Kiba together, as if he, Naruto, was the same sort of burden as an unconscious man who couldn’t move.

He built his righteous indignation up enough that it kept him going for a good part of the hike. Which was good, because when he finally stopped talking it hit him full force how tired he was, how steep the incline was that they were supposed to be climbing up and how much his legs, and everything else, were hurting.

Before Naruto could gather himself and fix his mind on what was ahead of him, damn Sasuke scooped him up in his arms and carried him bridal style up the rocky hillside as easily as if he really was just taking Naruto from the lounge to the bedroom.

‘What the hell?’ Naruto complained. ‘A dude can’t stop to admire the view for a second without you taking the opportunity to get all macho and show off to your buddies how you can carry your receiver around like a good obedient doll?’ Naruto thumped Sasuke on the chest.

‘My buddies are far too occupied with their own burden to care that you need carrying.’
'There you are calling me a burden, have you listened to a single word that I’ve been saying to you? I don’t need carrying! I’m way stronger than you. I could run up and down this hill ten times before you’d even done it once.’

‘You couldn’t.’ Sasuke smirked.

‘I’ll show you what I can and can’t do.’ Naruto tried to wiggle out of Sasuke’s arms but the cat had a surprisingly strong grip on him.

‘Naruto, please stop moving so much, you’re heavy and this terrain is difficult.’

‘I’m heavy! Well, you should have worried more about me being heavy when you shot your load into me and made a tonne of kitties. And as I am so heavy then do us bother a favour and let me walk by myself like I want to.’

‘You’d be heavy even if you weren’t pregnant, you’re tall and all muscle. Stop being overly sensitive about things that aren’t insults. And stop letting your pride get in the way of me helping you. Your wellbeing, is the wellbeing of our children, and I know you value them more than your overinflated ego. You can go back to being a stubborn idiot and run up and down as many mountains as you like all by yourself once they’re born. But please, for now, just stay still. Admire the view, like you claimed you wanted to, and let me get you somewhere safe as quickly as I can.’

‘It’s not fair, you can win every argument just by saying it’s best for our babies,’ Naruto grumbled.

But he didn’t protest any further.

It wasn’t because of the annoying part of him that was more under Sasuke’s control than his own and was permanently wanting to nuzzle up to and please the receiver cat. It was the sudden realisation that his mean bastard boyfriend who was lecturing him now about doing what was best for the kitties, hadn’t yet yelled him out for randomly jumping out of the boat and into the sea. Something that had no logical explanation and had properly scared one of their poor little babes. Sasuke always pulled him up on his stupidity, so why was he staying quiet on this? He must be waiting until they got to wherever they were going to, then Naruto was probably in for a hell of a night. When Sasuke decided he wanted to tell Naruto what an idiot he was, the sullen silent ice prince could go on and on for longer than even Naruto could. Yeah, that must be the reason, Sasuke was letting Naruto think it was all calm and forgotten, to get maximum impact when he finally decided to hit him with the enormous lecture. What other reason could there be for Sasuke being nice and not calling Naruto any of the trillion different words he had for ‘stupid’?

Without consciously thinking about it, Naruto found himself peeking over the Uchiha’s shoulder to see where Suigetsu and Gaara were. And of course, most importantly, how his bestie Kiba was faring. They’d fallen quite a way behind. They had constructed some sort of makeshift stretcher out of bits of driftwood to carry Kiba on, but that seemed to be for their ease rather than Kiba’s comfort. Neither of them seemed to be being that careful with the injured man. It was pretty obvious that Suigetsu wasn’t exactly the nurturing type, but Naruto was surprised to see that Gaara was making no adjustments to make sure Kiba didn’t get unduly jolted about. Gaara had been so kind to Naruto when they’d first met, Naruto couldn’t balance his image of that man against the one who was transporting Kiba as if the friend they’d spent ages and ages together on a boat with, was no more than a sack of potatoes.

He thought about mentioning it to Sasuke. Words formed in his mind, suggestions about how he was really truly not doing too badly, and they should wait for the others to catch up, and Naruto’d be okay making his way with Gaara, and then maybe Sasuke should take a turn with Kiba, ensuring for Naruto’s sake if nothing else, that the man had a smoother journey than he currently was. But he said nothing and felt strange relief when the path they were on turned around a bend and he was no longer able to see Gaara, Suigetsu. Or Kiba.

As Sasuke wasn’t talking Naruto filled the silent void with his own chattering, bombarding the other man with questions, most of which Sasuke ignored, but a few he answered.

‘Where exactly are we going?’

‘We’ve got extremely lucky. We’ve discovered some cabins, they haven’t got any recent unevolved scent around them, but are stocked with cans and packets of foods.’

‘How do you know what an unevolved scent is? I thought you hadn’t met any on your scouting.’
‘You’ll know their scent when you smell it. Hnnnn. Well, you might not, but anyone else would,’ Sasuke smirked.

‘Hmph. And do they just leave abandoned cabins and food about? Is that a normal thing in unevolved culture that you learnt in all your old boring scrolls? Or are there really nice kind gods looking after us after all?’

‘From the things we found around the cabins, letters, magazines, diaries, etcetera our best guess is that this particular area used to be fashionable for some sort of retreat where rich people liked to pretend to be poorer and ‘become one with nature’. One of the cabins actually has no food, because the ideal was to reconnect completely and forage and hunt.’

‘Pffft, make sure we don’t get stuck in that one then. But why are they empty now then if you’re right? And how do you know you’re right? Are you so super great that you can read unevolved languages?’

‘I don’t know I am right. It is our best guess. We think the nature retreats fell out of fashion so no one regularly comes here anymore, but they made sure their homes were stocked with food in case they did return. You see how far it is, rich people want the illusion of hardship, not the real hardship of lugging heavy provisions up here by themselves. That’s what servants are for.’

‘Ha! Is that a rich privileged house pussy-cat talking from experience?’ Sasuke honoured him with a smile and a little meow.

The animal sound, even though Sasuke was only teasing, had the embarrassing effect of awakening Naruto’s own animal desire. His cock was immediately erect. He blushed deeply, even though it was only Sasuke here and Sasuke must be well used to Naruto’s almost constant arousal by now.

‘Sorry, I, yaknow, don’t why it always does that. It’s not like I want you to, yaknow, do anything right now to me. Sorry. Yeah…. ummm…. sorry about my body being all…inappropriate.’

‘Don’t apologise.’ Sasuke’s smile had gone and there was an expression in his eyes that Naruto could only describe as sad. ‘There’s nothing inappropriate about you and there never could be.’

‘Yeah, I shouldn’t use such long words, should I, I’m not going to get it right. What I mean is that, sorry for always having a raging hard on, like I am asking you to fuck all the time. Because I am not.’ Naruto had meant to be light and joke the sadness out of Sasuke’s expression, but instead he had sounded too serious and it made no sense, as they both knew he had in fact been very actively asking Sasuke to fuck all the time for the entire long boat trip.

He waited for Sasuke to pick him up on that but instead the Uchiha looked away from Naruto and said, ‘What are your first impressions of these lands that don’t exist?’

It took Naruto a moment to adjust to the sharp change in conversation. Something in his stomach twisted, but he didn’t know why. There was no world, new or old, where Naruto wanted to have a conversation about the humiliating trio of his sexual ignorance, confusion and inexperience. But maybe he needed to have that talk with the man who he was planning to be his one and only lifelong lover.

He couldn’t think of anything else to say though, so followed Sasuke’s chosen line of conversation.

‘Are you sure we are actually in unevolved territory? It looks exactly the same as home. The sea was the same. The sky was the same. The beach was the same. The sun is the same. The trees and all that stuff is all the same. It doesn’t feel like anywhere new. The food you brought back to the boat, that was sweeter than home, but not really that different. And you say the rich people here are the same as being rich at home. So everything else is the same.’

‘Dobe.’ Sasuke smiled. ‘We haven’t sailed to a different planet. If I am right about how big the world actually is, we, in relative terms, haven’t actually sailed very far at all. Many things will be the same or similar. Also, remember we come from these people, and they’ve continued to monitor and shape our culture even from afar. Our language was the same language as the material we found in the cabin with only the colloquial differences you’d find travelling across the regions of our home. But things are still going to be incredibly different here. For example, you’re wrong about the fauna, it is entirely unlike what we have at home. If I was in cat form my fur would be completely on end because of all the unfamiliar scents and sounds from the wild surrounding us.’

Naruto squinted around him. ‘The rocks look like rocks. The grass looks like grass. And the trees
Sasuke laughed. ‘They are all entirely different species from home. You’re a fox, you should instinctively recognise the most subtle changes in nature, you should certainly be better than a mere house pussycat.’

‘Sooooo let’s go back to the image of you with your hair all on end. I bet you’d look so pretty as a cat with your fur all fluffy.’

‘No, let’s keep talking about the fox who doesn’t realise he’s seeing trees he’s never seen before, even though they’ve got entirely different leaf shapes.’

Naruto nudged his head lightly against Sasuke’s. ‘What are you doing noticing leaf shapes when you’ve got me in your arms?’

‘Maybe I am capable of enjoying you as well as being aware of everything around me, because I actually paid attention at school and learned how to have all my senses switched on.’

‘And here I was believing you were pining for me for years and years, but you always loved learning more than me, haven’t you? I’m going to be dumped for a dusty old book at some point, aren’t I? What proper lovesick schoolkid would pay attention to lectures about leaves over daydreaming about being with their crush?’

‘Maybe the type of schoolkid, who is so enamoured of his stupid friend that he’s planning for their life together and knows that he’s going have to be extra knowledgeable and intelligent to make up for his future lover’s dumbness.’

They continued to banter and if Naruto didn’t concentrate on the inexplicable knot in his stomach, the pain behind his eyes or the ache in his chest, he was pure happiness.

When they finally arrived at the cabin, Naruto was surprised how restless he was. After Sasuke had given him the tour of the open plan layout downstairs and the two bedrooms and bathroom upstairs twice, Naruto continued to explore them on his own. He dashed around opening every cupboard and drawer that he found. He didn’t know what he expected, but everything was so normal and so not-normal at the same time. There wasn’t just food left behind, but clothes, trinkets, three very cuddled teddies in one of the bedrooms, and shelves of books, jigsaws and games.

When he’d finished upstairs and was about to start going through the downstairs cupboards for the third or fourth time Sasuke called out to him.

‘Please, sit with me a while.’

Naruto immediately obeyed, but instead of sitting all over Sasuke like he’d done on the boat he perched on the other side of the sofa of his lover. He rubbed the back of his head aware of how nervous and ridiculous he was being with the man who’s babies he was carrying, somehow though he felt unbearably shy around the man who had carried him halfway up a mountain.

He’d wanted to be alone with Sasuke for so long, but now being together in this house felt strange and different to their time together on the boat. What was Sasuke expecting from him? What was he expecting from Sasuke?

Sasuke’s eyes twitched only slightly, but from the Uchiha it made Naruto feel like he was being intensely interrogated, why aren’t you in my arms when you’ve been begging to have private time with me?

Naruto had no answer, he felt the heat in his face and gave a noncommittal shrug and a hopeful grin as if that could explain everything he didn’t himself understand.

When Sasuke spoke though he asked a completely different question that took Naruto by surprise.

‘Do you know the sex of all the kits?’

Sasuke gazed at him wide eyed, Sasuke was reluctant to know anything about their babies until they were all safely born.

‘You called the one frightened of the sea ‘he’ earlier when you spoke about him,’ Sasuke added. Naruto tried to think about what to say that would encourage Sasuke and not end this conversation before it started. He was desperate to talk about their children together. But Sasuke was looking at him waiting for an answer; saying nothing, pausing too long, was worse than saying the wrong
thing. So Naruto just spoke the truth from his heart as it was natural for him to do with Sasuke. ‘I think I said ‘he’ because the kitty was reminding me of you at the time, not liking the water and everything. But I don’t really know their sexes, it changes, they change, they’re like happy joyful kids dancing around me. Sometimes some of them seem a bit madder and maybe masculine like me, yaknow, playing a bit rougher. And other times they’re like you, all quiet and peaceful and I guess feminine.’ Sasuke raised an eyebrow. ‘You think I’m feminine?’ ‘I don’t know. I think feminine means thinking more and being smarter and wiser, and that’s you. Rather than me all rushing in to everything and only working out what I’ve done later.’ Naruto chuckled. ‘You know I’m rubbish these things. I’m a pregnant receiver who still thinks he’s a giver, so even I don’t think you should be trusting what I say about sex or gender or whatever.’ ‘What about if they are foxes or cats, can you tell that?’ ‘Sort of. We’ve got a mixture. I think. Sometimes one I’m sure is a kitty will like appear with a bushy fox tail. They like messing with me. A lot! You know it’s their spirits I see, not like, I don’t know what they even look like in real physical world thing inside my tummy.’ Naruto put his hands on his belly.

Sasuke put his hands on top of Naruto’s and Naruto realised that they were now sitting next to each other in the centre of the sofa, even though he hadn’t been conscious of sliding closer to his lover that was obviously what had happened. He’d be cross at his stupid pregnant body doing these things on it own beyond his control, if Sasuke’s hand didn’t feel so warm over the top of his. And if his skin wasn’t tingling like it had that first time in the library being naked together. The two men gazed into each other’s eyes. Naruto’s tongue flicked over his lips. His heart thumped. He felt slightly dizzy and slightly sick as if he was being spun around. Except it was a good feeling. A really good feeling.

‘Can I kiss you?’ Sasuke purred.

Naruto nodded, only capable of making a little yelping sound at the back of his throat. Sasuke leaned into him. Naruto closed his eyes, tilting his head towards his lover. But instead of the most beautiful lips being pressed against his, cold outside air rushed into the room as the door was flung up.

‘Thank you so much, Uchiha, for coming back and helping us!’ Suigetsu stormed in. ‘If it’s not clear that’s sarcasm. Thank the fuck I didn’t let you guys dump Kiba on me permanently, I’d have chucked him overboard in the first hour. Looking after ill people sucks. It’s bad enough Gaara running off and abandoning me with this lump so he could follow some scent or trail, or maybe he just wanted to take a really big dump all on his own, who knows with that one?’ Naruto and Sasuke both jumped apart as if they were little kids being caught breaking rules by adults.

Suigetsu of course noticed and laughed. He said something that Naruto didn’t hear clearly but Sasuke did by the thunder of his face. Suigetsu didn’t stay to take the consequences though, giggling evilly to himself he was already dragging Kiba upstairs, not seeming to care as the inert body bumped on every stair.

Naruto watched to see if Sasuke would help, but what the Uchiha did was stand up and say in his coldest voice, ‘What are you doing? Kiba isn’t staying here. You know the plan. We’ll taking him to the next cabin along. You can leave him down here until Gaara returns to help transport him.’ ‘Change of plans. The one that is even fiercer than you, decided that it is best until we get a better lay of the land to all stay together. He thinks we should stay alert, take turns being on guard, and all that quack. You know the drill. So you’re going to have to save your fuck session with your hot fox until we’re more settled, unless you want an audience. Or even better extra participants. I’m so up for that.’ Suigetsu seemed to be still talking even as he was dragging Kiba behind a door into one of the bedrooms.

Sasuke gave Naruto the same strange look he’d given him on the hike up, Naruto had thought it was sad then, now it felt more like sad-guilt if that was a thing. ‘If Gaara thinks we should stay together he’ll have his reasons,’ Sasuke said cryptically.
‘it’s okay, I don’t mind we’ll all be together for longer. Plus, we get the room with the cuddly toys so that’s great.’
With a half-smile but still the sad look in his eyes Sasuke caressed the back of his hand over Naruto’s cheek, ‘How are you going to be a parent when you’re still a kid yourself?’
‘Lucky I’ve got you to be all serious and responsible for both of us, hey?’ Naruto caught Sasuke’s hand and nipped the fingers.
He was scared that look in Sasuke’s eye was catching, as there was a sadness building in him, threatening to overspill though he had no reason to be unhappy. He had the best lover in the world looking out for him. He was probably just tired and needed to work harder to keep the darkness down. And he would. He was going to be the best he possibly could for his new family.

* 
When Gaara had returned him and Sasuke, and then him Sasuke and Suigetsu, huddled up in deep conversation. Naruto knew he could have been a part of it if he wanted. He didn’t want. He kept doing what he’d done when they first arrived, going through all the cupboards and drawers, but even more carefully. Opening the games and looking at the score pads that had been scribbled over with long forgotten names and doodles. Flipping though books, in a big encyclopaedia of ‘Favourite Animals’ there were three pressed flowers and two hand drawn maps. He gave the maps to Sasuke in case they were useful but replaced the flowers. In the kitchen taking the tins down one by one and studying their labels. He found a tomato soup which he took to Sasuke, the cat thanked him with a tired smile but didn’t want to eat. Naruto did want to eat, but instead he went upstairs. He intended to look in on Kiba. The three others seemed to be ignoring him now they’d got him here, so it was up to Naruto to be his carer and make sure none of his friend’s needs got forgotten. Naruto paused with his hand on the doorknob. And did nothing. A casual glance over the bannister revealed both Sasuke and Gaara staring up at him while Suigetsu chattered on about something. Naruto immediately stepped away from the door and retreated back into the other bedroom that had been designated as ‘mainly’ his and Sasuke’s.
It contained two twin beds and after a moment of looking at them, Naruto slowly pushed them together. Then he lay on top of the bed, not removing any of his clothes and stared up at the ceiling.
* 
It seemed like much much later when Sasuke opened the door. Naruto was not quite awake but was unable to fall asleep. He didn’t turn to look at his lover even though it seemed like he’d been waiting for him for longer than a lifetime.
‘You’ve forgotten something,’ the Uchiha said.
‘I know,’ Naruto said dozily. He was not quite awake but unable to fall asleep.
‘Do you know what?’
‘Nope. That’s the problem.’
‘It’s not a problem any longer.’ Sasuke came over to him on the bed and placed a huge cuddly snake on top of him.
Naruto wrapped his arms around it. ‘Manda! Have you got Gamabunta too?’
Sasuke placed the other teddy by Naruto’s head.
‘Thank you.’
Sasuke kissed Naruto’s forehead. He undressed himself down to his boxers and did the same to Naruto. Naruto’s body tensed. He had to fight not to kick out even though Sasuke was at his most gentle. They snuggled under the covers and Naruto put his head on Sasuke’s chest as that is what he normally did and what he should do now.
‘I know this has been…a day. But I promise it’ll get better. I’ll make it better for you,’ Sasuke whispered. ‘This is the start of our new life together.’
‘Something’s wrong with me,’ Naruto said softly. ‘It’s the reason I turned into a fox isn’t it and lost consciousness. Is the same thing wrong with Kiba?’
‘No. And nothing’s wrong with you. Nothing.’ Sasuke stroked down Naruto’s back.
'Sasuke?'
'Yes?'
'Is it okay if we don’t…I know we’ve both been waiting for a private room…but is it okay if we don’t. Not tonight.’
Sasuke raised the hand that was on Naruto’s back to Naruto’s head and tussled it through Naruto’s hair. ‘Whatever you want to do, or don’t want to do, is more than okay. You’re in total control.’
‘Thank you,’ Naruto said. ‘Thank you.’
He felt so grateful. And so confused. And so tired. But he’d work it out tomorrow. This was his and Sasuke’s new life. It had to be good so it would be good and whatever darkness was nibbling at him would disappear after a night of sleep. He hoped.

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