Growing Pains

by nyawer92

Summary

A coming of age story of Naruto and gang as they navigate through puberty, teenage drama and senior year at the Konoha Academy.

Notes

Hi, this is my first high school teen story. This one is particularly close to my heart and I'm really excited to write it. My other fic Restoration is still underway. I'll be updating both side by side if I can. Let me know what you think! :)

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Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply
Category: Multi
Fandom: Naruto
Relationship: Haruno Sakura/Uchiha Sasuke, Uchiha Sasuke & Uzumaki Naruto, Sai/Yamanaka Ino, Hatake Kakashi/Maito Gai | Might Guy, Haruno Sakura/Inuzuka Kiba, Uchiha Sasuke/Original Character(s), Nara Shikamaru/Temari
Character: Uchiha Sasuke, Haruno Sakura, Uzumaki Naruto, Tsunade (Naruto), Hatake Kakashi, Uchiha Itachi, Uchiha Madara, Uchiha Mikoto, Uchiha Fugaku, Hyuuga Hinata, Hyuuga Hiashi, Hyuuga Neji, Tenten (Naruto), Karin (Naruto), Hoozuki Suigetsu, Gaara (Naruto), Juugo (Naruto)
Additional Tags: Drugs, Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Abuse, Shooting Guns, Debauchery, Angst, Teenagers, Teen Romance, Teen Angst, Alternate Universe - Teenagers, Fluff, Partying, Alternate Universe - College/University, Alternate Universe - High School, Teenage Rebellion, Teenage Drama, Drama, Drama & Romance, Family Drama, Action & Romance, Fluff and Angst, Puberty, Crushes, First Love
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Chapter 1

Konoha successfully completed another year of a humid summer and was ready to let its lush green leaves turn to gold.

The upcoming fall however, also meant the beginning of another school year for Konoha Academy students. Hence with a few groans and shed tears, the students departed from their respective homes to school with the added excitement of meeting their friends.

One such group had already laid claim to the nearest bus stop as a rendezvous point to exchange much awaited conversation.

‘I’m telling you Hinata, this is definitely our year!’ exclaimed an excited blonde.

‘Ino you say that every year but let’s face it, the school board will never rule out uniforms’

‘Pffft, that’s what you think’ said Ino with a toss of her long ponytail. ‘The uniforms are a tool to suppress our individual creativity. They want us to be subjugated to the mundane. This year is going to change all that. I’m not going to stand for it. I stayed up late last night devising a full proof plan to counter the stifling uniform rule and different ways to express my awesome self’ she swished her glamorous ponytail with dramatic effect.

Hinata sighed deeply. ‘Is that why you’re wearing a denim jacket instead of a blazer?’

‘Yes! If I’m going to be a fashion major, I need to show college scouts what I can do. Plus flaunting my designs is always a plus’ she added with a wink.

‘They’ll never allow it. The board thinks uniforms are equalizers. They’ll never let you enter the building’

‘Hmm…that’s what you think but I actually went through the student handout. It said that its mandatory to wear school uniforms however other items like jackets gloves etc can be added to their wardrobe. They didn’t say what kind’ she smiled mischievously.

Hinata shook her head in exasperation.

Ino looked awfully pleased with herself, skipping around in her denim jacket that she had donned instead of the KA navy blue blazer.

‘Anyway, what’s new with you? How was your summer? Please tell me you spoke to Naruto at least once’

As if on cue, Hinata started stuttering and stumbled over her own shoes.

Ino chuckled at her antics. They had nearly reached the bus stop when a voice called forcing them to turn around.

‘Hey, wait for me!’

‘Seriously, we told you we wouldn’t wait for you if you’re late’ admonished Ino

‘Sorry my alarm didn’t go off today’ she said, stifling a huge yawn.

‘Sakura, what’s that?’ Hinata asked, pointing at Sakura’s legs.
‘They’re pants’ replied Sakura ‘Hinata are you okay?’

‘Girls wear skirts, that’s the designated uniform’

Sakura crinkled her nose. ‘Not necessarily, I’ve decided skirts are a chauvinistic way to degrade young women and make them into mere objects to be ogled at. So this year, I’m ditching the skirts and wearing what the boys wear, cuz no one’s harping at them about the uniforms’

‘You’re expressing your individuality. I get that!’ said Ino enthusiastically.

‘I seem to be the only one who hasn’t gone nuts over the summer’ Hinata murmured.

‘That’s because Naruto isn’t here’ winked Ino

‘Shut up’
Both girls smirked.

‘By the way, where is Naruto?’ Ino asked Sakura

‘Last I checked, he was crashing over at Sasuke’s, he’ll most likely hitch a ride with him’

‘How Sasuke tolerates him, I’ll never know’

Sakura laughed boisterously

‘Nah, Sasuke’s great but he’s a little socially inept, Naruto usually helps him out with that, they’re good for each other that way’

Ino raised her eyebrow at her friend.

As if on cue, a gleaming dark blue Maserati Quattroporte pulled up near the bus stop. With one window rolled down, a blonde head emerged and greeted the trio.

‘Sup ladies. Did you miss me this summer?’ greeted Naruto

‘Yeah right’ said Ino

‘We just saw you last week’ said Sakura

‘Yeah but a lot can happen in a week Sakura-chan, stop killing my vibe’ he whined.

‘You have no vibe.’ Said a voice from inside the car

‘Shut up teme, I’m trying to up my game here’

‘You have no game, idiot’

‘You wanna go teme?’

‘As If’

‘Yeah, you wish you could beat the great Naruto’

‘Great Naruto needs to get his own ride’

‘So what if I prefer carpools, they’re eco-friendly.’
‘You mean you’re cheap’

‘Shut up teme before I make you sorry’

‘Yeah I’m sure you will’

Hinata stayed silent throughout the whole exchange.

Boys kept their banter up for another few seconds before Sakura broke in.

‘You two are such children. Anyway we’re going to be late so you two need to shut up and make room for us’

‘There’s no room here’ said Sasuke haughtily.

‘Oh please, there’s plenty of room in the back and all three of us can squeeze in’

She opened the back seat door and the three girls shuffled in.

‘Man, now you’re really killing my vibe’ grumbled Naruto.

‘Shut up Dobe’ retorted Sasuke although he didn’t seem to mind the girls hitching a ride, until Ino started talking.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

A slow paced start before events really take off.
Let me know what you thought of the chapter in the comment section below. :) 

When Naruto walked in the grey building of Konoha Academy, he was immediately greeted by a disheveled looking Kiba and a laid back Shikamaru.

‘Hey guys, how was your summer?’ asked Naruto enthusiastically.

‘The usual’ replied Shikamaru with a shrug.

‘Ugh don’t ask, my mom’s been on my case to pass senior year and not coast by, really bad for the rep you know. Plus the new school rule says we can’t have pets, how messed up is that?’ he asked as if the others would challenge his view.

‘Right, they probably did that after last year’s hamster disaster’

‘Yeah but it was a harmless creature’

‘It caught fire while sneaking in the science lab, Kiba’

‘Whatever’ Kiba skulked and made his way to class.

The hamster incident was not something Naruto wanted to discuss especially since the school administration was still figuring out who did it and he wasn’t going to clue them in. It was technically a prank that went wrong. He was supposed to put the hamster in the back of Choji’s shirt and cause mayhem but the furry creature escaped before they could do anything.

Sighing, Naruto made his way to class where the rest of the group was already there and in their seats.

Sakura and the girls sat near the window chatting away, while Sasuke found a seat for himself at the back of the class glaring at anyone who dared come near him. Naruto supposed his fangirls had already attacked.

He snickered slightly, it never got old. He wanted to see that.

Bastard, didn’t even save me a seat. Naruto pouted when he saw that the seats next to him was occupied.

He still found a place in front of the brooding boy and grinned at him. ’Guess we’re going to be study buddies too’

‘Kill me now’ muttered Sasuke.

Their homeroom teacher Kakashi walked in, tall and masked as ever.

He welcomed them back and announced a new student joining them someone by the name of Sai.
Naruto had never heard of a more ridiculous name. The new guy sat in the only seat available which was in front of him.

He tried to say hi and make conversation but the weirdo said something even weirder which made Naruto regret his decision instantly. He didn’t approach the new kid again.

The day crept by slowly and it wasn’t until lunch time that Naruto felt more like himself.

‘Let’s eat!’ he declared as soon as the bell rang.

Everyone else moved to leave for the cafeteria or other places. Naruto spotted Sakura packing her stuff b her desk.

‘Hey Sakura-chan, want to hang out with us on the roof?’

‘Thanks Naruto but I told Ino and Hinata I’d do lunch with them. Meet up after school?’ she smiled at him.

‘Definitely’

It had become quite a ritual for them to spend time after school at Sasuke’s house for one reason or another. Even though Sakura had Ino and Hinata, she had always been friends with the boys as far as anyone could remember and Naruto usually went out of his way to include her in whatever they were doing,

By the time school ended, Naruto was exhausted but still excited over the prospect of meeting Sasuke and Sakura after school. He hated going home it just reminded him of how sad and lonely his life was, but being with his friends made him forget all that.

He had just caught up to Sasuke leaving the building when Sakura came bursting forward.

‘Sasuke, Naruto, wait!’ she called

‘What?’ Sasuke wheeled around angrily

‘I need a ride’

‘We gave you a ride this morning, go on your own’

‘No, we’re going over to your house anyway, what’s the big deal?’ she spoke angrily

‘Since when did I give you permission to come over?’

‘Excuse me, your permission?’ She glared at him

‘Guys, c’mon I’m starving, let’s just go already’

‘Why is it that you two think its fine for you to crash over at my place when it bothers me?’

‘Because it doesn’t bother you’ retorted Sakura

‘You have the best junk food stashed around your house’

Sasuke gritted his teeth visably frustrated.

‘Look Sasuke, I have to tutor Naruto in Chemistry anyway and our World History paper is due end
of this week, we'll need to get a headstart on that if we’re going to survive senior year or Asuma-sensei will have our ass!’

‘Fine’ Sasuke relented

The two cheered loudly and rushed towards the parking lot.

‘I call shotgun’ yelled Naruto

‘No way!’ Sakura called.

Sasuke sighed deeply shaking his head at his bad luck for getting stuck with absolute idiots.

He would never admit it out loud but Sakura and Naruto livened up the place and his gigantic, usually empty house didn’t seem so dreadful when they were there to keep him company.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Some background about the characters in this AU.
If you like the chapter or the story let me know what you think :)
knew Naruto wouldn’t leave unless he had to so Sasuke was in good hands, sort of.

When they got home from school, Sasuke’s dining table was cluttered with books and exercise worksheets that they had collected during their Chem lesson that day. Sakura was hard at work trying to help an irate Naruto on how to handle their homework.

‘You just have to balance the equations here, Naruto. It’s all a matter of balancing numbers’

‘Ugh this is hopeless Sakura-chan, there’s so much to remember. My brain’s going to leak out all the information!’

‘That wouldn’t be a surprise’ came Sasuke’s answer from the TV room.

‘Shut up teme’ yelled Naruto gritting his teeth.

‘Make me’ he replied arrogantly.

Naruto growled and ran to the massive TV room.

Sighing Sakura got up and moved towards the den. Sasuke and Naruto were wrestling on the couch and hitting each other with pillows.

She snorted at the scene which made them stop and look over at her.

‘So you think you can casually laugh over at the seriousness of the situation?’ asked Sasuke, a deep frown marring his features.

‘Yes actually, cuz you two look like idiots right now’

They looked at each other and smirked. Soon enough Sakura found herself being pelted with gigantic throw pillows that Sasuke’s mother had meticulously decorated the room with.

‘Oh my God stop! I didn’t say anything. Ugh’ the two kept throwing pillows at her.

She huffed and threw them back engaging in an intense pillow fight battle royale.
Fall had easily turned into early winter and a deep chill had settled over Konoha by mid-October. School had progressed the way it does year after year and Sakura and her friends found themselves drowning again in quizzes, due papers and projects deadlines that kept them busy for the next few weeks.

A reprieve finally arrived when Tsunade-sensei announced the upcoming school formal.

‘Ugh finally, I’ve been dying to go shopping!’ cried Ino

‘But you went last weekend’ interjected Hinata.

‘Yeah but I need fabric if I’m going to make a custom designed dress’ winked Ino

Hinata shook her head and sighed, typical Ino.

‘Heyy are you girls going to ask anyone?’ inquired Tenten as she sidled up to their table in the cafeteria.

It was too cold to sit on the quad so the girls decided to stay inside and chat.

‘Well I’ve already got my eye on someone’ said Ino as she fixed up her mascara in her handheld mirror.

‘Oooh who?’

‘Not telling, till I get confirmation’

They giggled indulgently.

‘So, HInata who’re you going to ask to the dance?’ Ino nudged the girl.

‘N-n-noone.’ She stuttered.

‘Yeah right’

‘I’m serious’

‘Huh. Where’s Sakura?’ asked Tenten, looking around for a familiar pink haired girl.

‘She’s in the bio lab. She said she had to get some stuff done for Tsunade-sensei, what a teacher’s pet’

Ino sipped her caramel latte quietly and then rolled her eyes.
‘Ugh did she have to show up here too?’

The girls looked over to see a petite girl with a broad face and orange hair elaborately curled. Tskyomi Ami, Ino’s main rival when it came to popularity and probably one of the ditziest girls she’d ever met.

It was no surprise that Ami would raise in popularity especially with her rising stardom as a YouTube beauty sensation. However, it didn’t help her attitude at all and Ino hated her for it.

She was as always, flanked by her posse and this time was no exception.

‘Ah, look who we have here girls, a wannabe fashion flunky and her weirdo friends. Tenten, I think the space buns went out of style ages ago.’ She smiled at the girls.

‘Really? I might actually have to check the new catalogues, they’re called the I don’t give a hoot edition’

Ino and Hinata laughed.

‘What are you doing here anyway, didn’t you transfer to some loser school?’ asked Ino sardonically

‘You mean the exclusive all girls performing arts academy? No I wanted to, but Tsunade practically begged my father to keep me here, she said the school needed my rare talents.’ She said brushing invisible lint off her clothes.

‘Oh you mean how to be incredibly plastic? By the way, school started a month ago’ pointed out an uncharacteristically sassy Hinata

‘Well, I was in the Caribbean Islands shooting for my latest Magazine cover, they had professionals working on me everywhere, they’re totally going to airbrush my freckles’

‘They need to airbrush your personality too’ pointed out Ino

Ami laughed. It sounded a lot like nails scrapping on a board.

‘Oh please, you wish you were this popular. I’m just here to let you know that I’m back and this year is mine. So keep our grubby hands off my Ms. Konoha title.’ She tossed her long mane haughtily.

‘Ha, only blindsided fools would vote for you, newsflash, we openly discourage the presence and use of plastic. So you have as much of a chance at winning as Kiba’s dog has of getting an honor’s degree. Now get out of my face’

Ami’s face immediately turned an ugly red and she stepped in front of Ino until they were nose-to-nose.

‘Listen you blonde bimbo, I’m not letting anyone or anything mess with my YouTube contract and if that means getting a pest like you out of the way then that’s a chance I’m willing to take’

‘I’m sure the execs at YouTube will eventually learn that you’ve got no original talent and your fans will move on’ Ino shrugged.

‘Is there a problem here?’ Tsunade asked politely inquiring the girls.

Even though her tone was polite the girls immediately spotted a dangerous sensei, not meant to be crossed.
‘Oh no sensei, I was just catching up with Yamanaka-san after a long holiday, we have so much to talk to’

‘I believe Tskyomi-san is quite tired from her journey sensei, she seems to be clearly delirious talking about me sabotaging her run for Ms. Konoha when she knows I don’t take part in sexist events’

Ami looked as if she had been slapped across the face and Ino stifled the laughter bubbling inside her.

‘You’re right Ms. Yamanaka, it’s high time we rid ourselves of these ridiculous traditions. You know what, that actually gives me an idea’ with that, Tsunde departed leaving a very furious Ami and a very confused Ino.

‘Sexist events?’ she questioned Ino angrily.

The blonde shrugged.

‘I’m turning a new leaf Ami, I really don’t care what you do and after a while your so called followers will see that there’s no substance in your videos either and they’ll move on to something better and original. So you can either get out my way or continue to play your petty games but I’ve outgrown you, noting you say will have any effect on me whatsoever’

Ino grabbed her things and left the cafeteria with Hinata and Tenten. She didn’t plan on having a heart-to-heart with her rival of all people, but it was true, if she wanted to get somewhere, she had to let go of petty rivalries with people who didn’t matter.

A year ago, Ami’s constant whining and presence would have caused her great stress but ever since Sakura’s constant pep talks and encouragement, Ino felt that she could do more than help her family run their flower business or run after boys. Sakura’s friendship made her realize that she is smart and gets decent grades, maybe not as great as Sakura’s but decent enough to get her into a good college and start her own career in fashion.

Her friendship with the girls, especially Sakura, made her realize that life after KA doesn’t have to be bleak; it can be just as adventurous. But of course she doesn’t have to remain completely celibate or turn into a recluse, especially since her hottie radar spotted a gorgeous new guy.

Ino found out that his name is Sai and he transferred to KA to complete his senior year before he applies to all art colleges. Even though she heard Naruto complaining about him and Sakura making faces every time his name was mentioned, she found him charming and an artistic soul. There was just something about him that drew her to him. Like there was a lot of depth in him that she wasn’t used to.

When Ino exited the cafeteria, she ran into Sakura heading towards the door.

‘Hey guys, I was just coming over to see you, what happened?’

‘Ugh we ran into Ami, she’s back, there goes our fun senior year. Anyway Ino told her off’ complained Tenten.

‘What?’ she looked at Ino who smirked.

The girls launched into an explanation of the whole exchange between the two rivals, leaving Sakura with her mouth agape.

‘Wow Ino I’m really impressed’
‘Yeah forehead, your line about outgrowing her really worked’

‘That’s all you, she not worth your time’

They smiled at each other and walked arm in arm.

‘By the way, who are you going to the dance with? We keep trying to get Hinata to ask Naruto’

As expected, Hinata choked violently on the juice box she was drinking and turned a burning shade of red.

The girls chuckled.

‘Leave her alone Ino. Tenten are you asking anyone?’ asked Sakura

‘Hm….I already did’

‘What?’ the girls chorused. ‘Who?’

‘Neji’ she replied simply

‘Hyuuga?’ asked Ino

‘How many other Nejis are there?’

They looked at Hinata who was equally surprised.

‘He said yes?’

‘Of course he said yes’ said Tenten defensively

‘I’m sorry Tenten, it’s just that I’ve never seen Ni-san agree or be happy about anything before, especially not about school dances’

‘That’s cuz you don’t know him. Anyway it’s pretty mutual. We’re meeting for dinner before the dance so it’s a done deal’

‘Wait you’re going on a date with him too? OMG!’ exclaimed Ino

‘Chill woman’

‘But this is so exciting, one of us actually made a move, good for you!’

‘Sakura who’re you going with?’

Sakura snorted. ‘I don’t know if I’m going, honestly I was thinking if you girls are going stag I’ll just hang out with you, or not go at all’

‘Oh c’mon this is our last formal you have to be there.’

The pinkette shrugged.

‘Well, Hinata’s definitely going with Naruto and I’m going to make sure you ask him. Its time you recognize your power. You’re a great girl and he needs to see that too’ said Ino encouragingly.

‘She’s right Hinata, Naruto may be an idiot but even he can’t deny that you’re a kind and wonderful person. You just need to show him that with a little confidence. He can mess up a lot but if you really
like him, you should just be very direct with him, he appreciates honesty’

Hinata smiled at them. She really wanted to talk to Naruto but her traitorous tongue gets all twisted and her vocal chords give up on her. She’s reduced to mumbling like an incoherent idiot. It’s a nervous habit she tried so hard to get over.

‘You know what? It’s settled we’re going to help Hinata ask him to the dance’ declared Ino.

The rest of the girls concurred and went to class as the bell rang.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Hey I'm posting a long-ish chappie to make up for my absence. Just throwing in some casual sasusaku moments and how it effects the overall story. Let me know what you guys thought of the chapter! :)

Sasuke was having a really lousy day. For starters his parents called to tell him they were going to be in Kiri for another two weeks.

‘Oh we’re really sorry sweetheart’ his mother had said ‘But we’re really close to closing this deal and it has to be done either way. You understand right?’

He had agreed half-heatedly, not really surprised trying really hard to quell the sinking feeling in his stomach. The feeling only amplified when Ni-san called to tell him that his flight from Suna had been delayed and that he’ll see him on Sunday.

Sasuke didn’t really care at this point but he was looking forward to catching the latest game against Iwa with his brother. Now it seems his brother will only spend it catching up on his sleep before he heads to work the next day.

Sasuke sighed deeply.

Typical.

The weather didn’t help his mood much either, especially since it was pouring out when he left for school that morning. He supposed it was befitting in a way that the sky reflected how he felt internally. So with a heavy heart he trudged on expecting to at least find the Dobe or Sakura and get this miserable day over with.

Except the universe wasn’t done with him and an orange head bombarded his vision.

‘Hey you’ said a voice flirtatiously.

Why did it have to be today? He thought internally.

‘Tsukyomi’ he said tersely.

‘You’ve been avoiding my calls, Sasuke-kun’

‘A sane person would’ve guessed why’

‘Oh Sasuke-kun, you’re so sly. There’s obviously something here, so why deny yourself when you know it’s good for you’ she batted her eyelashes lavishly and chuckled.

‘There is nothing here. You’re deluded. Excuse me’ He not-so-politely shoved her out of the way and moved to class.

He hated the very sight of her and everyone from her so called enterouge. It was exactly why he
hated moving around in his parent’s social circles and why he hated being an Uchiha. Everyone thought he was interesting because he came from money. No one bothered learning much about him, until Naruto and Sakura.

He hated to admit it but they were the only two decent people he could trust. That doesn’t mean he has to pour his heart out every time he sees them, but he thought that they at least cared for him.

He would deny it of course but their constant badgering and annoying chatter filled up most of the empty spaces in his life and he didn’t know what to say to them most of the time. So he simply settled with listening to them bicker and occasionally giving his opinions. However whenever Naruto messed up he couldn’t help himself but point out the idiot’s stupidity; it’s a dynamic that has worked since childhood. He doesn’t want to give that up.

He entered the classroom and found Naruto with the rest of guys deep in discussion.

‘Nah man, I’m serious, it can’t be at my place’ said Kiba

‘Why not? You’re always jumping at the opportunity to host a party at your house’ said Shikamaru logically.

‘But it can’t happen this time, I’m sorry but you really don’t know my mom. She’s on a war path. She wants me to graduate and go to college and won’t leave me alone, for anything. You have no idea. I’m on serious lockdown here’

Naruto’s eyes bulged out.

‘Seriously? Then where are we going to have an awesome party?!’ he exclaimed.

They all remained silent for a moment.

Shikamaru nudged his old friend Choji who was standing nearby eating a bag of chips.

‘Okay…I’ll volunteer. My parents’ll be out this weekend’

‘Choi, my man, you’re a genius!’ said Kiba.

‘I could seriously kiss you right now’ exclaimed Naruto

‘Please don’t’ grimaced Choji, backing away a little.

‘Yeah yeah I won’t. Hey Sasuke’

Sasuke was dreading this moment. It was precisely why he had made himself scarce and avoided their conversation even though he heard every word.

He didn’t want to go to some teenage infused party. It all began and ended the same way, with half his class drinking themselves to a stupor or transporting themselves in a smoke hazed dimension that he really thought made them look even more deranged than usual.

‘Sasuke, we’re having a party at Choji’s this weekend. I’m sending a tweet out. Rage all night!’ he yelled and was met with an enthusiastic roar from the guys.

Sasuke sighed. This was already turning into a taxing day.

When Sasuke arrived at Choji’s house on Friday, he was met with the sight of half his classmates and complete strangers he didn’t recognize. This was the result of Naruto’s very public message. He had a way with everyone, so it came as no surprise that Naruto’s social circle would be half of
Konoha squeezed together in the Akimichi household. Cursing the blonde, he got out of the car, with Naruto trailing behind him. As the designated driver, he had to begrudgingly make sure the dobe didn’t make a fool of himself.

No promises there Sasuke smirked to himself.

They went inside Choji’s grand ancestral home, a traditional take on architecture. The Akimichi house wasn’t that far from Sasuke’s and it had the distinct markings of ‘old money’ yet Choji was a simple guy who, from what Sasuke could tell, wanted the simple things in life and didn’t ask for much.

He walked into the grand foyer where he could see people talking and catching up. Choji’s house had its own pool and a glass paned sun room which was where he found the most crowds, dancing away or diving in the water. Naruto’s mouth stood agape while Sasuke simply rolled his eyes.

‘Sasuke, you made it! I thought you’d be a no-show’ said Kiba enthusiastically.

‘Who else would drive your ungrateful ass back home. I thought you were on lockdown?’

‘Snuck out’ he grinned wolfishly while Naruto chuckled.

He noticed a stern young man standing ramrod straight right behind him.

‘Hyuuga’ he nodded at him.

‘Uchiha’ he responded.

‘Right, well I’m gonna go find Choji and Shikamaru’

He ran over to the other side of the house. Sasuke knew he just wanted to check out the pool.

Sasuke’s parents encouraged strict discipline. The insisted their children to be brought up in the same way they were, by inculcating traditional values. At one point Sasuke thought it was what defined the pride of the Uchiha, now he thinks it was an excuse to bar out all the fun in his life. They didn’t have a pool growing up so he could understand Naruto’s fascination with it. He did have a multiplex and a multipurpose indoor court so things weren’t totally bad.

He left the boys standing there and moved around throngs of people. He fixed himself a snack to get to a much needed quiet place. On his way there, he bumped into a familiar pink haired petite.

‘Sasuke! You’re here!’

‘You’re drunk’ he observed.

‘Not nearly as I plan to be’ she waved her hand dismissively and giggled. ‘I thought you hated these kinds of things.’

‘Someone has to drive Naruto back’

‘Ah, right. I figured he’d be with you, I haven’t seen him around’ she said looking around as if expecting the blonde to pop out of nowhere.

‘Right, did you show up alone?’
‘No I was with Ino, now I lost her. She’s probably chatting up to that new guy, what was his name?’

‘No idea’ he lied. It was Sai something, but he didn’t want to waste his time discussing that deadlast.

They stood there in silence for a few moments. Sakura sipping her drink, Sasuke knew she was trying to think of something to say. She never went two seconds without saying something.

‘Right, so why did you agree to be Naruto’s driver for the night?’ she smirked.

‘He’ll whine about me leaving him the next day and won’t let it go’ he shrugged.

‘Good point’

That shut her up.

Sasuke was perfectly comfortable in the silence.

‘Right as fun as this is Sasuke, I’m gonna go tell the dj or whoever to play something good. Later’

She patted him on the arm and stalked off.

Sasuke shook his head and moved over to the large patio overlooking the lush gardens of the estate. He couldn’t wait for the night to end.

It took three smashed bottles, screeching fits courtesy of Ino and Ami (who Sasuke successful avoided) and a tumbling of Choji’s grandmother’s ancient vase for Sasuke to get Naruto out of that house.

He was expecting to half carry the blonde, however, the surprise of the night was a swaying Saskura that he ran into in the hallway a few hours later. Drunk as she intended, Sakura was having trouble standing straight and leaned against a wall to balance herself.

His search for Naruto abandoned he went over to see if she needed help.

‘I think it’s time you went home Sakura.’

‘Yeah I know I just, I’m glued to this wall. Like I think someone brought out a gigantic glue stick and pasted me here so I couldn’t move’ she kept blinking rapidly most likely to stop her vision from blurring. She kept slurring her words too.

Sasuke rolled his eyes and gently guided her to his car.

‘C’mon, I’ll drop you home’

‘Thanks Sasuke, you’re the best, I really don’t know how I’d survive without you, Naruto or Ino’

Tears started to bead up in her eyes

Sasuke sighed and put his arm around her. If he was going to find Naruto and take care of drunk Sakura, he needed to multitask. So he fished in his pocket for his phone and dialed Naruto’s number.

He wasn’t picking up but thankfully Kiba came halting down the steps in the lobby.

‘Kiba, where’s Naruto?’

‘Uh…near the pool….no I definitely saw him in the gardens doing gods know what’
Great, just great, Sasuke thought and moved towards the gardens outside while balancing a half-asleep Sakura who was leaning on his shoulder.

He spotted Naruto near the koi pond talking to someone whose face was hidden in the shadows and called for him.

‘I’m leaving Dobe. If you don’t want to get left behind, I suggest you move now’ he said sternly.

Naruto said goodbye to the person he was having a conversation with and ran over to where Sasuke was standing.

‘What happened to Sakura?’

‘Drunk, I don’t know. Let’s go’

He got Sakura safely secure in the passenger seat while Naruto got in the back.

She had woken up but remained quiet except for a few sporadic moments where she and Naruto recalled the events of the night. Sasuke simply drove on without jumping in the conversation.

He dropped a half drunken Naruto off to his place while Sakura waved him goodbye.

When they reached her house she turned to him with a sleepy smile.

‘You know you could talk to us you know, even when you didn’t have fun’

He shrugged. ‘Watching that ancient vase fall from the second floor stairs into the gardens was fun’

She laughed.

‘I thought it’d tumble over and impale Kiba, when he tried to stop it’

‘Idiot’ he said with a smirk

It made Sakura laugh harder.

‘The image will forever be burned in my mind’

He nodded and gave her a small smile.

‘Sasuke,’ he voice had dropped down to a whisper. ‘I’m glad I found you today, even if it was in the middle of a huge crowd’

‘You could’ve called me.’

She shook her head.

‘No not that, thanks for just being there. You’re a really great friend and good person, just don’t shy away from it’

She looked up at him and smiled softly.

He could tell she was really drunk if she was being all touchy-feely at this point. Sasuke realized how unbelievably warm the car was, and how close Sakura sat next to him, close enough that he could count her eyelashes and the number of tiny almost-invisible freckles. He never noticed but she was rather pretty.
Okay, hold up what'?! He thought, his mind reeling to a halt.

He found Sakura pretty? Scrawny, loud chatterbox Sakura? Sakura with a gigantic forehead and brains to boot Sakura? No way.

He inhaled sharply and shifted uncomfortably in his seat, until it occurred to him that his friend was indeed very drunk and had wouldn’t remember what she’s saying the next day. She also had a reason for being this way.

‘Why did you want to get really drunk tonight?’ he asked, the thought occurring to him.

‘My parents are getting a divorce’ she spoke slowly. ‘They told me when I got home from school. I made it really clear that I wanted to complete my senior year here and go to college, so my dad’s moving out’

Well that does it.

‘Shit, I’m sorry Sakura’

She shrugged

‘It sucks that’s all. Whatever, I’ll just deal with it’

‘You shouldn’t have to’

‘Yeah, I know. I better head in, before my mom starts asking questions. Thanks for dropping me off and listening’

‘Yeah’

She gave him one last smile and departed not knowing that she had just created a storm in Sasuke’s mind, and more importantly his heart.
Chapter 6

Sakura had spent the entire weekend bundled up in bed nursing a bad hangover. She had been so out of it that she swore to herself not to listen to Ino ever again! She may be turning over a new leaf and blooming, but parts of her personality were still the same.

When they had arrived to the party together, Sakura thought they’d stick around and mingle a bit before heading home. Oh how wrong she was!

Ino met up and started a conversation with Sai and practically ditched her. Technically Hinata and Tenten were there too but when Tenten suggested dancing, she completely lost track of time and the number of drinks she had consumed.

By the time she ran into Sasuke, she realized she had gone a bit too far. It wasn’t as if she was planning to, but after the week she had at home, it was a release she needed.

She didn’t want to mention it to Naruto or Sasuke, she knew they’d worry about her in their own messed up but sweet ways. Things had been tense between her parents for ages. They worked long hours and didn’t have time for one another. Since they ran the company together, they decided to expand their work in different nearby cities in the fire country which led to them never really communicating much. Sakura doubted her parents had much in common anymore except for her.

So it was with a heavy heart that she accepted that things weren’t going to get better between them and it came off as no surprise when her parents sat her down on Friday afternoon to tell her that they were getting a divorce. There was whole argument about which parent she would be staying with, until she put her foot down and told them firmly she wasn’t going anywhere from Konoha.

With no room left for argument, Sakura’s parents complied and her father agreed to move out and continue his business in another city. In hindsight, their divorce was amicable; however it did put a strain on Sakura’s heart. They would never really do much together as a family, she knew they made the effort for her, but it wasn’t really going to be the same.

She couldn’t wait to go to college and be away from all this,

Sakura spent the following week, motivated by the weekend’s events, to check with her guidance counselor on potential colleges and career options for her. She was looking for a highly competitive career, somewhere she would be challenged and the counselor, Kurenai, suggested taking pre-med.

She hadn’t really thought about it, but Sakura’s grades were impeccable and it was competitive enough to get into a good college. It was definitely a challenge she was willing to take.

With a vision in mind, she felt that she had some form of clarity despite her stressed home situation and she wanted to share that clarity with her friends. Ino and Hinata were absolutely thrilled at the idea.

‘Hinata was thinking about going into the veterinary services, wouldn’t it be great if you’re both doctors!’ Ino had said.

Sakura felt a sense of warmth spreading through her insides. Her friends had her back that made her confident enough to pursue medicine as a career. Naruto was just as thrilled when he heard the news;
however it was Sasuke that worried her. It wasn’t as if she expected him to jump for joy or anything but she expected her friend to be happy for her, instead when she went looking for him, he was nowhere to be found. After a few days, it became quite obvious that he was purposely avoiding her, which hurt her even more.
Sakura wracked her brain trying to think of a reason why he would be upset or angry at her. They didn’t argue about anything, or disagree, so why would he without a reason, ignore her?
She thought she was overreacting until she saw him leaving school at the end of the day. She called after him but he kept walking ahead, if anything a lot quickly to get away from her.
What a jerk! She had thought.

He was perfectly fine a few days ago at the party when he dropped her and Naruto home. Sakura remembered being in his car laughing about something that had happened. She even remembered telling him that she thought he was a great friend. How does that merit a fight?

She remembered how quiet it was in the car, how everything had gone perfectly still including time, all she remembered was her friend, the one she got to know over the years and how, when he gave her that small smile, a familiar heat that risen up in her cheeks and crept along her neck.

It was one thing to leave her confused after, it was another to ignore her completely.

What the hell was that even about?!

She had tried to mind her own business in class, but every few minutes later, she couldn’t help but shift her focus to Sasuke sitting a few seats away from her. He was busy taking notes with a deep frown marring his features. She never noticed how intense he looked while doing that, it made him look distinctly aristocratic.

Sure he was popular but she knew he hated the attention, choosing to stay in the shadows and brood instead. What a waste! He could go really far if he became a bit social and easy going. But she figured he wouldn’t be Sasuke if he was any of those things.

She noticed him spending more time in the gym even during break and their free period. She supposed it was his way of hiding from her. One day she caught him practicing with the other boys for the upcoming basketball game against Suna.

She saw how fast he was on the court, like lightening! He was clearly enjoying the challenging maneuvers their coach, Gai, was making them practice and he looked like he was in his element. Focused, quick and leading the charge.

It was quite a sight, but Sakura was surprised to feel a familiar heat creep up her neck. Was this how people felt? Like in movies or books when time stops, and your heart starts beating wildly? Is this what it feels like?

To Sakura it was an onslaught of feelings and it felt too overwhelming. She didn’t blame Sasuke for ignoring her. What if Sasuke knew all along? What if he had felt her blush like a twelve year old and was too creeped out to even face her? What if she had potentially scared off her friend and inadvertently ruined their friendship irreparably?
She sighed deeply. Why did she have to make thing so complicated for herself?

She decided that wasn’t going to ruin years of friendship because of his stupidly long eyelashes. She was just going to have to mash down the weirdly overwhelming feelings and forget about them.

Nodding internally, she stood up from the bench she was sitting on, brushed dust off her pants and
marched on.

Chapter End Notes

Hi guys!
Things are definitely stirring up between them, or are they? ;)
Let me know what you thought of the chapter.
Enjoy!
After that wretchedly tumultuous party, Sasuke wasn’t looking forward to school. He wasn’t very keen on running into anyone really, and he was definitely not okay with running into Sakura.

Twice he almost ran into her and both times he closely avoided her. He hoped she hadn’t grown suspicious. Because a suspicious Sakura meant a chatty, trying to communicate and find out the problem Sakura, and he was not going to talk about his feelings to her.

Many times, Sasuke thought of confiding in Naruto but the dobe would only tease him and let something slip in his loud voice. It wasn’t a risk he was willing to take. Sasuke wasn’t sure if Naruto was even in the right head space. He often caught hi spacing out, more so than usual, even when they were having a conversation. It was like he wasn’t really listening and was distracted by something. Twice he had to call Naruto’s attention to what he was saying at lunch and then again in the hallway when he was glancing over at the quad with such concentration.

Sasuke realized that he wasn’t the only one with secrets.

However, Sasuke didn’t have time to deal with anyone or their personal lives, his parents had come over unannounced surprising him after school.

‘Sasuke dear, aren’t you glad to see us? Now stop pouting and give us a hug’ said his mother

He did as he was told.

‘I thought you had to extend the trip?’

‘The deal closed early, so we caught the first flight out of there. I don’t think I like Hong Kong very much’ said his mother.

His father stood by the grand fireplace ominously, studying him with a deep frown.

‘You haven’t been taking care of yourself, probably hanging around that Uzumaki boy’ he said gruffly.

‘You mean my friend’

‘Don’t take that tone with me’

‘Yes, Otou-san’ he said tersely

‘Oh quit it both of you, we just met after ages. How about we sit down for a nice family meal? Itachi will be here shortly, he’s wrapping some things at work’

‘Thank you but I made plans with my friends’ replied Sasuke

‘You would rather meet our friends than spend time with us? Sasuke-kun, where are your manners?’ she asked politely.

‘Probably in Hong Kong’
'Sasuke’ his father said sternly.

He sighed and stalked over to his room.

‘Dinner will be in an hour, I expect to see both of my sons there’ Mikoto called sweetly behind him.

He was just looking forward to a quiet day and now this.

Later at dinner, his parents made polite conversation asking about Itachi’s work and Sasuke’s studies.

‘Have you thought about a career after you graduate? Or started looking at colleges?’ asked his father.

‘No’

The man simply raised his eyebrows.

‘It’s too early in the year’

‘I hear Sakura already declared her major. Her mother told me so this morning, when I called to check in with her about a project we’re working on together’

Sasuke frowned. When the hell did that happen?

He shrugged to let them know he didn’t really know.

‘Your friends are already thinking of their next move. At this rate, you and that boy will be the only one’s left without an aim in life’

‘Not everyone wants a life already made for them’

‘You think this was handed to us? You don’t know what hard work and commitment is boy, so don’t presume otherwise’

‘Outo-sama, Sasuke only meant that he needed more time to think over his options. I’m sure he’s already met his counselor to discuss things’

He harrumphed skeptically.

‘You shouldn’t come to his aid every time, Itachi. I think you know better than to let him defend himself’

Sasuke got up angrily and shot his brother a glare.

‘Thank you Ni-san, but I’m fine. Excuse me’

‘Sasuke!’ his mother called, clearly crestfallen at the events.

It wasn’t as if Sasuke didn’t know how the process worked? He had met with Kurenai-sensei to discuss his options, but the more he poured over the leaflets and college brochures, the less interested he became and the more he realized that he wasn’t cut out for any other the options she gave. He kept picturing himself as a businessman or a lawyer, even a software developer. They all seemed to incite an image of his future where he worked a lot and stayed away from home. It was exactly the kind of life his parents led and the one he detested.

Sasuke was livid by the time he got to his room.
Why do his parents think they can show up announced and expect him to be happy. He knows they’ll leave again in a few short weeks or days. They don’t get to ask him questions about his future when they’re not here for him in the present. It bugged him to think that they could go on and pretend that he would be okay with their living situation. Who does that? And what is this about Sakura declaring her major? She never said anything to him! Sure he was avoiding her but that didn’t mean she would keep something like that from him? They were friends weren’t they? Naruto never mentioned it either and he must have known! Traitor!

He kicked a nearby desk and immediately regretted it when a sharp pain started rising in his left toe.

Steeling himself, he inhaled sharply and decided to go for a walk. If he was upset he might as well train for the upcoming match, it was something he was at least good at.

His troubles were nearly forgotten when his feet hit the pavement and the night air entered his system.

Chapter End Notes

I enjoy writing a grumpy Sasuke.
Don’t rule out his parents just yet!
More about the formal coming up in the next chapters so keep reading! :)
Sakura crinkled her nose disdainfully as she saw the posters for the upcoming formal. She sighed. It wasn’t like she planned on it but she decided that she wasn’t going. The formal was a lousy excuse for the student body to act more high strung than usual. It was just another party but with faculty supervision and blindingly bright lights.

She didn’t think she could muster the pressure on the brain.

‘Hey Forehead!’ Ino called. She wore a fabulously chic black faux fur winter cape coat over her uniform and dark boots.

‘So…got your formal tickets? You know I was thinking of going shopping, I still haven’t gotten my fabric for the dress, at this rate it won’t be ready in time!’ she exclaimed.

‘I’m not going Ino, I’ve got a lot to do’

‘Like what?’

‘Like brush through the college options Kurenai gave me and research on the application process’

‘You’re blowing off our last formal for college hunt? No way! I seriously don’t want to hear it Sakura, we’re all going this year!’

Sakura sighed.

‘Ino you’re going with Sai and Tenten’s going with Neji, I’d just be a fifth wheel in the situation’

‘So ask someone. No one’s caught your eye?’

It took everything in her power not to blanch at the comment, if only Ino knew.

‘No’ she replied offhandedly. ‘Anyway I thought you were helping Hinata ask Naruto?’

‘Oh that, yeah there’s definitely been progress, I gave her some liquid courage and told her to go talk to him at Choji’s party. So worth it, she later told me they took a walk along the gardens and talked about a lot of things’ she giggled ‘I think it was sweet’

‘What’s sweet?’ said Hinata, joining them.

‘You and Naruto’ said Ino mischievously

‘Ino!’ she admonished

‘So? Are you going to ask him?’

‘I-I don’t know’ she said unsure and turning beet red.

Sakura put her arm around her and smiled at her reassuringly.

‘Well, you’re going to ask him today at break and then we’re going to find Sakura a date, because
not going is not an answer we accept!’ claimed Ino with her hands on her hips.

Sakura sighed, she already felt unsure and now this?

Hinata agreed and the girls went to class but not before running into Principal Tsunde.

‘Good morning girls, Ms. Yamanaka, what is that?’ she asked sternly, gazing at her attire.

‘A faux fur custom made cape coat, sensei’

‘I didn’t ask for the description, I asked what it’s doing on you, in school grounds.’

‘It’s cold and besides, the school encourages a freedom of expression and thoughtfulness, I’m just expressing it the only way I know how’ she smiled sweetly at the older woman.

Tsunade inhaled sharply ‘Ms. Yamanaka, I don’t know how many times we have to go through with this, it’s against school policy to wear anything other than the designated uniform’

‘I hear you sensei, but the student handbook given to us didn’t state what kinds of winter wear it allows, so you can understand my confusion and assumption to wear my own clothing, besides it is quite cold’

Tsunade blinked and frowned. ‘Very well, for now, you can express your individuality, but I assure you, a revise in the policy clauses will be made’

With that, she stalked off.

Ino breathed a sigh of relief. Sakura and Hinata stood there stunned and couldn’t believe what had just happened. Ino had gotten off easy despite many warnings already issued.

She laughed completely relieved. ‘I thought I was done for.’

Sakura and Hinata looked at each other and sighed in exasperation; trust Ino to get what she wanted in the best way she knew how. The quickly scurried over to class, when the final bell rang.

The boys usually hung out on the roof for lunch. It wasn’t a tradition but Sasuke felt that ever since Naruto and Kiba discovered the quiet place that looked over the school grounds, it had become a regular spot for them to get away from the rest of the school. Plus they had enough room for Shikamaru to lounge lazily, looking up at the clouds, and for Choji to spread his lunch and bags of potato chips around him while he ate.

The roof was the one place where Sasuke felt at peace and away from the drama that most of his classmates tend to find themselves in. It was where he could get away his family since there was no cell reception there, and as of late, it served as a classic detour while avoiding Sakura.

That simple conversation in his car had turned his entire head around. For some reason he was seeing his old scrawny friend differently. It wasn’t as if he intended to but every time she would walk in a room, his radar would only zero in on her and what she was doing. It wasn’t like he wanted to, but every time he saw her, a large lump would form in his throat and he felt a weird tingling in his limbs.

It was too much of a risk for anyone to see him that state so he would go up to the roof to avoid trouble.

Sakura was sitting with the girls in the glass paneled student lounge, drinking her coffee. Tenten sat
next to her looking up dresses on her phone while Ino and Hinata were talking.

‘You have to do it Hinata, c’mon!’

‘No, I’m fine right here, thank you’ she said softly.

‘Hinata you said you had a wonderful time at Choji’s party why not have an awesome time at the dance?’

‘Because it was a quiet moment, the dance is too public’

‘At some point you’ll have to get over your shyness and make everyone see what a thoughtful and kind person you are.’

Hinata looked away shyly.

‘Okay, that’s it! You need to get up and ask him right now! I can’t sit here and watch you throw away a good chance at happiness here Hinata!’ Ino exclaimed.

Sakura and Tenten looked at each other quietly, from the gleaming look in Ino’s eyes, they both knew she wasn’t going to relent or give up.

Ino pulled Hinata up from the couch she was lounging on and shuffled over to the rooftop.

Sakura and Tenten followed closely behind, completely bewildered.

‘Maybe we should stay behind, in case they need to make a quick getaway?’ suggested Sakura.

‘Good idea’ replied Tenten.

The girls went up the stairs while the other two watched from below, they stayed hidden but could see what was happening.

Sakura glanced at Hinata, poor girl looked like she was going to faint. Ino pushed her enough that they stood in front of the boys who had looked up at the new arrivals.

‘What’s up guys?’ asked Naruto cheerfully.

Sakura saw Ino nudge Hinata to say something.

‘Um…Naruto-kun’ she began softly, clearly trying to look anywhere but at him.

He stepped closer towards them, very curious.

Ino cleared her throat and helped her friend out a bit ‘Hinata has something to say’

Shikamaru who was lounging nearby caught the hint and dragged Choji and Kiba to the other side of the roof and out of earshot. He motioned for Sasuke and Neji to follow who had no interest whatsoever and merely shrugged at them.

‘Uh…sure, what’s up Hinata?’

‘Um…Naruto-kun, do you…there’s a formal coming up…uh.’

‘Hinata I really can’t hear you’

‘Um…would you like…to g-go to the formal with m-me?’ she murmured, clearly agitated.
‘Sure, yeah, I’d like that’ he gave her a dazzling smile. ‘Text me your address and I’ll pick you from there, Saturday at 6?’

She nodded smiling shyly.

Ino smirked.

‘Well, we’ll be going now, Hinata can’t wait, see you!’ she yelled the last bit and moved towards the staircase.’

‘Later’ he waved good-naturedly.

Sakura and Tenten saw the whole exchange and high-fived each other. When the other girls climbed downstairs they both hugged Hinata and congratulated her.

‘We’re so proud of you Hinata’

The girl nodded and thanked them, especially Ino.

‘Hey, no biggie! Now all we need to do is go shopping, and find Sakura a date!’

‘Hell no, that wasn’t the plan’ said a startled Sakura.

‘Oh please Forehead, if Hinata can do it there’s no stopping you’

‘I don’t have anyone in mind’

The bell rang and the girls including Sakura started to depart, but not before being stopped by Ino.

When the other two were out of earshot, Ino confronted Sakura.

‘Okay what is going on Forehead?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Look I know you’d rather be looking at college options than going to this thing, but c’mon! I’ve noticed you’ve been so spaced out lately, and you haven’t been spending time at Sasuke’s like you do, did you fight with the guys?’

‘No, I wanted to give Hinata her privacy as she asked Naruto’

‘No I get that, you’ve been fine with Naruto, I’m talking about Sasuke, was he rude to you?’

‘No’ she replied shortly.

‘Sakura’

‘Nothing happened, but he keeps ignoring and running away from me like I’m the plague!’

‘Oh’ Ino blinked at her. ‘That’s weird’

‘Yeah, totally weird, it’s been two weeks!’

‘Okay look, I don’t know what’s going on between you guys, but you need to talk it out with him.’

She grew quiet all of a sudden, Sakura knew these were telltale signs of her getting an idea.
‘You know, why don’t you ask Sasuke to the formal? As friends, of course. He’s probably been asked by a bunch of his fangirls, but I don’t think he’s agreed or we would have heard something already. You know how gossip travels?’

Ask Sasuke, as friends? Ino didn’t know the torrent of emotions that Sakura was going through, but she was right about one thing, talking to him is a good idea. She’ll ask him what his deal is and he’ll be forced to tell her instead of running away. There’s no expectation of a date there either since they’ll be going as friends. She thought, although she didn’t know why the thought irked her.

‘You’re right, there’ll be less pressure and we’ll both get to attend the formal. I know he won’t be going otherwise anyway’ she shrugged.

‘Great! So you’re asking him at the end of the day?’

Sakura nodded earning a cheer and a hug from the other girl.

‘Look at us, taking our power back!’

Sakura chuckled lightly at that and the walked to class.

Sasuke found it extremely bizarre when the Hyuuga girl had asked Naruto to the school formal. He didn’t think Naruto would be so clueless as to not know she’d liked him forever. But the dobe wasn’t known for his intelligence so he let it slide. He now knew the mystery person he found Naruto talking to on Choji’s party last weekend. He supposed deep down he was happy for his friend, but he wasn’t going to show it so openly. He didn’t want to give anyone ideas of his friendliness.

Everywhere he went, the school was buzzing about the formal. It made Sasuke’s insides on edge. It was a stupid excuse for the school and the student body to dress up in uncomfortable clothes and spend hours in their cramped auditorium. It also meant spending time and money on a date he didn’t like anyway, so what was the point?

Shikamaru had already asked a transfer student from Sand and Neji was going with a girl in his class, he had zoned out when they were talking about it. Even Naruto’s going with someone. He hadn’t really thought about it, but he felt oddly left out. It’s not like he hadn’t thought about asking someone, but lately the whole situation with Sakura stressed him out to the point that he didn’t want to go with anyone and complicate matters. He thought that if he was going it would be a ‘boys only’ situation, apparently not it seems.

He was gathering his books at the end of the day when a figure blocked his line of vision.

‘Sasuke’ said Ami, dropping her voice in a low growl.

Great, now he had to deal with this.

‘What do you want?’ he asked gruffly.

‘School formal’s coming up, so I was thinking, you, me the dance? It’ll be such a hit, I’m even thinking of doing a live stream, here’s a chance of being featured on my video. We can’t hide these cheekbones from the world after all’ she pinched his cheek impishly.

He yanked her hand away glaring furiously at her.

‘What do you say?’
He thought he spotted a flash of pink somewhere behind Ami’s shoulder. Sakura was standing in the hallway looking at him. It seemed as if she was trying to make eye contact.

In that moment Sasuke did something he would regret many years down the road. In hindsight he should have handled the situation better and maybe would have if he were a better man. But seeing as he was confused about his feelings for Sakura and the fact that he couldn’t really say two words to her without fear of melting into a puddle of sweat and anxiety, he went with the only other option available to him that he knew would drive her way for now.

‘You know what Tskyomi, I think going might be a good idea’

‘Seriously? OMG! Okay, so you’re totally going to pick me up from my place, I like to make a statement so we’ll probably arrive later than everyone. I knew you’d relent, I’m totally our type’

She smiled at him and left.

‘Text me’

‘Right’

He looked over in the hallway and saw Sakura talking to Hinata and chuckling over something.

Clearly she wasn’t affected by the events that had just occurred, he wasn’t even sure she had noticed.

Sighing he stalked out of building alone, feeling lonelier than ever.

Sakura saw the whole thing happen in front of her that made her go through a serious of emotions. She felt shocked at Ami salaciously conversing with Sasuke. What’s worse was that he seemed to be responding to her.

She also felt furious because she knew what Ami was asking him. Here she was feeling sorry and thinking that she did something wrong. She had thought that they needed to talk and regain their friendship, when really he was avoiding and distancing himself from her because he liked Ami.

He knew Sakura didn’t get along with Ami so he probably kept her at arm’s length to make room in his life for someone else, thereby replacing Sakura and her importance.

Sakura felt extremely hurt and jilted. She thought that Sasuke and Naruto were he childhood friends when really they were just growing apart and showing her that she wasn’t as important as she thought.

Wiping the tears welling in her eyes, Sakura decided she wasn’t going to mope. If Sasuke could get someone as plastic as Ami to ask him, then she sure as hell wasn’t going to sit around at home, alone over the weekend. So she did what any sane person would do.

She marched all the way back to the emptying classroom, where she found the guys getting out of class. She saw Naruto exiting with the guys.

‘Kiba’ she practically shouted.

Several people had turned to look.

Ignoring them, she went over to him. He looked bewildered and looked at the other guys around
him. They shrugged and walked away.

‘I need to speak to you. Now’

She took a hold of his wrist and dragged him halfway across the hallway and into the parking lot.

‘Geez Sakura, slow down. What’s with you?’ he asked, straightening himself up.

‘Look I know you’re on lockdown or whatever, but I’m sure you could sneak out. Do you want to go to the formal together?’ she really hoped he’d say yes, because she didn’t think she’d bear the humiliation otherwise.

‘For real? Yeah, sure. Don’t worry about sneaking out, I’ve got that covered.’

‘Okay, cool. I’ll swipe something from my parents liquor cabinet, you know for later’

Kiba who had looked bewildered the whole time, laughed boisterously.

‘I never knew you’d be such a rebel Sakura. Whatever you want, I’ll pick you up at 7’

‘Great’

With that out of the way, Sakura had no doubts the news would spread around campus and Ino would stop harping on her about finding a date. She’d also show Sasuke and Naruto that she was fine without them.

This formal couldn’t come soon enough.

Chapter End Notes

Hi!
So formal prep is in full swing, keep reading to find out more from the drama that ensues at the event.
Drop a comment or kudos if you like the chapter! :)
When Saturday arrived, many houses in Konoha witnessed a flurry of teenagers fussing over themselves to get to the Konoha Academy Annual Formal.

Once such teenager resided in the Yamanaka residence and was shrieking herself hoarse at her pink haired friend who had arrived at her house to get ready.

‘What is that?’ she hollered

‘Uh…?’ replied her pink haired friend.

‘What in God’s name are you wearing?’

Sakura looked down at her white off shoulder pant suit.

‘What’s wrong with my outfit now Ino?’

‘It looks like you’re going to a business meeting’

‘No it doesn’t. Its business casual, perfect for an evening out’

‘So now you’ve completely foregone dresses too? Sakura this is a school formal, a dance, not where you have to prove to be anyone other than yourself.’

‘I like what I wear’

Ino shook her head.

‘Fine and here I was slaving away over your birthday gift. Oh well, I guess I’ll just donate it to a homeless shelter. Even though it’s an Ino original and I was waiting to gift it to you.’ She fake sighed and opened a large lilac box. She then went to give last touches to her makeup and left Sakura feeling bewildered.

It wasn’t like Sakura didn’t know what Ino was up to. She rather liked her pant suit combo. It was chic and elegant. Plus it made her short cropped hair standout. Still she was curious as to what Ino had made especially for her.

She crossed the room towards the package laid out on Ino’s bed and unfolded the tissue it lay upon. When she peered inside, her eyes widened, it was a gorgeous dress made dexterously for her. She ran her hands over the fabric. It was a dress worth keeping for special occasions. Sakura knew that Ino would be really famous, judging by her designs. It was Sakura’s now and it was the most beautiful dress she had ever owned.

Smiling slightly, she decided it couldn’t hurt to try it on for her last formal with her friends. She thought it was a special occasion even though it didn’t feel like one.

She took the dress out of its box. Grabbing the steaming machine from Ino’s workspace, she steamed out the wrinkles and unzipped her pant suit.

When she was done she went to the mirror. Ino had really outdone herself. It was an off shoulder silk
dress that reached to her toes with a slit running up the side. It was risqué and moderately reserved. It hugged her figure perfectly and made her feel glamorous. She supposed that was Ino’s specialty, to make you feel like a million bucks with a simple wave of her sewing needle. She had decided to pin her hair up in a simple updo as well, so it didn’t take away the focus from her dress. She didn’t look so bad, Sakura thought as she observed herself in the mirror one last time.

‘Okay, I’m ready, if you’re done being snooty, let’s go’ Ino stopped dead in her tracks. She looked over at Sakura and a smirk immediately graced her features.

‘Am I good or what?’

‘You most definitely are. Ino this is an amazing dress. I can’t believe you made this especially for me’

‘Yeah yeah, just as long as you put it on. I’ve already texted Sai and Kiba, they’ll meet us at the Academy entrance’

‘Yeah Kiba texted me the same. Ready?’

‘What do you think?’ she asked twirling in her sparkling lilac mermaid dress with a high slit in the middle and a sweetheart neckline.

‘Ino you look beautiful. I like what you did with your hair’ said Sakura gesturing at Ino’s straightened locks that hung like a platinum curtain down her back and was teased backwards near the hairline.

The blonde giggled and tossed her hair back.

‘Let’s go if we’re going to make it.’

They met the boys at the school entrance who were clad in sharp suit jackets and dark jeans.

‘Hello beautiful’ greeted Sai which made Ino blush and Sakura roll her eyes.

She smiled at Kiba who whistled lowly. They both gave the other couple their privacy by entering the auditorium together.

‘You look really great by the way’

‘Yeah I could tell by your wolf whistling’ she rolled her eyes.

‘Just showing my appreciation’ he shrugged. ‘Totally meant it though’

She smiled. In his own brash way, she supposed Kiba could be a gentleman when he tried.

‘Did anyone catch you sneaking out?’

‘Nah, I’m a pro’

When she raised her eyebrow at him, he deflated and confessed ‘Okay my sister caught me, when I told her I had a date and everything, she let me go. She’s a real sap with that sorta stuff’

Sakura chuckled.

When they entered the auditorium, they were met with dark lights and blaring music. Food tables lined both sides of the room while many of their classmates danced on the dance floor in the middle of the
Sakura looked around. She spotted Shikamaru and the Sand transfer student Temari. She took a class with the upperclassman and thought she was a tough yet kind girl, so seeing her there made Sakura happy for them. She also saw Choji attacking the refreshments while Lee and Neji were engaged in a heated discussion. Tenten stood nearby with a disgruntled expression on her face.

Sakura decided she could use a friend and urged Kiba to meet up with them.

‘Hey guys!’ she greeted.

The boys stopped arguing and looked over, Tenten too spotted her and waved happily.

‘Sakura, OMG!’ she hugged the pinkette. ‘You look stunning!’

‘So do you’ she returned admiring Tenten’s ensemble of a turquoise beaded dress that reached mid-thigh and her usual space buns with two strands of hair framing her face. She had also applied glittering eye-shadow that made her eyes glow beautifully.

She smiled at Sakura.

‘How was your date?’ Sakura whispered to her while the boys had begun a conversation about something.

‘It was awesome! But we met up with Lee and Neji was dragged in an argument that he’s too stupid to get out of. I was really hoping he’d ask me to dance’ she said, practically disgruntled.

‘Don’t worry about that’ Sakura said and she turned to the boys.

‘Hey there’s plenty of time to argue. It’s such a great night we should be out there dancing. Kiba?’ she looked pointedly at Kiba and then glanced quickly at Neji who she hoped got the hint.

‘Oh right yeah’ said Kiba fumbling a little and regaining himself as he took Sakura’s hand and guided her towards the dance floor.

When she glanced back, Neji had offered Tenten his arm and the two made their way towards the dance floor too. Sakura smiled, at the scene before her, she thought they made a cute couple.

She held Kiba’s hand as he placed his on her waist and they started moving to the upbeat tempo. Every now and then he would twirl her around across the floor quickly and reel her back in with an effect. It was fun and she didn’t care who saw them or how clumsily he held her hand while spinning her, she enjoyed every moment of it.

When the song ended they were both breathless and a bit dizzy. People around them started to move out and they decided to do the same. Kiba took Sakura’s hand and guided her away from the dance floor and near the refreshment table to get a drink.

Sakura spotted Naruto in a dark brown jacket and an orange tie, clearly he stood out the most in the crowd. However Sakura couldn’t take her eyes off Hinata who looked absolutely ethereal in her lilac A-line gown made of delicate chiffon and lace work on the top. She had completed her ensemble by styling her hair in a half up. She looked breathtaking and Sakura could tell Naruto was already enamored by her.

She smiled at them, if anyone deserved happiness, it was Hinata, They both started dancing to the slow number, clearly sharing a private moment, Sakura didn’t want to intrude so she looked away at a nearby table instead.
She gaped openly. There sat Ami in a sheer lace black dress that strategically covered her and hugged her features perfectly. Her hair had been pulled back in a wet look and she sat talking to what Sakura could guess would be Sasuke. She did look pretty though, Sakura thought begrudgingly.

She looked away they weren’t her concern. She tried to enjoy the night as best as she could. Kiba had returned with their drinks while Principal Tsunade grabbed the microphone and called to their attention.

‘Good evening students and faculty. I hope you’re enjoying the evening. This year is off to a great start and I want to keep that streak going. We will of course be announcing our best dressed individuals as voted by you here tonight but I have another announcement to make.’ A hushed silence followed her words.

‘As per a unanimous agreement made between the faculty and administrators of the Academy, we hereby announce that at the end of the year, one student from our outgoing class of seniors would be given the ‘All Rounded Student of the Year’ award. It is an award that tests you on our academic performance, extracurriculars and your overall conduct displayed on campus.’

An excited buzz generated from the students.

‘Please bear in mind, that we take the mentioned credentials very seriously and the person awarded the title will also be granted the KA Scholarship grant to go to a college of their choice’

Her words were met with a thunderous applause.

‘Thank you and have a great evening. Voting for the best dressed individual begins now’ she declared and was met with great enthusiasm.

Sakura thought it was insane! If she won, she could go to Sand or Sound. She could even go to Kiri’s prestigious university. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

‘Omg did you hear that? This is fantastic! I wonder what the test will be on?’ exclaimed Tenten who had come up to Sakura and Kiba.

‘I don’t know I hope it’s something good and challenging’ she replied.

‘I hope not, there’s a good chance we’ll flunk out’ exclaimed Kiba pointing a thumb toward him and Choji and Naruto who was standing speaking to Hinata on the other side of the room.

The girls chuckled lightly.

When the night was drawing to a close and when Hinata and Kiba were crowned as ‘Best Dressed’ with much fanfare, Sakura stepped outside the auditorium for some fresh air.

The cool night air hit her, refreshing her senses and giving her a much needed space.

She was happy for Hinata and Kiba and had a great time but there was an unsettling feeling in her heart that she couldn’t get away from.

‘Hey, Tenten said you’d be here’ said Kiba emerging from the auditorium and into the parking lot of the school.

‘Yeah needed some air, it was getting stuffy in there’
Kiba moved towards her and held her hand gently.

‘I had a really great time today’

‘Me too. Where’d you learn to spin someone like that?’

‘I’m not telling you all my secrets’ he grinned at her wolfishly.

‘Fair enough’ she smiled back.

‘Listen, if it’s cool, I’d really like to-’

He was interrupted by a vibrating sound coming in from Sakura’s beaded purse.

She declined the phone call and looked at Kiba expectantly.

‘What were you saying?’

‘uh.. yeah, I meant would you-’

He was interrupted again by the vibration from Sakura’s phone.

‘Maybe you should get that’

Sakura looked over at her phone to see her favorite picture of Naruto lighting up the screen.

‘It just Naruto, probably found Tsunade’s liquor stash in her office’

Kiba’s eyes widened at that ‘She has a stash?’

‘Yeah, who knows’

Sakura’s phone vibrated again; it was really getting annoying. Sighing she answered it in annoyance.

‘What do you want Naruto?’

She fell silent immediately as Naruto spoke on the other line, her mind reeling. She turned away from the concerned looks Kiba was giving her. She didn’t want to face them.

After listening to him on the other line quietly, Sakura hung up and faced Kiba.

‘I’m sorry Kiba, I have to go something came up.’

‘What happened? Is everything cool?’

‘I’m really sorry, but I really have to go’

Without another glance at him she called an Uber and rushed from there as soon as she could.

This was turning into a disaster.

Chapter End Notes

I have nothing against jumpsuits, I really wanted Sakura to wear red :P
Can you guess what was that cliffhanger at the end?

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