Into the Future

by ichilover3 (makasouls)

Summary

As payment for their last mission, Team 8 receives a device that projects the future. Everyone but Shikamaru is eager to try it, as he is convinced that someone will be embarrassed. And, as usual, he is right. Multiple parings.

Notes

And this, folks, is what happens when a plot bunny takes hold and doesn't let go. I started this as a little oneshot to go into Troublesome Crybabies, but it quickly became its own entity. I had even planned to just make it a separate oneshot, but this fic is quickly becoming a monster! So now I have another chapter fic on my hands. Yeah, as if I need another one of those. (Sorry, Rapture fans, I'm working on it. ^_^;;)

To be honest, this one has been sitting on my laptop for a while, but I figured I'd post something so that people don't think that school has swallowed me whole. (Which it in fact has...but again, I'm working on it.)

Okay! On to the story! Hmm...I guess I'm going to say that this takes place during Shippuden, but before Pein invades Konoha. Somewhere in there.

I don't own Naruto. If I did, the storyline would be moving a lot faster.
"Why are we here again?" Shikamaru asked lazily.

Temari cocked an eyebrow at the boy sitting next to her. "I'm here because Hinata heard that Naruto was coming and needed some moral support. I don't know why you're here. Isn't Kiba your friend or something?"

He shrugged slightly, looking up at the ceiling.

"Baka," Ino hissed from his other side. "We're here because Kiba said he had something to show us. A surprise!"

"Do you really want a surprise from Kiba?" Shikamaru pointed out. "He's really perverted."

"True, but it has to be something really good for him to gather all of us at his house," Ino retorted.

Shikamaru sighed. Ino and her need to know everything.

But she was right. Kiba had gathered all of the Rookie Nine plus Team Gai into his living room. They all sat on the floor in a big circle. Choji sat on Ino's other side, munching on chips. Shino quietly sat in between him and Sai, who smiled creepily at Lee, who was once again babbling about youth. Sakura, who had found herself sitting next to Lee and Naruto, was yelling at Naruto for some reason, while he sheepishly sat next to Tenten. Tenten was showing a new shuriken to Neji, who seemed to only be sort of listening, as he watched Hintata, on his other side, look visibly nervous. Kiba had even invited Temari, who had happened to be in Konoha. She sat next to Hinata, smiling reassuringly at her.

"Kiba!" Naruto yelled. "Are you going to tell us why we're here? I'm missing my late-night Ichiraku run!"

"Idiot, you just ate there an hour ago!" Sakura snapped.

"Yeah," Naruto responded incredulously. "That was my evening run. I still need my late-night run!"

Temari shook her head. "Is he always like that?" she asked Hinata, who was silently swooning. She blushed in answer.

"That would be a yes," Shikamaru drawled.

Temari shook her head again, this time wondering at her friend's sanity. What does she see in him?

Kiba, the only one standing, grinned, showing all of his canines. "Yeah, I'll tell you why I brought you here."

Everyone quieted at that, curious.

"You all know how my team got back from a mission today," he started. "Well, along with paying us, the lady gave us this."

He brought his hands from behind his back, revealing a shiny blue orb, the size of an orange, in his palms.
Everyone looked on confusedly.

"...That's it?" Naruto yelled. "I'm missing Ichiraku's for this?"

"It's pretty, Kiba," Ino commented uncertainly. "It's a little big, but I'm sure it'll make a nice necklace or something."

"No!" Kiba huffed, annoyed. "This, my friends, will allow us to see into the future!"

Silence. Then, Tenten snorted. "What are you on today, Kiba?"

He glared at her. "Nothing! I'm telling you, this thing shows the future! If a person fuels chakra into it, a moment from their future will be projected for them to see!"

Temari glanced over at Hinata. "Did you know about this?"

Hinata blushed. "H-hai."

That explained things. Hinata was afraid of what she might see, so she asked Temari, along with all the Leaf kunoichi, to come along.

"How far into the future is this supposed to be?" Choji mumbled around his chips.

"I don't know—it can be different for all of us. The lady said that it's random," Kiba answered, absentely petting Akamaru, who sat behind him.

"So it can essentially show us five minutes from now," Neji deadpanned.

"La-ame," Ino singsonged.

"Technically yes!" Kiba ground out. "But it only works once per person and—Jesus, do you guys want to try it or not?"

"I do!" Lee replied enthusiastically. "Seeing the future can only remind us of our YOUTH!"

"Oooh, oooh, I want to see too!" Naruto yelled.

Kiba smirked. "Okay then. But there is one catch."

Sakura narrowed her eyes, waiting for the other perverted shoe to drop.

"Everyone has to touch this. Whatever is shown will be shown to everyone, so it's only fair that everyone has something shown. Can you all agree to that?"

It was silent again. Then, Shikamaru uncharacteristically spoke up. "Technically, once we see the future, can't we just prevent it from happening?"

"No," Neji interrupted, "because it is fate. Whatever will be will be."

Tenten rolled her eyes at Neji's fate talk, turning to Kiba. "I'm game."

"Me too!" Naruto yelled, followed by Lee. Shino nodded once, as did Neji, and one by one they all began to agree, until only Temari, Hinata, and Shikamaru remained.

"Why not," Temari sighed, looking to her right. "What about you, Hinata? Are you in?"

Hinata suddenly looked skeptical as all eyes were on her. "A-ano…"
"Come on, Hinata!" Naruto begged, pouting. "Don't you want to know your future?"

Hinata's face flushed from the sudden attention Naruto was giving her, and she looked like she might faint. She nodded violently.

"Well then, that just leaves you, Shikamaru," Choji commented.

All eyes turned to him expectantly. Shikamaru sighed. "I don't think this is a good idea."

Kiba growled, and Ino rolled her eyes, annoyed.

"What's the matter, Nara?" Temari prompted. "Is the crybaby scared?"

"Troublesome woman, that was one time!" he retorted. "And I'm not scared, I just don't think this is a good idea. Someone is going to end up upset or embarrassed."

Temari didn't reply, just smirked at him. Sighing again, he lifted his eyes towards the ceiling. "Okay. But let it be known that I warned you."

"Wi-cchhha," Kiba said, flicking an imaginary whip at Shikamaru.

The shadow user glared back as many people laughed, especially Ino, who had found that hilarious. "Ino," he said, annoyed.

Ino stifled a giggle. "What? I'm sorry, but Temari does kind of have you wrapped around her finger."

"That may be so, but it isn't because we're dating like everyone seems to think," Temari cut in. "It's because he's too lazy to fight me."

"Again with the not dating," Tenten sighed.

Temari rolled her eyes in response. She didn't know where these Konohans got their information, but Nara and herself were friends at the most. Their relationship was strictly platonic and mostly entailed business.

"Enough with the sexual tension!" Kiba declared, putting the group's attention on him once again. "Who wants to go first?"
"Oooh, oooh, me me!" Naruto yelled, jumping up like a little kid. He grabbed the globe from Kiba's hand. "How does this work again?"

"I don't know, the lady said to put chakra into it," Kiba replied impatiently.

Everyone watched as the sphere began to glow. Then, it jumped out of Naruto's hands, hovering in midair.

"Well that's normal," Tenten snorted.

But before anyone could reply, the orb began to project something onto the nearby wall. Everyone turned eagerly.

Naruto, clearly older, slumped against his desk. He sighed.

The setting looked familiar, but no one could place it.

"Hey! That's me!" Naruto yelled excitedly.

"No duh, dumbass!" Sakura hissed. "Now shut up so we can hear!"

Naruto was too excited to be offended. He just grinned, placing his attention back to the projection.

Naruto sighed again.

"Naruto, are you even listening to me?" a familiar voice drawled. The projection panned out, and an older Shikamaru, in his twenties, could be seen standing next to the desk.

"Hey, that's Shikamaru!" Naruto exclaimed, making Sakura roll her eyes at his stating the obvious. Naruto's eyes got wide. "Aren't we in the Hokage's office?"

They were. And as older Naruto stood, smiling sheepishly, it could clearly be seen that he was wearing Hokage robes.

"YESSSSS!" Naruto yelled, threatening the eardrums of everyone in the room. The words spoken on the screen were drowned out. "I'M HOKAGE! I TOLD YOU ALL! I TOLD YOU!"

Hinata smiled softly, but everyone else looked at the screen in slight disbelief. Naruto ran around the room in victory.

Temari elbowed Shikamaru. "Looks like you're the Hokage's advisor, huh?" she grinned. "Who would have thought a lazy ass like you had it in him?"

"Che," he scoffed. But inside, he balked at his fate. What could possibly make him want to take such a troublesome job?

"I didn't even want this job," Shikamaru complained, looking at the ceiling.

Naruto grinned. "Why'd you take it then?"

Shikamaru sighed, reaching into his pocket and retrieving a cigarette. Putting it to his lips, he reached back into his pocket and found a lighter. "She made me," he answered sourly. "Now are
we going to finish this report or not?"

Naruto grinned cheekily, leaning towards his advisor conspiratorially. "I thought that you had quit smoking."

Shikamaru's hand, on its way to light the cigarette, froze. He looked at Naruto. "You're not going to tell her, are you?"

Naruto waggled his eyebrows. "Not if you buy me ramen for lunch tomorrow."

Shikamaru groaned. "Mendokuse."

Then, the projection cut off abruptly, the orb levitating back to the floor.

Ino laughed, leaning on Choji for support. Shikamaru glared at her, not seeing what was so funny.

"I can't believe you'd still listen to your mother at that age!" Ino cackled, wiping her eyes.

"I can," Naruto piped up. "His mom is scary!"

Shikamaru nodded in agreement, but Choji stayed silent. For some reason, he got the impression that Yoshino wasn't the "she" the projection was talking about.

"Okay," Kiba interrupted cheerfully. "Now that we know that Konoha's going to burn to the ground, who's next?"

"I resent that," Naruto huffed.

No one answered. It seemed that they had realized just how real everything was.

"Oh come on," Kiba scoffed. "Are we suddenly scared now?"

"I'm not," Tenten stated, standing. "Give it here."

Kiba grinned, picking the orb up off the ground and handing it to her. Once again, it glowed, jumping out of her hands and hovering in front of her.

A woman sat on the grass in what appeared to be a backyard. She had a pile of weapons next to her, and she was taking care to sharpen each one.

"That's clearly you, Tenten," Ino declared.

"Huh. Don't look too bad," Tenten responded thoughtfully.

Her hair was no longer in its signature style. Instead, it cascaded down her back in a neat braid, streaks of grey running through it. Her outfit was still more Chinese than Japanese in nature, but it was more for sitting around than training—just a light cotton dress.

Tenten continued to sharpen her weapons, making sure to get all angles. Suddenly, her arm shot out, and the kunai she was working on was no longer in her hand.

Another woman stepped out of the trees, holding the kunai between two fingers. She looked around twenty. Her brown hair, in a bun on top of her head, was held in place by what looked like a chopstick, and her pale, pupiless eyes looked at Tenten in annoyance.

"Hey," Temari whispered around Shikamaru. "Does that look like a Hyuuga to you?"
"The eyes look the same," Ino responded, looking over Shikamaru as well.

"She is," Hinata informed the other girls quietly. "She even has the crest on her shoulder."

"Is it really necessary to do that every time you see me, kaa-chan?" the woman snapped.

The air seemed to be sucked out of the room. Everyone stared at the wall, some openmouthed. Tenten looked on incredulously, and Neji looked very, very confused.

"Yes," Tenten replied with a smirk. "How else are you supposed to stay on your toes? Now, what did that idiot Naruto want?"

"I resent that!" Naruto hollered.

*It was the girl's time to smirk. Tenten stood, walking to meet her daughter. As she did, the Hyuuga clan symbol could be seen on the back of her dress.*

"Holy shit," Tenten breathed. She avoided eye contact with Neji, who still looked like he had no idea what was going on.

Sakura had made her way over to Temari's side of the circle, and now she sat in front of Shikamaru, ignoring him completely. "Do you think it was Neji?" she whispered to Ino.

"It could be any Hyuuga," Temari argued.

"That's highly unlikely," Hinata murmured.

Shikamaru rolled his eyes. Why was it *him* that had to be surrounded by gossiping women?

*The girl lifted the sleeve of her right arm, proudly showing the new ANBU tattoo that lay there.*

Tenten grinned, hugging her daughter. "Good job, Mai-chan. Now you match your kaa-chan, eh?"

Mai grinned back. "Don't forget tou-chan."

*Tenten rolled her eyes. "Yeah yeah, him too." She winked. "Did you tell him yet? What did he say?"

Mai nodded, sighing. "He just went on and on about how I was going to make ANBU sooner or later because it was my 'fate'," she mocked, her voice lowering a couple of octaves.

*Tenten laughed. "Of course!" she said sarcastically. "Now, are you up for a little spar with your ma?"

"Um, yeah," Mai scoffed, pointing to her shoulder. "ANBU, remember?"

The projection cut out, and the globe fell to the floor.

Sakura snorted, trying not to burst out laughing, and both Ino and Temari grinned, Cheshire cat style. They looked at Neji and Tenten, who were both blushing furiously.

"Not one word," Tenten threatened her friends. The kunoichi didn't seem perturbed, however, and their mirth grew. Actual tears began to form in the corners of Sakura's eyes as she tried to control her laughter.

"Wait," Naruto interrupted. "Is Tenten going to marry a Hyuuga?"
"Not just any Hyuuga, you dimwit," Tenten snapped, embarrassed. "Neji. Not that I'm surprised. And if any of you make fun of me, you're dead!"

And with that, she retook her place next to Neji, her cheeks still flushed, and avoided looking at him.

Neji, obviously uncomfortable, looked away from her as well. Although, if he were honest with himself, he wasn't really that surprised either.

"Okay!" Naruto yelled, leaning slightly away from an agitated Tenten, lest she strike him. "Who's next?"
No one said anything. Naruto huffed. "Fine, I'll pick someone. Hmmm...how about you, Hinata?"

"W-what?" she stuttered, taken off guard.

"I'll go," Temari interrupted. Hinata looked at her friend gratefully, and she smiled in return.

"Are you sure you want to do that?" Shikamaru asked her skeptically. "Chances are—"

"Shut it, Nara," she retorted, catching the orb that Naruto threw at her. "I already said I'd do it."

The ball glowed again, and she let it go. A projection appeared on the wall.

Temari sat on the floor, scribbling on a piece of paper. Her hair, free of its pigtails, ran wild. She wore a light pink t-shirt and a lacy pair of black underwear.

Kiba catcalled, Naruto giggled like a schoolboy, and she heard a cough from her left. She turned to see Shikamaru pointedly looking at the ceiling.

Temari rolled her eyes. "Take a good look, pervs," she snipped. "You're not seeing that again."

"Temari," Tenten deadpanned. "Aren't you at least a little embarrassed? Your ass is up there for everyone to see!"

Tenten looked at her incredulously. Temari scoffed. "Come on, Tenten, those are my freaking pajamas."

"And such nice ones," Kiba purred, making his way behind Temari and slinking an arm over her shoulders lecherously. "Do you know what I like to sleep in? The nude."

Temari, her face blank, slowly looked down at the offending arm—whose hand was dangerously close to her breasts—and back up to Kiba's smug face. "That's nice," she said pleasantly. "Now if you don't want to lose that arm, I suggest you move it."

"Fiesty," Kiba growled. "I like it." However, he moved his arm.

"Temari," Sakura called, pointing at the projection. "Um…"

Temari brought her attention back to the screen.

Temari was no longer doing paperwork. She stood abruptly, an annoyed look on her face. Then, her fingers grasped the hem of her shirt.

"OH MY GOD ARE YOU GETTING NAKED?" Naruto asked, quite tactfully in his own opinion.

Temari sighed, putting a hand on her forehead. "Looks like it," she replied, watching herself take the shirt off and reveal the lacy bra underneath. "Okay, this is a little embarrassing."
"A little?" Ino snapped. Like everyone else in the room, she was having a hard time not looking at Temari's breasts. They were a good size bigger than they were now, and that, folks, was saying something.

Temari shrugged good-naturedly, as if letting a room full of people see her practically naked was normal. "What can you do?"

Sai paused, contemplating his words. Then he said, "Your breasts are nice. They have a nice shape, and are much larger than the breasts of Konohan women. They would be lovely to paint."

Temari quirked an eyebrow awkwardly. "Um."

"SAI!" Sakura raged. "YOU DON'T SPEAK ALL NIGHT AND THIS IS THE FIRST THING YOU SAY? YOU CAN'T JUST SAY STUFF LIKE THAT!"

Sai cocked his head, his creepy smile on his face. "Why not? Is that not a compliment?"

Sakura looked ready to pummel him, mumbling about how socially retarded he was.

"It's okay, Sakura," Temari told her friend, holding a hand up to stop her violence. "Thanks, Sai. I think."

"Yeah, Sai," Ino piped up. "Sakura's just mad that she's flat-chested. I mean, the only one who could rival Temari anyway is Hinata, but Sakura is the flattest of all of us, and she's really sensitive about that."

"Shut up, Ino-pig!" Sakura yelled.

"Make me, billiard-brow," Ino sneered back.

"Why are we talking about...breasts?" Neji interrupted.

"Dude," Kiba said incredulously, "why shouldn't we talk about them?"

Temari dropped the shirt on the floor, still looking annoyed. She stood there for a couple of seconds, not doing anything.

And suddenly, it clicked. Temari's eyes widened, her mouth dropping open in horror. This was not fun anymore.

"We have to turn it off," she stated, getting up quickly and making her way to the levitating orb.

"Why?" Kiba asked, startled by her urgency.

"Because I'm sick of being ogled by you pervs!" she hissed, her voice rising a couple of octaves. "Now how do I turn it off?"

Kiba shook his head. "I don't know. I think you have to wait for it to finish."

Panic was evident on Temari's face, and her friends watched her in alarm.

"Are you okay, Temari?" Hinata asked.

"No, I'm not." She looked at Shikamaru, who was watching her with concern. "We have to turn it off."
"I was working on that," Temari complained.

And suddenly, he figured it out too. He paled.

"I know."

"It's due tomorrow, you know."

"You still have time."

"Wait a minute!" Ino gasped. "Isn't that—"

"HOW DO YOU TURN IT OFF?" Temari yelled, hysterically trying to break the orb. But instead of making contact, her hand waved through it, like it was a hologram itself.

She walked, slowly, towards the other side of the room. A shirtless Nara Shikamaru met her in the middle.

You could have heard a pin drop. Everyone stared, mouths hanging open and not quite believing what they were seeing. Choji stopped eating. Temari froze in mortification. Even Akamaru, who had been taking a nap in the corner, stared at the screen in disbelief.

She rolled her eyes. "You know that I hate when you use that jutsu on me."

He grinned cheekily. "That's not what you said last night."

"Kinky," Kiba muttered.

Shikamaru flushed. He didn't even know his jutsu could be used for...that.

"Shut it, Nara," she spat, unable to keep a smirk off her face. "I have work to do, and you, sir, are a terrible influence on me."

He didn't answer, just slowly moved his face towards hers. She blushed softly as her lips moved toward his involuntarily.

At this point, Temari had run to the wall, attempting to block the projection. Instead, everyone was treated to the image of her making out with Shikamaru—projected onto her face.

No one could look away. It was like they were watching an accident—they knew they shouldn't look, but they just couldn't help themselves.

It was clear after a while that future Temari was no longer under the influence of Shikamaru's kagemane, as she had fought him for dominance and won, pinning him to the floor.

He smiled against her lips, hands on her butt, before deciding to put them to better use. He reached up her body, unhooking the clasps of her bra and—

"OH MY GOD STOP!" Temari shrieked.

And the footage cut off, just like that.

Temari turned around, blushing so hard she was sure she had broken a few capillaries. Everyone else was red as well, and she could see a lot of the boys trying to cover up their nosebleeds. Even Shino had retreated farther into his hood.

"I guess you just needed to tell it to stop," Ino said faintly. "For it to turn off."
Temari didn't respond, just pridefully returned to her spot between Hinata and Shikamaru. She sat down, turning towards the latter. "You knew," she hissed.

He was just as red as she was, and his mouth dropped open in dismay. "What? It's the future, Temari, how was I supposed to know?"

"You warned me! Twice! Why else would you go through the trouble?"

"It's not because I knew, it's because the probability was high that something embarrassing would come up!"

"Does this mean they really are dating?" Naruto asked no one in particular.

"NO!" they yelled simultaneously, clearly pissed off.

Naruto shrunk back at their tone. "I'll take that as a yes," he whispered to Tenten.

"OKAY!" Temari yelled, startling everyone out of their thoughts. "Now that I've been properly humiliated, who's going next? You all have to go; we promised!"
"I'll go," Kiba declared, grinning. If a lazy guy like Shikamaru could get laid, with someone as smokin' hot as Temari no less, Kiba just knew he would be getting a lot of ass. And he wasn't shy about showing it, either. His grin widening, he grabbed the orb, channeling his chakra through it. It shot out his hand, levitating, and began to project an image on the wall.

Kiba scrubbed, stretching. He was a little older, but looked pretty much the same. He was shirtless, water running along his rippling abs.

"Like what you see, ladies?" Kiba asked, waggling his eyebrows. He winked at Temari, who scoffed disgustedly.

"Get over youself," Tenten snipped, rolling her eyes.

Kiba was in a grassy field, apparently giving Akamaru a bath. He scrubbed big soapy circles in the large dog's fur, sighing when Akamaru shook himself, spraying suds everywhere.

"Stop that," he growled, wiping soap off of his face. "At least wait until I'm finished."

"Don't complain," a voice on the other side of the dog replied. "You needed a bath too."

Kiba looked over the dog, scowling at the girl on the other side. Her brown hair was plastered to her face, and her pale eyes squinted slightly as she snickered at him.

"Hanabi-sama?" Neji exclaimed.

Hinata looked back to the screen. It was her sister.

"What are you even doing here, anyway?" Kiba scoffed, scrubbing behind Akamaru's ears. "Don't you have something better to do?"

"Nope," Hanabi replied briskly, soaping up a leg. "Normally, I'd be at home training. But since otou-san has officially named nee-chan heir, I don't have to train so hard anymore."

Hinata's eyes widened. "Heir?" she said faintly.

Temari wrapped an arm around her, grinning. Everyone in the room congratulated Hinata on her accomplishment, but none as enthusiastic as Naruto. "I knew you could do it, Hinata!" he yelled, grinning cheekily at her.

Hinata felt like she might faint.

"And speaking of nee-chan, I hardly see her anymore because she spends so much time with that dimwit."

Kiba chuckled.

Hanabi scowled, her face coloring slightly. "What? You know it's true! That idiot never even noticed that she's been pining after him forever."

"True." Kiba picked up the hose, spritzing off the dog in sections.

Everyone involuntarily looked at Naruto.
"What?" he asked, completely clueless.

Hinata reddened, but almost everyone else just shook their heads.

"What!" Naruto yelled again.

"But that doesn't explain why you're here," Kiba pointed out.

Hanabi reddened. "Well, unlike my sister, I have no problem expressing my feelings. It just so happens that I...I like...Akamaru here."

To further her point, Hanabi wrapped her arms around the head of the giant dog. Akamaru licked her, his tail wagging.

"Really," Kiba deadpanned. "Well, unfortunately for you, he's already got a bitch." His grin grew, his canines on full display. "But I know someone who's free."

The blush had started to return, but she looked Kiba in the eye. "Well, tell him to meet me at Ichiraku's in an hour."

Kiba grinned again, a devious glint in his eye. Suddenly, he pointed the hose at Hanabi, the water showering over her and Akamaru.

She shrieked, letting go of the dog and trying to protect herself against the freezing water. Seeing that was futile, she leapt at Kiba, who was howling with laughter. The two wrestled for control of the hose, water covering them both.

The projection stopped, floating gently back to the floor.

"Huh." Kiba scratched his head in confusion. Hinata's kid sister? Really? He had never thought of the brat that way, but if she ended up with a rack half as good as Hinata's, like the projection hinted, he guessed he could deal.

"You like Hanabi-chan, Kiba-kun?" Hinata asked quietly.

"No, but apparently she likes me." Kiba shrugged.

Neji stared at Kiba coolly, unhappy about his womanizer ways, yet offended in his apparent disinterest. "Do you not find Hanabi-sama attractive?"

Kiba scoffed. "Dude, she's like ten. Chill out."

Hinata was less worried about her sister. She knew that despite his serial dating, Kiba was sweet and caring, and would treat Hanabi with the utmost respect. "I'm happy for you, Kiba-kun."

He grinned, averting his eyes sheepishly. "Okay! Who's next?" he barked.

"I shall go," Shino said quietly.

Everyone's interest piqued. Shino was so mysterious that any look into his life was sure to be interesting.

Shino took the orb from Kiba, filling it with chakra. It glowed and began projecting.

*Everyone in the room had a look of horror on their faces. Shino seemed to be retreating further and further into his hood, bugs covering his face, and all of the girls gaped. Hinata had already fainted.*
"MY VIRGIN EYES!" Naruto shrieked, seemingly trying to claw them out of his head.

"MAKE IT STOP!" Kiba hissed.

"That is very...youthful," Lee said, astonished.

"I think I'm going to be sick," Ino said quietly, a hand over her mouth in disgust.

The projection cut off.

Everyone stared at the wall, waiting for something else to appear. Nothing did.

"That was lame," Naruto pouted. "You got gypped, Shino."

Shikamaru raised an eyebrow. "Did anyone else notice—"

"That that 'future' seems to take place right about now, in Kiba's living room?" Temari interrupted, glancing at him. "Yes."

"But whose future could possibly be that repulsive?" Sakura asked out loud.

"Who knows," Tenten answered. "We'll find out soon enough. And if we don't, at least we'll know that this thing is a fake."

Everyone agreed with that logic, choosing to forget it for now.

Ino reached over Choji, taking the globe from Shino. "My turn!" she singsonged, grinning.
"Woo boy," Sakura breathed out, rolling her eyes. "This is going to be good."

Ino glared at her, filling the orb with chakra. It shot from her hands, projecting onto the wall.

A woman rushed through what seemed to be a hospital. Her long blond hair flowed down her back, free of restraints save a small blue barrette. She wore a flowing blue sundress, her fashionable heels clacking as she strode along.

"Jeez, Ino, where are you going?" Tenten laughed.

"I don't know," Ino responded. "But it must be somewhere good for me to look like that."

Ino huffed, coming to a stop in front of another woman. Her pink hair sported a cute pixie cut, and she was wearing a white lab coat. When she saw Ino, she looked annoyed.

"Sakura, you will not believe what just happened to me!" Ino whispered intently.

"Not now, Ino," Sakura responded, flipping through the chart in her hands. "I'm busy."

"Sakura, this is important!" Ino hissed.

Sakura rolled her eyes. "Can it wait until later? I'm inducing Hinata in half an hour and I need to prepare."

Ino paused. "Wait, what? I thought you were supposed to tell me when she went into labor!"

Sakura rolled her eyes again. "Yeah, well she's not in labor yet." She glared behind Ino. "And I told you to tell her!"

Ino turned, only to see Temari purposefully making her way towards them, Shikamaru lazily trailing her.

There was an awkward silence in the room as the sight of Shikamaru and Temari together brought up certain...images. Someone coughed.

"Not one word," Temari threatened, still embarrassed. "One word, and I'll knock your teeth out."

No one said anything, although Naruto had the urge to say "word." Even he wasn't that stupid, however.

"Shikamaru!" Ino hissed. "Why didn't you tell me that Hinata was in labor?"

"Because she's not," he drawled. "Besides, I looked everywhere for you, even the barbeque restaurant."

"Barbeque," Ino moaned, latching on to Sakura, who was still trying to get all of her paperwork together. "Sakura, you've got to listen to me! I was at the barbeque place with Choji and—"

There was a poof. Sakura, closed her eyes, trying to contain her anger. "Pakkun," she growled. "What did I say about the hospital?"

The pug, who had appeared on one of the nurse's desks, looked at her, his gaze seemingly bored. "No dogs in the hospital," he replied, his voice gruff.
"—and he told me that I looked beautiful." Ino continued talking, not deterred. She let go of Sakura, directing her attention to Temari as well. "And I suddenly realized something—he always tells me that I look beautiful, even when I'm sick and disgusting, or covered in blood, or have no makeup on, or wearing my fat pants."

"Pakkun," Sakura hissed, grinding her teeth.

Pakkun snorted. "You know he doesn't like hospitals."

"We went to lunch like we always do," Ino exclaimed. "I even wore this because I had the urge to feel pretty. And he didn't disappoint. He told me I was beautiful." She paused dramatically, hooking Sakura's arm again to get her to pay attention. "And this time, I could tell he meant it."

Sakura sighed. "Ino, really? Choji always means it."

"You don't understand!" Ino scoffed. "This time when he said it, I got goosebumps! And I got this weird feeling in my stomach! He had to really mean it this time!"

Temari rolled her eyes. "Ino, come on. I don't know how many times I have to tell you, but that boy has been in love with you since I met you."

Choji coughed, choking on his chips.

Ino hit his back absentely, laughing at the screen. "This is ridiculous," she giggled.

"Before that," Shikamaru muttered. "Since we were little. Don't tell him I told you that though."

Choji glared at Shikamaru around his bouts of coughing. Shikamaru shrugged apologetically in a it's-the-future-what-can-you-do sort of way.

"Sakura-chan," the pug whined. Sakura waved him off, trying to deal with her nutjob of a friend.

"That can't be true," Ino snapped. "We're friends. Teammates. Besides, I think I would know if he loved me."

Her three friends shared a look.

"So then what happened?" Temari asked.

Ino blinked. "I came here to tell Sakura."

"You left Choji at the restaurant?" Shikamaru balked. "Just up and left?"

"He was making me feel funny, okay!" Ino snapped, "I had to tell someone! No one's ever told me I was beautiful before, and sincerely meant it. No one but my dad."

In the room, all the kunoichi shook their heads while Ino continued to laugh. They shook their heads at the projection of their friend who ran—ran from her own feelings, and from a chance at a relationship that wasn’t just for fun, but for love.

"Sakura-chan," the dog tried again.

"Ino." Sakura checked her watch, making sure she was still on schedule. "You are in denial. Now, I really have to—"

"Did I miss it?" Tenten huffed, running up to them. "She's not in labor yet, is she?"
"No," Temari responded. "But Ino here is having a crisis. She doesn't believe that Choji loves her."

Tenten scoffed. "Come on, Ino, really? Everyone knows that."

"You people are all insane!" Ino exclaimed.

"Five minutes, Haruno-sensei," a nurse chirped, smiling and continuing on her way.

"Sakura-chan."

"WHAT?" Sakura raged at the dog, startling several people in the hospital. "WHAT DOES HE WANT?"

Pakkun paused, apparently startled as well. Then, he cocked his head slightly. "What's for dinner?"

Sakura's face reddened in anger, her fists clenching. The dog took a step back.

"You know what?" he said gruffly, sensing danger. "I'll come back later." Then he was gone in a poof of smoke.

Sakura turned, her gaze on the rest of them. She growled, settling for Ino. "You," she snapped, "go back to the restaurant and find Choji. He's probably still waiting there. You can come back later."

"You," she said, pointing at Temari and Shikamaru. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm supposed to be helping her, remember?" Temari said incredulously. "Because I've done this before. And he's supposed to be calming down that dummy."

Sakura blinked. "Room 342, first door on the left. Go."

Temari rolled her eyes, but walked down the hallway. Shikamaru followed her, fingers laced behind his head nonchalantly.

"And you." Sakura turned to Tenten.

"Clearly I'm here for moral support," Tenten scoffed. "And Neji's outside having an aneurysm."

Sakura exhaled, her anger and annoyance disappearing. "You'll both have to wait out here, though. The only ones allowed in the room are me and the father, but since we all decided that allowing him in there with Hinata would be a bad idea, Hinata requested Temari take his place."

"It's cool," Tenten replied.

They both seemed to notice the third person still standing there.

"Ino!" Tenten practically yelled. "Go find Choji!"

"You can come back later," Sakura reminded her.

Ino nodded, as if in a daze, and left.

The projection cut off.

Ino was still laughing, shaking her head in disbelief. "That was hilarious," she commented,
Ino was still laughing, shaking her head in disbelief. "That was hilarious," she commented, leaning on Choji in her mirth. "Clearly this thing doesn't work. First of all, Choji doesn't even like me like that. We're just friends, right, Choji?"

Choji began choking again. Ino thumped him on the back. "Choji, what have I told you about chewing your food?"

Everyone looked at each other. Apparently Naruto wasn't the only blind one when it came to love.

Speaking of Naruto…

"Sakura-chan!" he said rather loudly, even though she was sitting right next to him. "Why were you cooking Kakashi-sensei dinner?"

Sakura had wondered that herself, but had shrugged it off. "I don't know. What's the big deal? I cook dinner for you sometimes."

Naruto grinned sheepishly, and seemed to end it with that. But what he had said got Sakura thinking about the other person that she used to cook for.

_Sasuke-kun…_

While it seemed that everyone in the room appeared in each other's futures freely, Sasuke had yet to even be mentioned. It bothered her.

"A-ano…"

The small voice snapped Sakura out of her reverie, and she turned to face the sound.

"I would like to go now," Hinata said quietly.
Ino turned in surprise. "Really, Hinata?"

Hinata smiled in response, but once she noticed Naruto's eyes on her, she cast her eyes down, fiddling her pointer fingers nervously. "H-hai."

Temari smiled at her friend, happy that she gained the confidence to just get it over with. Although, to be honest, Temari didn't know what she was afraid of. *Nothing* could be more embarrassing than the future that *she* got.

The orb was passed to Hinata, who took it gently. Taking in a deep breath and letting it out slowly, she filled it with chakra.

_A woman was walking down the street. Her long indigo hair was pulled back with a barrette, and she wore a light lavender kimono. She carried what looked to be a bento box, wrapped carefully in a furoshiki._

Kiba whistled low. "Damn."

Lee jumped up excitedly. "Hinata-san! You simply glow with the radiance of YOUTH!"

Neji gaped, slack-jawed.

Sakura looked on with surprise. "I guess it was implied in Ino's future."

Hinata blushed.

And Naruto, the most subtle of them all, told her point-blank, "Man, Hinata, you're huge!"

And she was. Future Hinata's abdomen extended out so far, it was a fair bet to say that she couldn't see her own feet. Her rotundness was prominent beneath her loose-fitting kimono, and her back was bent in almost a perfect U, trying to offset the extra weight. And, as Lee had so helpfully pointed out, she glowed, her happiness seemingly unable to be contained.

_Villagers smiled as Hinata walked by, exchanging pleasantries._

"You look beautiful today, Hinata-hime!" a young genin girl gushed.

"Wow, he sure did number on you, didn't he, Hinata-hime?" a shopkeeper laughed, his eyes twinkling.

"It's a boy, Hime," an old woman said, her wrinkled hands patting Hinata's stomach gently. "See how low he hangs?"

_A little boy shyly handed her a wildflower, admiration in his eyes._

_This continued, Hinata stopping every so often to rest and drink the tea offered her._

This startled Hinata a bit. First of all, the honorific they were giving her was strange. Sure, her family was a prominent one, but no one had ever called her that before. Maybe it had to do with the fact that she was heir to her clan?

Also, the villagers seemed enamored with her. They all smiled at her, struck up conversation,
asked to rub her belly, and she just smiled back as if it were all normal. Hinata didn't understand it. No one ever noticed her.

Hinata apparently wasn't the only one who noticed. "Man, Hinata, you sure are popular," Tenten pointed out. "I mean, I know you're all knocked up and everything, but everyone is in love with you!"

"Are pregnant women not coddled?" Sai asked.

"Not like that!" Sakura retorted. She pointed at the projection, where yet another woman had given Hinata a charm wishing the safe birth of the child. "This is like overkill!"

"If you would direct your attention to her shoulder," Shino said quietly.

There were small red swirls stitched into future Hinata's shoulders.

Kiba chortled. "Well that explains it."

Hinata barely noticed when all of her girlfriends waggled their eyebrows at her. She was having trouble breathing.

That was the Uzumaki symbol. On her kimono, right next to the Hyuuga one.

Which meant that she associated with the Uzumaki clan.

Which meant...that she had married Naruto.

Hinata struggled to stay conscious at this revelation. The only thing keeping her from fainting was her complete and utter happiness. She remembered future Hanabi mentioning her spending more time with someone she had pined over, and concluded that she had meant Naruto, but Hinata could only dream of this happening!

"Married the Hokage," Temari said quietly, poking her playfully. "No wonder the village is so attentive."

Hinata shook her head slightly. Yes, she had married the Hokage, but, more importantly, she had married Naruto. And was apparently carrying his child. Her eyes widened.

"Breathe, Hinata-sama," Neji reminded her from her other side.

"Yeah, are you okay, Hinata?" Naruto asked. "You don't look too good. And what the heck is everyone snickering at?"

Sakura sighed. "Trust Naruto to still be oblivious to what is directly in front of him."

"What?" Naruto yelled, still clueless.

"Didn't you see what was on her kimono?" Tenten asked, exasperated.

Naruto grinned sheepishly. "Nope. I was distracted."

"By what?" Ino growled, sick of his antics.

Naruto scratched the back of his head. "Heh heh. Well, you see...Sai was drawing... Temari's boobs."

Temari's eyes flashed in anger. "What!" she growled, looking at Sai, who was indeed sketching.
Shino and Lee leaned over to see Sai’s sketchbook.

"Oooh," Lee praised.

Shino coughed.

This prompted everyone to look over at Sai curiously, everyone but Temari and Shikamaru scurrying closer to him for a better look.

"Wow," Kiba said. "Dude, that’s pretty good."

"It actually is, Sai," Sakura said, surprise evident in her tone.

"It's very artsy," Ino commented.

"Still tasteful," Hinata said quietly, blushing anyway.

Temari gritted her teeth, annoyed. "Let me see," she huffed, pushing everyone else out of the way and looking at the sketch.

Unfortunately for her, it was no longer just a sketch of her breasts, or even just her, for that matter. It was a picture of her, pinning Shikamaru to the ground, mouth on his lazily grinning one, one of his hands on her ass and the other beginning the trek up her body.

It was scarily accurate.

"Give me that!" Temari screeched, snatching the book away, embarrassed. "What's wrong with you?"

"I have a photographic memory," Sai replied, clearly misunderstanding her rhetorical question. He held his hand out for the sketchbook. "I can color that for you, you know. You can have it when I'm finished."

"I'm having it now," Temari replied defiantly, holding it out of his reach.

Tenten raised an eyebrow, and Sakura grinned.

"To burn later, you pervs!" Temari said loudly, her face flushing.

"Or for pervy inspiration," Sakura laughed.

Temari sputtered. "Says the girl 'making dinner' for her sensei," she spat back, her fingers forming quotation marks.

It was Sakura's turn to gape. "What are you implying?" she screeched.

Temari grinned back. "I don't know. That you're more likely giving him dessert than dinner."

Ino sniggered.

Sakura continued gaping like a fish. "With Kakashi-sensei?" She had never thought of her sensei that way. Sure, he was smokin' hot, but goddamnit, so were most of the ninja in the village! "You —you're just trying to take attention away from the fact that you're a pedophile!"

It was a low blow, and even Sakura knew it. Everyone was silent, watching as Temari looked more and more angry. Her cerulean eyes flashed, and her cheeks flushed with color.
"And you are clearly jailbait," Temari said defiantly.

"Caaatfight!" Kiba sang.

Tenten rolled her eyes. "No. We're friends. We push each others buttons, but we don't really mean it. No harm done."

As if proving Tenten's point, Temari and Sakura were already laughing.

"I'll never understand women," Shikamaru grumbled.

"Besides," Ino pointed out, "even though we're underage by civilian law, we became adults when we became shinobi. So Temari can deflower all the little boys she wants, and Sakura can bone her sensei if she so pleases."

"HEY!" Sakura and Temari yelled.

"Shut up, pig!" Sakura hissed.

"I do not deflower little boys," Temari mumbled, involuntarily glancing at fifteen-year-old Shikamaru and cringing. Ugh.

Suddenly noticing that everyone was still watching her, Temari sobered up, shaking the sketchbook. "And I'm burning this!"

"Actually, I have other sketches in there, so I would appreciate it if you gave that back," Sai said.

Temari continued as if she had never heard him. "Now sit back down and watch Hinata's future, damnit!" she threatened.

Grumbling, everyone returned to their previous spots.

Shikamaru looked at Temari curiously, but figured asking to see a picture of her boobs was too awkward...and inappropriate. But it didn't matter, as as soon as she plopped back down beside him, the book was shoved into his hands.

He looked at her questioningly, but she was blatantly not looking at him, so he looked down at the book in his hands.

The sketch was good. Blushing, Shikamaru wondered if he could sneak it to Sai to finish.
"Hey!" Kiba said loudly. "Hinata finally got somewhere!"

"Geez, yours is the longest one," Ino told Hinata. "You've been walking around Konoha for like ten minutes already!"

Hinata was still barely staying conscious. She returned her focus to the projection, where her future self was waddling into the Hokage Tower, her hands full of charms and flowers.

**Hinata made her way through the building, smiling at everyone who greeted her and taking the elevator to the top floor. It was clear that she was making her way to the Hokage's office, but she was once again stopped right outside the door when Ino and Kiba exited it.**

"Hinata!" Ino squealed, immediately rubbing Hinata's stomach as if it were a magic lamp. "I swear, you get bigger by the second! When are you due again?"

"A week ago," Hinata replied in her quiet manner, not at all perturbed by her friend's roaming hands. She smiled in greeting to Kiba.

**Kiba was sniffing around her, searching for a difference in her smell. "Is that safe?"**

"Why are you sniffing her?" Naruto asked. "Is that how you say hi or something?"

Kiba scoffed. "Idiot. Clearly I'm seeing if she smells different. If she does, something could be wrong with her or the baby."

Naruto's eyebrows furrowed. "What baby?"

Everyone faceplanted. Sakura got up first, thumping Naruto smartly on the head. "The one in her abdomen, baka!"

Naruto looked back at the projection, scratching his head. "I thought that she had just gotten fat, like Kurenai-sensei."

"She's pregnant too, you know," Choji pointed out.

Naruto grinned sheepishly. "Really? I thought that she was just giving me some excuse because she didn't want to admit she was fat."

Temari was seriously worried about Konohagakure's future.

**Smiling, Hinata gently pushed his nose away. "I'm fine, Kiba-kun. Sakura said she would induce me in another week if nothing's happened by then."**

**Kiba looked slightly less concerned, and stopped trying to shove his nose around her uterus.**

"Well, we have to go," Ino cut in. "Naruto just gave us a mission, and Shino is waiting for us. You're lucky I'm such a good friend, Hinata, filling in for your knocked up ass." She winked, indicating she was teasing, but Hinata thanked her profusely anyway. "No prob. Now go sit down or something. You look like you're about to fall over."

"And don't forget to take a bath tonight," Kiba reminded. "It'll relax all of your muscles. And you should use those bath salts that Kurenai-sensei gave you."
"I will," Hinata replied, giving her friends a little push, knowing that they could spend all day fretting over her.

Hinata looked on in amazement. It was weird, seeing herself be fawned over by everyone. She knew that her teammates were fiercely protective of her, as it wasn't odd for Kiba to regularly invade her personal space by smelling her, and she was almost positive that Shino had her bugged. And Ino was her friend, so that was expected. But everyone else? It was surreal. She was barely noticed at home, only by Neji, who watched her like a hawk, and sometimes Hanabi, who was starting to look up to her big sis. The fact that she was suddenly drowning in attention—even if it was in the future—was a little overwhelming.

Taking shallow breaths, she watched as Ino and Kiba finally left. Her future self activated her Byakugan, presumably to make sure she wasn't interrupting anything inside the office, and quietly opened the door.

Naruto was slouched over his desk, frowning at his paperwork.

"Hey! It's me again!" Naruto cheered.

Everyone rolled their eyes. Hinata's breath hitched at the thought of being in the same room as Naruto—even though that was precisely what she was doing now.

"Ano, Naruto-kun," Hinata murmured, deactivating her Byakugan.

At the sound of her voice, Naruto's head snapped up, his grin overtaking his face. "Hina-chan!" he exclaimed happily, looking like a kid on Christmas.

Naruto looked confused. "Hina...chan?" he said slowly.

Hinata shivered at the sound of the words exiting his lips.

"Woo boy," Kiba grinned. "Here we go."

"Here what goes?" Naruto asked, but he was silenced to the sight of himself rising from his chair and promptly kissing Hinata on the lips.

Hinata turned scarlet, but her female friends hooted and hollered, laughing.

"This is getting good!" Sakura teased, shoving Naruto playfully.

Naruto just stared at the projection.

Hinata smiled against his lips, pulling away slightly. "You forgot your lunch again, Naruto-kun."

Naruto grinned sheepishly. "Oops. I don't know what I'd do without you, Hinata-chan."

"Me neither," Hinata quipped, going in for another kiss.

The boys in the room were quickly becoming uncomfortable, but the girls all watched with googly eyes, as if it were a romantic movie.

"So...Hinata's my girlfriend," Naruto said aloud.

"Actually, you married her," Shikamaru sighed. "Note the rings on both of your hands, and how she has your crest on her kimono."

Naruto nodded, seeming to accept this. But then, his expression seemed to darken. "Well then,
who knocked up my wife?" he yelled, frustrated.

Everyone sweatdropped. Sakura had the urge to hit him again, and almost did, but, unexpectedly, Hinata spoke up.

"It's always been you, Naruto-kun."

When Naruto turned to her, Hinata reddened further, mouth dropping open in horror as she realized that she had said that out loud. She quickly dropped her eyes to the floor, her pointer fingers coming together nervously.

"I suggest you stop that," a voice said from the corner of the room. It was Shikamaru, clearly working on his own pile of paperwork at another desk. He gestured at Hinata's abdomen pointedly, smirking. "Remember what happened last time?"

Temari visibly tensed at the sight of Shikamaru, but, noticing that she was nowhere in the room, relaxed again.

_Hinata blushed faintly, but Naruto stuck his tongue out childishly. "You're one to talk," he retorted, "with that little hellion you call a daughter running around."

_Hinata's mouth dropped open. "Naruto-kun! That's rude!" she scolded, turning to Shikamaru apologetically. "Shikari-chan is a wonderful little girl."

Shikamaru smiled. "No, it's okay. She's only one years old, but I can tell—she's definitely inherited some her mother's traits."

_Naruto grinned. "I was just kidding, Shikamaru. Besides, that girl's probably smarter than me."

"Probably," Shikamaru said.

Everyone laughed, but Temari was silent.

She couldn't be the mother of his child. She _couldn't._

All of the clues pointed towards it, but Temari _knew_ herself. He was smart, but he was far too lazy and unmotivated to be her partner, and too young. He was sort of good looking, she'd admit, so she could see the whole fuck-buddies scenario. But a child? That was commitment, and Temari didn't see herself committing to a person like Nara Shikamaru. Besides, Ino's future had implied that Temari had had a child, but no one said that it had been Shikamaru's. The fact that he was there could have been coincidence; she had said herself that he was supposed to calm down the hysterical Naruto. His child and her child were not necessarily the same person.

At the same time, the thought of this "Shikari" not being hers pissed her off, because that meant that she had been mortified by her future for no reason.

"Oh!" Naruto exclaimed, taking the flowers and charms out of Hinata's arms and dropping them unceremoniously on the floor. "You walked all the way here, didn't you? You know that you need to rest, Hina-chan."

"Yes, but I rested along the way," Hinata responded as Naruto forced her to sit in his chair. "And if I didn't, you wouldn't have had lunch."

"Shikamaru could have picked me up some ramen," Naruto fretted, taking her shoes off and massaging her sore feet.
"That's not as healthy as this lunch," Hinata retorted breathlessly, embarrassed that he was rubbing her feet in public, but enjoying it too much to tell him to stop.

Naruto, who was now at eye-level with her stomach, grinned at it. "Your kaa-chan worries too much."

"I do not," Hinata protested weakly as Naruto stopped his ministrations to place his ear against her midsection. The baby kicked.

"See, the baby agrees with me!" he said to her, a foxy smile still on his face.

"I think you heard it wrong," Hinata teased, smiling happily as Naruto placed small kisses on her abdomen.

"Still decided that you don't want to know the gender?" Shikamaru asked.

"We want it to be a surprise," Hinata responded, trying not to giggle at the sight of Naruto, crouched in front of her and animately telling her midsection about his day.

Shikamaru raised an eyebrow.

"He always does this," she explained. "Ever since Sakura told us that the baby could hear us. He even reads it stories at night."

"I talked to Shikari too," Shikamaru admitted. "Just not as...enthusiastically."

At this point, Naruto was waving his hands around to help emphasize his point. "And then Gaara just cancelled our monthly lunch! I know that he's busy, but I'm not going to have that much time to visit him once you're born."

Hinata smiled, returning her attention to Shikamaru. "But yes, we don't want to know. The only people who know the sex are Sakura and my father. And that's only because he apparently couldn't wait that long and used his Byakugan on me." She rolled her eyes good-naturedly.

"And so I told that old geezer to shut it," Naruto cooed to the baby. "I swear, the council is full of senile old people who don't know what they're talking about."

"Naruto-kun!" Hinata chastised, but her eyes couldn't hide her mirth.

"Err, respect your elders!" he added on half-heartedly for Hinata's benefit. "Because they're wise and...stuff."

Hinata laughed, and Shikamaru rolled his eyes.

The projection cut off.

"Awww!" the kunoichi cooed, wrapped up in how attentive and fatherly and cute Naruto was. Sakura ruffled Naruto's hair lovingly, and Ino and Tenten dreamily wondered what it would be like to be that much in love.

Temari smiled, as touched in the romance as the rest. She, however, ignored the fact that Shikamaru was looking at her calculatingly, and pretended that she didn't realize that she was quite possibly his baby mama.

Hinata was off in her own little world. It was so much better than she had always daydreamed! The look of pure happiness on her future self's face made her fill with joy and anticipation.
Naruto was uncharacteristically silent, looking at Hinata as if he had never seen her before.

"Gag," Kiba commented disgustedly. Even though he was happy for his teammate, the whole scene was a little too girly for him.

"Yosh!" Lee exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "This great display of love and compassion has reignited my flames of youth!"

Temari blinked. "...What?" she deadpanned.

Neji sighed. "He means that he would like to go next."

"Right you are, my eternal rival!" Lee declared, striking a nice guy pose.
Sakura shook her head a little at his enthusiasm, but held the orb out to him nonetheless. "Here you go, Lee."

"Thank you, my beautiful lotus blossom." He smiled, his teeth glinting charmingly.

"Something's seriously wrong with that kid," Temari muttered to herself.

Shikamaru apparently heard her, as he replied, "You're just figuring this out now? The guy wears a spandex onesie."

Temari snorted, momentarily forgetting to ignore him as she tried not to laugh.

"YOSH!" Lee exclaimed again, filling the orb with chakra.

The projection began.

Lee smiled. He looked much older, but with his bowl cut, green spandex suit, and jounin vest, he looked a lot like his former sensei. "I am Rock Lee, but you may call me Lee-sensei! I am your jounin instructor!"

Three kids looked at him warily. They were obviously newly instated genin, as their forehead protectors shone, and not a scratch was on them.

Lee looked repeatedly at each of the genin, clearly waiting for someone to introduce themselves.

The girl on the left sighed. Her clothes were more Chinese in nature, and her long brown hair cascaded down her back. Her pale eyes squinted with annoyance. "I'm Mai."

Lee smiled more enthusiastically. "Tell everyone about yourself, Mai-chan!"

Mai sighed again. "I specialize in weapons, but my dad is also training me in Gentle Fist. I like dango and I don't like when my cousin Kenji talks during movies."

Lee looked expectantly to the genin in the middle. Her brown hair was held back in a ponytail at the nape of her neck, and she was raising an eyebrow questioningly.

"Is this really necessary, sensei?" she asked. "We already know each other."

"You may know each other, Nara-san," Lee answered, "but I don't necessarily know all of you."

The girl clearly looked like she wanted to say more, but she bit her tongue, cerulean eyes flashing. "I'm Shikari. I like playing shogi and training. I don't like when it rains and you can't cloud watch or stargaze, or when my little brother bothers me. I'm the first female in my clan to be able to use the Kagemane no Jutsu, but I'm also fairly skilled in the tessen."

"That's wonderful, Shikari-chan!" Lee complimented, noticing the pride in the girl's eyes.

"Aren't you a little old to be on our team?" Mai asked incredulously. "You should have graduated before us."

Shikari shrugged, pointing nonchalantly at the boy next to her. "Wanted to be in the same class as him, and the 'rents said it was okay."
Lee turned to the third member, who was animately eating a bag of chips.

Shikari tapped the boy, getting his attention.

"I'm Choro," he mumbled, spraying crumbs.

"Swallow, Choro," Shikari reminded.

The boy did just that, albeit sheepishly. He had blond hair and was more...robust than most ninja. "I like food and hanging with Shikari. Oh, and flower arranging. I don't like when people make fun of my size. I don't think that they understand that I need it for my Baika no Jutsu."

Lee beamed. "Okay, team! We are Team Ten!"

Shikari looked at him warily. "Aren't we supposed to pass another test or something before we get instated as a team?"

Lee laughed. "Why of course, Shikari-chan! But you three have already passed it!"

"...What was it?" Choro mumbled around his chips.

"You three burn strongly with the flames of youth! That is enough!"

Mai groaned. Shikari looked at her curiously.

"And now, team, as a warm-up, we shall do twenty thousand jumping jacks in rollerskates!"

Shikari's eyebrow went up. Choro stopped eating.

Mai had her head in her hands.

"He can't be serious," Shikari said to Mai incredulously.

"He is," Mai responded miserably as Lee went to the side of the field.

"How can you be so sure?" Choro asked.

Mai shook her head. "He's my godfather," she whispered hoarsely.

Shikari shuddered, and Choro's eyes widened.

"Mendokuse."

"Okay, team!" Lee exclaimed, returning with three pairs of rollerskates and wearing his own. "If anyone falls, we all start over from zero. And if we don't succeed by lunch, tomorrow we shall run eighty laps around Konoha backwards. And on our hands!"

Their mouths dropped open.

"Shit!" Shikari cursed under her breath, grabbing her rollerskates.

"Oh! I almost forgot!" Lee yelled exuberantly. He ran back to the side of the field, ruffling through his pack. He held up three pairs of orange leg warmers. "Catch!" he shouted, tossing a pair.

Choro reached out to catch it instinctively. However, he was thrown back ten feet, the wind knocked out of him. Shikari rushed to her friend, gaping at his form on the ground, leg warmers resting on his stomach. "The fuck?" she exclaimed, leaning down to help him up.
"I took the liberty of putting weights in those!" Lee called. "You all are to wear those at all times, unless I say otherwise!"

Shikari strained, trying to lift the leg warmers off of a currently unconscious Choro. Mai moved out of the way as Lee tossed her her own leg warmers. They dropped to the ground, creating a small crater.

The mouths of the two conscious students dropped open.

"He's insane," Shikari hissed. "It's just my luck to get the insane sensei!"

"I honestly don't know how he got Ayame-san to marry him," Mai breathed, moving out of the way as Shikari's leg warmers came crashing. "And must they be orange?"

"Orange is the Hokage's favorite color!" Lee exclaimed, rushing over. "Now, put those and the rollerskates on, please!"

"This has to be child abuse," Shikari mumbled as Choro finally regained consciousness.

"Nonsense, Shikari-chan! This is just the warm-up! We still have to do today's training as well!"

"There is nothing to fear. I am a Hyuuga. There is nothing to fear. I am a Hyuuga," Mai muttered, hoping that the more she said it, the more she would believe it.

The projection shut off.

Everyone gaped.

"That was most youthful!" Lee cheered, striking another nice-guy pose. "And that I get to pass on Gai-sensei's youthful training is exciting! I must start planning now!"

"Those poor children," Sakura whispered, horrified. "They're not even born yet!"

Neji's eye twitched.

"Wow," Ino said. "Maybe you should nip that in the bud. That can't be healthy for them."

"It's okay," Tenten answered. She paused. "In small doses."

Neji's eye continued to twitch.

"Neji and I go through that every day, and we turned out okay," Tenten continued. "So she'll be fine. It's the other two you should worry about. Especially your kid."

Ino scoffed. "My kid wasn't up there! Just Shikamaru's and an Akimichi's."

"He had blond hair," Hinata pointed out quietly.

"Lots of people have blond hair," Ino retorted. "And the only Akimichi I'm even close to is Choji, and we're just friends. Right Choji?"

Everyone sweatdropped.

Choji nodded, though the fact that she kept pointing out the rigidity of their friendship seemed to depress him a bit. Shikamaru looked on sympathetically.

"Besides, what we really should be talking about is Shikari, and how Temari is clearly the
mother," Ino said gleefully.

Eyes turned to Shikamaru and Temari, who suddenly looked like deer in headlights.

It wasn't as if Temari could deny it anymore. If her specialty in the tessen hadn't been enough, Shikari's eyes told of her parentage—they were the eyes of Temari's mother, inherited by Gaara and Temari herself. And apparently, Nara Shikari.

"Damn," Temari muttered.

Shikamaru glanced at her. "Would being with me be that bad?"

Temari looked around the room awkwardly, noticing that everyone was watching them. She felt cornered. "It's not that you're a bad guy or anything," she started carefully. "It's just that I never thought of you that way. You're young, way too lazy for my liking, and seem to have no ambition whatsoever. Someone who wants to be with me has to be willing to make something of themselves, and that is clearly not you."

"He is technically the Hokage's advisor," Choji pointed out.

Temari scoffed. "Yeah, because his mother made him do it."

"It wasn't his mother," Choji responded. "It was—"

"Leave it alone, Choji," Shikamaru interrupted. "Because she's not right for me either."

Temari looked at him, slightly offended. "And may I ask why?"

Shikamaru sighed. "Everything about you is wrong."

Temari bristled, and Hinata put a hand on her arm to calm her. Shikamaru continued, undeterred.

"You're bossy, you're violent, and you're more trouble than my mother." He sighed again. "All I ever wanted was to marry a regular girl who wasn't too ugly or too pretty, to have two children, a girl first, then a boy, and then to retire when my daughter was married and my son was a successful shinobi. Then I could play shogi or go all day, and die of old age before my wife."

"You got your daughter and son," Temari replied testily. "What more do you want? I can help you along in the dying department, if you want."

His eyes met hers. "No, you're all wrong."

Temari's eyes hardened. "Well, I'm glad we're in agreement then."

He ran his hand through his hair distractedly. "You're misunderstanding me. There is nothing normal about you, and you're way too beautiful for me to marry."

She looked at him in disbelief, a faint blush on her cheeks.

"Damn, he's good," Tenten muttered.

"You married Ayame-chan, Lee?" Naruto suddenly hollered, interrupting the drama that was clearly in front of him. "Does that mean that you get free ramen?"

"I'm sure, Naruto-kun!" Lee replied cheerfully. "And although I haven't had a chance to get to know her as of late, I'm sure that Ayame-san is a beautifully bloomed blossom that I will enjoy plucking."
Temari took a moment away from her inner angst to wrinkle her nose. "Ew. Did he just say what I think he said?"

Tenten sighed. "No. It gets to the point that even he doesn't know what he's saying any more."

"Awww," Naruto whined. "I want free ramen for life too!"

"Most of the ramen Teuchi-san gives you is free," Sakura reminded him. "And what do you care anyway? Hinata'll cook you all the ramen you want."

At this, both Naruto and Hinata turned bright red. Hinata turned her face away in embarrassment, but Naruto shyly looked at Hinata.

"W-would you, Hinata-chan?" he asked carefully.

Hinata froze at being addressed, and slowly turned to face him, her eyes downcast. "I'll m-make you a-anything you wa-want, Naruto-k-kun."

"Really?"

She looked at him from beneath her eyelashes and nodded violently, no longer trusting her mouth.

Naruto grinned shyly at her, and Hinata dropped her eyes again, poking her fingers together nervously.

Between Shikamaru and Temari and Naruto and Hinata, the sexual tension in the room was suffocating Kiba. "Ugh," he said disgustedly. "Who's next?"

"Why, my loverboy Neji, that's who," Tenten answered, picking up the orb. "He hasn't gone yet."

Neji twitched. "Tenten."

"But you haven't, honey," she said innocently, holding it out to him.

He stared at her. "Stop that."

But Tenten was apparently having too much fun. She grinned. "Stop what, shnookums?"

"Those ridiculous pet names."

Tenten looked shocked. "What pet names, care bear?"

He twitched again. This would not do. Tenten's girlfriends were already giggling openly at him, and Tenten herself would not stop until she grew bored with her game.

But if she could play, so could he.

"Nevermind, sweetness," he responded through his teeth.

Tenten paused, surprised and flushing a little.

But if he was going to declare war, then it was on.

"If you say so, hotstuff."

"Don't worry about it, babe."
"Okay, Pooh bear."

"Can you pass me the orb, darling?"

"Sure thing, muffin."

"Thanks...boo."

The kunoichi couldn't handle it anymore. They burst out laughing. Sakura smacked the ground, Hinata giggled, Temari leaned on Hinata for support, and Ino rolled on the ground in her mirth. Even some of the guys found it amusing.

Kiba did not. Before Tenten could open her mouth to respond, he yelled, "Could you just get on with it already?"

She glared at him, annoyed at him breaking up her fun. Neji smirked, clearly thinking he'd won, and Tenten glared at him as well.

He'd won the battle, but he wouldn't win the war.
Neji

The orb shot out of Neji's hands.

Neji sat rigidly on the floor. He wore a formal kimono, and his forehead protector was absent, his curse seal visible. A woman sat next to him, her hair in buns. She wore a formal kimono as well, although her sash was loosely tied to make room for her slightly extended belly.

"Look!" Ino squealed. "Tenten's preggers too!"

Tenten scoffed. "What do you expect, Ino? That kid had to come from somewhere."

"So she has a baby too?" Naruto asked, squinting at the image in concentration. "Okay. I think I'm starting to get it now."

Everyone shook their heads. Sakura slapped her forehead in chagrin, and then proceeded to smack Naruto's head for good measure. "Baka," she muttered.

"What do you think she wants?" Tenten asked, rubbing her belly absently.

"I don't know." Neji turned to her. "But whatever it is, we must show her the utmost respect."

"Yeah, yeah, I got it," Tenten mumbled, still rubbing away.

"Really," Neji stressed. "This is a formal meeting. Thus, we must act formally."

"I said I got it!" Tenten hissed, fire in her eyes.

Neji, smart enough to avoid the wrath of her raging hormones, kept his mouth shut.

Tenten sighed. "Man, I could really use a pickle."

Neji glanced at Tenten. "You hate pickles."

Tenten shrugged.

"You hate pickles," Neji deadpanned.

"Yeah, well I want one now! With some chocolate. And wasabi..."

Both Nejis made a disgusted face. Everyone laughed as screen Neji promised to get her one after the meeting.

The door opened, and a woman entered the room. She wore a lavender kimono, and her long indigo hair was gathered on her head in an ornate updo, making her look like a princess. As she stood before them, she shifted the baby in her arms.

"Hinata-sama," Neji and Tenten said in unison, bowing so low that their foreheads touched the floor.

Blushing, Hinata bowed as well, but not nearly as low. "Nii-san, Tenten-san."

There was a beat of silence. Then, Temari spoke up. "Err...Hinata?"

Hinata, entranced by her future self, slowly turned to her friend. "Yes?"
"How should we put this," Sakura pondered.

Hinata glanced around the room, wondering why everyone was looking at her strangely.

"Does red hair run in your family?" Ino asked bluntly.

She shook her head, finally beginning to understand.

The baby, only a few months old, had an unruly mass of flaming red hair.

Hinata flushed heavily at the implication. "I-I would never! M-maybe Naruto-kun—"

"We know you wouldn't, Hinata," Temari reassured.

"Naruto does not know of his parentage," Shino said quietly. "It is highly probable that someone had more phenomelanin than eumelanin."

There was a beat of silence. Then Kiba sighed. "Dude, why don't you ever speak normally?"

Naruto was holding his head with both hands as if he had a giant headache. "WHAT'S GOING ON?" he yelled dramatically.

Shikamaru closed his eyes, trying to ignore the kyuubi host's incessant shrieking. "Someone in your family had red hair," he responded simply.

And the baby's parentage was further proved when it turned around, holding on to Hinata's shoulder for support. Big, pale eyes gazed around the room wonderingly, and whisker marks adorned its cheeks.

"OH MY GOD, HE'S SOOOO CUTE!" Ino squealed as the baby put three of his fingers into his mouth and began sucking on them.

Everyone had to agree. The kid was adorable, having inherited some of his mother's delicate features.

*Neji and Tenten released their bows, and the baby lit up, grinning and reaching his arms out.*

"*Kenji-sama,*" Neji acknowleged, his eyes smiling warmly.

"*Kenji-sama,*" Tenten repeated, her arms clearly itching to hold the child.

*Hinata smiled softly, but did not relinquish her child. "In a little bit, Kenji-kun. Business first."*

*The child pouted, but remarkably settled in his mother's arms.*

*Hinata sat down across from the other two in the room, gracefully moving the baby to her lap.*

"*Why the sudden meeting, Hinata?*" Tenten asked, adding "*sama*" when Neji glared at her.

*Hinata's face turned serious. "Today, I was summoned to see the Hokage. As the head of the Hyuuga clan, he felt it was important to inform me of a new law that will be in effect starting twelve am. tomorrow." Her eyes landed on Neji, who looked back blankly. "He informed me of a promise that he made you?"*

*Neji's eyes widened, and Tenten's mouth dropped open.*

Neji's head whipped towards Naruto, who grinned. Everyone else looked on confusedly.
A corner of Hinata's mouth rose. "I have been assisting him the past few years, and we have finally gotten the council to agree on an arrangement. Starting tomorrow, all branch members will be released from their seals. Instead, this one will replace it." She lifted Kenji's shirt, displaying the small seal on his side. "I have one as well. It still keeps the Byakugan safe should a Hyuuga die. However, it does not give the main branch control over branch members, and all Hyuuga that contain the Byakugan shall be marked with this seal."

They were speechless. For a second, the only sound was Kenji's gurgles.

Hinata smiled. "Oh! I can't believe I almost forgot! As clan head, I am enacting another law. Starting tomorrow, there will be no 'main' family and no 'branch' family. We are all family. We are all Hyuuga."

There was silence again. Then, clearly pushing all formality aside, Tenten leapt at Hinata, wrapping her arms around her. "Oh Hinata," she sobbed. "Thank you. Thank you."

Hinata patted her friend's back, making sure that Kenji wasn't getting squished. "Of course, Tenten! I've wanted to change these things since I was a child. I'm just able to now that I'm clan head and Naruto-kun is the Hokage."

Tenten sniffed, finally letting her friend go. "You don't understand," she said, wiping her eyes and caressing her abdomen lovingly. "We were so worried about her. We were sure she was going to be sealed."

"I wouldn't have let that happen," Hinata assured, glancing at her cousin, who still seemed to be in a state of shock.

Neji stared ahead, not really seeing anything. His lips twitched as he clearly tried to fight down his emotions.

"Nii-san?" Hinata called quietly.

Neji's pale eyes met hers. Then, with a quirk of his lips, he smiled, genuinely. "Thank you, Hinata-sama."

Hinata smiled back. "You're welcome, Nii-san."

Kenji fussed again, reaching his arms out. This time, Neji reached out as well, holding the redhead as he happily cuddled close to his uncle.

The projection cut off.

"Wow," Choji commented, munching on his third bag of chips. "That was intense."

"It was," Tenten responded quietly, glancing at Neji. He was still gazing at the spot on the wall where the projection used to be. Making up her mind, she threw her arms around him. "Congrats, Neji."

Neji didn't react at first. But then, instead of pushing her off of him like everyone expected him to do, his arm slowly wrapped around her, returning the hug.

All of the kunoichi sighed contentedly at the romantic scene. That is, until Ino yelled, "Yeah, girl, get it!" from the other side of the room, effectively ruining the moment and causing Neji and Tenten to leap away from each other like they had the plague.
Temari couldn't help but laugh. Seriously, Ino was a trip. And a half.

"Hey, that's pretty good too!" Naruto suddenly said, causing everyone to look at him. He returned their gazes sheepishly. "Sorry. Sai's just drawing again."

"I thought Temari took your sketchbook!" Sakura hissed.

Sai looked up at her, his ever-creepy smile present. "Who in their right mind would only travel with one sketchbook?"

"Ooh, let me see!" Ino demanded, crawling over to Sai.

"Yeah, me too!" Tenten yelled, getting closer as well.

"If it's porn again, I'm knocking you out," Sakura warned.

"I was not the subject of porn," Temari huffed indignantly.

And for the second time that night, Sai found himself completely surrounded as everyone got closer to see his sketchpad. "I'm almost finished," he said, shading with his red pencil.

Everyone gasped softly at the sight before them. Looking more like a photograph than a sketch, Hinata smiled at Kenji, who was looking up at her adoringly. The look of utter love between them was clear, and the contrast of lavenders and reds really brought out the intensity of the moment.

"Wow," Hinata breathed, entranced. "May I have this when you are finished, Sai-san?"

Sai smiled at her. "Unfortunately, Naruto has already claimed this one."

"Oh no no!" Naruto yelled, blushing and waving his arms around frantically. "You can have it, Hina-chan!"

Hinata blushed as well, astounded that Naruto would want a picture of her and that he had called her "Hina-chan" as if it was the most natural thing in the world. "N-no, you can have it, Naru-uto-kun."

"I insist!" he replied, hastily forcing the finished product into her hands.

Hinata blushed a deeper red as his hands touched hers, struggling for the umpteenth time that night to stay conscious. "Thank you."

"No problem," he grinned, scratching the back of his head sheepishly.

"Do you want me to make you another one?" Sai asked.

"Can we talk about this later?" Naruto hissed, clearly embarrassed.

Sai shrugged. "I was just offering."

"You know, Sai," Sakura said, "if you enough time to draw pictures, surely you have enough to take your turn."

Sai nonchalantly looked at the orb in Sakura's hand. He smiled. "Why not, ugly."
Sakura's eyebrow twitched, and she squelched down the urge to smack him a good one. She, however, tossed the orb with more force than necessary.

"Hey, watch it!" Kiba yelped. "Don't break it! People still have to go."

Sakura glared at him. Huffing, she returned to her spot. The others did the same as Sai filled the orb with chakra.

*It was nighttime. Two figures dashed through the darkness, their ANBU masks glowing in the moonlight. After taking to the trees and back down again, they stopped.*

"I think we've lost them, sempai," rabbit-mask said.

*Bird-mask nodded. "Then let's set up camp."

*They worked efficiently, putting up their tents, setting up a fire, and watching the rice they had for dinner cook."

"How far are we away from Konoha, Sai-sempai?" Rabbit asked.

Sai lifted his mask in order to shovel some fish into his mouth. His trademark creepy smile was not present, his face instead looking thoughtful. "I thought we were only to call each other by our codenames, Rabbit."

*Rabbit pulled up his own mask, visibly distressed. "Forgive me, Bird-san!"

*Rabbit thoughtfully put another bite of fish in his mouth. "Don't worry about it. There's no one else around anyway."

Rabbit exhaled a breath, clearly relieved at not being reprimanded.

"Hey," Sakura said suspiciously, pointing at the projection, "isn't that Himura from accounting?"

"Who cares?" Ino sighed. "He's hot."

And he was. His black hair was shaggy, long enough for it to be put into a small ponytail, and his chiseled face and dark eyes made him slightly resemble a certain Uchiha.

Except a lot less emo.

"Well, he's seemed to move up the career ladder," Sakura mused. "Just the other day Shishou got sick in the bathroom and he had to clean it up. Poor sap."

"Yeah, well what I wouldn't give to get a piece of that sap."

Ino grinned.

Temari laughed. "Careful, Ino. You're scaring the naive."

On either side of Ino, Shikamaru and Choji twitched.

"He sure does look up to you, Sai," Tenten commented. "Look at the eyes he's giving you. As if he's looking at a celebrity or something."

And it was true. The look of adoration was blatantly clear on Himura's face.
"Why anyone would look up to that freak is beyond me," Naruto muttered.

Sai turned to him, smiling. "What a coincidence! I think that about you every day, dickless."

Naruto growled, jumping up and yelling and waving his hands—basically having a tantrum. Sai smiled at him.

"Mendokuse," Shikamaru mumbled to himself. "Calm down, Naruto. And Sai, you technically can't call him that anymore seeing as he got Hinata pregnant."

Naruto stopped raving. "Wait a minute...he's right!" he yelled, pointing at Sai triumphantly.

"Hmm," Sai said thoughtfully. "The baby had red hair. Hey, you know who else has red hair? The Kazekage."

Temari rolled her eyes as Naruto thought about that tidbit. The thought of either of her brothers reproducing was a little much for her, but Gaara? The boy barely noticed the opposite sex. He was learning to be normal, but still.

A lightbulb visibly went off in Naruto's head. Suddenly, his attention was on Hinata. "Do you like Gaara, Hinata-chan?"


She eeped as Naruto suddenly appeared in front of her, his face a little too close to hers for comfort.

Naruto couldn't help himself. As soon as Sai planted the idea in his mind, he had felt this strange wave of jealousy come over him. He had never thought of Hinata romantically before, but seeing himself be so happy with her ignited something within him. He wasn't sure of what he felt for her yet, but he didn't want anyone to interfere until he did, not even one of his dearest friends. "Do you like Gaara more than me?"

Hinata leaned back as Naruto continued to unknowingly invade her personal space. She pressed her pointer fingers together, eyes wide. "A-ano—"

Naruto drew even closer, his blue eyes taking over her field of vision. "Do you even like me?"

Hinata turned bright red. "I-I-I—"

And with that, her eyes rolled up into her head and she fell into Neji's awaiting outstretched arm.

"Oh my god!" Naruto yelled in alarm. "Is she okay? Is she sick or something?"

"It was bound to happen," Neji said, lowering her gently to the floor.

Temari took out a small paper fan and began fanning the unconscious girl. "Just go sit down, Naruto."

Perplexed, Naruto returned to his seat, but kept shooting Hinata worried glances.


"Let's just get back to Sai's future," Tenten said.
"They've just been sitting there eating," Kiba snorted. "They haven't even said anything."

Sai sighed contentedly, putting down his empty plate. The rice was still cooking, but he had been too hungry to wait for it.

Himura set his plate down as well, although there was still fish on it. "Sempai, you have a bur in your hair."

Sai reached up to remove the offending object, but seemed to miss it, despite Himura's guidance. Finally, he shrugged. "Could you get it for me?"

Himura's eyes got wide. "Really?"

Sai shrugged again. "It can't stay there, can it?"

Himura didn't answer, just scooted closer and went to work on the bur.

Sai pulled out a sketchbook from his pack and began to doodle. He stopped when he felt the fingers in his hair pause. He turned his head, only to find his kohai's face very close to his.

"This reminds me of a movie I saw once," Tenten mused.

"What was it about?" Choji asked.

But Tenten never answered, because it was at that moment that Himura decided to press his lips against Future Sai's. Future Sai froze, the sketchbook slipping from his fingers, and was only unresponsive for a couple of moments before vigorously returning the kiss. The pot of rice began to boil over as clothes were rapidly thrown off.

For a second everyone froze. Then all hell broke loose.

Everyone in the room had a look of horror on their faces. Shino seemed to be retreating further and further into his hood, bugs covering his face, and all of the girls gaped.

"MY VIRGIN EYES!" Naruto shrieked, seemingly trying to claw them out of his head.

"MAKE IT STOP!" Kiba hissed.

"That is very...youthful," Lee said, astonished.

"I think I'm going to be sick," Ino said quietly, a hand over her mouth in disgust.

Hinata finally woke up. But once she saw what was being projected, she turned a deep purple and promptly passed out again.

"Is Hinata-chan okay?" Naruto yelled, peeking through his fingers and instantly regretting it.

Sai cocked his head, glancing at everyone curiously. "You know, this is just like—"

"Shino's future, we get it! We get it!" Temari said loudly, trying unsuccessfully to drown out the panting noises emanating from the screen. "Turn it off!"

For a second, Sai watched as everyone else screamed in horror. Then, very calmly, he said, "Stop."

The projection stopped.
There was a group sigh of relief. Then Ino turned to Tenten accusingly. "Woman, what kind of movies are you watching?" she yelled.

"I was curious!" Tenten wailed.

"It all makes sense now," Sakura mumbled to herself. "I had always thought that Himura was just really fashionable."

"I didn't know that you swung that way, Sai," Kiba said awkwardly.

Sai blinked. "What way?"

"Err, that you played for the other team," Naruto piped up.

Sai blinked again, his face blank. "I wasn't aware that I was playing for any teams."

"We didn't know that you were gay," Shikamaru said bluntly.

"I did," Temari muttered. "I mean, with that belly shirt and shit? Come on."

Shikamaru gave her a look, and she shrugged sheepishly. When he noticed that Sai still didn't understand what he was saying, he added, "We didn't know that you were attracted to men."

"Oh." Sai nodded in understanding. "I find beauty in everything."

"It must be an artist thing," Tenten whispered to a still shaken-up Neji.

"So you're saying you're bi," Sakura asked frankly.

Sai smiled, fingering the orb in his hand. "I guess you could call it that."

"Give me that," Sakura snapped, snatching the orb out of his hand. "You just scarred me for life."

"Me too." Naruto was still peeping through his fingers, as if he needed to be prepared for any horror thrown at him. "Are you going to go, Sakura-chan?"

Sakura sighed. "I guess so."
"Ooh," Ino grinned. "I hope there's some sexy sensei action."

Sakura flushed. "Shut up, Pig," she snapped. "You have no proof of that."

"Whatever, Forehead," Ino retorted. "You should be happy that a hot piece of man like that wants you."

"Ugh!" Naruto yelled. "Kakashi-sensei? You don't even know what he looks like!"

"Doesn't matter," Ino pointed out. "That man is sex personified."

"That's true," Tenten agreed. Neji looked at her blankly. "What?" she asked. "I can't look?"

"He probably wears that mask because he has no teeth," Sai mused.

Sakura pointed at Sai, adding his comment to her list of complaints. "Is that what you want, Pig? For me to end up with someone with no teeth?"

Ino scoffed. "Stop being so dramatic. The rest of him is more than up to par, so what does it matter?"

Naruto made a face. "I think I threw up a little in my mouth."

"It matters," Sakura hissed, "because this is my life we're talking about!"

"So the only problem you have with this guy is that he might not have teeth?" Temari asked.

Sakura nodded. "Or he might have fish lips. And let's not forget that fact that he's Kakashi-sensei! The man is a pervert! And a good fourteen years older than me, not to mention my teacher!"

"My parents were eleven years apart," Hinata said quietly, apparently having recovered.

Ino gave Sakura a look that clearly said I told you so. "And you can't play the teacher card. He hasn't taught you since you were twelve."

"I'm not listening. I'm not listening to this," Naruto said loudly, plugging his ears with his fingers. "This is like incest or something."

"I agree!" Sakura yelled. "Incest!"

"Me thinks she doth protest too much." Ino smirked.

"Yes she has." Tenten turned towards her friend. "Come on, Sakura, don't tell me you've never thought about tying him up."

It was silent. Everyone looked at Tenten.

She blinked. "Tying him up and slowly slashing his mask to ribbons to see what was under there? Come on, don't tell me I'm the only one who thinks about that."

It was still silent, most of them giving Tenten bewildered looks.

"Yeaaah," Sakura said awkwardly. "I think I'm just going to go now." She filled the orb with
chakra.

But no one was prepared for the first thing projected.


_Sasuke sat on the chair, his hands bound by chakra-draining restraints. His hair was much too long—he clearly hadn't had a decent haircut in a while._

_Sakura fingered her own shoulder-length hair nervously before forcing herself to stop. She sat in the jail cell with him, her chair across from his, unnerved by the gaze he was giving her._

"Maybe it's not a good idea to watch this," Ino said cautiously.

But it fell on deaf ears. Naruto stared intently at the screen. Sakura's eyes glazed over, as if she was in a trance.

"You've been sentenced to ten years in prison, and five years of house arrest," Sakura said coolly.

_Sasuke raised an eyebrow._

"You got off easy," Sakura said quickly, as if he had protested. "Sharingan or not, the council wanted to kill you. You are a traitor."

_Even while being restrained, Sasuke maintained an air of superiority, his face blank. "Why wasn't I killed, then?"

"Naruto."

"Naruto," Sasuke repeated, clearly thinking that she was kidding.

"He's next in line to become Hokage," Sakura responded carefully. "Tsunade-shishou is training him. His opinion matters, and he was able to change their minds."

"What is wrong with me?" Sakura asked no one. She had noticed how detached her future self was being, how emotionless. "It's Sasuke-kun. Sasuke-kun."

Ino knew why. She could tell by the look in his eye that the man in the projection was no longer her best friend's "Sasuke-kun."

He was a traitor.

"I think you should turn it off too, Sakura," Tenten said.

But Sakura was in her own little world. She bit her lip, eyes focused on the projection, her hands visibly itching to touch the man in it.

"Where is he?" Sasuke asked.

_It was then that a pained look crossed her face. "He doesn't want to see you right now."

_Sasuke averted his eyes slightly, choosing to look at the wall behind her instead of at her. "Dobe."

Naruto made a noise that sounded like he was choking._

Hinata watched worriedly as he pounded his fist into the floor. "Sakura," she pleaded.
Sakura took a breath to steady herself. He would not sway her. "During the house arrest, a person will be assigned to you. Whenever you are outside your house, this person must be with you. Your sentence may be lessened down the line with good behavior."

Sasuke's eyes flicked back to his former teammate's. "Why are you here, Sakura?"

That startled her. "I'm here to tell you the terms of your sentence."

"That's it," Sasuke deadpanned.

Sakura bit the inside of her cheek, refusing to give in. "That's it."

Sasuke averted his gaze again.

It was silent. Deciding her job was done, Sakura stood, turning towards the bars and nodding at the guard waiting behind them.

"Sakura."

She paused, but didn't turn back around.

"Will you wait for me?"

Sakura had the same reaction as her projection counterpart—her breath hitched, eyes widening.

"Oh no," Temari sighed.

"What?" Shikamaru asked, curious at her sudden drop in mood.

Her cerulean eyes flicked to his. "This can only end badly."

Sakura whipped her head around. Sasuke's gaze was intense, and she felt her resolve breaking. "What?"

He didn't repeat himself, but he didn't need to. She turned back to him, standing beside her chair. Conflicting emotions flashed across her face as she stared at the floor. Finally, she raised her gaze to meet his. "I've waited this long," she quietly choked out.

Sasuke smirked.

Sakura wasn't allowed to touch him, but she had never wanted to more than right then.

"We'll only be thirty then. We'll still have time."

"Time for what?" she asked, smiling happily.

The look he gave her made her feel stupid for asking. "Kids," he said.

Sakura giggled. "Is that all you think about, Sasuke-kun?" she teased.

"Sakura!" Ino tried again.

Sakura waved her hand dismissively in Ino's direction, eyes glued to the projection. "Shut up, Pig."

Sasuke raised an eyebrow. "I have to restore my clan."
Her laugh caught in her throat at the seriousness of his statement. "Well, if that's what you want," she replied slowly. "I love you, Sasuke-kun."

Sasuke averted his gaze. "I know."

Slowly, Sakura's eyes narrowed confusedly. She knew that Sasuke didn't like to express his emotions, but what other time would they have? He was going to prison, and they wouldn't see each other for ten years!

Sakura waited, along with her future self, but Sasuke didn't say anything else. Hurt invaded both of their faces, but Future Sakura hid it better.

Temari sighed, rubbing her forehead tiredly with her fingers.

Sakura smiled weakly, her tone cautiously playful. "What, I'm just a babymaker to you?"

But Sasuke didn't smile back. "I thought that was what you wanted."

Both Sakura's stopped breathing.

Without her noticing, all the kunoichi had surrounded Sakura, blocking her view of the projection.

"We all knew he was a douchebag," Tenten told her, a hand on her shoulder.

"I knew that the first time I met him," Temari added. "I mean, yeah, he's hot, but you can do so much better."

"Turn it off," Hinata said soothingly. "We don't need to watch this."

"Yes, please," Ino scoffed.

But Sakura pushed from the circle. She wanted to see.

"I wanted you to want me," Sakura replied quietly, the hurt and anger burning in her words. "And not just because I have ovaries!"

And she was so angry, mostly with herself for being so stupid, that without thinking, her fist flew into his face.

"Whoa." Kiba cringed. "That's got to hurt."

The guard raised an eyebrow, interested, but not going to interfere. Satisfyingly, Sasuke's nose gushed blood, a striking red on his pale skin. But he just looked up at her, his face still impassive.

This further enraged her. Her green eyes glistened with tears that she refused to let fall in front of him, and she opened her palm, about to strike him once more.

Her hand never made it.

Sakura turned, snarling at the man restraining her. "Let me go, Kakashi-sensei!"

"Now, now, Sakura-chan," Kakashi chastised. It was evident in his voice he was having a hard time restraining her. Still, his visible eye smiled at her. "Calm down."

Sakura made a choking sound, clearly about to lose the battle with her tear ducts. Taking a deep breath, she responded, "If you do not let me go, Kakashi, I will break your arm."
His eye widened, more at her deletion of the honorific than her threat, although he knew she was good on it. He sighed, seeing no other way, and turned her to face him.

Sakura looked at him confusedly for a second before she realized his intentions. "Don't you dare!" she hissed, eyes flashing.

But it was too late. His hitai-ate was pushed up with lightning speed, and though she struggled, she soon found herself forced to stare at the slowly spinning tomoe of his Sharingan.

"Bastard!" she screamed in frustration. Then, without warning, her body went limp. Kakashi caught it as it slipped towards the floor.

Slowly, he turned his attention to Sasuke, his gaze lazy. The blood had stained the whole lower-half of the rouge nin's face, and his shirt as well. "You're lucky," Kakashi said, scooping the unconscious Sakura up into his arms. "If she had slapped you, she would have broken your neck."

Sasuke didn't say anything.

Kakashi turned, nodding at the guard to open the cell door. It wasn't until he was about to leave that he heard Sasuke's response.

"I can't love her," he said quietly. "Everyone I ever loved is dead."

And he cared for Sakura far too much to let her come to the same fate.

"Stop," Sakura gasped, tears running down her face. "Stop. No more."
"Oh, Sakura." Ino sighed, knowing that there was nothing that she could do or say to rectify the situation.

Lee clenched his fists, wanting to stop his beloved's tears but not knowing how. He reached out to her tentatively.

But Naruto got there first.

Carefully, as if she might break, he enveloped her in his arms. She sobbed into his shoulder, clinging to him. Because she knew that he needed her as well—Naruto was just trying not to show it.

This was a pain only they could understand.

"Sakura." His voice was thick, tears hiding in them. But his face was clear. "Look at me."

Sakura hiccuped, attempting to reign her emotions back in. She looked up into his eyes.

"It's not ideal," Naruto said softly. "It's not how either of us planned it. But we need to focus on what's important. Sasuke comes home, and he lives."

"You're right. It's just—" She glanced at Ino, who looked back with concern.

It's just that I love him. And I don't think I can ever stop.

"Are you okay?" Naruto whispered.

She nodded, wiping her eyes. "Are you?"

"I will be." Then, placing his lips in the hollow of her ear so no one else could hear, he said, "Don't give up. We can still save him."

Sakura nodded. She had been thinking the same thing.

She would not give up on Sasuke until she heard his lips utter the words.

They could still save him.

Her future would change.

She let go of Naruto, smiling weakly at everyone else. "Sorry. I'm okay now."

"Are you sure?" Hinata asked.

"Yeah, yeah she's fine," Ino said loudly, shooing people away from Sakura to give her space. She winked. "Besides, now she knows she needs a man, not a boy."

"Ino," Sakura growled.

Ino laughed, knowing her friend was okay for now.

"You are ridiculous."
Everyone looked around confusedly.

"What the..." Sakura's head whipped around at the sound of her own voice. "I thought I turned it off!"

"You did," Shino said quietly. "This is someone else's future."

Sakura looked at the projection. Shino was right. Now, her future self was in a formal red kimono, and her hair was once more in a pixie cut.

"But who touched it?" Tenten asked.

Shikamaru and Choji both shook their heads.

"You really are a piece of work," Sakura sighed.

Ino gasped, grabbing Sakura by the arm and shaking her violently. "Forehead!"

Sakura reddened.

"Hmm?" Kakashi answered, eyes glued to Icha Icha.

"You heard me!" She snapped. "And you have read that book a million times! Can't you put it away for one night?"

"Hmm?"

"I am going to hurt you." Sakura shifted the toddler in her arms. "And no one at this festival would blame me."

"Wow," Tenten breathed. "That is one good-looking kid."

It was true. Although no more than one or two years old, the baby had big, emerald eyes and a shag of pretty silver hair. He was dressed in a navy blue kimono.

"I think you can stop denying it now," Temari sniggered. "And you will definitely be beating girls off with a stick. Like Ino."

Ino shrugged. "He is a looker."

"And you said I was a pedophile," Temari muttered.

"Is that what your sensei looks like without a mask?" Kiba asked.

"Probably similar," Shikamaru answered. "But the kid's facial structure favors Sakura's."

Sakura gaped like a fish, unable to defend herself.

Aggravated, Sakura pushed the book down from his face, forcing him to look at her. "Just give me one night. Just one."

Kakashi smiled behind his mask. "And what do I get in return?"

Sakura glared, biting her lip. "Page 134."

Kakashi's eye widened. "What?"
"You heard me." Her lips quirked upwards in the corners. "Page 134 of Icha Icha Tactics."

He watched her for a bit, trying to gauge whether she was bluffing. Then, he slipped the book into his pocket. Even though it was a festival, Kakashi had still preferred to dress in his Jonin outfit. Smiling again, he took the toddler from Sakura, placing him securely on his shoulders. The toddler had amazing balance, holding on to his father's hair but needing no further support. "Come, Obito-kun. Let's go catch some goldfish."

"Obito," Sakura mumbled. "That's a strange name."

"What's on page 134?" Ino demanded.

Sakura shook her head. "I don't know!"

Sakura smiled, happy to have gotten her way. Kakashi smiled back, slipping his hand in hers.

It wasn't until they were about to leave that Sakura noticed him. "Akamaru!"

"Akamaru?" Everyone chorused confusedly. Heads turned to the corner Akamaru was sleeping in, only to find it empty. Instead, in midst of all the ruckus, Akamaru had made his way towards the circle and had apparently activated the orb.

"Well," Kiba reasoned, "we did say everybody had to go."

Akamaru barked in agreement.

"You're right, honey!" Sakura praised, reaching in the top of her kimono and retrieving a dog biscuit. "It's a dog, just like we have at home."

"Got anything in there for me?" Kakashi asked cheekily.

Sakura looked back at him blankly. "No."

Even through his mask, it was easy to tell Kakashi was pouting. "You're no fun, Sakura-chan."

Sakura scoffed. "Kakashi, I'm fun enough for page 134. So please do everyone a favor and shut up." She gave Akamaru the biscuit, sticking her tongue out at her husband.

"Oh my god," Sakura moaned, head in her hands. "I can't believe I'm talking to Kakashi-sensei like that."

Sure he annoyed her, but she was never flat out rude or disrespectful.

Naruto scoffed disgustedly. "Don't worry about it. He is clearly getting off on it. Pervert."

"What the hell is on page 134?" Temari asked.

"I don't know!" Sakura wailed. "Why would I marry a pervert? WHY?"

"Closet pervert," Naruto coughed.

"WHAT DID YOU JUST CALL ME?" Sakura snarled.

Akamaru looked at her expectantly, tail wagging.
"I don’t have any right now," Sakura said tiredly.

"Have any what, my cherry blossom?" Lee asked.

Sakura tried not to cringe at the name. "Dog biscuits. I usually have at least a couple on me for Pakkun...OH MY GOD IT’S STARTING!"

Ino laughed. "You’re already a dog lady in training! Makes sense you would get with the dog man."

"Eight dogs is a lot," Tenten commented thoughtfully. "Think of all the hair you’ll have to clean off your couches."

Sakura resisted the urge to curl into a ball and die.

Akamaru’s tail wagged as he munched on his treat happily.

"Where’s Kiba?" Sakura asked the dog.

Akamaru responded in a series of barks and yips. Sakura looked on blankly.

"I’m sorry. I forgot you couldn’t talk," Sakura responded sheepishly.

"He said that Kiba was getting some ramen," Kakashi said.

Sakura smacked him lightly on the chest. "Psht. You’re ridiculous."

Kakashi’s eye smiled, but he held onto her hand. "He’s going to be here."

"I know," Sakura said softly.

"Will you be okay?"

Sakura grinned, standing on her toes and planting a kiss on the corner of his masked mouth. "Of course I will."

Kakashi studied her, trying to determine that for himself. Finally, he squeezed her hand. "We’ll see you later, Akamaru."

And as the three walked off, Sakura could be heard saying, "What’s wrong with you? Pretending you can speak dog."

Akamaru shrugged, as well as a dog could, and went on his way.

"I don’t care what you say, Sakura," Temari said, smiling. "I think that you and your sensei are cute together. You fit. And you look really happy."

Sakura couldn’t really defend herself, because she had to agree. This time around, her future self looked really happy. However, the thought of being with Kakashi-sensei still weirded her out. So instead, she retaliated.

"We have nothing on you and Shikamaru," Sakura retorted, Inner Sakura cheering as both Temari and Shikamaru recoiled. "Look how happy you guys look! Look at that adorable, perfect little family!"

Everyone watched as Future Akamaru came across the Nara family next. All of them were in the Nara green and gold, all except Choro, who was apparently tagging along.
"I've never seen so many ponytails congregated in one place," Tenten commented.

"I'm telling you," Shikari groaned. "Our sensei is insane! Tell them, Choro!"

"He's insane," Choro mumbled around his dango.

Temari laughed. "Well he does wear a spandex onesie."

Shikamaru smirked.

Shikamaru's eyes widened.

Everyone had the sense to smother their laughter except Naruto, who openly sniggered.

"What?" Lee was looking around confusedly. "What is a onesie?"

"That can't be right," a little boy with a golden ponytail pointed out. He was working a Rubix cube. "Realistically, he wouldn't have been made jonin, much less your sensei, if he was insane."

"Shut up, Asuma," Shikari growled. She turned to Choro. "See, he's only five, but he thinks he knows everything!"

"No I don't," Asuma sighed tiredly. "I just assume that I know most things."

"Asuma, huh?" Ino said quietly.

No one said anything.

"Shikari, we've known your sensei since before you were born," Shikamaru cut in. "He's a little different, but he will no doubt make you guys strong shinobi."

Shikani seemed to weigh this in her mind. Her father was so lazy, he only spoke when he felt the need to. Thus, he usually gave good advice. "Okay," she said, suspicious, "I'll give him a chance. But the second he goes psycho, I'm reporting his ass."

"Shikari." Temari's eyes narrowed. "Language."

Shikari recoiled a little at her mother's gaze. For the umpteenth time, she wondered what bet her father had lost that forced him to marry her scary mother. "Sorry."

"Shikari," Choro warned. "He's here."

Shikari's head snapped around, her eyes wide. "Oh shi...take mushrooms! We have to go! See you later!"

And with that, she ran off, dragging Choro with her.

"Stay together!" Temari called after her. She frowned at her husband. "Ugh. I sound like your mother."

"You do," Shikamaru agreed. "It's quite scary, actually."

"You're lucky I didn't bring my tessen," Temari growled, "or else you would be nothing but a chalk outline on the ground by now."

Shikamaru didn't question it. "How long do you think it will be until he cracks her?"
Temari grinned. "Well, he is Naruto's son. That boy will give up when hell freezes over."

"And as headstrong as she is, she still has the Nara genes. Eventually, she'll give up." Shikamaru grinned. "Like I did."

Temari scoffed. "Believe me, I didn't even try very hard."

"Time," Asuma said suddenly.

"One minute." Shikamaru ruffled his son's hair, much to his chagrin. "Good job!"

"No." He was annoyed, holding the cube out to Temari, waiting for her to scramble it. "You can do it in fifteen point five seconds. Again, mommy. Please."

"Are you sure you want to do it now?" Temari asked. "Look, Yuki's here."

The little Nara perked up at that, watching excitedly as the girl walked towards them. She smiled, her red eyes crinkling at the corners.

"Thanks for walking him around," Shikamaru told the girl.

Yuki smiled. "No problem, sensei."

"Sensei?" Naruto asked confusedly.


"Are you sure you don't mind taking him?" Temari asked.

Yuki smiled. "Of course not. Sensei took care of me all my life, so it's only fair. Besides," she added, ruffling Asuma's hair, "we always have fun together, don't we, Asuma-kun?"

Asuma nodded, grabbing her hand.

Yuki laughed, her chin-length brown hair swaying. "I'll bring him back in one piece!" she called, waving as she led the boy away.

"So," Shikamaru said suddenly, an arm slinking around Temari's waist.

Temari looked down pointedly at the offending appendage.

"The kids are gone. We're alone."

Temari grinned, picking up on his tone. She slipped her arms around his neck. "I wonder what we should do now."

Shikamaru smirked. He began to lean down, his lips hovering over hers. "I wonder."

Shikamaru coughed awkwardly.

"Why me?" Temari moaned. "Someone stop this, please."

But there was no need, as it was at that moment that Future Temari noticed Akamaru.

"Hey," she said over Shikamaru's shoulder, "aren't you Kiba's dog?"
Akamaru panted.

An eyebrow raised, Temari took that as affirmative. "I heard Hinata was looking for you. You should go see what she wants."

At the sound of Hinata's name, Akamaru's tail wagged excitedly. Happily, he began to trot off.

Temari detached herself from Shikamaru. She snorted once as he pouted in protest. "Come on, stud," she laughed. "Let's go get some dango."

The genius sighed. "I don't know if you heard me the first time, but we are alone. As in, no kids. As in—"

"As in no food," she interrupted, an eyebrow raised again. "And I'm hungry, so let's go."

Shikamaru looked at the stars, as if something up there could help him. But nothing did, and he found himself escorting his lovely wife to a dango stand.

Another "Wi-cccchhha" came from Kiba.

Shikamaru sighed.

He was doomed.

"You two are the personification of youth!" Lee cheered.

"We're disgusting, that's what we are," Temari replied, mortified.

"I believe the term you are both looking for is 'horny'," Kiba said.

Temari took a deep breath and held it, trying to stop herself from creating a fresh puddle of Kiba-goo on the floor.
Ino laughed at the sand sibling's ire.

"Why stop there?" Temari muttered to herself indignantly. "I can't embarrass myself any more than I already have. Might as well take my top off, get it over with. In fact, we should just have sex right now. Why not."

Shikamaru raised an eyebrow. "Are you propositioning me?"

Temari scoffed, giving the genius a once-over. "Little boy, I don't think you can handle me."

There was a spark in the Nara's eye as he looked at the blond beauty. The corners of his mouth went up slightly. "Is that a challenge?"

"Whoa! Slow your roll, Casanova," Ino interrupted. "This fic's rated T."

The two spluttered indignantly, faces red, neither having realized that their verbal sparring had taken a turn for the sexy.

"Horny is right," Tenten muttered to Neji. "They are definitely fighting a losing battle."

Neji silently agreed. On one hand, the sister of the Kazekage could very easily lure in any man with her feminine wiles, and then promptly rip his head off. On the other, the Nara genius was quite possibly the only man able to come out of it alive.

Losing battle indeed.

Akamaru barked, returning everyone's attention to the projection.

Akamaru continued on his way, passing Ichiraku Ramen. A woman rushed about, hurriedly trying to fill bowls with ramen and hand them to awaiting customers. In her haste, she nearly bumped into a man in green spandex, but his fast reflexes prevented the collision.

"I'm sorry, Lee-kun," she sighed, collecting money from a customer and putting it into the pocket of her apron. "We're just so busy—"

"Do not worry, my sweet!" Lee answered enthusiastically, simultaneously retrieving a notepad from his own apron and writing down a customer's order.

Ayame wiped sweat from her brow with her shoulder. "You really don't have to be here, Lee. You should go enjoy the festival."

Lee smiled charmingly at a genin girl as he handed her her ramen. "But you are here."

"Well, I promised Naruto-kun that we would be open today," Ayame answered, her voice traveling as she moved to dump money into the register. "And business is always great today, so it would be silly not to be. But just because I have to be here doesn't mean you have to be, Lee-kun! Go enjoy the festival! Tou-chan and I have it under control."

Ayame squeaked as she was suddenly pulled into an embrace.

"You must not have heard me, my sweet." A light kiss fluttered across her forehead. "You're here. You're here. So here is where I shall enjoy the festival."
Ayame froze, looking up lovingly into the eyes of what many would call a very strange man. "I love you," she smiled, happiness flooding her features. "You and your monstrous eyebrows."

Lee smiled winningly, letting her go and giving her a nice guy pose. "YOSH!" he shouted suddenly, throwing a fist in the air and startling more than a few customers. "Let us sell ramen!"

Ayame grinned, throwing her fist in the air and yelling "YOSH!" just as loudly.

They beamed stupidly at each other, ignoring the strange looks a couple customers were giving them. Akamaru walked by unperturbed.

It was Lee, after all.

"Kami help us," Sakura said under her breath.

"Ayame-chan is a keeper, Bushy Brows," Naruto said cheekily. "Especially if she doesn't mind your eyebrows."

"Why thank you, Naruto-kun!" Lee exclaimed exuberantly. "But what, may I ask, is wrong with my eyebrows?"

Naruto opened his mouth, but Tenten silenced him with a raise of her hand. "We aren't even going to go there."

One of Akamaru's ears perked up at the sound of a voice. Happily, he trotted towards it.

"Please, Naruto-kun. Just put it on."

"I don't want to."

Hinata came into view. She was turned away from the dog, and her long flowing hair was once again in an ornate updo. This time, however, her kimono was bright orange.

"Sweet mother of god," Sakura moaned. It was her worst nightmare. Orange everywhere! While the kimono did not necessarily clash with the Hyuuga heiress's hair, the orange Naruto wore clashed with his Hokage robes.

Choji laughed. "Can't say I'm surprised."

"What?" Naruto said defensively. "I like orange!"

"Yeah, well orange doesn't like you," Ino snorted. "Look at poor Hinata! You've washed out her complexion!"

"I don't mind," Hinata said quietly, blushing.

But Ino continued on as if she hadn't heard her. "And look at that!" she huffed, pointing at the poor redhead boy who had the misfortune to be born into a family that wanted to wear orange of all things. "He's a walking fashion disaster!"

The boy in question didn't seem to mind, however. His fiery hair, in true Hyuuga style, was long, flowing down his back in a neat braid. But paired with the bright orange kimono he was wearing, he looked like a firecracker ready to go off.

"Leave Kenji-kun alone," Naruto replied, sticking his tongue out. "He looks fine."

Hinata didn't care about the clothes. All she saw was the foxy grin the boy smiled, not unlike his
father's.

Her son was perfect.

_Akamaru moved closer, allowing two other people to be seen. Two little girls, no older than eight, stood next to Hinata. Both had long indigo hair, though one's was held back with a barrette while the other's ran free. Identical faces watched the exchange between their parents amusedly._

"Twins," Kiba laughed. "Have fun with that."

"Aww, they're like little Hinatas!" Sakura cooed.

And they were. Aside from their bright blue eyes and the whisker-marks that adorned their cheeks, the twins looked exactly like their mother.

"Please wear it?" Hinata tried again.

_Naruto pouted. "But it looks stupid."_

_Kenji sniggered. "It does look stupid, kaa-chan."_

_Hinata sighed patiently. "It does not," she replied, placing the hat in her hands on a still-pouting Naruto. "It looks formal. It looks like you're the Hokage. Which you are."_

At this point, it easy to finally get a good look at Hinata—and her once again enormous belly.

Everyone stared at it for a second. Then, Temari spoke up. "I know it's none of my business, Hinata," she said slowly, turning to her friend, "but maybe it's time to shut down the factory. Just a suggestion."

Hinata didn't answer, red-faced.

"Seriously," Ino retorted. "In the interest of the future of humanity, I don't think it's wise to let Naruto spread his genes everywhere."

"I resent that," Naruto interjected.

"Not only that, but you'll be pregnant all the time," Tenten added.

"Not to mention all of the little Narutos you'll be chasing around Konoha." Sakura shuddered at the thought.

Hinata shook her head, eyes averted. "I don't mind. I've always had a big family. I like it."

"What?" Naruto exclaimed excitedly. "You want a lot of kids too?"

Hinata reddened even further, her lips trying to form words but not succeeding. It was a lost cause when Naruto made his way over to her side of the circle again, clasping her hands in between his enthusiastically. Hinata's pale eyes widened considerably as she stared at their hands.

But Naruto didn't notice. "I've never had a real family, you know," he told her, as if this fact wasn't common knowledge.

Hinata nodded vigorously, her eyes not straying from their suddenly joined hands.

"So I've always said that I would have a shitload of kids," he mused. "At least seven. Or eight."
"Eight?" Hinata squeaked, eyes widening even more.

"Yeah!" he grinned. "And to think that you want a big family too! No wonder I married you!"

Hinata didn't answer, too busy trying to remember how to breathe.

But Naruto took her silence as a bad sign. "But that's not the only reason!" he backpedaled, remembering how upset Sasuke had made Sakura when he commented on her babymaking abilities. "I mean, you're smart," he continued, a faint blush dusting his nose, "and pretty. You're a little weird, but that's okay, because I like weird people." He paused, trying to think of more of Hinata's attributes. "Oh, and you could probably hand me my ass on a platter. And that's hot."

Seeing that Hinata was literally hyperventilating, Sakura decided it was time to intervene. "Okay, that's enough, Naruto," she sighed, grabbing him by the arm. "What did I say about people's personal boundaries?"

Seeming to notice for the first time that he was holding Hinata's hands captive, Naruto abruptly dropped them, a full-blown blush taking over his features. "I-I'm sorry, Hinata-chan!" he exclaimed, scratching the back of his head sheepishly. "It's just that sometimes I don't realize I'm touching people."

Sakura nodded solemnly. "It's gotten him into trouble a few times."

Shikamaru's brow furrowed. "You mean that time that—"

"Yup," Sakura sighed.

"And that other time?" Tenten wondered out loud.

Sakura nodded slowly.

Ino laughed. "Man, you really need to learn how to keep your hands to yourself."

"I can't help it," Naruto whined, sitting back down in his spot. "I'm easily excited."

"Clearly," Neji muttered, ready to start CPR on Hinata if necessary.

"You know," Naruto said pointedly. "As Hokage, I should be able to have a say in whether I wear the hat or not."

Hinata smiled softly, adjusting the hat on her husband's unruly blond hair. "The Kazekage's coming. You have to represent our village accordingly." Satisfied, she gave him a quick, consoling kiss.

"I bet you Gaara's not going to be wearing his hat," he sulked, but made no further move to remove it.

"There she is!" Kenji yelled suddenly, a gleeful grin taking over his features.

One of the twins, the one with the barrette, looked at her brother disdainfully. "Nii-chan, I don't know how many times I have to tell you this, but—she doesn't like you."

Kenji grinned, his pale eyes shining mischievously. "That's where you're wrong, Harumi."

The other twin gave her persistent brother a blank stare. "She's running away from you."

Kenji waved his hand dismissively. "She's just running—it's not from me."
"She's looking right at you. She's keeps checking to make sure you haven't seen her."

"I'm sure that's not the case, Hitomi."

"She's using her fat friend as a shield!"

"Hey!" Naruto interrupted, anxiously looking around to make sure no one had heard. "Never call an Akimichi fat. I learned that the hard way. They're—big-boned."

"Maybe you should just give Shikari-chan a little space, Kenji-kun," Hinata said softly. "Give her time to appreciate your attributes."

Kenji nodded in understanding. "Well, I haven't talked to her all day. Do you think that's enough time?"

"Sounds good to me!" Naruto said loudly, clapping a hand on Kenji's shoulder. "Go get her, son!"

"Thanks, tou-chan!" Kenji grinned. Kissing Hinata on the cheek and ruffling his sisters' hair, he quickly ran off in the same direction as the Nara girl.

"Wait, Kenji-kun, I don't think you should…" Hinata trailed off, knowing it was futile as she watched her son disappear.

"That boy," admonished a voice behind her.

Hinata turned, as quickly as her belly would allow. "Otou-sama."


"Hyuuga-san." Naruto returned the greeting.

"Ojii-san!" the twins yelled, attaching themselves to the man's midsection.

"Now now," Hiashi scolded. "Just like your brother. Is this any way for Hyuuga to act?"

But he was smiling softly. The twins grinned back, giggling.

"Sorry, otou-sama," Hinata said sheepishly. "They all know their manners, but...my children have such strong personalities."

A loud "HOLY SHIT, MAI, HIDE ME!" suddenly pierced the air.

The Hokage and his wife sweatdropped.

As did everyone in the room.

"He's a ladykiller, that one," Ino deadpanned.

"Naruto's son murders females?" Sai asked.

"Not literally," Choji explained. "It's just an expression."

"Sounded like she was dying to me," Temari muttered.
"Nonsense!" Lee said loudly, giving Naruto a thumbs-up. "The fire of youth burns strongly in both of them! They will make a wonderful couple!"

"I don't know," Ino piped up. "It seems pretty obvious that Kenji gets on her nerves. I think that Choro has a better chance."

"You're just saying that because that's your kid," Kiba retorted.

"He is not," Ino sniffed. "And I'm saying that because they seem to have the prime relationship for romance. You know, best friends who are also teammates and thus are together all the time. It's just bound to happen."

Tenten blinked. "Does anyone else see the irony here?"

Choji raised a finger.

"Ojii-san! Guess what I did yesterday?" Harumi said excitedly, still attached to Hiashi's midsection. "I made it up to thirty-two palms of the Eight Trigrams Sixty-Four Palms!"

"So?" Hitomi retorted, letting go of her grandfather to look her sister in the eye. "I made fifty bunshin yesterday. And summoned Gamakichi."

"What's your point?" Harumi snapped, letting go of Hiashi as well. "Nii-chan can summon Gamabunta."

Hitomi rolled her eyes. "You're just jealous because you can still only summon a tadpole."

Her twin reddened. "So? Who would want to summon Gamabunta anyway? He's mean."

"And scary," Hitomi added. The twins nodded at each other in agreement, squabble apparently dropped.

Sakura's mouth dropped open. "Oh my god. Those kids are beasts. Fifty kage bunshin? At eight?"

Neji's eyebrows went up in surprise. "At nine years old, most Hyuuga can only do sixteen of the sixty-four palms."

Naruto laughed, puffing out his chest in pride. "Well, what do you expect?" He grinned at Hinata. "With parents like us, it's impossible for them to be anything but the shit."

Hinata blushed, her pointer fingers pushing together. But inside, she was just as surprised as the rest of them.

"Okay, okay." Naruto put a hand on each of his daughter's heads, clearly used to being the mediator in their competitive spats. "We have acknowledged that you are both geniuses and the epitome of awesome."

"And I am very proud of both of you," Hinata added.

"As am I." At Hiashi's utterance, the twins beamed. "Perhaps I can help you enhance your Gentle Fist? Without the aid of the Byakugan, it is difficult."
They giggled, nodding their indigo heads vigorously. Their attention was diverted, however, once Harumi caught sight of Akamaru. "Akamaru-kun!" she yelled, causing Hiashi to wince.

The dog, at the sight of the twins, trotted over, his tail wagging happily. Immediately, their hands were in his fur, scratching behind his ears and receiving his appreciative licks.

Hitomi raised a leg, about to mount the dog and ride him around like she usually did, but Hinata immediately stopped her, noticing the scandalized look on her father's face. "Not in your new kimono, Hitomi-chan," she scolded.

Hitomi looked sheepish. "I'm sorry, kaa-chan."

"We are Hyuuga, not Inuzuka," Hiashi admonished. "And that was most unladylike."

Both the twins apologized to their grandfather, remembering how old-fashioned he was. But when Hiashi wasn't looking, Harumi whispered to Akamaru, "We'll play later."

Hiashi smiled slightly. "Now, who wants ramen?"

"Me!" three voices yelled.

Everyone turned to look at Naruto. He scratched his head awkwardly. "You weren't asking me, were you?"

Hinata laughed, squeezing his hand. "We'll get some later, Naruto-kun."

"Ra-men!" the twins sang, each grabbing Hiashi by the hand and leading him away eagerly.

Hinata giggled as Naruto looked at their disappearing form longingly. Her light eyes made their way to the waiting dog. "Akamaru-kun," she said affectionately, patting the dog on the head.

Akamaru panted, leaning into her touch.

"Hey!" Naruto said suddenly. "You made it!"

For the second time that night, the air seemed to be sucked out of the room.

It was Sasuke. He wasn't dressed up like everyone else, instead in civilian clothes—a plain black shirt and plain black pants.

Everyone involuntarily looked at Sakura. She stubbornly looked at the screen, biting the inside of her cheek and refusing to react.

Sasuke looked uncomfortable standing next to the energetic Hokage, choosing to look off into the distance instead of at Naruto. "I don't think I should be here."


The Uchiha stiffened a little at the name. "I make people...uncomfortable."

"Who cares what think!" Naruto smiled softly. "You did your time. You have as much of a right to be here as everyone else."

Sasuke's eyes flickered to passersby, who gave him nervous glances. "They hate me," he said bluntly.

Naruto rolled his eyes. "Stop being so melodramatic. No one hates you, do they, Hina-chan?"
Hinata shook her head, a small smile on her face.

Sasuke looked at the Hokage blankly. "Of course Hinata doesn't hate me. She's Hinata. It goes against her nature to hate anything. Dobe."

"That's not true," Hinata said softly. But at the same time, she couldn't think of anything she really despised.

"Teme! How dare you talk to me that way!" Naruto growled, at the same time throwing his arm over the Uchiha's shoulders happily. "You realize you become active again next week. And that I'm the one who assigns missions." He grinned devilishly. "I think another one of Madam Shijimi's cats has run away again."

Sasuke scowled. "You wouldn't."

Naruto's eyebrows raised. "Wouldn't I?"

Hinata shook her head, happy that the mood between the two friends had, at least for the moment, turned back to normal.

"All you've got to do is prove the villagers wrong, Sasuke." Naruto tipped his Hokage hat. "Believe me, I would know."

Naruto was having mixed feelings about seeing himself talk to Sasuke. On one hand, it hurt. On the other, observing them once act like friends again made him swell with hope. Things would turn out okay.

"Oh, I almost forgot," Hinata told Akamaru. "Kiba's looking for you."

Akamaru nodded, giving her one last lick before going on his way.

He passed the Naras, who had apparently caught up with Temari's brothers. Even though he was taller than her, Temari leaned on the Kazekage, her arm resting on his shoulder. Contrary to Naruto's belief, Gaara was, in fact, wearing his hat, and he only looked slightly annoyed at his sister's actions.

Shikamaru stood by as all of them listened to Kankuro tell them something. Temari's eyes narrowed, and she smacked Kankuro in the back of the head.

Kankuro hissed, automatically clutching the sore spot. "Bitch," he muttered.

Temari snorted, amused that time had not changed her family's dynamic. "Good times. Good times."

"Who's that girl?" Sakura asked curiously.

Temari looked at the girl standing behind Gaara. "Oh. That's just Matsuri. Gaara used to teach her. She's been fangirling over him ever since. Wonder what she's doing in Konoha, though."

Akamaru passed Neji and Tenten, who were walking with Choji and Ino. While the Hyuuga and the weapons master did not touch, Choji had his arm draped comfortably over Ino's shoulders.

"Cho! Look, it's us!" Ino said happily, poking Choji in the side. "And look at me! I look good."

No one bothered to mention that her beautiful kimono's colors matched Choji's, or that she leaned into Choji's touch. It was kind of pointless. Denial wasn't just a river.
Ino stopped her gossiping once she noticed Akamaru. "Kiba's looking for you!" she called. "He's that way, I think."

Finally, the dog made it to his master. Kiba, who was grinning cheekily to Hanabi, looked up as Akamaru approached. His sister, Hana, stood next to him, as well as a person who looked suspiciously like Shino's dad.

"We've been looking all over for you," Hanabi scolded lightly, patting the dog on the head.

"You didn't go chasing after that squirrel again, did you?" Kiba asked suspiciously.

"Aw, leave him alone," Hana snapped. "That squirrel taunts him all the time. It's clearly asking for it."

"Do you ever shut up?" Kiba retorted, annoyed.

Hanabi sighed. Although her hair was pulled into a low bun, her long bangs ran free, and she tucked them behind her ears. "Can you guys just stop for one night? Because Shino and I are sick of it."

The projection cut off.

"Whoa!" Naruto yelled, looking at Shino admiringly. "You grew a moustache? Nice!"

"You look just like your dad," Sakura added. "It must be the glasses or something."

"Why is everyone so impressed with the emersion of facial hair?" Sai asked. "From what I have read, facial hair is a normal occurrence in males after they have hit puberty."

"It just makes him look more distinguished," Tenten answered. "More mature, like—hey Kiba, are you okay?"

Everyone turned to Kiba, who was staring, bug-eyed and open-jawed at Shino.

No, he was not okay. Because while everyone else was admiring Shino's new moustache, he had seen something different.

He had seen Shino, holding hands with—he struggled not to gag—Hana!

"Dude, what the fuck?" he asked wonderingly. "Out of everyone you could choose...you choose Hana?"

Being that half of his face was covered and his hood was up and he was wearing sunglasses, it was impossible to judge Shino's reaction.

Kiba was looking at him as if he had never seen him before. "...You know she's a complete bitch, right?"

"I hope you weren't talking about me, brat," Hana snarled, appearing in the doorway of the room with a big bowl of popcorn.

Kiba just gaped.

"I figured you guys might be hungry," Hana told the group, thrusting the bowl into Kiba's hands. "You've been in here for a while, and I know my idiot brother's not the best host."
"You're right," Sakura responded, taking the bowl from Kiba when he didn't move. "He's terrible."

Hana shook her head, her ponytail swaying. "Well, there are sodas in the fridge, if any of you want any." She turned to leave, but paused. "See you Thursday, Shino?"

"Yes," Shino answered quietly.

Winking at him, Hana left the room.

Everyone stared at Shino incredulously. Kiba looked like he was going to start seizing any second.

"Whoa!" Ino laughed. "Look at Shino, getting it in! Never thought I'd see the day."

"What the fuck, man?" Kiba screeched. "What was that?"

"Hana-san requires my assistance in the disposing of fleas," Shino responded. "It is something that she asks of me from time to time."

"Why did no one tell me about this?" Kiba yelled. "And why is she winking at you?"

"I wouldn't tell you either, if I knew you would act like this," Tenten retorted. "And clearly, she was flirting."

Kiba twitched at the word flirting. "But...but she's a bitch," he mumbled.

"She's also hot," Naruto scoffed, prompting everyone to murmur in agreement.

"I agree, dickless," Sai said. "She is very aesthetically pleasing. It would be enjoyable to paint her."

"She's got really nice legs," Temari commented.

"And a decent rack," Ino added, laughing as Kiba twitched again. "What, it's okay for you to talk about women this way, but you can't take it when others do? Your sister is a woman, after all."

Kiba looked around dazedly, clearly one step away from a psychotic breakdown. His eyes settled on Shino. "I don't even know who you are anymore," he accused.

"Oh, shut up." Sakura rolled her eyes. "Enough of the theatrics. Who wants to go next?"
"I'll go," Choji mumbled around popcorn. It wasn't as if his lazy friend was going to volunteer anyway.

Akamaru walked over to him, offering him the orb. When Choji took it, the dog finally returned to his corner.

For a second, Choji contemplated the device. Then, he filled it with chakra.

"Thank god!" a girl exclaimed, her eyes widening in relief. "You have got to help me."

"CHOJI looked bewildered. "What's the matter, Tenten?"

"Damn, girl!" Ino exclaimed as Kiba catcalled. "Look at you! You should really wear your hair like that more often."

The projected Tenten was very different from the one sitting with them now. Her long brown hair flowed down her back, a slight wave in it, and it appeared she was wearing a little makeup—her eyes were more defined and her lips glossy. The short vermillion dress she wore clung to her like a second skin, the v-neck showing a decent amount of cleavage, and the black pumps on her feet made her eye-to-eye with Choji.

"Frankly, I don't see a point," Tenten retorted. "Long hair can easily be used against you in battle. I think it's dumb not to secure it." She paused, shrugging sheepishly at Neji. "Sorry, puddin' pop."

Neji did not answer, his gaze pointedly fixed on the Tenten in the projection.

"Neji," Tenten tried again, snapping her fingers in his face when he didn't respond. He looked at her in surprise. "I'm over here," she smirked.

Neji flushed, averting his eyes.

"Long hair is kind of a stupid idea," Temari mused. "Come to think of it, what kind of ninja wears orange?"

"Obviously the best kind," Naruto scoffed.

It was clear that the two were in a bar, as many people sat at tables, drinks in hand. Tenten grabbed Choji by the arm, leading him to the bar. "What's the matter is that I put on my hooker heels for this!"

She didn't explain, but she didn't have to. Slumped over on her stool was Ino, her blond hair hanging around her face in sweaty strings. And sitting next to her was Sakura, still in her medic uniform, taking a shot of something so strong, Choji could smell it despite the musky scent of the bar.

And in between both of them, an impressive collection of bottles and shot glasses.

"Whoa." Kiba's eyebrows went up. "Rough night."

Ino gaped. "Forehead! How could you let me go out in public looking like that?"

"You?" Sakura retorted. "How could you let me go out like that? What the hell is wrong with my
Future Sakura's hair had clearly been hacked off, pieces of it at different lengths, some of the shorter pieces sticking up tragically.

Ino looked over her shoulder, her eyes red. At the sight of Choji, a dopey smile appeared on her face. "Choji!" she said loudly, standing up wobbly and tripping in her own heels.

Choi caught her as she fell into him. He gave her a pained expression. "What are you doing here, Ino?"

Ino rolled her eyes exaggeratedly. "It's girl's night out!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms in the air and almost falling again. "No—no boys allowed." She squinted at him. "But you, you, you can come, I guess. Hinata...wait, where's Hinata?"


"Yeah, that's right. Well, you can be Hinata." She looked around conspiratorially, putting a finger to her lips. "Shhhhh. Don't tell anybody. Okay?"

"Okay," Choji agreed, leading her back to her seat. He glanced at the alarming amount of alcohol that had been consumed. He looked back to Tenten, who was apparently the only one sober. "Did they really drink all of these?"

Tenten nodded, pointing to a few of the bottles. "Well, technically Ino only drank those. The rest are Sakura's."

"Wow, Sakura," Naruto commented. "Those are a lot of drinks."

Sai cocked his head. "This is what one would call 'alcoholism', is it not, Ugly?"

"Shut up," Sakura snarled. "I'll have all of you know that as a medic, my body has been trained to metabolize poisons quickly."

"So you need a lot to even get buzzed," Shikamaru responded.

Sakura nodded. "Why do you think that Shishou drinks so much?"

"Alcoholic," they all said in unison.

Sakura flushed angrily. "Fine. Why do you think she drinks so much and still stays sober?"

They all paused at that.

"Makes sense," Tenten murmured.

"Why are you drinking so much?" Choji asked.

Ino scoffed. "Duh. Men. They...they act like they care, but really they just want to steal our hearts so that they can stomp on them. Bastards!"

Choji cringed at her volume, but Sakura just raised her beer in silent agreement.

"We do this every week," Tenten sighed, "but it's never like this. If Temari was here, she'd know what to do. But me—I have no clue. I wouldn't have come if I had known that these two would be such Debbie Downers."
"Hinata!" Ino laughed loudly at her own joke. "Come have a little drinkey drinkey with us!" She waved the sake bottle at Choji in a way she thought was temptingly, but really just sprayed liquid onto her blue dress.

Choji took the bottle from her, but just set it down out of her reach. "I think it's time to go home, Ino."

Ino pouted, struggling in vain as he grabbed her by the waist. "No."

He turned back to Tenten. "Do you think that you could take—"

"Sakura?"

Ino stopped struggling, eyes wide. "Oh ho ho HO…"

Sakura recoiled at the sound of the voice. "Go away."

Both Choji and Tenten looked confused at Kakashi's sudden appearance. His eye quickly roved the scene, taking in the many bottles strewn about, the girls' clear inebriated state, and Sakura's hair, which was a lot shorter and a lot more messy than the last time he saw it.

"Sakura—"

"I dun wanna hear it," she snapped, gesturing to the bartender. When he came over, she slurred, "Gimme more."

"I don't think that's a good idea," the man told her.

"More!" Sakura growled, slamming the bills onto the countertop. "I gotsa money."

Mitarashi Anko appeared over Kakashi's shoulder. An eyebrow raised. "I'm assuming this puts a hold on our plans."

Kakashi exhaled slowly. "Yeah. Sorry," he responded, not sounding apologetic at all.

Anko looked unperturbed, her eyes scanning the room. They lit up when they settled on someone. "Oi, Iruka!" she called. "How would you like to—hey! Where are you going?"

Choji and Tenten looked at each other awkwardly.

But a feral grin took over Anko's face. Slowly, her tongue ran over her teeth. "I love it when they run."

As she stalked off, looking very much like a predator going after her prey, a distinct shiver went down the sober shinobi's spines.

"I don't know if we've ever said this," Kiba said conversationally, "but that woman is fucking crazy! Just thought I'd put that out there."

"Poor Iruka-sensei," Naruto shuddered.

"Jus'...jus' one more," Sakura growled, glaring at the bartender. But the bartender, who was used to serving shinobi, was not intimidated, and he glared back.

"Just give it to her." Everyone's attention was suddenly on Kakashi, whose gaze was suddenly intense. "She'll just get it from someone else anyway."
The bartender paused, considering. But, scoffing, he filled a shot glass to the rim with whatever it was Sakura had been drinking. "Okay, but she ain't my responsibility."

Kakashi picked it up and set it in front of Sakura without spilling a drop.

Sakura looked at him suspiciously, eyes never leaving his as he sat down on Ino's vacated stool.

"I'm not sorry about what I did," Kakashi said bluntly. "And neither are you."

She didn't respond, knocking the shot back without a grimace.

"We should go," Ino told Choji in what she probably thought was a whisper. "They haveta talk."

Kakashi turned his head, startling Ino. "I'll make sure she gets home."

"Are you sure?" Tenten asked. "I have to head that way anyway."

"I'm sure." His eye smiled, but there was no humor in it. He raised a hand in salute. "Have a nice night."

Sakura scowled. "Listen, you—"

"Aaand that's our cue to leave," Tenten said hurriedly, pushing Ino and Choji towards the exit. "Shit is about to go down, and we don't want to be anywhere near the vicinity when it happens."

"Wow, Sakura-chan, you sure are mad," Naruto commented.

Sakura scoffed. "Of course I'm mad! That bastard used his Sharingan on me! Not cool."

"I think she's more mad that he stopped her from killing Sasuke," Temari murmured to Hinata. "Hell, I would be too."

Hinata nodded solemnly.

Once safely outside the crowded bar, Tenten turned to Choji. "I have to go in the opposite direction. Got her?"

Choji nodded, but Ino pushed his arm off of her. "Why is everyone treating me like a child?" she asked loudly.

Tenten looked at her blankly. "You're drunk, Ino."

Ino scoffed. "Yeah, but that doesn't mean that I'm an invalid. I can still walk." She promptly turned on her heel, making it a good two feet before almost falling on her face.

"You sure can, Ino," Tenten snorted. "I'll see you two later. I've got a Hyuuga to bug." And with that, she quickly darted out of sight, even in stilettos.

"And by bug, she means bang," Ino laughed.

Ino sniggered, her amusement compounding by the second at the sight of Tenten's face. "Man, I'm funny."

"Ino," Tenten snarled warningly. She glanced at Neji, who was still watching the projection impassively. "What's the matter with you? Didn't you hear what she just said?"

"No," Neji said coolly.
"I believe my eternal rival was too focused on your choice in footwear to pay attention to other
details," Lee piped up cheerfully.

"You like my hooker heels?" Tenten deadpanned. "What, do you have a foot fetish or
something?"

Neji finally reacted, his face flushing a deep red. "Tenten," he said warningly.

"Cause you know, I'm cool with that." Tenten grinned. "I don't have that exact pair, but I can go
get them for you."

Neji twitched. "Tenten."

"Hey, any of you up for shoe shopping tomorrow?" Tenten asked the kunoichi.

"I'm game," Temari responded.

"What kind of question is that?" Ino scoffed. "Duh."

"Can we make it later in the afternoon?" Hinata asked softly. "I have a clan meeting to attend."

"Better make it tomorrow evening," Sakura said. "I don't get out of the hospital until—"

"TENTEN!" Neji yelled, startling everyone in the room. "I do not have a foot fetish!"

Tenten looked at him wide-eyed, amazed that the usually distinguished prodigy had lost his
composure. Then, she huffed, looking away. "Fine. I guess that means you don't want to see my
fishnet collection, then."

Neji exhaled slowly. "No. I do not want to see your—wait, what?"

"Here you go," Sai said suddenly, holding up a page from his sketchbook. A long-haired Tenten
in a short red dress and tall, tall heels looked back seductively.

"Hells yeah!" Tenten exclaimed, reaching over to take the offered page. "I like you more and
more, belly-shirt."

Sai smiled creepily.

"Oh, look," Sakura commented, pointing back to the projection. "I think you've given up on
walking, Pig."

It seemed that Future Choji had decided to give Future Ino a piggyback ride. Her arms circled his
neck, her heels hanging from her fingers loosely.

"Why were you guys drinking so much?" Choji asked, locking his hands under her thighs to
ensure she wouldn't fall off.

Ino giggled, a sure sign of the alcohol coursing through her veins. Although she was nowhere
near as gone as Sakura, she was definitely inebriated. And a drunk Ino was a talkative Ino. Or, to
be exact, a more talkative Ino. "She's still upset about that asshole Sasuke," she sighed, wiggling
her toes absently. "Her heart is broken. But what can you do? It's only been a week."

"What did he do?" Choji asked.

But Ino babbled on, not hearing him. Or possibly ignoring the question. "You know that train
wreck that is her hair? Yeah, she did that to herself. Today. I told her, I said, 'Why didn't you let me help?' Because in all honesty, what she has goin' now is not helping matters with her ginormous forehead. You know what? I like to tease her about it, but it's not really that big. It's kind of endearing." She paused. "Choji, I think my ass is hanging out."

Choji rolled his eyes. "Why are you wearing such a short dress?"

Ino scoffed, as if his question was stupid. "To get a man, of course. You know, Sakura's all heartbroken, but she really shouldn't be. I'm pretty sure that Kakashi-sensei likes her. I just don't think either of them knows it yet. But they've been having these one-on-one training sessions. And Sakura even told me that he paid for her lunch one time, even though he never pays for anything." She paused. "Wait, what was I talking about?"

"Why your dress is so short," Choji replied, trying to keep up with Ino's drunken mind.

"Oh!" Ino slumped further onto Choji, her chin resting on his shoulder. "Well, Forehead may have a chance at love, but I don't."

Choji turned his head slightly, appalled. "What are you talking about, Ino? Any guy would be lucky to have you."

Ino laughed humorlessly. "Yeah? Tell that to Genma."

Choji was too shocked to answer. He hadn't seen that coming at all.

"You know what? When I first started seeing him, I thought it was just for fun. Nothing serious. But then he would say things that made me feel so special. I've never felt special before. I thought that I had finally found someone, someone who would actually appreciate me. But no. I go into that bar and see him playing tonsil hockey with some random girl! And then when he noticed me, he had the nerve to ask me if we were still on for Thursday." Her lip trembled.

Choji didn't know what to say. "Ino—"

"I'm not a whore, Choji." Tears were cascading down her face now, hitting Choji's shoulder like little raindrops.

Choji stopped walking, his chest suddenly hurting. "No one thinks you are!"

"Yes they do," she choked. "They see my blond hair and short skirts and assume I'm open for business."

"Well then they don't deserve you," Choji snapped, surprising both of them with his sudden anger.

Ino blinked in confusion.

"They don't deserve you," he said again, quieter.

Ino smiled, sniffing. She tightened her grip on his neck in a makeshift hug, kissing the side of his forehead. "I love you, Cho."

Choji felt his heart stop. He stared disbelievingly at the ground.

"You're the best friend a girl could have," she sighed into his hair. "Way better than that Bakamaru. Where is he, anyway?"

And there it was. He ignored the sinking feeling in his heart, deciding that now was as good a
time as any. "You know where he is. Listen, Ino—"

"I think I'm going to be sick," Ino mumbled, scrambling off of him and barely making it to someone's flowerbed before emptying the contents of her stomach. Choji followed, dutifully holding her hair out of the way.

The projection cut off.
"Wow," Naruto said. "That was intense."

Ino looked thoughtful, her eyes not focusing on anything in particular. "Yes it was," she said softly, as if she were somewhere far away.

Sakura looked at her friend worriedly. "...Do you really feel that way, Ino?"

And just like that, Ino snapped back to reality. Exaggeratedly, she rolled her eyes. "No," she scoffed. "I mean who wouldn't want to date me? Look at me."

Kiba nodded agreeably. "Valid point."

Shikamaru sighed. "It's not all about looks, Ino."

Kiba nodded again. "Also a valid point."

Ino's jaw dropped slightly, upset. Her eyes narrowed. "Oh really? Well what is it all about, then? Being a cougar with homicidal brothers that lives three days away?"

"Hey now," Temari interrupted. "They've gotten much better about that. They've got much better about that." She paused. "And I resent that."

Shikamaru sighed again, more deeply. "That's not what I said—"

"I don't care what you said, Bakamaru!" She paused, chuckling at her own joke. "That really is a good one. I'm hilarious."

Shikamaru looked at her incredulously.

"Anyway!" she started again. "I don't want any advice from you. You lost your advice-giving privileges when you decided to frolic in Suna while I was clearly having a mental breakdown."

"There's no proof he was in Suna," Temari interrupted.

Ino looked at her incredulously. "Temari. Honey. Let's stop it with the denial, okay?"

Everyone gaped at her. Temari's jaw hung the lowest. "You," she started, pointing at Ino, "are lecturing me?" She blinked. "About denial?"

Ino looked undeterred. "Yes. So?"

Temari just shook her head, muttering about how she needed to find smarter friends.

Ino laughed. "Go find your new friends. I don't need you anyway! Actually, I don't need any of you! Clearly I just need Choji." She wrapped her arm around Choji's neck, and then, much to everyone's surprise, kissed him right on the cheek.

Choji blushed, mouth agape. "I-Ino?"

"Thanks for being such a great friend, Cho," she replied, winking. "And if you ever get sick, I'll make sure to hold your hair while you puke."

"Thanks," Choji mumbled, his face still red.
Shikamaru shook his head in disbelief, but didn't say anything. Instead, he reached around Ino and took the orb out of Choji's hand.

Temari snatched it from him. "What do you think you're doing?" she growled.

Shikamaru looked at her as if she had grown another head. "It's my turn," he said slowly, as if he were talking to a child. A very special child. "Everyone else has gone."

"Yeah, well you're not." Temari glared. "I think I've been embarrassed enough tonight."

For a full minute they had a full-out stare down, neither backing off. Everyone else watched amusedly.

"You know," Shikamaru began, "I hate to say I told you so...but I did warn you. And you still made me agree."

Cerulean eyes flashed; teeth ground together. But Temari smashed the orb into the Nara's awaiting palm, biting her tongue.

Bastard.

Shikamaru looked nonchalant, but in reality, he was just as worried as Temari was. He had never seen himself so...animated before. Clearly sex was as great as everyone made it out to be. However, watching himself having it was...awkward. Watching it with the female lead—whom he still wasn't sure how he felt about yet—was really awkward. But watching it with all of his friends too? Not even remotely on his list of favorite things to do.

So, filling the orb with chakra, he silently vowed to shut off the projection if Temari decided to make an appearance.

Shikamaru huffed, wiping the sweat out of his eyes with a dusty hand. He was exhausted, having made a three-day trip in two days, and he was beyond dirty—covered in sweat and grime, with sand hiding in crevices he didn't even know he had.

All he wanted to do was find some obscure place to take a nap, but he continued his way up to the gates purposefully.

_He was on a mission._

_The guards, who had spotted him from a distance, waved at him good-naturedly and let him through the gates without a hassle._

"See?" Ino smirked. "Suna."

Temari didn't respond, seeing as Future Shikamaru was most definitely in Suna. She could see the hills of endless sand, and she also recognized the guards. One thing did bother her, though—

"Why are the guards just letting him in?" she snapped. "It is procedure to check the papers of any foreigners entering the village."

"Maybe they were just lazy," Kiba replied.

"Or maybe," Sakura said thoughtfully, "they recognize him."

"That shouldn't matter," Temari said stubbornly. "Everyone knows who I am here, and I still have to show my papers."
"Maybe it has something to do with the fact that he's dating the Kazekage's sister," Tenten whispered to Neji sarcastically. "Just a guess."

Immediately, Shikamaru made his way towards the Kazekage Tower, climbing the steps quickly and making his way over to the receptionist's desk. She looked up in surprise.

"I need to see the Kazekage," he huffed.

The woman blinked, but looked down at her planner. "Is he expecting you?"

"No."

The woman's mouth set into a frown, her brown eyes narrowing. "Well then, you'll have to make an appointment, Nara-san."

Shikamaru sighed, resisting the urge to snap at the girl. Ever since Matsuri began dating Gaara, she began taking the job of managing his affairs way too seriously. "Is he busy now?"

Matsuri's frown deepened. "Well, he's not in a meeting now, but he's the Kazekage, of course he's busy—where do you think you're going?" She yelled, scrambling after the Nara, who had promptly walked toward's Gaara's office.

Shikamaru turned on his heel, looming over the small woman. "I don't know if you heard me the first time," he said, clearly annoyed. "But I need to see the Kazekage."

And leaving Matsuri gaping at him, Shikamaru knocked on the door.

"Jeez, Shikamaru," Naruto commented. "What bit you in the butt?"

"Really," Sakura agreed. "I don't think I've ever seen you so mean before."

Temari silently agreed. That boy was too lazy to give a damn about anything. What could he possibly have to talk to Gaara for?

Shikamaru merely shrugged, eyes to the ceiling and the tips of his ears pink.

Without waiting for an invitation, Shikamaru opened the door. Kankuro and Gaara, at the sudden intrusion, looked up from the papers they were going over.


"Yo," Kankuro greeted confusedly.

Matsuri tittered behind Shikamaru nervously. "I told him, Kazekage-sama! I told him that he needed an appointment and that you were busy—"

"It's okay, Matsuri," Gaara said quietly, reassuring the distressed girl. "Can you shut the door on your way out, please?"

Matsuri nodded, a slap-happy grin on her face as she did as she was told.

"Gaara's cerulean eyes met the Nara's. "What is it I can do for you, Shikamaru?"

Temari started a bit. It was a little weird seeing Shikamaru and her brothers on such good terms. For the Nara to burst into the offices without warning and not be reprimanded, the three must have been really good friends. It was a startling realization to say the least.
Shikamaru suddenly didn't look so determined anymore. He fumbled for the piece of paper being kept in his vest pocket, handing it to the youngest Sand sibling.

*If Gaara had eyebrows, they would have been raised. "A cake recipe," he deadpanned.*

Shikamaru scratched the back of his head awkwardly. *"Tsunade mentioned how much you enjoyed my mom's cake, so I was sent to give it to you."*

Kankuro guffawed. *"Dude, that is the shittiest excuse I have ever heard." He grinned. "But you're out of luck. Temari's not here."

"She is on a mission," Gaara continued. While he did not outright laugh like his older brother, his eyes betrayed his amusement. *"She's not expected back for two more days."

Shikamaru shook his head. *"I didn’t come here for her. I wanted to talk to you two."

Kankuro's brows furrowed as the conversation suddenly turned serious. *"About what?"

The Nara shifted his weight, clearly uncomfortable. *"I want to marry Temari and I wanted to ask for your blessings."

Temari’s mouth dropped, eyes wide. She looked unbelievingly at the Shikamaru on the screen, as well as the one sitting next to her.

While everyone else in the room seemed surprised at this sudden happening, Shikamaru did not. Clearly his brilliant mind had deduced this outcome the moment he saw himself forgoing a nap to talk to Gaara.

"Called it," Ino grinned, winking at the two nin that were slowly getting more and more red.

Temari paid her no mind, continuing to gape.

The brothers stared blankly at him. *To his credit, Shikamaru did not wither under their stares.*

Finally, Kankuro spoke. *"You didn't accidentally get her pregnant, did you?"

Shikamaru paled. *"No!"

Kankuro still looked perplexed. *"And you still want to marry her? Why?"

"What the hell is *that* supposed to mean?" Temari growled, knocked out of her reverie. *"When I get home, that asshole's getting it."

"But he technically hasn't even said it yet," Choji reminded her.

Temari rolled her eyes. *"Doesn't matter. That idiot's always saying something stupid."

Shikamaru looked uncomfortable.

"Did she threaten you?" Kankuro pressed. *"Because I'm pretty sure we can get you out of that."

Shikamaru sighed, hands in his pockets. *He longed to look towards the ceiling, but didn't, afraid that the moment he removed his gaze from the Kazekage's, he would lose a body part. "No, she didn't threaten me. I want to marry her because fate clearly hates me."

The brothers looked perplexed. *"Because I love her," the Nara clarified.*
A blank look then made its way onto both of their faces, and Shikamaru began to lose his battle against fidgeting.

Suddenly, the door to the office slammed open. Temari, sweaty and covered in dirt, grime, and copious amounts of unidentifiable substances, marched in, much to Matsuri's dismay. Her hair was plastered to her skull in some places, and while she didn't necessarily smell bad, she definitely smelled like outside, like battle.

"I tried to tell her that you were in a meeting," Matsuri told Gaara helplessly, "but she wouldn't listen."

"It's okay," Gaara said, a smirk tugging at the edges of his lips. "Please close the door on your way out, Matsuri."

Matsuri nodded, closing the door happily.

Temari stomped up to the desk, throwing a scroll down tiredly. "Took less time than we thought. I'll give you the mission report later. I need to get this blood out of my hair."

Gaara nodded in reply, nonchalantly look at the suddenly panicking Nara.

Temari started, her fatigue apparently making her oblivious to her boyfriend's presence until this moment. Her eyebrows furrowed in confusion. "What are you doing here?"

"He's here to take you to dinner," Gaara replied, stunning the Nara.

"Dinner," Temari deadpanned.

"Yes," Kankuro piped up. "Dinner."

She looked at Shikamaru curiously. "You came all the way here to take me out to dinner?"

"I'm here on a mission," Shikamaru clarified. An unofficial one, but she didn't have to know that.

She nodded, content with that answer. "Let me shower first. I'm disgusting."

"You know," Kankuro grinned, "He's pretty gross too. You two should just shower together! Saves water, you know."

Temari smirked. "That's a good idea," she purred, winking at Shikamaru.

Kankuro began coughing uncontrollably, clearly not prepared for his sister to respond positively to his teasing. "What!" he wheezed.

Temari rolled her eyes. "That's what you get, you perv! I swear, he never learns." Turning to Shikamaru, she put a hand on his elbow. "Give me an hour. I'm going to need it."

Shikamaru, apparently undergoing the first symptoms of shock, just nodded, watching as she left as quickly as she had arrived.

The projection shut off.

"Man, you've got balls," Kiba commented admiringly. "They could have maimed you for sure."

Naruto nodded. "Gaara's my friend and all, but even I thought he would have castrated you. His self control's not that great, you know."
"That was so romantic," Sakura sighed. Hinata nodded in agreement.

"I know!" Tenten replied. "I wish someone would almost get castrated for me!"

Neji gave her a look that clearly said, "Bitch, are you crazy?"

Tenten just smiled back.

"Aw, look at my Shika-kun!" Ino cooed, poking an increasingly agitated Shikamaru. "Going out of his way. For a woman."

"Of course!" Lee exclaimed. "When one burns with the youthful fires of love, anything is possible!"

Shikamaru looked like he wanted to melt into the carpet and disappear, but Temari looked thoughtful.

"You would really do that," she stated, looking him straight in the eye. "You would ask my brothers."

Shikamaru ran a hand embarrassedly across his hair. "Of course I would. I mean, your dad's not alive so...it's the respectful thing to do."

Looking back, this would be the moment Temari would recognize as the point her view on Nara Shikamaru changed. She would stop seeing him as a young boy, brilliant, but lazy and wasting his potential. Instead, she would begin to see him as a man, still brilliant and still lazy, but rapidly blurring her mental lines, making it hard to distinguish friend from lover.

But that would be later. Now, Temari could only blush, breaking eye-contact in her confusion.
"Kiba." Everyone turned at the sound of the voice, properly distracted. It was Hana again, leaning on the doorway. "Mom's coming home soon."

"Oh shit!" Kiba swore, standing up quickly. "You all have to leave. My mom's coming back and you can't be here."

"Why?" Naruto asked confusedly.

Kiba looked sheepish. "Well, technically I'm not allowed to throw a party without asking her first."

"You aren't throwing a party," Sakura scoffed. "If you were, there would be booze. And at least a couple strippers."

Kiba grinned cheekily. "Yeah, you're right. Good times, good times."

Hana rolled her eyes. "And that's exactly why he is no longer allowed to throw parties."

"Oh, don't act like it wasn't the party of the century," Kiba retorted. "Although I probably should have rethought inviting Lee. No offense, bro."

"None taken," Lee piped up.

Everyone but Temari shuddered at the memory. Lee and alcohol definitely do not mix.

"Okay!" Kiba said loudly. "Everyone, get the hell out."

Naruto pouted, but brightened when he saw the time on a wall clock. "It's almost time for my midnight snack at Ichiraku anyway!"

"Isn't Ichiraku closed?" Choji asked.

Naruto grinned. "Not for me! Teuchi-san always leaves ramen out for my late-night and midnight snacks."

"How are you still alive?" Temari gaped. "All...that...sodium..."

"Beats me," he responded cheekily. Feeling eyes on him, he turned, only to be met by the pearly gaze of Hyuuga Hinata. Embarrassed, Hinata averted her gaze. But a lightbulb visibly went off in Naruto's head. "Hey!" he exclaimed. "Hinata-chan! Want to come with?"

Her eyes widened, all of her blood seemingly rushing to her face. "C-come?" she squeaked.

"Yeah!" the rambunctious blond answered. He wanted to get to know Hinata better, and Ichiraku Ramen seemed like a great place to start. "With me to Ichiraku!"

Hinata got more red, if that was even possible. "L-l-like a d-d-d-da—"

"Yeah!" he replied, flashing her a foxy grin. "Like dinner."
Hinata couldn't believe her luck! Feeling as if she would pass out at any second, she vigorously nodded her consent, her pointer fingers pressing together and her gaze once again averted.

"Great!" Naruto said happily. Then, without any further warning, he stood, grabbing Hinata by the hand and yanking her to her feet. "Let's go! Don't want the ramen to get cold."

"Naruto!" Sakura admonished. "You can't manhandle her like that! It's rude."

Naruto dropped Hinata's hand like a hot potato. "I'm sorry, Hina-chan!" he said quickly, regret in his eyes. "I just get so excited about ramen—I wasn't thinking—"

"It's okay, Naruto-kun," Hinata said quietly, still not looking at him for fear of fainting. "I don't mind."

The grin quickly took over his features again. "Really? Then let's go!" Unthinkingly, he grabbed her hand again, half-dragging her towards the front door. Hinata followed willingly.

"Hinata-sama," Neji interrupted, causing his cousin, while still walking, to look over her shoulder at him. "Your curfew is in half an hour." In other words, "it would not be wise for you to go."

But Hinata's feet still moved, her hand still captured in Naruto's. And when she finally made it out of the front door, she reached out to shut it.

Neji stared at the door disbelievingly. "She ignored me," he stated, completely shocked.

"Of course she did," Tenten snorted. "Leave the girl alone. You can't cockblock her forever."

Neji looked at her in dismay. "Tenten."

"Yes, munchkin?" she responded, her facial expression feigning innocence.

If he were a lesser man, Neji's teeth would be ground together in frustration. But as it was, he was not. He was a Hyuuga. Exhaling slowly, he said, "We should leave, lamb chop. Before Kiba gets in trouble."

Ino snorted, finding it hard to control her mirth.

Tenten nodded, standing. "That's a good idea, snuggles. We wouldn't want Kiba to get into trouble. Let's go, Lee," she told her other teammate.

"Yosh!" Lee responded buoyantly, jumping to his feet. Bowing deeply to the Inuzuka siblings, he said, "Thank you for your hospitality."

"Yeah, thanks, Kiba," Tenten added distractedly, walking with Neji to meet Lee on the other side of the room. She looked at the Hyuuga thoughtfully. "Soooo….does this mean we get to make out now?"

If he had had less grace, Neji definitely would have stumbled. But he was a Hyuuga, dammit! He was full of grace! "Tenten!" he hissed, stopping in his tracks, a slight blush adorning his cheeks.

"What?" Tenten responded nonchalantly. "I'll let you rub my feet after."

"FOR THE LAST TIME!" Neji bellowed, startling everyone in the room. "I DO NOT HAVE A FOOT FETISH!"

Tenten stared at him, stunned.
Neji cleared his throat, regaining his composure. "If you must know," he said stoically, looking Tenten straight in the eye, "you have nice legs."

It was silent as Tenten slowly comprehended this. Then, a grin reemerged. "I can roll with that," she winked, linking an arm through each of her teammates'. "Come on, boys. Let's blow this joint."

And with that, Team Gai left Kiba's house.

Temari burst out laughing. "I knew there was a reason I loved that girl," she sniggered, standing up as well. "Snuggles. Wow."

Shikamaru looked up at her. "Where are you going?"

Temari rolled her eyes. "If I'm not mistaken, Kiba just told us to get the hell out." She crossed her arms beneath her chest. "So I'm going to my room at the consulate."

Shikamaru sighed, standing as well. "That's on the other side of town."

Temari raised an eyebrow. "It is."

"And it's dark outside."

Temari suppressed the urge to laugh. "It is."

The shadow user looked annoyed that she was making him say it. "I'll walk you, you troublesome woman. A man should never let a woman walk alone in the dark."

Amusement glinted in Temari's eyes. Let it never be said that chivalry was dead. "Oh, Shikamaru," she swooned sarcastically, a dramatic hand draped across her forehead, "thank you so much! God forbid I had gotten lost! Or attacked. What would I have done?"

Shikamaru looked skyward, wondering why he always put himself into these situations. He followed Temari towards the door, stopping when Sai handed him a piece of paper behind Temari's back.

A now completely finished portrait looked back at him.

Score.

Before he could completely admire the blue of Temari's eyes against the pale paper, the muse herself turned around, wondering why he was walking so slowly. He stealthily slipped the paper into his pocket, following her into the night.

"They are in denial," Ino huffed. "Seriously." She rolled her eyes, standing. "Let's go, Forehead. I denounce tonight to be Sleepover Night. We have too much to talk about."

"Okay, Pig," Sakura sighed, standing as well. "But it's going to be your house this time. And you better have ice cream."

"What kind of Sleepover Night would this be without ice cream?" Ino snorted indignantly. She turned to her remaining teammate. "See you tomorrow, Cho. Lunch, right?"

Choji nodded, reflexively smiling to Ino's infectious one.

Thanking the Inuzukas for their hospitality, the two girls left, leaving only Choji, Shino, and Sai.
"We should leave as well," Shino said quietly, prompting the other two to stand along with him.

"Yeah," Choji responded, scratching his head. "We can walk together, since we all live in the same general direction." He paused. "I think. Where do you live again, Sai?"

Sai smiled creepily in response.

Choji looked weirded out. "Ookay. Whatever. We'll just head out. Thanks for having us, Kiba."

"Yes," Shino added, bowing his head slightly. "And thank you as well, Hana-san."

"Oh." Hana smiled, wrapping one of her bangs around her finger. "No problem, Shino-kun."

Kiba nearly gagged at the sudden spike in his sister's pheromones. "Really?" he shrieked childishly. "Really now."

Choosing to ignore Kiba's outburst, the three remaining shinobi nodded their goodbyes and then exited the house.

Kiba turned to his sister. "Really?" he shouted, clearly on the verge of having a mini-tantrum.

Hana shook her head. "Shut up, brat. You're just a puppy. You'll understand when you're older."

Kiba gasped. He crossed his arms, looking in the opposite direction of his sister. "I am not a puppy," he sulked, clearly insulted.

"If you say so, Kiba," Hana laughed, mussing his hair. Suddenly, she noticed a blue orb sitting on the carpet. "Hey, what's that?"

Kiba and Akamaru shared a knowing look. "Nothing," he responded, picking it up. "Ino must have left it. I'll give it to her tomorrow."

Hana shrugged, yawning. "Well, I'm going to bed." She turned. "Oh, and this room's a mess. Clean this shit up."

Kiba growled at her retreating back. "Bitch," he hissed.

"I'm sorry, did you say something?" Hana called sarcastically, her voice far away.

Mumbling, Kiba cursed his sister. And, as his eyes scanned the popcorn-speckled carpet, he cursed the fact that Choji was a messy eater.

---

**The End**

...or is it?

---

*I can do this,* Sakura thought miserably.

She *had* to.

She just *had* to know!
Ino had tried to convince her to go buy her own copy, but even if Sakura could find a merchant willing to sell it to her, she didn't think she would be able to stand the shame.

For this reason, she had been following her former sensei around all day as he meandered about, oblivious to the world as he giggled into that stupid book of his.

The stupid book that Sakura needed.

She jumped quietly onto another branch as she watched Kakashi somehow dodge a group of rambunctious academy students without once looking up. She knew very well that she couldn't take it from him—there was no way he would allow that to happen. The only option left was asking to borrow it, and that was just as embarrassing as buying the book herself!

Sakura froze in her tree-jumping escapade, noticing for the first time that her target had stopped walking and holy sh- it, he was looking right at her!

"Sakura," Kakashi called, cocking his head to the side in question. "Why have you been following me all day?"

Embarrassed, Sakura jumped out of the tree, landing in front of the calm jounin. She looked at her feet, Kakashi's presence adding to the awkward feeling in her gut.

Stupid future-telling orb.

"Sakura?" Kakashi prompted again, causing the roseate girl to shyly look up into his masked face.

Sakura fidgeted under her sensei's gaze. "I was wondering if you could do me a favor, Kakashi-sensei."

His visible eye turned into a half-moon. "Depends on what it is, Sakura-chan."

"I want to borrow *Icha Icha Tactics,*" she said hurriedly, before she could second guess herself.

Kakashi paused at that, her request apparently throwing him for a loop. He had expected that she wanted a training session, or maybe that she was here again to try to convince him to take his yearly physical, but he hadn't expected that. "*Icha Icha* is for adults, Sakura," he responded, his tone carefully blank.

"I am an adult," Sakura huffed, forgetting her embarrassment in favor of feeling indignant. "I've been an adult since I became a genin."

Kakashi continued to observe her, nothing about him betraying his feelings. Sakura struggled not to shrink back at his scrutiny. Finally, his half-moon eye was back. "Okay."

"Really?" Sakura breathed unbelievingly.

In response, the Copy Nin held out the book to her.

Slowly, Sakura reached out, her fingers closing around the novel.

The moment had finally come.

She no longer had to wonder!

Shakily, she opened to page 134.
Immediately, every drop of blood in her body migrated to her face.

Involuntarily, her jaw dropped in astonishment, head turning sideways to view the illustration at another angle.

She was pretty sure she would have to dislocate her own arm for that.

"Ah," Kakashi said, a smile in his voice. "That's one of my favorite parts."

Sakura shrieked, immediately jumping away from the Copy Nin, the book flying into the air. When had he gotten there? she thought frantically. He had been in front of her, but with no warning he had appeared behind her, reading over her shoulder, so close that she could feel the vibrations as he spoke shiver against her back. So close that his breath brushed her neck, causing the fine hairs to stand on end.

Kakashi easily caught his beloved book, clearly amused that he had caught her off guard.

Sakura breathed heavily, her heart still crashing against her ribs. "Is," she started tentatively. She swallowed. "Is that even possible?"

"Oh yes," Kakashi answered seriously. "You have to have perfect chakra control, but it's possible."

Sakura's heart stopped.

She had perfect chakra control.

ABORT MISSION! ABORT MISSION! her ninja senses screamed at her. And, for once in her life, Sakura didn't think twice about listening.

"See you later, Kakashi-sensei," she squeaked, dashing out of there like she was Naruto and she had just been told ramen was on clearance.

Kakashi watched confusedly as his former student disappeared in a cloud of dust. He scratched his head in bewilderment, wondering if Sakura was merely PMSing again. But, shrugging the whole strange incident off, he reopened his book to his previous spot, giggling.

Chapter End Notes

Just to clear up any last minute things:

~Shika really did just walk Tema home. Unless you want it otherwise, in which case they lemoned it up, baby! :)

~I love Tenten. She is just so much fun. Go get 'em, girl. Go get 'em. XD

~Writing time travel-y things is a bitch. Seriously. For example, Ino had to stay oblivious to Choji's love so that her own future come true, but during this whole fic, I'm going off the idea that everyone is going to disregard the orb's power. Thus, when pregnant with Kenji, Hinata will say that she doesn't know the sex of the baby (even though she had seen him through multiple futures), and Sakura will still hope that Sasuke loves her, even though she's seen that he can't. Ino will date Genma, even though she knows he's in it only for the sex, because she will think that that is what
she wants as well (even though she has clearly seen otherwise). Temari won't see
Shikamaru's proposal coming because she is a.) exhausted and b.) a skeptic.

Even though Shino's future proved the power of the orb, everyone will later mark it
off as coincidence. We have got a bunch of cynics on our hands, people. Just roll
with it.

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