

101 Words

A story told in moments

Von BlueJey

Kapitel 20: Life

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: This one is the final part. *Finally*. I can't even begin to describe how much trouble I had with this. I wanted to write a completely different scene, but then one of my friends went and said, "Oh, that doesn't fit them AT ALL!!" and gone was my idea. I think it took me at least four months to eventually get this finished afterwards... >.< (The original version was about thrice as long and overflowing with medical details that I couldn't imagine anyone would be interested in. So I shortened it down a bit. And thus, I had wasted 2 1/2 hours of my life on research on several medical topics...)

To everyone who read this through up to this point: Thank you so much!^^ I hope I didn't bore you too badly. *laughs* I also hope you find this final chapter to your liking, and that it isn't too much of a disappointment... ^^"

Part 50 - Life

Naruto felt like he was freezing to death with his insides aflame.

His heart was beating in his throat and his breath came in harsh, gasping pants, even as he desperately tried to calm down, calm down – '*Just calm down and don't freak out*,' he told himself, blinking rapidly to get the dizziness out of his head.

Sasuke's blood was uncomfortably hot on the bare skin of his hands.

Around them it was dark, the sheer density of the forest shielding away the last of what little light the thin crescent moon above the treetops and gray clouds could provide. The sun had set hours ago, leaving them to a blackness that seemed to

swallow everything. It had gone haywire from that point on. Their surprise attack on one of Ootogakure's last hideouts had turned into a disaster and their eventual forced retreat had been chaotic, the combat area spreading out wider with every passing second.

He'd never seen Sasuke's skin quite this pale.

"*Fuck...*" Naruto breathed faintly, voice high and thin and trembling, very nearly giving in on him. He barely recognized himself through the mess in his head, his mind entirely focused on the unmoving body in his arms.

Sakura didn't blink, didn't move – didn't even breathe for what could have been minutes or seconds. Her hands had frozen in midair, the torn fabric of what used to be Sasuke's shirt dangling loosely from her perfectly still fingers. Only her eyes never stopped moving – taking in everything at once, it seemed, every cut and bruise and scratch – the look in them sharp, alert and deadly serious.

"He's—he's going to make it, right?" he forced himself to ask, and the heavy silence that was Sakura's reply made him shiver with unnatural cold. "*Sakura*," he breathed, both faint and intense, as a surge of helpless desperation washed over him. Why was she *looking* like that!? Why was she still staring, why wasn't she actually *doing* anything!?

"I don't *know*," was all she said eventually, her words nothing more than a sharp hiss of air through clenched teeth and Naruto's heart skipped a beat or two. "Shikamaru," she then called without turning, her tone never losing that edge of urgency. "I need Blood Replenishing Pills. A lot of them."

And then, for just the briefest moment, her eyes flickered to Naruto. It was nothing more than a quick glance, cast at him through the few loose strands of pink hair that had escaped the ponytail at the back of her head and had fallen into her face, her attention back on Sasuke before Naruto had even fully realized what he had seen in those eyes. But he had seen it nevertheless.

"Fuck," he breathed shakily, clenching his hands into fists to fight down the sudden trembling that took control of his whole body. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, *fuck!*"

If she'd punched him, right in the face and without holding back, it couldn't have hurt more than that short moment of open *fear*. It hit Naruto with the force of an oncoming train, shattering that already ridiculously small and helplessly desperate sliver of hope he'd been clinging to – that Sakura was Sakura, after all, and that as long as she was with them, she would be able to patch them back up, no matter what happened, and that this, *this*, this coldness, this darkness, this promise of loneliness, couldn't touch them just as long as she was *there with them*. That *death* couldn't reach them.

But Sakura was scared.

The realization washed over him like a wave of cold water, his chest tightening

painfully, making it almost impossible to breathe through the sudden rush of panic.

Sasuke was dying.

Here and now, right here in Naruto's arms and with Sakura leaning over him, Sasuke was fucking *dying*. He was dying – Naruto was losing him. He could almost feel the life pouring out of him with every single drop of blood he lost and— There was blood everywhere. So much of it, too much of it, no matter where his flickering eyes glanced. Sasuke's whole chest was one entire bloody mess, all kinds of cuts and gashes zig-zagging across it. Too fucking much of it, *too fucking much!*

Sasuke shouldn't be bleeding this heavily, he shouldn't be *dying* out here in enemy territory in the middle of the night! He shouldn't—

"Hey," Kiba said sharply from just behind him, one hand grabbing Naruto's shoulder. He hadn't realized he'd been swaying until the Inuzuka steadied him, jerking him out of his increasingly hysteric thoughts.

Sasuke was dying on him. He was losing him.

"My god," he barely whispered, his vision blurring with tears even as he tried to regain his composure, eyes impossibly wide and focused only on all that red that seemed to crawl up his arms.

Uchiha Sasuke was—

"Naruto," Sakura said very sharply, her voice cutting right through the rising panic. "Deep breaths, you're hyperventilating. I don't need you fainting on me right now."

With a quick flick of her wrist, she flung away the kunai she'd used to cut Sasuke's vest off, the blind motion in itself a carelessness that was entirely unlike her. Nimble fingers danced across Sasuke's bared chest, butterfly-touches, testing, assessing the damage. Naruto took a deep breath, suddenly too busy with fighting back the wave of nausea that hit him at the sight.

"Gods..."

So much blood. So many injuries... There was a stab wound just below Sasuke's ribs that looked like someone had thrust in a kunai and *twisted*, a long, almost vertical gash at his right shoulder, dangerously close to his neck, and another cut that looked like his opponent had tried to simply slice off his entire torso running almost horizontally across his stomach. His left shoulder was covered in tiny glass shards that had bitten deep enough into his skin to almost disappear completely, and Naruto was almost sure a few of his ribs were broken as well. There was also a fair amount of other injuries – most of them cuts and scratches, some of which had already started to dry and crust over – and an awful lot of bruises.

Something like this was not just the outcome of the last battle, Naruto suddenly

realized with sick, but mind-clearing horror. Some of those wounds must have been caused at least a few hours ago.

"I—I didn't even—," he started, voice cracking with pain at the realization, "I didn't even notice he was hurt..."

In fact, he hadn't noticed anything was wrong right until he'd heard Sakura's call over the noise of the last fight and spun around only to see Sasuke motionless on the mossy ground, his opponent swinging his sword at the raven's unprotected head. The next moment, Akamaru was ripping the man's throat out, blood splattering the grass around them as he went down with a gurgling sound.

He couldn't remember how the fight had ended – besides from the fact that they had obviously won. It was all a misty haze in his head, but he knew that he'd never killed so many in so little time, never felt such *pain*, such despair, even when he'd told himself that he was okay, that Sasuke was only knocked out, maybe injured, yes, but not badly.

He only remembered skidding to a halt and dropping to his knees by Sasuke's side – not exactly in that order as the buzzing pain in his legs suggested – turning him over with the raven's name on his lips, his stomach twisting into sick knots as he saw the bloody mess that was his partner. And then, Sakura had been there with him, kunai in hand, cutting away the soaked fabric of Sasuke's clothes, baring all those wounds and—

And suddenly, his pink-haired teammate burst into action.

"I need those damn pills, Shikamaru!" Sakura almost-yelled at their captain, then whipped around to shout at Kiba, "You, go! Find Ino, Hinata – anyone with medical skills, however limited they may be. Someone has to be out there! I can't do all of this by myself. You've got five minutes, ten at the most – don't just *stand* there!"

"I'll go with five, then," Kiba acknowledged courtly, tensely, already turning as the words left his mouth. He whistled for Akamaru, the huge dog exploding into motion and in the blink of an eye, they were gone.

"You," Sakura finally turned back to him, one hand suddenly coming up to ever so slightly slap him on the cheek, "Snap out of it already! I need you here with me right now."

She pushed back the sleeves of her turtleneck top, crimson smears staining her bare arms where her bloodied fingers had touched skin, and fixed her ponytail to keep her bangs from falling into her eyes. There was no trace of hesitation, not the slightest touch of doubt left in her movements, her face hard with determination as her eyes stared right into his.

She really was a pro, Naruto suddenly realized with startling clarity, blinking once, then shaking his head as if it actually helped get rid of the chaos in his mind.

"Is he—?"

"I haven't given up just yet," she told him courtly, a sharp warning to shut up and work. Shikamaru was at her side barely half a second later, a small box in his hands, his sleeves pushed back as well. "But he's lost way too much blood already and the pills alone won't work. I can't close all of his wounds by myself – we're incredibly lucky if my chakra's enough to at least stop the worst of the bleeding and even then, all of that would just be enough to buy us some time..."

"Will he make it?" Naruto cut her off, finally forcing himself to repeat the question that he was no longer sure he even wanted answered, flinching visibly when Sakura grabbed his right arm and tore off his sleeve.

"He might," she said, pushing the cloth into his hand, then directing his hand to press it to the stab wound on Sasuke's stomach. "Stay like that," she ordered, then finally, *finally*, gathered chakra into her hand, the soft green glow and the sudden feeling of warmth and softness soothing some of the agony in Naruto's heart.

When her fingers touched Sasuke's skin, radiating *life* and love and *hope*, Naruto closed his eyes, for the first time in his entire life regretting the fact that he had no god to pray to. His heart was still beating in his throat and his breath still came in harsh, gasping pants. But beneath his fingers, he could feel Sakura's chakra starting to pulse through Sasuke's body, and though he'd never felt so helpless before, he clung to the fact that she *hadn't given up just yet*.

"He... wouldn't leave you alone like this," Sakura then whispered ever so softly and suddenly, Naruto realized that he was crying.