

# Three Cheers for Romance

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*Naruto, Kiba, Sasuke, Shikamaru, and Neji are best friends. But what happens when the element of romance gets thrown into the mix? sorry not yaoi. Naruhina, Sasusaku, Nejitenten, not sure who shika gets yet.*

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"It's only one more year. And besides, until then, if we want to go anywhere we can just take on of the limos." Sasuke said.

"Easy for you to say, you have limos!" Naruto shouted.

After some fifteen minuets of walking and arguing, mainly between Naruto and Kiba, the group passed a public basketball court. Noticing a dozen some girls and several guys on the sidelines cheering, they decided to stop and see what was going on.

"Wonder who's playing?" Naruto questioned.

"Probably Neji or Shino." Shikamaru answered.

As they drew closer, they discovered that it was actually both Neji and Shino and four others that none of them recognized.

"Hey guys." A girl with two buns on the top of her head greeted them.

"Oh, hey Tenten."

Tenten was one year older then them and attended an all girls school on the other side of the village. She was often seen tagging along behind Neji but none of them were sure what kind of relationship the two of them had. Neji didn't talk much about that sort of thing.

"So what's going on here?" Kiba asked.

"Neji and Shino are playing against those four guys."

"Two against four? Isn't that a little unfair?" Naruto asked.

"You would think so, but their actually winning. By a lot."

None of the boys were surprised to hear this. Neji and Shino were on the school team, along with Sasuke, and each of them was very good; especially Neji.

"Woot! Go Neji!" Tenten cheered as Neji stole the ball, passed it to Shino, who passed it back as Neji went up for an easy lay up.

"First one to twenty wins; Neji and Shino are up to eighteen, the other guys are at six. I still don't get how Shino can play with sunglasses on. You would think they would fall off, or they would screw up his vision or something." Tenten said.

"We don't get it either. I've never seen him without them on. But leave it to Bug Freak to find a way to play basketball with sunglasses on." Kiba said, as he knew Shino better then the rest of them did.

The team of four had the ball now; one of them was about to shoot when out of nowhere, Shino jumped up in front of him and swatted the ball all the way to the other side of the court, where Neji promptly

grabbed it and made the final basket. The losing team sighed and Shino raised his arm and pointed at the one he had blocked moments ago.

"You got served."

Shino made his way off the court.

Tenten joined the other girls in cheering for Neji, who seemed to pay no attention to them.

"Man, I wish girls would do that for me." Kiba groaned.

"Be careful of what you wish for. You don't know how scary fangirls can be." Sasuke said; he had plenty of experiences with fangirls.

"You know, Shino would probably have some fangirls if it weren't for the whole bug thing." Shikamaru said while staring at the sky.

"Wish I could have fangirls." Kiba grumbled for the second time.

"Well you don't, so shut up about it!" Naruto yelled.

Neji made his way over to the four boys, mopping up the sweat on his face with a towel.

"Hey, didn't expect to you guys here, I thought you would be at Sasuke's."

"Actually we're on our way to the mall." Naruto said.

"The mall? Then why didn't you tell me?" asked the long haired Hyuga.

"We tried." Shikamaru started. "We tried calling you, but we just kept getting a busy signal. It's like that almost every time we call."

"That would my cousins' fault. Between the two of them, the phone lines are tied up all the time."

"You know something... I don't think we've ever seen your cousins." Sasuke said slowly.

"That's probably because it's a huge place, and we don't spend that much time there anyways. We mostly hang out at Sasuke's and occasionally Naruto's."

"Anyways," Shikamaru continued. "We also tried to IM you, but you're never on."

"You know I gave up on IM. These fangirls keep on finding out my screen name and then they won't stop messaging me." Neji explained.

"I have the same problem." said Sasuke.

"We didn't bother to try your cell though. You never have it on anyways." Shikamaru finished.

"Well, I'd come with you, but I can't exactly go to the mall when I'm this sweaty. How about I meet you guys there in about an hour? That should give me enough time to take a shower and change." Neji suggested.

"Ya, that'd be fine. We'll meet you in the food court." Sasuke said as the four of them started to walk away.

"See ya then Neji!" Kiba shouted. Akamaru, atop Kiba's head, barked in farewell.

"If his hair wasn't so long and girly, then it wouldn't take him so long to shower!" Naruto said when he thought Neji far away enough not to hear them. Moments later, a small rock hit the blond in the back of the head.

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Neji stood outside the bathroom door and tried to reason with the girl inside.

"Hinata, you're not even doing anything! You're just painting you toenails!"

"That's something isn't it? No, not you Sakura, I was talking to my cousin."

Neji was finally use to his cousin being so outspoken. Two summers ago, Hinata finally decided that it would be for the best if she went to some self help groups to try and work on her stuttering and how quiet she always was. They hadn't truly started to kick in until this summer. She was still the same sweet, kind, caring girl she had always been; now she was just louder about it.

It was defiantly helping her relationships with many people; she was closer to her friends, she wasn't as afraid of meeting new people, but most of all it had helped her relationships with her family. Neji had always criticized her whenever she spoke of changing herself. He had always thought that if you were born weak, you stayed weak; that you could not change. But Hinata had proved him wrong. She had shown him that she could change, and that she could become stronger.

In a way, she had changed Neji as well. He had stopped blaming things on fate and started putting more faith in others. He now felt bad for the way he had treated her. If he had been supportive of her, she might have been able to change herself sooner.

In the past, Hinata would have immediately left the bathroom and let Neji take a shower, and apologized to him. But now, she was sticking up for herself. Neji knew that it was a great improvement on her part, but that did not mean that it didn't get on his nerves when she did something like this.

"Why do you need to use this bathroom anyways? There are plenty of other ones you can use."

"This one has the best shower! And why can't you go paint your toenails somewhere else?"

"Because I was here first! I'm sorry that my cousin keeps interrupting us."

"That's okay Hinata." Sakura said, twirling the phone cord around her finger.

"He's not pounding on the door anymore; I think he's gone."

Sakura giggled on the other line.

"So are we still on for later?" Sakura asked.

"Ya, I'll get down there as soon as I finish my toenails. I'm meeting you inside the main entrance right? Where that little fountain is?"

"Yes, and don't forget, Ino will be there so make sure to speak sloooowly." Sakura said, dragging out the last word. Hinata giggle. A click was heard on both sides of the line and a voice that was defiantly not Hinata or Sakura spoke.

"Hinata, I'm in your room right now and I have your diary in my hand. Unless you get out of that bathroom right now, I'm going to start tearing pages out." Neji said in a monologue.

"Neji, don't you dare touch my diary! Get out of my room right now!" Hinata screamed into the phone.

*"So that s what Hinata's cousin sounds like."* Sakura thought to herself.

Hinata tore out of the bathroom as fast as she could with wet toenails; phone in hand. She ran down the hall and yelled at the phone, assuming Neji was still on it.

Neji set down the phone. He watched from around the corner as Hinata ran awkwardly down the hallway towards her room, trying not to smear her freshly applied toenail polish. He made his way into the bathroom, and locked the door behind him. He smirked.

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Hinata sat on the floor outside the bathroom waiting for her cousin to finish his shower, knowing it could be a long time; Neji was notorious for taking very long showers. He always had to have his hair perfect. In fact, Neji on average, spent more time in the shower than Hinata and Hanabi combined.

Hinata looked up when she heard footsteps to see her younger sister staring at her.

"Why are you sitting outside the bathroom, fanning your toes?" Hanabi asked.

"Neji tricked me out of there while I was painting my toes and now I need to wait for him to get out because my nail polish is still in there." Hinata said glumly while using a paper fan to dry her toes.

"What was the name of it?" Hanabi questioned.

"I don't remember."

"Would you remember it if you saw it?" Hinata nodded.

"Well we can look in my room to see if I have it too. If not, then you can always use something that's close. I doubt anyone would notice the difference." Hanabi suggested. Hinata beamed at her sister.

Twenty minutes later Hinata stepped out of her father's limo, one block away from the mall; she may not stutter anymore, and she may speak her mind, but that did not mean she wanted lots of attention. She would much rather arrive without everyone staring at her because she showed up in a limo. She started walking down the sidewalk and hoped no one would notice that four of her toes were painted a slightly darker shade of blue than the other six.

The pale eyed Hyuga walked through the crowded street outside the mall and somehow managed to get all the way inside without bumping into anyone. She looked around and a large spot of pink in her vision got her attention. She made her way over and stood behind Sakura and Ino who were sitting on the edge of the small fountain.

"Hello!" she said cheerfully, startling her two friends.

"Hinata, you shouldn't sneak up on people like that!" Sakura scolded while smiling.

"What kept you? We thought you would be here like ten minutes ago!" Ino questioned.

"Oh, sorry about that; troubles with Neji." Hinata explained.

"You two are a lot closer now aren't you?" Sakura asked.

"Ya, it's great." Hinata beamed.

"Um, I hate to break up all the happy feelings, but my mom's picking up me in three hours and we don't have time to sit around and talk!" Ino said while standing up.

"As much as I hate to admit it, she's right. If you think about it, three hours isn't all that long." Sakura said while getting up to follow Ino. Hinata grabbed her purse and ran off after her friends before she lost sight of them in the crowd.

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End of chap one. Me originally planned to make this at least 3000 words, but decided to settle for 2500. hope no one minds. And yes, this will be a romance fic. The couples will be as follows; Naruto X Hinata, Sasuke X Sakura, Neji X Tenten, and me needs you to vote if you would prefer Shikamaru X Ino or Shikamaru X Temari. Which ever gets more votes is what me will decide on. No matter what there will be a little of both though. Pleazzz comment and tell me what you thought! also, if your reading this crap, then read my other crap. If your reading my other crap then read this crap.

With love,

~::~ me ~::~



## 2 - Chapter Two

### Three Cheers for Romance

Disclaimer- don't own Naruto... but maybe someday... oh, yeah right.

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"Ino, I just don't feel comfortable wearing something like this!" Hinata's voice came from behind the fitting room door.

"Like I said, I don't care! You're being unreasonable and way to modest, you need to show off a little or else you're never going to get a boyfriend!" Ino said in attempt to coax Hinata into the open. Hinata pouted a little at the words.

"Come out of there and let us see what you look like before I come in there and force you out!"

After a moments wait, the sound of a lock turning was heard and Hinata slowly stepped out of the small room. She fidgeted slightly feeling somewhat awkward without the familiar weight of her coat pressing down on her shoulders.

The Hyuga was wearing a plaid skirt that came down to just above her knees and a tight fitting shirt with a lotus design on it that did nothing to hide the curves of her upper body. Hinata made an attempt to pull the shirt down to cover the small part of her stomach it showed.

"Hinata, you look great!" Sakura said. Hinata blinked.

"Really?"

"Of course you do. How many times do we have to tell you that you're pretty? You're just always hidden behind that jacket of yours." Sakura said with an encouraging smile. "You need to loosen up a little."

"Ya." Ino started. "What good are boobs if no one can even tell you have them?"

"Ino!" Hinata, who had never been comfortable with the fact that she was well endowed for her age, covered her chest with her arms.

"I don't get it; you're rich, you can have any clothes you want, yet almost all of the clothes you have are long-sleeved and loose fitting. I mean, I've seen you in some gorgeous dresses and kimonos, but your clothing of choice always covers you up as much as possible."

"I'm just uncomfortable with people looking at me like that."

"If we wanted a bunch of perverts checking you out we would put you in a mini skirt and a tube top; there's a difference between looking attractive and looking like a tramp."

"I know... can I change now?" Sakura sighed and Ino slapped a hand on her forehead.

"No. we're buying that. Sakura, you hold her down, I'll go pay. Oh, and I'm taking your other clothes with me so you can't just change back into them."

"That's not fair!" Ino simply half turned, pulled down on the skin under her eye and stuck her tongue out. Hinata acted equally childish, opting to stick her own tongue out in return and then sulk.

"I know it doesn't seem like it, but we're just trying to help you. I thought you were all done being shy?" Sakura said leaning against the wall next to Hinata.

"I'm not being shy, I just don't like wearing skirts and stuff that's too tight." Hinata said trying to get the shirt to stay over the thin strip of skin it left uncovered.

"Listen to yourself; you sound like Tenten. Anyways, you wear a skirt to school."

"Ya, but that's different, it's mandatory and it's only girls there. Plus that one's a little longer than this one." Hinata said referring to the plaid one she had on now.

"Don't worry, if anyone tries anything on you Ino and I will beat them into the ground." Sakura said rather cheerfully. Hinata gave a small smile.

"Thanks Sakura."

"No problem. Oh, Ino's waving, we gotta go!" Sakura said as she grabbed the lavender eyed girl by the wrist and pulled. Hinata barely managed to snatch her purse off the ground before stumbling along after her pink friend.

Ino then dragged them into a jewelry store because she needed to replace an earring of hers she lost. While Ino argued with the girl behind the counter, Sakura noticed Hinata staring intently at a piece that was on display. She walked up behind her friend, got very close, and asked loudly:

"What cha lookin' at?"

Hinata jumped, made a very poor attempt to glare at the cheerful face, and quickly gave up.

"Nothing, just a necklace."

The necklace sat on a small pearl colored pillow and glinted slightly in the artificial light. It consisted of three deep blue gems which appeared to be sapphires, the center one being slightly larger than the two on either side of it. The metal holding the gems shined gold; connected all to a golden chain made of intricate links. Judging from the price that was given on the side, it was all genuine.

Sakura let out a low whistle.

"Are you going to buy that?" she asked.

"I don't think so..."

"Why not? It's beautiful and it would look really nice on you. Also it's not like you can't afford it or anything."

"Well, part of it is that, well let's face it, my family is rich." Sakura mumbled under her breath about that being an understatement. "If I just bought whatever I wanted when ever I wanted, then things like this wouldn't be special; they'd just be another piece of shiny metal and stone."

Sakura looked at the young girl smiling faintly next to her and let out a small sigh.

"You're an odd one Hinata. But you've got a point. If you manage to get your self a boyfriend in time for your birthday, maybe he can get it for you? Would it be special then?" the playful grin that played across Sakura's lips only increased as Hinata looked away with a faint blush.

"What's wrong with purple?!"

"I never said there was anything wrong with it! I was just making a suggestion; you're being unreasonable!"

"Well you know what? You suck! And that dress is ugly!" Hinata and Sakura looked up and over to the counter where Ino had a finger pointed accusingly at the girl on the other side of it, who like Ino, was looking quite enraged.

"Um, Ino?" Hinata squeaked.

"First off, you can't argue over the price of things! And my dress is not ugly!"

"Fine! You can keep the stupid earrings!" Ino stomped away, her face glowing red. "We're going girls."

The blond grabbed her friends by the wrists on her way past them and hauled them along after her.

Before they rounded the corner, Ino turned and got in the last words.

"It's very ugly!"

With that, she stormed away, friends in tow, leaving the girl at the register to fume.

"Stupid earrings... they weren't that fricken' expensive last time... what's wrong with purple?!" Ino grumbled to herself as she marched her confused companions along.

"Can you believe the nerve of that girl? I can't believe her!" Ino began to rant.

"Um, no, since we don't really even know what you were-" Sakura was cut off.

"I know! I can't either! Some people can be really annoying!"

"Ino? Can you stop dragging us? My wrist is starting to hurt."

"Eh? Oh! Sorry Hinata, got a little carried away." Ino quickly let go of her comrades and smiled apologetically.

"A little?" Sakura mumbled.

"Ya... so where to now?" Ino was obviously trying to change the subject.

"Hmm... how much longer do we have till Ino's mom comes to get us?" Ino pulled her cell phone out of her purse and looked at the time.

"We've got a good hour left."

"Well I was planning on getting a new pair of shoes while we were here, so let's go do that!" Sakura suggested. Ino jumped at the idea.

"Perfect! We'll do that."

"You know, I think I'll pass." Hinata said, backing away from her friends slowly.

"What's the matter Hinata? Is something wrong?"

"No, no. It's just that the last time I went into a shoe store with you two, you started fighting over something stupid and then you started throwing shoes at each other and then we got kicked out." explained Hinata. "I'd rather not repeat the experience."

"I remember that..."

"Come on Hinata! We promise we won't do anything like that." pleaded Ino.

"It's okay Ino; there's some nail polish that I need to get anyways." Hinata started to walk away, looking back over her shoulder to communicate with the two girls.

"Aw, come on!"

"Call me when you're done! Tell me where we should meet up then!"

"You're no fun at all!" Sakura shouted after her. Hinata waved.

Hinata found the nail polish she was looking for seven minutes after she split from Ino and Sakura, and was now wondering what to do. She had told them to call her when they were done, but that still might be a while before she got the call. So she decided to stop in a Barnes and Noble and see if anything interesting had come out since she last checked.

While skimming over the titles of books, she noticed a girl about six feet away from her with her face buried in a manga from the graphic novel section that was placed directly across from the teen section. She was wearing worn out faded light blue jeans that had a hole on one of the knees, and a light gray hoodie that read "University of Sunagakure" in black letters.

It wasn't that there was anything strange about girls in book stores reading manga, and there wasn't anything strange about the way she was dressed. What Hinata noticed about the girl was her dirty blond hair that was tied at the back in four places, each of them spiking off into any direction.

She had never seen anyone wear their hair like that before, but she felt she shouldn't be too surprised; before Sakura, she had never seen anyone with naturally pink hair before either.

The girl noticed Hinata staring at her and looked up from the InuYasha volume she was reading.

"Hello?" she voiced it more as a question than as a greeting.

"Oh, hello. Sorry, it's just I really like your hair. I've never seen anything like it. I suppose you hear things like this a lot."

"Actually not all too often, every now and then though. Glad to hear you like it. Like your outfit by the way." The girl smiled.

"This? Really? Actually my friends sorta forced me to wear this today."

"It looks nice on you."

Just then Hinata's phone started ringing in her purse.

"Sorry." A beep. "Hello Ino. You two got kicked out didn't you?"

"Maybe. But that's not the point. We're done now and we'll be waiting for you at the little coffee shop on the first floor, you know, the one kinda close to where we came in."

"Okay. I'm on the exact opposite side of the mall here, so I'll be there in a few minuets." Hinata snapped the phone shut and put it back in her purse.

"Well, I've got to go; it was nice meeting you." Hinata said with a friendly wave. The girl returned the wave and returned to her manga as Hinata exited the scene.

Hinata left the store and made her way to the nearest elevator since she was on the third floor, stopping only once to look at a kimono on display in a store window.

The Hyuga pressed the down button and it instantly lighted up. After a moments wait, the light went out and the steel doors slid open. Hinata stepped inside and pressed the button marked "1". After a moments pause, the doors began to slide shut. Just then she heard somebody shouting.

"Hold the doors!" the voice called.

Not even two seconds after the declaration had been made, the one who made it flew threw the shutting doors, crashed quite unceremoniously into the wall of the elevator, fell on the floor, and then seemed to notice Hinata, who was staring down at then. They locked gazes in silence for a moment. During that time Hinata unconsciously flattened her skirt against her legs.

Hinata quickly analyzed the boy with his back on the floor. Messy, spiky, bright blond hair shot out of his head. He had on an unzipped orange and black jacket and a black t-shirt under it that had a red spiral on it. His mouth was agape. On his face he had three whisker-like markings on each cheek. She also decided that he was cute. Cute enough to make her face color itself a shade of red.

"Hi." The boy decided to break the silence.

"Um, hello." Hinata said at a slight loss of words. The silence formed again.

"So, um, do you always lie on the floor in elevators or is it just this time?" Hinata managed to say.

The boy looked around as though he were confirming the fact that his back was on the floor rather than his feet. He scrambled to proper standing position and scratched the back of his head in a sheepish manner and accompanied it with an equally sheepish grin.

"Sorry... I guess I didn't notice."

"N-no, it's nothing to be sorry about."

*"But how can you not notice you're on the floor?"* Hinata wondered in her head. The elevator dinged showing they had arrived at the first floor. They stepped out together and stood still.

"So where are you going?" Hinata asked, silently praying she wasn't blushing too obviously.

"Where ever you're going." He seemed to immediately regret saying it. "N- I meant I was... ur... where did you say you were going?" Hinata giggled.

"I'm headed in that direction." She pointed to the right. "I take it you're headed there too?"

The blond flashed another smile with his eyes closed; the actions accompanied with his whisker marks made his look quite fox-like.

"Actually yeah. I'm supposed to meet a friend there." They started walking together through the crowds.

"Oh, I'm Naruto bye the way. What's your name?" he said when it seemed to dawn on him that they hadn't been introduced.

"Hello Naruto. I'm Hinata."

"Hinata... that's a pretty name... Er- wait..." He slapped a hand to his face and then sighed. Hinata giggled again, blushed a little more and smiled.

"Glad you think so."

They lapsed into a silence in which Hinata focused intently on her feet while pushing her index fingers

together, a habit she thought she had gotten rid of a long time ago.

All too soon, the place where Hinata was to be meeting Ino and Sakura came into view. Hinata thought hurriedly to herself.

*"Say something to him! Ask him if he wants to do something later. Ask him if he's seeing anyone. Tell him he's cute! On second thought don't do that. Make conversation. Something please say someth-*"

"Hinata?" The Hyuga snapped her head over to look at him.

"I was wondering if maybe, if you're not busy or anything, maybe later you'd like to do something or something." He was obviously struggling to get the words out. "Or are you already... er... with someone?" Hinata was almost positive she saw him cross his fingers before he moved his hand behind his back.

"No- not at all!" Naruto let out a breath of air.

"Good, I'm glad. Wait! No- that didn't..." he sighed. "I hate my tongue right now."

"It's okay." Hinata laughed as she said it. "My friends are waiting for me and I'm sure your friend is too."

So is it okay if I give you my cell phone number and you can just call me later?"

"Ya, that'd be great!" Naruto said rather enthusiastically.

Hinata looked in her purse and found a pen but nothing to write on.

"Do you have a piece of paper or anything?" Naruto pulled up the sleeve of his jacket and held his arm out.

"Or that works." Hinata carefully wrote out the digits out carefully and put the pen back in her purse.

"There. Make sure you call." Naruto began to move away.

"Don't worry, I will. See you then!" he waved and trotted off in the same direction they had just come.

"Bye!" the pale eyed girl called as she followed him with her eyes until he was lost in the crowd. Hinata smiled warmly to no one but herself and turned to go to the coffee shop to meet up with her friends but stopped in mid-step.

As it was, it was unnecessary to go to the shop to meet Ino and Sakura, as they were standing right in front of her; Ino was smirking and Sakura was wide eyed and curious.

"Hi, guys." Hinata smiled a little nervously because of her friends looks.

"So Hinata... who was that? Hmm?" Ino's words and the overall way she said it made Hinata want to focus on her feet again.

"What was who?" Hinata started pushing her fingers together again.

Sakura traded her curious look for more of a sly one, complete with a mischievous grin.

"Come on Hinata, you can tell us." Hinata squirmed a little under her friends gazes.

"Well, that was N-Naruto. And I uh, gave him my number so we could get together and do something later." Hinata looked down in a blatant attempt to hide the color that had risen to her face. Sakura's grin increased.

"You like him don't you? And I don't just mean like him, I mean you *really* like him." The Hyuga heiress made a small noise that sounded like a squeak.

"I um, ummm... is it really that obvious?"

"Please, if it was any more obvious it would be on a billboard."

"Ino! That's not nice."

"It's true though."

"Ya, it is."

Hinata groaned.

"Aw you're so adorable!" Sakura exclaimed before hugging Hinata dramatically. Hinata groaned again.

Ino slid next to Hinata and whispered in her ear.

"A little advice; if you don't want people to know you like someone, don't blush when you talk about them, don't stutter when you say their name, don't look down or do that thing with your fingers, and





"Hmm, I wonder who Zabuza is."

"Who's that and why are you asking?" Kiba questioned without removing his eyes from the older boy.

"It's the name tattooed on his arm."

"You can make that out from here? Man, you got better eyesight than I do." The boys were interrupted by a shout.

"Haku, I got what I needed- it's time to go." The boys looked over to the entrance of the store where a tall man with a stern expression and spiky black hair stood. He had a headband with a metal plate on it wrapped around his head. The boy Naruto had been talking with offered him a farewell and a wave as he trotted over the side of the intimidating man and wrapped his slender arms around one of the man's well-muscled ones. Haku, it seemed was the boy's name, twisted around his upper half to give Naruto one final wave from his painted nails. Naruto returned it and started walking over to his friends smiling brightly. Kiba put on an unconcerned face.

"So Naruto, who was that?" he asked, keeping his voice nonchalant. Naruto did the happy-idiot grin he was known to do.

"That was Haku. She's eighteen. She's traveling around with her boyfriend Zabuza, that big scary guy she just went out with. She seemed really devoted to him with the way she talked about him." Naruto rambled on and Kiba didn't even attempt to hide his grin anymore, which had widened so much it threatened to damage some of the muscles in Kiba's face. Even Shikamaru was finding it hard to keep a straight face. Naruto stopped talking, cocked an eyebrow at his friends and leaned on the long metal rack that held the CDs.

"Okay, what's with you two?" he asked. Kiba let out a loud burst of laughter. The corners of Shikamaru's mouth turned up. Kiba was the one to inform their blond friend.

"Well, that was a guy," he said once he had stopped laughing. Naruto slid off the CD rack and crashed clumsily to the ground, only to shot right up back to his feet.

"What!" he shouted. "That was a guy?" Kiba roared with laughter again. Shikamaru snickered a bit but decided to interrupt the hysterics with a voice of reason.

"C'mon guys. I think management's about to throw us out of here with all noise you two are making. We got to get down to the food court anyways. Sasuke's probably wondering where the hell we are and Neji's gonna be here any second," he said as he pushed a still laughing Kiba and a slightly dazed looking Naruto towards the door.

"That's the damn prettiest boy I've ever seen..." Naruto mumbled to no one in particular.

"Hey Naruto, bet you can't get down to the food court before I do," Kiba said, apparently no longer thinking about what happened in the music store.

"Like hell you can!" Naruto shouted right back at him. "Alright! Let's go Akamaru," Kiba said to his companion as they bolted off to the left and Naruto to the right. Shikamaru sighed, muttered something involving the word 'troublesome' and headed off after Naruto. The way he chose had elevators and he didn't really feel like taking the stairs.

Kiba dodged and bounded through the mobs of civilians as he ran full speed to his destination, the usually over crowded food court. Once he could see the neon lights of the restaurants he slowed down a small bit and jogged to the middle of the tables and began scouting for Sasuke. Kiba scratched his head with his long nails after unsuccessfully attempting to find his friend. Just as he was preparing to shout out "where the hell are you Sasuke," something sharp stabbed him in the back of the head. He whipped around, quick swiped the pencil that had hit him off the ground, and raised it threateningly with full intent of returning the object to who ever had thrown it with plenty of force. He stopped short however, when he saw a familiar face waving at him from about forty feet away.

"Oh, hey Sasuke. I've been looking for you- hey, have you seen Naruto here yet?" The black haired boy with equally black eyes shook his head. "Sweet- that means I win!" Kiba said while throwing a



punch in the air.

“Some stupid contest between you and Naruto?” Sasuke asked with traces of an amused smile played around his lips. Kiba grinned.

“You know it,” he said cheerfully, either unconcerned or unaware of Sasuke’s use of the word stupid while describing the things he and Naruto did. They exchanged words for a little while until Shikamaru arrived. He sat down at the table next to Kiba.

“Hey guys.”

“Yo, Shikamaru. You sure took your sweet time getting here. But not as long as Naruto is taking.”

Shikamaru looked up.

“You mean he’s not here yet? Wow- I thought he was just off grabbing ramen or something to drink,” he said as he sat up in his seat and scanned the surrounding area for any signs of an orange clad hyperactive youth. Sasuke rolled his eyes.

“I thought he was with you, or that you would at least know where he is.”

“Nope. The last I saw of him was him running to where the elevators are.”

“This isn’t good,” Sasuke said running his fingers through his raven black hair. “Knowing Naruto, he probably followed some creepy looking guy into his white windowless van because he had ramen and candy.” The words were meant to be a joke but the three boys still looked around nervously for a moment before shrugging the uneasy feeling off.

“Well, seeing as how neither Naruto or Neji are here yet, I think I’ll go head to the Game Stop real quick. See if anything new’s come out.” Kiba announced with a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder. Shikamaru nodded.

“K, while your doing that I’m gonna call Naruto. Just to make sure he didn’t do something stupid,” Sasuke said as Kiba got up and trotted off. He pulled an expensive looking phone, obviously the most advanced on the market, possibly even off the market too, and hit a few buttons with his thumb. “You better pick up dobe,” he warned as he raised the phone to his ear. One ring, two rings, thr- “Hey Sasuke! What’s up? How are you doing today? I’m feeling awesome right now. Really awesome. How about you?” Naruto’s happy voice, speaking rapidly came out of the phone. Just from his tone you could tell he was smiling like crazy.

“Hey dobe...” Sasuke said slowly, not quite sure what to say in response. “Where are you? You’ve been taking so long we thought you got kidnapped.”

“You guys are still in the food court right? I’ll be there in just one sec- I got to tell you about this,” Naruto said quickly, completely ignoring Sasuke’s questions, seeming to be barely able to contain his excitement.

“What are you getting so worked up about?” Sasuke demanded. Shikamaru cocked his head to the side and looked at Sasuke.

“Great! I’ll be there before you know it,” Naruto shouted happily before hanging up. Sasuke took the phone away from his ear and stared at it, as though he expected it to do something more.

“Dobe...” Sasuke said it almost as a question.

“So what was that all about? I take it nothing happened to him?” Shikamaru asked, fiddling around with a plastic fork.

“Well, from the way he was talking, something did happen. Nothing bad though,” Sasuke added when he saw Shikamaru’s face. “He sounded way happy and he was talking even faster than usual. Also, he ignored everything I asked him. Said he had to tell us something and he’ll be here in just a second.” He blew a strand of hair out of his face when he had finished talking.

“Guess we’ll find out what’s going on in a sec. Think I see Naruto coming this way,” the lazy boy said as he looked out into the crowd. And sure enough, they could see a streak of orange weaving in between bystanders and he ran to the food court. Sasuke and Shikamaru watched as the blond caught

sight of them, waved and almost tripped over a bag left carelessly on the floor. But he managed to catch his balance, only stumbling instead of falling flat on his face.

"Hey guys," Naruto said as he slid into the seat next to Sasuke, grinning like mad.

"Hey dobe. Bout time you got here," Sasuke said.

"Love you too. But hey, guess what happened when I was having that race with Kiba," Naruto said, smile never faltering. Shikamaru shrugged.

"You found a nice shiny nickel on the ground and now you can't get over it," he offered, aiming to insult their blue eyed friend.

"Some guy offered you ramen that turned out to be drugged?" Sasuke threw out.

"No. And defiantly no. Try guessing for real," Naruto said. Sasuke rolled his eyes and decided to go with the least likely scenario.

"Oh, let's see here... you met some amazingly beautiful girl you really like and she just might like you back," he said, smirking as formed the words.

"Yes!" Naruto exclaimed as he shot up in his chair.

"Didn't think so," Sasuke said, still smirking. Shikamaru looked from Naruto to Sasuke as the raven haired boy's smirk dropped.

"Yeah! I ran into the elevator, hit the wall and landed on the floor. And there was this ultra-pretty girl there looking down at me. She was wearing a plaid skirt and a tight shirt. I'm telling you, she looked amazing! She has long black hair that seems to have kind of a bluish tint to it, and these absolutely beautiful pale lavender eyes!" Shikamaru and Sasuke looked at the blond boy who was bouncing in his seat, unable to contain his energy.

"Are you serious?" Shikamaru asked, slightly wary.

"Totally. Oh, her names Hinata by the way. And check it out- she gave me her number so we could do something together later!" Naruto pulled up the sleeve of his jacket and held his arm out proudly like he was showing off a battle scar or a tattoo. The numbers were written in a curvy format that even seemed somewhat artistic. There was even a small heart drawn at the end.

"Yep; that's defiantly a girl's. And Naruto's handwriting is chicken scratch," Sasuke announced.

Naruto grinned again, ignoring the comment about his handwriting instead of starting a fight over it like he normally would.

"Well I'm gonna quick grab something to drink. Been talking and running too much," Naruto said as he skipped off in the food court. The two friends remaining at the table looked at each other.

"A girl named Hinata who has long black hair and pale lavender eyes?" Shikamaru said.

"Think its Neji's cousin?" Sasuke asked.

"It's gotta be. How many other girls do you think are out there with eyes like that with that name?"

Sasuke thought for a moment before smirking.

"Yeah, but do you think that Naruto knows its Neji's cousin?"

"This could be very interesting," Shikamaru said, now smirking too.

"Hey guys! Guess what," Kiba said, announcing his return. Shikamaru and Sasuke turned to face him.

"When I was walking back here, I saw the hottest girl ever. She had on this tight shirt a plaid skirt and they really showed off her curves. And man, did she have some perfect curves. I know where she's at now and I'm thinking about going back there and asking her-" Kiba was suddenly cut off by an orange streak that slammed into him, knocking both of them to the ground with a shout of "You stay away from her!"

"Looks like Naruto's back," remarked Shikamaru as the two teens rolled around in an undignified pile on the floor, punching and kicking any part of the other they could. "And he dropped his drink too," he added noticing the orange liquid spreading across the floor a couple tables away. "Think we should stop them?"

