

Innocent Heart, Demonic Blood: Ayami Hyuga's Story

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An Innocent heart, demonic blood, detested by those whose fathers, sons, and husbands fought the EightTailed Demon Wolf 12 years ago and survived, Ayami Hyuga is a troublemaker along with Naruto Uzumaki, this is her story.

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1 - The Beginning

Innocent Heart, Demonic Blood
The Story of Ayami Hyuga

The Beginning:

The beast was huge.

Whenever it howled, the land shook.

Its swaying eight tails churned up thunder that tore at the skies. Razor-sharp claws ripped easily through flesh and bone. Long fangs chewed effortlessly through the toughest enemies.

Even its eyes were deadly. One piercing glance from its golden eyes turned the strongest shinobi to stone.

The Eight-Tailed Wolf was a spirit that lived in this land. It was the second most powerful demon next to the Nine-Tailed Fox, or so they say.

Now why'd this creature attack this peaceful village? Nobody really knew. But the Village Hidden in the Leaves was in grave danger.

The Wolf threw its head up to the sky and howled.

Aaa-ooooooooooooo!!!!

The land shook even harder. The trees in the surrounding the Leaf village fell down like little flowers.

Black clouds came from nowhere, crackling with lightning.

The shinobi nervously watched from a great distance. They were all well trained and ready for combat, but the beast, in truth, petrified them.

The ninja knew they could never in a million years kill the Wolf. They just needed to hold it off.

The shinobi raised a great battle cry and charged at the beast. The front line went in first.

The Wolf stared at them at first. Then it howled, shattering their best secret jutsu into little shreds. The red-hot flames of a Fire style jutsu vanished into thin air. Ninja were torn to shreds and scattered across the ground.

The others didn't run away, but quickly fired up their own best secret jutsu.

This second attack hit right on target. The Wolf scowled as fireballs exploded in its face and daggers of stone stabbed at its stomach. Shuriken and kunai whirled through the air as the battle raged on.

The shinobi who had been called here to fight were all sure that there was a deathblow. They all figured the creature had to be hurt . . . at least a little.

But when the Wolf emerged from the smoke, the ninja all froze in shock. The Wolf looked no different! Not one little scratch marred its hide. It just sat there and whined like a little puppy, mocking the tiny shinobi.

Suddenly the Wolf slid forward, too fast to react, the shinobi were torn apart by the Wolf's humongous claws.

The front line survivors, who had retreated after their attack, somehow dodged the blows. But their best secret jutsu were useless against the creature.

They didn't even slow the Wolf down!

The Leaf shinobi fought on. Ninja were knocked down, smashed up, and blown away, but the rest kept going.

They refused to give up. If they did, the Hidden Leaf Village and everything around it would be flattened to the ground.

Soon only a few shinobi were still alive, though just barely. The survivors had no strength or chakra left. But the desire to protect their loved ones, and village, plus their well-honed ninja instincts kept their bodies moving.

They all knew that is if the battle continued they would die.

Then something happened that no one could have guessed, even in a million years. The Eight-Tailed Wolf's head swung in the opposite direction.

It was what the shinobi had been hoping for.

Another huge wolf leaped over their tired bodies and landed on the other side of the Wolf. As wolves go, this one was quite unique. It wore a gray kerchief around its neck and gauze wrapped around its legs. A large senbon needle was dangling from its mouth lazily. The wolf sat on its legs and threw its head up to the moon and howled like whistling grass. The Wolf howled back in reply and swung its head to face its new enemy.

The two beasts smashed into each other. They bit, clawed, and tackled each other to no end. The land shook once again. The wolf aimed its senbon needle at the Wolf, who knocked it away with one of its tails.

Up to this point, the monsters seemed evenly matched. Then the Wolf brought out its deadliest weapon. Soon every single one of its gigantic eight tails started to thrash at the defenseless wolf.

The wolf somehow managed to dodge every blow before it vanished in a puff of smoke.

The Wolf looked bewildered. It didn't even notice when a woman approached, carrying a small bundle wrapped in a blanket. Without warning, she made a complicated sign and shouted something.

What's she doing?! One ninja shouted. Then they heard a horrible, ear-piercing, blood-curdling scream.

Huh? What? Could it be? Was the Eight-Tailed Wolf . . . screaming?!

It was true! The Eight-Tails, lady of the spirits, was screaming in pain. It was too good to be true!

The Leaf shinobi gaped in astonishment as a soft glowing light rose up from the Wolf. All of a sudden, the light zoomed toward the woman and entered the bundle in her arms. The whole thing happened in a flash, but for the ninja, the moment felt like an eternity.

The Eight-Tailed Wolf, which hundreds of shinobi couldn't hurt, slowly crumpled to the ground. The infamous eight tails, which had once leveled mountains and raised tsunamis, listlessly flopped around its body.

The earth shook one final time as the Wolf let out a soft whine before it sunk into the dirt, dead. The ninja rushed forward, shouting for joy . . .

Then they saw her. Her body crumpled in the dirt. The woman who had so bravely stood before the Wolf now lay dead beside her enemy.

She was Mikoto Uchiha, twin sister of Mikoto Uchiha, wife of Hiashi Hyuga, and mother of two. The healers tried to revive her, but not even the best secret jutsu could bring Lord Hiashi's wife, Mikoto Uchiha's sister and young Airo Hyuga's mother back to life.

Their joy became sorrow. Too stunned to even speak, each shinobi prayed a silent prayer.

Then it happened.

Look! someone shouted, pointing above them.

The small bundle floated down from the sky, glowing from all the chakra it held within.

From the center of the bundle came a loud wail. The ninja hurried to unwrap the blanket. Inside was a squirming baby with dark violet hair.

That baby's name was Ayami.

Yes this is MY story! I only used Naruto: Innocent Heart, Demonic Blood for a bit of inspiration. I will have the next chapter up soon!! FLAMES ARE UN WELCOME!!!! JA-NE!!!!!!!!!!!!

Next Chapter: Meet Ayami Hyuga

2 - Meet Ayami Hyuga

Previous Chapter: The Beginning

Meet Ayami Hyuga

Ayami! Naruto! Where s Ayami Hyuga and Naruto Uzumaki? Iruka-sensei shouted as he hurried down a hall inside the Hidden Leaf Village Ninja Academy. His hair was pulled up into a ponytail, and an old scar crossed his face near the middle of his nose.

I have a reeeeeally bad feeling about this! And before the graduation exams, too, He worried. Suddenly Iruka heard a loud ruckus from outside.

Look at the Great Stone Faces! somebody screamed.

The Great Stone Faces were on a cliff at the edge of the village. The head of every Hokage in history had been carved there. The Hokage were the village chiefs and the strongest shinobi of all. Besides the Third, who was still alive, every previous Hokage had given their lives for their village so the monument was considered holy ground.

Iruka s sinking feeling sunk even lower. He dashed out of the Academy and onto a nearby building for a birds-eye view of the Faces.

What the hell?

Red blood gushed from every delicately carved nostril. Or was that supposed to be snot?

The First Hokage had a nasty swirl scrawled on his left cheek, while a steaming pile of crap decorated the Third Hokage s right cheek. More graffiti was scribbled everywhere.

Narutooooo! Ayamiiiiii!

Iruka clenched his fists, gritted his teeth, and took off running.

A girl in a purple and black dress with a black Hyuga symbol on the front and on the back in purple, surrounded by a black circle was hanging from a rope, holding a paintbrush. She wore a pair of black shorts and her arms and legs were wrapped in gauze. Her dark violet hair just passed her shoulders, and now it was tied up in a messy bun.

The boy wore an orange jumpsuit hung from another rope. His hair poked up in jagged tufts, as if it had been hacked at with a sword. His jacket was tied around his waist, revealing the black shirt underneath. He wore goggles on his forehead. Both had huge grins plastered on their faces.

No one else was smiling. They all just shook their heads and watched the two from below.

Ayami Hyuga wasn t tall and she wasn t short but she was very popular. She had all the boys going goo-goo over her. She could really care less. She just loved pranking and pulling gags. She giggled quietly, winked at Naruto and went back to her masterpiece .

Naruto Uzumaki was small compared to the other kids his age. But he handled the rope deftly as he drew with a big brush.

Hee hee! This next one will get em! Naruto snorted as he drew. Go for it bud! Ayami shouted

enthusiastically as she moved to the next Face. Both paused and looked down at the wave of villagers as they heard an angry voice.

Hey, you two! Cut it out! All you two ever do is pull pranks! A Chunin yelled.

Ah shaddup! Ayami screamed down to the angry Chunin. Yeah! None of you lamebrains would never even think of pulling off something like this! Naruto sneered.

Naruto was dead right. No one would ever dare doodle on the Hokage faces. The monument was sacred to all the villagers, it wasn't something to touch.

That made it the perfect place for Naruto and Ayami's crime spree. They'd had a tough time causing trouble because almost all of the villagers had their guard up.

Check it out lamo s! Ayami called down as she dipped her brush back in the paint can. We win as usual wannabes! Naruto bragged.

Just then the Third joined the crowd. He was the village's most important man, but neither Naruto nor Ayami had talked with the Hokage much. But there was something about him that made him different to them from other adults.

The Hokage had a sour look, but he didn't seem all that angry. He just stood there, observing, until a shadow crossed his path

I apologize Lord Hokage. It's all my fault, Iruka said nervously.

Ah! Iruka, The Hokage said, turning to him.

Oh man . . . Ayami said with a worried look on her face. What? Naruto said looking at her. Sensei's here . . . She gasped. Both lost their grip on the rope. Ayami's rope began to break, and Naruto clung to his for dear life. Too late! With a pitiful scream, Ayami clutched her frayed rope and grabbed Naruto's outstretched hand.

Iruka covered his face with his hands and sighed.

What do they think they're doing? The graduation exam is tomorrow! he muttered to himself. Luckily, a tree branch caught the two on their way down. Iruka lassoed them both with a rope and dragged them back to the Academy.

Iruka's classroom had stadium-style seating, with several tiers rising from the teacher's podium. Naruto felt cold eyes glare at him and Ayami felt both cold and love-struck eyes stare and glare at her. Iruka royally chewed both of them out.

Iruka faced Naruto. You've flunked the graduation exam twice already Naruto! You shouldn't be fooling around! Naruto looked at the blackboard. Yeah, Whatever. Naruto mumbled. Iruka turned to Ayami

And you have been a star student since you were seven! S-E-V-E-N!!! I expect more of you, Iruka scolded.

Yeah, yeah. Like I even care, Ayami muttered. Naruto tried to turn around to face her, but they were tied back-to-back. Both were way too scared to make eye contact.

Iruka sighed heavily and turned to face the class.

Line up, kids! Time for a pop quiz! he said firmly.

The class booed in unison. Iruka totally ignored them all.

Today you will do a Transformation Jutsu. You will transform into me, now line up!

Eventually the students staggered to the front, pausing to glare at Naruto and Ayami (The fanboys smiled at her). She glared at them. You are soooooo lucky that I'm tied up . . . She had a hint of troublemaking in her eyes. The fanboys scurried away.

Both slouched against each other and refused to get up.

Get in line you two! Iruka barked, unwinding the lasso. Both got up and went to the back, sulking all the while.

The Transformation Jutsu isn't really that hard. With a bit of practice, anyone can transform themselves. Fighting or using another jutsu while transformed is another story. But a simple, no-frills transformation?

Piece of cake!

Ayami's turn came and went, then it moved onto Naruto.

Naruto stepped in front of Iruka and made the Transformation Jutsu hand sign.

All of a sudden Iruka felt something bad was about to happen. Naruto was acting as innocent as a newborn baby, but his eyes told a different story.

Transform! Naruto yelled.

He cloaked himself in smoke while Iruka waited in anxiety. Soon a vision emerged from the dark cloud.

I call it the Sexy Jutsu! Naruto laughed.

A completely naked girl, like a model from one of *those* magazines, was posing prettily on one leg.

Ayami attempted to suppress her laughter. The weird thing was, Iruka thought he recognized her.

Iruka felt hot liquid in his nose and instantly cupped his hands over his nose. Almost immediately, his palm brimmed over with bright red blood.

Hey, baby! The naked girl said in Naruto's voice. A giggle escaped Ayami's mouth. She struck another pose. Iruka's nose bleed erupted in full force and he passed out.

Finally, Ayami fell on her back, laughing, tears streaming down her face.

Ain't she cool Iruka-sensei? Naruto laughed.

Just hearing Naruto's voice bought Iruka back from planet chick. Instantly he started on his warpath.

You fool! Don't invent a stupid jutsu like that! Iruka roared, jerking Naruto away by his collar, and he dragged Ayami off by her dress tail, with her still giggling.

But what about the quiz sensei! Kiba Inuzuka shouted after them.

Iruka turned back, facing his students.

Were done for today! He snapped. Study on your own until the end of class. Awesome!

The class erupted in cheers as Iruka dragged the two away.

Iruka dragged Ayami and Naruto back to the Great Stone Faces.

You're not going home until you clean off that mess. Iruka shouted angrily. Ayami and Naruto looked at the Faces.

Silently, Ayami grabbed a cold rag and a bucket from Iruka and was raised on a foothold, to the First's Face.

Soon both were scrubbing the doodles off with a cold rag, pausing to glare at Iruka, then getting back to scrubbing.

Why are they both like this? He asked himself for the millionth time. Iruka was deep in thought when he heard some grumbling from below.

So what if I can't go home? No one would care, Ayami mumbled.

So what if I can't go home? No one's waiting there for me anyway, Naruto muttered.

Iruka felt a double-bladed sword pierce his heart. Both were right. They were both alone. The Hokage and others secretly took care of them, did their duty. They took care of the two not out of love. They

worried that the seal that held Ayami's demon and Naruto's demon would break. They were afraid.

Ayami's mother died sealing the Wolf inside her. Her father always favored Airo and Hanabi, leaving her and Hinata alone. She had no one except for Naruto. That's why they often cried. He'd heard Ayami and Naruto crying in the bathroom on more than one occasion.

Why didn't I notice it before! Iruka asked himself, anguished, beating himself up on the inside.

Uh, Ayami, Naruto? When you're all done . . . Iruka began.

Then what? Ayami and Naruto groaned. Their arms ached to no end.

Iruka looked at them sheepishly.

When you're all done, I'll buy you a bowl of ramen each.

All right! Naruto yelled

Talk about some motivation! Ayami smiled.

Both looked ready to leave right then. Iruka smiled despite the situation.

But only if you clean up **EVERYTHING!** Iruka reminded them.

Don't worry sensei! Ayami and Naruto promised.

When the two were finished, it was already dark out. The three ambled over to Ichiraku Ramen, the all-time favorite of the academy students. Ayami and Naruto were well beyond hungry after all of the hours of Iruka's slave-driving, hard labor. Both attacked their ramen with wild ambition.

Ya know sensei, Ichiraku's ramen is the best! Ayami said in between slurps. Naruto nodded, noodles were poking out of his mouth. In truth, Ayami and Naruto hadn't met a noodle they didn't love. They were hopelessly addicted to them.

Iruka watched them both greedily slurp down their dinner for a bit. Finally he spoke.

Why'd you two do it? You know how much the village respects the Hokage.

Naruto and Ayami looked up in surprise.

Of course! We both know sensei! Ayami spit out, her mouth crammed with ramen. She took a big gulp and smiled.

People who earn the title of Hokage are the best of the best, Naruto said earnestly. Ayami nodded as she shoveled more ramen into her mouth.

And I'm gonna be the best of the best! Naruto Uzumaki! The Next Hokage! Naruto shouted.

Ayami gulped down her ramen. And I'm gonna be the best ANBU Black-Op Captain ever! Ayami smirked.

But why'd you do it Ayami? Iruka asked. ANBU Black-Op Captains aren't up there.

She shrugged. I wanted to go along for the ride. She said and shoveled more ramen into her mouth.

What should Iruka do? Should he encourage their impossible dreams or keep his trap shut? Iruka weighed the options, Naruto chuckled nervously and Ayami rubbed the back of her neck and put her hair up in a short ponytail.

Um . . . sensei? Ayami asked nervously.

Can we kinda ask you a favor? Naruto asked.

Now what? Iruka looked them both in the eye. Ya two want another bowl? He asked.

No it's not that, Ayami said nervously.

Iruka looked very surprised. *They must want something more important.* Iruka looked at them. Then what do you want? Iruka asked.

Pleeeeeease let us wear your headband! Just for a bit! They begged.

Ninja wore headbands for protection. But to Naruto it meant Look at me everyone! I'm a ninja! Ayami only wanted it cause she was anxious to pass the exams.

Nope, Iruka said plainly. If you two want one so badly, pass the exam tomorrow. Then you'll earn your own. Aah! Pretty selfish for a teacher! Ayami pouted.

Iruka chuckled as Naruto and Ayami squabbled over who gets to treat who tomorrow for ramen. That ended in them wrestling on the ground. Their heads popped up when they heard Iruka slurping up the last of his ramen. They looked at their empty bowls and then to Iruka.

WE WANT ANOTHER BOWEL!! They shouted and scrambled onto their seats.

Hey I never promised you guys two bowls! Iruka shouted.

In the end Naruto ate three bowls while Ayami ate S-I-X!!!! Huge helpings no less and the bowls were left bone dry. And Iruka paid for every one!!!

They left Ichiraku's and Ayami left with Naruto cause the Hyuga Compound was the way Naruto had to go. Ayami waved to Iruka earnestly before turning around and heading toward the Compound. Bye Naruto! Bye Iruka-sensei! She called and rounded the corner and was lost from sight.

Bye Iruka-sensei! Naruto shouted before heading toward home. Iruka watched until he was out of sight. Then he sighed. How was he supposed to handle them now? Tomorrow the graduation exams began.

You will all do the Clone Jutsu first, Iruka told the class before he entered the examination room. Each student would be called in order, one by one. Ayami's name was called first. She stood up from her seat and made her way to the exam room. Showtime. She muttered to herself and opened the door. Iruka and a new Chunin kunoichi sensei named Mena sat at a table in the back of the room. Ayami never even saw her before, but she had a good vibe around her. She had never shunned her like the other senseis . . . except for Iruka, that is.

Ayami gulped nervously. The Leaf headbands were spread out on the table where the teachers sat. One in specific caught her eye. It was identical to the rest, but it was black.

Ayami Hyuga, begin. Iruka said in a serious tone.

Ayami made the correct hand sign. Then concentrating so hard her head might explode, she did the required jutsu.

Clone Jutsu! Ayami shouted when she was ready.

A white, airy cloud covered the front of the room. When it cleared, around twenty perfect Ayami replicas were standing or sitting in the front of the room. They all had that trademark smart-@\$\$ goofy grin on their faces.

Ayami Hyuga, you pass! Iruka boomed. The Ayami clones disappeared, leaving the original. Ayami walked to the front of the room. Iruka handed her the black headband. Iruka felt two small arms wrap around him.

Thank you! She squealed and left the room. She sat down next to Naruto.

Good luck bud! Ayami punched him playfully.

Naruto chuckled. Thanks for the motivation. He said nervously. Soon Naruto's name was called. Ayami watched him disappear into the exam room. Soon Ayami dozed off.

Ayami's head shot up when she heard the door squeak open. She rubbed her eyes and looked toward the door. She saw Naruto, but no headband. Ayami looked at Naruto and Naruto looked at Ayami.

Feeling a blush come to her face, she averted her gaze.

Outside, the students who had passed the exam were happily celebrating, except one. Ayami felt more alone than she ever had felt in all her twelve years. She didn't want to be anywhere near the wet-behind-the-ears students and their snobby parents. She tied her new headband around her neck and plopped herself in a fork of a tree near the edge of the schoolyard.

Oh! That's her, isn't it? she heard a mother hiss in her direction.

Yep, that's her, another mother hissed back. Can you believe they let someone like her graduate?

You are so right! Someone like her can't become a ninja!

I know! If her true nature ever emerges, we'll all be

But before they could go on, a third mother quickly interrupted them.

Shhhh, you two! We're not supposed to talk about her, remember! she chided.

Ayami heard more than enough. Wiping away a tear that rolled down her cheek, she jumped off of the limb, her head hanging. Slowly she trudged home, pausing to glare daggers at the three mothers, and continued away from the schoolyard. Where should she go now? There was no where she felt truly welcome.

There all idiots! Ayami muttered to the ground. Morons! Stupid a

Hello, Ayami A kind voice said. Ayami slowly pulled her head up, wiping away her tears. Mena stood in front of her, smiling in sympathy.

C'mon, let's get out of here, she said.

Soon they were sitting on the balcony of a tall building nearby, enjoying a panoramic view of the entire village. The villagers hardly came here, but Ayami was glad Mena had suggested it.

They sat in silence for a while, until Mena finally spoke.

Don't hate them, Ayami, she said.

B-but they always shun me.

That s OK, you want to impress the villagers? she asked.

How!?

I have an idea. Do this, and they will definitely accept you.

Wh-what is it? Ayami asked nervously.

Mena glanced around to see if anyone was listening, then she whispered something in Ayami s ear.

Ayami suddenly grinned. She grinned so wide that the people the next land over probably saw her teeth from the sharp canines to the molars, that is if they happened to be looking that way.

The Third Hokage was very old, but he wasn t feeble. In fact, most of his skills were still as sharp as shuriken points.

So it as no surprise that late one night, while he was writing in his journal, he heard someone sneak up to his house.

The Third Hokage lowered his eyelids and focused his attention on the intruder. No evil vibes there. The stranger had no intention on murdering him. Judging from the size, she was either a young woman or adult.

Ayami? Is that you? The Hokage called out.

Sometimes Konohamaru, his grandson, played tricks like this, but Konohamaru would be out like a light at this late hour, or would he be using the Sexy Jutsu. The Hokage sharpened his focus on the intruder until he was sure of her identity. Then he heaved a big sigh.

What is she plan He was cut off suddenly when Ayami s hand connected with his neck.

Amazing how well she perfected the Clone Jutsu at her age, the Hokage thought as he slowly sunk into oblivion.

Close . . . way too close, Ayami gulped, rushing away. She tore through the mansion until she found the library Mena was talking about. The shelves were jam-packed with books, on a normal day, Ayami would be more than happy to spend hours upon hours reading their contents. Ayami reluctantly passed up the scrolls that were literally calling her name and headed toward a corner away from the other books.

Hm, this must be it, she thought out loud.

Ayami pulled out a scroll as long as herself and Naruto put together and browsed its contents. Bingo. Smirking, she rolled it back up, tucked it under her arm and paused. Did she hear someone? She ignored it and climbed out the nearest window.

A shadow, hidden from view, had been watching the entire operation. It had gotten nervous when Ayami heard it draw a sharp breath.

They didn t find the Third until early that morning. He was still unconscious, eyes rolled back, he looked like a marionette.

That same night, in another house, Iruka tossed and turned. He couldn t stop agonizing about both Ayami and Naruto s fate. What should he do? What could he do? What should he do?

To make matters worse, the Third Hokage had called on Iruka after the exam with a surprising request.

I understand your position on this, but both Naruto and Ayami need your affection, too, the Hokage told him.

Affection?

I m not saying you shouldn t scold the both of them, the Hokage continued. Naruto and Ayami need a firm hand. But they also need love. Someone who treats them tenderly, like a parent. Not someone who

acts like a parent, but neglects to fulfill that role, like Lord Hiashi. Please remember that. Iruka knew the Hokage was right, He had felt guilty as all get-out with Naruto after the test, and he felt even guiltier listening to the mothers and how they talked about his star student. But some dark feeling inside him kept him from truly opening his heart. He didn't hate Naruto or Ayami, but he knew they could never be close. Iruka obsessed about this till dawn, when someone started banging on his door.

Who could it be at this hour? he asked, irritated and royally pissed.

Iruka! Hurry! Mena gasped when Iruka opened the door.

What happened? Iruka asked.

We believe that Ayami has stolen the Scroll of Wisdom. Come to Lord Hokage's mansion with me.

Ayami did what?

Mena didn't answer, but ran off into the fading black of the morning light. Iruka followed closely behind. By the time they arrived at the mansion, the chief Chunin were already there.

You're late, Iruka, the Third Hokage said sternly.

Sorry, Lord Hokage.

The Third nodded and cleared his throat.

As you've all heard, the Scroll of Wisdom is missing, he said gravely. We think it may have been stolen some hours ago. If we don't find the Scroll soon, there will be dire consequences.

The Scroll of Wisdom contained dangerous special jutsu that were sealed by the First, Second, Third, and Fourth years and years ago, one right after another. Like any important reference book, it was never allowed outside the library. Only the Hokage were allowed to look inside, but they had never shared its secrets.

A Chunin named Bekko looked grim so did the others. Mena looked sad, but she did not object to punishing Ayami when they found her if they found her.

Our first priority is to get that Scroll, the Hokage directed. We can decide about Ayami later. GO!!!

The Chunin scattered in all directions.

As Iruka jumped from roof to roof, he vowed to be the first to find Ayami.

He had to be the first. There was no telling what the others might do if they caught Ayami red-handed. Besides, Iruka was dying to discover how exactly Ayami found out about the scrolls location. She wasn't even supposed to know it even existed.

I have a sneaking suspicion where she might be, Iruka muttered. But I'll turn over every stone in this village until I find her. Suddenly Iruka had another sneaking suspicion. Was someone following him? He didn't have time to investigate. He took off for the first place on his list.

A/N: Konichiwa peoples! Let me tell ya now that if you give me any heat at all I'll murderize ya all!!! (I'm sorry, but you'd be cranky too if you'd been typing since 8 and it's almost 12:30. Ah well. JA-NE!!!!)

Next Chapter: Friends Or Foes?!

3 - Friends-Or Foes?!

Previous Chapter: Meet Ayami Hyuga

Friends Or Foes?!

Meanwhile, in the middle of the forest, Ayami sat on the ground in a complete daze. She'd been practicing a special jutsu since the black of night faded into grey. Now every single bone in her body ached.

Mena had told her the truth, alright. Every single jutsu in the Scroll of Wisdom was totally amazing. Only problem was, they were a bit too complicated for an Academy Student.

She wound up choosing a jutsu that seemed sort of easy. It, in truth, made the Clone Jutsu look like child's play.

Ayami went through the motions and hand signs over and over again, trying her hardest to get it right. Now, hours later, she actually made some progress.

I just need a bit of practice, Ayami panted.

Ayami struggled to her feet, but her legs felt as wobbly as a drunk. Ayami was so focused on getting to her feet that she didn't hear someone approach.

Ayamiiii!

Ayami blinked and rubbed her eyes and looked in the direction of the voice. Then she grinned.

Hey, sensei! I found ya!! Ayami yelled.

I found you, fool! Iruka yelled back.

Ayami wobbled to her feet, then fell flat on her @\$\$, dazed, and Iruka gasped in surprise.

What are you even doing out here? You look dead tired.

I am, Ayami said, leaning on the Scroll. I've been practicing ninjutsu.

You have?

Here, I'll show you! Ayami said excitedly, getting into position. If I do this everyone won't shun me! *Damn, if I do this, they'll promote me all the way to Jonin*, Ayami thought wildly as she made the complicated hand signs.

Not so fast, Ayami, Iruka blurted. What's that scroll laying on the ground?

The scroll was as long and heavy as a log, but Ayami completely forgot about it.

This old thing? Mena-sensei said I would be accepted if I learned any jutsu from this scroll. So I borrowed it from Grandpa Hokage.

Hold up, Mena told you about the scroll? Iruka gasped.

Without warning, Iruka shoved Ayami aside. Ayami fell backward as a storm of shuriken and kunai flew right toward Iruka.

Iruka felt the weapons pierce every part of his body. He staggered backward, struggling to stay on his feet.

S-sensei? Ayami gulped. Iruka glared at a nearby tree.

Hello, Mena. So you were the one stalking me, he said grimly.

Mena stood on a branch near the top of the tree. Her headband was tied around her head. Several windmill shurikens were strapped to her back.

I thought you might lead me to Ayami, Mena said, descending from her lofty perch.

I see.

Iruka plucked a kunai from his leg and grimaced. Ayami looked from one sensei to another in sheer and

utter confusion.

Wh-what s going on here?! Ayami shouted, her eyes shifting from sensei to sensei.

Give me the scroll, Ayami! Mena said coldly.

Ayami had never seen Mena look so menacing, her mouth twisted in a nasty smile.

Don t, Ayami! No matter what he says! Iruka hollered. That scroll contains dangerous jutsu! Mena tricked you into taking it so she can have it!

Ayami gaped at Mena with shock and quickly activated her kekkei genkai Byakugan and slipped into the Gentle Fist fighting stance, despite her fatigue.

You don t need that scroll, Ayami! Just give it to me! Mena demanded.

N-no, Ayami stammered.

Why? Because Iruka-sensei said not to? Mena scoffed. Would you like to know what Iruka-sensei really thinks of you?

Iruka suddenly looked horrified.

No, Mena! Don t do it! he cried.

Mena turned to Ayami.

Do you know who killed Iruka s grandparents? she began.

Um, the Wolf demon, right? With the eight tails? Ayami said.

Mena snorted in amusement.

A brilliant answer, Ayami. Especially coming from you.

I said stop! Iruka yelled, lunging at Mena. But the shuriken and kunai have done their damage. Iruka fell painfully to his knees.

A brilliant answer, yet not quite accurate, Mena continued.

I said stop! Iruka yelled again, but Mena continued.

Think about my question, Ayami. I asked who killed Iruka s grandparents, not what.

Who? Ayami asked, stumped for the first time in her life. You make it sound . . . human-ish.

Because it is, Ayami! The Eight-Tailed Wolf has changed form, but it is still alive.

That s enough, Mena! Iruka screamed.

Mena leaned forward and got right in Ayami s face.

Mikoto Uchiha, your own mother didn t kill the Eight-Tails. She just sucked out its spirit and sealed it inside a human, she said. Ever since, our village has had a strict decree: that human s identity must never be revealed.

Wh-what decree? I ve never heard about it? Ayami said, frightened.

Ayami was telling the truth. She knew all village decrees. She even broke some with Naruto and sometimes Kiba. But she never knew about that precise one.

Of course you don t know, Mena snapped. But it s about time you did.

Noooooo . . . Iruka moaned. He threw the kunai in his hand and flung it at Mena. Mena simply moved aside, the kunai passed.

Ayami, the human with the spirit of the Eight-Tailed Wolf is inside of a girl. That girl is . . . you.

Wh-what do you mean!? Ayami choked.

You killed Iruka s grandparents and the men of the village! Mena snarled.

Darkness seemed to descend onto everything. In fear, Ayami s Byakugan deactivated.

Ever wonder why the villagers shun you? Gossip about you? Treat you like absolute dirt?

N-no!!! Ayami screamed, her body shaking in anger and fear. Tears welled up in her eyes.

Don t listen to her, Ayami! She s not telling the

Truth, Iruka? The truth is, you hate both the Nine-Tailed Fox and Eight-Tailed Wolf more than anybody, Mena sneered.

Ayami looked at Iruka s face with pleading, upset eyes.

No, Ayami. That's not Iruka started to say.

Mena pulled a massive shuriken from her back.

Even Iruka hates you, Ayami! You killed his grandparents! No one can stand the sight of you!

The big shuriken buzzed in Mena's hand, but Ayami was way too upset to notice.

Noooooo! Ayami screamed, tears streaking down her face.

She looked ready to explode with rage and sadness. Iruka had never seen Ayami so angry or upset before. It terrified him.

You did your job, Ayami! Die in peace! Mena roared.

Ayami froze as the giant shuriken spun toward her. She didn't scream, or tremble, even the flow of tears stopped. She just stood there, stunned beyond belief.

Everything went black as Ayami fell backward. Then a strange thing happened. Suddenly her whole body felt cradled by something soft and warm.

Ayami looked up to find herself held in Iruka's arms.

S-sensei? she said faintly.

Iruka slowly pulled away. Ayami shuddered when she saw the huge shuriken sticking out of his back.

Iruka's heavy vest had softened the blow a bit, but he was still seriously injured.

Iruka looked at Ayami and burst into tears.

You must have felt so lonely, Ayami, Iruka sobbed. You must have suffered so much.

Ayami gaped at Iruka in utter astonishment. Tears started to cascade down Ayami's face.

Tears rolled down Iruka's cheeks as he remembered what the Hokage said.

Naruto and Ayami need a firm hand. But they also need love. Someone who treats them tenderly, like a parent. Not someone who acts like a parent, but neglects to fulfill that role, like Lord Hiashi.

That need felt all too familiar to Iruka. He had also longed for someone to love when his parents died.

As a boy, Iruka had even pulled a few pranks to get attention, but never as many as Ayami or Naruto.

He just wanted to be somebody, someone to acknowledge his existence.

Ayami and Naruto are me, Iruka thought. No wonder I could never get close to either of them.

But for some reason, Iruka felt different now. He had thrown himself in the shuriken's path without a second thought, and one brave move had cracked his heart wide open. Now Ayami and Naruto were his dear students, children he had to protect.

Rest assured, he would still scream bloody murder whenever Naruto and or his partner-in-crime, Ayami wreaked havoc. Only now he would understand why they did it. At long last, Iruka finally knew how to handle the two.

But was it already too late?

Iruka coughed and cleared his throat.

I'm sorry, Ayami. I should have realized what you were going through, Iruka said gently. Blood dripped from the corners of his mouth, a sure sign of internal injuries.

Ayami looked at Iruka in awe. Then she jumped up and dashed into the forest with the scroll.

Poor, poor Iruka. Looks like your sob story fell on deaf ears. Iruka sensed Mena behind him.

She'll get revenge on the village with that scroll, you know, Mena continued. Did you see the Eight-Tails in her eyes? Horrifying, to say the least.

Ayami's incredible fury had truly shocked Iruka. But he still had to protect her.

Iruka got up and yanked the shuriken from his back, ignoring the searing pain.

Ayami isn't like that, he told Mena.

Believe what you want. I'm still getting that scroll, Mena snarled as he zoomed away.

Wait! Mena!

Just try to catch me, Iruka.
Iruka stumbled forward, but his legs quickly buckled under him.
Not know! he yelled, kneeling in the dirt. Move!
His legs, like his students, finally obeyed, and he ran after Mena.

A/N: Konichiwa! I would like to thank MistFairie93 and The Hanyou named Bunny for both favoriting and reviewing this story. JA-NE

Next Chapter: Showdown