

Runaway

By Uozumi

Submitted: January 1, 2006

Updated: January 1, 2006

"Naruto," he began in a very gentle but firm voice, "you must forget Gaara, because I doubt you will ever see him again." A young Naruto encounters a boy who is very much like himself.

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/Uozumi/25721/Runaway>

Chapter 1 - N/A

2

1 - N/A

Title Of Witchcraft, Wizardry, Dementors, and Mythical Creatures **Title** *Runaway*

Author Uozumi

Genre General

Rating PG

Disclaimer I do not own nor claim to own this. The characters, ect...contained within are not my property. This is an act of fandom and I donot make a profit from this endeavor. I also do not own the song containedwithin, it is property of its respective owner(s).

Summary "Naruto," he began in a very gentle but firm voice, "you mustforget Gaara, because I doubt you will ever see him again." A young Narutoencounters a boy who is very much like himself.

Runaway

Yashamaru was dead. The little boy kept putting onefoot in front of the other. Yashamaru told him about love, about the symbolthat was now tattooed on the small boy's forehead, but in the end it had been alie. The little boy kept his eyes to the ground as he walked slowly, thinkingabout all of the times the sand had rescued him from himself and many would-beassassins. He kept walking and didn't look behind him. He didn't know where hewas going or why, but if it could get him away from the assassins, then so beit.

After days, the boy came to the opening of a large andbustling town filled with plants by a large mountain with faces on it. Thelittle boy wasn't sure if he could get through the gates on his own, so hejumped and hid in a cart that was coming into the village carrying imports.Hidden by boxes of fresh fish, the little boy kept himself alert as they pausedby the gates.

"Good morning, Kaze-san. Fish today?" He heard whatmust be one of the guards talking to the man with the cart.

"Yes," the man replied good-naturedly.

"Any news?" the guard continued and the boy saw ashadow looming over the mat that covered him and the boxes. The boy scrunchedup into the smallest ball he could manage as the guard lifted the cloth up abit. Holding his breath, the boy watched the sunlight coming closer to hissandal, and then it stopped and the guard put the mat back down.

"Well, I guess that you're clear," the guard stated. "Goodluck selling your fish, Kaze-san."

"You'll come by and get some won't you, Rikou-san?"

"Of course."

The boy felt the cart start to move again. He closedhis eyes and slowly counted to one-hundred and hoped that the cart wouldn'tstop before he reached it. It was still moving when he opened his eyes again,so the little boy waited and then got out of the cart as easily as he hadgotten onto the cart, the owner never noticing.

The little boy quickly ran from the cart and dartedinto the crowd that packed the streets of the city. He crawled under a fewvendors and soon slipped out and into a park area nearby. Tired, he sat down on a swing and looked around at his new surroundings. The swing wasn't too faraway from a building which looked like a school. He watched the door a momentand saw a few children go in, all older than he was. He had an older sister andan older brother who both went to the ninja school where they lived. He alwayswondered if they would allow him to go when he was school aged, but maybe ifthey didn't know who he was here, he could go to ninja school in this village.

"Who are you?"

The little boy blinked and looked over to his right where another little boy about his age stood, looking at him cautiously. Theredhead stared for a moment at the blonde boy standing before him. "You don't know me?"

"No."

The boy eyed the blonde a moment and then answered, "I'm Gaara. Who are you?"

"Uzumaki Naruto." The boy cocked his head. "Don't you have a last name?"

Gaara ignored the question. He didn't like his lastname. He looked at the boy then at the school, then he asked. "Do you go there?" The younger kids started classes later in the day than the older ones at the ninja school in his village.

"No, but next year I will!" The blonde instantly brightened. "I'm going to be the Hokage, you know!" He grinned brightly so that his face was almost like a kind version of the Cheshire cat's.

"Oh." Gaara looked down at his shoes.

Naruto's grin faded at the lackluster response. The little boy kicked at a stone as they fell into silence.

Finally, he asked, "So, where do you live? I've never seen you before."

"Far away," Gaara replied quietly.

"How far? Like near the walls? I don't go out there much."

"No, beyond the walls."

Naruto stared. He'd never met anyone from beyond Konoha before. "Why are you here? Did your family come to help or sell something?"

"I came by myself." Gaara's voice grew smaller and he hunched over in the swing as though trying to make himself smaller too.

"So you're alone?"

"Yeah." Gaara drew his feet up so they dangled farther from the ground. He wanted Naruto to go away, but at the same time, he didn't want him to.

Naruto gauged the miserable expression on the boy's face and then he grinned. One of Naruto's best traits was that even in the worst of times; he could still put up a cheerful façade and look as though everything was all right. "That's okay. I am too."

Gaara looked over and up at Naruto then. For someone all alone, the boy was very cheerful. Gaara was mesmerized. He watched Naruto sit down in a swing next to him. Neither said the word friend, they didn't know if the other would accept that.

"Third, we have a problem!" A Chunin burst through the Hokage's door and set a coded message on the Third's desk.

The old man picked up the message with his withering fingers and glanced at the code, lips pursed. "The badger child Gaara has gone missing."

"They've put a message out to other nations that are on peaceful terms, but they are afraid he might have gone over to the Village of the Mist, which is almost at war with them," the Chunin summarized.

"They're requesting permission to send a team of Anbu in to find and take Gaara back to the Village of the Sand."

The Third frowned and then nodded. "We will assemble our own band of Anbu so that we can find him faster." He took out a piece of paper and a pen. Scribbling a message on it, he then handed it to the Chunin. "Take this to the coders and have them send it to the Kazekage."

"Yes, sir," the Chunin stated and then left the room.

"This is my place. It's small but I like it." Naruto turned on a light of his very tiny apartment. Gaara's green eyes scanned the room. It was small and wooden with a futon in the corner, a smelly and small refrigerator near the window that looked out onto one of the alleys. Gaara glanced out the window as Naruto opened his refrigerator, wrinkling his small nose. "Do you like ramen?"

Gaara blinked. "Yeah."

“Good! I know a great ramen shop down the street!” Naruto blinked when Gaara’s face fell. “What’s wrong?”

“I didn’t bring any money,” Gaara replied quietly. This boy was being really nice to him, but it seemed like Gaara couldn’t repay him.

“That’s okay. I got my allowance this morning!” Naruto grinned. He saw Gaara ready to say something and he shook his head. “You can always pay me back later!”

The two left the apartment and walked down the street. As they walked, Gaara winced. Just like in his village, people were glaring at him as he passed. He scrunched his shoulders and tried to make himself smaller and invisible, though their eyes seemed to burn him as they walked. He glanced over at Naruto who was looking straight ahead with a goofy grin on his face. He didn’t seem to notice all the people watching them sourly at all.

“They’re not looking at you.”

Gaara blinked, staring at Naruto.

Naruto’s grin never faltered, though his young voice had an edge to it. “They’re looking at me.”

“There is a team of Anbu already out, but due to the severity of this problem, all of you will be on the lookout for the boy.” The Third took a deep breath and a Chunin behind him held up a drawing that just arrived from the Village of the Sand. “Gaara as you can see is a small child of six-years-old. What makes him dangerous is that he carries Shukaku within him. Not only that, but he also carries a gourd of sand which will protect him from nearly everything.”

“So he’s like Naruto?” someone asked from in the group assembled before the Third.

“Yes.” The Hokage nodded. “The boy is like Naruto in the fact he carries a monster within himself.”

A silence grew around the group and then the Hokage spoke, “Alright. Now that you have seen the boy, find him and keep him busy if you can until the Anbu can come. You must not try to fight or force Gaara into anything; we do not know how Shukaku will react.”

The group rose and nodded before departing in various directions to scour Konoha for the boy of the sand.

“Here we are! Ichiraku Ramen Shop!” He looked over at Gaara and the grin seemed to get wider.

“Let’s go in, they’ve got the best ramen in town!”

The pair entered and the cook smiled. He was one of the few people of the village that would smile at Naruto. “Good afternoon, Naruto, I see the Hokage gave you your allowance today.” The cook blinked and then smiled down at Gaara. “Who are you?”

Gaara shrunk slightly behind Naruto. Only Yashamaru had smiled at him and Yashamaru had tried to kill him only just last night. Naruto spoke up for the redhead. “This is Gaara. We want two ramen!” The cook looked to Gaara for confirmation and the boy nodded shyly.

“Alright, two ramen coming up!” he announced and both boys scrambled up into the stools at the bar.

As the chef prepared the ramen, Naruto looked over at Gaara. “You don’t have to worry about Ichiraku, he’s an okay guy.”

Gaara gave Naruto an unsure look. People who smiled made him uneasy now.

“This afternoon I’m going to take you to meet Iruka-sensei. He’ll like you,” Naruto continued on about one of his future teachers and one of the few villagers that would be nice to him. “He’s awesome. I want to wear his headband, but he won’t let me.”

Gaara nodded, not sure exactly what to say to that, and then a bowl of steaming hot ramen appeared in front of him along with the smiling chef. “Here you both are, boys.” Then he looked over at Naruto. “Let it cool first.”

Naruto stopped, his chopsticks about to hit the food and then he withdrew them. It was well known that Naruto would instantly dig in and burn himself if no one reminded him to wait just a few minutes for the ramen to cool slightly. He pouted and then slouched in his seat. Looking over at Gaara, he watched

the other boy study his ramen as though debating whether he wanted to eat it or not. Naruto looked over at his own and then he said, "It looks great!" Then he dug in, making a very loud yum noise as he slurped up some noodles. He looked over at Gaara, sauce dribbling down his chin. "Try it, Gaara." Gaara looked at Naruto and then at his bowl. The sand hadn't acted up and Shukaku was silent. That must mean that the ramen would be alright. He picked up his chopsticks and put a bit in his mouth before nodding. "It's good."

"I told you so!" Naruto exclaimed through a mouthful of ramen, the noodles still dangling half-way out of his mouth.

A nineteen-year-old Chunin paused at the corner and looked at the swings outside of the ninja school. No one was on them, and he was sure that Naruto would still be there. The boy, though unpredictable on occasion, could usually be found in certain places at certain times of the day. Sighing, he started down the street towards Ichiraku Ramen Shop. It was early for Naruto to be there, but if he wasn't at the swings, the ramen shop was the next logical place to find him.

"Iruka, I need you to find Naruto and bring him here. There is no telling what might happen if he met up with Gaara."

Iruka neared the ramen shop as the Third's words echoed in his ears. He was one of the few sensei that saw Naruto as a normal kid and also one of the very, very few that actually liked the boy. Iruka had a bad feeling about this and his pace quickened. Stopping at the doorway, Iruka paused and then froze. Naruto was telling one of his off-beat jokes to a small kid with hunched shoulders and red hair. Shaking himself mentally, Iruka summoned a shikagami to his hand. "Tell the anbu that Gaara is at the Ichiraku." Then he lifted his hand and the dove flew away and to the East. Iruka watched it a moment and then ducked into the shop. "Naruto."

Naruto looked over his shoulder and he waved. "Iruka-sensei!"

The teenager waved back, offering a small yet good-natured smile. "I was looking for you; I thought you would be at the swings."

"I was," Naruto replied and then blinked. "Oh, Iruka-sensei, this is Gaara." He pointed at the boy beside him. "Gaara, this is Iruka-sensei."

Gaara looked over at the young man. Naruto was brimming with pride over him. He saw Iruka's hesitant yet polite smile. Iruka knew who he was, Gaara could tell. "H – Hi," Gaara said nonetheless. He could just be paranoid. If no one else had recognized him, why would somebody recognize him now?

"Hi," Iruka replied in a similar voice. This boy didn't seem all that dangerous, but there was a level of power surrounding him that was terrifying, especially if he looked in Gaara's eyes. Naruto was nothing like this due to the seal that kept his demon at bay, but Iruka noted that this boy had no seal, or if he did, it was a very weak one.

"Naruto, when you're done, the Third wants to see you," Iruka informed the child. If he could keep the both of them at Ichiraku, the anbu could find Gaara easily.

"Why does he want to see me?" Naruto asked.

Gaara averted his eyes to his ramen bowl. He had a bad feeling about all of this and Shukaku had started whispering. He could only hear Shukaku faintly and couldn't make out the words yet, but he tried to suppress it. He didn't want trouble.

Iruka paused and then he folded his arms and gave Naruto a hard stare, his voice a bit stern. "Why do you think?"

It worked. Naruto laughed nervously. "Well, why do you think it was me?"

Iruka responded in a rather normal fashion. It wasn't unusual for Naruto to prank the village in some form. He just couldn't give away that he didn't know what the blonde had done yet. "Because I know you. Come on." He gestured to the doorway. "Let's go."

Naruto looked over at Gaara. "I have to go. They figured out it was me." He grinned. "You can wait at

my place.” Naruto reached into his pocket and retrieved his key, but before he could place it in Gaara’s hand, a very large tanned hand grabbed his firmly.

“What are you – “ Naruto looked up into the mask of an anbu and stared. He had never seen one so close before, let alone had one *touching* him. Naruto frowned. “Hey! What was that for! What – “

“Naruto!” Iruka interjected, interrupting the flood of indignant questions.

One of the five anbu in the room moved forward, speaking in a disguised voice. “Gaara of the Sand, we would appreciate it if you came quietly. We do not want to use force on you.” This was part of the Hokage’s plan. If they did not treat Gaara in a threatening manner, they might be able to avoid unleashing Shukaku. They could use the fact that he was still only a child to their advantage, however, that didn’t mean they could be lax when dealing with him.

Naruto’s blue eyes looked at the crowd and a slightly helpless expression passed over his features before he went to stand, but the anbu had too hard a hold on his wrist for him to move.

“Let him go.”

The dangerous voice drew Iruka’s attention immediately. Gaara’s eyes were dangerous as he repeated, “Let him go.”

“Come with us and we will,” the anbu said in a disguised voice.

The air became thick and Shukaku spoke louder. Gaara tried to suppress it. He had killed Yashamaru and he would not kill Naruto, although he would not speak for the anbu. “No.”

“Then we will take Naruto away,” the anbu stated, tightening his grip on the blonde’s wrist so the boy wouldn’t speak.

Gaara glared. Shukaku was getting louder. He was trying to block out the words, but some were slipping through. He gritted his teeth. He would not hurt Naruto, he had decided. He studied the anbu and looked at Naruto. The other boy couldn’t speak and his eyes were wide. Gaara wasn’t sure what that meant, but Shukaku was growing dangerously loud and he was sure he would give into the voice soon. He couldn’t give in.

“I’ll go on one condition.” Without waiting for a response, Gaara said, “You can’t kill me or him.”

The anbu were silent and then the anbu holding Naruto answered, “We weren’t ordered to do either. Now, come with us, Gaara of the Sand.”

Gaara slid off the stool and glanced over at Naruto as he passed, several anbu converging on him to lead him away. After they were gone, the anbu holding Naruto’s hand let it go and then disappeared into the afternoon.

“Wha...?” Naruto gave the Third a rather blank look. He was sitting in the chair in front of the Hokage’s desk, his legs dangling at odd angles in his slouched posture.

The Third sighed inwardly. Long explanations were lost on Naruto and this was not a subject that could easily be summed up in one sentence. He wasn’t sure if he even had the boy’s attention but since Naruto was looking at him and not away from him, the Hokage was certain that he had some of it.

“Naruto,” he began in a very gentle but firm voice, “you must forget Gaara, because I doubt you will ever see him again.”

Naruto instantly straightened in his seat, his eyes fixed on the Hokage. “What do you mean I won’t see him again!”

“Naruto, Gaara is a very dangerous person,” the Hokage picked his words carefully.

“No he’s not!” Naruto stood up, shouting. “Gaara – “ He felt a hand come down on his shoulder and Naruto quieted at the unusual gesture.

“Third, may I have permission to – “ Iruka asked hesitantly. He didn’t want to seem out of place, but he didn’t think that this could end well in the direction it was going in at the moment.

The Third nodded. “Yes. Go – both of you.”

Iruka nodded. “Come on, Naruto.”

The child followed the teenager from the room. The instant the door closed, he grumbled, "Gaara isn't a bad person, Iruka-sensei."

Iruka was quiet a moment and then he spoke as they walked out of the Hokage's complex. "Being bad and being dangerous aren't always the same thing." Iruka thought about his words carefully. He wanted to say, "Take yourself for example," but he refrained. After a moment, he spoke, "Think of it this way. The Hokage is a very dangerous man – "

"But no one is trying to take the Hokage away!" Naruto interjected. "And what makes Gaara so dangerous anyway! He's just a kid like me!"

'Exactly,' Iruka thought as the pair entered the streets of Konoha. Some threw glances at Naruto but weren't phased that he was walking with the Chunin. Iruka wasn't allowed to tell Naruto what he was, but he supposed that he could tell Naruto what Gaara was. As long as he didn't try to make an analogy towards Naruto, it shouldn't break any rules.

"Gaara," Iruka began slowly, "has a monster inside of him. He can't control his monster and so he is very dangerous – " Iruka held up a hand, noting Naruto was ready to interrupt him, " – but that doesn't mean he's a bad person."

Naruto studied Iruka, then looked down at the street. "He said that he came by himself. He didn't have any money... Did he run away?" He looked up at Iruka.

"Yes, he ran away."

Naruto looked back down at the street. "Iruka-sensei...?"

"Yeah?"

"If I ran away, would you come looking for me?"

A silence fell over them, only the sound of their feet on the pavement and the people around them filling the space. Finally, Iruka spoke. "Would you really do that Naruto? Because the worst thing you can ever do is run away."

Naruto glanced over at Iruka, but the teen wasn't looking at him. Iruka looked very serious though and Naruto simply nodded. He had never thought of running away before and couldn't imagine ever wanting to.

The End