

Dragon of the Spring Ch. 2

It was the day after she had passed the academy's final exam and put on the forehead protector that marked her as a shinobi of Konoha. Sakura sat in the classroom and pondered on the identity of her teammates. Honestly speaking, it could have been worse, but that was cold comfort at best.

Naruto Uzumaki... Sakura didn't have much of an opinion of him, other than 'noisy'. The blond prankster had been wise enough never to target her for one of his pranks, and so she'd never really given him much thought other than coolly rebuffing his over-friendly overtures. Thankfully for his continued health, he'd turned his attentions elsewhere. Sakura had no idea how a quiet and refined girl like Hinata could stand to be around such a loudmouth, but puppy love covereth a multitude of sins. But while she might not care for him one way or another, that did not mean she wanted the class clown as a teammate. Especially since he'd failed the finals, and had probably only been allowed on a team after he passed some make-up test or something.

Sasuke Uchiha on the other hand, Sakura did have feelings for, and they were overwhelmingly negative. Her best friend Ino had a crush on the boy, and Ino's enduring obsession had greatly cut into their time together. A part deep inside Sakura did not like that one bit. Ino was *hers*. Even worse, though, was the way Sasuke looked at his classmates, her and Ino included.

He thinks we are beneath him.

Sakura tried to make allowances for the tragedy that had befallen the boy, but at the end of the day, it didn't matter. Sakura couldn't put it into words, but it was disturbing how much anger came at the mere thought of being disrespected.

Taking a deep breath, Sakura tried to calm herself. Hopefully her sensei would be someone she could work with. Once they started their duties as ninja, she could prove herself while ignoring the other two, and all would be well.

She had been wrong. Her sensei was, if possible, even more condescending than Sasuke! First he was hours late to their first team meeting. Then he was deliberately vague and confusing during introductions. Then he suggested that the test he was going to give them was so hard she would throw up! Sakura had a big breakfast just to spite him, and it was lucky she had because he was over three hours late! Again!

The test itself was an obvious ploy to pit the three genin against each other. Only two bells for three ninja, and the one who can't snatch one from him flunks? He must have a really low opinion of their intelligence. Unfortunately, events were proving him right. Naruto was too thick, and Sasuke too arrogant to realize that he was too strong for them to overcome individually.

Admittedly, it was amusing watching how he handled the boys. Her plan had been to wait until they got their asses beat, then approach them with an offer of alliance while they were licking their wounds.

All that went out of the window when Kakashi hit her with a genjutsu.

The sight of Ino, battered and bloody, had triggered a flood of rage that had swept all plans and stratagems aside. The sudden rush of burning power had popped the illusion like a soap bubble, but Sakura didn't care. That bastard had dared show her the death of her most precious person! That would never happen! She would not let it happen!

Her suddenly razor sharp senses had told her where her sensei was located. That was all Sakura needed. With a scream of rage she launched herself at her enemy.

Kakashi could admit to feeling disappointed earlier. Neither his sensei's son nor Obito's kin had shown the basic understanding of what it meant to be a Konoha shinobi. As for the pink-haired girl, he hadn't really thought much about her. Now he was wondering if he ought to have read Sakura Haruno's file more carefully. Surely it mentioned the propensity for berserker rages?

Her newfound speed and strength was certainly impressive for a genin, and judging by her growls her anger had been triggered by whatever the genjutsu had shown her. Which was fair, the Hell Viewing Technique was meant to trigger a fight or flight response, and she seemed to have landed on 'fight'. But the problem was that she was fighting a LOT harder than what her academy results had indicated. And if he wasn't mistaken, she was only getting stronger and faster as the fight progressed.

Kakashi put on a burst of speed and delivered a hard fist to her solar plexus. No anger could overcome the need to breathe.

It worked. For ten seconds. Then she was back on her feet and breathing fire. That last wasn't a euphemism, she was literally breathing fire, which was an interesting trick without any visible hand signs. There was also a massive heat radiating from the rest of her body, so hot it actually made close combat uncomfortable. Oh, and she was now strong and fast enough to equal most chunin. That was a thing, too.

Deciding the situation required more observation, Kakashi left behind a shadow clone to fight her while he Flickered out of combat. It was a maneuver he had done before, so practiced only a jounin should have been able to spot it. The girl spotted it. And tried to give chase before being distracted by the attacking shadow clone.

Heightened senses too? Kakashi decided to dip into his bag of ANBU tricks for defeating enemy trackers. By the time he had concealed himself adequately, the heat around Sakura was enough start setting the grass on fire. Each time the clone hit her with what should be a knockout blow, it only slowed her for a few seconds before she came back even stronger and hotter.

By this time, Kakashi was beginning to fear for her health. He didn't know what bloodline or kinjutsu she was using, but that much radiant heat could not be good for a human body. As an experiment,

he dismissed his shadow clone. As soon as he did, Sakura started looking for his real body. But he was ANBU, and her senses could not penetrate his concealment. As he watched, the girl seemed to grow calmer. The heat dissipated. The hard scale-like pattern that had appeared on her skin slowly faded. After five minutes, all that remained was a young girl, breathing hard and swaying with exhaustion.

It was at this point that Kakashi used every ounce of speed and skill to deliver a knockout blow to a pressure point on Sakura's neck. The girl collapsed. After a long tense minute, Kakashi breathed a sigh of relief as Sakura continued to stay down. Looking around, he rubbed his head. The test was a bust. He needed to get the girl to a hospital, then question her carefully as to what had happened, then report to the Hokage. From what he recalled, she was the only ninja in her immediate family, meaning it would probably land on him to guide her through what looked a lot like a new bloodline, if only to minimize the number of people who knew.

Sighing, he created another shadow clone to let the boys know their teammate was injured and the test was cancelled, then he picked up the girl and took off. *I knew I shouldn't have complained to Kurenai yesterday about being bored.*