

Fandom: Naruto

Character: Gaara and Kurei (CanonxOc)

Summary: Kurei has just returned to Sunagakure after a very taxing mission where knowing only half of the full story is stressing her to her breaking point. Falling asleep on a random roof leads to a very curious encounter with the Kazekage and perhaps the start of something more for both...

Rates: T (mild language and sexual allusions)

Un-beta'd, all mistakes are my own.

This was purely a "stream of conscious" exercise. Enjoy it for what it is: FLUFF!

Might be a tad confusing, sleep-drunk narrators will do that...so I've heard >.>

Sunset/Sunrise prompt suggested by [george3222](#) on dA. Feel free to leave suggestions in the comments!

Reviews of style and characterization would be nice.

...the Council is of the opinion that in accordance with the council is of the opinion...

Wait.

Kurei rubbed her eyes. The dry night air was murder. Well, it was always dry air in Sunagakure, and the strain on her eyes had more to do with Kurei's aches and pains and overall lack of energy. There was actually a nice breeze playfully tossing her hair about. Hair which was getting into her eyes and blocking out her paper.

"Damn reports. Damn Council. Damn everything." The kunoichi cursed and slammed the folder closed. In a show of futile frustration Kurei tossed the folder to the side, only to scramble after it in a mad bid to keep the contents from sailing over the side of the rounded roof. There was a reason people shouldn't throw things in a fit of frustration but also a reason why they did.

She hugged the mission report to her chest and let gravity bring her down so she was lying facing the stars. Well, that was interesting, the sun had set at some point. It had been light when she had begun reading the Council's proposal from Team Thirteens next mission. Or had she started on the summary of their recently completed mission? Could have been expense reports or even damages...

It didn't matter. Kurei had finally had enough of reading the same line of text repeatedly. It was time to put work down and do something else.

What then?

Sleep might be nice, sure, but she was too tired for sleep. She was both exhausted and wired. The mission had been successful in the practical sense. They secured a package, fought off the bad guys, and returned home with all the secrets they set out to take. It had

been a failure when one considered they had, in all likelihood, stolen valuable information and left a small village to die by the hands of a mad man. Shinobi life was just so fair.

Something jingled in the village below and Kurei rolled carefully over on her side, arms still folded over her documents. A small cat stood perched on a stone bench. It was a bright ginger with dark bands around its tail and a smattering of stripes. Kurei made little kissy noises to gain its attention. Its eyes were a bright green, intelligent, and rimmed with dark circles. She smiled as she gazed at the tabby. "You're a handsome devil," She said. The cat preened at the praise and stretched luxuriously. "And a show off, good for you."

The village streets were lit by many brightly colored lanterns and sturdy street lamps. Looking up and down the path adjacent to her rooftop perch, Kurei watched a few late nighters staggering home. It seemed all was well in the little village, quiet and peaceful and soft. Rolling on to her back Kurei let out a heavy sigh. Suddenly it felt as if all the tension was able to drain away, up into the sky, to be carried far away by the breeze.

Stars twinkled and blinked above her. Billions of lights and patterns had been unveiled by the night, she was familiar with so many. Her job at the Mizugame Ryodan had provided instruction of identifying the stars and traveling by the same. It was fascinating to learn about the myths behind the constellations. Many she had learned through stories told by the Shuhou elders as a child. Sometimes life was funny. Connecting seemingly irrelevant pieces of information together in obscure ways that made so much sense it was painful.

Tossing an arm over her face Kurei sighed again. "Everything is weirdly connected. Everything happens as it will. Everything needs a good kick upside the head."

Someone laughed. Okay, it wasn't a laugh, more of a surprised chuckle. The wind that had been tugging and tangling her hair had ceased suddenly and she felt a slight chill fall over her. Moving her arm slightly, Kurei uncovered an eye and looked about to find the newcomer. Said newcomer was blocking most of the light in the area and Kurei had to blink rapidly to clear the previous image of stars -now blurry spots- out of her eyes.

"Pardon me for interrupting you," Kurei stilled, eyes closed. "I was merely concerned as to why a shinobi was laid out on the rooftop at this hour."

Kurei let a lazy smile tug at the corner of her mouth. "I'm not drunk,"

"You don't drink,"

"True enough."

The individual shifted, the tails of his coat swishing as he went. Kurei opened her eyes again and turned her head toward the Kazekage. "You look like you could use a drink."

Gaara gave her a stiff look which had Kurei chuckling. "I'm not one to talk, am I?"

"Certainly not," Gaara replied bluntly, though Kurei couldn't help but catch a hint of worry in his tone.

She caught the redhead eyeing the file in her arms. So she let it slide down her torso and into an awaiting hand before waving it around. "Mission file a la Council of pain and despair." Gaara held out a hand but Kurei snatched it back against her breast. "Nope," Apparently that was not the answer the Kazekage had been looking for. Sand hissed out around his shoulders and like a snake it slithered toward Kurei, quickly enveloping her hand and the documents she halfheartedly clung to. A shiver ran through Kurei's arm and down her spine as the sand skimmed over her skin, soft as silk.

Fighting back was not going to end well for Kurei so she simply let go of the folder and closed her eyes. Part of her wanted badly to protect Gaara, it was futile seeing as he was in the number one position to come across all things bad, gruesome, and heartwrenching. And hadn't he seen enough in his young years? All the same, he was a precious person to her and Kurei would be damned if she couldn't do something. Even then, this file would pass through Gaara's hands when she had finished writing it and had submitted it to the Suna Advisory Council.

"The relief team has already been briefed and will leave at first light." It took a few moments for the words to process in Kurei's sluggish mind. "That village will be aided against those attacking it for the information you retrieved. They have offered their aquifer as payment, so the Mizugame Ryodan will be heading out once the dust settles to retrieve water."

Well okay then.

"Good, that's good...good." When had she shut her eyes? It was totally Gaara's fault, his voice was damned hypnotic and it would be so easy to just fall asleep. To curl up in those strong arms - no. Bad, no...no.

There was an awkward pause in the conversation. "Have you been up here all night?" Gaara inquired.

"No, just since the sun went down." She replied, turning over on her side to get more comfortable. Now she could look at Gaara and couldn't help the snort that was brought forth. "Your hair, Gaara, have you been out long?" His red spikes were wind blown; his hair just as tangled as hers were at that moment.

"Hm," Gaara hummed as he turned to look the Shuhou girl over. "It's almost sunrise," The smile dropped off Kurei's face. "Your teammates were of the opinion you were upset over the events of the mission. Apparently the Council decided that you did not need to be aware of the relief team who would be following your advance." Kurei appreciated the tone of frustration in his voice. Lately the Council seemed to be challenging Gaara's authority in any and all ways they could.

"Oh," Really what was there to say to that? "You're sure it's almost sunrise?" Gaara simply indicated with his chin toward the east. Begrudgingly, Kurei sat up, her back and several other places cracking loudly as she did so. "Yap, I've been laying here a while, ouch." Kurei rolled her shoulders and adjusted her neck before turning her attention toward the horizon.

The sight stole her breath away as the inky black of night was retreating from the brilliant gold of dawn. The brightness of the stars began to succumb to rainbow hues of sunlight as they built themselves into the sky. Kurei counted the colors as they appeared, blending into and out of one another. So pure was the light out in the desert, unhampered by the manufactured brightness of the large villages she had visited, that it took little time for it to travel and claim the sky as its own. Suddenly, brilliantly rays crested the horizon to outlined the undulating dunes of the desert beyond Sunagakure's walls and for a brief time the sand was dark again. It turned golden in the next instant as the sun continued its ascent into the sky, finally peeking out, as if unsure it was wanted at this hour. It's bold entrance painted the sands all around as the bands of sunlight ran toward the village.

Kurei could feel Gaara watching her watch the morning. "Beautiful," She felt hot tears streaming down her cheeks but didn't bother to clear them. The world worn kunoichi had no more strength to do anything more than sit and stare out at the sands.

"You are wary after your mission, yes? It would be best for you to get some sleep." Gaara needed to stop talking or else she really was in danger of falling asleep on the roof, again. His voice was calm and sure, soothing her exhaustion and making her war with the want to sleep and the want to stay awake, with him.

Gaara was speaking again but she was unaware of the words. "Fine, fine," It was very upsetting when Gaara stood, she didn't want him to leave, though her half awake company was probably ill received, naturally. Kurei was startled into a vague state of alertness as she was lifted into the air. Her head thumped lightly against Gaara's strong shoulder as he settled her against his chest. "Let's get you to bed."

Kurei grinned, a mischievous glint in her eye despite her sleep-drunk state. "Okay, you're place or mine?"