III

Knowing exactly what was going to happen to her body did not make the anxiety that Ino felt towards the process any easier.

Over the course of the morning, Ino had been watching Temari blow up like a balloon right before her very eyes—all without realizing that the cause of such a strange and unusual event had happened the night before! Temari getting her butt smacked by that creepy wanna-be Kage had been the inciting incident to all of this madness, and now that they were *both* on the line—

“What now that it’s *your* problem too, suddenly it *matters*?”

“Shut up and let me think!”

Something had to be done, and something had to be done *fast.* In less than twenty four hours, Temari had more than doubled in size, and since Ino had been tagged with the same strange mark from the Reed ninja that they’d fought in the marketplace, she could already *feel* herself growing heavier. She’d been hungrier, sure, but not so much so that it had been noticeable. Two hours after the inciting incident, and Ino’s upper body was pressing tight against her under clothes—her bra was pinching against newly developing rolls and bulges as it sagged under the weight of her developing chest. Her face was hot and flush, growing rounder as the cursed mark spread its magic along the upper half of her body.

“Ohhh gosh my arms are already getting all *flabby*…”

No one had ever accused Ino of being a humble person. For a long time, her looks had been one of the most defining features of who she was as a person—for good and bad. And while she might have come a long way from being the cruel teenager that used to pick on her childhood friends for silly things like their forehead sizes, becoming a more well-rounded person had an entirely different meaning when you were literally going to round out because you were magically putting on weight thanks to… thanks to…

“What is *happening to usssss?*”

No one had ever accused Ino of being able to hold it together during a crisis either.

A firm, hard, *SMACK* across the cheek courtesy of the increasingly bottom-heavy Suna ninja was thankfully enough to snap her out of it. Or, at the very least, get her to start thinking instead of freaking out. The momentary pause in Ino’s rapid downward spiral into melodrama was *just* enough for her to sort break out of it.

“I don’t know if your ponytail is tied too tight or what, but I need you to listen up and listen good.” Temari said in a stern, authoritative voice, “Whatever’s happening to the two of us is happening because of whoever is pulling the strings in this village—I think it’s time that we stop relying on espionage to find answers and start *taking* them the old-fashioned way.”

It might have been a little more difficult to take her seriously than normal, but Ino knew that Temari was right. Underneath that double chin, those round cheeks, and the slight short of breath that had caused her to start panting as her weight climbed higher and higher, Temari was still the same tough-as-nails Ninja of the Fan that had joined up with her on this mission in the first place. And if she wasn’t going to let almost two hundred pounds of extra pudge slow her down in her quest to solve this, then Ino didn’t have any right to start complaining about an extra twenty… *thirty*… pounds now.

“…you’re right.” Ino finally said after a long silence, rubbing her chubby cheek with one hand as she sighed in resolution, “Let’s get to the bottom of this once and for all.”

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Even if the two of them hadn’t been trained in the art of scouting, Ino and Temari both would have been able to surmise that the largest house in the village belonged to its leader—the would-be Ashikage and his sizeable collection of bodyguards.

Despite the recent modernizations that the Village Hidden in the Reeds had gone through though, his home was far more traditional than either of them expected.

There was a glaring security concern in the form of a large open courtyard in the center of the estate, with a large pond that neither of them could see to the bottom of surrounded by stone and décor. The red wood archways framed the walkways into the outer layer of porch that separated the rooms from one another, forming a tight square shape that ran neatly around the perimeter of both the inside and outside of Oda Watari’s home.

For all of the pomp and circumstance about bringing the Village Hidden in the Reeds up to the “modern” standard set by those governing bodies around it, Ino would admit to being a little surprised by how traditional—if not *humble—*the setup was.

The creaky floorboards should have been a testament to how old this particular part of the village was, but right now, all Ino could think about was how they shouldn’t have been a problem.

The hours that had passed since sunset and recon meant that she was dragging along an extra eighty pounds now; weight that neither of them could have quite accounted for, but were forced to sort of deal with as they made up their assault along the way.

*“Watari’s bedroom is at the head of the estate.”*

*“Color me surprised…”*

Ino had told Temari this a good forty pounds ago after getting a bird’s eye view. The Mind Body Switch technique was just as useful when it was separated from the rest of the Ino-Shika-Cho combination, especially so when it meant taking advantage of a nearby hawk.

*“We need to launch an attack at sunset—once he retires for the evening, we’ll be able to take advantage of a shift change in guards.”*

With their increasing weights, Ino and Temari needed every advantage that they could get their hands on. Who knows how big they’d be if they let this slide until the next day? Or the day after? Would they have even been able to *move*? Temari alone was getting to be so big that she could only just waddle around—and even with all the muscle underneath her newly formed fat, just securing the perimeter was enough to make her winded.

“Let’s… hahhh… let’s make this quick…”

Temari’s cheeks were boulder-sized. Not the ones that dimpled twice over now as they burned a bright red in her struggling to catch a second wind, but the ones that sagged from either side of her rapidly fattening waist. Ino could see Temari’s butt from the front, with tree trunk thighs forced together all the way down past the knee and legs that buckled underneath the growing size of her ass. The fat stomach that forced her to hunker forward did her no favors either—the poor thing had started to swing her arms from side to side with her every step as she tried pitifully to make her way to a safe location that was within the confines of the mansion.

It was clear that Ino was going to be doing the lion’s share of work on this one.

Luckily, Ino’s specialties as a ninja lied in two things; flowers, and jutsu that allowed her to take over the bodies of the jounin that protected the Ashikage.

One at a time, mind you, and not without some undue risk of her own.

Ino’s body was getting heavier by the minute, just the same as Temari’s. The head start that the pineapple-headed blonde had received over her pony-tailed counterpart was not insignificant and her weight was much more pronounced because of it, but Ino’s over one hundred pound weight gain was not something that could be ignored when planning for this particular strategy.

“S’a lot harder to put my hands together like this than it used to be…” Ino made a small attempt at a joke as her fleshy biceps wrestled with her ample amounts of side-boob while she attempted to make the hand signs necessary to perform her family’s special technique, “Just… lemme focus for a minute…”

There was a lot *more* of her than she was used to. Knowledge of chakra meant knowledge of one’s own body. Choji’s weight never bothered him because he was used to it—in fact, some of his jutsu *required* his size. But Ino’s sudden shift in physique over the course of a few hours had meant that her body was completely foreign to her now.

She had become chesty and soft, with a subtle ache in her back that was becoming more pronounced as the night went on. Ino’s thin, beautiful body had been puffing outwards slowly from the top half out, making her look visibly heavier in the face and fingers than Temari was just a few hours ago. Having always been a particularly vain woman, Ino had been making herself promise not to look at the changes in her body while it was incapacitated due to the Mind Body Transfer technique.

“You think that you’ll be able to pull it off?” Temari asked, her voice thick and heavy as she sat up beneath the tree on the hill they’d stationed themselves at, “I know you said that it was dangerous…”

“It’s only dangerous because I’m having some difficulty with my chakra right now.” Ino said confidently, gathering herself as best as she could for the upcoming ping-pong of consciousness that she was going to have to try and pull off, “Going from one body to the next isn’t all that hard. It’s adding anything more than one extra body into that chain that’s going to be a problem.”

The Yamanaka Clan was kind of a one-trick pony as far as some of the other ninja clans went within Konoha. The Uchihas were fire-breathers, the Hyuuga clan had their byakugan, and even the other two-thirds of the Ino-Shika-Cho trio had shadow manipulation and body transformative techniques. Meanwhile the Yamanakas were only really good at one thing…

But the one thing that they were good at, they did *exceptionally* well…

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The attack on the Oda estate, the would-be capital of the Village Hidden in the Reeds, was an intricate and well-planned endeavor.

Using the Mind Body Transference technique on animals was something that Ino had been doing for reconnaissance since she was just a Genin. For combat purposes, it was pretty useless without Shikamaru’s Shadow Possession Jutsu to hold the target steady, or Choji’s Human Boulder technique to make use of an immobilized opponent. All three of these techniques made for a perfect triangle that could be devastating against a single opponent, but each point was markedly powerful even by itself if used by someone who was sufficiently skilled.

The hawk that had flown overhead just as the sun was going down had been something of a crapshoot that turned out successfully. Waiting for him to nest, Ino’s consciousness travelled in a straight line towards the resting bird of prey as her chubby body back with Temari fell lip. In her new form, Ino took flight and began to circle overhead, looking for an isolated guardsman that could act as a relay point…

*Ewww gross he’s taking a leak…*

She’d caught more than a few sloppy opponents this way before, but it didn’t make it any less gross. Jumping inside this farmer hick playing dress-up wasn’t exactly Ino’s preferred way of getting inside the mansion, but it wasn’t like there were a lot of options presenting themselves to her at the moment. And besides, the only option that probably wasn’t some make-believe jounin was going to be the reason that all of this was happening in the first place—she couldn’t exactly get the wannabe politician to give her answers if she was taking his body for a joy ride.

*Anyone with a strong enough will can still knock me out of their body though…*

Ino zipped up the guard’s pants and steadied herself within his body.

*Gotta get answers, and I’ve gotta get ‘em fast.*

Considering that for the past few hours she’d been wading around in a body that felt like it was slowly filling up with pudding, taking this skinny little twerp’s body for a joyride was a welcome change of pace for Ino. He wasn’t well-trained or especially powerful, but he was agile and he was lithe—two things that couldn’t be said for Ino or Temari anymore since this entire debacle started. And even though he might not have been up to snuff when casting the sort of jutsu that you’d find in a more established village like the Leaf, Ino could still manage a simple Mind Transfer technique if she wanted to jump to another body.

*Can’t exactly do this a lot—it’ll arouse suspicion…*

Getting back to the post that Ino had seen him at when she was inside the hawk, Ino guided the guard toward the Ashikage’s chambers. If she was going to get to the bottom of any of this, she was going to need to get him out of this little bubble that he’d created for himself. And in this body, that was going to be difficult. Any good blow could render her unconscious, and then right back where she started on the hill with Temari. Playing it sneaky and gathering information wasn’t exactly something that they could do for long, though…

“Hey Okizaki!” a guard called out to the man that Ino was wearing, “We’re getting started in fifteen minutes!”

“Uh… sure!” Ino said in a voice that wasn’t her own, making a quick and frantic look towards the hillside where she could still see the marble shape of her fellow ninja, “Be right there…”

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After five minutes of waiting, making observations where she could without looking too out of place, the rest of the guards on duty were ordered to stand at attention in the central lake that dominated the property’s courtyard.

The night air in the countryside was hot and humid—mosquitos and the sound of cicadas buzzing in the air, as ill-adjusted to the meteoric rise in development of the aspiring city state as its inhabitants seemed to be. Between the fattened citizenship and the uppity attitude of the local militia, it was hard to call the Village Hidden in the Reeds as anything *but* uppity. The smooth talking politician that had lead them down this path of growth and development, the same person who had cursed Ino and Temari with that strange mark that was making them both so fat, was going to have to answer for… *whatever* it was that was happening out here.

More importantly, whatever it was that he was going to do with that summoning scroll.

The guards had been summoned to stand outside of the circular pond, and that had included Ino. Luckily, it only required standing at attention. The leader of the village came out just as young and baby-faced as the day before, when he had smacked Temari across what had been, at the time, a tight firm ass. But seeing him now, in the context of it being sunset and carrying that gigantic scroll with him… Ino would admit that he looked far more sinister than she had ever given him credit for.

*This is the same technique that Temari uses to summon Kamatari, and Naruto to summon those frogs of his*…

Watari Oda delicately pricked his thumb with an extended metal tack that had been left for him, nestled between two rocks that lined his man-made pond. His hand signing wasn’t perfect, but it was serviceable enough that a large blue light began to glow in the center of the pond. Ino’s surprise was hidden enough behind the guard’s features, but it was clear that some of the jounin that had been appointed as his body-guards were not at all used to what was happening. If anything, her nonchalance about the fact that this guy had some secret hidden ninja art might have made her stand out *more*.

“Everyone, I trust you all to be on your best behavior.” Watari said, clearing his throat softly before standing to his full height, “After all, it’s not every day we host the Demon King of the Rivers...”

The pond began to bubble as a shape began to take form along the water line.

“Just once a year.” A voice burbled from the now steaming pond in the center of the estate, “And I trust that you will not disappoint me as you did in our last meeting.”

What emerged from the shallow lake was something far too large to have been coiled up inside. It was a large, snake-like deity; its turquoise scaling and fleshy fins glistening in the moonlight in a way that was somehow more disturbing than the sheen on its fangs or the reflection in its large, pale eyes. Only the greenest of the guards flinched now, Ino noticed. Their rapid expansion and Watari’s insistence on maintaining an important presence meant that there had been plenty of new hires since the year before.

Ino took this opportunity to let her revulsion eek through, just a little bit.

“O Great Kawa-no-Kami, it is a great honor to see you again.” The little politician schmoozed as he used his standing position to take a full bow, “You honor us with your presence once more.”

“And I hope that *you* will honor *me* with a bountiful harvest this year.” The great fish monster chuckled, writhing and coiling in the air, “Those pudgy housewives and lazy farmers were *hardly* the way to thank me for rewarding your village with such bounty year after year, now were they?”

*Harvest… Housewives… Farmers?*

“I agree.” Watari said in his faux-jovial way, “Which is why I’ve ensured that my village is only providing its biggest, *heftiest* citizens to you, O Demon King of the Rivers…”

Ino gulped to herself, her blood running cold as the realization hit her like a ton of bricks.

“In fact, I believe my men should be closing in on them right now.”