

Calamity 331

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 331: Rescue

Renjiro's words surprised Fujin's team. Unlike Renjiro's teammates, who had spent almost four months in the Land of Water, they hadn't heard of these atrocities happening in the Land of Water. To know that a village was committing such atrocities on their citizens was shocking.

Even Fujin, who had some ideas regarding the civil war, was shocked. He thought, 'No wonder such a massive rebellion is happening here. I initially thought that it was just the clans with Kekkei Genkai against normal clans. But this is disturbing.'

Fujin let out a sigh and wondered, 'Is this the act of some lunatics in the Mizukage faction or has Obito made the Mizukage commit such atrocities?'

Renjiro said, "Makoto, check who all are alive and can be saved. Heal them."

Fujin objected, "This place just had a conflict. If we spend time here, we could once again be attacked."

Fujin was opposed to Renjiro's decision. After all, Renjiro's squad was captured not long ago. And seeing the horrendous state, he doubted whether any of them would be able to live a normal life after experiencing such a horrifying incident.

Renjiro shook his head and said, "The situation is different. If we see any ships coming, we will run away. If not, we will save as many here as we can."

Fujin sighed and asked, "Would they even want to live after experiencing such an incident?"

Renjiro replied, "That isn't something we should decide."

Fujin said, "Alright. I'll help out Makoto. But keep an eye on your chakra levels, Makoto. Running away will be difficult if it is low."

Makoto nodded. The group immediately began looking for survivors. The village had around 450 people. However, only 60 were alive when they arrived. And among those 60, 20 were in a very critical state and couldn't be rescued without complicated medical treatments.

Makoto healed most of them while Fujin healed their external wounds. Among the survivors, 24 had lost one or more limbs. Only 16 were well physically. However, their mental health was a complete mess. It wasn't a surprise though. Not only did they undergo tremendous physical pain, but they also lost their loved ones. And the streets were still covered by their blood.

The Konoha group spent half a day on the island. Fortunately, no one sailed to the island. After putting everyone to sleep using Genjutsu, Fujin asked, "What are you planning to do with them? Leaving them here wouldn't be wise."

Renjiro nodded and replied, "Yeah, the trauma is too intense. I'll build a ship for them to sail away towards nearby islands. As for whether they survive or not, it's their fate."

Fujin nodded. Though Konoha was doing well, they couldn't interfere anymore in this matter. Until then, no other country had interfered in the Civil War happening in the Land of Water. But once Konoha stepped in, the remaining 3 villages would also have to step in. It would make the situation very complicated and could lead to an all-out war between the 5 villages with the Land of Water as the battlefield.

During the night, the Konoha ninjas built a boat large enough to carry 40 people. The next day, they asked whether the people wanted to stay on the island or leave. Knowing that the Mizukage's forces could return, everyone chose to evacuate.

However, one young boy, around 6 years old, approached Renjiro. He was very skinny, had pale skin and white hair. He looked into Renjiro's eyes and asked, "Can you train me to become a ninja?"

His voice was surprisingly calm and steady. Renjiro bent down to his level and asked with a kind smile on his face, "What is your name, brave child?"

The kid answered, "I am Kyushu Hayami."

Renjiro asked, "Hayami-kun, why do you want to become a ninja?"

Fujin noticed as the boy struggled to control his emotions. He clenched his fists and said, "They made my mother and sister scream in pain for a long time before killing them. I don't want to be helpless while my loved ones are harmed."

Fujin and the other ninjas sighed on hearing his words. Renjiro let out a sigh as well. He said, "It's unfortunate what happened here. But, to become a capable ninja, you will have to train extremely hard for years. Are you willing to do that?"

The boy answered, "I will train as hard as you want me to."

Renjiro placed his hand on his head gently and said, "Alright. I will train you to be a ninja."

He looked at the survivors and asked, "Are any of your relatives alive?"

The boy shook his head. An old man approached and said, "Hayami-kun never talked much with anyone. But he was very close with his mother and sister. Please take good care of him and take him away from this country."

The people already knew that Renjiro and the rest were from Konoha. They wanted to evacuate to the Land of Fire, but Renjiro declined their request as he wasn't able to guarantee their safety.

Renjiro said, "Alright. I'll take good care of him."

At the same time, he thought, 'The boy's chakra is a bit dark. He might become an expert in Yin release.'

The Konoha ninjas saw the survivors sailing away in the boat. After they left their sight, the group began running towards the Land of Fire once again. Renjiro carried Hayami as they ran across the seas. Seeing people run on the water was a first for Hayami. However, despite his young age, he didn't seem interested in it. His mind was still affected by what had happened to his family.

Due to the break, Renjiro's squad had to eat another soldier pill to continue moving. After travelling for over a day, the group finally reached the shores of the Land of Fire!

The group took a break at a patrol camp before continuing their journey to Konoha. During this time, Fujin interacted a bit with Hayami. Though the kid was polite, he wasn't very responsive.

Fujin thought, 'Recruiting talented kids not from the village... It leaves a threat of young kids being sent as spies by enemy villages. Even if that isn't the case, the loyalty of such ninjas can also be questioned. But, I guess Hiruzen doesn't even consider this issue. The Will of Fire... What a convenient tool.

I need to come up with a similar ideology to ensure the loyalty of my members. But... though it seems simple, it is very difficult. After all, what fuels this ideology is the sacrifice of the previous generations. If the older generations don't sacrifice themselves for the next generation, then this ideology will collapse in no time.

Sigh, I hope I can come up with something good enough to influence a few people. Otherwise, the only way would be a curse seal.'

A few hours later, the group reached Konoha and arrived at Hiruzen's office. Hiruzen looked at Renjiro and said, "It's good to see you all unharmed."

At the same time, he looked at Fujin meaningfully and thought, 'For them to have returned so quickly, Fujin should have used his summons to fly over. It was the right decision to send him over.'

Renjiro nodded and replied, "Thank you. Unfortunately, our mission was interrupted."

Hiruzen looked at Hayami and asked, "So, who is this young friend?"

Renjiro let out a sigh and said, "On our way back, we encountered a village in the Land of Water that was destroyed by Kirigakure ninjas from the Mizukage faction. We rescued and healed a few survivors. Kyushu Hayami was one of them. He wants to become a ninja, so I brought him with me."

Hiruzen observed the boy carefully. With a smile, he said, "Alright. We will take good care of you, Hayami. I have a lot of hopes for you."

He looked at Renjiro and asked, "Should I make living arrangements for him, or will you be taking him to the Senju clan compounds?"

Renjiro looked at Hayami. Hayami also looked back at him with eyes full of hope. Renjiro said, "I'll make arrangements for him in the Senju clan compound."

Hiruzen wasn't surprised. Over the last few decades, especially since the start of the Second Great Ninja War, the Senju clan frequently took in orphans. Hiruzen nodded and said, "Alright. I will leave it to you then."

He looked at Hayami and said kindly, "Hayami-kun, can you wait outside the room for a while? We have some matters to discuss."

Hayami obediently said, "I can."

He walked out of the room.

Hiruzen asked, "So, how did the mission go?"

Fujin replied, "It went well. I had a small confrontation with Mei, but no conflict happened. Since everything went well, I created some curiosity in her and handed her the scroll. She was grateful and said she owes us a favor."

Hiruzen nodded and said, "Good. The mission can be considered a complete success. Though your mission was cut in half, it can be considered a success as well, Renjiro. I have already moved the kids you sent over into the academy."

Renjiro nodded. They discussed some more details. Finally, Renjiro said, "I'll be needing some time off. It's been a while since I returned home."

Hiruzen nodded and replied, "You can leave. Send me a mission report later."

The group left the office. Renjiro looked at Fujin and said, "Meet me tomorrow at noon in Yakiniku with Hoka. It's been a long time since we have been together."

Fujin replied, "Yeah, it's been a while. Alright, I'll call him."

Renjiro nodded. He took Hayami with him and the group went their separate ways.

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Chapter 332: A Get-together

Renjiro took Hayami to his home and introduced him to his family. His wife and children entertained Hayami and made him feel at home while Renjiro arranged for Hayami to stay in the Senju clan compounds.

After making arrangements, Renjiro took him to the T&I Department where Hayami was put to sleep using a Genjutsu and the authorities did a thorough checkup on him. They inspected his body for any possible seals. After confirming there were none, they had a Yamanaka ninja read his memories. Once again, he was cleared and they confirmed he wasn't a spy. After confirming, Ibiki let Renjiro take him back.

The procedure wasn't created especially for Hayami. All the 35 children Renjiro had sent before were subjected to the same. Of course, none of the kids remembered any of this.

The next afternoon, Fujin walked into Yakiniku. He heard, "Fujin, here."

Fujin turned his head in the direction of the voice to see Hoka. He joined him and said, "It's been a long time."

Fujin had gone to Hoka's residence the day before. Unfortunately, he wasn't at home. So he just dropped a message for him and left.

Hoka replied, "Yeah. It's been over a year since we last met up. Time flies so quickly. Seems like the Anbu life is very hectic."

Fujin nodded and said, "Yeah. Some missions need me to stay out for months."

He let out a sigh and added, "And for some reason, Lord Hokage seems to like giving me a lot of missions. You are lucky to not be in it."

Hoka nodded and replied, "Yeah, it gives me a lot of time to train."

Fujin chuckled and teased, "So, why aren't you a Jounin yet?"

Hoka immediately became dejected. He said in a depressed tone, "Lord Hokage is so strict when it comes to promoting. I can already fight against Jounins from other major villages and even in my clan. But he promoted me to just Special Jounin. Father said that I'll probably need another couple of years to be officially promoted to the Jounin rank."

He looked at Fujin and asked, "What about you? Do you remember the promise we made two and a half years ago? You only have six months left."

Fujin replied, "I got promoted to Anbu Captain a few months back. That rank is equivalent to Jounin. I'll be Jounin when I retire."

Hoka quickly caught on to the information. He asked, "You are planning to quit the Anbu?"

Fujin nodded and answered, "I don't get much time to train. But I still have some work to do in the Anbu. It should be completed in around 6 to 8 months."

Hoka replied, "Alright. Let's compete when you are done with your work then."

A grin formed on his face as he said, "I can't wait to fight against you again."

"Is fighting all you two can think about?"

Fujin and Hoka turned their heads to see Renjiro approaching them. Fujin chuckled and replied, "Well, we can only do what our Sensei taught us."

Hoka nodded, "Yup. Feel free to blame our Sensei."

Both laughed at Renjiro's expense. Renjiro sighed at their antics and joined the table. It had been just over 3 years since Fujin and Hoka were Genins under his tutelage. However, now Hoka was a Special Jounin while Fujin was an Anbu Captain.

In terms of strength, Hoka was at the Jounin level while Fujin was as strong as Renjiro. Though he lacked in terms of overall capabilities and experience, in terms of speed and lethality, he had already surpassed Renjiro. In a fight, Renjiro would need to be very careful against Fujin.

Renjiro was very proud of his students. However, he couldn't help but think, 'It's a shame that Mieko got caught in the Uchiha mess. She would have been at the Jounin level as well if she had been alive.'

A server delivered them meat as the three of them caught up and shared some of their experiences. Of course, no one spoke about any missions that had to be kept a secret. So Hoka and Renjiro were unaware of the stunts Fujin pulled in the Land of Wind and his fight against Roshi.

After having lunch and talking for a couple of hours, Renjiro asked Fujin, "So, how did you make it to the Land of Water so quickly?"

Fujin replied, "I signed a Summoning Contract. My summons can fly quite fast."

Hoka was surprised. He said, "Summons that can fly you? That's very rare. Congrats Fujin."

Renjiro added, "No, Summons that can fly four people and probably fly at twice the speeds of messenger birds. That's even more impressive."

Hoka was surprised, "That good? Wait!"

He squinted his eyes and stared at Fujin. Fujin realized his thoughts and chuckled. Hoka let out a sigh and cursed, "Bastard! It's already annoying to fight you when you keep running away! For the last two years, I kept working on strategies to combat your style of combat. But now you can fly? How the heck am I supposed to fight you if you fly and keep attacking from above?"

Fujin didn't reply and just grinned. Unknown to Hoka, his summons had great control over Wind chakra and were just as lethal as him if Vacuum jutsus weren't considered.

Hoka sighed and said, "No summons and no running and hiding during our fight. Wait, no clones either."

Fujin tilted his head and asked, "Are you gonna tell your enemy that?"

Hoka replied, "It's a spar, that's different."

Renjiro chuckled and said, "So much talk about sparring. Do you two want to spar against me?"

Both Fujin and Hoka looked at him. Hoka replied, "Sensei, I know that you could take three of us at the same time back when we were Genins. But do you think that you can take the two of us at the same time right now as well?"

Over the last few years, Hoka's Taijutsu improved a lot. It didn't have any flaws and he was confident in going up against Renjiro when it came to Taijutsu. With Fujin supporting him with Ninjutsu, he didn't think that Renjiro would have an easy time against them.

Renjiro shrugged and said, "It's not necessary to win in a spar."

Fujin said in an uncertain tone, "Sparring... I'm kinda against doing much of that now."

Fujin's words surprised Renjiro and Hoka.

Hoka asked, "Why so?"

Fujin replied, "The last time I sparred with my team, I had a hard time controlling myself. The missions in Anbu have honed my killing instincts to an extreme. It gets difficult to control myself when I see openings. And it is very dangerous considering that I use Wind jutsus primarily. One bad attack could end up killing a friend."

Fujin's words surprised Hoka. Unlike Fujin, Hoka went on missions that were tailored to his growth. The Hyuga clan had a proper system in place for anyone who worked hard to get stronger. So Hoka benefited from it. And unlike Fujin, his missions didn't involve as much killing.

Renjiro said, "Yeah, that happens when you spend a lot of time in Anbu. Even after leaving the Anbu, it stays for many years. That said, losing control over your actions is not good. It may seem advantageous in battle, but you'll end up making a lethal mistake at some point. You should find a sparring partner to learn and control those instincts."

Fujin nodded and said, "Yeah. I guess Lord Hokage feels the same. My missions over the last few months don't involve much fighting."

After his clash with Roshi, Hiruzen realized that Fujin's tactics and thoughts had developed to become extremely lethal. He realized that Fujin's actions in the Land of Wind wouldn't be a one-off event. So to tone down his aggression, Hiruzen had assigned him missions that dealt more with diplomacy and protection rather than elimination.

Though the mission to rescue Renjiro's squad had a chance of high-level combat, it too fell under diplomacy as Fujin had to avoid conflict to ensure the complete success of the mission. So as such, Fujin hadn't killed a lot after his mission to eliminate the base that Suna had created in the Land of Fire.

After talking for a bit, the group decided against sparring. Renjiro was concerned that an all-out spar between them would wreck an entire training ground. Though the village generally disregarded such destruction, he had a feeling that the scale might surpass what the village could ignore. As for Hoka, he wanted to keep his improvements a secret from Fujin. So he didn't push for a spar either.

Fujin changed the topic by asking, "How many kids did you rescue from the Land of Water?"

Renjiro replied, "Including Hayami, 36."

Fujin was surprised. He said, "That's quite a lot. Do any of them have Kekkei Genkai?"

Renjiro shook his head and replied, "They are too young. So it hasn't manifested in anyone. But some of them do have the bloodline. Hopefully, a few of them will unlock their Kekkei Genkai. Though even if they don't, it's fine. At some point in the future, one of their descendants will unlock it."

Fujin nodded. Establishing a new bloodline clan in the village was a long-term project. It would take a few decades to show results. And the frequent wars and deaths during the missions would be a huge obstacle towards that goal.

But Fujin wasn't very interested in the long-term aspect. He hoped that a few of the kids would unlock their Kekkei Genkai very soon. He was planning to start fusing his own elements soon to learn a Kekkei Genkai. Having a reference would be a huge help for him. He thought, 'I'll need to keep an eye on those kids.'

Seeing how much time had passed, Renjiro said, "I lost track of time. I have some work to do at home. It was good meeting both of you again."

Hoka nodded, "Yeah. We should do this more often in the future."

Fujin and Renjiro nodded. They said farewells and went their separate ways.

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Chapter 333: Konoha's Light and Darkness!

After a few days off, Fujin once again became busy with his Anbu duties. Hiruzen was quite busy as well. He made arrangements for Hayami to join the 1st year in the academy.

Though the kids Renjiro brought from Kiri were talented enough to be placed in Elite batches, Hiruzen didn't do that and instead distributed them in the normal batches that had 100 students. His goal was to ensure that they made good friends in Konoha. Combined with his frequent 'motivational' speeches, the unsuspecting kids were quickly assimilated into Konoha.

Once the assimilation was complete, Hiruzen analyzed, '36 good kids. Their circumstances will make them train harder than most. And they might even motivate others to train hard. Once their strength grows beyond the normal students, I'll expand the Elite batches to include the ones that stand out.'

Seeing how good they were, Hiruzen thought, 'It'd be good if we could recruit such kids frequently from there. Unfortunately, it will be very difficult and risky. Both sides should have noticed these events. They'll be on the lookout for such operations done by other villages. Not to mention, there will be competition from other villages.'

He began analyzing to check if he could continue the operations in the Land of Water somehow. However, he could only think of one solution. He wondered, 'Should I ask Danzo to make a move there?'

Hiruzen was in a dilemma when it came to Danzo. Though he was a comrade, he had been very extreme in the past few years. The Uchiha's loss was a big blow for Konoha. In addition, unlike others, Danzo won't obediently do what Hiruzen wanted.

He thought, 'The only way Danzo would agree is if I let him induct the kids into Root. No, he will agree even if I decline and would instead secretly induct the most talented kids he finds into the Root.'

But, I have already disbanded the Root. Though he still has a few dozen Root ninjas under his command, it is a far cry from what he controlled before the Uchiha Massacre. If I let him recruit kids from here, then he will begin rebuilding the Root again.'

Hiruzen began analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of such an action. After around 10 minutes, he decided, 'Though the rebels aren't lunatics like the Mizukage faction, at the end of the day, they are still a different village. I can't guarantee that they would ally with us. Even though Danzo is extreme, at the end of the day, he is still loyal to Konoha.'

I'll let him take over this operation. Even if he recruits talented children now, he will need around 10 years to raise a large number of Jounins from their ranks. He will be too old by then to have any more ambitions towards the Hokage seat. Besides...'

A glint appeared in Hiruzen's eyes as he decided, 'In around 6 years, I'll pass my seat to Kakashi or Fujin. And I'll make the other the commander of Root and force Danzo to retire along with me. That would be the best outcome for Konoha.'

Though there were a lot of reasons for Hiruzen to be upset with Danzo, it was undeniable that Konoha had benefited heavily due to him. Of all the villages, Konoha was the only village where a rank S ninja willingly took over the role of Darkness and stayed away from the limelight.

One rank S ninja leading in the light and another hiding in the dark was a deadly combination. Even if Konoha didn't have any other rank S ninjas, Hiruzen was confident in defending Konoha during the Second and Third Great Ninja wars despite being surrounded by enemies on all sides.

So if Hiruzen could see any opportunity to create such a combination in the future, he would make a move towards it.

He let out a sigh and thought, 'I was hoping that the ones who replaced us would be Jiraiya and Orochimaru. Back then, my relationship with Danzo was very good. If Jiraiya had accepted the Hokage position and Orochimaru succeeded Danzo, we would have been in a stable position for another couple of generations.'

Unfortunately, Jiraiya didn't take my seat. And Orochimaru wanted to become the Hokage instead of letting Minato be the one. After Minato's death, everything became a mess.

I had given up any hopes of recreating this arrangement. To think that such an opportunity would present itself once again. And unlike the ones before, Kakashi and Fujin can take the roles of both, Light and Darkness. It would provide a lot of flexibility to the village.'

After dissolving the Root, Hiruzen initially didn't intend to revive it again. There were two main obstacles to reviving the Root. The first was a capable leader to succeed Danzo. And the second was the manpower. Fujin's performance in the Land of Wind provided Hiruzen with a second possible future leader. And the orphans in the war-torn Land of Water provided him with the required manpower. Though there were some risks, the advantages far outweighed them in Hiruzen's opinion.

Having concluded his thoughts, Hiruzen decided on going forward with his plans. He disappeared from his office. A few seconds later, he appeared in a secret underground chamber.

Danzo, who was sitting in a chair and handling some work, suddenly looked up. To his surprise, Hiruzen had shown up unannounced. He asked, "What do you want?"

Hiruzen replied with a question, "Are you aware of Renjiro's mission in the Land of Water?"

Danzo looked at Hiruzen without speaking, but there was no change in his expression. He replied, "The one to rescue orphans from the Land of Water?"

Hiruzen nodded and said, "He ended up confronting the rebel faction. So I had to stop the mission. But, it's a waste if we don't act on such an opportunity. I want you to deploy your forces and rescue such orphans."

Danzo squinted his eye. He asked, "My forces? Did you forget that you disbanded Root?"

Hiruzen sighed and asked, "Do you think I'm oblivious to everything you do?"

Danzo didn't reply. He knew that Hiruzen knew about the forces still under his control. But he didn't expect Hiruzen to confront him about it.

Hiruzen said, "So, will you?"

Danzo replied, "I want my former Root ninjas back under my command."

Hiruzen shook his head and replied, "That's not negotiable. Root won't be officially started either."

A frown formed on Danzo's face. He asked, "How will I rescue the orphans?"

Hiruzen replied, "Use your current forces. You can deploy all of them if you want. In addition, the kids you recruit can be recruited into Root. But I want proper documentation on each of them, along with yearly reports on their progress. Especially if someone unlocks Kekkei Genkai."

Danzo was surprised by the offer. He thought, 'I do have enough force to undertake such a task. But why is Hiruzen being so generous? I thought I would only get to induct a few kids sneakily. But if he allows me to induct them openly, I can rebuild my Root forces in 8 to 10 years.'

Hiruzen stared at Danzo, completely understanding his thought process. He thought, 'I don't want to do something like this to an old comrade. But you left me with no choice. I can only give you false hope and take it away from you before it gives you any results.'

Not knowing Hiruzen's plan to force him to retire, Danzo replied, "Alright. I will take over this mission. But you can't change your mind in the future."

Hiruzen nodded and said, "Of course. Recruit as many orphans as you can. But be careful of the Mizukage and Rebel factions. Their fighting will intensify soon."

Danzo nodded. Hiruzen disappeared from the office as rapidly as he appeared. After he left, a frown formed on Danzo's face. He thought, 'Konoha's current condition is very stable. So why did Hiruzen give me an opportunity to reestablish my forces?'

He thought for a long time, but couldn't come up with a definite answer. He decided, 'Whatever. No matter what he is up to, I'll just counter his schemes when they pop up. Besides, even if I figured out his schemes, I would still want to recruit those orphans.'

The following day, 36 Root ninjas sneakily left Konoha. They moved into the Land of Water and began their mission of 'rescuing' a large number of orphans who were suffering due to the war.

Around the time the Root ninja reached the Land of Water, Fujin entered his basement. There were multiple scrolls in his hand. He laid the scrolls on the floor and opened them while thinking, 'In the last eight months, I have learnt all the new Fuinjutsu symbols that were in Section A of the Library. In addition, I have learnt hundreds of new seals. Finally, my basics are good enough to begin learning this jutsu.'

He sighed and muttered, "It's been such a long time since I wanted to master this seal. Finally, I can do it!"

The scrolls in front of him contained information and a training plan to learn the Four Symbols Seal!

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Chapter 334: Four Symbols Seal

Fujin sat in his basement, carefully reading the information in the scrolls. It wasn't the first time he had read it. In fact, it was the first seal he studied after getting promoted to the Anbu Captain rank. But the last time he read, he realized that he wasn't ready to learn the seal.

After reading all the information once again, Fujin summarized, 'Four Symbols Seal... A seal made of just four symbols. Sounds so simple... Unfortunately, that isn't the case. The truth is that this seal contains thousands of symbols arranged in a very complicated manner. In terms of complexity, this is the most complex seal I have seen.

The thousands of symbols are arranged in such a way that they take the shape of four symbols, giving the seal its name. The four symbols themselves have a particular function.

The first symbol is to make the seal adaptable. It allows certain changes to be made to the seal such that every Four Symbols Seal is different from each other, sort of like a signature or a fingerprint. And once the seal is created, this symbol allows the seal to be further modified.

Due to this, the ones who know this seal and are aware of the details in this symbol can make it stronger or weaker if the host doesn't resist or considers them a threat. In addition, the seal can also be influenced by other seals to make the sealing much stronger.

The second symbol is to suppress what is sealed inside this seal. It restricts the amount of power the Tailed Beast controls. In fact, it can pretty much shut down all power of a tailed beast and forcefully put it to sleep.

The third symbol is to make the seal resilient. If the Tailed Beast somehow overcomes the suppression of the second symbol, then the resilience granted by this symbol is enough to temporarily stop a Tailed Beast from breaking out and provide the host with an opportunity to resist and fight back.

It would also provide defenses to prevent someone from forcefully changing the seal. Though if the difference in power between the two ninjas is high, it won't be much help.

The last symbol's effect is a bit vague and variable. It uses the willpower and determination of the host to increase or decrease the effects and strengths of the other three symbols. Though it isn't a fixed boost, it is a good addition. After all, the willpower of any person will be the highest when death is right in front of them.

So at the moment when the Tailed Beast is about to break out forcefully, this symbol would provide a huge help to the host. In addition, if the host faces an external threat, such as a situation where his friends are being killed while he helplessly watched, the determination to live or resist the Tailed Beast can decrease, lowering the power of the seal and allowing the Tailed Beast to break out and rampage against a superior enemy force.'

Fujin stayed in silence for a few minutes to digest all the information. After around seven minutes, he analyzed, 'If the purpose is to only seal a Tailed Beast or something similar, then this seal is good enough. But there are some major flaws.

The first major flaw is that it doesn't steal chakra from what is sealed inside. So if a Tailed Beast is sealed inside a ninja, then that Jinchuriki can only act as a nuke. He won't be able to access any chakra of the Tailed Beast unless the Tailed Beast breaks the seal and kills him before rampaging on the battlefield.

And the other major flaw is that, unlike Naruto's seal, this seal doesn't allow anyone else to enter the seal and help them fight the tailed beast.

So these effects should be from the Eight Trigram Divination Seal, which is created by overlapping two Four Symbol Seals. Unfortunately, the Library doesn't have the Eight Trigram Divination Seal. And asking Hiruzen for it will raise a lot of questions, starting from how I even know about that seal or what I plan to do with it.

Fortunately, I do have some ideas. The Four Symbols Seals have to be overlapped in such a way that they don't completely overlap with each other. I can try learning using the Trial and Error method. If I can't, then I can only think of a way to ask for it from Hiruzen without arousing suspicions.

After all, for me to implement any of those plans I created, the Eight Trigram Divination Seal is more important than even the Flying Thunder God!

There was a reason why Fujin wanted to master this seal. It was due to an idea he had long ago when he was in the academy. Over the years, he introspected the idea several times. Though he became more and more aware of how difficult it would be to make that idea a reality, he never found anything that would completely rule out the feasibility of his idea. Finally, he was about to take a major step towards it.

Without wasting any time, Fujin created 80 Shadow Clones and began learning the seal. The complexity of the seal meant that even with numerous clones, Fujin would still need a long time to learn and master the Four Symbols Seal!

For 13 days straight, Fujin kept working on the seal until he was called for another mission. After dressing up in his Anbu attire, Fujin flickered towards the Anbu Headquarters.

He appeared inside Eagle's office and asked, "Another escort mission?"

Eagle shook his head and said, "No."

He placed a map on the desk between them, pointed at a location and said, "The Ito family in the Land of Waterfalls has recently been experiencing strange incidents. There have been a lot of murders happening in the villages in their territory. In some cases, the entire population inside the villages have disappeared. And there have been no signs of struggle.

Tanigakure sent some of their ninjas to investigate but came empty-handed. I sent another Anbu squad to investigate but they didn't find anything either. They stayed in their territory for one month during which no incident occurred. However, a few days after they returned, the incidents began happening again.

For some reason, whoever is doing this, is only targeting the civilians. And they have managed to hide from any ninjas investigating. The previous squad I sent specialized in tracking and investigation but was unsuccessful as well. So I'm guessing that a SealMaster or GrandMaster might be involved."

Fujin listened carefully. Eagle added, "Your mission is to inspect who is causing this. If you find the culprit, you can decide whether to kill or capture them or even let them go if you have a good reason. If you don't find anyone, then make a decision on when to stop and return back to the village."

Fujin nodded and replied, "Alright. We will move out soon."

He took the map that had all the markings of where the incidents had happened. He went into his team's assigned room and analyzed the information while his clones moved to call his teammates.

Fujin analyzed, 'This case is weird. The targets are all over the Ito family's territory and no one area has a higher number of attacks. Still, attacking civilians and possible Fuinjutsu mastery... Is it the Jashin?

They were active in the Land of Grass last time. And this area isn't too far off from them. But the Land of Earth is also close to this place. So there could be a possible Iwagakure involvement. I need to be careful in case the Jinchurikis or Onoki are involved.'

In around half an hour, his team assembled, ready to move. Fujin explained the mission parameters and left the village. Though Fujin's squad didn't have anyone who specialized in tracking or picking up small clues like scent or hidden footprints, every one of them was a sensor. Though Yugao and Bunjiro's sensor skills were very good, they were still quite handy. Both had improved considerably during the last 7 months.

Within a day and a half, Fujin's team reached the town in the Land of Waterfall where the Ito family lived.

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Chapter 335: A Complex Situation!

Fujin's squad went straight into the Ito family's mansion. Seeing that another Anbu squad from Konoha had arrived, they were quickly welcomed into the mansion.

Ito Yuya immediately appeared and said, "I am glad that Konoha sent another squad so quickly. Come with me. I'll update you on the recent incidents."

He began walking inside the mansion while the Konoha ninjas followed him. As he walked, Fujin looked to his left and right. Numerous servants were staring at them. On seeing his gaze, they quickly averted eye contact and continued their work.

A frown formed on Fujin's face behind his mask. He thought, 'That's weird. Not all of those gazes were filled with curiosity. Though no one showed it on their faces, it felt like someone was excited to see us. There is a problem in this mansion.'

He remembered their faces and continued following Yuya. They soon entered a large room with a lot of maps. The room had several ninjas and people from the Ito family, who were trying to come up with a solution.

As soon as they entered, all eyes landed on them. A look of relief appeared on their faces. While Fujin identified several faces, one stood out. He looked at one person and thought, 'Hara Yuto. As expected, he is here as well.'

Hara Yuto was a capable Jounin from Takigakure. In terms of strength, he was about the same level as Fumito. Around a year ago, Fujin's previous Anbu squad had taken a mission to eliminate the ninjas from the Kawaguchi family who wanted to kill Ito Yuya and Kara Yuto. So Fujin had some impression of them.

Fujin walked towards a circular table that had a large map. The map was of the territory they controlled. He asked, "So, what's the current status?"

Yuto answered, "This is the most detailed map we have. The villages crossed out in black are villages where the entire population disappeared."

He pointed towards one village and said, "This village faced their fate five days ago. The remaining three happened before your previous Anbu squad had arrived."

As for the other villages, the numbers next to them state how many people have gone missing. We have tried searching for them continuously but have had no luck until now.

There is no pattern to their activities. The people kidnapped are of both genders, all ages and all professions. The attacks are also at completely random places. We have tried forming a pattern to deduce what they will attack next, but have never succeeded."

He took a pause and looked at the Konoha ninjas. He continued, "However, there is one thing. Not a single Ninja has gone missing. The villages where we sent a ninja squad didn't experience such incidents. But if we withdraw the squad, then such attacks resume. In addition, when the Konoha Anbu squad was here, not a single attack took place. But after they left, it resumed."

Everyone in the room was completely helpless. They had tried all they could but couldn't do anything to resolve the situation. Previously, they had specifically asked for a squad that specialized in tracking. But that didn't help them either.

Yuto concluded, "So our analysis is that the culprit is someone who specializes in stealth but either isn't strong enough to face our ninjas or doesn't want to risk facing us."

Fujin's subordinates also fell into thought while Fujin focused on the map, trying to find any attack patterns. Bunjiro asked, "Why don't you deploy a ninja squad to every village? Wouldn't that solve the issue?"

Bunjiro's analysis was on point. Though they won't find the culprits, they would avoid taking any more losses. However, Yuya helplessly replied, "Unfortunately, we don't have that many ninjas. We tried asking our village for it, but the request was refused because they were afraid that these attacks would spread to other territories."

Yuto nodded and replied, "In addition, if we do that, then the defenses of Takigakure will be weakened. We have to shield against the possibility of this being an attempt to launch an attack on our ninja village."

Their explanations made Bunjiro's solution unimplementable. He didn't say anything else. However, Fujin muttered while staring at the map, "Yeah. But you might not have a country if you don't stop this."

Fujin's words caused a few frowns to appear in the room. However, no one said anything. They were concerned about it as well. And since Fujin was staring at the map, they didn't want to disturb him.

Fujin continued observing as he thought, 'Random incidents... Nothing is random. Even if they used a chance-based system, patterns will appear. If they tried avoiding that by having a human decide, even then the patterns will appear due to that person's mentality.'

He stared at the map for 5 minutes before concluding, 'Unfortunately, it is too complicated. I should have brought a Nara with me.'

Finally, Fujin stopped looking at the map. Yuya looked with a hopeful expression and asked, "Did you notice anything?"

Fujin shook his head and asked, "No. Can I kill some of your servants?"

A frown appeared on his face. He couldn't decide what to say. Seeing him struggle, an old man said, "You can, but we need a proper explanation. You can't kill anyone on a whim."

Fujin thought, 'Alright. They don't seem to be complete scumbags. So it shouldn't be done by them.'

The Ito family was one of Fujin's suspects. After all, every incident occurred in their territory. And wherever their ninjas went, the incidents didn't happen. So all the helpless people in their territory would begin looking at them as their protectors from the mysterious enemy that keeps kidnapping ordinary citizens. However, Fujin had no proof for the same. And from their previous record, such behaviour was unlikely. So, he decided to move ahead with the lead he had.

Fujin replied, "Alright, summon all your servants."

Attempting to calculate the pattern and predict the next attack was a helpless proposition. Not to mention, they could stop attacking like they did when the previous squad was here. Fujin had no intention of wasting a month in that town. So he could only solve it through a different approach.

In around 15 minutes, all the servants in the mansion were gathered in a large hall. They were confused as no information was provided. Ito Yuya asked everyone to maintain silence and stand in discipline.

Fujin looked at Yuya and asked, "Are they all?"

Yuya nodded.

Four shadow clones appeared next to Fujin. They walked towards the servants and carefully observed them. After seeing a servant, the clone said, "You can leave."

The other clones acted similarly. They took their sweet time in dismissing the servants.

Due to the time and since they didn't know what was happening, every servant who hadn't been sent away was getting more and more tense as time passed. Half an hour later, only 16 servants stood in the room.

Fujin observed them and thought, 'These were the sixteen staring at me in the corridor.'

Fujin's clones dispelled themselves as Fujin said, "Lock down the doors. You 16, stand next to each other."

The ninjas from the Ito family closed all exits while the servants nervously stood next to each other, while Fujin continued staring at them. Finally, one couldn't bear the tension. He asked, "Can you say what this is about?"

Fujin gazed at him and observed for a minute. He concluded, 'Not him.'

He said, "We have come here to investigate the recent incidents happening around this town. After looking for a long time, we realized that a servant working in the mansion has turned traitor."

Fujin's words surprised the servants and the Ito family. The Ito family ninjas looked at Fujin with skepticism. After all, they had already investigated each of their servants and hadn't found anyone suspicious.

The servants quickly began defending themselves. One said, "We will never betray the hands that feed us."

Another said, "Lord, please recheck your information. We will never do that."

Others complained as well.

Fujin said, "My information is accurate."

He made a hand seal and said, "I will give the traitor an opportunity. Confess. If you do, then I will let the Ito family handle your punishment."

He released some killing intent and stated very coldly, "But if you don't, then not only will I kill all of you, I will also slaughter each and every member of your families!"

'Boufura no Ekirei jutsu'

The Ito family frowned again. Once again, Fujin had done something that they didn't approve of. However, since he hadn't acted yet, they controlled themselves. After all, they had already talked with him.

Only Yuto noticed what Fujin did. He thought, 'A Genjutsu? But which one?'

Since Fujin used only one hand seal, Yuto couldn't identify what he did.

The servants began arguing and pleading hysterically. They didn't want their families to suffer.

However, as they shouted, they suddenly felt a pain in their stomach. They all held their stomach and fell to the ground while screaming in pain. The Ito family finally had enough, but Yuto said, "It's fine. Stay back and watch."

Meanwhile, a frown appeared behind Fujin's mask as well. He thought, 'That's strange. None of them are ninjas. And I didn't sense anyone speaking lies. Was what I felt wrong? Or is there such a good civilian spy?'

The pain soon turned into panic as the servants noticed maggots drilling through their abdomen and crawling out. They pleaded with Fujin to spare their lives.

Fujin looked at them and said emotionlessly, "For one last time, have you done anything to betray the Ito Family or passed information to someone else?"

All 16 servants replied negatively. However, Fujin's and Fumito's eyes landed on one servant. Both detected that he was lying.

A few seconds later, all the servants lost consciousness. Fujin looked at Fumito, who nodded in response.

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Chapter 336: The Right Question...

Fujin created a Shadow Clone who walked towards the servant who had lied and picked him up. Fujin said, "Give me a small room. I want to interrogate him."

Yuya asked, "What about the remaining 15? And what did you do to them?"

Fujin replied, "They were placed under a Genjutsu. They will wake up in a day or so. Keep them in the same room and have a doctor monitor their health. And they won't remember much of what happened. So make up a story for them."

Yuya replied, "Alright."

Soon, a closed room was arranged for the Konoha ninjas. Fujin placed a few privacy seals in the room and said, "Go ahead Fumito. Check what he is hiding."

Fumito nodded and walked towards the unconscious servant and placed his hand on his head. Yin chakra entered the servant's brain as Fumito began reading his memories. Fujin observed him carefully.

He thought, 'It was a boon to have a Yamanaka on my squad. In the last 6 months, I have seen him read memories several times. Thanks to that, I have gained valuable insights into the technique. I used some bandits to experiment on and I can finally read some memories.'

But my method is still too crude. I have only a 25% success rate and I can't read all the memories as the brain gets destroyed after a few minutes. Still, this is good. In a few years, I will be able to use this technique properly.'

For 30 minutes, Fumito kept reading his memories. Finally, he let him go and took a deep breath. Fujin asked, "So, what did you find?"

Fumito replied, "He isn't a traitor. Or at least, he doesn't consider himself as one. That is why we couldn't detect any lies earlier."

He lives alone as his family died around a year ago. He knew who the killer was but had no proof and couldn't do anything as the killer held a lot of influence in the Ito family. He could only bottle it up in himself and continued living bitterly.

However, a few months ago, a man approached him. He knew about his situation and promised to get justice for his family if he passed information about any foreign ninjas coming into this mansion."

His words generated complicated emotions in the Konoha ninjas. Bunjiro sighed and said, "No wonder he didn't consider himself a traitor."

Yugao asked, "Did he pass the information?"

Fumito nodded. He said, "He agreed but added that he will only do it once. The man agreed and eliminated the person who had killed his family."

In return, he informed the man when our previous squad arrived here. After passing on the information, the man gave him another deal. If he passed them information for the second time, he would eliminate the ones who supported the killer and allowed him to live in peace without any consequences for his actions. He agreed once again.

When we were analyzing the map and the situation, he went out to report our arrival to that man."

A frown formed on the faces of the Konoha ninjas. Yugao said, "That means that our arrival is likely known to the enemy."

Fujin nodded. He asked, "Did he know anything about the man?"

Fumito replied, "Nothing apart from his appearance."

Fujin replied, "Alright, draw his sketch. It might help if that person wasn't a ninja. Otherwise, this is a dead-end as well."

Fumito nodded. Though he got a lot of information from the servant, it wasn't very useful for their mission. The only person who mattered was that man, and the servant knew almost nothing about him.

Fumito began drawing a detailed sketch while Fujin analyzed, 'No wonder it took me so long to find this guy. If he was just a spy, then it would have been much easier. The excitement I felt earlier should have been from this guy seeing an opportunity to get rid of the ones that helped the killer. And until I asked whether they passed any information, he hadn't told any lies.

And my threat of killing their family was useless against him as well. Regardless, this route will lead to a dead end as well. What should I do next?'

Fujin began thinking of a plan. By the time Fumito was done, Fujin strategized, 'The next step will be waiting patiently. I can make a decision based on whether such incidents occur again. If they do, then I'll need to use the clues to track and hunt them. If not, then I will have to make an arrangement for us to stay here for a long time...'

Fumito handed Fujin a paper and said, "This is how he looked."

Fujin observed the sketch. He didn't identify the man. He said, "Let's leave it to the Ito family to find this guy."

His team nodded. Searching an entire town would be too tedious and time-consuming with just 4 people.

Fujin deactivated and collected the privacy seals he had attached and exited the room with his team. Yuya immediately asked, "Did you find anything?"

Fujin nodded, handed him the sketch and asked, "Do any of you know this man?"

Everyone observed the sketch but couldn't identify him. Fujin said, "He is the one who bribed this servant to inform him about the movement of foreign ninjas. So the knowledge of our arrival is already known to the enemies. Put the town under lockdown and find this man. He could be the key to helping us understand what is happening in your territory."

Fujin's words enraged the Ito family members. Yuya asked, "He took bribes to betray us?"

Fujin looked at Fumito who explained what the 'bribe' was. The explanation doused their anger. Yuya sighed and said, "I can understand his thought process. But this is still a betrayal of our trust. He won't be able to escape punishment."

Fujin replied, "While I don't care what you do with your people, I'd advise you against it. Like others, he won't know what happened. So we can use him to pass false information to the enemies.

If you can't find that man, you can keep an eye on him to find that man later on. In addition, you can also grant secret protection to his targets to trap and capture any attackers.

Once the issue is resolved, feel free to do what you want to with him."

Yuya thought about Fujin's words and immediately agreed. He quickly dispatched his ninjas to investigate the town. At the same time, he made living arrangements for the Konoha Anbu in the mansion.

The Konoha ninjas made themselves comfortable. Sensing the opportunity, Fujin called Yuya and Yuto into their room.

Yuya asked, "What did you want to discuss? And why did you tell us to come alone?"

Fujin looked straight into his eyes and said, "I have a doubt. I'm wondering if you could provide me with a satisfactory answer."

Yuya replied kindly, "Just say. We will do our best to fulfill any of your requests."

Fujin didn't break eye contact and asked, "Is the Ito family behind these events?"

Fujin's question shocked everyone in the room. Yuto quickly looked at Yuya who looked angry. Yuya controlled his temper and asked in an unpleasant tone, "What do you mean?"

From his reply, Fujin could see that Yuya wasn't a part of it. He said, "Stop being emotional and think rationally. Such a large incident without the support of someone from inside is difficult. Do you suspect anyone from your family is behind this? Or perhaps providing them with information that could assist them in some way?"

Yuya thought for a minute before shaking his head. He said, "I can't think of anyone doing something like this. There is nothing for our family to gain. Some rival families may have a hand, but even after investigating, we didn't find any proof."

Fujin replied, "Alright. Keep an eye out. Though I don't have any proof either, this being an inside job has a high possibility. For that reason, I will only be informing you two about the next step of my plan."

Yuya got serious. Yuto asked, "What plan did you come up with?"

Fujin replied, "If the attacks continue happening, we will begin the hunt depending on the situation. But, if the attacks stop like last time, then we will stay here for a week. You will take that opportunity to see how we act here. And you will arrange for 4 ninjas you trust to disguise as us.

We will sneak out during the night without alerting anyone and those 4 ninjas will continue disguising as us to deter any future incidents."

Yuya and Yuto fell silent and began analyzing. Finally, Yuto let out a sigh and said, "Looks like that is the only feasible action."

Fujin nodded and said, "If the incidents continue happening in the future, then we can meet someplace outside the town secretly and create a plan to stop them. But if they keep hiding, there isn't much we can do."

Yuto nodded. They discussed some more details before leaving.

While walking back, Yuya sighed and said, "Looks like this is our only way. The village won't send us more ninjas and Konoha doesn't want to station a squad here permanently."

Yuto nodded and replied, "Yeah. But this is better than nothing. It could buy a few months of peace until they realize that something is wrong. We can use that time to investigate further."

Yuya nodded. Since the information was leaked, they didn't have any hopes of catching the culprits and could just wish for temporary peace. Unknown to them, their prediction would turn out to be completely wrong!

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Chapter 337: A Creepy Feeling!

Yuya and Yuto began overseeing the task of searching for the man. They showed the sketch around the town. However, not a single person similar to the sketch was seen by anyone in the town.

Yuya went to Fujin and reported to him the state of investigation. Fujin said, "Looks like that man is a ninja. He should have used the Transformation jutsu when the servant saw him."

Yuya asked, "What do we do now?"

Fujin instructed, "It's fine. Continue the search until everyone is asked. Once it is completed, inform me. Inform me as soon as the ninjas stop the search."

Yuya was surprised by the weird command. But he nodded. His ninjas investigated until the evening before giving up. Yuya informed Fujin that the search had stopped and the ninjas would return in a couple of minutes. Fujin nodded and dismissed him.

Around 10 minutes after the ninjas returned, a chakra field covered the entire town! It was activated by Fujin, who sat at the top of the mansion.

He thought, 'I can't sense any other ninja. It looks like he is still being careful. That sucks. I was hoping that he'd drop his guard after the ninjas returned. Anyways, time to mess with him.'

In one ordinary house in the town, a man began sweating. He held his breath and didn't dare to even move a muscle. After 2 minutes, when the chakra field disappeared, he finally relaxed.

He thought, 'What a crazy bastard! Did he cover the entire town with his chakra field? Fortunately, I kept my chakra suppressed. If I had relaxed because those annoying Ninjas gave up, I'd be dead now.'

He collected himself and decided, 'It's best to not use my chakra for a while. I might not get lucky every time. But as long as I don't use my chakra, I will be safe.'

After consoling himself, he calmed down. However, his night wasn't peaceful. Throughout the night, Fujin and Fumito kept activating their chakra fields alternately. The first started to do them at an interval of 10 minutes. But then they suddenly changed the interval to 1 minute.

They followed it up by going completely random. At some point, both stopped and didn't sense any more before suddenly sensing after 3 hours! The man didn't dare to sleep in case he accidentally released some chakra during his sleep. And he didn't dare to consume a soldier pill to stay awake as that would make it difficult for him to hide his chakra.

So he had a sleepless night followed by a sleepless day and another sleepless night. However, he didn't blow up his cover. Fujin finally decided to stop as he had to leave after 6 days and the Ito family wouldn't be able to replicate such sensing skills.

During these two days, reports of missing people were sent continuously to the Ito family. However, Fujin didn't move out as those incidents took place before they arrived or just after they had arrived. So there wasn't much point in moving out. The Ito family could only send their own squads out.

After two days passed, the reports stopped coming. As they had predicted, the incidents had all stopped. For three days straight, not a single incident happened. Knowing Fujin's plan, Yuya began spreading the news that the incidents had stopped because the culprits were afraid of Konoha ninjas.

Within a day, everyone in the town and neighbouring villages knew that the Konoha ninjas were responsible for their peace. He also said that the Konoha squad will be staying in their territory until the culprits are found! That lifted the morale of the common people.

However, out of everyone's expectations, a day later, a report arrived that shocked the Ito family and everyone living in their territory! Every single person from another village had suddenly gone missing. In addition, over 25 reports of missing people were filed from all around their territory. The entire mansion was in chaos.

Fujin and his team were immediately summoned to the Meeting room. Fujin analyzed the information and said, "It looks like they have decided to confront us."

Everyone nodded. Fujin asked, "Do you have any plans?"

Yuto replied, "Our initial plan was to attack one spot with all our forces. However, the sudden attack has caused a lot of panic in the population. We will have to split up to restore calm in the public."

He pointed at the map and continued, "You guys go to the village with missing people. I have already gone to 4 of them and haven't found any clues. I will go to this village which had 5 incidents. The rest will investigate the other cases."

Fujin nodded and replied, "Alright. We will take our leave then."

Fujin didn't mind the plan. He wanted to move just with his squad in either case. The Taki ninjas would only get in their way. Yuto was the only Taki ninja with decent capabilities. The rest could barely be considered Chunins.

Yuto replied, "Good luck. I hope that you can resolve this issue in one go."

Fujin nodded and his squad left the town and began moving towards their target. Around the same time, a couple of dozen more ninjas left the town. Yuto moved in a direction opposite Fujin's squad while the others were dispersed in all directions.

Though the village where Fujin was heading wasn't close, it wasn't too far away from the town either. After 30 minutes of continuous running at the optimal speed, Fujin's squad reached the village.

The squad stayed a sufficient distance from the village and hid among the trees while observing the village. Fujin's eyes stopped glowing as he muttered, "That's strange. I'm not seeing anyone's chakra. But the village is giving me strange creeps."

Bunjiro replied, "Maybe it is because the village is empty."

Fujin replied, "No. That's not it. Be on your guard. Fumito, let's investigate the village."

Fumito nodded. Both he and Fujin activated their chakra fields. However, neither sensed anyone or anything strange. But Fujin had a frown on his face. He said, "Let's go. Everyone keep your chakra field active. Be on your guard and stay behind me. Retreat when I say so without any questions. Is that understood?"

His team nodded. They began walking towards the village. All four were actively sensing. In a minute, they appeared at the entrance of the village. Fujin stopped walking as he stared into the village with hesitation in his eyes. His team also stopped behind him and wondered whether he discovered anything.

Fujin stood for two minutes but still couldn't make sense of anything. He thought, 'My first thought is Fuinjutsu. But this doesn't feel like it. I normally understand it very well when something is hidden with the help of seals. What is th...?'

As he was thinking, his instincts warned him. Suddenly, a wide grin appeared behind his mask as he thought, 'Not bad at all. You almost had me!'

A sword appeared in his right hand and he swung it forward with all his strength as he said, "Retreat!"

In the next moment, Fujin's sword met with a hardened black fist! Yugao, Fumito and Bunjiro immediately jumped backwards. The sword cut into the fist for a few millimeters but couldn't pierce any deeper. Instead, the force of the punch overwhelmed Fujin's sword. But Fujin wasn't bothered and instead used the force of the punch to be sent flying backwards. He laughed loudly and shouted in excitement, "Very Impressive. Consider me impressed!"

Though Fujin laughed and said those words, they were only a taunt to provoke the ones hiding inside the barrier and make them come outside. He didn't want to fight on a battlefield created by the enemy. Unfortunately, no one fell for his taunt.

Fujin continued moving backwards as he built up a large amount of chakra. Hundreds of shurikens, explosion tags, kunais, spikes, earth spears and a few jutsus appeared out of thin air and came rushing at the Konoha ninjas.

'Wind Release: Infinite Breakthrough jutsu'

Fujin released a supercharged Infinite Breakthrough jutsu at a massive speed and with dozens of wind blades and a couple of Vacuum Waves in it. The jutsu clashed with the incoming attacks!

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Chapter 338: Failing for the First Time!

The incoming weapons and jutsus clashed with Fujin's attack. Without any suspense, all were knocked back towards the village. In fact, the Wind current was so strong that it looked like it would uproot the entire village!

However, a massive invisible barrier appeared around the village. The winds hit the barrier and couldn't penetrate through it!

Fujin observed the barrier and thought, 'Fortunately I learnt those new seals. Looks like this is the work of a Fuinjutsu Grandmaster. I almost fell into a deadly trap!'

While it was easy to become a SealMaster, Fuinjutsu Grandmasters were very rare. The only one with whom Fujin interacted during missions was Uchiha Sora. Apart from him, Jiraiya, Hiruzen, Tsunade and Danzo were the only ones he knew in Konoha that were Grandmasters for sure.

Apart from them, there was one Fuinjutsu Grandmaster who made inscribed seals for the Anbu, but Fujin never found his identity. Fujin did speculate there to be a few more in Konoha, but the knowledge wasn't publicly known. It was the same for the other villages. No information was available on who reached this level of Fuinjutsu due to how easy it was to hide.

Though Fujin had come across seals inscribed by Grandmaster previously, they were in places where he had expected them to be and without anyone actively managing them. This was the first time for him to be ambushed on the battlefield by one. So he had never experienced how the advanced seals placed by them would be perceived by his senses. Fortunately, his long training in Fuinjutsu prevented him from walking into a trap.

Fujin thought, 'It'd be great if I can see who this person is. Once the identity is leaked, he or she will be forced to stay hidden. But for now, I need to draw them out.'

While the barrier blocked the attack, Fujin and his teammates immediately retreated away from the village. Though they didn't sense anyone, they realized that many ninjas were hiding in the village. Inside the barrier, a frown formed on the face of the ninja who punched Fujin's sword.

Seeing no way to lure the Konoha ninjas in, he shouted, "Chase and kill them!"

Immediately, dozens of ninjas rushed out of the barrier. In addition, 3 squads of ninjas appeared on the flanks and behind the Konoha ninjas.

As soon as they appeared, the Konoha ninjas became very serious. Fujin wondered, 'Iwagakure ninjas? What is Iwagakure planning by kidnapping so many people? This isn't their style of action. And...'

Fujin looked at the large man that had punched his sword and thought, 'What is so important that they sent Kitsuchi on this mission? Shit, this guy is considered S rank. Though he is probably among the weaker S ranked ninjas, he will still be a very difficult opponent. We need to retreat.'

Fujin's teammates also saw Kitsuchi and had a grim expression. One S ranked ninja along with 96 Iwa ninjas was too much for them to handle. And they didn't know if anyone else was still hidden in the village.

At the same time, Kitsuchi looked at Fujin and thought, 'Suzuki Fujin... So close. Had he stepped in, I could have killed him. But such alertness...'

An old man stepped next to him and said, "This young man has a good grasp of Fuinjutsu. It's possible that he is a Grandmaster as well. Don't take him lightly."

Kitsuchi nodded and said, "He has a lot of other annoying capabilities as well. This will be a costly battle."

If Fujin was aware that Kitsuchi was aware of his identity, he would be surprised. In addition, he would also smell something fishy. Unfortunately, he couldn't read Kitsuchi's thoughts. And he had already stepped into their trap. He appeared next to his team and said, "Formation 77, Rear."

His squad immediately understood the command. They stood in a triangle formation with Fujin at the center. All three grabbed a scroll and opened it while facing outwards and made the confrontation hand seal.

Immediately, 33 Kunai with explosive tags attached were launched from each scroll.

Seeing the attack, a few of the Iwa ninjas slammed their hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Earth Wall jutsu'

Multiple layers of walls appeared in front of them, surrounding the Konoha ninjas from all sides. The kunais hit the wall and exploded. One layer of the walls was destroyed by the explosion but the layers behind it stood. However, this was just the start of Fujin's tactic.

Four Shadow Clones of Fujin appeared around them. Without wasting any time, all flickered in front of the walls.

'Wind Release: Vacuum Serial Wave jutsu'

At the same time, Fujin's squad moved towards the enemy squad at their rear. Fumito rapidly weaved hand seals.

'Lightning Release: False Darkness jutsu'

Fujin's clones launched dozens of Vacuum blades at the walls. All pierced through the walls with ease and moved towards the Iwa ninjas. A smile formed on the faces of Fujin's clones. Hitting enemies who thought that they were safe was a tactic that had yielded him too many kills.

At the same time, the Lightning spears launched by Fumito broke through the walls and moved towards the ninjas behind them.

However, something happened that shocked Fujin's clones. As the Vacuum Blades approached the Iwa ninjas, every one of them got out of their way. And they didn't do it by just marginally avoiding them. Instead, they dodged leaving sufficient distance to not be harmed by any suction force. It was almost as if they were waiting in anticipation to dodge the incoming attacks.

The four Iwa ninjas dodged Fumito's Lightning spears as well. But the Konoha ninjas had anticipated that. Fujin followed up by shooting 8 Vacuum Bullets, 2 for each ninja, from a very close range. However, as soon as the Vacuum Bullets were shot, the Iwa ninjas immediately jumped out of the way, almost as if they knew that Fujin would attack them in this manner. All the bullets were dodged safely.

Fujin's eyes widened. He thought, 'What the hell? They dodged at such close range? Wait, I don't sense any chakra disappearing from my clones' attacks either. Did they all dodge?'

Fujin didn't understand. If he used the Vacuum bullets at such close range, only Elite Jounins would be able to dodge in such a convincing manner. But the chakra levels of the four ninjas were much lower. In addition, his clones' attacks were dodged as well. But there was no way that all the dozens of Iwa ninjas were Elite Jounins.

Unfortunately, he didn't have any time to make sense of the situation. The four Iwa Jounins facing them counterattacked. Though the Konoha ninjas managed to deal with the attacks, it provided enough time for the remaining Iwa ninjas to come swarming towards them.

He thought, 'This is bad. My tactic's success depends on killing a few enemies quickly and demotivating the rest to chase us due to the costs they would have to incur. But since neither Vacuum waves nor bullets managed to kill anyone, we will be swarmed by them.'

Fujin had a bad feeling. He properly observed the Iwa ninjas. They didn't come flooding towards the Konoha ninjas to abuse their numerical superiority. Instead, only 7 additional squads rushed at them. The others quickly began establishing a perimeter to stop any escape. But they were very close as well and could jump into the battle at any moment. It was as if the Iwa ninjas wanted them dead at all costs.

Seeing the situation, Two of Fujin's clones moved towards a couple of incoming squads and stalled them. The remaining two clones got together and faced the direction which had the maximum number of Iwa ninjas.

'Fire Release: Searing Migraine jutsu'

'Wind Release: Infinite Breakthrough jutsu'

The two jutsus combined seamlessly and a massive Firestorm was launched at the incoming Iwa ninjas. However, before they could be hit, Kitsuchi slammed his hands on the ground.

A massive Earth Wall appeared in front of the Iwa ninjas. The Fire and Wind combination jutsu hit the wall and was about to move around and over it, but the size of the wall kept increasing and surprisingly kept up with the expanding firestorm. The wall curved to properly protect all the Iwa ninjas so that the Firestorm would harmlessly pass by.

Though the attack was stopped to the clones' dismay, it stopped the Iwa ninjas behind the wall temporarily, allowing Fujin and his remaining clones a breather.

One of the clones flickered in front of the incoming squad and shot a dozen Air bullets. Once again, all the bullets were dodged. The clone stopped their counterattack while analyzing, 'They know about my skills. They move as soon as I attack. The same should have happened with Vacuum waves. But why would everyone be aware of my skills?'

Suddenly, the clone flickered again and appeared behind them. The Iwa ninjas quickly dispersed in four different directions immediately. Surprisingly, a cut appeared on the back of each of their necks. Before it could cut through, two of the ninjas hardened their bodies using Iron Skin jutsu and stopped the attack. The remaining two dropped dead.

The clone analyzed, 'Looks like they don't know all my tricks. Air Bullets, Infinite Breakthrough and Vacuum jutsus were anticipated. But Blade of Wind caught them off-guard.'

As soon as the two ninjas died, a squad from the perimeter moved and attacked the clone, keeping him busy. So despite the killing, the situation of the Konoha ninjas didn't improve.

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Chapter 339: Countering Fujin!

While one of Fujin's clones had some success in killing, the other clone couldn't get rid of his opponents so easily and was stuck fighting. He realized the same too. He analyzed, 'Did Iwa know that I was coming here? Regardless, mid-ranged Wind jutsus isn't all I can do.'

Suddenly, a massive amount of wind was blasted behind him. He disappeared and appeared next to a ninja in the blink of an eye and slashed his sword at his neck. The ninja immediately raised his kunai while moving backwards and leaning backwards.

At the same time, his teammates attacked Fujin's clone with shurikens. The sword sliced through the kunai, but the ninja leaned back enough to avoid the sword and the wind chakra flowing along it. The clone couldn't keep attacking due to the incoming attacks.

Fujin's clone used Assassin's Rush again and tried attacking another ninja but the ninja dodged once again while the others attacked the clone. This time, the clone hardened his body with the Iron Skin jutsu to block the counterattacks. At the same time, wind flowed along his blade as his sword released a Wind slash along with the swing of his blade.

The Iwa ninjas quickly got out of the way of the slash and weaved the hand signs for the Iron Skin jutsu. All four of them saw their skins turning black and hard to defend against the accompanying wind slashes. However, dozens of slashes still appeared on their bodies, including a few cuts across their necks, killing them on the spot.

The clone looked at them coldly. The hand signs made him realize a crucial point. He thought, 'They are too familiar with my fighting style. If not for Susumu's Genjutsu, they would have managed to block all the accompanying slashes.'

Though the Iwa ninjas thought that they had used the jutsu, in reality, they hadn't. While Hiruzen had asked him to keep the technique a secret, the current circumstances didn't allow him to hold back much. That said, it was still difficult for the bystanders to figure out why the Iwa ninjas didn't use the jutsu to defend themselves.

Fujin's clone turned his eyes towards the two squads rushing towards him and analyzed, 'All of these guys are Jounins! Though their speed isn't as high as mine, they are able to anticipate my attacks, movements and react at the last moment to barely save themselves while the others distract me. Even though I will win eventually, I don't have the luxury of time. Once the remaining Iwa ninjas rush in, I will be the one at greater risk.'

Fujin himself felt the same issue. Despite having more chakra than his clones and his teammates to assist, his performance wasn't much better as they were facing two Elite Jounins along with multiple Jounins. Though he managed to kill 5 ninjas, he wasn't happy.

He analyzed, 'These guys never come too close to me so that they will have sufficient time to dodge. In addition, every one of them is aiding others in defense. And all their attacks come from my blindspots.'

It is almost as if someone has properly studied my fighting style and trained these guys to fight most optimally against me. The only way I can overturn this situation and get a quick victory is by spamming Shadow Clone and eliminating their advantage of numbers.

But, in this situation, dividing my chakra that much is suicidal. Fifty clones fighting means the amount of chakra I use would be ten times higher than what I'm currently burning.'

He let out a sigh and thought, 'It would have been so much more convenient if I was here by myself. I could just run away like I did in the Land of Wind. Unfortunately, though these three are quick, they don't share my expertise in running away.'

Unknowingly, Fujin fell into a similar situation as his sensei had not too long ago. But it was unknown whether he would make the same choice as his sensei or think of any other way.

On the other side of the battlefield, separated by a Firestorm and a massive wall, Kitsuchi thought, 'I had to waste so much chakra. If it wasn't for his Wind Vacuum attacks, we could have just escaped underground and sneaked upon them unharmed from this attack. But I can't keep waiting. The more time I waste here, the more of my men will die at Fujin's hands. I can't afford to lose so many well-trained ninjas.'

He suddenly increased the amount of chakra he poured into the Wall. Thousands of spikes appeared on the outer surface of the wall. In an instant, all were launched at the Konoha ninjas!

The two clones saw the incoming attacks. They couldn't dodge as the attack would hit Fujin and the rest who were behind them. One clone slammed his hands on the ground while the other charged up his chakra.

'Wind Release: Vacuum Cannon jutsu'

'Earth Release: Earth Wall jutsu'

A clone shot a Vacuum Cannon at Kitsuchi. Immediately after, a wall rose from the ground. In terms of size and majesticness, it was far less impressive when compared to the wall raised by Kitsuchi. However, it did its job by blocking the earth spikes moving towards Fujin and his team.

At the same time, the Vacuum Cannon pierced through the gigantic wall and headed straight at Kitsuchi. A look of surprise appeared on Kitsuchi's face. He immediately dodged by moving underground. He thought, 'Roshi wasn't kidding. This kid is very dangerous.'

He concentrated chakra on his body.

'Earth Release: Earth Instantaneous Body jutsu'

Kitsuchi suddenly began moving towards Fujin's squad at a fast speed from underground. Fujin's clones sensed him and immediately shot Vacuum Bullets into the ground. To their surprise, Kitsuchi maneuvered around and dodged all the bullets and passed from under them. The clones thought, 'So fast while under the ground? Even Renjiro isn't this agile under the ground!'

Fujin immediately sensed the massive chakra moving towards him from under the ground. A frown formed on his face as chakra gathered on his fist. Just before Kitsuchi was about to reach his location, he punched the ground with all his might.

The punch instantly cracked the ground. The ground trembled as a strong shockwave moved towards Kitsuchi. The shaking caught the remaining Iwa ninjas off-guard and they immediately retreated momentarily in order to not give an opening to the Konoha ninjas.

Kitsuchi, who was about to launch a couple of jutsus, was shocked. He immediately hardened his skin. Due to the shockwave, he felt some impact of the punch. Sweat appeared on his face as he thought, 'Fortunately, I used the Iron Skin jutsu. Otherwise, I could have been injured. Roshi didn't mention this absurd strength. Did he manage to hide some cards while fighting Roshi?'

Unlike Kitsuchi, Fujin didn't bother thinking much. The punch had brought him a slight breather. He immediately shot a dozen Vacuum Bullets at Kitsuchi. Kitsuchi immediately moved. However, the Vacuum bullets fired by Fujin targeted all his escape routes as well. He could only move in one direction. By twisting his body far beyond what someone of his size should have been capable of, he barely managed to avoid the attack. The Vacuum bullet grazed his left arm, leaving a slight cut despite the Iron Skin jutsu protecting him.

Kitsuchi immediately appeared out of the ground. Before Fujin could attack, he said, "Suzuki Fujin. You are very impressive for your age."

Fujin's eyes widened. Seeing Kitsuchi facing them, the other Iwa ninjas quickly surrounded the Konoha ninjas in a couple of seconds. Fujin glanced and understood, 'Looks like escaping normally is not possible. But I guess that isn't my main concern right now.'

Since the Iwa ninjas weren't attacking, Fujin asked, "How do you know my identity? And why are you targeting the civilians?"

Fujin had understood by now that Roshi had leaked all his combat abilities and fighting style to Iwa. But he was surprised to know that Iwa managed to link the Spectral Swordsman's identity to his real identity. Of course, what disturbed him the most was that they had prepared an army of Jounins specifically to counter his style of combat!

Kitsuchi smirked and replied, "You gave us quite a scare with your fight against Roshi. Did you think that we can't see behind your mask?"

Fujin watched back without replying. Kitsuchi's statement gave no information. More importantly, he was building up a massive amount of chakra! Fujin understood why the remaining Iwa ninjas weren't jumping on them.

Of course, Kitsuchi won't give him the answer. When a secret gets leaked, a lot of suspicions arise. If Fujin suspected a Konoha higher-up, it could decrease his loyalty to the village. Kitsuchi looked at Fujin and thought, 'Six months of planning just to bait and trap him. It's time to deal the final blow.'

Six months ago, Iwagakure :

Kitsuchi walked into Onoki's office and put a few files on his desk and said in a tired voice, "It's too difficult to trap him, old man!"

Onoki looked at all the files on his desk. Every file had information on Suzuki Fujin. Unknown to Fujin and anyone in Konoha, Iwagakure had begun scheming against Fujin a few weeks after his clash against Roshi!

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Chapter 340: A Six Month Long Scheme!

Kitsuchi reported, "There is very little information on Fujin. None of our spies in Konoha have seen him in action or heard about his abilities. The only information they have is his fights during the Chunin exam three years ago. And that information is very outdated.

And since he is in the Anbu, it is very difficult to track when he leaves on missions and to where. So trying to ambush him during a mission is almost impossible. We will have to lay a bait and hope Konoha sends him over."

A frown formed on Onoki's face. He said, "Though it is normal for ninjas to hide their skills, some information eventually leaks out. To be so secretive... Hiruzen must be scheming something. If it wasn't for sending Roshi on that mission, we would have been completely in the dark. It's an even greater reason to eliminate him now. Any news from Suna?"

Kitsuchi shook his head and replied, "No. I wanted to get information about the ninjas who wreaked havoc there and see if that was this kid as well. However, none of our spies saw the culprits and Suna has refused to give any information regarding the culprits."

Onoki chuckled and commented, "It looks like they have been badly humiliated to hide it so deeply."

Kitsuchi said, "So our only source of information is Roshi."

Onoki replied, "It's fine. He should have used most of his tricks against Roshi. Just make a plan based on it. Did you decide on the location?"

Roshi nodded and replied, "The Land of Waterfall."

He opened a map and laid pointed at a location and said, "Around a year ago, our scheme against the Ito family was suspected to be destroyed by the Spectral Swordsman. 2 of our Anbu died while the Kawaguchi family forces were decimated. So there is a chance that he will be sent here once again.

If he does, we will eliminate him and withdraw in order to avoid any retaliatory actions by Konoha and prevent escalating the conflict. If he doesn't and Konoha doesn't send anyone equally powerful, then I will destroy the Ito family.

We use their territory as a base and change the power structure in nearby territories. So at least a third of the influential families in the Land of Waterfall will be on our side. By the time Takigakure and Konoha react, it will be too late for them to do anything."

Kitsuchi further explained the details of his plan to target the civilians to create panic in the Land of Waterfall.

Onoki thought for a bit and nodded. He replied, "It's a good plan. Both situations would be advantageous for us. The second situation will be a great diplomatic victory for us. It will offset the losses we had in the Land of Grass and make the situation more advantageous for us.

However, if we manage to kill him, it will be another diplomatic disaster for us as the Land of Waterfall will be completely pushed into Konoha's camp just like the Land of Grass. But, considering his potential, it's a trade-off I'm willing to make."

Kitsuchi nodded. He agreed with Onoki's decision. Someone forcing Roshi to resort to the Tailed Beast mode and still managing to escape at the age of 14 was a huge future threat to Iwagakure.

Onoki asked, "Have you begun the training?"

Kitsuchi nodded. He, along with Onoki, had discussed Fujin's fighting style, jutsus, their mastery and specialities extensively with Roshi and Gin. After analyzing Fujin's skills, they came up with a proper training plan to counter Fujin.

Kitsuchi replied, "I have selected 43 Jounins and 52 Elite Chunins so far. I am still looking for around 30 more. The ninjas I have selected all have good speed and reactions.

I have already begun training the ones who don't know, the Iron Skin jutsu. The ones who know it are working on reducing the hand seals needed for the jutsu. This jutsu will make most of his Wind and Fire Release jutsus pointless against them. The only threats it leaves are the Vacuum jutsus and getting hit by his sword directly."

Onoki nodded and thought, 'Good. I would have done the same. I could have created a plan myself, but I'm not sure how my back will be during the next war. Kitsuchi will have to be the one to lead our forces on the battlefield. This will be a good opportunity to test his tactical skills. As for leadership, he has already proven that in the previous war.'

As his back problems kept worsening, Onoki knew that he would need to find a successor quickly. Unfortunately, though Kitsuchi was strong and was considered a rank S ninja, he was no match for the other Kages.

The Fourth Raikage, the Sannins, and the Fourth Mizukage all outmatched him by a large margin. Rasa was the only one he could compete against. So Onoki was reluctant to pass the Tsuchikage position to him.

Kitsuchi continued, "The bigger problem will come next. Roshi said that Fujin could flicker continuously without making any seals. He seems to have trained his body a lot to increase his natural speed to a ridiculous level as well. And he has mastered Assassin's Rush jutsu on top of it.

In order to counter that, I want you to ask Han to aid in our training. It is impossible to increase their speed to such a level quickly. But we can raise their reaction speed and ability to defend, dodge and survive by letting Han make them experience what facing someone so fast will feel like.

In fact, we could do even better. Roshi said that though Fujin was faster than him, his speed is still lesser than Han's. So after facing Han for a few months, they might be able to see and react to Fujin very easily."

A smile formed on Onoki's face as he replied, "Alright, I will send Han over."

Kitsuchi understood why Onoki smiled. He thought, 'This will allow Han to interact closely with our ninjas who may fear him. More importantly, after this training is done, all the Elite Chunins will be as strong as Jounins.

We will have around 60 new Jounins who will have very high survival skills during the next war. If our luck is good, then a couple of Jounins could also reach the Elite Jounin level.'

Kitsuchi added, "I also need a Fuinjutsu Grandmaster to trap Fujin. I will send a few squads over to scout the Land of Waterfall and create a proper plan of action."

Onoki nodded and assigned one of their 3 Fuinjutsu Grandmasters to aid Kitsuchi. The two discussed a few more details before Onoki said, "Good work. I will leave this matter to you."

Kitsuchi nodded and took his leave. Onoki looked at his back and thought, 'Since the time of peace started, the readiness of our ninjas has dropped several levels. Especially after Minato died and Konoha became weaker.

This is a good opportunity to start rebuilding our famed Elite armies. Once this mission is completed and the ninjas have high motivation, I will push Kitsuchi to expand the numbers of this force to 500 ninjas. At the same time, I will start rebuilding the Thousand Ninja Elite army units that we are famed for.

With the Third Raikage and the Fourth Hokage no longer alive, we won't suffer similar losses as in the last Great War. Once the armies are raised, the only thing missing will be commanders. I, Roshi, Han and Kitsuchi could handle the next war. But we will need the next generation to step up for the wars after that.

Thankfully, this generation does have some promising youngsters. Akatsuchi has shown a lot of promise. So has my granddaughter. There is also the Deidara kid who has the Explosion Release Kekkei Genkai. If these 3 reach the S rank, then Iwa will be safe for another 50 years.'

After Kitsuchi left, he selected more suitable ninjas and began the training with full intensity. For 3 months straight, the ninjas trained with a plan tailored to counter Fujin. Every single ninja became capable of using the Iron Skin jutsu rapidly and had sufficient defenses to defend against normal Wind jutsus.

At the same time, Han used his speed in order to give the ninjas a taste of what a fight against Fujin would be like. The initial phase of that training resulted in a lot of pain for the ninjas as they couldn't even see Han move. However, after 3 months of being beaten daily, the reactions of the ninjas improved several times!

They could finally protect themselves from Han's attacks. As an added bonus, the beatings also motivated them to learn the Iron Skin jutsu better. A few ninjas managed to learn how to use that jutsu without any hand seals.

Three months later, Kitsuchi left for the Land of Waterfall along with the ninjas who were adequately prepared in his opinion. The remaining ninjas continued their training and joined his campaign at a later stage.