

Calamity 241

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 241: The Spectral Swordsman

The Land of Waterfall :

The Land of Waterfall was a country filled with mountains, rivers and waterfalls. Due to the same reason, it also had various valleys which added to the beautiful scenery of the country.

In one such unnamed valley was a secret base. 12 ninjas were busy staring at a map and making plans. All 12 ninjas had hidden their faces using demon-faced masks.

After some time, a ninja pointed at a spot on the map and said, "Captain, according to our information, Lord Ito Yuya and his entourage have already crossed the border. They will cross this bridge in around 2 hours."

The captain nodded. He didn't make any decision. A ninja standing next to him said in a soft voice, "Yes, but he is guarded by Hara Yuto. Even with us twelve acting together, defeating him will be difficult. He is an expert at Water Release. He could defend the Noble Yuya and counterattack at the same time."

The captain nodded grimly and said, "Yuto was away on a secret mission for a long time. I didn't expect him to return along with Yuya. It complicates our situation."

Suddenly, a snort was heard. The twelve ninjas looked towards the source of the sound. Two more masked ninjas were sitting in the cave as well. One was wearing an elephant mask while the other was wearing a red ape mask.

The ape-masked ninja scolded, "What are you afraid of with us here? Do your attack as planned. We will sneak attack Hara Yuto and kill him. Even if he is an expert in Water Release, it is weak against our Earth Release. The mission will go as planned."

The captain looked at him and nodded, "With your assurance, I can rest assured."

He looked at his subordinates and said with determination in his voice, "Our Kawaguchi family has been suppressed by the Ito family for far too long! Today, with the aid of our friend from Iwagakure, we will eliminate their successor and their strongest guardian! With this first step, our family will rise up steadily and take control of the northwestern area of our country!"

His words sent a wave of excitement through his subordinates. They all shouted in excitement, "Yes Captain!"

The Anbu from Iwa saw their excitement and sniggered secretly. They thought, 'What fools! Getting excited about ruling just one small part of this small rural country.'

However, they didn't say anything. Their orders were to slowly expand Iwagakure's influence in Takigakure. If they succeed, then in the next war, Iwagakure could attack the Land of Fire through 3 countries without having to face much resistance. It would force Konoha's forces to spread too thin. After all, Konoha's location meant that it would have to defend against all four major villages.

The captain began laying out the plans. He set a few pieces on the map and said, "We will set up our ambush just away from this bridge. This place doesn't have any water bodies close by, so Yuto's water manipulation will be restricted.

After we kill them, we will burn their bodies and dump them close to the Land of Fire. We will plant some pieces of evidence that they were attacked by Konoha who retreated after killing them. This way, no suspicion will be cast upon us and Lord Daimyo will restrict the country's dealings with the Land of Fire."

Everyone nodded. The Anbu ninjas from Iwagakure were also satisfied with the plan. The Captain looked at their satisfaction and sighed in relief. Though their family had ambitions, they definitely didn't have the power to lord over one region. It was only due to the support from Iwagakure that they had the guts to make such a plan. So he had to ensure that the Iwa Anbu were satisfied.

With the preparations made, they set off immediately. They moved out of the valley and moved rapidly and stealthily on top of the trees. Within 5 minutes, they reached close to the spot where they were planning to set an ambush. Suddenly, one of the Iwagakure Anbu shouted, "Lookout!"

His shout alerted everyone. However, even before they could raise their guard, they saw air bullets ripping through the trees to their right and coming straight at them. Their eyes widened. The bullets were too close to move away.

One ninja was too close to the air bullets. Even before he could see them, an air bullet pierced through his head and he dropped dead!

The others watched the Air bullets and reacted however they could. Some bent forward for the bullets to pass from above while some gathered chakra in their feet and stamped their legs on the ground to stop themselves and saw the bullets pass in front of their eyes. However, some air bullets still pierced through the limbs of a couple of ninjas.

The Iwagakure ninjas frowned. Their plan was perfect. They didn't expect to be ambushed. Immediately, all the remaining 11 Takigakure ninjas and 2 Iwagakure Anbu looked angrily at the spot from where Air Bullets were fired at them. However, they couldn't sense anyone.

Suddenly, the Bear-masked Iwa Anbu slammed his hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Earth Dome jutsu'

An Earth Dome appeared from the ground and began surrounding all of them. The Takigakure ninjas watched with eyes widened as they saw a strong windstorm coming at them from the opposite direction. Luckily, the Earth Dome was formed in time.

The strong wind currents hit the dome and caused tremors to pass through the dome. Dust began falling inside the dome due to those tremors. However, the dome didn't collapse.

Sweat formed behind the masks of Takigakure ninjas. The captain gulped and said, "Luckily you noticed the attack."

However, the Iwagakure Anbu ninjas were still frowning. The Ape-masked Anbu said, "Be careful. I can't sense the attacker. He could be very stro..."

Suddenly, his body moved out of the way instinctively. A hole appeared in the dome and a very strong bullet made of wind pierced into the dome. The bullet hit the side of his jacket and left a cut along the sides of his abdomen. At the same time, 9 more Vacuum Bullets pierced into the Earth Dome.

Unlike the war-hardened Iwagakure Anbu, the ninjas from Takigakure didn't have the same survival instincts. Five Vacuum Bullets pierced through the vital organs of the Takigakure ninjas. The remaining bullets could only leave some cuts on the bodies of the remaining ninjas.

The Takigakure ninjas were horrified and left tongue-tied! The Captain's heart ached as he saw the dead ninjas and thought, 'We worked so hard to raise them to chunin level. The family spent countless resources on them. But in less than a minute, more than half of them are dead?'

Fear could be seen on his face. The Iwagakure Anbu noticed their emotions and frowned. At the same time, they were on guard due to how brutal and efficient their opponent was. The elephant-masked Iwa Anbu once again slammed his hands on the ground while thinking, 'We can't stay hidden here if the Dome can't protect us. We will just be sitting ducks.'

Small spikes began appearing on the surface of the Earth Dome. The spikes were launched in all directions as the Earth Dome collapsed. The spikes buried themselves in the trees but didn't hit their attacker. They watched with frowns on their face as they still couldn't find who attacked them.

The ape-masked Anbu instructed, "Keep an eye in all directions. I will find that bastard."

He weaved hand signs and slammed his hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Earth Sensing jutsu'

A vibration was sent through the ground. Every animal who was in a 1.5-kilometer radius felt the Vibration passing under their feet. They quickly began running away from the point of impact.

Despite the large scale of vibration, the Anbu still didn't sense anyone. A frown formed on his face. He snorted and put more chakra into the ground. The vibrations intensified. The Takigakure ninjas could feel the ground shaking under their feet.

The vibrations were so strong that they even travelled up the tree trunks! On one such tree, the vibrations were felt under the feet of a masked ninja hiding there. A smile formed behind the mask of the ape-masked Anbu as he muttered, "Got him!"

At the next moment, giant spears formed under the tree and launched at the ninja hiding on it. However, the ninja immediately flickered away. But since the Iwa ninjas had already sensed him, they didn't allow him to disappear from their sight once again.

They, along with the Takigakure ninjas, gave chase. The attacker noticed it and sighed, 'Looks like I can't sneak attack anymore.'

He looked towards the ninjas chasing him and launched a couple of dozen air bullets. The Iwa and Taki ninjas saw the attack and dodged it with ease. Due to the distance between them and since they knew the attack was coming, it was much easier to dodge.

However, using that short moment of distraction, the ninja disappeared once again. The Ape-Masked ninja frowned and quickly began feeling the vibrations under his feet. Suddenly, he turned around and shouted, "Behind us!"

All the ninjas quickly turned around. To their surprise, the attacker was very close. The Taki ninja who was the farthest in the back watched the attacker swing his sword at him. The scenes of his comrades falling dead ran through his brain. In a rage, he grabbed his kunai and swing it at the attacker's sword and yelled, "DIE".

At the same time, the others grabbed their kunai to attack him. They planned to kill him when he was blocked. However, they watched with widened eyes as the sword cut through the kunai as if it was air. The sword beheaded the 7th Taki ninja!

The eyes of the remaining 5 Taki ninjas went red in rage. They tried to attack, but the attacker flickered on a branch behind him.

The Iwa Anbu finally got a good look at the ninja. The attacker was a well-built young ninja who was wearing a Hawk mask. In addition, he had two swords hanging on the right side of his waist. And the sword sheaths on both those swords were very exquisite! Swirling designs were etched into its glossy black lacquer. They immediately recognized him and their expressions became grim behind their masks.

The Taki ninjas were enraged. They were about to attack when the Elephant-masked Anbu said in a grim voice, "It is the Spectral Swordsman!"

The Taki ninjas suddenly stopped. Their expressions became grim. Horror could be seen in their eyes! They watched their attacker as if he was the Grimreaper himself!

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Chapter 242: Timeskip!

The 5 Taki ninjas stared at the Spectral Swordsman in front of them and gulped. His information began running through their mind. It was around 6 months ago when murmurs of a swordsman were being heard. It was said that he appeared and disappeared at will. It was said that his victims wouldn't even know when they were dead until they saw their headless bodies with their detached heads. According to the rumors, there were two features that were identified with the Spectral Swordsman. They were the Hawk mask he wore and two exquisite swords hanging on the right side of his waist.

The swordsman was soon called the 'Spectral Swordsman'. Among the minor villages, he was a menace! There were no records of anyone stopping him. Even against the major villages, his record was very good. He would eliminate his target and escape long before any reinforcements could arrive.

He was so efficient, that it took over 6 months for someone to actually see him in action! As soon as he was seen, rumors of his appearance spread quickly throughout the ninja world.

The ape-masked Anbu shouted, "Don't be shocked by his reputation! He is just one guy! Stay and fight together! Keep an eye out for his sneak attacks."

His words snapped everyone from their shock. They prepared themselves for an intense fight. Chakra flowed through the sword of the Spectral Swordsman as he swung it towards the 7 ninjas. A windstorm consisting of hundreds of sword slashes immediately engulfed the group.

The two Iwa Anbu ninjas immediately slammed their hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Multiple Earth Walls Jutsu'

Immediately, dozens of walls of varying sizes appeared from the ground. They surrounded them from multiple sides. Having experienced the Vacuum Bullets, they didn't want to lock themselves in without any room for escaping.

The Windstorm hit the walls and left multiple slashes in the walls. But once again, the walls stood. Behind the wall, the Ape-masked Anbu shouted, "Keep an eye out for those wind bullets! And counterattack once these winds die down!"

Even without his warning, everyone was as alert as they could be.

The Spectral Swordsman noticed their defense. He opened his mouth and exhaled a horizontal wind wave. However, the core of this wind wave was made of vacuum!

The Vacuum Wave hit the walls and cut through them with ease. The enemy ninjas saw the wave and immediately jumped high up to dodge the wave. The wave safely passed from under them and cut off a bunch of trees before leaving a deep scar on the ground!

However, their troubles weren't over. As soon as they jumped to dodge the attack, the swordsman flickered next to them. They watched in horror as he swung his sword once again.

The one closest to him had no chance of dodging. His neck was sent flying in the air. Worse, the sword also sent a flying slash towards the rest of them. Three more Taki ninjas couldn't dodge or use any defensive jutsus and died to the slash. Only the Taki captain and the two Iwa Anbu were able to move out of the way.

The Iwa ninjas quickly got back on the ground while weaving hand signs. Elephant-masked Anbu slammed his hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Mud River jutsu'

The ground in front of him turned into mud and flowed towards the Swordsman at a high speed. At the same time, the ape-masked Anbu completed his jutsu.

'Fire Release: Fire Dragon Jutsu'

He spat a fire dragon into the mud river. Both jutsus combined seamlessly and moved towards the swordsman ferociously. However, the swordsman just flickered out of the way and once again moved to their rear and attacked with his sword.

The Taki captain saw his actions. He thought, 'I can't let him swing his sword anymore. Or even I might die here!'

He weaved signs and spat a water jet at the swordsman to force him back. However, instead of dodging, the swordsman exhaled a Vacuum Cannon into the Water Jet. The jutsu overwhelmed the water jet and ripped straight through it at a rapid speed!

The Taki captain didn't expect such a response and was caught off guard. He barely managed to move to his right. Unfortunately, the jutsu was too fast and much larger than the earlier bullets. The cannon hit the left side of his chest and tore it from his body entirely! Even his heart was destroyed. He fell to the ground with his eyes wide open and full of terror and shock.

The sight sent a shiver down the spines of the Iwa Anbu. However, they didn't let it affect them and attacked the swordsman immediately. This time, his position was pelted by hundreds of sharp spikes. However, he still flickered away. The ape-masked Anbu cursed, "Slippery Bastard!"

However, suddenly their eyes widened. Both looked to their left. A blue arrow of Lightning was piercing through everything in its path and approaching them at an insane speed. They immediately tried to jump out of the way but tripped and fell down. In a panic, they looked at their feet.

They were shocked to see that their feet were stuck in the ground. Shock appeared on their faces as they couldn't believe that they were trapped using the element they were most proficient in! The Lightning Arrow reached them and exploded. Both their bodies were zapped mercilessly. A miserable scream exited their mouth!

After a few seconds, the Lightning dispersed. The scent of their burnt flesh could be smelled. However, they were still alive and barely stood on their feet. The Lightning had got rid of the trap under their feet.

Unfortunately, the swordsman appeared behind them and beheaded them both with a single swing of his sword. All 14 ninjas were killed!

The swordsman looked at the dead ninjas and thought, 'It doesn't matter how many times it happens, your intelligence still shocks me, Shikaku!'

He looked up to see a turtle-masked Anbu appearing from the ground. He was the one who trapped their feet.

Turtle sighed and said, "Your speed keeps amazing me, Hawk! It's as if you get faster every day!"

The victory was overwhelming. And the major reason for such an overwhelming victory was his speed. He dodged every attack and always had the initiative whenever he decided to attack. At times, his enemies didn't even have the time to form a jutsu!

Hawk replied, "They were at most Chunins. Only these two were better. Still, they weren't strong enough."

Turtle muttered to himself, 'Do you have to keep saying that every time? Besides, you are also a Chunin!'

Soon after, a bear-masked and a fox-masked Anbu appeared from the direction from where the Lightning Arrow was shot.

Kuma observed the surroundings and said, "Great work as usual, Hawk."

Hawk nodded and asked, "I didn't sense anyone else other than these guys. So is this mission over?"

Kuma nodded, "We checked the perimeter and didn't find anyone else. There shouldn't be any more danger for Yuya. And if something does happen, he still has Yuto protecting him."

In any case, this was the only attack that the commander predicted. It isn't our job to keep protecting them until they reach their home."

Hawk nodded. Of course, the commander who Kuma referred to was Konoha's Jounin commander and not the Anbu commander. Shikaku had predicted that a move would be made against Ito Yuya, who had good relations with Konoha. Hence, Kuma's Anbu unit was sent to eliminate the attackers and push the blame on Iwagakure.

Kuma approached the dead bodies and instructed, "Turtle, crush them with Earth Release. Make it look like they were killed by Iwagakure ninjas instead of a sword."

Turtle nodded and got to work. In a few minutes, he changed how the wounds on everyone's bodies looked. He stabbed Earth Spears into the wounds made by the Air and Vacuum bullets. As for the ones that were beheaded, he crushed their bodies at the spot of the cut so that they wouldn't look like a clean cut. If anyone would see their bodies, it would be very unlikely that they could be traced back to the Spectral Swordsman.

Hawk inspected the bodies and nodded in satisfaction. The truth is that he had done many more killings than he was given credit for. However, most of them were hidden due to Turtle's methods. So he was looked at as more of a fable rather than a bloodthirsty killer.

After planting some fake evidence, Turtle buried all the bodies in the ground and they left without speaking another word and began returning to Konoha.

They returned back to their quarters in the Anbu. After removing their masks, Tsuyoshi said, "Great work as usual. The mission was completed without a hitch."

He looked at Fujin and said with a smile, "Fujin, over the last 20 months, your performance has been brilliant. Lord Hokage has acknowledged your performance and asked you to meet him tomorrow."

His praise for Fujin wasn't unjustified. Fujin had fit into the Anbu unit like a glove and seamlessly blended into the Anbu lifestyle. He was efficient, deadly and didn't seek fame or glory. Despite having a famous title, very few in Konoha knew that it was him.

Kaen and Teru's eyes widened as they realised what Tsuyoshi meant.

Fujin nodded and said with a smile, "Alright."

Teru immediately patted Fujin's shoulder and said in excitement, "Congrats, Fujin!"

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Chapter 243: Settling Debt with Interest!

Kaen also realized why Fujin was called by the Hokage. He smiled and said, "Looks like you won the race for promotion to Anbu Captain."

He sighed and continued, "Makes sense though considering how many people you have killed. Your Spectral Swordsman title is very well-known and feared."

Tsuyoshi shook his head and said, "The Anbu Captain title isn't handed so easily. You will be given a promotion mission. The mission is usually very difficult. Only if you perform it satisfactorily will you be promoted. Anyways, no point in speculating about it. Take some rest today and ensure that you are at your complete readiness tomorrow."

Fujin nodded and said, "Alright Captain. Thank You for all your guidance."

The squad dispersed.

Unlike the time with his Genin squad, the Anbu squad never hung together other than when they were training or doing missions. Tsuyoshi had instructed them to not appear together in public while they were a part of the Anbu. Due to this the trio of Fujin, Teru and Kean never went out together to eat or party despite being in the same team for over a year and a half!

Fujin grabbed a random mask, put it on and walked out of the room while thinking, 'A secret mission huh? I wonder what it will be...'

He thought for a bit and speculated, 'It will most probably be another political scheme by Shikaku. That guy makes way too many schemes. No wonder Konoha's position is so solid despite being vulnerable militarily for so long.'

Anyways, it is still early morning. What should I do for the day? Just resting the entire day will be a waste.'

As he was thinking, he walked towards the training facilities of the Anbu. A grin formed on his face behind the mask. With his next step, his physical features transformed. His height increased to 6 feet 6 inches and his body became very slim. On his next step, his chakra signature transformed. It became heavy in Yin chakra. If a sensor were to sense him, it would be very difficult to link him to Fujin.

He kept walking nonchalantly to the Training facilities. After arriving at the facility, he saw a few other Anbu. Without exchanging words with anyone or attracting any attention, he walked towards the Wind Training rooms and entered one.

His eyes immediately roamed through the room. All the seals in the room that were inscribed and hidden in the room became visible to him. Many of these seals were for inspection and spying.

He acted as if he didn't notice any of them and sat in the center of the room and began meditating. Just like in the Tower in the Forest of Death, these rooms also had Elemental crystals. Fujin began absorbing the energy from the crystal.

The room didn't initially have any methods of investigation and spying. But, shortly after Fujin entered the Anbu, he began using these rooms. And his rate of absorbing the energy from Wind Crystals skyrocketed! He initially needed to meditate for 4 hours for 12 days to completely absorb all the energy in one Wind crystal. But in a few months, he got used to absorbing energy from the Wind crystal. He began exhausting an entire crystal in one meditation session of 4 hours!

This development alarmed Hiruzen. Wind crystals used to be the ones that used to be the slowest to be exhausted. But suddenly, its rate of absorption became second to only Fire crystals. He immediately tried to investigate but didn't find anything.

So he resorted to inscribing seals in the Wind Training rooms. Unfortunately, Fujin was a SealMaster as well. He easily identified the seals and played around with them. Hiruzen couldn't figure out how the crystal was getting absorbed so quickly.

Numerous times, he also sent some Anbu to spy on the meditation rooms. But in that case, Fujin would absorb very little energy from the Wind Crystal. Due to this, no one could blame him. Instead, the Anbu ninjas that were keeping an eye became his perfect alibi.

Of course, Hiruzen did suspect him. After all, the number of Wind users was very low in Konoha. After failing to find any suspect, he thought very hard, 'The absorption rate of Wind crystals increased suddenly after the new Anbu were inducted. Of those 234, only 5 specialize in Wind release. But, I can't disregard others or the older Anbu as it is possible that they are developing Wind as their second or third element.'

Finally, Hiruzen gave up, 'Leave it. Even if I find the culprit, I can't punish them or tell them to stop. Otherwise, everyone else will begin questioning the speech I gave to motivate them. Besides, even though the usage is high, we do have a good stock of Wind Crystals. It is still within an acceptable range.'

Since he joined the Anbu, Fujin alone used up around 250 Wind Crystals. He had successfully used up all the money Hiruzen earned by gambling on him and was still collecting interest. The overall consumption of Wind Crystals during this period was over 400. It barely exceeded Earth and Water crystals which were in the range of 350 to 400.

Of course, Fire Crystals were still the ones being used the most. The Anbu training facility used over one thousand five hundred Fire crystals every year. Due to the sudden increase in Anbu numbers, Hiruzen ran out of Fire crystals a few times. If not for the fact that the Uchiha clan no longer existed and he could divert the Fire Crystals that used to be allotted to them, he would have been forced to apply restrictions on the Fire Training rooms.

Other than the Wind crystals, Fujin also absorbed energy from Lightning, Fire and Earth crystals. However, his rate of absorption with them was very low. His rate of absorbing Wind energy kept increasing rapidly until he hit a limit. But his other elements didn't experience such an increase in the rate of absorption and he reached their limits much sooner.

Fujin had expected such a result from Fire and Earth crystals but he was disappointed when he couldn't increase the speed of absorption from Lightning crystals. Of course, despite the slower rate of absorption, it was still very helpful in improving his affinity with those elements.

In around three and a half hours, Fujin emptied the Wind crystal. He got up and went into a Lightning training room. These rooms didn't have the same level of investigative seals. The seals in the Wind

Training room didn't detect that the crystal was empty until another Anbu visited to train his wind element and realized that it was empty.

Fujin spent most of his day in the training facility and only returned home late at night. He had dinner and went to sleep. The next day, he once again began his morning with an intense morning workout. Unless he was out on a mission, Fujin never missed his morning workout for even a single day.

Instead, his morning workout had gotten even more intense. He had managed to use his previous training seal at its 100% capacity. He created a new seal for himself that had a maximum limit four times higher than the seal Hiruzen had created for him.

Fujin returned home after the workout and freshened up for the meeting with Hiruzen. While getting prepared, he took a look at his bracers and thought, 'I have been using these bracers since I became a Genin. Time to change it.'

He took off his bracers. A grin formed on his face as he thought, 'The Spectral Swordsman identity has become too well known. All the Anbu ninjas from the 4 major villages identify me on sight. Even though they don't know about most of my capabilities, it is annoying when they get on full alert and don't provide any openings. It's time to play that card.'

He discarded his old bracers and put on new ones. Unlike his previous ones, these were very thin and of the same color as his skin. So from a distance, it was very difficult to spot them. In addition, he had inscribed dozens of small storage seals on each bracer and stored a variety of weapons in it. His chakra metal swords were also stored in the bracers.

Of course, despite being very thin, they were much harder than his previous bracers as they used better metals and Fujin himself worked with the blacksmith to inscribe seals into them to make them as tough as he could.

With all preparations made, he placed the seal on his door and flickered towards the Hokage building.

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Chapter 244: The Bait!

Fujin knocked and entered the Hokage's office. He noticed that Shikaku was also in the room. However, apart from them, no one else was in the room. Even the four Anbu ninjas that usually guarded Hiruzen weren't there.

Hiruzen smiled and asked, "Fujin, how have you been?"

He noticed the new bracers Fujin was wearing and immediately noticed the high number of seals inscribed in them. He looked into Fujin's eyes and meaningfully said, "Good Bracers."

Fujin ignored the gaze and the implications behind his words. He replied with a smile, "Thank You, Grandpa. I have been well."

Hiruzen had gotten used to Fujin ignoring subtle messages. He said, "Your performance in the Anbu has been very good. Both Tsuyoshi and the Anbu commander have recommended me for promoting you to the Anbu Captain rank. However, the Anbu Captain rank is equivalent to the Jounin rank. So to become one, you have to complete a Promotion mission."

Fujin nodded and said, "Yes, Captain informed me."

Hiruzen looked at Shikaku. Shikaku stepped forward and handed a scroll to Fujin and said, "Recently, we have been getting multiple strange reports from the Land of Wind. We suspect that Sunagakure wants to end the alliance with us while the Daimyo of the Land of Wind doesn't. Your mission will be to infiltrate into the Land of Wind and cause discontent for Sunagakure among their nobles and make them more inclined to assign missions to Konoha.

The scroll has multiple scrolls with details of all the nobles in the Land of Wind, their nature, likes, dislikes, the people precious to them and their current relations with us and Suna along with some recommendations for you. You will act on your own and are free to do whatever you want to make progress in the mission. Just don't let anyone know that you are from Konoha."

Fujin furrowed his eyebrows. The mission was huge. Though he had grown stronger, his strength wasn't at a level where he could casually influence the relations between a Daimyo and a Kage.

Hiruzen and Shikaku noticed his expressions but didn't say anything. Fujin said, "The mission is too difficult. Though I could make some moves, I am sure that Suna will retaliate immediately. So my actions won't make much of a difference."

Shikaku nodded and said, "Yes, but you don't need to worry. You aren't the only one we have sent. Many other Anbu ninjas have been given the same promotion mission. So the attention from Sunagakure will be divided among all of you."

Of course, if you think that you can't continue the mission any more, you are allowed to retreat. In addition, be careful of who you kill as the Anbu ninjas we deployed will be under disguises."

A frown formed on Fujin's face. The mission was not only difficult but it also had several complexities. He sighed and thought, 'Despite the training, most of my missions in the Anbu were straightforward assassination, elimination or protection missions. I guessed that Hiruzen wanted me to focus on those skills. Looks like my guess was wrong. This mission will be a pain in the ass.'

Fujin asked, "How long do I have to stay there?"

Shikaku replied, "As long as you can. Retreat when you think that your cover might be blown or you don't think you can make any further progress towards the mission. The success or failure of the mission will be decided by how long you manage to stay in the Land of Wind and the result of your actions there."

Fujin digested the information. Shikaku asked, "Any more questions?"

Fujin shook his head and said, "No. But I would like to have the attire of a Sand Anbu ninja along with a new mask that is popular among their ranks."

Shikaku had expected such a request from Fujin. He handed Fujin another scroll and said, "This scroll has what you asked for. It also has enough ration bars and water to last half a year."

Fujin accepted the scroll. At the same time, he got an idea of how long he was expected to stay undercover in the Land of Wind. Shikaku asked, "Are you ready to move out or do you need some time to prepare?"

Fujin replied, "I can move out right away."

Shikaku nodded and said, "Good. We have one more mission for you. This one isn't related to your promotion mission, but a good performance could influence our decision if your performance in the Land of Wind is subpar."

Fujin looked at Shikaku without changing his expression and thought, 'Do you still not know that such manipulation tactics don't work on me?'

Shikaku obviously knew it. He had interacted several times with Fujin. But he was just too lazy to change his ways for just one person. From his point of view, regardless of how he spoke, Fujin would act the same way. So he didn't bother changing his dialogue.

Shikaku said, "In recent times, we have noticed the movement of some bounty hunter rogue ninjas in the forests around our village. I speculate that they have an accomplice in the village who monitors the movements of ninjas and informs his group outside the village. We tried trapping them but haven't had any success so far as they are very careful with their targets."

Hiruzen added, "You haven't been seen much since a bounty was put on your head as your Anbu achievements haven't been credited to you yet. So you will be the perfect bait for them. Go through the Village gate without any disguise and let them see you. Hopefully, they will think of you as the perfect target and ambush you outside the village.

We will send a Jounin squad to follow you stealthily from a distance. They will reinforce you as soon as the battle begins or you send a signal."

Fujin thought for a few seconds and said, "Alright. Do we have any intel on who the rogue bounty hunters are?"

Hiruzen shook his head, "We have eliminated one group who had rogue ninjas from Iwa, but they didn't have any intel on others. According to our calculations, there are 3 more groups."

Fujin said, "Okay. I will move out now."

He left the office and began walking casually towards the village gate while thinking, 'Bounty hunters... I haven't encountered any in this world other than Kakuzu. Anyways, as long as he or any other S rank ninjas aren't involved, I should be fine. If they are weak, I can eliminate them myself. Otherwise, I will just have to stall them.'

Fujin reached the gate and felt a few eyes on himself. He analyzed, 'Hmm, though there are a bunch of eyes on me, it will be difficult to say who is with the bounty hunters. After all, there are always a bunch of eyes on the village gate. Oh well, let's see.'

As soon as Fujin left the village, two pairs of eyes sparkled in greed. One of these pairs belonged to a man in his twenties with an ordinary appearance and was operating a firework shop near the village gate.

He observed the direction in which Fujin left and couldn't help but lick his lips. He thought, 'When we made a list of the good targets, this boy topped it. Who knows which gods he offended to get such a big bounty. Unfortunately, this coward didn't leave the village for so long. But finally, it's time!'

The man looked at a stall opposite his. The man in that stall also looked back at him. Their eyes met. Both quickly used their methods to inform their respective groups. However, unknown to both of them, one squad of Jounins left the village secretly and followed Fujin from a few kilometers away.

If either of the two bounty hunter groups knew about the existence of these ninjas, they wouldn't dare to approach Fujin even if their courage was amplified a hundred times. After all, this group was led by Konoha's newest Elite Jounin, Copy Ninja Kakashi!

Fujin didn't sense Kakashi's squad. However, he wasn't surprised as he wouldn't be good bait if they could be sensed so easily. He continued travelling through the woods as if everything was normal, but he didn't move at his max speed to not create any doubts in the minds of the bounty hunters.

Two groups of Bounty hunters quickly moved towards the route from Konoha to the Land of Rain. The first group was made of Rogue ninjas from Kirigakure. They excelled in assassination. Their group contained 11 ninjas. Before betraying, 8 were Chunins in Kiri while the remaining 3 were Jounins.

The second group was made of Rogue ninjas from the countries of Lands of Rain, River, Grass, Bird and Bear. This group had 24 people, 11 of whom were Jounins in their village before they went rogue.

Both reached the same spot on the route at the same time and got into a standoff. After all, their messengers had also informed them that another group of Bounty Hunters might also be hunting Fujin and neither wanted the other group to get to Fujin first.

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Chapter 245: I don't wanna be a bait anymore!

The two groups of bounty hunters stared at each other. Suddenly, Kido Shiro, one of the Kiri rogues sighed in relief and said loudly, "Thankfully we found them. I was worried that these morons might ambush him closer to Konoha and steal our jackpot!"

His statement irked the bounty hunters in the other group. One of them sneered and said, "Aren't you being too cocky? We outnumber you by more than two to one. Do you think you have a chance to compete against us?"

The leader of the Kiri rogues grinned. His name was Higashi Renzo. He was a large muscular guy with hideous scars all over his body. He was being trained to be the next generation of the Seven Swordsmen of the Mist. Unfortunately, before he could complete his training, everything went crazy in that country.

Renzo said in a hoarse voice, "You may outnumber us, but do you weaklings think you have any chance against us."

A wave of killing intent washed over the other group of bounty hunters. Their expressions became very grim. Though they haven't ever experienced it, Kiri's cruel methods and the craziness of their ninjas were well known throughout the world.

Ogawa Shingo, the leader of this group exerted his chakra to snap his comrades out of the killing intent unleashed by his opponent. The Kiri ninjas were about to attack but he raised his hand and said, "Stop! If we fight here, we will alert the Konoha ninjas and will be hunted until we are all dead. Even if you are strong, against Konoha, you are nothing but bugs. Not only will you not get the bounty, but you will be hunted.

So why not team up? We will ambush the kid together and split the reward on his head. We will each get 10 million Ryo and won't have to fight each other to death."

Shiro immediately said, "Why would we split the rewards with you? As for Konoha ninjas, we will have long killed you all and that brat and left even before those tree huggers sense something is wro..."

He was interrupted by a Jounin who said, "Shut up! Renzo, let's cooperate. The Konoha ninjas are already hunting for us. A huge battle could invite all sorts of trouble."

Renzo wanted to fight. However, he couldn't disregard the concerns of the Jounin who just spoke. After all, he was the only SealMaster in their group and was his second-in-command. Without his help, bounty hunting would become much more risky.

Renzo looked at Shingo and said, "Alright, let's team up."

The two groups teamed up and set up an ambush for Fujin.

Fujin had a frown on his face. Even after travelling for six hours, no one intercepted or attacked him. He thought, 'Did they sense the trap that Shikaku laid for them? Or were their accomplices on a break when I left the village?'

He continued moving through the vast forests of the Land of Fire while occasionally activating and spreading his chakra field. Finally, after half an hour, he sensed something off.

His speed slowed down as he maintained his chakra field and analyzed, 'I can't sense 4 locations... These guys have a SealMaster within their ranks. That's annoying. I can't check how strong they are. But, this might not be entirely bad. Since they are separated, I will hunt them one by one.'

The four locations that Fujin's chakra field couldn't sense were small underground rooms constructed using Earth release. If it was a normal sensor, he wouldn't feel anything off. But Fujin himself was a SealMaster. So it couldn't be hidden from him. The four locations were all spread properly. Two were close to the path that Fujin was taking. While the remaining two locations covered the left and the right sides.

Fujin locked his eyes on the location to the left. He was about to move when he suddenly stopped. His eyes shrunk as his instincts warned him and he stayed in his location. He thought, 'Why am I having such a bad feeling? It is almost comparable to the feeling I had when we fell into Darui's trap!'

During his time in Anbu, Fujin had developed an incredible sense of danger. His instincts would warn him every time he was about to fall in grave danger. Though he wasn't completely sure, Fujin speculated that it was a result of him gaining more experience and due to him using his sensing abilities hundreds of thousands of times.

The seals in those hidden locations were more advanced than what Fujin had speculated. When his chakra field covered those locations, a few seals began emitting green light. The leader in each of the rooms frowned. They knew that Fujin was a sensor but didn't expect him to spread his chakra field deep in the forest.

However, they didn't make a move as they knew that a sensor wouldn't be able to sense them. They expected Fujin to continue forward into their trap. However, their frowns deepened when Fujin didn't move forward and the seals kept emitting the green light.

Renzo asked, "Did he discover us?"

The SealMaster answered, "That is unlikely. Unless he is a SealMaster himself or works closely with one."

Renzo quickly analyzed the situation and said, "It doesn't matter. He is just one chunin brat. Let's go out and hunt him."

He quickly broke the seal on the underground room and appeared outside. At the same time, the other 3 hideouts also received the message and soon they broke out as well.

Fujin immediately sensed everyone and began sweating. He almost cursed, 'What the fuck? 35 fucking bounty hunters? And 7 of them have Jounin levels of chakra!'

The bounty hunters ran towards Fujin at full speed. Fortunately, Fujin was over a mile away from their location. He quickly ran backwards and made a few shadow clones while thinking, 'This is the last time

I'm being the bait! The smartest man and the most experienced man my ass! If I didn't know them any better, I'd think that this is a scheme to kill me!"

Four chakra fields extended towards Fujin and his clones and began sensing him. Fujin was left speechless once again. He cursed, 'Seriously, what the hell! SealMasters, Sensors, such huge numbers... Don't tell me a Kage is also hiding within their ranks!'

Fujin didn't know that two groups of Bounty hunters were hunting him together. He'd have been confident of taking one group on by himself. But with the two groups working together, he didn't want to take much risk. Hiruzen and Shikaku also didn't predict that Fujin would lure two groups of bounty hunters. Otherwise, they would have sent more ninjas along with him.

At the same time, Pakkun said, "Kakashi, thirty-five new scents have suddenly appeared!"

Kakashi's eyes widened as he exclaimed, "Thirty-five?"

Pakkun replied, "Yes. Fujin is running back in our direction but enemies are faster than him. They will reach him before us."

Kakashi said, "Everyone, we will move at our fastest speed!"

Guy grinned and said loudly, "Thirty-Five bounty hunters on your first mission as an Elite Jounin! I'd expect nothing less from my eternal rival!"

Despite talking, he was the only one in the squad who was able to keep up with Kakashi's speed.

Kakashi didn't pay attention to Guy's words as he was confused, 'Didn't Shikaku say that Fujin was incredibly fast on his feet? How are they faster than him?'

Among the bounty hunters, one of the sensors informed, "His chakra has split into four! According to the intel, he knows the Shadow Clone jutsu. I can't identify who is the real one!"

Renzo commanded, "Keep track of all four of them. If they split, we will also split and chase one each!"

Fujin's clones didn't split up. The bounty hunters moved incredibly fast and quickly caught up with Fujin. They still maintained the four groups. Two were trying to chase Fujin from the right and left while the remaining two were on his rear. The ones in the rear were led by Renzo and Shingo respectively.

Fujin looked back at them and thought, 'Alright, they are close enough.'

Fujin and his clones split into pairs of two and dispersed in opposite directions. This forced the two groups in his rear to split up and move towards the groups on their respective sides. The situation suddenly changed as now the groups on Fujin's two sides became the closest to him while the groups at his rear lagged behind.

Fujin kept observing their positions. Soon, all four groups of bounty hunters and the two pairs of Fujin's clones were in a straight line, Fujin and his clones stopped and turned around.

'Fire Release: Searing Migraine jutsu'

'Wind Release: Infinite Breakthrough jutsu'

One clone released the Searing Migraine jutsu while the one next to released the Infinite Breakthrough jutsu. The same was replicated by the other pair. The jutsus combined together perfectly and fused into one deadly attack.

The bounty hunters who were chasing at their full speed were suddenly stunned to see a massive firestorm head towards them! The attack came without any warning and they had very little time to react.

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Chapter 246: The Source of Danger

On one side, the group closest to Fujin was a Kiri group of 5 led by their third Jounin. The former Kiri Jounin rapidly weaved hand signs.

'Water Release: Water Wall jutsu'

A water wall appeared in front of his group of 5 just before the combination attack reached them. The jutsu hit the water wall and broke through it as if it was air. A huge amount of steam was released as the entire water wall evaporated!

Renzo saw with wide eyes as 5 of his men were being engulfed by the Firestorm. He could hear their screams. He quickly completed hand signs and shouted, "Quickly flood this place!"

'Water Release: Exploding Water Shock Wave'

The other 5 in his group also used the same jutsu. A huge amount of water was released which formed giant waves and moved towards the incoming attack and their allies.

On the other side, a couple of Jounins slammed their hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Earth Wall jutsu'

Two walls appeared in front of them. However, the range of the combination attack was too much. It easily engulfed the walls and hit the group regardless. Unlike the battle-hardened Kiri rogues, this group didn't have the same expertise. For the first time in their lives, they began experiencing the unique feeling of being cooked alive! A few quickly escaped into the ground while the others screamed miserably within the firestorm.

The group behind them saw the terror in front of them. Shingo quickly slammed his hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Earth Dome'

Seeing the mistake made by the group in front of him, he chose a jutsu that would protect them from all sides. The Fire-Wind combination jutsu engulfed the dome, but the people inside were safe.

Water and Fire clashed on the other side of the battlefield. The combined efforts of six ninjas overpowered the combination jutsu and water waves engulfed their allies. The water doused the fire on them and provided them with some relief. Four Kiri rogues were burnt badly. Only the Jounin was in better shape as he had a thin layer of water armor surrounding him.

A look of relief appeared on the faces of the six ninjas when suddenly they began feeling the heat. They looked behind themselves and saw in horror as another jutsu of the same scale approached them!

Since the second Bandit group didn't stop the attack and just protected themselves, the Kiri rogue ninjas had to face an attack from both sides. This situation was a result of Fujin's clever manipulation of the battlefield. Since he split into two groups, the bounty hunters assumed that he wanted to run away. They didn't even notice that they were all in a straight line. All their attention was entirely on the pair in front of them.

Renzo once again weaved hand signs. In the nick of time, he completed his jutsu and spat out massive amounts of water. His jutsu was overwhelmed, but the water brought them enough time for others to repeat that jutsu. A water pool was formed which engulfed the 11 Kiri rogue ninjas and kept them protected from the fire. However, the water itself was heating up and evaporating at a rapid speed. Everyone could feel the heat, especially the 4 people from the first group who were very badly burnt.

Renzo looked at the firestorm with a frown on his face. He cursed, 'Horrible! The intel was way off! It didn't mention large-scale wind jutsus. It didn't even say that he knew any Fire jutsus. All it said was to be careful of his Vacuum jutsus and Swordplay.'

Suddenly, his eyes widened as he realized, 'Vacuum jutsus... Fuck!'

Despite being underwater, he shouted, "BE CAREFUL!"

It was a no-brainer that Fujin's ability with the Fire Release was completely a surprise to them. After all, he had developed it entirely during his time with the Anbu. While he didn't intend to keep it a secret like his Lightning release, he hadn't been on any mission without his mask. So very few were aware of it.

Fujin's details in the Bingo book were almost 2 years old. Since he was never seen leaving the village after getting the bounty, the bounty hunters assumed that he had given up on his ninja career.

Fujin's clones observed the bounty hunters. In the group that used Earth Walls, 3 had escaped underground while the remaining 6 were burning. Behind them, 15 people were hiding in an Earth dome.

A smirk formed on both their faces. A dozen Vacuum bullets formed in both their mouths. They launched them all simultaneously. The group of 15 bounty hunters were feeling safe inside the dome. Suddenly, bullets rained into the dome. They were all caught off guard and couldn't even move.

Twelve ninjas had their hearts, brains or throats pierced. They collapsed on the spot! The remaining three were also injured but could still move around. They quickly escaped underground in terror and moved towards the Kiri group.

On the other side, Fujin's clones observed the Kiri ninjas being protected by water and guessed, 'This group looks to be exclusively from Kiri. Whereas that squad is only using Earth Release. Does this bounty hunter group have factions within them? Oh well, they'll all be dead anyways.'

'Wind Release: Vacuum Serial Wave jutsu'

Sharp Vacuum blades were launched at the water pool protecting them. The vacuum blades moved through the fire and into the water right when Renzo shouted. The four ninjas that were badly burnt didn't even see the attack coming and were cut into two.

The Jounin who was injured tried to dodge as well. He barely moved his body and head out of the way. But one vacuum blade hit below his right knee and cut his leg off. The remaining six managed to dodge the attack.

Renzo's heart ached. Four Chunins were dead while one Jounin would no longer be able to fight. That was a huge loss for his group. He felt a great hatred for Fujin and the messenger. At the same time, he felt regret for choosing Fujin as the target.

However, his expression soon became vicious. He decided, 'Since you have caused us so much loss, I will claim your bounty no matter what! I can not disappoint Lord Mizukage any further!'

The effects of the Fire-Wind combination jutsu had finally begun dissipating. Renzo looked at his subordinates that were still fine. They noticed his gaze and nodded. Soon, 6 bounty hunters from the other group came out of the ground next to the Kiri survivors. They looked at the situation around them in shock.

Of the 35 attackers, only 6 were still uninjured. As many as 23 had died or were critically injured. And it had barely been over a couple of minutes since they began chasing after Fujin!

Swords appeared in the hands of Fujin and his clones. They flickered towards the bounty hunters. The combination of Searing Migraine and Infinite Breakthrough jutsus was one of his strongest methods. Since this group managed to survive, using the same jutsu once again on them wouldn't be very effective. After all, he no longer had the element of surprise.

Renzo noticed his movements and said, "They are coming, prepare yourself."

Everyone readied themselves. Fujin's attacks had eliminated most of the weaker ones from their ranks. Of the remaining people, half had Jounin ranks before going rogue.

Fujin's clone appeared to one side of the group and swung his sword from 5 meters away. A sword wave was launched at them. The expression of the group became grim. Apart from Renzo, only one person was able to follow the movement of Fujin and his clones.

Just before the sword slash could hit them, a barrier appeared around them. The slash hit the barrier and caused it to shake, but it stood erect. Fujin's eyes landed on the Jounin who created the barrier. He thought, 'So this guy is probably their SealMaster.'

Fujin wasn't bothered that his attack wasn't successful. The information he gained in exchange for merely swinging his sword was sufficient. However, before he could attack once more, Renzo left the barrier. He raised his sword and slashed it down on the clone who had just attacked the barrier.

Fujin's clone easily blocked his sword, but couldn't cut through it as Renzo also used Chakra flow on his sword. At the same time, Shinjo and two Jounins from his group exited the barrier and attacked the other 3 Fujins.

Fujin was surprised. He defended while analyzing the barrier, 'It looks like this is a one-way barrier. It prevents entry but allows exit. A good way to keep attacking from a location.'

Suddenly, four more bounty hunters exited the barrier. They were the four chunins, including Shiro, from Renzo's group. Fujin frowned, he didn't want to get ganged up on. So the four of them counter-attacked. Renzo was able to hold his opponent back, but the other 3 were feeling overwhelmed. Fujin's clones barely managed to get away from them and were about to attack the four ninjas that exited the barrier when those ninjas avoided Fujin and ran in four different directions.

Fujin was confused. He thought, 'The hell? Are they quitting the group and escaping? Or do they plan to attack me in the back?'

He didn't want to risk getting pincered and wanted to attack them, but the Jounins caught up and began fighting once again. Since they blocked him, Fujin confirmed, 'They aren't running away.'

The four ninjas moved and stood surrounding Fujin and the rest. They made the Snake hand seal and clapped their hands. Immediately, a violet barrier began appearing and surrounded Fujin and the other bounty hunters. The barriers formed four walls, a roof and another layer underground, cutting off all means of escape. Fujin was shocked. He muttered, "Four Violet Flames Formation! No wonder I felt such an intense danger."

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Chapter 247: Fooling Everyone!

A grin spread on Renzo's face. He said, "You are now trapped. I was planning to just kill you and get your head. But since you have killed 4 of my men, I will torture you until you beg for death!"

The morale of the remaining hunters in the barrier finally recovered.

Fujin thought, 'Just 4? Are there multiple groups here?'

No fear appeared on Fujin's face. He retorted, "Torture me?"

He looked towards his right and said, "I left the village to bait and hunt you down. If you dissolve the formation and surrender, you might be able to keep your life. Otherwise, even if you manage to kill me, your only result will be death!"

The bounty hunters were shocked to hear that Fujin was the bait. Renzo and others followed Fujin's gaze. Their eyes widened as four Konoha ninjas appeared outside the barrier. Shingo muttered with a grim face, "We were schemed against! It is Kakashi of the Sharingan!"

Their morale which had just recovered crashed down. Fujin's words were completely true. They would have a very difficult battle to just kill Fujin. Facing even stronger Konoha ninjas right after it would be a certain death!

Meanwhile, Kakashi's group also had grim faces.

Yamanaka Ken said, "Fujin is trapped."

Kakashi too had a grim face. He said, "The barrier has a high demand for chakra. And all four ninjas need to keep supplying chakra continuously. We will target one spot and kill one of them."

The battlefield entered a deadlock. The Konoha jounins couldn't interfere. And though the bounty hunters were safe for the moment, they were very fearful for their life.

Fujin noticed the distraction and immediately took advantage. The clones gathered chakra. The four jounins facing them noticed it and reacted. However, a dozen Vacuum Bullets were already fired at each of them.

Despite the low distance and the fast speed of the bullets, they still moved their body as much as they could. Renzo dodged 10 bullets and the remaining 2 he blocked with his sword. However, cracks spread through his sword due to the power behind the bullets. His expression became dark as he realized, 'If I hadn't used chakra flow on the swords, the bullets might have pierced straight through them!'

However, the other 3 weren't as strong as him. They could only move sufficiently for the bullets to miss their vital organs. A bullet grazed the right arm of Shingo. It left a cut so deep that even his bone was visible. The other two were hit by two to three Vacuum Bullets each.

Unfortunately for those two, they were once again standing right behind each other. So despite dodging, they were targeted by the Vacuum Bullets heading towards them from their back. One of them was very unlucky. A vacuum bullet hit his back and pierced straight through his heart. He dropped dead. The other one had a couple more holes created in his body but luckily avoided any critical injuries.

One of Fujin's clones laughed and taunted, "This barrier is good. This way, none of you can run away. Hahahaha!"

Not wanting to lose any more morale, Renzo immediately attacked the clone closest to him and shouted, "Everyone! Attack him! Attack and kill all four of him. Only after he is dead we can plan on how to escape the once outside the barrier!"

There was still another barrier created inside the Four Violet Flames Formation. It still had five people. One was the injured Jounin from Renzo's group. Another was the SealMaster while three were from the other group. Other than the injured Jounin, the others exited the barrier and attacked Fujin's clones.

The SealMaster said, "His chakra has become very low. He won't be able to continue for much longer."

Fujin's clones were all low on chakra. They had spent a lot of their chakra on the Fire-Wind combination jutsu. And after using Vacuum jutsus repeatedly, they didn't have much chakra.

Outside the barrier, the Konoha ninjas were getting worried. They were bombarding the barrier with Ninjutsu at the spot where Shiro was. The barrier shook but still stood erect. However, the four ninjas, especially Shiro, were under a lot of pressure. Their chakra was being drained rapidly.

Suddenly, Pakkun noticed something and looked to his left. After observing properly, he said, "Kakashi, focus on your smell in that direction."

Kakashi was surprised by Pakkun's request. He quickly gathered chakra in his nose and enhanced his sense of smell. Suddenly his expression became very peculiar. Guy noticed and asked, "What did you smell?"

Kakashi shook his head and said, "Nothing. Keep an eye on the barrier. We won't attack any more as we might run out of chakra before the barrier breaks. If that happens, we will be in a tougher spot."

Guy and the two Special Jounins from the Yamanaka clan realized that Kakashi was hiding something. They didn't question him and began paying attention to fighting inside the barrier. Without their attacks, the four ninjas maintaining the formation sighed in relief. They quickly consumed a soldier pill to recover their chakra rapidly.

Yamanaka Ken said, "Though maintaining the barrier needs a lot of chakra, they could rest until they have recovered if they keep using soldier pills. Should we call in reinforcements to prevent that?"

Kakashi shook his head and replied, "No need. There are only 12 left and two are severely injured. Regardless of the pills, the four maintaining the barrier will be exhausted. We can take them out without much issue."

Yamanaka Ken nodded. Inside the barrier, Fujin and his clones fought intensely for five minutes. However, the remaining ninjas were all very careful. Fujin took deep breaths while analyzing, 'They are too careful! In the last five minutes, I only managed to kill that guy with 5-6 holes in his body. Though I injured the rest to varying degrees, I haven't been able to injure them critically.'

He looked towards his other clones. At the same time, they too looked into his eyes and nodded. Suddenly, three clones flickered away and appeared next to Shiro.

Renzo had a bad feeling. He and the rest ran towards them, but the three clones touched the barrier and at the next moment exploded!

The force of the explosions was felt throughout the barrier. Shiro fell to his knees and began vomiting blood. While the remaining three also felt the impact. They began coughing blood.

Renzo shouted in panic, "Hang on! The barrier must not fall!"

The four rogue ninjas gritted their teeth and forcefully maintained the formation. Kakashi and the rest didn't manage to enter inside.

Renzo looked viciously at Fujin and said, "That was stupid! Without clones, you are an easy target for us!"

He immediately ran towards Fujin who was breathing roughly. Everyone could see that he was exhausted. Guy was getting restless, but Kakashi said, "It's fine, just watch."

Renzo swung his sword at Fujin. Fujin deflected his blow with his sword and punched him with his left hand. Renzo punched back at his fist. However, Fujin opened his fist at the last moment and caught Renzo's fist. A grin broke on his face. Renzo suddenly had a bad feeling. Without a word, Fujin exploded!

All the bounty hunters were stunned. The explosion created a dust cloud. In a second, a body was launched out of the dust cloud. He landed a few meters away. It was Renzo. His left arm was completely blown off! His chest, abdomen, face and thighs had hideous burns and were covered in blood. In addition to the existing horrible scars, his entire appearance looked similar to that of a terrifying demon!

One of the bounty hunters muttered in disbelief, "Did he explode his main body?"

Renzo replied with a hoarse voice, "It was a shadow clone!"

A sense of disbelief and shock spread through the four ninjas maintaining the barrier and the remaining seven ninjas inside the barrier. Such huge casualties were inflicted upon them by merely shadow clones.

Finally, one said, "No wonder he has a 20 million bounty! No, even a 20 million bounty is low for him."

Outside the barrier, everyone other than Kakashi and Pakkun was shocked. Yamanaka Ken exclaimed, "That was a shadow clone? Where is his real body?"

On cue, Fujin flickered behind him. They quickly turned around to see him. There wasn't a single scratch on his body. Guy and the others realised that Kakashi and Pakkun had smelled his scent and hence stopped attacking the formation. Kakashi looked at him and memories regarding Fujin's graduation exam surfaced. Fujin had made quite an impact that day by asking for a chakra metal sword. Kakashi never imagined that the boy would become so strong in just a few years. He said, "Good work."

Guy had no idea how Fujin managed to achieve this. But he didn't care. He raised his thumb and said with a grin, "You are good! I can feel the power of youth flowing through you!"

The two Yamanaka ninjas also looked at Fujin with surprise in their eyes.

The bounty hunters in the barrier noticed Fujin outside the barrier. They had already expected. However, the eyes of the SealMaster widened. He exclaimed in horror, "His chakra!"

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Chapter 248: The Formation Breaks...

Renzo ignored his missing arm and all his injuries and tried to analyze when Fujin switched with a clone. He realized, 'According to the intel, he moves very fast. That is why we set up the trap and prepared the formation in the first place. However, when he escaped, his speed didn't match the intel. But our minds were too occupied with claiming his bounty and we didn't notice the anomaly. He probably switched himself with a clone even before we exited the hidden bases while his clones moved slowly to catch us off-guard with that combination jutsu.'

Renzo's analysis was very close to the truth. Fujin created a shadow clone with 20% of his chakra and escaped right after sensing that he was facing 35 enemies. He hid his chakra signature and scent and moved without making any sounds or leaving any trail due to which the sensors among the bounty hunters never sensed his main body.

Later on, when he saw the Four Violet Flames Formation, Fujin realized why he was feeling a sense of danger. After realizing that his backup was Kakashi, he stopped hiding his scent so that Kakashi could smell his scent and stop worrying. While it could expose a flaw to the bounty hunters, Fujin didn't care as the bounty hunters were already in deep trouble.

Inside the barrier, everyone looked at the SealMaster, who was also a sensor, as he exclaimed loudly, "His chakra!"

Renzo looked at him and asked, "What about his chakra?"

The SealMaster gulped and said, "It's massive! It's almost twice your maximum chakra, Renzo. He likely only used around 20-25% of his chakra on those 4 shadow clones."

The eyes of the ninjas inside the barrier widened in horror as they took a look at Fujin once again. Though Fujin had improved a lot during his time in the Anbu, his biggest improvement was the increase in his chakra reserves.

As Ryu had speculated, the growth in Fujin's chakra reserves had begun slowing down. But thanks to the fact that his chakra reserves were already comparable to a Jounin and the aid provided by the Elemental crystals, his growth was still massive.

His chakra reserves had grown by three times in the last 20 months. In another six months, his chakra reserves would reach the same level as Renjiro's. However, Fujin did sense that his growth was slowing down rapidly. So he wasn't sure about reaching Hiruzen's level of chakra at his current rate.

Kakashi looked at the spot where Fujin's three clones had exploded and said, "Focus your jutsus on that ninja again."

The Konoha ninjas were about to attack when Fujin said, "Wait, I'll give them a few more explosions."

He created 6 shadow clones, each with 5% of his chakra. Three flickered close to Shiro while the other 3 flickered close to the other three ninjas maintaining the formation. Kakashi nodded and weaved a few hand signs as well.

'Lightning Release: Shadow Clone jutsu'

A shadow clone infused with Lightning appeared and followed Fujin's clones. Fujin's clones once again touched the barrier and exploded. Shiro was prepared this time and poured more chakra into the barrier. However, the explosions were much stronger as the clones were full of chakra.

The impact of the explosion was once again sent through the barrier. As the person closest to the explosion, once again the majority of the impact was borne by Shiro. He collapsed on the ground and almost lost consciousness. However, he gritted his teeth and forced himself to stay awake. He said to himself, "No! I have to stay awake! Otherwise, all of us will be dead."

Through sheer will, he forced himself to stay awake. Unfortunately, Kakashi's Lightning Shadow Clone appeared and transformed into Lightning and hit the barrier on one single point. The barrier could no longer hold on and a small hole appeared in it as the Lightning broke through. It hit Shiro and electrocuted him.

Shiro was already on his last legs. He didn't even have the energy to scream as his body was electrocuted to death.

With his death, the entire formation collapsed. Immediately, all 5 Konoha ninjas flickered towards the opponents. The bounty hunters were on guard as well. As soon as the formation collapsed, they began running away in different directions. However, compared to the fresh Konoha ninjas, the bounty hunters were extremely tired.

Fujin's clones immediately attacked the other 3 ninjas who were maintaining the formation. They were already exhausted and low on chakra. None among them could put up a fight and were beheaded with ease. Fujin's clones immediately flickered towards the ones who were escaping.

Kakashi flickered behind Renzo. Despite being gravely injured, Renzo stopped running and swung his sword at Kakashi. However, Lightning appeared in Kakashi's hand and hit the blade. Despite the chakra around Renzo's sword, Lightning still conducted through his sword and into his body.

Kakashi said, "Higashi Renzo, you are a long way from home."

Renzo's sword shattered and Kakashi's hand pierced into his chest.

At the same time, Guy appeared behind Shingo. Shingo began weaving hand signs. However, Guy grinned, "Too Slow!"

Before Shingo could complete his hand signs, Guy had already reached his position. His eyes widened as he saw a kick coming at him from the top. He immediately moved to his right. Guy's kick landed on the ground. Shingo was still maintaining his hand seal, however, Guy's kick tore the ground open. Hundreds of small stones were launched in all directions. Shingo was hit by dozens of small stones at rapid speed. He was still unharmed, however, he couldn't continue weaving hand signs.

Guy quickly attacked him once again. Shingo snorted internally, 'Do you think that only you can use Taijutsu?'

Shingo's physique was much larger and more muscular than Guy's. He formed his fist and punched back at Guy. Their fists collided. Shingo's expression immediately changed. An intense pain coursed through his entire arm. He cursed, 'What the fuck is his body made of?'

Unfortunately, he didn't have any time to actually ask that question. Guy's second punch was coming straight at him. Unwillingly, he had to punch back with his other arm. And intense pain coursed through that arm as well. However, it was much worse due to the injury caused by Fujin earlier! He cursed, 'Fuck! It feels like my arm will break into two.'

Guy immediately noticed that his opponent was in a lot of pain. He didn't miss the opportunity and bombarded Shingo with punches and kicks. Shingo, who dared to match Guy in Taijutsu despite his injuries, was overwhelmed! He was beaten to a bloody pulp. Guy knocked him unconscious and tied him up while thinking, 'Lord Hokage wanted some prisoners to check their memories. This guy looked quite strong. He should have some information.'

Some distance away from where Guy and Shingo were fighting, Fujin flickered behind one of the three remaining subordinates of Shingo. The bounty hunter noticed Fujin and turned around to fight. However, he was already very exhausted. There were dozens of small cuts on his body from the earlier fights. He had seen Fujin's clones cut through kunais with ease. So he began weaving hand signs. However, Fujin opened his mouth and shot 8 Vacuum Bullets.

One bullet was aimed at his forehead and another was aimed at his heart. The remaining six were to cut off his escape route. The bounty hunter moved his head out of the way and tried to twist his body. However, the Vacuum Bullets were too fast. One grazed past his face and tore his right cheek and ear off. His bloody teeth could be seen. Another bullet hit his rib cage and pierced through his chest. It avoided his heart, but he was on his last legs. With a swing of Fujin's sword, he was beheaded.

Fujin spread his chakra field to observe the other battles. He noticed, 'So Kakashi has already killed their leader. My clones and that guy have killed their opponents as well. Guy should win soon too. So just that SealMaster and the one-legged bounty hunter are alive.'

Fujin sensed that Kakashi was moving towards the one-legged guy. So he moved towards the SealMaster. Fujin's clones followed him as well. Yamanaka Ken had confronted the SealMaster. Both entered in a fight and were evenly matched.

The only bounty hunter who wasn't attacked so far was the one-legged Jounin from Kiri. Despite having just one leg, he was moving quite fast through the forest. Unfortunately, Kakashi killed Renzo too quickly. He immediately gave chase and caught up. The Jounin noticed Kakashi and immediately turned around and weaved hand signs. Kakashi noticed his hand signs and weaved hand signs as well.

'Water Release: Water Clone jutsu'

'Fire Release: Fireball jutsu'

4 Water clones appeared next to the Kiri rogue. They saw a giant fireball headed straight at them. One of the clones weaved hand signs.

'Water Release: Water Wall jutsu'

A water wall appeared in front of them. The Fireball hit it and exploded. A lot of water was turned into smoke and covered the area while the rest was splashed back at the ninja and his clones. They were about to attack once again when a sound of Lightning was heard. Lightning travelled through the water that was splashed on them and electrocuted them all!

All four water clones were instantly dispelled. The one-legged Jounin's eyes widened. He realised, 'He used my own jutsu against me!'

He barely maintained his consciousness. However, Kakashi appeared in front of him and placed his right hand on his chest. Immediately, an intense current passed through his body and knocked him out.

Kakashi tied him up and placed a seal on his chest and thought, 'One captured alive. Guy should have captured his opponent as well. This mission is successful.'

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Chapter 249: Eight Gate Lock-Up

'Water Release: Water Needles jutsu'

Water split into hundreds of drops. Each drop turned into a needle and rained at Yamanaka Ken. Ken immediately flickered out of the way while making his hand seal. He flickered once again to get close to his opponent.

'Mind Destruction Jutsu'

His opponent immediately moved out of the way and jumped on a branch behind him. Suddenly, his eyes widened. A Vacuum bullet hit his chest and pierced straight through it. However, his body turned into water and collapsed. A few meters behind him, his body appeared once again. He looked at Fujin and said, "You can hide your chakra. No wonder I didn't sense you back then. But now that I know it, hiding it is useless."

Fujin didn't reply but Ken flickered close to him once again and tried using the same jutsu. The SealMaster took out a scroll and jumped back on the ground to dodge Ken's attack. He opened the scroll and smeared his blood across it and weaved a few hand signs rapidly.

Fujin frowned and wondered, 'Is he attempting to reverse summon himself somehow?'

Chakra gathered in his mouth as he shot a few Vacuum Bullets at him. At the same time, Ken once again used the Mind Destruction jutsu. However, a black tortoise projection made entirely of chakra appeared between Fujin and the SealMaster. Fujin's Vacuum bullets hit the shell of the tortoise and were stopped. At the same time, an Azure Dragon projection appeared between Ken and him. The jutsu hit the Dragon but had no impact on him.

Fujin frowned as he analyzed, 'A barrier?'

At the same time, projections of a Vermillion Bird and a White Tiger were also formed around him. After tanking the jutsus, the projections collapsed and transformed into a barrier around him. The walls of the barrier had the image of those four mythical beasts. A smile formed on his face.

Fujin gathered a large amount of chakra while changing his location.

'Wind Release: Vacuum Cannon jutsu'

Fujin shot the powerful Vacuum Cannon at the wall which had the Vermillion Bird image. The entire barrier shook, but not a single crack appeared on it. The ninja inside the barrier also looked completely fine.

He taunted, "This is my strongest barrier. You can keep attacking for days, it won't fall! Your mind control jutsus will also not work against my barrier!"

Fujin was surprised. He analyzed, 'This barrier is smaller, but it is even more sturdy than the Four Violet Flames Formation. Worse, it doesn't look like it is using his chakra. I won't be able to crack it using Shadow Clone Explosions.

Fujin immediately snorted, "You are deep within the Land of Fire. Let me see how long you will keep hiding here."

He dispelled his clones and got some chakra back. He sat at some distance from the barrier in case the barrier had any more peculiar means. His eyes began glowing as he started observing the barrier properly.

Ken also replicated Fujin's actions and stood in the opposite direction. After some time, the other Yamanaka ninja arrived. He went to Ken to ask him for an update. A few seconds later, Guy and Kakashi arrived. Both were carrying the ones they captured.

Guy looked at the barrier and said, "I haven't seen such a barrier yet. What is it?"

Kakashi observed the barrier and replied, "Barrier Defence Seal Jutsu: Eight Gate Lock-Up. It's a wide-range barrier jutsu created by the Uzumaki clan to create a barrier around an entire village. Looks like he has a modified version of it to protect just himself."

The SealMaster's expression became grim after seeing the three Konoha ninjas arrive. It implied that every other Bounty hunter was killed. He replied, "As expected of the Copy Ninja Kakashi. Since you know about the barrier, you know that you wouldn't be able to break it like the Four Violet Flames Formation."

Kakashi replied, "Every barrier could be broken. Regardless, this is the Land of Fire. I could summon hundreds of ninjas and keep a watch on you until you can't maintain the barrier anymore."

The SealMaster laughed and said, "Hundreds of ninjas just for me? Hahaha. I never expected my life to be so precious for you to waste so much manpower on me."

Kakashi said, "It isn't. You won't be able to imagine the torture you'd be put under for wasting our time. So I'll give you an offer. Surrender now and I will ensure that no harm will come to you. Lord Hokage might even allow you to turn a new page in your life."

The SealMaster was surprised. He thought, 'I never imagined that Konoha would offer to recruit me.'

The offer was alluring. However, his eyes laid on the two Yamanakas and he rejected that idea, 'No, these two will read my memories. Once they do, they won't allow me to live.'

He opened another scroll and said, "It's a tempting offer. Unfortunately, I can't do it."

He made a confrontation hand seal. Immediately, dozens of explosion tags appeared from the scroll. A few stuck to his body while the rest stuck on the four symbols on the barrier. The Konoha ninjas immediately became alert.

In the next moment, all the explosion tags exploded! Fujin immediately flickered away. Kakashi slammed his hands on the ground.

'Earth Release: Earth Dome jutsu'

A dome appeared from the ground and covered him and Guy. At the same time, the last ninja grabbed Yamanaka Ken and escaped underground.

The barrier collapsed. The chakra of the SealMaster and within the barrier fueled the explosion and caused a fire to spread in all four directions! It also caused cracks to spread within the ground around the barrier.

Kakashi noticed that the ground under his feet as well as the dome had begun cracking. His expression became grim as he poured chakra into the ground to strengthen it.

The two Yamanakas who were escaping underground had it rough. As the ground cracked, some heat entered the ground.

After flickering a few times, Fujin turned around to see. The fire had spread for almost 300 meters from the explosion spot. He was surprised, 'What a crazy bastard! That barrier was a trap. He didn't intend to protect himself. He just wanted to use its chakra to amplify the explosions from those tags. He even used all his own chakra to amplify the explosions!'

Soon, the explosion died down and only the fire remained. A few water dragons appeared in between the fire and moved through the fire and began dousing it. The water also entered into the cracks in the ground. The two Yamanakas sensed it and left the underground. Fujin sensed that they were all fine. So he flickered back towards where Kakashi was.

He first looked at the spot of the explosion. There was no sign of any dead body. The SealMaster's body was completely obliterated. Fujin looked at the two Yamanakas and asked, "Are you two alright?"

Both of them had several burns on their skin. Ken nodded and said, "It's fine. It's just minor burns."

He looked at Kakashi and asked, "Why did that bastard commit suicide? Wouldn't accepting your offer be much better for him?"

Kakashi replied, "More than suicide, it looked like he wanted to burn all the dead bodies. This way, we won't be able to gain any intel from them. Of course, if he managed to kill any of us, that would have been a bonus for him."

Ken looked around and frowned, "All the dead bodies will have been burnt by the fire. We won't be able to read their memories now. It looks like he wanted to hide something crucial."

He looked at the two ninjas that Kakashi and Guy had captured and added, "Information that these two wouldn't have."

Kakashi nodded and said, "Yes. I guess he didn't know about this."

He took out a scroll and opened it. He made a hand seal and Renzo's body popped out.

He said, "I had stored his body as he was likely their leader. Read his memories."

Yamanaka Ken nodded and immediately got to work. He placed his palm on the forehead of the dead body and inserted his chakra into his head to inspect his memories.

Fujin's eyes were glued to him. The Yamanaka clan's ability to read memories of dead bodies was something he had wanted for some time. Unfortunately, he didn't get to visit the T&I department frequently. During his time in the Anbu, he had only seen it being done thrice.

Fujin analyzed, 'Just like before, the chakra that invades the brain of the dead body is pure Yin chakra. It is almost entirely the opposite of medical ninjutsu. But, how exactly does this work?'

Despite observing it for the fourth time, he didn't have any idea about the internal workings of the jutsu. Though he had killed hundreds of people, his Anbu squad would always be close by. He never got to experiment on the dead bodies. And he had no intention of experimenting on the only dead body still in his possession.

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Chapter 250: My Shamelessness is Not Enough!!

Ken continued reading his memories for a few minutes. Sweat appeared on Ken's body. It was apparent that reading memories from a dead body was very taxing on him.

Finally, he let him go. His expression was grim. Kakashi asked, "Did you get any information from him?"

Ken nodded and said, "I couldn't read all his memories, but the ones that I could show that this bounty hunting was a scheme made by Kirigakure."

Kakashi furrowed his eyebrows. Ken continued, "He hadn't gone rogue. Instead, he was given a mission by an elder from the Mizukage faction from Kirigakure. They currently have a huge advantage against the rebels who are hiding. Since they are hiding, the forces of Mizukage are ideal. But, the rebellion means that no one will issue missions there.

So to raise funds, they issued him a mission. He was to go rogue, get in touch with other rogue Kiri ninjas and form a bounty hunter group. After collecting the bounties, they would secretly send the majority of the bounty to Kirigakure. That SealMaster was assigned as his deputy for this mission. Apart from them, all others were actual rogue nins who got used."

Ken's words left the four Konoha ninjas speechless. Even after going rogue, those guys were still being made to work for Kirigakure unknowingly. Fujin couldn't help but think, 'What a scheme! And what shamelessness! Sigh, every time I think that I am getting too shameless, this world gives me a reality check. These bastards are a hundred times more shameless than me! I need to improve myself.'

Back in Konoha, a chill passed through the spine of Hiruzen. He immediately got alert and observed his surroundings. He didn't notice anything weird and wondered, 'Why did it suddenly feel like someone wanted to take everything from me? Are any of my former students or teammates scheming something? It has been a while since I have paid attention to their movements.'

Back in the vast forests in the Land of Fire, Kakashi said, "It is a great scheme. The high number of ninjas going rogue should weaken them. But now, they have managed to make use of them instead. I guess that they have also sent guys like him to other villages."

He looked at the other Yamanaka ninja and said, "You inspect his memories as well."

The ninja nodded and got to work. Kakashi looked at Fujin and said, "According to our intel, the bounty hunter's group shouldn't have been so big. I guess two different groups allied together. We should be able to confirm it after checking their memories."

Fujin nodded. He had the same analysis after Renzo threatened him. Kakashi continued, "This mission is done, will you be coming back with us?"

Fujin shook his head and answered, "No, I have another mission. I will take my leave."

Kakashi nodded. Fujin flickered away. Guy looked at him and said, "He is quite strong, Kakashi. There weren't even half the bounty hunters alive by the time we reached."

Kakashi nodded. He said, "Lord Third is very positive about his prospects. I guess his progress shouldn't be very surprising. Anyways, let's clean up the battlefield."

Kakashi and Guy gathered the remains of every burnt dead body. Most of the dead bodies were badly burnt. The only ones who were in decent shape were the ones who had attempted to hide under the Earth Dome and were killed by Fujin's Vacuum Bullets.

After storing all the bodies, the two Yamanakas used Mind Body Switch jutsu to take over the bodies of the two prisoners so that they wouldn't suddenly attack. The group returned back to Konoha.

After returning, they reported the details of the mission to Hiruzen and Shikaku. After analyzing the data, Shikaku let out a sigh and said, "Despite being in such a mess, they still try to create a mess in other villages."

Hiruzen said, "It's because they know that no one would retaliate with force. After all, no one wants to enter into their mess."

He looked at Kakashi and instructed, "Deliver the dead bodies to Torture and Interrogation department. Have them inspect all their memories. Once we can't find any new memories, deliver their bodies to the underground market and claim their bounties."

He looked at Shikaku and said, "Find a way to spread the news of the death of Higashi Renzo in Kiri. It will improve the morale of the rebels. Though I won't be involved directly, the Mizukage would have underestimated us way too much if he thinks that we can't retaliate at all. Also, form a few patrol squads to roam randomly through the country to find traces of any other rogue Kirigakure ninja."

Shikaku and Kakashi nodded and left the office. A frown formed on Hiruzen's face as he analyzed, 'Kumo has already been trying to scheme a lot against us. Though Suna is allied with us, they are growing restless by the day. Iwa is silent for now, but once that fencesitter makes up his mind, they will become extremely problematic. And now even Kiri is making moves. Sigh, these peaceful times might not last very long.'

In the middle of the desert, existed a city that commanded awe and reverence. Amidst the harsh desert environment, this majestic city stood proudly, surrounded by a colossal wall that stretched as far as the eye could see.

The towering walls, crafted from sturdy sandstone, created an imposing barrier against the unforgiving desert winds. Samurais clad in desert-hued armor stood vigilant at the city gates.

A group of traders approached the towering walls of this city and moved towards the Samurais. The Samurais noticed their arrival. Among them was Captain Hayashi Ryota who was responsible for the safety of the city gates.

One of the traders walked forward and bowed respectfully. The samurais scrutinized the group with a discerning gaze. The trader, dressed in fine desert attire, exuded an air of confidence and respectability.

Ryota said, "Welcome to the Wind Capital, esteemed travelers. I am Captain Hayashi Ryota. State your purpose and present your trade permits for inspection."

The trader said, "I am Takahashi Hiroshi. I have heard about your valor, Captain Ryota. I am pleased to make your acquaintance."

Ryota's mood improved on being praised. Hiroshi handed him the required documents and said, "We are a new traders group from the Land of Bird."

Ryota and the other guards inspected the documents carefully and verified their authenticity. Satisfied with their findings, Captain Ryota returned the permits to Hiroshi and allowed them to enter the city.

Ryota said in a diplomatic tone, "As honored guests of our city, we trust that you will adhere to our laws and customs during your stay. Please be mindful of the city's regulations and treat our citizens and fellow traders with respect. Enjoy your time in the Wind Capital and may your business ventures be prosperous."

Hiroshi bowed deeply once again and said, "We are humbled by your hospitality, Captain Ryota. We shall uphold the highest standards of conduct and contribute positively to the commerce of this remarkable city."

Hiroshi and his fellow traders entered the city along with their caravan. As soon as they did, they were immediately captivated by the stunning contrasts and breathtaking sights in the city!

The streets wound through the city like intricate mazes and provided shelter from the scorching sun. Buildings of varying heights and styles rose proudly, their architecture inspired by the desert environment. Majestic minarets and ornate domes punctuated the skyline as their golden surfaces glimmered under the brilliant sun.

Hiroshi couldn't help but mutter in awe, "So beautiful!"

Ryota smirked and said, "Everyone who enters this city for the first time feels the same."

Hiroshi nodded and replied, "It's difficult to feel anything else."

Ryota nodded. Hiroshi said, "I'd love to keep watching. Unfortunately, some of my goods are perishable. Could you tell me where the markets are situated, Captain Ryota?"

Ryota nodded and provided him with the information. Hiroshi and the other traders began moving according to his instructions.

Soon they left the sight of those Samurais. Immediately, every trader's expression changed. The awe and captivation disappeared from their faces. Hiroshi said in a neutral voice, "Sell all of our products."

All the traders immediately got to work. Hiroshi kept observing the city. They had goods in bulk. So they found appropriate buyers and sold all their goods at low prices. In a few hours, their entire caravan was empty.

Hiroshi took all the money and said aloud, "Since we made the dangerous journey successfully and have plenty of money, we should enjoy some time in this village. Of course, in our time here, we will also check which goods are the most appropriate and profitable to trade. So enjoy yourself for the next few months."

The traders smiled and rejoiced on getting a long break. They split into groups and left in different directions under the envious gazes of some people. Though trading was very risky, if done successfully, it was very rewarding!

Hiroshi left alone and booked a room in one of the most expensive hotels in the Wind Capital. He stood on the balcony and saw the sunset. A golden hue was cast across the city making it seem even more breathtaking than ever. A smile formed on his face as he thought, 'In terms of the scenery, the Wind Capital is leagues ahead of the Fire Capital.'