

Calamity 281

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 281: The Fifth Hokage?

Hiruzen had the same thought as Shikaku. He didn't dare to imagine what Fujin might do the next time if they said that his performance was unsatisfactory. He quickly nodded and answered, "Your performance has been very good. You will be promoted. However, we haven't arranged any Anbu subordinates for you yet. So you will be an Anbu Captain only in name."

Fujin replied, "That's fine. I will be visiting the library. And I also need a break after such a long mission. Preferably at least one or two months long break to learn new Seals and jutsus. Take your time. I'll file the report later. See ya."

Fujin immediately disappeared from the room despite none of the doors and windows being open. Shikaku and Hiruzen looked at where Fujin was standing.

Shikaku cursed in his heart, 'This brat! He created such a mess and didn't even stay to discuss how to handle it! And after giving me month-long headaches, he has the gall to ask for a month-long vacation?'

Meanwhile, Hiruzen thought, 'Seals? Sigh, he will soon begin bugging me for Flying Thunder God.'

Shikaku looked at Hiruzen and asked while sighing, "Lord Hokage, if we don't promote him and send him for such a mission again, do you think he will try to assassinate Rasa?"

Hiruzen didn't reply and began considering it. After all, there was already an instance of a Kazekage disappearing. Unknown to him, the assassin's age back then wasn't much older than Fujin's current age.

Hiruzen shook his head and said, "Unlikely, unless you specifically mention it. Regardless, his performance has been excellent."

Shikaku was dumbfounded. He thought, 'Does no one understand sarcasm?'

He smiled bitterly and said, "It's not that his performance is excellent. Rather, it is too excellent! Making a Jinchuriki lose control and killing an Elite Jounin was a bit too much. Suna will be forced to retaliate. And they will likely retaliate in an extreme manner.

Not to mention, in addition to that, he killed 16 Anbu ninjas, a few Jounins and likely dozens of Chunins and Genins. And I still haven't considered the dead nobles, burned Provision Depot or the stunt he pulled in Shunkuto!

In the history of Suna, they have only once taken a bigger loss than this during peacetime. And they started the Third Great Ninja War. We have to be careful in case Rasa decides to start another war."

However, Hiruzen shook his head immediately and said, "No, the situation is completely different. When the third Kazekage died, Suna was very vulnerable and Rasa's position as the 4th Kazekage wasn't very stable. In addition, they were surrounded by 3 major villages that were preparing for war.

The current matter is an internal one and doesn't directly threaten their strength. And of the 3 major villages that surround them, one is in a formal alliance and another is embroiled in a civil war. So they won't choose war right now."

Shikaku analyzed Hiruzen's words and nodded, "That makes sense. I guess Suna will be a mess for a few months. They will either focus entirely on stabilizing the situation, or they might do it alongside sending Anbu units into our country. Regardless, once their mess is resolved, they will retaliate somehow. We have to be prepared."

Hiruzen nodded and said, "We do. But we have time. Due to the mess that Fujin created, Rasa will be forced to deploy at least 1000 Suna ninjas in the West to calm them down. In addition, he has also deployed a few hundred ninjas in the Wind Capital. The other cities might also ask for additional security as a precaution. And they will also have to scour the desert to look for the culprit.

This will ensure that he can't make a big move for the time being. So you just need to prepare for the moves they make in the dark. No need to create any more trouble in the Land of Wind for now. Hopefully, their anger will fade away by the time these issues are sorted.

However, the schemes they come up with have to be crushed. It's best if all Suna ninjas who infiltrate the Land of Fire are killed. Fujin's actions, though provocative, are a good deterrent. If we stop their schemes, then they will be even more afraid of breaking the alliance."

Shikaku sighed. He will have to work a lot and won't be able to laze around for the next few months. He said, "Alright."

He began walking out. Hiruzen instructed, "Have a Yamanaka Jounin read Susumu's memories. And create a scroll describing his Genjutsu jutsus and hand it to me. We won't be placing it in the library. Also, create a list of Jounins who will benefit from learning these jutsus and can keep them a secret."

Shikaku nodded and replied, "I'll get to it, Lord Hokage."

He left the room. As he sat alone, his previous thoughts surfaced in Hiruzen's mind as he wondered, 'Could Fujin be a candidate for 5th Hokage?'

Hiruzen let out a sigh. The matter of selecting the Fifth Hokage had been troubling him for years and he still didn't have any solution. He thought, 'It'd have been great if Jiraiya or Tsunade accepted this position. Unfortunately, neither have the will to do so. As for others, there is no one qualified.'

If I retire now, the next Hokage will be Danzo. That wouldn't be good for the village. Though he is loyal to the village and his ambitions would benefit Konoha, he doesn't have the strength needed to fulfill his ambitions despite those Sharingans and Lord First's cells.

I was hoping Kakashi would rise to the challenge and reach my level. Seeing his potential, I and Danzo worked in the background to increase his reputation and give him sufficient fame. Unfortunately, despite being looked at as the leader by the younger generation, he is still too weak.'

A frown formed on Hiruzen's face as he thought about Kakashi, 'In terms of talent, Kakashi doesn't lose out to even Minato. His growth trajectory was very fast even exceeding my and my students' strength at his age. Unfortunately, ever since the 3rd Great Ninja War ended, his growth has stagnated. He hasn't trained enough and spends most of his time in front of the memorial stone or doing missions.'

Not to mention, according to the intel Itachi sent, I doubt Kakashi could win against any of the Akatsuki members. At the current rate, I guess Kakashi will need around 5 to 7 years to reach my level. Unless something makes him feel like his strength isn't enough and he pushes himself once again.

As for Fujin, I never considered him until now. Though his mission record is impeccable, he didn't fight anyone truly strong other than Kaminari. But with such a performance, he is far more capable than I expected.

Even if I consider that he used hit-and-run tactics and only used a sneak attack to kill Susumu, that is still quite good. Especially if he can pull off something like this during a war. It could force Sunagakure to withdraw half their troops from the frontlines.'

His crystal ball lit up and showed the scene inside section A of the Library. Hiruzen thought, 'As I expected. He has already started looking at the seals. Once he masters the seals in this section, he will come asking for Flying Thunder God. If he can master it, his threat on the battlefield will be no less than Minato.

Though it is a big if. Regardless, he has one advantage over Kakashi. He has a hunger to grow strong. Though he isn't as relentless as Guy, he still trains a lot and even asks for vacations to train.

Unfortunately, he is quite young as well. He should be 14 soon. He will need 5 to 7 years to completely mature as well. Sigh, I'll have to hold my old bones together for the next 7 years. The only plus point is that we might have more than one option for the Hokage seat. A situation similar to when I and Minato were selected.'

With another sigh, Hiruzen stopped thinking about this matter. He got up and left the office.

As soon as he left, Fujin flickered to Konoha's library. Though he had travelled non-stop for a day, he couldn't stop himself from visiting the library and checking out what all jutsus were available.

He reached section A while recalling Renjiro's words as he thought, 'Though Renjiro emphasized the importance of mastering Rank C jutsus, I have long reached a bottleneck. I won't be able to improve those jutsus any further without investing significant time. It's time to learn the Rank A jutsus. I hope the library doesn't disappoint me.'

With eyes full of expectations, Fujin stepped into section A of the Library.

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Chapter 282: 58 Scrolls!

Fujin entered Section A of the library and looked around. The size of this section was much larger than other sections. However, the number of scrolls in this section was the least.

Fujin immediately began looking for Wind jutsus. As he searched and collected the scrolls, he analyzed, 'I wonder if any rank A Wind jutsu will be of any aid to me. After all, most of my rank B and C jutsus are as strong as rank A jutsus due to supercharging them and Yin & Yang control.'

In a few minutes, he grabbed all the Wind scrolls and sat on a table. He analyzed, 'Not bad. I wasn't expecting many Wind jutsus considering how few were there in Section B.'

Fujin had found 6 scrolls. They were :

Blade of Wind jutsu

Severing Pressure jutsu

Wind Explosion Clone jutsu

Assassin's Rush jutsu

Geyser Creation jutsu

Summoning: Giant Windmill jutsu

Fujin decided to start with the one with which he was the most familiar. He opened the Blade of Wind jutsu scroll and began reading. In a minute, he thought, 'This jutsu is almost entirely similar to the Wind

Sword jutsu. Just that the power, sharpness and speed have been increased slightly and it also provides some defensive uses. Still, it should be very easy to learn.'

Fujin extended two Fingers on his right hand. Immediately, the wind began flowing around them. A small 1-inch blade of wind appeared on top of them. Soon, that blade began increasing in size and reached 1 foot in size. Fujin analyzed it and nodded, 'This jutsu is down. I didn't even need to use the hand seals. I'll begin using this instead of Wind Sword jutsu.'

Fujin kept the scroll back and turned his attention to the next jutsu. He analyzed as he read, 'The Wind Explosion Clone jutsu. I tried creating this jutsu by myself by referencing the Shadow Clone Explosion jutsu. I succeeded, but the damage output was very low. It was just barely higher than an Explosion tag unless I put in too much chakra. Unfortunately, I didn't get much free time after the Anbu training phase was over to work on this jutsu.'

Fujin read the entire scroll carefully and realized, 'Oh, I see. I was going about this in the wrong direction. I was first creating a normal Wind Clone and then using its chakra to explode and generate sharp winds. But according to the scroll, the clone itself is created for the sole purpose of exploding. So it can explode faster and generate more powerful explosions. This is different from Shadow Clone Explosion. I wonder if I could modify Shadow Clones using these methods as well.'

Fujin kept the scroll and began reading the rest. He read the Severing pressure scroll and shook his head, 'This scroll requires a fan to be used. Not suitable for me. Its lethality doesn't exceed my sword slashes and its range doesn't exceed Infinite Breakthrough. I don't need it.'

Fujin opened the Assassin's Rush jutsu scroll and began reading. His eyes immediately sparkled as he thought, 'Nice! This is a great and very practical jutsu. I'll learn this after mastering the Wind Explosion Clone jutsu.'

Fujin checked the last two jutsu scrolls as well and had mixed feelings. He analyzed, 'These jutsus are a bit difficult and have limited use. But they are quite strong. Summoning: Giant Windmill is a jutsu similar to Rashomon summoning. This jutsu was created by the 2nd Kazekage as well.'

The jutsu summons a giant Windmill that is around 3 storeys tall from the ground similar to Rashomon Gates. However, instead of defense, this jutsu is for attacking. The blades of the Windmill will spin rapidly and will form a strong wind flow that will pull everything towards the blades. If anyone gets caught in it, they will be chopped in pieces, a certain death.

Unfortunately, even the user isn't spared from this wind flow. Though it isn't an issue as I can hide underground. But, I can't use this jutsu when I'm with allies. In addition, it is also heavy on chakra. And though the damage potential is high, it won't be effective against veteran ninjas. They will just hide underground or find something for support.

So the only use of this jutsu is to clear cannon fodder when I'm fighting solo. Not very useful as I already have too many means of doing that. Other than running away, this is what I excel the most at.

As for the Geyser Creation jutsu, it is a bit complicated as it is based on a Steam Release jutsu from the Sakai clan. The jutsu has two phases. In the first phase, cracks and holes have to be created in the ground. And then we have to make hot steam erupt from the ground and blast whatever is in the way.

However, this jutsu was modified. Instead of hot steam, I will have to make highly pressurized air erupt from the cracks in the ground. Instead of blasting and burning, it will cut the ones in the way. And since this jutsu comes from the underground, the opponent won't be able to hide underground to avoid the attack.

I'll learn this jutsu as well. Two new jutsus along with the Wind Explosion Clone jutsu, not bad. Unfortunately, it looks like Konoha's stock of Wind jutsus isn't very high. Or perhaps, the number of rank A Wind jutsus itself is quite low. Would make sense if even something as lethal as the Wind Vacuum technique is only rank B!

Fujin kept the Wind scrolls back and began collecting the scrolls related to Fuinjutsu. There was a hint of excitement in his eyes. Even more so than when he checked the Wind jutsus. The reason for this was simple. If Fujin could learn and master every seal in this Section, he would be a Fuinjutsu Grandmaster. Very few people in Konoha could call themselves this. More importantly, it would allow Fujin to ask Hiruzen for the Flying Thunder God!

As he collected the scrolls, he realized, 'I see. Almost half of the scrolls here are for Fuinjutsu. As for the rest, the majority are Rank A Fire jutsus followed by Water and Earth jutsus. I guess this shows the foundation of this village. Fuinjutsu scrolls probably came from Mito, Earth and Water scrolls from the Senju while Fire scrolls should have come from the remaining clans.'

In all, Fujin found 58 Fuinjutsu scrolls. He created a few clones and they divided the scrolls among them. They immediately began studying.

After around half an hour, a Jounin entered Section A. He had received information that someone went into Section A of the library without authorization. However, as soon as he entered, he was left dumbfounded by the sight. 10 people with similar faces were reading the scrolls and had more scrolls with them. His eyes twitched as he thought, 'Using shadow clones to read in the Library? That's a first.'

He coughed to attract Fujin's attention. But Fujin didn't even look at him, leaving him standing alone awkwardly. He walked towards one of Fujin's clones and asked, "What are you doing?"

Fujin's clone looked up and answered, "Reading."

The man was left speechless once again. Fujin's clone was looking at him as if he was the biggest idiot in the world. He wondered, 'Do his eyes have an issue?'

He said, "I am the supervisor of the Library. Tell me why are you in Section A? It is restricted and only Jounins can enter. If you are here without any authorization, you will be arrested and punished by Lord Hokage."

Fujin's clone looked back at the scroll and began reading as he said, "I got promoted today and reported to Lord Hokage that I'll be coming here. Feel free to ask him."

The supervisor was dumbfounded. He thought, 'Such a young Jounin? I'll have to confirm with Lord Hokage though. It'll be a pain in the ass if he is lying.'

He asked, "What is your name?"

Fujin's clone answered, "Suzuki Fujin."

The supervisor nodded and left. He had no intention of talking further with Fujin. He left the Section and asked a couple of people to keep an eye on Fujin while he confirmed whether what Fujin said was true.

Fujin and his clones ignored this matter. They went through every scroll in detail. It was a few hours past midnight by the time they were done.

Fujin dispelled the clones one by one and received their memories. He let out a sigh, 'I thought that like jutsus, the number of seals in this section would also be lesser. Instead, it's many times higher. No wonder that despite there being so many SealMasters, there are so few Grandmasters in Fuinjutsu. If I don't use Shadow Clones, I'll probably need more than a decade to learn all these seals.

Even with Shadow Clones, this will be very time-consuming. I should first learn the rank A Wind jutsus. Then I will focus entirely on the seals.'

A smile formed on Fujin's face as he thought, 'Fortunately, I found the few seals I was looking for. Once I learn them, I can begin working towards that plan.'

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Chapter 283: The Dangerous Copy Ninja!

In the last few hours, Fujin had found numerous seals and formations. Among them, the most important seals were, The Four Symbols Seal, Five Elements Seal, Five Elements Unseal, Evil Sealing Method and Iron Armor Seal. In addition, there were many Juinjutsu seals as well as barriers.

Fujin analyzed, 'The quantity and quality of the seals is good. Especially the Four Symbol Seal. I was worried that it would be in the forbidden scroll. In addition, there are also the methods with which Suna and Kumo seal their tailed beasts. However, the Reverse Four Symbol Seal and Eight Trigram Seal aren't here.

I guess I could learn the Eight Trigram Seal through experimentation. It could provide me with valuable experience in creating new seals based on what I know. Unfortunately, I have no idea about the Reverse Four Symbols Seal. It could have been a good trump card to use in the organization.

That said, fortunately, I also found a lot of Juinjutsu seals. After I learn them, I can take steps towards creating a seal for my organization members. Until I succeed, I won't work towards finding new members.'

Fujin finally got up and left. He stepped out of the library and saw the night sky. He looked up and thought, 'I completely lost track of time... It's alright. The gains were quite high. I'll take a good rest today. Training can wait for a day.'

He began moving towards his home. However, despite it being late at night, Fujin wasn't the only one up. Inside the Hokage building, Shikaku sat in a room with a dozen Jounin and Anbu Captains in front of him. He was assigning them missions to prepare for Suna's retaliations. Though Shikaku was reluctant to work, his situation was far better than another person who was far away from him.

Sunagakure -

One ninja was running fast from the Kazekage Building to Rasa's house. As soon as he reached it, he slammed the door loudly while shouting repeatedly, "Kazekage-sama! Wake up quickly!"

The banging and the shouting woke up Kankuro and Temari along with Rasa. With a frown on his face, Rasa walked towards the door and opened it. He angrily asked, "Why are you creating a ruckus?"

The messenger immediately said, "Kazekage-sama, we just received a report from Elder Manabu from the West. Gaa..."

He stopped speaking as he noticed Temari and Kankuro watching them from behind. Rasa noticed it. The messenger handed a scroll to Rasa and said, "Kazekage-sama, it's an emergency."

Rasa opened the scroll and began reading. Anger formed in his eyes as he gritted his teeth. He instructed, "Summon all the elders and the council members right now."

The messenger nodded and left. Rasa turned around.

Temari asked, "Did something happen, Father?"

Rasa replied without looking at her, "Everything's fine. Go back to your rooms and sleep."

Temari had a bad feeling. She asked, "Is Gaara alright?"

Rasa opened the door to his room and said, "He is fine. What can happen to him? I need to get ready. Now go to bed. I will be busy."

He entered his room and shut his door. Temari and Kankuro looked at each other helplessly.

Rasa began changing into his formal attire. Within 15 minutes, every Council Member and most Elders inside the village assembled in the meeting room. No one was happy at being woken up at this hour. Finally, Rasa entered the room and took his seat. He looked around and noticed that everyone was there.

Goza asked, "What happened now? Did Manabu catch the culprit?"

Rasa had a grim face. He placed the scroll on the table and said, "No. They set up a trap for the culprit with over a hundred troops. However, they still couldn't stop him. He caused Gaara to lose control and killed Susumu before running away. They have lost track once again."

The eyes of the Council Members widened. Sajo exclaimed, "How could Susumu be killed?"

Goza asked, "Was Gaara stopped and is he alright?"

A few others began reading the scroll. The elders were shocked. Though Susumu wasn't the strongest among them, he was the most annoying to fight due to his unique usage of Genjutsu. Killing him was very difficult.

Rasa frowned and answered, "He injured Gaara which made Gaara lose control and transform partially. Odaka sensed that he had run away. While Odaka, Susumu and Manabu were stopping Gaara, he sneak attacked Susumu and killed him before running away for real. Gaara was stopped once again, but a few ninjas died as they didn't have Susumu's help."

His words caused silence to spread in the room. Their expressions became grim. Finally, Goza asked, "Who was the culprit? To be able to run away unharmed from more than a hundred ninjas while confronting a Jinchuriki and multiple Elite Jounins, did Konoha send their Sannin?"

Rasa replied, "They couldn't identify him. Manabu suspects that he used the transformation jutsu. But, neither of the two Sannins is known to use Wind jutsus. Though it isn't difficult to learn new jutsus, covering their fighting style would be difficult. So I doubt that is the case."

The Council Members agreed. If not for the result, no one would suspect the sannins. However, one of the Council Members, who was reading the report, asked, "But if not for the Sannins, who in Konoha could do something so remarkable? Even if we consider other villages, there is no one who is famous for using Wind jutsus. Manabu said that his ability with the Wind Jutsus exceeded his."

The Council Members began thinking and discussing. Finally Goza said, "In the last couple of years, Konoha's Copy Ninja has been gaining a lot of fame. Could it be done by him? After all, they say that he has copied a thousand jutsus. In addition, he was taught by that cursed Yellow Flash."

They debated among themselves a lot and finally agreed. Joseki said, "I thought Konoha was just pushing his reputation to deter other countries. I didn't think that he could actually live up to his reputation. Regardless, we have to retaliate."

He was cut off by Sajo who said, "But we first need to secure the West. And set better traps for him. If he is in the West, then he can make more attacks. Even if he doesn't, the journey from there to the border with the Land of Rivers will take 4 days at the very least. We need to intercept him inside our country and kill him. Once he is dead, we can create Anbu squads led by Elite Jounins to infiltrate the Land of Fire and target their Nobles."

Everyone agreed with his words. However, Ryusa asked, "But who can stop him? He was able to run away from a combined attack by Manabu, Odaka and Susumu. We don't have anyone to stop him."

His words caused another wave of silence to spread in the room. None of them wanted to fight the Copy Ninja. However, Rasa suddenly said, "You don't need to be worried about it. I will make a move myself and bury him in the desert permanently. After I leave, you guys decide which Nobles to target and create foolproof plans for the same. For the time being, begin arranging ninjas to scour the desert. As soon as he is discovered, I will make a move."

Rasa's words caused mixed feelings to spread among the Council Members. On one hand, they were proud and relieved that their Kage was making a move himself. Though Kakashi was strong, none of them believed that he would stand a chance against Rasa. However, on the other hand, they were ashamed that there was no one other than Rasa who could act in this situation. After all, their opponent wasn't even in the top 3 in terms of strength inside Konoha.

They nodded and immediately got to work. By noon, they had prepared more than 500 ninjas to move out! Rasa himself was ready to move out. Unfortunately, before he could leave, Rasa received another message. Rasa opened the scroll. A chill passed through his spine as he read about the events that took place in Shunkuto!

Cities and Towns around Shunkuto had finally started receiving the migrants. They sent a message to Sunagakure as soon as they heard about the events the migrants described. The news about the events spread through those cities in no time. A fear about Sunagakure and disgust for Rasa spread in those cities as well.

Rasa held the scroll tightly. He was shaking in rage as he thought, 'Did Konoha deploy this man to split our country into two? But, how can that happen? Unless Konoha also plans to invade us at the same time. But, has Konoha's military recovered to this extent? Are they not afraid of Kumo and Iwa taking advantage?'

He looked at the messenger and instructed, "Call all the Council Members. Even call those two elders. We will be having another meeting."

The messenger's eyes widened as he wondered, 'What message did the scroll contain for his expression to become so grim and for him to contact those two?'

He nodded and quickly left.

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Chapter 284: One Man makes the Entire World move!

Within 15 minutes, every Council Member and Elder except 2 were in the meeting room once again. They noticed Rasa's grim expression and asked while sighing, "What happened now, Kazekage-sama?"

Their sigh wasn't an act. All of them were sick of the recent events. It was just one thing after another continuously with no respite!

Rasa didn't say anything and just handed them the scroll. Their eyes widened and arms shivered in rage and horror as they read the report.

Joseki shouted, "This is outrageous! We are in an alliance. Do they want to launch a full-fledged war?"

All of them were experienced. They reached the same conclusion as Rasa.

Rasa said, "I received these reports from the cities and towns around Shunkuto a few minutes before I called the meeting. Wait for some time. There are still more people to come."

Joseki looked around and asked, "Who else is remaining?"

As if to answer his question, the door opened and two very old ninjas walked in. The Council Members and Elders were surprised. They were Ebizo and his sister Chiyo.

Behind them, the messenger finally sighed in relief. Bringing these two here was a huge headache. He thought, 'I know she is just fooling around, but one of these days she might really end up dead!'

Chiyo and Ebizo immediately noticed the tense expressions in the room. Chiyo asked, "Why are your expressions so grim? I haven't even played possum yet!"

Rasa handed them a scroll and said, "This isn't the time to be fooling around. Please read."

The siblings began reading. Unlike the time when Gaara was kidnapped, Rasa was still alive. Though he was junior to them, they couldn't dismiss him casually like Baki. In addition, their health was much better as compared to what it would be 6 years later.

Their eyes widened as they completed reading the report. Chiyo chuckled and said, "That's why I told you to not form any alliances. They will stab you in the back the very first chance they get."

However, her brother said, "True, but we were the ones to make a move first. They didn't act against us until we took steps towards breaking the alliance."

Ebizo's words reminded the Council Members and other Elders that it was Suna's choice that led to Konoha's retaliation. Goza gritted his teeth and said, "But their actions are outrageous. There were numerous ways to counter our moves. There was no need to do something so drastic. I'm afraid that they intend to launch a war."

Rasa nodded and said, "I'm of the same opinion. I plan on deploying 2000 ninjas along the border with the Land of Rivers to deter Konoha. What are your opinions?"

The Council Members were surprised. They realized that Rasa already had a plan. He had just called them here to inform them and check if they had any ideas. However, considering how grave the situation was, no one opposed him.

Only Chiyo laughed in disdain while Ebizo shook his head. He said, "If you do that, then it will give Konoha an excuse to mobilize as well. And if Konoha indeed wants a war, then they will be prepared. Such a frontal confrontation is what they would want to see."

In addition, the culprit who made this mess will also receive more opportunities to keep creating a mess in the West and worsen the situation even further."

His words caused everyone to frown. They thought for a bit and realized that it made complete sense. Goza asked, "Then what would you recommend, Elder Ebizo?"

Ebizo said, "Instead of deploying an army on the frontlines, divide them in small squads and discretely deploy them in the deserts between here and the Land of Rivers. Have them deploy various traps to harass any incoming army."

Even if Konoha marches, we shouldn't defend the frontlines. Instead, let them enter the desert. We will fight and stall them here instead of fighting a quick and decisive battle. I doubt Kumo or Iwa would miss the opportunity to take advantage if Konoha is stuck in a drawn-out battle here."

In addition, we can use this time to find and kill the one making a mess in the West. As long as he is dead, we won't have to worry about our backs."

Ebizo's words made sense. Everyone nodded. Only Sajo asked, "But what if our estimates are wrong? What if this is Iwa's scheme and they plan to attack us when our forces are facing Konoha?"

Before Ebizo could answer, Goza answered, "Let them attack. It's only a vast desert from the Land of Birds to here. We can use our alliance with Konoha to make them attack Iwa through the Land of Grass. And we can move our forces from the west and east to intercept and stall Iwa's army.

In case Iwa and Konoha have allied, then we will have to stall them both and form an alliance with Kumo and have them attack Konoha. In that case, the war will enter a stalemate."

Everyone agreed with his answer. Seeing that there was no other objection, Rasa said, "Alright, let's do this. Sajo, you will lead 500 ninjas to the West. You will be responsible for scouring the deserts and providing more security to the cities there. If you encounter the Copy Ninja, don't engage and inform me. I will move towards the escape routes to intercept him if he decides to escape the county."

Rasa turned his eyes towards the siblings and said, "In my absence, I'll leave the safety of the village to you two. Yura will be returning with Gaara in a few days. Please inspect his seal as well. Goza, you will be responsible for slowly deploying 2000 ninjas towards the Land of Rivers and have them deploy traps and prepare ambushes. The rest will aid you. Any objections?"

No one objected. Rasa got up and left. Within an hour, 500 ninjas departed from Sunagakure towards the Western part of the country to hunt for Kakashi, who was neither the culprit nor present there.

The real culprit had a nice long sleep and was enjoying his lunch in Ichiraku. He wasn't aware of the movements inside the Land of Wind. But if he was, Fujin would wonder what sort of expressions Rasa, the Council Member, the Elders, and the 500 ninjas would make if they learnt the truth.

Though Fujin didn't care about this matter, others did.

The next morning, every major village received reports that 500 ninjas had moved from Sunagakure towards the Western part of the Land of Wind. Due to how massive the movement was, every spy in Sunagakure noticed it immediately. Most leaders were puzzled as to why Suna was making such huge movements.

Onoki wondered, 'What's going on in Suna? They have already deployed more than 600 ninjas. And now 500 more? And even Rasa moved? Don't tell me that bastard Rasa intends to start another dumb war.'

He immediately called for a council meeting. After a discussion, they decided to deploy 500 ninjas on the borders with the Land of Bird and another 750 ninjas on the border with the Land of Bear.

Just like Onoki, the Fourth Raikage Ay was also puzzled. After thinking for a bit, he decided to secretly ready his forces to take advantage in case a war broke out.

Unlike the rest of the world, two people were very clear about the situation. Shikaku analyzed the news, 'I can understand why the 500 ninjas left. But why did Rasa leave? Do they not know that Fujin already left?'

He opened the report Fujin had made and checked the end. He thought, 'His report doesn't mention how he returned. Now that I think about it, he returned way too quickly. Does he have a flying summon or know a space-time ninjutsu?'

He thought for a bit before giving up, 'Leave it, I'll just ask the Hokage. According to the movements, Rasa likely wants to hunt Fujin. But Fujin is already here.'

A smirk formed on his face as he thought, 'Looks like you will have a nice wild goose chase for quite some time.'

His smirk faded away as he let out a sigh, 'Unfortunately, once they give up, there is a high likelihood of them moving those troops towards our border. And thanks to the vast deserts, we won't even know where that army is.

The best way to counter this would have been to deploy Konoha's forces. Unfortunately, that's the worst option here. I'll have to deploy many Anbu and spies in the Land of River to warn us if the Suna army enters it. In addition, I will have to have Konoha's forces prepared for war. Sigh, so much work.'

Fujin's face appeared in his mind as he decided, 'No more long-term missions for this guy. Fortunately, I sent him to Suna. If this was Kumo, the Fourth Great Ninja War might have already started.'

Fujin was blissfully unaware of all these developments. He was back in his training ground doing his morning physical workout after a long time!

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Chapter 285: Ambition!

Fujin stretched his body casually as he wondered, 'Should I increase the intensity of the training seal? Though I didn't train my body for almost 3 months, I did eat healthy and ran a lot. Alright, I'll increase it from 40 to 45%.'

Fujin had long reached the maximum limit on the training seal that Hiruzen had created for him during his academy days. During his time in the Anbu, he had replaced it with a new training seal that he created. This one could apply four times the max pressure and resistance as the previous seal.

Forgetting about all the turmoil he created a few days ago, he began training with maximum intensity once again and continued for four hours straight before going to Ichiraku for breakfast.

As he ate the ramen, a smile could be seen on his face. He thought, 'Now this is a good life. Sleep long, train hard, eat delicious food and don't worry about anything else. If I can't break through the limits to reach the top and events progress just as they did in the original story, then perhaps I'll retire after the 4th War and recreate all the famous fast food chains from my previous world here.'

Ayame noticed Fujin's good mood and asked, "What's the good news, Fujin?"

Fujin shook his head and replied, "No good news. Just missed the ramen for the past few months."

Teuchi smiled and said, "It's good to have you back again, Fujin."

Fujin nodded. He lifted the bowl and drank the soup and said, "Thank You for the meal. I'll see you tomorrow."

Ayame replied, "Take care, Fujin. Don't train too much."

Fujin nodded and left. As he walked back to the training ground, he thought, 'Though a retired life enjoying all the delicacies sounds pleasant, it'd be a pity if that's all I manage to do after working so hard.'

My current strength is pretty much at the Elite Jounin level. S rank is still quite far, but I feel that it is just a matter of time before I reach it as long as I keep training hard. I should reach it before Akatsuki starts collecting the tailed beasts.

And, if I can learn Senjutsu or Flying Thunder God, I'll be able to rise all the way to the peak of S rank reaching a similar level as Jiraiya or Minato. Perhaps only Nagato and Obito would be able to keep up with me then.

However, once I reach that stage, getting any stronger will be difficult. If I ignore the Otsutsuki, only four ninjas are known to surpass that level. They are Hashirama, Madara, Naruto and Sasuke. But, Madara and Sasuke were able to do it due to Eternal Mangekyou Sharingan. Naruto did it due to Kurama. As for Hashirama, he is just ridiculous. No point in thinking about him.

The only way I could potentially keep up with them is if I capture and seal a Tailed Beast in me or through the Eight Inner Gates. But even these have limits and dangers and aren't sure-fire.'

Lost in thoughts, Fujin reached the training ground. He let out a sigh as he thought, 'To climb to the very top might need some drastic actions and insane planning. And, unlike those four, I won't have any help. The only advantage I have is that I know the major events in the future. I'll need to take advantage of anything I can. Only then I will have any chance. But, I need to reach rank S first. Only then I can begin acting as well. For now, it's time to continue training.'

Fujin's hands moved rapidly as he weaved hand seals.

When Fujin transmigrated to this world, he, like anyone else, wanted to reach the peak of this world. However, unlike the others, Fujin was very aware of how dangerous and hazardous this world was. The threat suppressed every desire other than his will to survive in a world teeming with adversity and danger.

As he grew, trained, fought, and overcame obstacles, his spirit grew resilient and his body honed to a razor's edge. The pursuit of survival became a testament to his unwavering determination.

However, as he slowly carved his path through the crucible of trials, a subtle transformation took place within him, imperceptible even to his own consciousness. His confidence grew. He no longer had to be worried about missions going awry. He was aware of the ninjas that could threaten his life. And he had multiple means of escaping even from the worst situations.

Due to this, a seed of evolution took root in the very depth of his being. Every step he took forward, every victory he experienced and every improvement in his strength nourished this seed. The path to survival had ignited a desire to reach the very top of this world and leave an indelible mark upon its tapestry.

Driven by this newfound desire, Fujin set his eyes on the pinnacle and began his training.

'Wind Release: Wind Explosion Clone jutsu'

Fujin closed his eyes as he sensed the movement of chakra through his body. Soon, a Wind clone was formed in front of him.

Fujin looked at the clone as he observed, 'I see. The normal Wind clone has Yin and Yang chakra in equal quantities. However, this clone didn't have the same balance. Instead, it was mainly made of Yang chakra.'

The Wind clone nodded at Fujin and looked in the opposite direction. He instantly disappeared and appeared on a boulder around 50 meters away. He placed his palm on the boulder and exploded!

Fujin observed the explosion and nodded in satisfaction as he observed, 'Good. The explosion is almost three times as strong as what my normal wind clones could do. But, with such an imbalance in Yang and Yin, this clone should have some limitations. I need to test it.'

Fujin weaved the hand signs once again and created another Wind Explosion Clone. He followed it up by creating a Wind Clone and flickered away.

The two clones looked at each other. There was no need for any words to be exchanged. Both jumped away from each other.

Two spheres of wind appeared in the hands of the Wind clone. He launched both Wind Explosion Spheres at the other clone.

The Wind Explosion Clone immediately got out of the way. At the same time, two spheres of Wind began forming in his hands. However, instead of forming proper spheres, the jutsu collapsed! The Wind Explosion Clone was surprised and looked at his hand while thinking, 'What the hell? I can't use a simple D rank jutsu?'

The Wind Clone immediately took advantage of the opening and built up his chakra.

'Wind Release: Infinite Breakthrough jutsu'

The Wind Explosion Clone immediately noticed the incoming attack and flickered out of range. He tried making Wind Explosion Spheres again but failed.

Fujin observed the fight and realized, 'I see. Since the balance is so off, the Wind Explosion Clone can't use normal jutsus. More likely, it can only use jutsus that require more Yang Chakra. I guess the only way to use this clone is to flicker and explode.'

But, despite this, distinguishing between this and a normal wind clone is quite tough. Once I am able to make this clone without any hand signs, I can confuse my opponents with ease. So the effect would be quite similar to if the clone could use jutsus.'

As Fujin analyzed, the Wind Explosion Clone couldn't form any jutsu at all. So he gave up and flickered towards the Wind Clone to self-destruct and make the fight a draw. However, the Wind Clone immediately flickered away and the two began a game of tag.

Fujin watched with a deadpan expression as he thought, 'I created you two to test out the differences. Why the hell are you two playing tag?'

He immediately dispelled both the clones and analyzed, 'Making this clone without seals shouldn't be difficult. But I'll leave it for later after I become used to using it. It'll save time.'

Fujin began weaving hand seals again. Anticipation could be seen in his eyes. Of the jutsus he found, he was the most excited about this jutsu.

'Wind Release: Assassin's Rush jutsu'

Immediately, a high amount of chakra began flowing around Fujin. The chakra was rapidly converted into Wind and in an instant, a vast amount of wind was forced behind him. The wind blasted multiple trees behind him and uprooted them. At the same time, Fujin disappeared and travelled in a straight line at a speed far exceeding the speed of Wind Instantaneous Body jutsu!

In the blink of an eye, Fujin appeared in front of a boulder. Chakra concentrated in his fist as he punched the boulder. The boulder was instantly blown apart! And a wide grin could be seen on Fujin's face.

He analyzed, 'Great speed! Though it uses a lot more chakra than flickering, it will be very domineering in a battle. With practice, I'll be able to sustain the wind longer and even change my direction freely.

Combined with my swordplay or Senju Taijutsu Style, it will be extremely lethal. Not to mention, it also prevents any attacks on my back. Alright, I'll master this jutsu right away!'

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Chapter 286: What makes a jutsu Rank A?

For one hour straight, Fujin continuously trained the Assassin's Rush jutsu. His breathing became heavy as he thought, 'Damn, it's been such a long time since my chakra reserves hit so low. Rank A jutsus are very taxing on chakra. But, it isn't as bad as I thought it'd be.'

A thoughtful expression appeared on Fujin's face as he thought, 'I used to think that the more destructive or complicated a jutsu is, the higher ranked it'd be. However, now that doesn't seem to be the case. After all, in terms of pure destructiveness, none of the rank A jutsus I read is anywhere near as destructive as Infinite Breakthrough jutsu.

Instead, it seems like the jutsu is ranked depending on how efficiently it can utilize the Yin and Yang aspects of the chakra. Though I learnt this jutsu just an hour ago, I have tried it dozens of times. And I don't see any way to optimize it further like I could optimize my rank C and B jutsus.

The reason for this is that this jutsu is already optimized to limit. It's the same for Wind Explosion Clone jutsu. The ratios of the Yin and Yang chakra were optimized to be what is the most effective.

So looking at it from another perspective, when I optimized my jutsus using Yin and Yang chakra earlier, I was actually increasing their ranks. Or at least bringing them closer to rank A.

This is why I directly managed to learn Blade of Wind jutsu. After all, I had already modified Wind Sword jutsu enough to replicate the same results as the Blade of Wind jutsu.

I guess the experienced Ninjas like Hiruzen and Orochimaru have already completed this process for all or most of their jutsus. It's probably why they don't use a lot of higher-ranked jutsus as their rank B and C jutsus are basically as strong as a Rank A jutsu. I guess Renjiro was implying this back then. I thought he was just referring to supercharging jutsus.'

Fujin concluded, 'In essence, a rank A jutsu is a pinnacle jutsu that can't be improved any further. As for the S rank jutsus, they probably can't be explained with this logic. They should be jutsus that either surpasses these limits like Rasenshuriken or jutsus that are beyond logic like the Dead Demon Consuming Seal.'

Fujin began walking out of the training ground thinking, 'Anyways, I'm on the right track. No point in thinking about S rank jutsus for now. Time to meditate until I recover my chakra.'

A mischievous smile appeared on Fujin's face. His chakra signature transformed as he changed into his Anbu attire with a different mask. He entered Anbu's training in one of the Wind Training rooms.

Within the next six hours, he absorbed all energy from the Wind Crystals in 3 Wind training rooms! He left as quietly as he arrived while thinking, 'Looks like maintaining disguise anymore wouldn't be possible. There is no way Hiruzen won't know that it is me. Still, this is fun. I'll keep up the disguise for old time's sake, hahaha.'

He left the Anbu headquarters and continued training the Assassin's Rush jutsu. In the next hour, his chakra ran out once again. However, he had reduced the number of hand seals required to use the jutsu to just one! Satisfied with his progress, he went out for dinner.

Around the same time, an Anbu ninja appeared in Hiruzen's office and reported, "Lord Hokage, the energy in Wind Crystals in 3 Wind Training rooms suddenly disappeared. As per my estimates, 2 of them should have had around 40% energy while the last one should have had around 75% energy left."

Hiruzen's expression immediately went dark. He cursed in his heart, 'That brat! I knew it. There's no one else as greedy as him. He didn't even wait for two days after returning!'

Hiruzen looked at the Anbu and instructed, "It's fine. You don't need to monitor Wind Training rooms anymore."

The Anbu ninja was puzzled. He wondered, 'Why did you make me monitor it for over a year then? And why did the problem suddenly start? And why is your expression so dark?'

Seeing how dark Hiruzen's face was, the Anbu ninja didn't dare ask any questions and left obediently. Hiruzen angrily thought, 'How many hundreds of millions of Ryo worth of Wind crystals did this brat eat?'

However, he soon sighed helplessly as he analyzed, 'But if his speed of absorbing the energy is so high, it means that his talent in Wind Manipulation has increased even more which is good for the village. If he can reach S rank, then this is a small cost to pay. I'll turn a blind eye to it.'

Besides, it's not like I can ask him to stop anyways. Even if I make him admit, I can't do anything to him. And knowing his greedy nature, he'll likely spend months in those rooms until Konoha runs out of Wind crystals!'

For the next couple of days, Fujin repeated the same activities. He made rapid improvements while making Hiruzen's heart ache due to how rapidly he was going through the Wind Crystals.

Finally, on the fourth day, Fujin stood in the training ground. A large amount of chakra appeared on his back. The chakra began converting into Wind and blasted backwards with huge force. Fujin was instantly propelled towards the trees. He quickly changed direction without slowing down and navigated through the densely packed trees for a couple of minutes.

As he moved, chakra gathered on his right fist. He jumped upwards before changing his direction downwards. The winds propelled him rapidly towards the ground as Fujin punched the ground.

Immediately, a loud sound could be heard. A crater with 15 feet radius and 3 feet depth was formed on the ground. At the same time, multiple cracks spread through the ground for dozens of meters.

Fujin jumped back on his feet with a grin on his face. He shook his palm as he muttered, "Speed is Power. This jutsu amplifies the power of the Senju Taijutsu Style even more. However, it hurts like hell. I'll need to mix Iron Skin jutsu into this as well later on. For now..."

Fujin rapidly weaved hand seals and slammed his hand on the cracked ground.

'Wind Release: Geyser Creation jutsu'

Immediately, the air began moving rapidly in the crater and through the cracks in the ground. In a second, sharp winds rushed out of the cracks. At the same time, the sharp winds inside the cracks began widening them.

Fujin stopped the jutsu and analyzed, 'I initially thought that this jutsu would only be useful to kill enemies hiding underground. In the Fourth Great Ninja War, this technique could be used to kill Zetsu by thousands if I catch a large number of them underground.

But, on second thought, this can be an excellent continuation while using the Senju Taijutsu Style. After all, no one would want to take a hit from a chakra-enhanced punch head-on. If I use the chance to punch the ground and release this jutsu, the enemy will be caught completely off guard. It will be a good tactic. But I'll have to learn how to use this jutsu without hand signs as well.'

Fujin let out a sigh as he thought, 'I was planning to move on to Fuinjutsu today. Leave it, I'll master this jutsu first. If I'm assigned new Anbu members under me, I'll have to train them. And the initial missions will likely be Police duties in the village. I can use that time to learn the seals as well.'

Fujin continued training. While he trained, Shikaku was busy reading the numerous reports that he kept receiving. He muttered, "First Iwa moved 500 ninjas to the border with the Land of Birds and 750 ninjas

to the border with the Land of Bear. In response, Suna deployed 200 ninjas on each of the borders. And in Kumo, many ninjas are moving around. All this confusion over a simple promotion mission..."

Shikaku was left speechless. He thought, 'Fortunately Suna and Iwa haven't moved into those buffer countries. Otherwise, Kumo will move for sure. And this time we won't be able to fool the world and get the Land of Iron to be in the same camp as us.

Still, I believe Onoki just got worried due to how many Suna ninjas moved West and took precautionary measures. The matter should cool down after a few weeks as neither intends to start a war.

But, if three major villages are moving around and we don't move, others will get suspicious. Kumo might think that we are weak or unprepared for war. Meanwhile, Suna will confirm that we were behind those recent events.'

Shikaku got up and laid a map on his table as he analyzed the actions Konoha should take to come out of this period unharmed. After running a few calculations, he made up his mind and went to Hiruzen's office.

Hiruzen looked at Shikaku and immediately realized why he was there. Shikaku said, "Lord Hokage, in light of recent events, I have come up with a pla..."

Hiruzen cut him off and said, "No need to consult me. Just implement what you planned. I have full confidence in your capabilities."

Shikaku's expression immediately became dark. Hiruzen knew all about the recent events. However, since Fujin had returned to Konoha, there would be no further hostilities. So the situation would defuse by itself as no one other than Kumo wanted a war. Shikaku obviously realized Hiruzen's thought process. His face was dark because Hiruzen threw all the work on his shoulders.

He nodded and left the room. Later that day, 500 Ninjas left Konoha and moved towards the border with the Land of Grass. They had strict orders to not enter it. At the same time, smaller squads sneakily left Konoha one by one. In 3 days, around 1200 ninjas had left Konoha this way. They all met up at the assigned location for Kakashi to take control of this army.

They stayed hidden while preparing for war. However, Shikaku arranged for Kakashi to drop hints of their movements. In a few days, all the major villages became aware of a large Konoha force wandering around their borders with the Land of Hot Water.

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Chapter 287: A Long Game of Shogi

By the time the Konoha ninjas were deployed outside the village, Fujin had managed to perform the Geyser Creation jutsu without the use of hand signs. Satisfied with his progress, Fujin decided to move his attention to Fuinjutsu.

He returned to his basement and created a Shadow Clone which dispelled itself instantly. The Shadow clone that was in the Library immediately received the message. He packed the scrolls and placed them back and dispelled himself.

Fujin received memories and began analyzing. During the last week, Fujin left one clone in the Library to plan out the order in which he should learn the seals. He didn't have clones working actively on the seal as training rank A jutsus was very straining on his chakra. He could barely train for an hour straight with all his chakra.

A frown formed on Fujin's face as he realized, 'The Four Symbol Seal is too complicated. I won't be able to learn it right now. In fact, most of the top seals are very complicated. I will have to start with the easier seals. It's fine though. I still have a lot of time.'

Fujin planned for a couple of minutes and decided, 'Using too many clones to learn the seals will be redundant. I'll leave some chakra with me and meditate in the Wind Training Room. As long as none of my clones is dispelled, I won't be disturbed and can meditate in peace.'

Fujin created a Shadow Clone with 70% of his max chakra. The clone used Multi-Shadow Clone jutsu to equally divide his chakra into 60 clones. They began practicing the seals while Fujin left his house and moved towards the Anbu Training Facilities.

In a remote location in the desert, a camp was set up. A dozen similar camps were set up in the desert. However, this camp was special as it housed one of the five Kages in the world.

A messenger ran into Rasa's tent and reported, "Lord Kazekage. 500 ninjas have left Konoha and appeared on the Eastern border of the Land of Grass. Iwa reciprocated and deployed 500 ninjas on the Western border of the Land of Grass. And Iwa's ninjas still haven't entered the Land of Birds or Bear."

A frown formed on Rasa's face. He thought, 'What the hell is happening? I first thought that this was done by Konoha. But when Iwa moved, I felt that I could have been wrong. But Iwa didn't invade us and instead, Konoha assisted us. How do I make sense of this situation?'

He thought for a bit but couldn't come to any conclusion. Finally, he instructed, "Have Goza deploy more spies in the Land of Grass. If Konoha and Iwa have allied, then this might be a trick to fool us. Is there any news from Sajo?"

The messenger shook his head and answered, "No. He hasn't even seen the shadow of the culprit! It's as if he has disappeared from the desert."

Rasa snorted and instructed, "Where will he disappear? Ask him to keep searching."

The messenger replied, "Yes Lord Kazekage, but there is another news. It's just that we haven't confirmed it yet. Some spies reported that Hatake Kakashi is leading a 1200-strong ninja army and conducting military drills near their border with the Land of Hot Water. So some Council Members think that he has already left."

Rasa frowned and furrowed his eyebrows. Once again, he received information that didn't make any sense.

Shikaku couldn't guess that Suna would put the blame on Kakashi's head. If he did, he'd have kept Kakashi hidden to keep Suna occupied in the West.

After thinking for a bit, Rasa said, "It is likely a trick by Konoha to make us drop our guard. Since it isn't confirmed, Konoha probably made someone use Transformation jutsu. Let Sajo keep doing his work."

The messenger nodded and left. For the next 3 weeks, Suna kept scouring the desert and for obvious reasons, they didn't find Kakashi there. However, in these 3 weeks, they stabilized the situation in the

West. Though there was still resentment against them, law and order was maintained and common people were assured of their safety.

However, the political situation still got worse as Toshio's family reached Wind Capital and complained about the events in Shunkuto. Around the same time, Iwa and Kumo received some details about the events in the Western regions of the Land of Wind.

Onoki relaxed as it meant that no war would happen, while Ay was upset for the same reason. Regardless, the tensions died down as everyone realized that no war would happen. However, both countries raised their guard against Konoha as they were the only suspects.

Neither Iwa nor Kumo wanted to deal with such a headache. So they provided additional security to their Nobles and increased the number of Patrol units. At the same time, Suna began plotting their revenge and started what would be a long game of Shogi with Shikaku.

In these 3 weeks, Fujin practiced Fuinjutsu for more than 12 hours every day with 60 Shadow Clones while he spent a similar amount of time meditating in the Elemental Training rooms. Finally, he received a message asking to visit Hiruzen's office.

Fujin thought, 'It's almost a month since I came back. Did they find suitable subordinates for me? But, why did the messenger ask me to appear in the normal mission outfit instead of Anbu uniform?'

Fujin stopped his morning workout and went to Hiruzen's office. On entering, he saw a bunch of civilian officials along with Shikaku, Choza and Homura in the room. Hiruzen saw Fujin and said, "Fujin, you'll be accompanying me on a mission to the Land of Tea. Wait outside for a while."

Fujin furrowed his eyebrows as he wondered, 'Accompanying him on a mission? Is this supposed to be a rank S mission?'

He nodded and waited outside the room. Shikaku looked at Fujin and wondered, 'Why did Lord Hokage ask Fujin to follow him on this mission?'

He looked at Hiruzen as a thought appeared in his head, 'Does he intend to groom him like Kakashi for the Hokage position? I can see why considering his performance on the previous mission. But, he's still too young.'

Homura also looked at Fujin and thought, 'So this is the kid that Hiruzen refused to give to Danzo. I wonder what's special about him.'

Hiruzen hadn't mentioned Fujin's achievements in the Land of Wind to anyone. So no one apart from him and Shikaku knew. Though Danzo, Homura and Koharu had questions and doubts after the recent event, Hiruzen feigned ignorance and pushed the blame on Iwa.

Inside the room, discussions continued for another half an hour. Finally, the civilian officials left. A few minutes later, Hiruzen left as well. He was followed by Choza, Homura and his Anbu guards. Hiruzen looked at Fujin and said, "Come with me."

Fujin followed him. The group of 8 left the village and began travelling to the South. Hiruzen informed Fujin, "We are going to the Land of Tea to discuss some trade-related matters as well as some cooperation. You don't have to do anything, just pay proper attention in the meeting."

Fujin was confused. He tilted his head and asked, "What will I observe in a trade-related meeting?"

Fujin's first thought was that Hiruzen knew that someone would ambush him. But he immediately dismissed that idea. Despite his age, Hiruzen was one of the strongest ninjas in the world. Why would he need Fujin's protection? He wondered, 'Is he planning on burning some city and needs an assist from my Wind jutsu?'

Hiruzen replied, "Just pay proper attention. I'll tell you later."

Fujin said, "Alright."

The group travelled through the vast forests rapidly. Fujin was a bit surprised that Homura was able to keep up with ease. He looked at him from the corner of his eye and thought, 'Looks like despite his age, he has retained a good part of his strength. I wonder why he and Koharu never fought in the original story.'

Be it Orochimaru's attack, Pain's attack or the Fourth Great Ninja War, they didn't participate in any fight despite being available. I don't recall properly, but I think they didn't fight even when Kurama rampaged inside Konoha.'

At the same time, Homaru also sized up Fujin. He observed, 'Not bad. Despite travelling with Hiruzen, he hasn't put his guard down and is prepared for any ambush. His chakra isn't bad either. It's at the Jounin level at such a young age. However, I can sense that he is hiding a portion of his chakra. So I can't be sure yet. Still, it shouldn't be much higher. But, why does Hiruzen want to make him a negotiator?'

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Chapter 288: Negotiations

The journey to the Land of Tea took a couple of days. Hiruzen made a lot of small talk on the way to inspire Fujin and his Anbu guards. Fujin took the opportunity to interact with Choza as he thought, 'Akimichi clan's body size manipulation is part of Yang Release. Though it's unrealistic to get the methods of learning the jutsu from him in just this journey, there is no harm in creating a good relationship with him.'

After all, he is the only one from the Ino-Shika-Cho trio to live after the Fourth Great Ninja War. And if in the future my reputation becomes as good as Hiruzen's, I could try to ask him for it.'

The next afternoon, the group from Konoha arrived at Degarashi port in the Land of Tea without any incident along the way. However, Fujin was surprised when they arrived outside the gates of the village.

Every major Noble in the city was standing at the entrance of the gate. In fact, even the Daimyo of the country was present! Fujin had made multiple trips to this country as an Anbu ninja in the last couple of years. So he easily identified most of the Nobles and Ministers waiting at the Gates. Fujin peeked inside to see the sides of roads packed with spectators.

Fujin thought, 'I didn't think I'd underestimate how much influence this old fox still has!'

The Daimyo of the Land of Tea stepped forward and cordially greeted, "Lord Hokage, it's good to see that you are still hale and hearty!"

Hiruzen smiled and replied, "It's great to see that you are doing well too, Lord Daimyo."

While the two exchanged pleasantries, two people walked to the sides of Daimyo. Hiruzen looked at one of them and said with a smile, "Jirochi, are you doing well?"

Wasabi Jirochi bowed slightly and answered with a smile, "I have been well, Lord Hokage. All thanks due to how efficiently Konoha carries out the missions."

As he spoke, the face of the other man fell. However, he quickly hid it behind a fake smile and greeted Hiruzen politely. Hiruzen looked at him and thought, 'So he is the one who wants to take over Degaroshi port from the Wasabi family?'

Hiruzen just nodded and began talking with the Daimyo. Wagarashi Kyuroku controlled his anger and didn't say anything disrespectful. One of the missions that Jirochi referred to, cost him more than 90% of his forces and over 50% of his wealth.

After that, he lost his ability to create trouble for the Wasabi family. He had still not recovered from the blow that 5 squads sent by Hiruzen had dealt the Wagarashi family when they dared to enter the Land of Fire to eliminate Wasabi Daichi. Having learnt his lesson, he had no intention of openly opposing Hiruzen. If it wasn't for ensuring his own benefits, he wouldn't even have shown up there.

As they talked, the Tea Daimyo and Hiruzen walked into the village. Jirochi, Kyuroku, the nobles, ministers and the Konoha ninjas followed them. As they walked, Fujin noticed a lot of curious gazes from the people that crowded both sides of the road. Some cheered, but most just watch casually.

He wondered, 'Are they really so curious to see a Kage or did the Daimyo arrange them here to create a favorable image of the citizens on Hiruzen? We are here for trade discussions after all.'

The four Anbu ninjas had all their attention on the crowd in case any assassin was hidden. Homura, Choza and Fujin weren't much concerned about this and just casually walked. The crowds thinned as they reached closer to the Daimyo's Palace.

After entering, they were led into the Grand Hall inside the palace. The hall had several old and expensive artifacts. It had a large circular table at the center which was adorned with elegant tapestries and exquisite tea sets.

Hiruzen took his seat while the Tea Daimyo sat opposite him. Jirochi and Kyuroku sat next to the Daimyo. The ministers of the Daimyo and other nobles occupied seats next to them.

Meanwhile, Homura sat to Hiruzen's right while Choza sat to his left. The Anbu stood behind Hiruzen while Fujin stood awkwardly thinking, 'Should I take a seat or stand along with the Anbu?'

Homura was one of three Village Elders while Choza was a Clan Leader. Meanwhile, Fujin was just an orphan who was in the Anbu. Though he had gained a lot of strength, most of it was known to very few people. In addition, Hiruzen hadn't given him any purpose on this mission.

Hiruzen looked at Fujin and said, "Take a seat as well, Fujin."

Fujin nodded and sat next to Choza while thinking, 'In the last mission, Shikaku didn't give me any specific instructions. Though I wasn't interested in knowing the aftermath, I'm sure the last month would have been hell for him. I'm surprised that Hiruzen still didn't give me any instructions...'

At the same time, the eyes of the Daimyo and the Nobles fell on Fujin. They were surprised that Hiruzen asked someone so young to sit alongside the three of them. The Daimyo looked at Fujin and thought, 'To bring someone so young here. Is Hiruzen planning something? Regardless, this young man must be someone worthy of keeping an eye on.'

Hiruzen looked at his Anbu Guards who nodded in response and disappeared. The faces of the few ninjas in the Daimyo's camp got serious. Only a few of them managed to see how the Anbu Guards hid themselves.

Soon, a bunch of servants appeared and served delicious warm food with great fragrance on the table. The Daimyo said with a smile, "I know you are very busy, Lord Hokage. So I decided to arrange for Lunch while we discuss a trade deal."

Hiruzen smiled and replied, "That is very thoughtful of you, Lord Daimyo."

The servants served all the food and left. Soon, the doors to the grand hall were closed. The Tea Daimyo asked, "So, shall we start the discussion, Lord Hokage?"

Hiruzen nodded and said, "Yes. We received multiple requests from you. So you can begin, Lord Daimyo."

The Tea Daimyo said, "Alright, Lord Hokage. As you know, there is a civil war happening in the Land of Water. Due to this, many ninjas are fleeing away. Unfortunately, instead of living peacefully, most have resorted to banditry. Though our major cities are safe, they cause great harm to small villages.

When we send missions to Konoha to eliminate them, it generally takes around a week for any squads to come here. And in the last month, the delay has been even longer. This causes unnecessary loss of life and property.

So my request is for you to establish a small military outpost in the Land of Tea. At least until the chaos caused by the Civil War in the Land of Water is settled."

Until last month, the Tea Daimyo was fine with the one-week delay. However, due to the sudden buildup of tension between the four major villages, the villages reduced the number of missions they accepted drastically.

Shikaku had deployed 1700 ninjas within a few days to deter other countries and was showing that the other troops were being prepared as well. So Konoha was quite short on manpower as well.

A frown formed on Homura's face as he said, "Lord Daimyo, that won't be possible. After all, if anyone has any enmity with Konoha, they might attack these ninjas instead of trying to attack in the Land of Fire. So it will be very dangerous for our ninjas."

Hiruzen and Choza maintained their silence while Fujin just watched carefully. He was interested in seeing how they would negotiate. The Daimyo said, "We can host them in big cities that are well protected. So they won't be in any danger normally. The only time their lives will be at risk is during the missions. But that would be true in any case."

Homura shook his head and said, "That isn't the same. We study every mission properly and then assign squads with the necessary strength to complete the mission safely. If we don't, then the number of deaths will be very high."

Homura's words caused the Daimyo to fall silent. After all, he was putting the Konoha ninjas at risk. He couldn't force this matter. Jirochi said, "Lord Hokage, there is something that you can do. What if we consider every mission as rank A?"

Kyuroku snorted and asked, "Do you know how expensive that would be?"

Jirochi immediately replied, "How can money be compared to the lives of our citizens? If needed, I can contribute my family's wealth for this purpose as well."

Kyuroku was surprised. At the same time, he was elated. He thought, 'This is great. If he wastes all his money here, then I can catch up with his family in strength within 2 to 3 years!'

He immediately became quiet and let Jirochi commit a blunder.

Since the opposite party was willing to pay, Homura became silent and looked at Hiruzen. The entire room paid attention to what his decision would be.

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Chapter 289: Lord Hokage is Magnanimous!

Hiruzen stayed silent for a minute. The silence made the Nobles from the Land of Tea nervous. Fujin noticed it and thought, 'I remember that in my previous world, some politicians used to have long silences in their speeches. Looks like it is quite an effective tool here as well.'

Finally, Hiruzen said, "It isn't a matter of money. However, I can't ignore the suffering of the people here. I'll deploy an Elite Jounin along with 4 dozen ninjas at the border between the Land of Fire and the Land of Tea on the coast.

You can issue your missions to them. That will reduce the journey time from a week to one or two days which wouldn't be much longer than deploying ninjas in this or any other city. However, you will have to pay an appropriate cost for this."

Jirochi asked, "What is the cost, Lord Hokage?"

Kyuroku snickered in his mind as he thought, 'Great! Take all the fool's money away!'

Hiruzen maintained another few seconds of silence and said, "I'll need 400 Fire Crystals and 400 Wind Crystals every year that we deploy the ninjas here."

Hiruzen's request surprised all the people from the Land of Tea. Choza and Homura already knew that Hiruzen would ask this. It was the main reason why they accompanied him. However, Fujin was surprised.

He quickly looked at Hiruzen as his left eye twitched and thought, 'Don't tell me! He brought me all the way here to tell me that he knows I'm using the Wind Crystals and he wants me to decrease the rate of using them because Konoha is running out of them?'

Hiruzen noticed Fujin's gaze but didn't look back at him. He thought, 'Though this isn't the main purpose of bringing him here, it is a nice bonus. He should be smart enough to notice the hidden message. It'd be great for the village if he doesn't consume them at such a ferocious speed!'

Fujin's initial consumption speed was already giving Hiruzen headaches. However, in the last month, Fujin focused a lot on meditating there. Due to this, his rate of consumption increased several times! In the last month alone, he had consumed the energy in around eighty Wind Crystals by himself.

Fujin immediately removed that thought from his head and analyzed, 'No, how can the Great Grand Hokage ask a young and promising ninja to reduce using Wind Crystals? I feel ashamed of thinking so little of the leader of my village!'

I'm sure that he brought me here to tell me that no matter how many Wind Crystals I use, he has my back. Even if Konoha runs out of Wind Crystals, he will visit smaller neighbouring countries and ask them for Wind Crystals.

This way, I can keep absorbing their energy without worrying that the village might run out of them. Sigh, he is such a great guy. Going up to such lengths to reassure the younger Generation. I'll work hard and absorb energy from more and more crystals to repay his faith in me. It's a shame that Shadow Clones can't absorb this energy. Otherwise, I'd have repaid all faith.'

Fujin looked at Hiruzen again with a smile on his face as he concluded, 'It doesn't matter what anyone says. The Third Hokage is the most magnanimous person in the world!'

Hiruzen would have noticed Fujin's smile normally and sensed that something was wrong. However, his attention was gained by Kyuroku who spoke loudly, "How can we do that, Lord Hokage? Those crystals are meant for training our own ninjas! If we give them away, the strength of our ninjas would drop!"

Kyuroku was enraged. He didn't mind Jirochi wasting his wealth. But the Elemental Crystals were important to him. He was buying as many as he could by bribing the Ministers.

Homura retorted, "No amount of elemental crystals can help you train an Elite Jounin. The cost is far lesser than what the Kiri rogues will inflict upon you."

Homura's words caused silence to spread among the Nobles. However, Kyuroku was unresigned. He said, "That isn't the same. There is no way we ca..."

He was interrupted by the Tea Daimyo, "Kyuroku, stay quiet."

Kyuroku immediately went quiet. Though he was influential, his influence was nothing when compared to the Tea Daimyo's power.

The Tea Daimyo looked at Hiruzen and requested, "Please understand our difficulties."

Hiruzen replied, "I understand your difficulties, Lord Daimyo. However, Homura's words are right. Still, I don't want to reduce the strength of your ninjas. So in order to compensate for the loss, I'll allow some of your ninjas to visit the base Konoha will establish at our border and receive training from our experienced ninjas. This would be far more beneficial for your ninjas."

Hiruzen's proposal excited all the officials. If they could have ninjas from their families or factions train under capable ninjas from Konoha, their standings and influence would improve substantially in the Land of Tea.

Many Nobles immediately said that it would be a good thing for the country. Kyuroku frowned as he thought, 'If Konoha gives preference to training ninjas from the Wasabi family, then we will be at a disadvantage. But, everyone should have the same worry. I'll use it to suppress him later.'

Kyuroku decided against opposing the idea as most of the Nobles were in favor of it.

The Daimyo had the same worry. Though he had good relations with Konoha, it could be dangerous to his position if the Wasabi family's influence rose without any restraints. He asked, "How will you decide which ninjas to train?"

Hiruzen replied, "You can choose which ninjas to send. The number of ninjas and the duration of training will be decided by the Elite Jounin we send to the new post."

The Tea Daimyo was relieved. He nodded and said, "Alright, but I still have one issue. I can pay you 400 Fire and Wind Crystals each for the first year as we have some stock. But, I can't sustain it for every year after that. I can only pay 100 Fire and Wind Crystals each."

Hiruzen already knew that they wouldn't be able to do that. He said, "That's too low. But understanding your difficulties, how about you pay me 200 Fire and Wind Crystals each from the 2nd year?"

The Tea Daimyo thought for a bit and said, "That's reasonable. Let's do this deal, Lord Hokage."

The Tea Daimyo's limit was 230 crystals. He willingly agreed.

Choza said, "In addition, we would also like to discuss additional imports of herbs from your country and some discounts on the tea you sell."

Jirochi smiled and said, "Alright, but our population needs additional meat and some other food items."

They immediately began negotiating for discounts on both sides. Fujin watched with interest as both sides negotiated for benefits nonstop shamelessly.

The officials from the Land of Tea were unwilling to offer discounts on Tea until Homura pointed out that they have eliminated almost all bandit groups from the Land of Fire and that the new post could slowly bring the same change in the Land of Tea. So their business won't be as risky anymore.

Fujin was especially impressed by Homura's expertise at negotiating without any shame. He thought, 'Looks like all of Hiruzen's friends are as shameless as him. No wonder they never fight. Why bother fighting and risking your life when the younger generation is willing to do that enthusiastically? I wonder if this is why Jiraiya doesn't want to be the Hokage.'

Still, negotiating seems fun. Never thought I'd enjoy seeing it. It's kinda the way I kept bugging Hiruzen and Renjiro for stronger jutsus. I wonder if Hiruzen brought me along to show that my shamelessness is still not enough and for me to take inspiration from Homura and these Nobles and Ministers. That said, I wonder if the legendary Talk-no-jutsu would work during negotiation between shameless politicians.'

After a long discussion, the Land of Tea agreed to export multiple rare herbs to Konoha. They even agreed to a 5% discount on it as Konoha would buy them in bulk. In addition, they agreed to an 18% discount on their Tea exports.

As for Konoha, they agreed to a 7% discount on the meat and food items exported to the Land of Tea and agreed to increase it to 12% after the bandit groups in the Land of Tea were eliminated.

After some more discussion about smaller matters, the meeting finally ended. Hiruzen and Homura exchanged glances. Both were satisfied with the outcome. As usual, Homura acted as an aggressive negotiator while Hiruzen acted as a peaceful and empathic negotiator. The officials from the Land of Tea were also satisfied with the results.

The meeting concluded with a toast, a symbol of unity and cooperation between the Land of Tea and Konoha. After exchanging pleasantries and bidding farewells, the Konoha group left as quickly as they came. However, the discussions in the grand hall weren't over. Instead, they were just about to get very intense. And unlike the discussion so far, it would be extremely unfair to one person!

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Chapter 290: Guiding the Younger Generation

As soon as the Konoha ninjas left, the Nobles and the Ministers exchanged glances. Without exchanging any words, a scheme was formed in mere seconds!

Kyuroku said, "Lord Daimyo, we need to decide on the distribution of the ninjas that will be sent for training. And we also need to decide who will bear the cost of the Elemental Crystals we have to give. Since Jirochi agreed to pay Konoha out of his own pockets, I say we should let him bear the majority of the cost."

Kyuroku was immediately supported by the ministers that were bribed by him and other Nobles. After all, if Jirochi paid, it'd mean that they would have to pay less.

Jirochi was immediately put under pressure. He was disgusted by their actions. However, he stood by his morals and said, "Lord Daimyo, I'm willing to contribute to the safety of our citizens."

The Tea Daimyo nodded. He was worried about Jirochi using Konoha to increase his own influence. He said, "It won't be fair for you to pay the majority cost. However, since you were the one to put forth the proposal and offered to pay, I won't reject it. But making you pay the majority share won't be fair.

I'll contribute 25% of the funds needed for this and you do the same. The other Nobles will contribute the remaining 50% equally. As for the ninjas, we will wait for Konoha to send the details. I will allow everyone to send an equal number of ninjas. But since the Wasabi family is paying more, they will get the first choice. Does anyone have an objection to it?"

Kyuroku was surprised. He wasn't expecting Jirochi to go along with what he said. And he didn't expect the Daimyo to agree to his words. Though Jirochi only had to pay 25%, it would still be many times more than what he would pay. In addition, Jirochi only received the first preference. This implied that he would at most get to send one more ninja than the rest of the Nobles. So he received nothing despite paying more.

He was elated as he realized, 'This is a great opportunity. Since I helped the other Nobles save a lot of money, they will owe me a favor. I'll use these favors to secure control of Degarashi Port in the future! But, I'll have to be careful of Jirochi.

He could sway public opinion in his favor by spreading the fact that he contributed the most to public safety. As soon as I leave, I'll begin spreading rumors that Jirochi offered Konoha the money of this country and paid them several times what we got in return. Though not true, I'm sure every other Noble will cooperate with me. Though the Daimyo can clear his name, Jirochi would gain no benefit from spending so much money here.'

Kyuroku and the rest immediately agreed. The group discussed a bit more and left. As they left, the Daimyo looked at Kyuroku's back and thought, 'This guy is good. Having bribed so many of my ministers, he could corner Jirochi despite having much lesser influence overall.'

The Daimyo shook his head and concluded, 'Unfortunately, he is too short-sighted. The Wasabi family is backed by Konoha. They won't allow Degarashi Port to switch hands. If he truly threatens the Wasabi family's position, Konoha will eliminate him or make me take action. Oh well, until that time, I can make good use of him.'

While the officials of the Land of Tea were discussing, the Konoha's group was travelling rapidly across the country. Their next target was the Land of Noodles.

Hiruzen looked at Fujin and asked, "Fujin, what did you observe during the negotiations?"

Fujin almost replied involuntarily, 'That everyone sitting in a position of power is extremely shameless!'

Fortunately, he controlled himself and answered. "We have to work very hard to secure benefits for our citizens."

Hiruzen nodded and said, "Yes. But that's not what I am talking about. Analyze our actions and words during the meeting. Tell me why we did what we did and their consequences."

Fujin fell into thought while Homura and Choza looked at him. Both were surprised at how openly Hiruzen intended to groom Fujin.

After thinking for a while, Fujin answered, "Konoha is a lot stronger than the Land of Tea and we are the only country that has a land border with them. So we were in a position of power in this meeting. However, since our relations are very good, we couldn't be very forceful."

Fujin turned his eyes towards Homura and said, "I guess Elder Homura came along to act as the bad cop while you played the good cop to get what Konoha wants. Though I'm pretty sure that they could see through this act, just that they didn't dare to say it out loud."

Homura's eyes widened as he looked at Fujin in surprise. He was impressed with Fujin's analysis but felt that it was nothing extraordinary until he heard the last sentence. He thought, 'He could see through their acting?'

Fujin continued, "You used the opportunity provided by the unstable conditions due to the civil war and probably something that happened in the last month due to which we weren't able to accept the missions in time to get the Elemental Crystals."

Since the Daimyo agreed so easily, you should have calculated how much stock he had. As for the yearly payments, what you expected should have been under 200 each. I guess that the situation in the country is quite bad due to which the Daimyo didn't negotiate a lot. As for the tea and herbs discount, I guess you want to take advantage of safer traveling conditions to save some money."

Hiruzen nodded and replied, "Good analysis. Especially the deterrence part. It's the advantage that we get due to being strong. Other countries will act carefully in order to not provoke us."

As for the Elemental Crystals, my lower limit was 150 of each. If I didn't offer the Daimyo to train their ninjas, he would have probably bargained down to this number."

However, you aren't completely right about the tea and the herbs negotiations. Though safer traveling conditions allowed us the ability to propose that, the main reason for doing it was to mask the Elemental Crystal deal that we did. That is why Choza accompanied me on this journey."

Fujin thought for a bit and asked, "The other major villages might take action if we openly gain the Elemental Crystals?"

Hiruzen nodded and answered, "Yes. While Elemental Crystals aren't very useful for someone at my level, it is quite useful for young ninjas at the Chunin level. Though they won't start a war over this, they would do something similar and get the Elemental Crystals assigned to their neighboring villages"

forcefully. In addition, it would also expose that we are spending a lot on our Military. So other villages will also openly build their armies and we will progress towards the Fourth Great Ninja War."

Fujin nodded and replied, "That makes sense."

He thought, 'In the last month I noticed that the effect of the Wind Crystals on me is reducing slowly. If I keep consuming them at this rate, their effect would be negligible after around half a year.

Or rather, it'd be more appropriate to say that I'd need a lot more Wind Crystals in order to have some improvements. But, if my speed of absorbing the energy doesn't increase, then it'll take months of meditation to make small gains. Definitely not worth the time or cost it'd take.'

However, Fujin had one confusion. He looked at Hiruzen and wondered, 'Why is he teaching me how negotiations happen?'

Hiruzen noticed Fujin's look and asked, "Are you wondering why I am explaining to you how negotiations happen?"

Fujin nodded. Hiruzen chuckled and said, "I want you to be responsible for Konoha's negotiation in the future."

Fujin was surprised. He asked, "Isn't it the Hokage's job to negotiate? Also, I have no experience in this."

Hiruzen replied, "Not really. Any of the elders can negotiate in my absence. So can Shikaku as the Jounin Commander. As for the experience, don't worry about it. I'll be taking you along to all the negotiation meetings from now on. We will be heading to the Land of Noodles next.

Just like the Land of Tea, we have good relations with them as well. So the discussion will probably go similarly. However, since they are a newer and smaller country, the amount of Elemental Crystals with them will be lesser. Just observe once again and understand how the negotiations go better.

A month later, we will go to negotiate with the Land of River and the Land of Grass. Our relationship with them, though good, isn't as good as these two countries. So the negotiations will be tougher. During those negotiations, you are allowed to speak if you feel that it'll benefit the village."

Homura was surprised once again. He looked at Hiruzen and thought, 'He has permission to speak after just two meetings? Sensei took us to several meetings for over two years before allowing us to speak! Why is Hiruzen being so impatient?'