

Calamity 441

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 441: Curse Seals

Several symbols appeared on the head that Fujin was holding. Fujin immediately withdrew his hand and retreated. Unfortunately, the symbols travelled through Fujin's Yin chakra and appeared on Fujin's right hand.

Fujin ignored the head and focused on his right hand. The Yin chakra dissipated and a layer of Yang chakra appeared on Fujin's right arm and hand to stop the symbols. It stopped the symbols from proceeding any further. However, the symbols came together forming an 'X' shape. It was a seal.

Fujin frowned and wondered, 'A trap? Hmm, a Juinjutsu... Did Danzo prepare it specially for me or is this something that all Root Ninjas have?'

Fujin's eyes glowed as he properly observed the seal on his right hand. It was a seal that he had never seen before. However, the symbols the seal used were familiar. Fujin analyzed the seal for a couple of minutes.

Immediately, several symbols appeared on Fujin's right arm and moved towards the 'X' mark. Within a minute, the seal on his right palm was destroyed. It was as if no seal had ever appeared on his palm.

Fujin muttered, "To give me a feeling of danger... What a weird seal..."

Fujin turned his attention towards the head and observed it carefully. He realized that his brain was destroyed. He won't be able to read any memories from it. Fujin analyzed, 'I see. It looks like Danzo planted a seal that protects the brains of the Root ninjas. So the Root ninjas can neither say what they do nor let anyone else read their memories to let them know.

In addition, this seal attacks anyone who tries to read memories. And, the path it takes is very interesting as well. The seal is probably stimulated by foreign Yin chakra and travels through it. If I hadn't stopped using Yin chakra and used pure Yang chakra instead, the seal would have spread all over my body. Even for me, the consequences of that could be heavy.

Not to mention, the seal is quite complicated. If the one who is reading the memories isn't a Fuinjutsu Grandmaster, he would suffer the effects of the seal. The chances of someone who is able to read memories also being a Grandmaster in Fuinjutsu is very low. What a devious trap!

I wonder if it is another seal or if it is a part of the curse seal he plants on their tongue or if Danzo has also put a second seal on the Root Ninjas. Hmm, now that I think of it, I should also learn the curse seal on their tongue. It should be a good inspiration for creating my own curse seal.'

Fujin tried observing the seals on the head. Unfortunately, there wasn't much he could observe. After destroying the brain and attacking Fujin, the seal completely disappeared. Even the seal on the tongue no longer existed. Fortunately, Fujin had the head of another Root ninja.

Fujin stored the head back into the scroll and began studying the second head. This time, he didn't insert chakra into his brain and instead just focused on figuring out the seals.

As he observed, Fujin's eyes widened in surprise. He had noticed not one but two seals on the head! He analyzed, 'I see. Devious indeed. On the surface, every Root ninja has just one seal, which is the Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal.

If any Root ninja tries to say something that would leak the secrets of either Root or Danzo, then his or her body will be paralyzed, taking away their ability to speak or move. However, Danzo has applied a second seal in secret.

A seal that is inscribed at the back of their heads and not visible to the naked eye. A seal that is so well hidden that even a Grandmaster won't notice it until someone tries to read his memories. If it wasn't for the fact that I am studying a head that I beheaded and tried to read his memories, I wouldn't have noticed this seal either. I guess that the Root ninjas are unaware as well.

The two seals don't have anything in common and are entirely independent of each other, making the second seal hard to detect. The Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal is for stopping the Root Ninja from leaking out secrets, be it voluntarily or under torture. The second seal is to stop anyone from reading or influencing the mind to gain information.

Still, both the seals are quite complicated. I'll need some time to study them... Unfortunately, taking them back to Konoha would be stupid. I'll have to study it now. Though I shouldn't stay in this location.

Ninjas and traders travel through the path near this camp rather frequently. And, I'm not sure if the seal had a backdoor for informing Danzo about anyone tempering with it.

Such a seal... It would be impossible for Hiruzen to not know about it. Meaning that he agrees with Danzo about this decision. Or perhaps, Hiruzen was involved in creating this seal as well... I'll travel to the Land of Rivers and study there. If I can create a new seal, I'll meet up with Shigeki and have him expand the organization.'

Fujin stored the head back carefully and began moving towards the West at a fast speed. En route, he destroyed any bandit camp he came across and used the bandits as test subjects to perfect his mind-reading technique.

A day later, he reached the borders with the Land of Rivers and infiltrated it. He found an empty cave and inscribed some seals for safety and stealth. He created several dozen Shadow Clones and everyone began studying the seals properly.

Four days later, Fujin completed studying both the seals. A look of appreciation could be seen on Fujin's face. He analyzed, 'Danzo... If these two seals were invented by him, then he is indeed a genius. And a terrifying one at that. I guess he only succeeded in creating such a seal due to his obsession with the Root.

The Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal is made of 3 parts, all serving different purposes and acting one after another to make the seal effective. The first two parts of the seal are for merely detecting emotions.

The first one detects the ninja's intentions about divulging secrets. The second part detects the ninja's decision to put those thoughts into action. It activates the third part of the seal, which is a very potent paralysis seal, stopping the ninja from doing so.

Once the seal is activated, it remains activated until Danzo decides to turn it off. So if Danzo is unaware of such a thing happening, the Root ninja could stay paralyzed for life!

That isn't the ingenious part though. After all, any Grandmaster and even a few SealMasters know how to deactivate the paralysis jutsu. At least, I won't have any issues deactivating it. Unfortunately, any such

attempt would just reform the Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal and the Root ninja wouldn't be able to say anything.

The only way to counter this seal would be by getting rid of it entirely. Unfortunately, even that isn't possible! The seal has an imprint, sort of like a thumb imprint or password. Only the person who knows what this imprint is will be able to lift this seal. It means that Danzo is the only one who can lift this seal. Unless my Fuinjutsu reaches an entire level beyond Danzo, I won't have any way of lifting this curse seal. And since Danzo is already a Grandmaster, it means that no one other than him can lift this seal.

It is the same for the other seal as well. It has 3 parts as well and no one can remove it. The first part is to detect any external Yin chakra headed towards the brain. The Yin chakra can be as I tried to read the memories or a Genjutsu which attempts to force the truth out.

If it detects it, the remaining two parts get activated. The first part simply destroys the brain, making it impossible for anyone to read memories. The second part infiltrates through the external Yin chakra and attacks the one trying to read the memories with a rather strong Juinjutsu. It is a paralyzing seal as well, however, it directly attacks the brain and the nervous system of the one trying to read the memories or cast a Genjutsu.

If that ninja gets hit by this Juinjutsu and isn't an expert in Fuinjutsu or has one such expert around, he will suffer heavily. Though it isn't life-threatening, it can reduce a ninja to a vegetative state if no help is provided in time.

Such a brutal seal... No wonder Danzo is so hated by the higher-ups in other villages. The Root ninjas have no morals and lack sympathy. That alone makes them a difficult opponent. To make matters worse, even if they are captured, the enemy village won't get anything from them. It is too much effort for neutralizing ninjas at Elite Chunin or Special Jounin levels.'

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Chapter 442: Creating and Destroying the Seals

Fujin continued analyzing, 'Of course, such efficiency comes only after discarding the lives of Root ninjas. The second seal shows the willingness of Hiruzen and Danzo to sacrifice them without a second thought.'

Though it is rather brutal to sacrifice your own ninja, I can understand why Hiruzen would allow Danzo to do so. If the situation becomes that bad, then it already means that the Root ninja is more or less dead. He will just be tortured until they can get all the information from him.

By choosing to sacrifice his life and using that chance to counterattack the enemy, the enemy will be far more reluctant in trying to capture and torture any Konoha ninja, even more so if the captured ninja is an Anbu. This way, at least the final moments of the ninjas won't be filled with torture and blaming themselves for compromising the safety of the village or their friends.

Of course, the biggest reason why Hiruzen allowed Danzo to use these two seals is because Danzo doesn't have any control over these two seals other than being able to put them and release them. Unlike the Hyuga clan's curse seal, these two seals don't have any features to allow Danzo to paralyze a Root ninja or to destroy his brain at will.

As long as the Root ninja is safe and doesn't intend to divulge any information, even Danzo can't use the seal to control or torture them. He will have to depend on his other skills to do so. Only... I wonder if Danzo created the seals in such a way to ensure that Hiruzen would agree or if there are any restrictions due to him being able to include his imprint in the seal.

Even though I understand all the functions of these two seals, there are still some aspects of the seal that I am not clear on. That will need experiments to be completely clear. I also wonder if the seal can be made even more dangerous. After all, I won't be having someone like Hiruzen to restrict me.

Hmm, now that I think about it, doesn't Orochimaru use his curse seal to seal a part of his soul inside them? I wonder if his seal is just the next step of this seal. That said, even if that is the case, it won't explain how Orochimaru is able to divide his soul to do so. Sigh, that guy is even more weird than Danzo. It'd be so damn helpful if I could read his memories!

Unfortunately, there was no way that Fujin could think of to make that absurd thought a reality at that moment. He shifted his attention back to the head in front of him as he thought, 'Luckily, there are no backdoor mechanisms for Danzo to know if or when either of the seals get activated. So, he should be in the dark about the fates of these two. Sadly, I can't read their memories to understand his intentions either.

Oh well, it doesn't matter much. I already know what to expect from Danzo, but he doesn't know much about me. Even if Hiruzen gave him all my information, he still wouldn't have the right picture. Regardless, I would need to experiment...'

Fujin let out a sigh and muttered, "It looks like I'll have to leave the village once again in the future after I master this seal and find more bandits and rogue ninjas to experiment. Meeting Shigeki will have to be pushed back until then."

He looked at the seal and thought, 'Though I felt this issue earlier, I didn't focus on it as I was more focused on the workings of the seal. But, how do I apply this seal on a person?

Making a seal imprint shouldn't be an issue. I just need to create the 3 parts for both the seals and then merge them together. But, how do I create an imprint in the seal such that only I can deactivate this seal? Learning how to create that and add it to curse seals will take some time.

Another issue is that I have only studied that seal through the curse seal on this dead Root ninja. So, I am completely in the dark about any limitations this technique might have and the theories behind it. So applying and improving this will be dependent on me.'

Fujin stretched his body and muttered, "Oh well, I'll work on this later. Hopefully, it shouldn't be too difficult. That said, I wonder if I can lift this seal..."

Fujin suddenly had an idea. He pondered it deeply. Soon, the idea took root. Fujin thought, 'It is difficult... Very difficult. I will probably fail. But there is no harm in experimenting. After all, this head is useless to me now. I might even get more insights about how this seal is applied.'

Fujin's eyes glowed as he observed the two seals once again. He analyzed, 'Though the two seals are independent of each other, the second seal will be triggered if anyone attempts to remove the Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal or the second seal. So, the result will be the same as when I tried to read the memories.

I will ignore the Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal. If I manage to neutralize the second seal, then I can remove the Cursed Tongue Eradication Seal later. What I need to do is stop the second seal from getting triggered. How should I proceed?'

Fujin began analyzing his options. The seal would get triggered if it detected a foreign Yin Chakra or if someone tried to remove it forcibly. After planning for a bit, Fujin began inscribing some seals on the

head. His plan was to counter Juinjutsu with Juinjutsu. Two Shadow Clones appeared next to him and began helping him out.

The seals he inscribed on the head were to try and stop the seal from destroying the brain. As for the attack, since Fujin wasn't using any Yin chakra, he was under no threat. Fujin had already studied the seal very thoroughly, so he wasn't worried about it harming him.

The head soon became covered in seals. However, since the seals hadn't posed any threat yet, the seal on the back of the Root ninja's head didn't trigger. Once Fujin was ready, he controlled all the seals and attacked the seal on the back of the head.

As he observed, Fujin thought, 'I have two main tasks to do. First, I have to stop the seal from destroying the brain. And secondly, I have to isolate the entire seal, including the imprint Danzo left.'

If Fujin succeeded, then even if he couldn't unseal the seal, the seal would become useless as it wouldn't be able to do its task. It would also allow Fujin to study the seal more closely and understand all its secrets.

Unfortunately, while Fujin's plans were good, they weren't good enough. Fujin managed to keep the brain safe for a few seconds and used that time to isolate the seal. Unfortunately, he failed to do so due to Danzo's imprint and the seal managed to damage the brain. Within a few seconds, the brain was sufficiently damaged to ensure that no memories could be read from it.

Fujin sighed and muttered, "As I thought, this is too difficult. That imprint is pretty much buried into his head. I'll need to experiment on a lot of Root ninjas to have any chance of success. But where would I find so many Root ninjas? Leave it. I had sufficient gains from studying the seal."

Fujin extended his palm towards the head of the Root ninja. Chakra was emitted from his palm and began spinning at a high speed. It was like the Rasengan, but not the usual one. Instead of forming a sphere, the chakra engulfed the head while moving rapidly. Within a few seconds, the head was completely destroyed. The bodies of the two Root ninjas were also destroyed. Danzo would never know where and how his two subordinates died.

With the traces of the two Root ninjas wiped out, Fujin decided, 'It's time to read the memories of that Grand Priest of Jashin.'

Fujin removed his bracer. On his forearm was a storage seal that he had inscribed on his arm. Fujin focused on it and a scroll popped out. It was the scroll that he had stolen from Uchiha Akihiko and kept it hidden since then. A few seconds later, the body of the dead Grand Priest of Jashin lay on top of a stone table.

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Chapter 443: Zankoku's Tragedy!

Despite it being several years, the body of the Grand Priest was in the same condition as it was when he died. Though the Uchihas tried to study him, they didn't have sufficient time to devote resources and manpower to do so. So, they took great care to maintain the state of the dead body to study it deeply after the coup. As for Fujin, he never once removed the body from the scroll to ensure that the body didn't degrade and stayed in optimal condition.

Having already experienced a backlash while trying to read the memories of the Root ninja, Fujin didn't recklessly try to read his mind and instead observed and studied the dead body carefully. While Danzo and Orochimaru were very weird, Jashin took the crown when it came to being the weirdest in the Naruto World. Being aware of that fact, Fujin was very careful.

Fortunately or unfortunately, Fujin didn't find any seals on his body. Fujin wondered, 'Did his body have no seal or did the Uchiha remove any seals on him? Tough to say. Oh well, I hope that his memories are still well preserved.'

From what Fumito said, memories start disappearing after the person dies. If their head isn't preserved in a storage scroll where time barely moves, then almost all their memories will dissipate in a few days and only some important events still stay stored. But even that becomes very difficult to find. If the brain is damaged due to the passage of time, then all the memories will be lost. So, I should try to learn as much from him as I can quickly.'

Fujin placed his palm on the Grand Priest's head. As usual, two Shadow Clones kept a watch in case something unusual occurred. Fujin inserted his Yin chakra into his brain and began reading his memories one by one.

A long time ago, in the Land of Bats there existed a small hidden village. The village was called the Hidden Bat Village. It was the sole ninja village in the Land of Bats. The village was covered in greenery

and had traditional Japanese-style houses. Despite it being day, several bats could be seen flying in the village.

A young handsome man walked into the central house in the village. As he did, a few servants greeted him respectfully by bowing slightly. He smiled in response and continued on his way and entered one of the rooms.

An older man looked up and noticed the young man walking in. In terms of facial features, the young man looked very similar to the old man. If the old man didn't have some wrinkles and a head full of grey hair, they would look very similar.

The young man greeted respectfully, "Father."

A serious look could be seen on his face. The old man nodded and asked, "Is something the matter, Zankoku?"

Zankoku nodded and said, "Father, I received reports from the spies I planted in the neighboring Land of Eagles. They are rapidly building up their military. If we don't act soon, then we will be in grave danger."

The old man sighed and muttered in a tired voice, "This again?"

Zankoku pressed on, "Father, according to my reports, their hidden village has promoted 6 Chunins to the Jounin rank. Their total number of Jounins is now 28. That is twice the number of Jounins we have.

Not to mention, their number of Genins and Chunins is increasing rapidly too. Though you are stronger than any ninja in that village, we don't have any chance if a war breaks out.

Let us start training our ninjas as well. And, let me lead a squad to hunt their Elites one by one to buy our village some time. In time, our strengths will achieve parity once again."

Even though Zankoku's words had some logic to them, his father shook his head and said, "We have experienced peace for a long time now. No war has happened for more than a decade and a half. It is unlikely that anyone would want to disrupt this peace.

Taking action against the Land of Eagles will force them to attack us. Even if we win, your actions will spell doom for our village. As for training more ninjas, we can't divert any more resources. If we do, then the common people will have to face the pinch. A Village won't be able to survive for long in that case."

Zankoku wasn't convinced. He tried arguing but couldn't change the decision of his father, who was also the leader of that small hidden village.

Zankoku left the house in a gloomy mood while thinking, 'Though there are no wars, there are too many undercurrents in the world. All the villages are busy strengthening themselves. If we don't act, then our demise is set in stone!'

He quickly left the village and entered a cave that was some distance away. The number of bats in the cave was very high. However, they didn't attack Zankoku and let him pass through.

After walking for a bit, Zankoku arrived in front of a person. The person in front of him was wearing a religious robe and had several strange tattoos on his body. The person asked, "Did you convince your father?"

Zankoku replied, "I failed, Lord Ketsueki. My father is as stubborn as ever. The chances of him changing his ways are very low."

Ketsueki said, "In that case, your village will be destroyed. Your only way of survival is to worship Lord Jashin and perform the ritual."

Zankoku had a complex expression on his face. A struggle could be seen happening inside him. He sighed and replied, "If I perform the ritual, it will be no different than destroying the village."

Ketsueki shook his head and said, "You are wrong. You won't be killing them. You will be sacrificing them to Lord Jashin. They will merely be freed from their mortal bodies and find peace with Lord Jashin. And with the help of Lord Jashin, you can destroy anyone who has or will wrong you."

Zankoku sighed once again and asked, "Is there any way to gain Lord Jashin's help without sacrificing everyone in my village?"

Ketsueki answered, "No. If you can't even make a sacrifice for Lord Jashin, then Lord Jashin won't help you. Your faith in Lord Jashin isn't enough. Leave for now. In the future, when you see the truth, come and find me."

Zankoku took his leave. He had encountered Ketsueki who introduced himself as a Bishop who worshipped Lord Jashin. Zankoku was immediately captivated by Jashin and accepted Ketsueki's teachings. However, he was unwilling to perform the ritual as it needed a lot of sacrifices from the people who were close to him.

Not to mention, even if he wanted to, he couldn't do so. His father was much stronger than him. In addition, there were 3-4 more ninjas who were stronger than Zankoku. So, sacrificing all of them wasn't something he could accomplish by himself.

Life continued as usual for the people in the Land of Bats and three years passed. However, the rest of the world slowly became uneasy. Several hidden conflicts happened on a daily basis. The major as well as the minor villages began preparing for a war.

The Land of Bats was unable to stay separated from this conflict. Zankoku's father began preparing for war too late. As a result, the Hidden Bat Village was attacked by the Hidden Eagle Village.

The attack was swift. The Hidden Bat Village was almost entirely annihilated. Rivers of blood flowed inside the village. Only a few Jounins had managed to hold on, but they were outnumbered as well.

In one such battle, Zankoku was facing three enemies Jounins. His body was riddled with injuries and he was on his last legs. Just when one of the enemies was about to land the killing blow, a figure appeared on the battlefield and killed all three Jounins in a perfect sneak attack. He quickly grabbed Zankoku and disappeared from the battlefield.

Not long after, everyone else in the village was killed and the Hidden Bat Village became one of the many villages that disappeared in the long river of history!

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Chapter 444: Jashin's Ritual

In a cave close to the former village, Bishop Ketsueki healed Zankoku. Zankoku's condition was very bad and he needed a couple of days to even be able to move.

As soon as he could, he got up and informed Ketsueki, "I'm heading back to my village."

Ketsueki replied remorsefully, "Your village is no more. The battle was over in a few minutes after you fell. If I hadn't rescued you, then you would have been dead as well. The ninjas from the Hidden Eagle Village have already retreated, leaving behind a few ninjas to watch over your village."

Ketsueki's words shocked Zankoku. While he knew what the result would be, his heart didn't want to accept it. The village had his parents, his siblings, his lover, the friends he grew up with and trusted his back to and everyone else whom he saw on a daily basis. Losing them all at the same time was a huge blow to him.

Ketsueki allowed Zankoku to mourn his loss in silence for a while. When he noticed that Zankoku had accepted the reality, he said, "Lord Jashin had warned me about the calamity that would befall your village five years ago. It is fate. Nothing would change that. Lord Jashin could only give you an opportunity to act first and strengthen yourself to take revenge on the ones who would destroy you. Unfortunately, you didn't accept the ritual."

Zankoku looked at Ketsueki. Hatred, determination and a strong will were visible in his eyes. He asked, "Will Lord Jashin allow me to complete the ritual now?"

Ketsueki answered, "As long as you have faith in Lord Jashin and are willing to follow his teachings, you can."

Zankoku replied, "I have faith in Lord Jashin and I'm willing to follow his teachings."

Ketsueki replied, "Good. Unfortunately, everyone in your village is dead. All your family and clan members who shared your blood are no more. Fortunately, it hasn't been too long since then. The ritual can still happen. However, it will require even more sacrifice."

Zankoku replied, "It doesn't matter who or how many need to be sacrificed, I am willing! Everyone I know and cherish is already dead. I am willing to sacrifice the entire world if I need to!"

Ketsueki nodded in approval and said, "Good."

He extended his hand towards Zankoku and healed all his injuries, surprising Zankoku once again. Zankoku returned to his optimal condition. Ketsueki began walking out of the cave and said, "Follow me."

Ketsueki and Zankoku walked back to the Hidden Bat Village. The Village only had 1 Jounin and 8 Chunins watching over it. Ketsueki said, "Though your clan is dead, their blood still flows on the street. So does the blood of the ones who killed them. Go, kill all your enemies in this village.

Then collect as much blood from the streets as you can. And, collect the hearts of every dead person who was related to you."

Zankoku immediately got into action. Though the village had 9 enemy ninjas, none of them could take on Zankoku by themselves. To make matters worse, they weren't gathered together. Zankoku killed them all in no time without Ketsueki needing to take action.

He followed it up by ripping the hearts out of every dead person from his clan whose bodies still littered the streets. He even collected the blood that was flowing on the streets, which for some reason hadn't dried, solidified or seeped into the ground. Though Zankoku noticed the anomaly, he was too consumed by grief and rage to analyze it rationally and just considered it as the will of Lord Jashin.

The process of collecting as much as he could took half a day. He approached Ketsueki and handed him the scrolls he used to store what he collected. Ketsueki observed it and said, "Good work, this should be sufficient. However, this can't be considered as a sacrifice as they are already dead. You will need to sacrifice 800 alive people to Lord Jashin to prove your faith and gain his recognition.

After destroying this Village, the forces of the Hidden Eagle Village moved through the country to conquer it properly. The common citizens in other small villages didn't take a second to switch their allegiance. You should sacrifice them to Lord Jashin."

Zankoku nodded and agreed. Over the next couple of weeks, Zankoku and Ketsueki visited small villages spread over the country. Ketsueki cast a Genjutsu on them and guided them to a massive hidden cave

that he had prepared for the purpose of conducting a ritual. They ended up gathering over a thousand. Zankoku also eliminated any ninjas from the Hidden Eagle Village that he came across.

After gathering all the sacrifices, Ketsueki got to work. Zankoku waited in the cave patiently. He noticed a high number of symbols and seals inscribed everywhere in the cave. The spot of the ritual was already marked. For the first time, Zankoku also met a few other followers of Jashin who served Ketsueki.

Zankoku observed what Ketsueki was doing and noticed him inscribing a few seals and markings on every person they had kidnapped. Zankoku didn't know much about seals and didn't identify any seal or symbol that was used by Ketsueki.

Ketsueki needed another week to complete the preparation. In a large formation that covered a huge portion of the cave, Ketsueki arranged the kidnapped people who were still under Genjutsu, the hearts of the people related to Zankoku and the mixture of the blood of the people related to Zankoku and the blood of the people who killed them. During this time, Ketsueki also explained the process of the ritual to Zankoku and informed him what he needed to do during it.

The process left Ketsueki visibly exhausted. Zankoku wondered whether Ketsueki had aged by several years in the last week. Ketsueki approached Zankoku and said, "The preparations are complete. The rest will depend on you. We will conduct the ritual on the next full moon."

Zankoku nodded. He desperately wanted the power to avenge his village and to serve Lord Jashin. So he had no intention of messing up the only thing that would immediately make him stronger. He waited patiently while meditating and worshipping Lord Jashin.

On the night of the full moon, Zankoku moved to the center of the cave. The center of the cave had a large circular room with a dome-like ceiling. There were eight narrow pathways connected to the room. Several symbols and seals were drawn from those pathways to the room.

At the center of the room was a small circular pool that contained blood that Zankoku had collected earlier. If one looked closely, then numerous hearts could be seen at the bottom of this pool. A narrow canal came in from each of the 8 pathways connecting to the room and joined the pool. However, those canals were empty for the time being.

Following Ketsueki's instructions, Zankoku walked into the pool and sat at its center. He closed his eyes and began meditating, his mind only having thoughts about Lord Jashin and gaining strength.

Meanwhile, Ketsueki started the ritual. Zankoku was instructed to only focus on meditation and to not get distracted even for a second. Ketsueki activated all the symbols in the room. Immediately, a glow appeared in the room due to the seals shining. At the same time, several seals on Zankoku's body were activated as well.

Zankoku immediately felt a surge in chakra. At the same time, his body felt intense pressure while his mind became very restless. He gritted his teeth and recalled the bloody state of his village. He continued meditating and believing in Lord Jashin.

Slowly, the hearts in the bloody pool began burning up. The blood in the pool began flowing towards the seals on Zankoku's body.

On the other side of the 8 narrow pathways surrounding the room were 8 rooms. Each had a hundred ordinary people. The seals on their bodies began glowing as well. Suddenly, they felt an intense pain. The pain was so high that they snapped out of the Genjutsu they were under. Unfortunately, they couldn't do anything. They all screamed in pain as blood was being sucked out of their bodies!

Their screams could be heard in the central room where Zankoku was meditating. However, he paid no attention to them and just gritted his teeth. The pain he experienced was far more intense than any of the 800 screaming civilians.

The blood extracted from their bodies began moving through the canals connecting to the blood pool. Soon, their blood flowed into the pool as well.

Under Ketsueki's control, all the blood began flowing into Zankoku's body with the help of seals he had inscribed on Zankoku's body. Despite the intense pain, Zankoku hung on.

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Chapter 445: A Secret Organization

While Zankoku could endure the pain, it wasn't the case with the common people. Unfortunately, the pain didn't allow ordinary people to stay unconscious for long. They screamed until they could no more and merely waited for their eventual death.

The ritual continued for three days straight! By then, all the 800 people had died. The blood in the canals and the pool had been absorbed into Zankoku's body. All the hearts were missing as well. Zankoku was now sitting at the bottom of the empty pool. The pain he was experiencing had now subsided. Or perhaps he had gotten used to it as his body still felt itchy.

He opened his eyes and observed his body. Strange tattoos covered his entire body. However, Zankoku didn't mind. Instead, his focus was entirely on the power he was feeling coursing through his veins. In merely three days, his chakra reserves had tripled. In addition, he could feel a strange power in his blood, though he wasn't aware of what it was.

Suddenly, he heard a voice. "Lord Ketsueki, are you alright?"

He turned his head and noticed that Bishop Ketsueki had collapsed. He quickly approached him. Ketsueki was thoroughly exhausted. Though no blood was drawn from his body, his condition wasn't much better than the 800 people who had died. Zankoku was shocked to see his state.

Despite being in a terrible state, Ketsueki wasn't concerned. Instead, a twisted smile could be seen on his face. He exclaimed, "I succeeded! I succeeded! I succeeded! Hahahaha!"

Ketsueki's state surprised his followers and Zankoku. None of them had ever seen Ketsueki lose his composure before. Ketsueki looked at Zankoku and said, "I lied earlier. This isn't my first time performing this ritual. Instead, it is my 9th time!

Unfortunately, the eight that preceded you didn't have sufficient faith in Lord Jashin and failed during the ritual. As a result, all of them died!"

Zankoku was shocked to learn that. He understood that the risk he had taken was far greater than what he had imagined it would be. However, he had already performed the ritual and succeeded.

Ketsueki continued, "By completing this ritual, you are now a Grand Priest. You have the right and the duty to propagate Lord Jashin's name and convert others to Jashin. Take my followers and lead them. The people you convert will also become your followers. Try to build a huge force and always follow the teachings of Jashin."

Ketsueki's passionate speech confused everyone. Zankoku asked, "What do you mean?"

Ketsueki replied, "For the ritual to be successful, a Bishop has to supply his life force. Since you succeeded, I will die in a few minutes. However, I have successfully performed my duty and followed Lord Jashin's words and instructions.

According to Lord Jashin's divine message, you will gain the power to control your blood. You will be able to use it to attack, defend and heal yourself. In terms of healing, you will be superior to any ninja currently alive. In terms of power, you will be an elite as well.

However, I should warn you. Don't let the power go into your head. There are several ninjas who can still easily defeat you. Especially the Kages and the Elite Jounins. Don't challenge the major villages. Stay hidden and grow your strength and your army in the dark."

Zankoku nodded and said, "I will remember your instructions."

Ketsueki smiled and said, "Good. I have completed my duty. I will finally unite with Lord Jashin again."

Ketsueki closed his eyes. A second later, he died peacefully unlike the 800 civilians he had just condemned to death!

With Ketsueki's death, Zankoku took command of his followers. He immediately began planning his revenge. However, he was well aware that he couldn't destroy the Hidden Eagle Village alone.

For the following year, he targeted individual squads from the Hidden Eagle Village that were out for missions, slowly whittling down their strength. The Hidden Eagle Village tried to find who was attacking them but never succeeded.

A year later, the Second Great Ninja War finally broke out. During the opening stages of the war, the neighboring Land of Birds invaded the Land of Eagles and annihilated their armies.

At the same time, the Hidden Eagle Village was attacked by Zankoku and his followers. He took advantage of the fact that most of its ninjas were out of the village to fight the war and reduced it to the same state as his own village. Irrespective of their age, gender and ability, every single person in the village was killed.

Just like the Land of Bats, the Land of Eagles was also lost in the long river of History. Both the countries were incorporated into the Land of Birds.

Zankoku went into hiding after the destruction of the Land of Eagles. He took advantage of the war and tried to spread Jashin's word to the affected people, increasing his followers.

Over the duration of the two wars, Zankoku focused on increasing his strength and his followers. The number of Priests under him rose from 1 to 7. His nature and morals changed vastly as well, leaving no resemblance with the Zankoku who had just become a Grand Priest.

His own strength became very formidable among Elite Jounins. Unfortunately, no matter what he did, his strength never rose past that rank. He never became a rank S ninja. As a result, he tried to replicate Ketsueki's ritual to increase his strength further. Unfortunately for him, he was discovered and eliminated by Fujin's squad.

Fujin finally took his palm off Zankoku's head. He had read several important memories from Zankoku's life which had the highest impact on Zankoku. The conversation with his father, the conversation with Ketsueki, the fall of his village, the ritual, his revenge, a few bouts of madness and his final fight with the Uchihas were his most impactful memories. Fujin could read them clearly. The rest was very difficult to read and Fujin didn't have much hope of succeeding in doing that. Regardless, he was satisfied with the information he gained.

Fujin analyzed, 'So his name was Zankoku, huh? Looks like he led a rather eventful life. He was lucky to be born as the son of the Village Leader and be quite talented. If everything had been peaceful, he would have succeeded his father and led the village.'

Unfortunately, this world is anything but peaceful. His father was too pacifist and didn't listen to his suggestions. As a result, the entire village was wiped out, leaving him as the lone survivor. However, everything might not be as straightforward as it seems. After all, these memories just show things from Zankoku's perspective.

For starters, why did that Ketsueki guy approach Zankoku? And, how did Ketsueki know that the Hidden Eagle Village would invade in the future? Did he just guess the trends of the world or did he work behind the scenes to make that invasion happen? Or is there really someone called Jashin who conveys messages like this?

But, who could be such an entity? More importantly, what would he gain by creating a few Grand Priests? Hmm, is there another being like Kaguya who is sealed on this planet and trying to get out? Only in that case would it make any sense. But who is it and who sealed him?'

Fujin thought for a bit. However, he didn't have any information to make any guesses. Fujin decided to stop thinking about it. He analyzed further, 'There is just too little information. Ketsueki mentioned several times that Jashin instructed him and he heard Jashin's voice. However, Zankoku doesn't have any memory of any such voice guiding him. Other than feeling a sense of compulsion, there was nothing unusual in his life.

So, it is impossible to say whether Ketsueki was telling the truth or whether he just made it all up for some reason. Oh well, no point in thinking about such an entity. Even if I find it, it won't help me unless I get a lot stronger and can subdue it.

Rather than thinking about such an entity, the Jashin cult is worth paying more attention to. This Ketsueki fellow had the rank of a Bishop. The members of Jashin are generally divided into four ranks, that is, the Grand Priest, the Priest, the Devotees and the Servants, with the Grand Priest having the highest authority and the servants having the least.

As for the Bishop, Zankoku never met another in his life. It seems like the Bishops perform the rituals which can create a Grand Priest. Most likely, they all die on creating a Grand Priest. This way, the Grand Priest's knowledge will be limited to what the Bishop passed down to him. He won't be able to threaten the place or organization from where the Bishop came.

If I assume that this is the case, then there is perhaps a secret sect or a secret cult of Jashin somewhere in this world.'

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Chapter 446: Hiruzen the Matchmaker

While Fujin was researching about the Jashin, Hiruzen was sitting in his office facing a different headache. Hiruzen was staring intently at the 3 letters on his desk.

Despite his decades of experience, Hiruzen was left clueless about how to handle the situation in front of him. The three letters were sent to him by the Hyuga, Yamanaka and the Inuzuka clan leaders. All three letters were extremely similar to one another!

He cursed, 'That brat. Just when I thought that he wouldn't trouble me again, he caused me headaches once again. Though I can't fault him on this one, he is still the reason for this headache. Sigh, I'm getting too old. Though they don't state it specifically, don't they have any shame asking a widowed old man to decide something like this?'

The letters from the three clan leaders requested Fujin to be the Jounin Sensei of teams of their respective children.

Some time ago -

Hyuga Clan Compound -

Hyuga Hiashi sat in front of a table writing a letter. Once he was done, he read it while wondering, 'Is this the right thing to do?'

He fell into deep thought for a few minutes. Finally, his expression became resolute as he thought, 'Hinata is too timid and soft. As she is now, she won't be able to accomplish much as a ninja. The chances of that changing is negligible. Once the time comes, there will be no other choice but to put the seal on her.'

Hiashi stopped thinking. He had seen what had happened with his brother due to the seal. If possible, he would choose to not have either of his daughters be branded by the curse seal. Unfortunately, that was a difficult task and against their customs.

He thought, 'Suzuki Fujin is almost opposite to her. Though not a lot of his information is available even to us clan leaders, there is little question about how lethal and ruthless he is on the battlefield. Though I failed, there might be some hope for him to succeed.

Even if he doesn't, if he trains Hinata, it'll give me several opportunities to interact with him. I'll take these opportunities to get closer to him and ask him to marry Hinata.

The reason to brand the curse seal on branch members is for their safety on the battlefield. However, what better safety there will be than being with a rank S ninja? Not to mention, there is no way someone like him will allow his partner to be branded by the curse seal.

I can use the pressure applied by a rank S ninja to avoid branding Hinata with the curse seal. That will be the best for her. I just hope everything goes well.'

Yamanaka Clan Compound -

Just like Hiashi, Inoichi had written a letter as well. His request was the same as well. He asked Fujin to be Ino's Jounin Sensei.

Inoichi thought, 'I hadn't expected Fujin to be a good teacher as well. After all, Kakashi, despite his prowess, failed every team he was assigned. And, he was assigned the top teams of each year. Unlike him, Fujin already has shown great signs despite being much younger.

From what Ino says, Naruto has steadily become stronger this year. His Taijutsu has improved and within a few months, he has mastered some Wind jutsus. When I heard that Fujin had taken an interest in Naruto, I thought that he wanted to create an influence over Konoha's only Jinchuriki. I never expected that he'd surprise me. Such progress by someone like Naruto is shocking. If Fujin can be assigned to Ino's team, she will benefit a lot. So will Shikamaru and Choji.

Though Lord Hokage wants Asuma to be their Jounin Sensei, our three clans are already very close to the Sarutobi clan. There won't be any change. However, with Fujin, there are a lot of benefits. I'll ask Shikaku and Choza to back me up as well.

Not to mention, Fujin is an orphan without any clan. If they fall in love and he marries Ino, he'd be a part of the Yamanaka clan as well. With a rank S ninja among our ranks and two votes on the council, I could increase the amount of benefits the Yamanaka clan gets several times.'

Inoichi sent the letter to Hiruzen and asked Shikaku and Choza to do the same very soon as well.

Inuzuka Clan Compound -

Tsume wrote a similar letter as well while thinking, 'Though Kiba has talent, he lacks discipline and focus. I still recall how much that kid trained in the 5 days he was in the central tower in the Forest of Death. If he can instill that discipline in Kiba, then I wouldn't need to worry.'

A smirk appeared on her face as she thought, 'Of course, if he becomes Kiba's Jounin Sensei, then it'll provide me a chance to push Hana closer to him. That girl is still very reserved. I need to teach her a thing or two about being a woman!'

Back to the present -

Hiruzen stayed in his chair while wondering what he should do. Though he could very easily see what the true goal of the clan leaders was, he still needed to make a decision.

He analyzed, 'What should I do? In terms of relationships, I'm a lot closer to Inoichi. However, the Hyuga clan has a lot more influence. Not to mention, the Inuzuka clan is with them as well on this matter. While forming a squad, Hyuga and Inuzuka ninjas are the most preferred teammates due to their abilities. I can't offend both of them at the same time.'

Hiruzen massaged his forehead while thinking, 'That said, what luck this brat has. Three clan leaders want to set him up with their daughters. Now that I think about it, the same should have happened with Minato. He was even more impressive than Fujin at this age.'

However, he was already in a relationship with Kushina by the time he gained fame. No one dared to make a move fearing Kushina's response. Since Fujin isn't in any relationship, nothing is stopping them. Fortunately, Hinata and Ino are still very young and Fujin is stronger than the clan leaders. Otherwise, they might have gone past me and directly tried to do something.'

As Hiruzen was thinking, he heard a voice, "What interesting letters, Sensei. This brat's luck makes even the Great Toad Sage Jiraiya feel envy, hahaha."

Hiruzen looked behind him to see that Jiraiya was sitting at the window. He looked at him with annoyance. Without being asked for, Jiraiya gave his free advice, "Why don't you just put the three of them in one squad? Won't that solve the issue? Just imagine that lucky brat with three girls. He'll be in heaven and hell at the same time. It'll be fun to watch. I'll get so much more research material for my next book!"

Hiruzen looked at the letters again as he asked, "Solve the issue? Or raise a hundred new ones? The Ino-Shika-Chō formation can't be disrupted. With the three of them working together, they can become a rank S-level threat in the future just like their parents. It's not something we can give up on for some whim."

He thought, 'Besides, what fun will I get to watch? Those girls won't come of age for the next 6 years. Will I be even still alive and kicking by them? Even if I am, this brat hides behind a million seals. Even my crystal ball doesn't work! Who knows what he needs so much privacy for!'

Jiraiya said, "Stop being a party pooper, Sensei. Just imagine that my next book can be titled, The Orphan and the Three Princess!"

Hiruzen looked at Jiraiya with a tick mark on his forehead. Jiraiya chuckled and asked, "So, what will you do?"

Hiruzen answered, "What can I do? I'll obviously need to ignore their real agenda. As for the decision, I'll leave it to Fujin. Let him decide."

Jiraiya sighed and said, "That's boring."

Hiruzen glanced at him and said, "If you want to make it interesting, come take this seat. Feel free to do whatever you want to then."

Jiraiya immediately replied, "No thanks, I am out!"

A cloud of smoke suddenly appeared and Jiraiya disappeared within the smoke. Hiruzen cursed internally, 'At this rate, I'll have to do paperwork until I am 100 years old! I need to quickly find someone to dump these neverending files on!'

He looked at the three letters and muttered to himself, 'Enjoy, for now, kiddo. I promise that your future years won't be this carefree!'

Hiruzen decided to leave the choice to Fujin. He didn't want any more headaches. As for Fujin, he was completely unaware of the fact that two grown men and one woman were about to force their daughters on him as soon as he returned back to the village! Whether he'd be pleased or annoyed remains to be seen!

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Chapter 447: So Many Complications!

Fujin continued analyzing, 'That secret organization is likely responsible for training the Bishops and sending them into the Elemental nations to create Grand Priests. If that is indeed the case, then even if a Grand Priest did something extreme and all the known Jashins were hunted and killed as a result, the religion itself would never be in danger of extermination.

The only other way would be if Jashin himself appointed his Bishops and directed them towards the Grand Priest. However, in that case, no one will be able to find anything and I can't do anything either. So, there is no point in thinking about this possibility.

Still, it seems like there are some similarities among the Grand Priests chosen. Hidan and Zankoku were both from minor villages. They weren't satisfied with the pacifist leader and wanted to expand their village's military power rapidly. And, both were quite talented for someone from minor villages.

Anyway, I'll consider them later on. For now, my only focus is on Blood Manipulation. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like I can get my hands on it easily.'

Fujin had a serious expression on his face. He recalled all the details of the ritual that gave Zankoku the ability to manipulate blood. He analyzed, 'While I did learn a lot of surprising information, the most surprising is what was used to conduct the ritual. It was Fuinjutsu! Or rather, a combination of Fuinjutsu and Juinjutsu.

I'm not sure who or what Jashin is, but that Bishop was definitely a Grandmaster in Fuinjutsu. The seals he inscribed on the 800 ordinary people and Zankoku were all Juinjutsu whereas the seals and symbols covering the cave were Fuinjutsu.

Unfortunately, Zankoku wasn't a Fuinjutsu Grandmaster. He wasn't even a SealMaster. Despite participating in the ritual, he didn't pay much attention to what Ketsueki did. Even after Ketsueki died, he didn't try to learn it and merely focused on his revenge and spreading the word of Jashin.

As such, he had no idea how to recreate the ritual. It was only when his strength began dropping due to age that he became interested in it. Unfortunately, it was too late by then. He revisited that old cave, but it wasn't in the best shape due to being abandoned for decades.

Fortunately, one of his Priests was a SealMaster. He spent a lot of time studying the seals that still remained in the cave. With the help of Zankoku, the SealMaster Priest and the one Priest who used to follow Ketsueki before his death, they managed to recreate the ritual.

Unfortunately, it wasn't perfect. They were still missing several seals. And there were many seals that the SealMaster couldn't comprehend. As such, he had to remove several parts of the ritual and only managed to create a substandard ritual, one which couldn't even hold half of the 800 people that Ketsueki's ritual could. To make matters worse, it could only work on children aged 2 to 6.

What makes it even more unattractive is the fact that they weren't 100% sure that the ritual would work. And, despite being involved, Zankoku still doesn't know entirely about the seals as even the simpler seals were very complicated for him...

Fujin let out a sigh and thought, 'If I could read Ketsueki's memories... I'm 90% sure that I'll be able to succeed easily. Unfortunately that bastard died decades ago! Even if I find him, there is no way any of his memories are still intact. The only possible way to extract information from him is by using Edo Tensei! Unfortunately, extracting that jutsu from Hiruzen would be impossible. I might have a better chance of getting it from Danzo!'

Fujin began analyzing again. Depending on just Zankoku's memories wouldn't be reliable enough. He calculated, 'I guess there is just one way for me to learn how to perform that ritual. I need to go to that cave and inspect the seals myself. At the very least, I'll be able to do a far better job than a SealMaster.

However, there are a few more complications. Ketsueki said that 8 people had failed before Zankoku succeeded. He also said that Zankoku needs to have complete faith in Jashin. Ketsueki even spent 5 years slowly influencing Zankoku and ensuring that he was completely devoted to Jashin.

If that is indeed a requirement, then there will be no way for me to perform it and learn Blood Manipulation. I have no intention of joining that crazy cult and worshipping a fake or a lunatic God.

Another issue is that these rituals definitely have a side effect, a rather nasty one at that. Though Zankoku never heard any word from Jashin, he frequently kept getting an urge to kill someone and drain their blood. He kept his urge under control for several years, but eventually, he couldn't do so anymore. By the time he died, he pretty much had a fetish for blood. He also had an unnatural urge to recruit more followers.

Considering all the complications, the best way for me would be to bypass the ritual and directly gain the ability to manipulate my blood. It shouldn't be impossible to do so. After all, Ketsueki merely used Juinjutsu, be it to suck blood from people or to give Zankoku this ability.

If I can just study the seals in Zankoku's body, I might be able to imitate them. In fact, when I first saw the ritual, that was my intention. But...'

Fujin once again focused on Zankoku's dead body in front of him. His eyes glowed and looked restlessly as if he wanted to find something. As time passed, frustration could be seen on Fujin's face. He couldn't help but curse, "Where the fuck are the seals that were supposed to be on his body? Don't tell me those damned Uchihas wiped out everything!"

One complication after another left Fujin feeling a bit depressed and annoyed. He raised a small rock from the ground and sat in front of Zankoku's dead body while calming down himself and thinking about the situation.

After some time, he realized, 'Wait a minute... Why would the Uchihas wipe out the seals on his body? Unless they made some progress in replicating it and wanted to stop anyone else from gaining it. But, they already had his body with them. How would anyone else study it?

Not to mention, they didn't wipe out any markings that were on his body. So why would they only clear out the seals?

Hmm, now that I think about it, I had observed this guy carefully when he fought with the Uchiha Jounins. Back then, though I wasn't a Grandmaster, I was already a SealMaster. Even if his seals were complicated, I should have been able to detect them even if I didn't understand them. So why couldn't I?'

On calming himself down, Fujin realized that he had missed one, no, two important points! He analyzed further, 'Another point to consider is the Juinjutsu itself. There is no Juinjutsu in Konoha and perhaps any other Elemental villages that can give such a crazy ability.

Now that I think about it, I haven't heard of any of the dead Uzumakis having such ability either.'

Fujin's eyes suddenly widened as he realized a crucial point. He gazed at Zankoku's dead body once again and cursed, 'Shit! How did I miss such a simple point! This Juinjutsu... It likely has nothing to do with having faith in Jashin. Rather, it is at an entirely different level than what we ninjas practice.

A Juinjutsu that can inscribe seals on and in the body so intricately that it fuses with the body and becomes a part of it. That is probably why I can't see any seals on his body. They most likely still exist, but they have already become a part of his body. Most probably, his body has been modified by that ritual, just like Hidan.

If I can learn this...'

Fujin felt a wave of excitement flowing through his body! A whole new world had opened up in front of him. He had a feeling that his strength would increase tremendously if he grasped this knowledge. He felt that this could be a way to surpass the S rank! Fujin muttered, "I have a feeling that I can escape the limits of the human body and lifespan if I can grasp this! Though I might not become as strong as Hashirama or Madara, the benefits will be far more significant than a simple increase in strength."

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Chapter 448: Medical Ninjutsu and a New Target

Fujin felt that his speculation was on point. His mind quickly began calculating how he could learn that level of Juinjutsu. His eyes landed on the dead body in front of him as he thought, 'One way will be to study this dead body properly.'

I need to understand what biological changes Zankoku experienced after undergoing the ritual. I will need to compare his body to a normal body and experiment to understand which seals could cause such a change. That could form a base for me to understand how a Juinjutsu of this level could be created.

To reach that stage, I will first have to properly study and research this dead body. Unfortunately, I have zero expertise in this field... To be able to do that, I will need to take up Yoshi's offer and pursue Medical Ninjutsu. But...'

Fujin had a headache. He was already learning a lot. He specialized in Ninjutsu and had mastered well over 50 jutsus. While his main focus was on the Wind element, he had also learnt several powerful ninjutsu of Lightning, Fire and Earth elements. In addition, he was also working on Space-Time Ninjutsu, which was entirely different from any other Ninjutsu.

Though Ninjutsu was his speciality, he had diversified his skills a lot already. In terms of Fuinjutsu, he was already at the highest rank in the ninja world. Considering the speed of his progress, very few would be able to claim to be as good as him at Fuinjutsu after a few years.

His Taijutsu was extremely strong as well. Not only did he know two of the strongest fighting styles, he also knew the forbidden Eight Inner Gates formation and he could open two Inner Gates. That alone made him one of the strongest Taijutsu users in the Ninja world.

While his Genjutsu wasn't as spectacular as the other three fields, Fujin was still better than any Special Jounin who specialized in that field. More importantly, he had developed the skills to counter the Sharingan and was extremely good at detecting and breaking Genjutsu.

If Fujin worked on Medical Ninjutsu, then it would take a lot of his time and energy. Even with Shadow Clones, it won't be an easy task.

Fujin sighed at the thought of increasing his already ridiculous workload. He decided, 'I have no choice... It looks like I have to work on this aspect. Even if not today, I might need this skill sometime in the future. In fact, I have a feeling that I'll be needing these skills a lot in the future.'

That said, researching dead bodies isn't an easy task. Though I came from a technologically advanced world, I never focused on improving my medical knowledge. So I won't have any advantage over others in this world despite the advances in my previous world.

Not to mention, being able to research something as complicated as Zankoku's body can probably be done by only a handful of ninjas. The only ones that come to mind are Tsunade, Orochimaru and maybe Kabuto and Sasori. The process of studying his body will be far more efficient if I can get the help of one of them. However, how can I get their help?'

While Fujin's analysis was logical, he had no method of cooperating with either of those four or anyone else who was very good at this aspect. He thought enviously, 'To have a subordinate like Kabuto... That bastard is extremely lucky. Maybe I should focus on raising ninjas that can assist me in this regard.

Hmm, yeah. That will be the best. If I can raise or recruit someone who is very good at Medical Ninjutsu and researching, then my work will be simplified. After all, it is unrealistic to assume that I can reach the top in every field. If I hit a limit, then all my plans related to this would have to be dropped. If I can raise someone talented at this, I will only need to improve my medical knowledge sufficiently to ensure that I don't get tricked.

I will begin working closely with Yoshi after I master the Flying Thunder God and make a curse seal. Once my expertise in Medical Ninjutsu improves and I get help from someone capable, I can begin researching the changes the Ritual and the seals brought to his body.

However, this will be a long-term plan. There is actually another way for me to learn more about this level of Juinjutsu. That way is Hidan!'

Fujin stored Zankoku's body back in the scroll. He removed all the traces he left in the cave, left the cave and began moving back to Konoha.

En route, he analyzed, 'If a Bishop is indeed needed to perform the sacrificial ritual, then a Bishop should already be in touch with Hidan. I need to find that Bishop and read his memories. If his strength is the same as Ketsueki's, then it wouldn't be a problem for me to neutralize him.

His memories should clear all my doubts. I might even understand the high-level Juinjutsu that the Bishops use. That said, I don't think that he would know the ritual to become able to manipulate blood.

After all, Hidan didn't have that ability. His ability was immortality. I wonder if the Bishop sucked out the Life Force from ordinary people or something like that... Regardless, Hidan's ability is even more broken. I won't complain if I can gain that.

Even if he doesn't have the information, as long as I can find the location of that secret Jashin sect or cult, I will achieve my goal. Once I master the Flying Thunder God, I'll directly attack them and read their memories one member at a time.

As a society that has been hiding for a long time and has such a high level of Juinjutsu, its strength should be quite high. But since they don't dare to expose themselves, it implies that their strength is far weaker than the Five Great Villages. As long as I watch out for any Juinjutsu traps, they shouldn't be able to stop me. And considering their mysterious means, the knowledge they have might be as good or even better than what the Uzumaki clan had.

Reading his mind will also allow me to understand whether there really is a Jashin who speaks with them or if it is just some scheme they are running to achieve some goal.

The only issue with this plan is that capturing and reading the memories of that Bishop can affect Hidan's ritual. If it doesn't go through, then Akatsuki's structure might undergo some changes. However, even if it causes some changes to the future I know, the benefits of doing so are too high. Akatsuki's goals won't change even if Hidan doesn't join them while my strength will grow several folds due to doing this.

I will do it now. I'll return to the village and take some elimination missions in the Land of Hot Water. Once I find Hidan and the Priest, I will find my answers!"

Fujin returned to the village at a high speed, resting just once during the night. While he rested during the night, Fujin had a thought and his expression became very peculiar. He thought, 'In my previous life, whenever I read about someone working with dead bodies, I would always feel very weird and get a creepy feeling due to the nature of the job.'

It was even more so in anime when I read about characters like Danzo, Orochimaru and Kabuto experimenting with them. However, I unknowingly spent the last few days studying a head that I cut off and a dead body I have been storing for over 3 years! When did I become like this?'

Fujin was left speechless by the realization. While the excessive amount of killing he did in this world meant that he no longer felt any stigma while inspecting the dead bodies, he never thought that someday he would become so focused on studying dead bodies and even plan on improving his medical knowledge to do that better!

Fujin just shook his head and thought, 'I doubt the me who had just arrived in this world would be able to connect with the present me. Oh well, nothing I can do about it. Surprisingly, it isn't that hard to get used to being around dead bodies.'

Fujin began resting for the night and continued his journey the next day. In Konoha, Hiruzen was working in his office when he received a high-priority scroll from the Daimyo of the Land of Hot Water.

As Hiruzen read the details in the scroll, a frown appeared on his face. He thought, 'I expected them to face troubles in becoming a peaceful country, but this is just too much. No wonder the Daimyo is panicking so much. Still, this resembles a lot with that particular mission...'

Hiruzen thought for a bit and instructed, "Takao, call Fujin to my office."

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Chapter 449: Fujin's Frustration

Fujin arrived in Konoha a couple of hours before noon. He went straight to the Hokage Building and was about to walk into the mission center when someone called out his name.

Fujin turned around to see Hatake Takao coming towards him. Takao appeared in front of Fujin and said, "Fujin! Here you are. I visited your house and the 23rd training grounds in the morning to find you."

Takao had gone to look for Fujin in the morning following Hiruzen's instructions. However, he wasn't at his house or in the training ground. Instead, he met Naruto who informed him that Fujin hadn't returned from his mission. He went to the Mission Center to confirm it and informed Hiruzen about the same. As

a result, Hiruzen had begun creating another squad. However, as luck would have it, Takao had come down for some work at the same time that Fujin arrived at the Hokage Building.

Fujin raised an eyebrow and asked, "Does Lord Hokage need me??"

Fujin was surprised. It hadn't even been a few minutes since he had returned to the village and yet Hiruzen was looking for him. Takao nodded and answered, "Lord Hokage was looking for you earlier in regard to a mission. You should meet him and see if he still needs you to go for it."

Fujin wondered, 'A mission right when I wanted to head to the Land of Hot Water? Sigh, I hope it is in that country or some place beyond it.'

Fujin replied, "Alright. I'll go see him."

He handed Takao a scroll and said, "Hand it to Shichiro. It contains mission files and dead bodies that had to be collected. Please inform him that I have completed all the missions."

Takao accepted the scroll and replied, "Sure."

Fujin walked over to Hiruzen's office and entered the room. Hiruzen looked at Fujin and said with a smile on his face, "It is good to see you, Fujin. How did your missions go?"

Fujin casually answered, "They went well. There were no complications."

Hiruzen said, "Good, come sit. I have received a mission from the Daimyo of the Land of Hot Water which is eerily similar to one of your past missions."

Fujin sighed in relief upon hearing that. The mission was exactly where he wanted to head to. As for which mission it was, Fujin didn't think much. He had been on hundreds of missions and couldn't speculate which mission Hiruzen was hinting at. Unfortunately, Hiruzen's next words would shock Fujin!

Hiruzen said, "In recent times, the Land of Hot Water has been reducing their military strength and are depending more on us and the Land of Iron for solving their issues. Their country is transforming from a militaristic state to a tourist destination due to the large number of hot springs in their country. However, some ninjas aren't happy with this trend.

One of those ninjas killed 18 Yugakure ninjas and a few dozen civilians before escaping. They arranged for ninjas to hunt him down but couldn't find him. More importantly, while they were hunting him, over 300 people went missing all of a sudden from the small villages in their country. They aren't sure if the two events are linked, but some feel that the same ninja is behind the kidnapping.

They have issued a rank S mission to our village. I want you to go to the Land of Hot Water and find and rescue the missing people. If the same ninja is involved, kill or capture him depending on the situation. Otherwise, ignore him. The ninja is called Hidan."

Hiruzen's words left Fujin stunned. He was so stunned that he even forgot to hide his emotions. Hiruzen noticed it and asked, "Is something the matter?"

Fujin realized his mistake and calmed himself down. He shook his head and answered, "It sounds like that cult named Jashin. Our mission involving them had gotten rather nasty. If those people have been missing for a long time and if no new people have gone missing for some time, then I'm afraid that it will be too late."

While he answered in a calm tone, Fujin's mind was anything but calm. He cursed, 'What the fuck? That bastard couldn't wait a few days? I hope the ritual isn't complete yet. I don't care about Hidan, but I need that Bishop's memories!'

Fujin was extremely pissed and frustrated! His attempt to learn Blood Manipulation by reading Zankoku's memories met a huge number of complications, leaving him unable to replicate it in the short term. Fortunately, he thought of a method to get it easily.

However, even before he could act on it, that method was snatched away from him! The entire ordeal left him mentally exhausted. He muttered to himself, 'It almost feels like someone is making my life difficult and enjoying my sufferings!'

Hiruzen didn't know about Fujin's internal struggle. He replied, "Yes, it is worrying. The killings happened three weeks ago. People started going missing a few days later. The last case of a missing person was reported 6 days ago. So time is precious.

I have already arranged 3 members and was looking at who was available to lead them. Fortunately, you came back at the right time. I'll leave this mission to you. Leave right away, meet up with the Daimyo and get the exact information."

Hiruzen tossed Fujin the scroll. Fujin caught it and said, "Alright. I'll move immediately."

He was about to leave when he suddenly had an idea. His feet stopped and he looked at Hiruzen and thought, 'Isn't he supposed to be the professor? I wonder if he knows about this...'

Fujin said, "I recently faced a question while training. I wonder if you know something about this."

Hiruzen asked, "What did you face?"

Fujin replied, "I was wondering whether we can use Juinjutsu to permanently strengthen ourselves or give us new abilities."

Hiruzen was surprised by the question and became serious. He hadn't expected Fujin to ask such a question. He wondered, 'Did he witness anyone having such abilities or did he just think it by itself?'

Hiruzen couldn't be sure. He asked, "Are you aware of the Uzumaki clan?"

Fujin nodded. Even though almost no one from Fujin's generation would know about the Uzumaki clan, Hiruzen wasn't surprised to know that Fujin knew about them considering how much time he spent in the Library and learning the seals. He said, "Most of the Fuinjutsu and Juinjutsu in Konoha come from the Uzumaki clan."

Fujin had speculated it to be the case. So he wasn't surprised. Hiruzen continued, "The Uzumaki clan was a step ahead of the world in terms of sealing. It was why they were considered a threat by other villages and annihilated before the start of the Second Great Ninja War.

However, even in the Uzumaki clan, a seal like you said was never propagated. It was only during their final struggle that their leader, Uzumaki Ashina, showed abilities similar to what you described.

I'm not sure what exactly you mean by giving permanent abilities, but I guess you mean being able to do something beyond what normal seals should. The seals Uzumaki Ashina used touched that concept and were speculated to be able to take our understanding of Fuinjutsu and Juinjutsu to the next level.

However, with his death, the technique was lost. I'm not sure why he never taught the technique to anyone else in his clan. Or perhaps he did but no one else was able to learn. Another possibility could be that everyone who he taught those seals was killed in the war. Or perhaps someone survived and the knowledge still exists but that person has kept it a secret."

Fujin was surprised by the answer. Though he had asked Hiruzen, he wasn't expecting Hiruzen to know anything about it. He thought, 'Uzumaki Ashina... Wasn't he the leader of the Uzumaki clan when Hashirama was alive? Unfortunately, I barely remember anything about him. Now that I think about it, I don't think much was shown about him anyway.

I wonder if these Juinjutsu seals were passed down in the Uzumaki clan or if he created those seals by himself. Regardless, it shows that even if you don't worship Jashin, you can create seals that are similar to the ones that form in the Ritual or at least have the potential to reach that level.'

Fujin asked, "Did no one try to investigate what seals they were? Also, what abilities did the seal give him?"

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 450: Uzumaki Ashina, Danzo's Suspicion, Hiruzen's Admiration!

Hiruzen answered, "Uzumaki Ashina was a rank S ninja who specialized in sealing. His ability in sealing was so good that even other rank S ninjas, including myself, wouldn't want to face him in a one-on-one battle. It made him a grave threat on the battlefield. The other villages attacked the Uzumaki clan only when he had grown very old and hadn't been active for over a decade.

The combined armies of several countries assaulted them. Though the attacking armies suffered high losses due to the traps set around Uzushio, their numerical advantage allowed them to endure

the losses and attack the village. When it looked like the fall of Uzushioagakure was inevitable, Ashina appeared once again.

He used a technique that allowed him to regain his youth and return to his peak. As a result, the invaders suffered even more losses. Unfortunately, he was facing three Kages at the same time.

We wanted to reinforce the Uzumaki clan, unfortunately, a large portion of our forces, including myself, were deployed against the Kumo border who had arrived with their full force led by the Third Raikage. In addition, other villages had also deployed small armies along our borders, forcing us to spread our armies and top-level ninjas.

By the time we realized what was happening and sent an army to reinforce the Uzumaki clan, it was too late. Uzumaki Ashina had fallen and Uzushioagakure was no more.

His body was taken by the Third Mizukage and Kirigakure extensively studied the seals on his body. However, they never found the seals that allowed Ashina to revert back to his peak. Hence, that is now considered a lost technique."

A hint of sadness could be heard in Hiruzen's voice. Konoha had lost a strong ally in that war. As a result, Konoha suffered a lot more losses than they would have in the two Great Wars.

Fujin's mind was completely occupied by those seals. As such, he didn't register the sadness in Hiruzen's voice. He analyzed the information and asked, "Doesn't Lady Tsunade also have an ability that allows her to maintain her youth?"

Hiruzen shook his head and said, "That isn't the same. Tsunade's technique is her own. Though it involves some seals, it is mainly based on her expertise in Medical Ninjutsu. And there are limits. Uzumaki Ashina's transformation was very pure. From the intel we gained, his body was full of life force and chakra when he activated whichever seals he did. It didn't seem like he was an old man who was extracting all that he had left, instead looked like someone who was at his prime. More importantly, they didn't discover any side effects or backlash of the seal he was using.

We speculated that he was working on a seal that would allow him to permanently become younger or at least expand his life force significantly. Had Uzushioagakure not been attacked, it was likely that he

would have succeeded and Uzushioagakure might have become the Sixth Major Ninja Village. Unfortunately, that wasn't to be."

Fujin analyzed, 'Not being able to find the seals... That sounds exactly like what happened with Zankoku. Despite being a Grandmaster, I'm at a loss. Considering that they have the body, they might have even tried to open up his body and study him thoroughly. Still, they failed! Sigh, the difficulty is as high as I imagined.'

Fujin replied, "I see. A shame that he died before he could complete it. Anyway, thanks for letting me know. If I have any more ideas regarding this, I'll discuss it with you. Anyway, who will be going with me on this mission?"

Hiruzen replied, "This mission will be a searching mission. You will have Special Jounin Inuzuka Shiro, Jounin Hyuga Hisao and Jounin Yamanaka Ken helping you. Shiro and Hisao will be good for tracking while Ken can help you in information gathering if needed."

Fujin nodded. The team was good and he was familiar with one of them. He said, "Just have them meet me. We will leave immediately. I'll explain the mission on the way."

Hiruzen nodded. Within a few minutes, all 3 of them gathered in the office. Fujin left with the three of them immediately. On leaving the village, he looked towards the direction of the Land of Hot Water and wished, 'I hope that I'm not too late. Finding another clue regarding Jashin will be very difficult and entirely luck-based.'

The four of them and Shiro's ninja dog moved rapidly towards their destination.

Back in Konoha, a figure rushed into the underground Root office. He entered Danzo's office and reported, "Lord Danzo, Suzuki Fujin returned to the village but he was sent to another mission by Lord Hokage. He led a team of 2 Jounins and 1 Special Jounin. I couldn't find out what the mission is and where he is heading to as the mission was given directly by Lord Hokage."

Danzo frowned on hearing that. He analyzed, 'He returned but the two I sent after him are still missing? Did he sense and eliminate them? But sensing them shouldn't have been easy. And even if he did, why would he kill them?'

While Fujin had displayed that he had no love for Root, Danzo didn't see any reason why he would kill a Konoha ninja. After all, there were several powerful ninjas in Konoha who didn't like Root. However, that didn't mean that they would kill them on sight. Even if the Root ninjas were in the wrong, they would show restraint and discuss with Hiruzen. In the worst-case scenario, they would arrest the Root ninjas and ask Hiruzen to investigate.

Danzo concluded, 'It is unlikely that he would kill them unless they tried to assassinate him. However, neither of them sent me any messages. It implies that they were killed within a few hours of leaving the village. And, they were instructed to not make any reckless moves anytime soon.'

Did they encounter someone else who killed them? But who? Did Suna send an Elite Jounin to infiltrate into the Land of Fire again? Or was it someone else who has hostility towards Konoha ninjas or at least our Anbu Forces?'

Danzo couldn't be sure. He looked at the ninja in front of him and instructed, "Take two squads and inspect the path Fujin should have travelled. According to the information, he took missions to eliminate bandit camps and rogue ninjas to the south. Trace his steps and find signs of any battles along or near the route.

Inspect carefully as there might have been an attempt to cover up any signs of battle. Also, find out who left the village along the same route after Fujin and after how long."

The Root ninja replied, "Alright, Lord Danzo."

He flickered out of the room and began assembling a team. A few minutes later, Eight Root ninjas began trailing the steps Fujin took a few weeks ago.

Meanwhile, Hiruzen, who was unaware of the hidden exchange between Fujin and Danzo, kept thinking about his little discussion with Fujin. He thought, 'Though some simpler seals can be used to add more defenses to the body, there is no way to truly strengthen a ninja with the help of it. In fact, the main concept behind Juinjutsu is to restrict enemies.

To think of using it as an enhancer instead... No wonder he managed to become a Grandmaster so quickly and with minimal guidance. Seems like the next revolution in seals will come from Konoha.'

A smile appeared on Hiruzen's face. He could see the benefits Konoha would enjoy if Fujin succeeded in doing that. Of course, he didn't have very high hopes considering the crazy level of difficulty.

Fujin's squad moved at a high speed and managed to reach Yugakure the next day at noon despite taking a couple of breaks. Fujin had informed them about what the mission was. Due to the state of the mission, none of them slacked off. To add to it, Fujin made everyone move at a rapid speed. He didn't care much if those 3 couldn't help him in combat. He just wanted to find Hidan quickly.

As soon as they reached, Fujin met up with the Daimyo. Sitting in the conference room, Fujin said, "I have gone through the information you provided Lord Hokage. Do you have any additional information on the movements of Hidan or the news of any more missing people?"

The Daimyo replied, "Unfortunately, there is no new news. The last person, who was reported to be missing, disappeared a week ago. No new kidnapping has happened since then. However, we haven't found any traces of the missing people."

Fujin had already thought about how to approach this mission while he was moving towards the Land of Hot Water. Without missing a beat, he said, "Tell me the areas that you had suspected the most irrespective of whether you searched for those places or not."