

Calamity 451

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 451: Finding the Hiding spot!

Fujin's words surprised the Daimyo and the Yugakure ninjas who were rather offended by the statement. One of them asked, "What do you mean? Do you want to say that we couldn't find them despite looking in the right area?"

In front of the Daimyo, he didn't dare to explode in anger. However, his tone displayed his anger and dissatisfaction at being treated in this manner. He thought, 'Even if he is from Konoha, who does he think he is to look down on us? We fought in wars even before he was born!'

Unfortunately for him, Fujin wasn't in the mood to be patient with him. He nodded and nonchalantly said, "Yes."

Fujin's brazen disregard for their pride caught everyone, including the Daimyo, off guard. Even Fujin's teammates looked at him with surprise. Though they looked down on ninjas from the minor villages, they never spoke about it in front of them. For a moment, everyone in the room was left speechless.

Before any of the Yugakure ninjas exploded in anger, Fujin looked at the Daimyo and said, "These incidents resemble the way in which a cult called Jashin operates. I had faced them in a mission earlier in the Land of Grass and more than 200 kids would have died had we been late by a day.

Considering that the last missing case occurred one week ago, I'm afraid that it is already too late. So I would recommend helping me out and giving me the information I need if you want to have any chance of saving the missing people. If I was to start looking by myself, I'm afraid that it would be completely pointless. You will be better off by just giving up on them."

Fujin's words surprised the Daimyo and the ninjas in the room. Though the Yugakure ninjas were offended by Fujin's words, they knew that getting angry at that moment would be detrimental. The Daimyo looked at them and said, "Help him out."

Daimyo's words left little room for discussion. Without any delay, everyone gave Fujin the information he needed. They pointed out and marked the locations where they had speculated where the kidnapped people could be held. They also informed Fujin about how they had inspected those locations.

Fujin and his team pieced together all the information and clues and tried forming their own plans. While planning, Fujin enquired about the landscapes in each of the locations and marked them on the map.

Fujin analyzed, 'It seems like the rituals are always conducted in a cave, be it created artificially or with the help of jutsus. Regardless, the mountain has to be natural or these ninjas would have noticed the anomaly.'

Even if Zankoku's ritual was an exception, they should still conduct such a ritual in a closed-off space to stay hidden. If not for caves, the only other possible location is if they create and hide in an underground base.

For now, I will only inspect the suspicious locations that have mountains. If I don't find them, I'll look at the other locations. The caves should be hidden with the help of Fuinjutsu. So it is no wonder that these guys couldn't find anything.'

Fujin quickly began planning which route he should take. While he did so, he said, "If you have a picture of Hidan and some of his belongings with his scent on them, give them to us."

He kept looking at the map. The Yugakure ninjas quickly handed a piece of cloth and a small picture to Fujin's teammates. Hyuga Hisao observed the picture properly while Inuzuka Shiro and his ninja dog memorized Hidan's scent.

After drawing up a plan, Fujin rolled up the map and left Yugakure in a hurry along with his team. A couple of minutes after they exited the village, 3 Shadow Clones popped next to Fujin. They dispersed along different paths.

Fujin's teammates immediately understood what Fujin was up to. However, they were confused. Yamanaka Ken wondered, 'Why is he so relentless? We have barely rested since we left Konoha. At this rate, we won't be able to fight at our full strength. He wasn't like this during the two missions I was with him earlier...'

The other two had the same confusion as well. Fujin could guess his teammates' thoughts. In order to not make them suspicious, he looked at his teammates and said, "I'm not sure who our enemy will be or what abilities they will have but I have a bad feeling.

We should capture them before they do whatever they are planning with the kidnapped people. After we find them, be ready to consume a soldier pill if the fight becomes intense as we won't be resting much until we find them."

Fujin's teammates nodded. Though Fujin didn't give a proper explanation, they knew that trusting one's instincts was crucial for a ninja. Several times, a ninja would have to head into a mission with little information. Even in their current situation, they were unaware of the reason behind the kidnapping and the identity of the kidnappers. As such, trusting your instincts becomes an important factor.

It was the reason why Fujin used such a reason. It saved him from having to explain his urgency. After all, he couldn't say that he was hurrying them just because he wanted to catch the Bishop and read his memories before he completed the ceremony and kicked the bucket.

The group moved rapidly. So did Fujin's clones. Though Fujin wasn't from the Land of Hot Water, he had taken several dozen missions in this country, most of which entailed hunting down rogue Kiri ninjas and bounty hunters. Apart from the Land of Fire, this was the country where he was the most active. As such, he knew the area very well.

Fujin and his squad began moving directly towards the place where Hidan had done the massacre. As for his clones, they began scanning the decided locations one by one.

Within six hours, several of the suspicious places were searched. The location where Hidan had killed civilians and fellow ninjas didn't have any clue to track Hidan. Though Shiro picked up some scents, he couldn't use them to track Hidan.

His clones didn't have much luck either. Each of them had properly searched 3-4 locations without much success. One of Fujin's clones kept moving in the direction of the Land of Frost. He was only a couple of dozen from the border when he reached a small mountain range that existed there.

He thought, 'I have already looked through 3 locations and haven't found anything. Since I didn't receive any message, the others shouldn't have had any success either. Sigh, I hope I find them in time.'

He activated his Space-Time Sensing Technique. Just like all the previous times, he didn't sense any disturbances in the Space-Time field, implying that there was no ninja in a 4.5 kilometer radius. The clone moved around for a bit to cover the entire mountain range but still didn't find anything.

Finally, he deactivated his technique and activated his chakra field. He began inspecting the Mountain range once again. After a couple of minutes, he sensed a location that he couldn't sense. His eyes widened. He immediately deactivated his chakra field and hid himself.

He wondered, 'Is this it? But why didn't I sense anything with my Space-Time Sensing Technique? Hmm, normal seals shouldn't be able to hide themselves from my Space-Time Sensing Technique. This means that either the seals here counter Space-Time Techniques or, more likely, there is no one inside whatever is being hidden by the seal.'

I hope that it is the former. Konoha's library didn't have any seals to stop or block Space-Time techniques. If this cave does have such seals, then I can use them against Obito. As long as his intangibility is neutralized, killing him wouldn't be that difficult.'

Fujin's clone was excited by that possibility. However, he turned his focus back to the matter at hand. He analyzed, 'It wouldn't be strange to have an abandoned base inside this country. It could have been created by them during wartime. Or perhaps it could be created by any other major villages during one of the Great Ninja Wars. So, I can't be sure that this is done by Jashin. I need to inspect it while taking care to ensure that no one inside the hideout gets suspicious.'

He created a Shadow Clone with a very low amount of chakra. The clone immediately transformed into a rabbit and began moving towards the area being blocked by seals that he had detected earlier.

The rabbit reached that location in a few minutes. He hid in bushes and observed it. The area looked completely natural. It was a mountain wall and nothing else.

The rabbit analyzed, 'It looks like the entrance to the cave is properly sealed off, making it look completely normal. Now, let me see the level of the person who inscribed seals here.'

The rabbit concentrated chakra in his eyes as he began observing the wall. Soon, several dozen seals appeared in front of him. The rabbit properly analyzed every seal he could see and dispelled itself.

The clone immediately received the memories. He analyzed, 'This level of sealing... Whoever did it should be a Grandmaster. More importantly, the style of the seals and symbols is quite similar to the ones in Zankoku's memories. It looks like this is it!'

The Shadow Clone wasn't the only one to receive the memories. Fujin and his other clones received the memories as well. Fujin immediately began moving towards the Land of Frost. As for his two Shadow Clones, they dispelled themselves, sending memories and chakra back to the main body. The Shadow Clone that found the base kept hiding there, ensuring that no one escaped.

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Chapter 452: A Suspicious Feeling!

Within a couple of hours, Fujin and his squad reached the Mountain range and appeared where his clone was hiding. On seeing Fujin, the clone dispelled itself. Fujin received his memories.

In the last 2 hours, there was no movement into or from the base that his clone had detected. In addition, the mountain range's location was such that no major trading route passed nearby. As such, the clone didn't detect traders or ninjas passing by either.

While Fujin was analyzing the memories, his teammates were scanning the area. Shiro couldn't smell any scent while Hisao's eyes didn't pick up anything out of the ordinary. Both looked at Fujin with odd expressions on their faces wondering whether Fujin had brought them to the right place. As for Yamanaka Ken, Fujin had instructed him against activating his chakra field.

Hisao said, "I don't see anything odd."

Shiro added, "Same, I don't smell Hidan or anyone else nearby. Are you sure that they are here?"

Fujin replied, "I can't say for sure. Let's check."

He began walking towards the spot where his clone had disguised as a rabbit and inspected the seals. His teammates were surprised by the casual response. They followed him. Unlike his clone, Fujin didn't bother hiding his presence much. If his presence lured out the ones hiding inside, he would be glad instead of getting worried.

His eyes glowed as he observed the seals. Without the need to hide himself, Fujin could observe in greater detail. He saw a lot more than just the seals on the surface. Even the seals on the inner side of the walls were visible.

Fujin raised two fingers on his right hand. Four Vacuum Blades formed on top of his fingers. They flew and hit the wall in a way that none of the seals were damaged. Fujin wasn't sure whether his targets were inside the cave. As such, he wanted to leave the seals unharmed to study them later and avoid being left empty-handed on a mission that gave him so many headaches.

The four Vacuum Blades cut open a door in the mountain. Fujin's teammates were surprised to see a cave hidden behind the wall. Hyuga Hisao thought in surprise, 'Incredible. I didn't detect anything! It must be hidden with seals. Is Fujin a SealMa...'

A few seconds after the door was cut open, Shiro smelled a scent that made his expression grim. Despite not sharing his sense of smell, the other three noticed it as well and recognized what the stench was. It was the stench of dead bodies rotting! Hisao immediately activated his Byakugan, while Fujin and Ken activated their chakra fields.

All 4 immediately had grim expressions. Fujin muttered to himself, 'No wonder I couldn't sense any disturbances with my Space-Time Sensing Technique. Everyone inside is already dead. Sigh, am I too late?'

Fujin asked, "What do you see?"

Hisao answered, "Dead bodies... More than 300 of them. They are spread in 6 rooms. However, I don't see any clear injuries on their body. We will need to inspect it properly. There is no one alive inside unless they are hiding with the help of seals."

Fujin looked at Shiro and asked, "Did you notice anything?"

Shiro answered, "I can confirm that Hidan's scent was in this cave. He should have left. However, I can't find any trail of his scent. It looks like he can eliminate traces of his scent."

Fujin thought for a bit and instructed, "Send a messenger bird to Yugakure and inform the Daimyo. Ask him to deploy ninjas here and take care of the dead bodies."

Fujin looked at the cave and said, "Entering inside will be risky as there are a lot of seals inside. I will send my clones to investigate the cave. Shiro, you search for any traces of Hidan on this mountain range that could aid us in tracking him."

Hisao and Ken, you two inspect the remaining mountain range and check if we missed anything. Also, keep an eye out for any unusual activity or presence."

Everyone nodded and got to work. Meanwhile, Fujin created several Shadow Clones who entered the cave in two waves.

Fujin analyzed, 'Though the ritual is over, it shouldn't have been a long time. If that Bishop's body is still inside this cave, then I might still be able to read some of his memories. As long as I can find the location of their secret organization, I can always find more targets to read memories and learn about these rituals.'

Unfortunately, there are two issues. The first is if the Bishop dying isn't something that always happens after a ritual. And, the second is if Hidan hid his body. In that case, I'll have to capture Hidan and read his memories. But, how do I do that with these three following me everywhere?

Sigh, so many complications once again. Couldn't he have just waited for a few weeks before starting the ritual? Why did he have to undergo the ritual exactly at this moment? If it had happened a bit later, I would have gotten what I wanted. If it had happened earlier, I wouldn't have cared much about this. This timing really feels like someone is messing with me, be it intentional or unintentional.'

The timing of the ritual felt too much of a coincidence for Fujin. As such, he couldn't help but be suspicious. However, he couldn't comprehend how anyone would have known that he would read Zankoku's memories and go after Hidan at that time.

While Fujin waited outside the cave, his clones got to work. The first wave of the clones was responsible for studying the seals. They recorded every seal in the cave into various scrolls that Fujin had handed them. In addition, they were also responsible for disabling any traps left among those seals and making the cave harmless to anyone else.

The second wave of Shadow Clones began inspecting the dead bodies. Fujin's main goal was to find the bodies of the Bishop and his priests. At the same time, he was also curious about how the people had died during the ritual and the seals on their bodies. In Zankoku's case, the people had died due to the blood being sucked out from their bodies. Fujin was curious about what they had to sacrifice to give Hidan such a broken ability.

The first wave of Shadow Clones progressed slowly but steadily. Though there were some seals and symbols that Fujin didn't recognize, those seals were related to the ritual and didn't have any offensive capabilities. As such, none of his clones were dispelled.

Once the pathways were secured, they continued recording the seals while the clones from the second wave began inspecting the dead bodies.

On observing, the clones immediately noticed similarities among the corpses. They analyzed, 'That's weird... According to the mission details, people of all ages were kidnapped. Still, everyone here is extremely old!

There are no signs of any injuries on them. It's almost as if they weren't killed. Instead, they died due to old age. Hmm, does that mean the ritual absorbed the life force or lifespan of these people? Would increasing life force by multiple times give the ability to become an Immortal like Hidan? Or are there more factors involved?'

The clones began studying the corpses more carefully. As soon as they touched the corpses, the clones immediately noticed another aspect. They thought, 'The cells in their body... So weird... The cells in their bodies don't resemble that of someone who died a few days ago. Instead, they have deteriorated to such a stage that it might look like these bodies died several years ago!

But why is this? Could it be that a ritual was conducted here a long time ago? No, Shiro said that he smelled Hidan's scent. Not to mention, the number of dead people here is similar to the number of kidnapped people.

So, did their cells deteriorate so quickly because their lifespan was sucked? Now that I think about it, Hidan would frequently harm himself, be it to act as a distraction or to activate his killing technique. Despite the damage, he is able to move around freely.

This should imply that he is able to heal very quickly. His ability to survive can be divided into two parts. The first is being able to survive attacks that would kill a normal person, such as a spear through his heart. The second is being able to recover from that damage.

There is only one way to recover from that damage, that is, cell regeneration. It should be at the same or higher level than Tsunade's Mitotic Regeneration. The only limit it has is when he is cut into two or more pieces like Asuma and later Shikamaru did. Or perhaps he isn't skillful enough to use this in that situation.

Regardless, it looks like they not only sucked the life force but also sucked out the cells' ability to regenerate themselves. This is why the cells in these corpses have deteriorated so quickly. My guess is that they will continue deteriorating at a high speed and completely decompose themselves. In a few months, it will become impossible to even identify these people.'

Fujin's clones who were studying the dead bodies began studying the seals inscribed on the dead bodies and copied them in scrolls. Meanwhile, the remaining clones from the second wave were searching for a body wearing the same outfit as Bishop Ketsueki.

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Chapter 453: The Mysterious Factor!

While the clones were recording the Juinjutsu seals on the bodies of the corpses, one Shadow Clone placed his hand on the head of one of the corpses and inserted some of his Yin chakra into his brain.

After a couple of minutes, he withdrew his arm and analyzed, 'As I expected... I can't read the memories... The fast speed of decomposition of their bodies has also made it impossible to read their memories. All their memories have been lost to time. Sigh, I hope that Bishop's case isn't the same.'

After nearly an hour, Fujin's clones had recorded each and every seal in the large cave. Fujin's teammates, who were kept busy by the miscellaneous tasks he assigned them, had no idea that Fujin was recording all the seals in the cave under the guise of completing the mission.

Despite recording all the seals properly, Fujin wasn't very happy. Inside the cave, he had found the bodies of all the kidnapped people. However, he didn't find anyone wearing the outfit that Ketsueki wore in Zankoku's memories.

To make matters worse, in addition to the kidnapped people, there were 32 more dead bodies in the cave which were cremated long before Fujin's clone found the hideout. Fujin speculated that they were the Priests and servants under the Bishop.

He analyzed with a grim expression on his face, 'As I thought. Someone is indeed messing with me! I can understand not being able to read the memories of the sacrifices due to the nature of the ritual, but what was the need to cremate the followers of the Bishop?

This completely counters my ability to read memories and learn about the identity and appearance of the Bishop along with what exactly happened during the ritual.

Besides, why would they kill the followers of Jashin instead of having them follow Hidan? The situation is completely different from Zankoku. It looks like my only option is to capture Hidan and read his memories to find out more about the Bishop. But...'

A frown formed on Fujin's face again as he thought, 'But there are no leads on Hidan. How the hell am I supposed to find him in this vast country? Not to mention, he doesn't need to stay in this country.

Another obstacle is Akatsuki. I don't know when the Akatsuki will make a move to recruit him. Once they recruit him, I won't be able to deal with him for quite some time.

Though I'm confident in dealing with Hidan, Kakuzu is not someone I can defeat for sure right now. Even more so when Hidan is cooperating with him. I'll need to wait for some time for my strength to increase considerably and only then deal with both of them together.'

Fujin let out a sigh and looked at the cave in front of him. He thought, 'It looks like there are only two ways now. I can only study the seals and try to study Zankoku's body. I have some confidence in studying the seals, but Zankoku's body is another hopeless prospect.

Fortunately, Zankoku's memories were more or less intact. Even if I don't achieve any success in those two methods, I can learn more about this when I get my hands on the Edo Tensei jutsu.

But there is still the interference I am feeling... Hmm, I should move quickly and secure Ketsueki's corpse. It would suck big time if someone moves or destroys it. If there is indeed someone interfering, then they might try to attack me when I am holding Ketsueki's body. That would be a good way to draw out whoever is hiding.'

Fujin was left stuck once again. Despite feeling that he was very close, Fujin just barely missed gaining the secrets of the Jashin ritual. As such, he could only make plans for the future.

A long distance away from the mountain range Fujin was inspecting the Jashin hideout used for ritual, a figure could be in the forests. He was holding a bag and pouring some ashes on the ground, letting the wind spread it.

It was the person Yugakure was searching for. Hidan emptied the contents of his bag and complained, "That motherfucker! He asked me to cremate his body after his death and asked me to scatter his ashes all over the Land of Frost!

First, he hurried the ritual for some reason. Though those Yugakure cowards are incompetent, they still managed to catch us a couple of times. After completing the ritual, he burned the dead bodies of all of his followers and asked me to do the same to his body and even asked me to spread his ashes."

He wondered, 'Why did Lord Jashin ask Bishop Shikabane to do that?'

Of course, Hidan couldn't comprehend the reason. If Fujin were to learn of it, he would easily understand. Hidan cremating Shikabane's body ensured that Fujin wouldn't be able to read his memories. And, by spreading his ashes over long distances, all his ashes would be mixed with the earth and become impossible to find even if Fujin read Hidan's mind in the future. As such, Edo Tensei wouldn't work either!

However, even this knowledge would force Fujin to wonder a lot. After all, Shikabane began gathering people for the ritual even before Fujin attempted reading Zankoku's memories and having any intentions towards Shikabane and Hidan. Not to mention, Fujin had read Zankoku's memories in

absolute secrecy! Unfortunately, Fujin had no way of knowing that his suspicions of someone messing with him were indeed the truth!

Unlike Fujin, Hidan didn't bother thinking much about such a complicated matter. He cursed a bit loudly, "Whatever, I just need to spread the word of Jashin. I will kill and sacrifice those bastards to Lord Jashin! Hmm?"

Hidan immediately jumped backwards. A few shurikens landed where he was standing. In front of him, 8 ninjas appeared. All staring at him. One of them wondered, 'Who is this guy? And why is he shouting about killing us in the middle of nowhere?'

Hidan frowned on seeing them and asked, "Kumo ninjas? What do you want?"

The leader among the 8 Kumo ninjas replied, "That is what I want to ask you. Kill and sacrifice us? Who do you think you are? Since when did rogue Yugakure ninjas become this arrogant?"

Hidan watched dumbfounded and thought to himself, 'I didn't even sense them. What a coincidence that they were here and heard what I was saying.'

He suddenly laughed out loudly and exclaimed, "Lord Jashin is mighty. He already brought me more sacrifices! Be proud of the fact that you would be the first ones I sacrifice to Lord Jashin."

The Kumo ninjas looked at him like he was a moron. Their leader said, "We need to meet up with Darui soon and head to the Land of Hot Water. Let's kill this clown and get on our way. We have rested enough."

Everyone nodded. In the Land of Frost, a few kilometers away from their border with the Land of Hot Water, 2 Kumo squads clashed with Hidan!

Back in the Land of Hot Water, Fujin was oblivious to these developments. Fujin's clones kept recording all the seals. It took them around 4 hours to record everything perfectly. At the same time, his remaining clones checked up on all the corpses, confirming that none of their memories could be read. His teammates scanned the mountain range and didn't find anything suspicious.

Fujin looked at the cave and wondered whether he should wipe out the seals left in the cave. After some time, he decided, 'I'll let them be in case I need to refer it at some point in the future. I have already left a Flying Thunder God marking in the cave. When I master it in the future, I can freely access this cave.

Even though doing this could allow other Grandmasters to observe this cave as well, it isn't an issue. In fact, it might even be better. After all, I am just one person. Now that I think about it, I should give information about these seals to Hiruzen as well.

If others work on it as well, the chances of someone succeeding in making sense of these new seals and symbols would be much higher. If it is someone from Konoha, other than Danzo, then getting my hands on it wouldn't be difficult.

Even if it is someone not from Konoha, as long as it is exposed, I can go and hunt that Grandmaster and read his memories. After all, once I master the Flying Thunder God jutsu, who can stop me from infiltrating and escaping?

Another possible aspect can be if the spread of this knowledge makes the Jashinists come out of their cave. That would make my life easier as well. Hmm, yeah, I'll do this. I'll give Hiruzen some of the new seals and symbols I discovered in this cave. As for the entire seal formation, I won't give it to him. Making it requires a lot of work. I won't be able to create another copy to give it to him in time. Let him send a squad and take the notes.'

Fujin immediately began acting on his plan. He created a few more Shadow Clones to copy some of the new seals and symbols in different scrolls which he would give to Hiruzen.

A couple of hours later, the Yugakure ninjas finally arrived.

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Chapter 454: Five Forces Move (1)

The Yugakure forces were led by a familiar face. It was Takeshita Tokuhei leading a group of 24 Yugakure ninjas. Some of his subordinates were the same ones who had cooperated with Renjiro's squad on an elimination 4 years ago.

Tokuhei looked at Fujin. Though Fujin and his teammates had made an impact back then, Tokuhei hadn't thought much of it. After all, several geniuses appeared every year. However, the ones that made it to the top were very few. Most would either die or not have the dedication to keep training to become a fearsome ninja.

Of course, that was until he saw Fujin's bounty poster with an insane bounty and the speculation of him being the Spectral Swordsman! It was a name even he wouldn't want to face on the battlefield. When Iwagakure updated Fujin's information in the Bingo book, Tokuhei was left stunned. He never anticipated that the Spectral Swordsman would be so young and someone with whom he had cooperated earlier.

While the ninjas from the major villages weren't too intimidated by the Spectral Swordsman, the situation was completely opposite for the minor villages neighboring the Land of Fire where Fujin was highly active. The sheer amount of people he killed during his time in Anbu made them very fearful of him despite him not being very active in recent times.

Tokuhei thought, 'From a newly promoted Chunin to an Elite Jounin in merely 4 years... Thankfully we aren't on opposite sides.'

He said politely, "Suzuki Fujin, it's good to see you again."

Fujin looked at Tokuhei. Unknown to Tokuhei, Fujin had worked several times with him while he was an Anbu. It is just that Tokuhei wasn't aware that it was Fujin. He nodded and said, "It is good to see you once again as well. Unfortunately, the occasion isn't a joyous one."

On hearing it, the expression on every Yugakure ninja's face became grim. They were informed of the information the Konoha ninjas sent to the Daimyo. Among their group were a few ninjas who were offended by Fujin's words in the meeting room and a few who had inspected this spot earlier and not discovered any hideout. Through his actions, Fujin had proven his words true, making them feel ashamed and guilty.

This loss was a significant one for the Land of Hot Water. Losing so many civilians in one blow would cause a lot of chaos and panic in the country. Their economy would suffer as well as trading would slow down and tourism would come to a halt temporarily. As a result, the country would be in for a hard time for a few months at the very least.

Fujin looked at the cave and said, "There are many seals in the cave. Fortunately, they don't trigger automatically. You guys can recover the corpses. That said, I'm not sure what the seals do. So, avoid damaging the cave and accidentally triggering any seals."

Tokuhei nodded. He had no intention of arguing with Fujin. He instructed his men to collect and store the dead bodies properly.

While the Yugakure ninjas were cleaning up, Yamanaka Ken asked Fujin, "The mission seems to be over, captain. Should we stay or return to Konoha?"

Fujin thought for a few seconds and answered, "Let's accompany them back to Yugakure. It'll be in our path anyways."

Fujin's teammates nodded. Fujin thought, 'Collecting all the bodies and returning will need some time. If Yugakure gets news of Hidan's movements, I'll have an excuse to find and hunt him.'

Though Fujin knew that the chances of getting what he wanted were very low, he didn't want to give up on it considering that there wasn't much danger in doing so. Apart from losing some time, he wouldn't lose anything else.

While the Yugakure ninjas were storing the bodies, a new development happened elsewhere. Close to the border between the Land of Hot Water and the Land of Frost, eight Kumo ninjas stood.

C complained, "Where are those guys? They were supposed to meet us several hours ago. If we delay any further, then our mission will be a failure."

Darui calmed him down and said, "Relax. They should have a good reason to be late. Besides, we can't guarantee that we would be able to take him down with just the 8 of us. We need a SealMaster to be able to pin him down and avoid his traps. Without him, our chances of succeeding will drop hard."

C said, "I know. But if we wait any longer, he might leave and return to Konoha. We had to wait for months for him to leave his village. Fortunately, he left it twice in a row! Who knows how long he will stay holed up in Konoha like a turtle once again?"

Darui sighed. He knew that time was running out as well. However, he didn't want to take any meaningless risks and waited patiently. Suddenly, C's eyes widened. He said in a serious tone, "Follow me quickly."

C flickered right away. The remaining 7 Kumo ninjas followed him immediately. After flickering a few times, C arrived in front of an injured Kumo ninja. The Kumo ninja was covered in blood and had several injuries on his body. Soon, others arrived as well.

C immediately began healing the injured ninja while Darui asked, "Who attacked you? And where are the rest?"

The injured ninja was in a state of shock. Though C healed him, his mental state didn't recover. The injured ninja looked at Darui and said, "They are dead! All died! He is a monster!"

Panic and fear could be heard in his voice. His entire body was shivering. The eight Kumo ninjas were surprised to see his state. Everyone could see his horror. In addition, the fact that 7 Kumo ninjas died to just one person surprised them. After all, none of them were weak. Every one of them was a Jounin or a Special Jounin.

Darui asked, "Who is a monster?"

The injured Kumo ninja said, "He was a rogue ninja from Yugakure. He is Imm..."

Suddenly, the injured Kumo ninja coughed and vomited blood. He clutched his chest as if he was trying to hold his heart. A second later, he lost his life and dropped dead!

The Kumo ninjas were all shocked! Darui asked hurriedly, "C, what happened? How did he die?"

C had a grim expression. He was healing the injured ninja when he suddenly collapsed. He answered, "I don't know. Though he was injured, his condition wasn't critical. Seeing him hold his heart, I guess he might have suffered a heart attack. We will need to take him back to the village to inspect him."

One of the other ninjas said, "We can take him back to the village later, but we need to first get them justice. Which bastard dared to kill Kumo ninjas? Since when did Yugakure have such a strong rogue ninja?"

Samui said, "I read some reports from the Land of Hot Water recently. Apparently, one of their ninjas killed 18 other ninjas and several civilians before going rogue. I believe his name was Hidan. It might be him."

Darui thought about Samui's information. He asked, "C, do you detect anyone nearby?"

C shook his head and replied, "My chakra field has been activated for some time. I didn't detect anyone else."

Darui said, "Then our only choice is to trail his steps and find out what exactly happened. Then we can hunt that rogue ninja."

Samui asked, "But what about our mission?"

Darui sighed and said, "We can't risk taking on Suzuki Fujin without a SealMaster. It'll make it very difficult to kill him as he is speculated to be a Grandmaster. If we fail once, then he will forever be on guard and Konoha might take some retaliatory measures."

Everyone agreed with Darui's reasoning. They stored the dead body properly and began tracing his steps back.

A couple of dozen kilometers away from Darui, a burst of loud laughter could be heard in the snow-covered forest. Several diagrams made from blood could be seen on the ground. In addition, there were a few corpses and a lot of blood from the dead ninjas.

Hidan thought, 'I have offered my first sacrifices to Lord Jashin. Even that ninja who managed to run away. I want to know what his expression was when he died even after managing to escape.'

The thought made Hidan laugh once again. He thought, 'Still, this isn't enough. I need to sacrifice more people to Lord Jashin!'

Hidan grabbed his weapons and continued his aimless journey. Around the same time, a messenger bird reached Tokuhei from Yugakure. His eyes widened on reading the message. Fujin noticed that and asked, "What is it?"

Tokuhei informed, "To find the missing people, we had our ninjas spread out all over the country. Some even cooperated with the patrol camps of neighbouring countries along our borders.

A couple of our ninjas were searching inside the Land of Frost while cooperating with the ninjas of Shimogakure. They found Hidan. He was engaged in a battle with Kumogakure ninjas and was winning. They left immediately and sent back a message."

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Chapter 455: Five Forces Move (2)

Fujin was surprised by the information. He wondered, 'Hidan is in the Land of Frost? Makes sense that he escaped there, but why is he fighting Kumo ninjas? Is that crazy guy trying to sacrifice everyone he meets? He isn't that crazy, right?'

Tokuhei said, "I will leave some men here to complete the work here and lead the remaining forces to hunt him down. What will you be doing?"

Fujin acted like he was thinking for a few seconds and answered, "Well, our mission statement also included hunting him down if we meet him. Give me the location, we will move ahead first."

Tokuhei nodded and informed Fujin about the location where Hidan and Kumogakure ninjas fought. Fujin's squad left immediately. A few minutes later, Tokuhei also followed them with 3 squads.

Around the same time, in Shimogakure, 2 squads stood in front of a person. He looked at them and informed them about the fight between Hidan and Kumo.

He instructed, "Considering that the rogue ninja was winning, it is safe to say that Kumogakure will take some actions to eliminate him. From reports, he seems to have killed many Yugakure ninjas as well. So they might cooperate with Kumo ninjas to eliminate him.

You don't need to fight him. In fact, if you do meet him, escape without fighting. If you meet Kumo or Yugakure ninjas, feel free to help them out with intelligence, but don't fight for them. Just observe what happens with the rogue ninja and try to ensure the safety of common people if you can without risking your life."

The leader of the 2 squads nodded his head. He and the remaining ninjas left Shimogakure and moved towards the location of the fight. They didn't want to get involved, but since the fighting was happening in their country, they had the responsibility of monitoring the battle and ensuring that commoners didn't become needless casualties once again.

As a result, the forces from four villages, that is, Konohagakure, Kumogakure, Shimogakure and Yugakure, began moving to find Hidan in the Land of Frost. Kumogakure were unaware of the movements of the other forces, while Fujin and Tokuhei were the most clear about which villages would be involved. However, even they weren't aware of another force that was about to get involved.

In the Land of Rain, a white & black figure appeared from the ground and looked at Nagato's Deva Path and Konan! Black Zetsu said, "I have found an interesting person. I believe he will be the perfect partner for Kakuzu."

Nagato and Konan were surprised. Konan asked, "You mean you found someone stronger than Kakuzu? Who is it?"

White Zetsu answered, "It is a rogue ninja from Yugakure. He killed 18 ninjas and went rogue a few weeks ago. We saw him fighting Kumogakure Jounins a few hours ago. He isn't stronger than Kakuzu, but it looks like his body is immortal."

His words surprised the two. Nagato asked, "What do you mean by Immortal?"

Black Zetsu answered, "He can't be killed by physical injuries. In his fight against Kumo, his heart was stabbed several times. At times, he did it himself. Yet, he kept moving around and fighting as if nothing

was wrong. Elemental jutsus doesn't seem to have much effect on him either. His offensive abilities are very peculiar as well."

Zetsu informed the two about what they had witnessed during the battle. Konan was quite surprised and impressed by Hidan's abilities. Nagato said, "Alright, let's recruit him. Konan, I will leave this matter to you. Take Kakuzu and Itachi with you to test and recruit him."

Konan nodded. She was about to leave when White Zetsu said, "You should hurry up. Darui from Kumogakure was close to where the fight happened. And a few Yugakure and Shimogakure ninjas spotted him as well. Though I doubt he will die, he could be in trouble if he gets heavily outnumbered."

Nagato nodded. His Animal Path body appeared, weaved hand seals and slammed his palm on the ground.

'Summoning Jutsu'

A giant bird with a long and massive beak appeared. Nagato said, "You can use it to fly over to the Land of Frost."

Konan nodded. She immediately left along with the bird, while picking up Itachi and Kakuzu on the way.

Hidan, the one who was at the center of all this action, was completely clueless about the five forces coming for him and their intentions. One of the forces just wanted to observe and limit the destruction. Two Forces wanted revenge and justice and were coming for his head. One just wanted to capture him and read his memories. And the last one wanted to recruit him.

Darui's team was the first one to reach the spot as they were the closest to it. They followed the bloody trail left by the dead Kumo ninja while he made his way to them. The expressions of the Kumo ninjas became grim as they saw the gore in front of them.

C cursed, "To kill our ninjas so brazenly! That bastard doesn't want to live!"

Everyone agreed with him. The dead bodies of the Kumo ninjas were too pitiful to watch. Their blood was boiling in rage at the sight. They stored the dead bodies properly and began looking for Hidan's trail. Unfortunately, it wasn't easy.

They could follow the bloody trail to find the location where Hidan and the Kumo ninjas had clashed. However, trailing Hidan from there onwards wasn't easy. Yet, they had no intention of giving up and continued looking.

Around three hours later, Fujin's squad reached the place. Shiro looked in surprise and said, "So much blood! It looks like their reports were correct. A huge battle took place here."

Fujin nodded. Hyuga Hisao added, "There is no one nearby. They should have already left. Fortunately, they left a trail behind."

Fujin instructed, "Shiro, investigate the scents you can find in this place and see how many tracks you can find. Ken, help him. Hisao, come with me."

Fujin and Hisao moved and found the bloody trail left behind by the Kumo ninja who had escaped temporarily. Hisao pointed out some footprints that were mixed with blood which Fujin observed and analyzed, 'It looks like someone managed to escape. But, considering the amount of blood that person lost, there is no way he would survive against Hidan even if he ran away.

And for that very reason, it is unlikely that Hidan would bother chasing him. That said, why did the Kumo ninja escape towards the Land of Hot Water instead of escaping towards the Land of Lightning? Was any Kumo squad in that direction?'

Fujin was confused. He could understand there being some Kumo ninjas in the Land of Frost considering that they were neighbors. But his movement made Fujin a bit suspicious. He and Hisao returned to where Shiro and Ken were.

Shiro noticed Fujin and reported, "Captain, I can sense 17 scents that were lingering here some time ago. One of them belongs to Hidan but I can't identify the rest of them."

Fujin fell into deep thought. He analyzed, '17? It looks like the ninja who escaped went to find reinforcements. He should have succeeded in finding them. That's weird. Why didn't Hidan kill him? Can he not lick the blood that has fallen to the ground or is there any time limit for how long the blood should have left the target's body?

No, that shouldn't be it. After all, Kakashi had taken Kakuzu's blood and Shikamaru took his own sweet time to use it. Could it be that he just disdains licking the blood that has fallen to the ground?'

Fujin couldn't be sure but he felt that was the case. He asked, "Can you track where the 17 who were here have gone? Or rather, can you track Hidan?"

Shiro nodded and said, "Yes. I can track his scent. The issue is that there are multiple paths. I'm afraid that he left behind some pieces of cloth which were taken by others. As a result, there are two tracks."

Fujin was surprised once again. He thought, 'That's weird. He hid his tracks so well in the Land of Hot Water. No matter what we did, we couldn't track him. How did he become so careless all of a sudden?

Regardless, if I assume that the ones who took the pieces of his clothes were reinforcements from Kumo, then they might be trying to hunt him down right now. It will create an opportunity for me. I should move quickly.'

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Chapter 456: Dreams of Invincibility!

Fujin asked, "Can you create Shadow Clones?"

Shiro answered, "Just one. I'm not very good at it. Also, it exhausts my chakra very rapidly."

Fujin nodded and said, "Don't worry. Just make one with minimal chakra. Your clone will follow my clone to see where those bloody footprints go. Check whether you can smell some of the scents here on that route."

Shiro nodded. He created a Shadow Clone with 15% of his while Fujin created one with 1% of his chakra. Both immediately left along the trail left by the bloody footprints.

Shiro asked, "Which track should we follow?"

He had smelled two tracks of Hidan's scent. They could only follow one route unless they split up and made Shiro and his ninja dog move into two separate teams.

Fujin didn't intend to split the team so quickly. If the other team found Hidan, then they would be in danger and he didn't have the ability to teleport as of now. He answered casually, "The one where you can smell a hint of blood."

Shiro was surprised by the answer. However, he followed the instruction without any delay and the four moved once again.

Fujin thought, 'Hidan's fighting style involves a lot of blood. His weapons should still be smeared in enemy blood. By comparison, the Kumo ninjas would be careful enough to not make such a silly mistake.

Not to mention, knowing Hidan, he should leave a bloody trail in his path. As long as there is no unexpected factor, I should get to him. The only thing I need to worry about is how I can read his memory while these three are with me...'

Fujin was finally hopeful once again. Though they were moving slightly slowly, he felt that they had a high chance of catching Hidan.

While they were following the tracks, Hidan met another bunch from Kumo. Darui and his teammates had finally found Hidan. Despite not being good at smelling, everyone could smell a stench of blood from Hidan.

Hidan exclaimed, "Another bunch from Kumo? You are too eager to be sacrificed to Lord Jashin!"

His words immediately angered the Kumo ninjas. Darui said, "So you admit to killing our ninjas. Good. Let me see where you get the courage to do so!"

He weaved hand seals.

'Lightning Release: Black Panther'

Darui released black lightning which immediately took the form of a panther and reached Hidan in the blink of an eye. The speed of the jutsu was too fast. Hidan was surprised.

He had a relatively easy time killing ninjas from Yugakure. Though he struggled a bit against the Kumo ninjas, it was due to being outnumbered rather than being outmatched.

The jutsu hit Hidan and electrocuted him. His screams were heard. A black glow appeared around him due to the black lightning. The Kumo ninjas enjoyed Hidan's screams. However, to the surprise of the Kumo ninjas, Hidan's screams slowly became softer. By the time the attack was over, Hidan was still standing. Only his clothes were damaged.

Hidan looked at the Kumo ninjas hatefully and was about to curse when he felt someone grab his neck. One of the Kumo ninjas took advantage of Hidan's inattentiveness and snuck up on him. He lifted Hidan by his neck and slammed him into the ground.

He looked at Hidan and asked, "Do you know how we were able to track you?"

Hidan tried to release his neck from the enemy's grip, but the Kumo ninja was much stronger physically. Plus he was just given shock therapy by Darui. The ninja answered his own question, "We lost your trail multiple times. But each time we did, we found several people who you butchered. It was only due to the blood trail you left that we managed to find you!"

The Kumo group wasn't as skilled as Fujin's squad in terms of tracking. As a result, tracking Hidan was quite difficult for them. However, whenever they lost his trail, they found a few people or families that were slaughtered by Hidan. As a result, they were able to stay on his trail and eventually reached him.

Having ensured that Hidan would regret killing mindlessly at the last moment of his life, the Kumo ninja grabbed a kunai and stabbed it into Hidan's heart!

The Kumo ninjas just watched from a distance. After all, the one attacking was an Elite Jounin as well. Though they were alert against Hidan due to him having 8 Kumo ninjas, they were still confident in defeating him easily.

However, to the surprise of every Kumo ninja present, Hidan dug his nails into his forearm and caused the Kumo ninja to bleed. At the same time, he grabbed his retractable spear and attacked the Kumo ninja while ignoring the kunai stuck in his chest.

The Kumo ninja quickly backed away. The remaining Kumo ninjas quickly grabbed their weapons and looked with shocked expressions. Darui asked, "How is he still alive?"

The ninja who had just fallen back replied, "I don't know. I'm sure that I stabbed his heart."

C said, "Remember the words of our dying comrade? His last words were 'He is Imm...'. Do you think he meant to say that he is an immortal?"

Darui replied, "It could be. What an annoying opponent. No wonder they didn't survive..."

While the Kumo ninjas were talking, Hidan got up and removed the kunai from his chest. Immediately, blood poured down from the injury. He licked the blood on his nails. Immediately, several tattoos appeared on his face and body. At the same time, he used his foot to draw the sacrificial diagram on the ground with the blood that had poured down.

He looked at the Kumo ninjas and cursed, "You Motherfuckers! The ritual has now begun! Let's experience the ultimate pain together!"

The Kumo ninjas were confused by his words. However, they didn't dare to underestimate him anymore. The 8 ninjas spread out and surrounded Hidan from all sides. A few began weaving hand signs.

While the Kumo ninjas were engaged in a battle with Hidan, Fujin's squad was rapidly moving towards the location where Hidan and the Kumo ninjas were fighting. Unfortunately, they were still too far away to be able to detect the fight. Luckily for them, the two sets of scents kept merging on the same path again and again. As a result, they were able to confirm that they were moving in the right direction.

At the same time, the Akatsuki members led by Konan were flying in rapidly. They had crossed over the vast area of the Land of Fire and had entered the Land of Hot Water thanks to the high speed of the Giant Drill-Pecked Bird they were riding. Since none of them were the talkative type, they flew in complete silence.

As for the Yugakure and Shimogakure ninjas, they were still some distance away and they didn't have the advanced tracking capabilities of the other three forces.

At the place where Fujin's team was heading, the Kumo squad were by themselves. The only difference was that instead of 8, there were only 6 ninjas. The remaining two were lying lifelessly on the ground. One of the ninjas cursed, "That bastard ran away."

C said, "How far can he go? With that bloody wound, tracking him wouldn't be difficult. But, we need to plan first. Otherwise, we will lose more people."

Samui analyzed, "His abilities are very peculiar. I now understand how he was able to kill those 8 ninjas. Stab wounds and jutsus have no long-term effect on him. In addition, he can ensure that one of us suffers the same damage that he does, allowing him to kill that person by stabbing his own heart."

Darui continued, "However, to do that, he needs to lick the blood of that person. As long as we don't let him injure us, he won't be able to use that curse against us. The best way to fight him would be to fight him from a distance."

Samui questioned, "But how can we fight him from a distance? So far, the only wound he couldn't shrug off was when you cut his arm off. But if we fight from a distance, we can't do that. He isn't impacted much by our jutsus and moves fast enough to dodge any weapon we throw."

C said, "One of us would need to fight him at close range. As long as he can avoid getting injured and we keep Hidan away from the circle, we will be able to neutralize him."

Darui said, "I will do it. Unless he somehow reattaches his arm, he won't be able to keep up with me, let alone injure me. I'll cut his legs off and then we can keep attacking him until he dies. If not, we will tie him up and carry him to the village. If we can get his technique, then the village will benefit a lot."

Everyone nodded at Darui's idea. Hidan's technique was just too absurd. If they could gain it, they wouldn't have to worry about much during fights. Even if a small percentage of ninjas in Kumogakure mastered that technique, their village would become invincible in war!

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Chapter 457: Splitting Up

Tempted by Darui's idea, the six Kumo ninjas quickly stored the dead bodies of their comrades and prepared themselves to move.

Darui looked at everyone and said, "We don't know whether he can activate his curse with any blood or only the blood he draws. So, if any of you have any cuts, get healed and apply bandages. Not a drop of your blood should flow while fighting against him."

Everyone nodded. C quickly healed everyone and they restarted their chase in a hurry! Despite it not being their mission, everyone knew that the Raikage would be more pleased with Hidan's body rather than eliminating Fujin. Hence, they gave up on their official mission entirely.

Some distance away, Hidan was running at a fast speed. He was holding his left arm in his right hand while he was running away. He cursed, "What strong bastards! If I didn't catch them by surprise and escaped, that motherfucker would have cut me into several pieces! I will find them later and sacrifice them to Lord Jashin."

Though Hidan's arm was cut, his wounds had long stopped bleeding. In fact, he wasn't even feeling any weakness. And, he was well aware of the fact that even with his immortality, he wouldn't win against them. So, he was rushing ahead at a rapid speed.

This loss also made Hidan slightly wiser. He thought, 'I now understand why Shikabane took so much effort to ensure that we didn't leave any trail. I need to do the same as well. But it is so much fucking work!'

Kumo ninjas didn't anticipate that Hidan would move faster than ever and would take efforts to make trailing him more difficult. As such, their new chase would be many times more difficult than their previous chase despite being much closer.

While the Kumo ninjas chased after Hidan, Fujin and Shiro's Shadow Clones reached the location where Darui's team was when the injured Kumo ninja found them. With Shiro's ability, they easily found blood at the spot where that ninja had died.

Shiro's clone inspected the place and said, "The same 9 scents are lingering here. But if we continue forward, one scent disappears. I guess 8 Kumo ninjas fought with Hidan and only one managed to escape here. He met with another squad of 8 ninjas here, most likely from Kumo, and they went back to find him. That is why there were 17 scents there."

Fujin's clone nodded. He had reached the same conclusion. He said, "Well, it looks like this is a dead end. Still, it clears up the picture. Let's dispel ourselves."

Both clones dispelled themselves and sent the memories back to their main bodies. Fujin immediately analyzed the memories, 'Hmm, so that's how it was. But Shiro can only smell 8 other scents other than Hidan occasionally. That ninja who escaped should have died as well.'

I wonder who the Kumo ninjas chasing Hidan are and whether they would be able to stop or stall him for long enough. It'll be great if they can exhaust him enough to force him to take a nap. Otherwise, this will be a rather long hunt.'

A little while later, the Giant Drill-Pecked Bird reached the location where the first clash between Hidan and Kumo ninjas happened. Hovering above the area, they scanned the lands below.

Kakuzu said, "There is no one here. Tracking them will take a lot of effort considering that it has been a while since they fought here."

Konan said, "Wait for some time. Zetsu sent a clone to keep an eye on him."

While she was speaking, a White Zetsu appeared from the ground. He took a few heavy breaths and said, "I ran so much!"

The bird flew lower and landed on the ground in front of him. The White Zetsu looked at Konan and said, "Hidan has escaped to the east and fought with another Kumo squad led by Darui. I couldn't watch the fight, but Hidan ran away once again while the Kumo ninjas gave chase again."

They are moving to the South East. I tried to track them but their sensor sensed me and they tried looking for me. So you will have to find them on your own."

After getting the location from White Zetsu, Konoha flew once again. Thanks to the speed of the bird, they overtook Fujin's squad and reached the location where Darui and Hidan clashed before the Konoha ninjas. After inspecting, Konan said, "If we keep flying, we won't be able to search for clues. We will move on foot from here onwards. Itachi, check if you can find any tracks."

Itachi activated his Sharingan. He immediately found a few tracks and the trio began moving.

Around half an hour later, Fujin's squad reached the location where Hidan and Darui's squad had clashed. Shiro inspected the place and a frown appeared on his face.

He reported, "This place has Hidan's scent and 8 scents that were in the previous place. However, there are 4 new additional scents. One of them smells like a bird. I'm not sure if they are chasing as well or if they were just passing through..."

His words surprised the team. Fujin asked, "Do you recognize any of their scents?"

Shiro answered, "I feel that one scent is a bit familiar. Unfortunately, I can't recall whose scent it is. It must have been a long time since I encountered that person."

Fujin didn't find it odd. After all, it was impossible for anyone to remember everyone's scent for years. It was the same as normal people forgetting the faces and names of someone they hadn't met for a long time.

Fujin said, "I see. Check in which directions all the scents here are travelling. Hisao, check if you can see anything odd around."

The two immediately got to work. Fujin and Ken used their chakra fields and Space-Time Sensing Technique to see if they could find something. Unfortunately, there wasn't anything for them to detect.

Shiro and Hisao quickly found tracks and the team began moving once again. Shiro said, "Of the 13 people, 10 are moving in this direction. They are Hidan, six people from the 2nd group and 3 people from this new group. The one who smells like a bird isn't moving on this route."

Fujin was confused. He analyzed, 'Which ninja smells like a bird? Is it someone with a bird summoning? Or is it a bird summoned by one of those 3 people? Also, Kumo lost 2 more ninjas. It looks like they suffered losses at the hands of Hidan once again.

But since they weren't wiped out, this squad should be quite strong. But considering that Hidan escaped, they shouldn't be too strong. At the very least, the Raikage and the two Jinchurikis shouldn't be among those six.

Since they are still chasing, they should be quite strong. I'm guessing there should be one or two Elite Jounins in that squad, giving them the confidence to still chase Hidan. Unless of course, it's them who are escaping with Hidan chasing them. That would be a sight to see, hahaha.'

Fujin couldn't help but wonder who it could be if it was indeed an Elite Jounin chasing Hidan. Involuntarily, he recalled Darui and his previous squad when he was a Chunin which met their demise against the Kumo ninjas under Darui's command.

The situation changed once again. Hidan was running at the foremost. He was being chased by 6 Kumo ninjas led by Darui. However, they were finding it increasingly difficult to trail him properly. They were followed by the three Akatsuki members who were moving at a very rapid speed.

Behind them was Fujin's squad. Despite not being as fast as the Akatsuki members, Fujin's squad still moved at the fastest speed as they had four trails and ninjas who were excellent at tracking. As a result, they never had to waste any time in confirming that they were on the right track. It was an advantage that neither Kumo ninjas nor Akatsuki members had.

Elsewhere, the Yugakure and Shimogakure ninjas encountered each other. They began moving together in search of Hidan. Shimogakure ninjas weren't interested in fighting Hidan, but they offered their help to find him and to ensure that other Shimogakure ninjas didn't fight them. Unfortunately, their squads were left far behind.

After a couple of hours, the Kumo ninjas finally stopped! C said, "It's getting increasingly difficult to keep track of him. How is that bastard still running? There are two trails in front of us. What do we do?"

Darui replied, "Let's split up. We will move in squads of three. Whoever finds him will send a signal to the other team. Don't fight him recklessly. Just keep him at bay and don't lose sight of him until the other squad meets up."

The Kumo ninjas nodded. They split into two squads and began moving ahead. When Akatsuki reached the same location, they fell into a dilemma as well. Itachi said, "There are three different tracks ahead of us. It is difficult to say which one is Hidan."

Konan thought for a bit and said, "Let's split up."

She created a few butterflies made of paper which flew and landed on Itachi and Kakuzu's shoulders and said, "I will use the butterflies to communicate if any of us find him. Let's move quickly."

The three of them split up and began moving rapidly. Though Konan and Kakuzu weren't as good as Itachi at tracking, they were still quite good at it.

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Chapter 458: Heavenly Luck!

A few minutes later, Fujin's team reached the same location. For the first time, their team stopped. Shiro inspected the scents and said, "They have split into three groups and are moving along three paths."

Hisao nodded and agreed with his observation. Fujin asked, "Which path did Hidan take?"

Shiro pointed in one direction and said, "He is moving along this path. Only one other person is moving in this direction. He is from the last group."

Fujin instructed, "Let's keep following him."

The Konoha ninjas continued moving. Fujin didn't particularly care about the Kumo ninjas or the other group. He only wanted Hidan. Unfortunately, as everyone split up, he wasn't sure of how he could get Hidan alone and read up his memories.

He calculated, "I was initially planning to use the Kumo group to split our group and catch Hidan alone. I could knock him out and read his memories as much as I wanted and let him go. But what do I do now?"

Fujin thought for a while and realized, 'There is only one way. I have to let Hidan kill all three of them or perhaps do it myself while they are fighting him. However, in that case, I can't let Hidan go. I'll have to capture and seal him. He'll be my test subject to experiment on. But, is there any value to doing this?'

While Fujin didn't want to kill innocent people, he wasn't opposed to it if he had a lot to gain. If success was guaranteed, Fujin would have done it. However, the chances of success were just too low. Over a day had passed from the moment Fujin found the cave used for ritual. The ritual itself most probably took place a few days before Fujin found the cave.

Even if the dead Bishop's body wasn't burned like his subordinates, the chances of his memories staying intact were almost nil. The longer the chase went on, the lesser Fujin's hopes were.

To make matters worse, not only was Fujin not guaranteed any benefits, on the contrary, he would suffer two disadvantages. For starters, Hidan wouldn't be able to join Akatsuki in the future. As a result, the internal structure of Akatsuki would change. Their movements in the future could change as well.

Secondly, this matter would cast a lot of suspicions on Fujin. There was no need for him to volunteer to hunt Hidan. His job was done when he found the missing people. If he were to lose all his subordinates, be unable to recover their bodies and allow their killer to escape, Hiruzen would easily suspect that there was something fishy.

Even though Fujin would not leave any proof behind, he would be foolish to think that Hiruzen wouldn't get suspicious and raise his guard against Fujin. Considering his future plans, Fujin didn't want to be under constant watch by Hiruzen.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages, Fujin decided, 'It's not worth it. The only way I can get what I want is if Hidan preserved that Bishop's body or if that Bishop is alive and Hidan knows where he

is. Both are very unlikely. Despite doing all I can, I have already failed in achieving any of my goals for this hunt.

It'll be better to let him live for now. I'll capture him in the future and have Tsunade study his body. Even if I raise my medical knowledge and recruit someone who is damn good at it, it won't be anywhere comparable to what Tsunade can do. Not to mention, Akatsuki's movements will stay more or less the same as I remember.'

Fujin sighed internally. He muttered to himself, 'Chasing Hidan here was a mistake. Now, how do I convince them to stop looking and turn around?'

Since Fujin didn't see much hope in being able to read the Bishop's memories, the entire chase seemed pointless to him. He no longer wanted to capture Hidan. After all, if he captured Hidan now and brought him to Konoha, Hiruzen would most likely ask Danzo to experiment on Hidan. Though Fujin no longer consider Danzo as a great threat, he had no intention of underestimating Danzo and giving him the means to strengthen himself.

Unfortunately for Fujin, he was already very deep into this mission. Calling it off suddenly without a good explanation would look suspicious as well. He moved along his squad while thinking about how to back off from the mission.

As they moved, Fujin occasionally used his Space-Time Sensing Technique. At one such instance, he sensed a disturbance. He looked in front of him and thought, 'Hmm? There is someone around 4 kilometers in front of me. Who is it? Is it Hidan?'

Just when Fujin gave up hope, he sensed someone. Fujin was generally a very calm person. This mission was one of the rare times where he had lost his cool several times and become very frustrated. Once again, Fujin's anger flared!

He cursed internally, 'This bastard. I have been hunting him for so long and he doesn't show himself. Finally, when I give up, he presents himself to me. I hope that damned Bishop is alive. Otherwise, I will skin this bastard alive!'

The last few days, Fujin's mind had experienced an emotional roller-coaster. None of his plans went as he wanted. It was as if the entire world wanted to stop him from succeeding. As a result, he was

extremely frustrated and wanted to take it out on someone. Though he didn't want to capture Hidan anymore, he doubted whether he'd be able to control himself.

He decided, 'I don't want to take his body back to the village now. Hiruzen will probably give it to Danzo. I don't want that old bastard to get some sort of power up. I will just pummel him here and cut his body into pieces. Akatsuki can fix him up if and when they find him. I'll mark his body just in case they don't and someone else gets to him.'

Fujin's team continued moving. The one in front of them was moving slower than their group. When the distance was reduced to 3 kilometers, Fujin activated his chakra field and tried to sense his chakra signature.

His eyes suddenly widened in shock. Though Fujin could detect disturbances with his Space-Time Sensing Technique, he couldn't detect who caused the disturbances. As a result, he had to depend on his normal sensing ability to identify who it was. Of course, just like Shiro's sense of smell, it wasn't practical to remember everyone's chakra signature. However, the chakra signature Fujin sensed was something he could never forget!

Fujin's shock soon changed into excitement. He thought, 'Fucking Kakuzu! Excellent. I'll run into him and begin fighting him. It'll be the best reason to stop chasing Hidan and retreat back to Konoha.'

Fujin immediately made plans. However, he wondered, 'That said, what is he doing here? Is he just hunting some bounty? Or is he one of the three from that last group? If so, does that mean that three Akatsuki members are here and are chasing after Hidan to recruit him?'

Fujin was surprised by how quickly the Akatsuki moved. He quickly put together all his information and speculated, 'Zetsu should have seen Hidan's fight with Kumo ninjas. Only that would explain such quick movement. After all, 3 villages are hunting Hidan. If they are slow, even if he is immortal, he'll be captured.'

Shiro stated that he smelled a familiar scent. I guess that's Itachi. Itachi has a bird summon as well. Or it could be Nagato's Bird summon if they used it to travel. It all makes sense now. Still... How lucky is that bastard? I hunted him so much and he managed to avoid me each time. In fact, he is probably not even aware of the fact that I'm chasing him!'

Fujin couldn't help but wonder if Jashin's ritual improved the luck of an individual. It was difficult to explain Hidan's incredible luck otherwise. Despite being stronger, faster and having better assistance, Fujin lost to Hidan merely due to Hidan's luck! He found the entire ordeal utterly ridiculous!

He shook his head and stopped thinking about it. He said, "Prepare yourselves. I can sense a strong chakra signature 2.7 kilometers ahead. Hisao, check whether it is Hidan or someone else."

The entire team became alert at once. They had been moving around for a long time without finding any enemy to fight. As such, all of them were exhausted and had gotten slightly lethargic. They were aware of that fact. Hence, with Fujin's warning, all of them prepared themselves. They didn't want to be caught off-guard when they finally faced an enemy!

Kakuzu turned around and looked behind him. He wondered, 'There is someone chasing me from behind? Or is it a squad just passing through the area? Or did I somehow overtake that ninja called Hidan? Or were there more people chasing him? But how are they able to track so quickly?'

Kakuzu could feel the chakra field moving rapidly, implying that whoever was behind him was coming rapidly. He stood his ground and muttered, "Whoever it is, I hope that they have a good bounty!"

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Chapter 459: Testing each other

The Konoha ninjas got closer. Hisao activated his Byakugan. He said, "There is one person in front of us. Around 1.5 km ahead. He isn't moving, but he isn't Hidan either. He..."

Suddenly, Hisao's eyes widened. A look of shock appeared on his face. He said, "His body is very weird! It is as if there are multiple sources of chakra on his body."

Fujin acted as if he was surprised and said, "Be careful. I recall fighting one such person before. He was very strong. If I say retreat, do so without any word or hesitation."

Fujin's teammates were surprised. However, hearing the seriousness in his voice, no one dared to oppose him.

They continued moving forward. At one point, Shiro confirmed Fujin's suspicions by saying, "I can smell him. He is one of the three from the last group."

Fujin nodded in response. A few seconds later, they appeared in front of Kakuzu, who was waiting to see who was pursuing him. His eyes widened momentarily on seeing Fujin. So did Fujin's eyes. However, unlike Kakuzu, he was just acting.

Kakuzu said, "The Spectral Swordsman from the Hidden Leaf. I didn't expect to see you here."

It hadn't been a long time since Fujin cut down Jozu. As a result, Fujin was still very fresh in the minds of Akatsuki members. That was especially the case with Kakuzu who was very tempted by the bounty on Fujin's head.

Fujin replied, "Kakuzu, a rogue ninja from Takigakure. What are you doing here?"

As he spoke, Fujin's eyes landed on a couple of paper butterflies on Kakuzu's shoulders. He immediately realized, 'Paper butterflies? That should be Konan. Hmm, Itachi, Konan and Kakuzu... What a weird team structure. Oh well, as long as it isn't Obito or Nagato, I don't care. I'll run as soon as I sense Konan or Itachi.'

From the words exchanged, Fujin's teammates immediately understood that Fujin knew the opponent. At the same time, they took a second look at Fujin. They wondered whether Fujin would accept the title. Though the majority of Jounins in Konoha believed that Fujin was the Spectral Swordsman, no one had heard him admitting it openly. However, they would be left disappointed as Fujin neither accepted nor rejected the title.

Kakuzu chuckled and asked, "Do I need to inform Konoha about my whereabouts?"

Fujin didn't particularly care about his sarcasm and directly said, "Seeing the route you are taking, it looks like you were chasing after Hidan as well. I wonder what Akatsuki has to do with that rogue ninja."

Kakuzu replied, "You should be more concerned about yourself. 50 Million Ryo... Your bounty is very tempting."

Kakuzu prepared himself for a clash. Fujin's teammates quickly grabbed their weapons sensing the change in his temperament. However, before the battle could begin, Fujin said, "You guys aren't his match. This mission ends here. Leave and report the mission to Yugakure and then retreat back to Konoha. I'll hold him back and directly return to the village."

Fujin's words surprised them. However, remembering his previous warnings, all of them retreated in a flash, leaving Fujin and Kakuzu alone in the snowy forest. Kakuzu was surprised by the sudden development.

He said, "That's rather courageous of you. I never imagined that the boy who escaped on seeing me would have the courage to face me in a battle so soon."

Fujin chuckled and responded, "That's surprising. I didn't think you'd remember me. Where is Kaminari? I wanted to have a rematch with him."

Kakuzu replied, "You did make quite an impact. Unfortunately, Kaminari has long been dead."

Fujin replied, "That's a shame. Anyway, are you sure you want to fight me? If we both fight, Hidan will manage to escape."

Kakuzu said, "As I said, you should worry about yourself. Enough chit-chat. You subordinates have gone far enough."

Fujin was merely chatting to waste some time. While he was confident in holding Kakuzu back, he had no confidence in ensuring the safety of his subordinates if a second Akatsuki member arrived.

On the other hand, Kakuzu expected a tough fight. He wanted to be sure that Fujin's subordinates left instead of hiding and sneak-attacking him while he was in combat. Though they were much weaker than him, the clans in Konoha were famous for having peculiar jutsus that could turn the battle in an instant.

As soon as he was done speaking, Kakuzu's fist hardened. He suddenly appeared in front of Fujin and punched towards his face. A sword appeared in Fujin's hand. As he slashed at the incoming fist, wind chakra began flowing along the blade. The sword and the fist clashed. To Fujin's surprise, his sword wasn't able to put a scratch in Kakuzu's fist.

Fujin thought, 'Damn! How much did he practice the Iron Skin jutsu to raise it to such an insane level? This is the first time I have failed to even scratch with my sword!'

Fujin had fought Kitsuchi and Roshi earlier. Kitsuchi could use the Iron Skin jutsu as well whereas Roshi used a Lava Armor. However, neither of them could block his swords without taking any damage. It was the first time his sword was completely blocked when he was using chakra flow.

Kakuzu followed up with a flurry of punches. Fujin used his sword to block some and his left palm to block the rest as he retreated continuously. A deep frown could be seen on his face as he struggled to defend against Kakuzu's onslaught.

In terms of speed and strength, Kakuzu appeared to be slightly superior to Fujin. And since Fujin's blade couldn't hurt him, Fujin fell into a disadvantageous position. Kakuzu had complete momentum. Fujin was struggling to keep up. Eventually, a few punches made it through Fujin's defenses. Fortunately, he was able to barely dodge them and avoided getting pummelled.

Suddenly, Kakuzu stopped attacking and jumped behind, puzzling Fujin. Kakuzu looked at the spots on his body that Fujin had touched while defending himself.

He looked at Fujin and said, "It looks like the information was right. You are a Grandmaster at Fuinjutsu. And a pretty good one as well. Even I wouldn't have been able to notice them if I wasn't anticipating them. No wonder Juzo died to you. His death wasn't unjustified."

The main reason why Kakuzu attacked Fujin with Taijutsu was because he wanted to see whether Fujin could apply seals as Zetsu had speculated. He had intentionally given Fujin an opening and as he expected, Fujin took the bait.

Fujin's eyes widened. This time, it wasn't an act. Every time he touched Kakuzu's body, he applied a seal. Kakuzu's fists and arms had several Explosion seals and Self Cursing Seals inscribed on them. To keep stacking on the seals, Fujin even acted like he was struggling to keep up with Kakuzu.

In an instant, Fujin activated every single one of those seals. However, Kakuzu was faster. He released Chakra from his body and eliminated every single seal on his body with perfect accuracy.

Fujin cursed internally, 'This old fossil! He is an expert at Fuinjutsu as well. It shouldn't be a surprise considering how long he has lived or what state his body is in. Oh well, since I had already exposed this against Juzo, I wasn't expecting this to work against any other Akatsuki member anyway.'

Fujin had already exposed his mastery with Fuinjutsu against Juzo. As such, he didn't expect to trap any other Akatsuki member as easily as Juzo. It was only because Kakuzu gave him the opening that he decided to use them and put up an act.

Fujin immediately riled up his chakra and shot a dozen Vacuum Bullets at Kakuzu. Since he couldn't trap Kakuzu with seals, he didn't need to put up any act. Kakuzu immediately got out of the way. A few bullets grazed past his cloak, causing it to tear in various spots.

Fujin flickered and slashed his sword at Kakuzu as if he wanted to cut him into two halves! Kakuzu raised his arm and hardened it. The sword hit his arm and was stopped as Kakuzu expected. This time, he was neither slower nor weaker than Kakuzu. Both were equal.

Not wanting to allow Fujin to take the momentum, Kakuzu counterattacked instantly with his other fist and tried punching Fujin. Fujin's left palm was already moving to block the incoming fist. However, Kakuzu felt something odd. Instead of blocking normally, the wind was flowing in a peculiar manner at Fujin's fingertips. Kakuzu's eyes widened in shock as he understood what was happening.

He immediately moved backwards while hardening his entire body. However, Fujin had no intention of letting him off that easily. Though Fujin didn't expect to kill Kakuzu and was neither interested in doing so, he would be terribly disappointed in himself if he didn't cause Kakuzu to lose any hearts.

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Chapter 460: Neverending Hidden Cards!

While Kakuzu and Fujin had engaged in a fight, two more face-offs were happening in the snowy forests of the Land of Frost.

Darui looked at the person in front of him. His expression was very serious. He muttered, "Uchiha Itachi. Why were you chasing after us?"

Darui's subordinates were tense as well. Though they were confident in Darui's strength, Itachi was someone who massacred the entire Uchiha clan. They didn't dare to underestimate him. They prepared themselves for a life-and-death battle!

Elsewhere, the Kumo team led by C and Samui encountered Konan. Though they weren't aware of who she was, C was able to sense her vast chakra reserves. As a result, they were in a tense situation as well.

Suddenly, Konan sensed something and looked in the direction where Kakuzu and Fujin were fighting. She thought, 'It looks like Kakuzu is fighting someone. My butterflies were destroyed.'

Konan took a look at the Kumo ninja once again before leaving the battlefield. C asked, "Should we chase her?"

Samui suggested, "We don't know who she is. Though she is strong, capturing Hidan is more critical right now."

C and the other ninja nodded. They continued their trail. Elsewhere, Itachi received a message from the paper butterfly. He too left and began moving towards where Fujin and Kakuzu were. Darui's team breathed a sigh of relief. They pondered for a few seconds and took the same decision as their other team.

While Kakuzu was retreating backwards, 5 Vacuum Bullets formed at Fujin's fingertips and shot at Kakuzu at blinding speed at the same time that he moved backwards. He twisted his body at weird angles to be able to dodge them.

However, the small distance meant that he couldn't dodge them entirely. Three Vacuum Bullets hit his hardened body and pierced through it. In addition, one of the two bullets he dodged destroyed the paper butterflies on his shoulders.

Despite hitting Kakuzu, there was no happiness in Fujin's expression. None of the bullets managed to hit his heart. Unfortunately for Kakuzu, it wasn't the end of the attack. Fujin could launch four waves of attack with his Vacuum Gatling jutsu by now.

Despite Kakuzu's incredible speed, Fujin chased after him and kept attacking. In the second wave, 2 more pierced through Kakuzu's body. In the 3rd wave, 4 bullets pierced through his body. And, in the last wave, though Kakuzu managed to dodge 4, the last one was heading straight towards one of his hearts.

Fujin's eyes glowed as he watched in anticipation. In terms of strength, Kakuzu was extremely strong. He was only below the likes of Hiruzen, Onoki and Ay. Even though most weren't aware of Kakuzu, according to Fujin, to be able to kill him once would be an even greater achievement than killing Juzo.

Unfortunately, it wouldn't be that easy. To Fujin's shock, Kakuzu's heart moved inside his body. The bullet passed through his body but barely missed the heart! All 5 of Kakuzu's hearts were still intact despite him being hit by 10 Vacuum Bullets at a close range.

The movement of Kakuzu's heart surprised Fujin for a moment. However, on second thought, he didn't find it odd. After all, the heart could leave Kakuzu's body and function independently.

Even though Fujin's Vacuum Bullets had the ability to suck the items that were close to its path, it wasn't very effective against Kakuzu as the only things that got sucked were the dense threads inside his body. To make matters worse, the damaged threads immediately attached to other threads, ensuring that Kakuzu didn't suffer much damage and was able to fight at his full strength.

Fujin sighed internally and thought, 'As I guessed... I can't kill a strong rank S ninja this easily.'

Seeing no new bullets forming at the tip of Fujin's fingers, Kakuzu was relieved. He looked at Fujin and thought, 'What a dangerous brat! If I had been slightly slower to react, he could have destroyed all five of my hearts with that unexpected attack!'

Since Fujin couldn't spam Vacuum Bullets, he moved faster and swung his sword at Kakuzu once again. Once again, Kakuzu hardened his arm and raised it to block Fujin's sword, confusing Fujin who wondered, 'Isn't he afraid of falling to the same attack once again?'

Of course, Kakuzu wasn't a fool. When Fujin's sword neared, several threads appeared from Kakuzu's body and tore through whatever was remaining of his cloak. He had no intention of falling to the same tactic. Instead, it was his turn to surprise Fujin. The threads moved rapidly towards Fujin's heart!

Unfortunately for Kakuzu, Fujin showed no interest in those threads. Kakuzu's eyes widened in shock and he immediately looked upwards. Instead of being stopped, Fujin's sword cut straight through Kakuzu's hardened arm! He tried moving, but the sword hit his left shoulder and began cleaving through his body!

Even though Kakuzu had hardened his entire body, it couldn't put up any resistance against Fujin's sword. It was as if Fujin was merely swinging his blade through the air. Kakuzu immediately flickered to his right. However, he was still too slow. Fujin's blade cleaved through one of Kakuzu's hearts, cutting it into two halves. Not only that, Fujin's sword had cut his body. Kakuzu's left chest, shoulder and arm were cut off from his body.

Kakuzu's remaining body had moved to the right due to him flickering before the sword had cut through his body. He fell to the ground and rolled for several dozen meters before stopping. He lay there as if he was a corpse!

Lying on the ground, Kakuzu was in shock. He had lost one of his heart! One of his arms was cut off from the forearm and the other arm was completely cleaved from his body! Though they weren't a major loss for Kakuzu, he couldn't control them as those parts didn't have a heart to allow him to control them.

He thought, 'Zetsu's information is incomplete! His Wind Vacuum Technique is far more dangerous than his Fuinjutsu. He applied a layer of vacuum to his sword. That is why I couldn't block him like before. To make matters worse, he made me feel confident in being able to defend his blade and hence forced me to make this mistake.'

With his experience, Kakuzu immediately understood what his mistake was. At the same time, he looked at Fujin in a whole new light. Though Fujin wasn't stronger than him in any way, he kept way too many cards hidden.

Juzo fell to his Fuinjutsu which no one knew of despite Fujin having such a high level of mastery. On the other hand, Kakuzu almost fell prey to a completely new style of using the Wind Vacuum Technique. If he had just one heart, he would have died. That said, if he just had one heart, he wouldn't have fought Fujin in such a reckless manner. He kept lying hoping that Fujin would lower his guard down and approach him.

Fujin naturally wouldn't believe that he was dead. He thought, 'This old geezer is good at hiding his chakra. Even though he still has 4 hearts, it feels like he is completely dead. I can't sense any chakra from him!'

Still, I was only able to destroy one heart after exposing Vacuum Slash and Vacuum Gatling. And now that I have exposed them, it will be very difficult to catch him off guard with them again.'

Fujin was very careful while exposing his hidden cards. He would generally avoid exposing them even if it meant he would have to retreat if he didn't have any benefits to be gained. That is why he didn't use his new collections of Vacuum jutsus against Juzo despite knowing that he could gain a huge advantage in the battle.

However, since then, Fujin had made rapid progress in learning the Flying Thunder God jutsu. It was only a matter of time before he completely mastered it. In addition, he was also learning the Eight Inner Gates technique.

Since he would have those techniques as his hidden cards in the future, Fujin didn't mind exposing some of the Vacuum jutsus he created. Not to mention, against someone like Kakuzu, he would struggle a lot and could be at risk if he restricted himself to using the same techniques that he did against Juzo! After all, he was far away from Konoha and Kakuzu had the backup of two strong rank S ninjas! Fujin couldn't afford to get injured at that place.

Since Kakuzu was playing possum, Fujin decided to take his time. He created two Shadow Clones and immediately riled his chakra. He shot Vacuum Cannon at Kakuzu's body while his clones followed up with the Infinite Breakthrough jutsu and the Searing Migraine jutsu. The two jutsus merged seamlessly and moved towards Kakuzu who was still playing dead!