

Calamity 571

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 571: Fujin the Diplomat!

Understanding Hiruzen's intention, Shikaku added, "Though Kusa is good at diplomacy, they can't ally easily with Iwa as their relationship is quite bad currently. Iwa had invaded the Land of Grass in both the Second and the Third Great Ninja Wars. Their people still remember that. Their civilians as well as ninjas hate Iwa for causing so many deaths and putting them through hell.

In addition, Iwa had sent their Jinchuriki to the Land of Grass a couple of years ago. Their relations had deteriorated to the level it was at during the Great Wars after Roshi used the Tailed Beast Bomb on their lands.

And, these two aren't the biggest issues. The biggest issue is that Iwa is definitely funding and assisting the rogue group that is fighting against Kusagakure. Though the rogue group likely formed by itself, there is no way that they would become such a threat without Iwa's aid.

Even if Kusa decides to overlook this fact and not raise this issue while negotiating with Iwa, Iwa would want both groups to coexist in the Land of Grass so that they can restrict both sides and control the Land of Grass.

This will cut down Kusa's influence considerably as the country would have two Hidden Villages instead of one. It will also give a chance to that rogue group to create a proper army and grow without having to fight Kusagakure. In the future, they wouldn't need to resort to guerilla warfare whenever they have to fight Kusagakure and could confront them head-on.

So even with their good diplomacy, it is unlikely for them to get favorable terms by allying with Iwa."

Fujin nodded, agreeing with Shikaku's analysis. Hiruzen added, "So in other words, this high-priority message is just Kusagakure's way to coerce us to do their job for them without getting anything in return."

Though Hiruzen talked plainly, Fujin could clearly see that Hiruzen wasn't pleased. He chuckled internally while thinking, 'It looks like they hit a nerve. That said, this scroll from Kusagakure is quite ingenious.

On the surface, it might seem that they are arrogantly threatening Konoha, a village far stronger than them, by saying that they would ally with Iwa. However, nowhere in the scroll is this explicitly mentioned. If confronted, they can just decline it and say that this isn't what they implied and can give some other examples of what the 'drastic actions' will be.

Though it seems that they will offend Konoha by doing so, in truth, there isn't much Konoha can do. The worst we can do is ignore this scroll and decline to help, in which case Kusagakure doesn't win or lose anything. The status quo will prevail.

If we decide to act against them in the dark, then that will be equivalent to jumping on an axe as that will weaken Kusagakure and will allow a faction that is supported by Iwa to take power in the Land of Grass. So, they know that we won't take such a step.

Besides, even if we decide not to help, we will still be forced to help if Iwa gets involved directly. Hehe, no wonder Hiruzen is annoyed. Considering that he didn't take any advantage of the critical situation I had placed Rasa in pretty much says that he wants to avoid a major war at all costs even though the village is no longer as weak as during the Hyuga incident.'

Fujin looked at Hiruzen and said, "They are indeed quite good at diplomacy. Anyway, why did you call me? Are we going to war? Or do you want me to silently make a few people disappear?"

From Fujin's perspective, that situation wasn't difficult to handle. Neither side had any rank S ninja. If he wished to, he could eliminate leaders from both sides with relative ease. Even though Kusagakure's diplomacy was good, that was contingent that Konoha played by the rules.

Konoha could just install puppet leaders and take control of both forces forcefully. The only issue it would create is that other major and minor villages would become quite wary of Konoha. However, that was Hiruzen's headache and not Fujin's.

Hiruzen smiled and said, "Neither. I want you to lead a diplomatic team to Kusagakure and negotiate a deal with them. Whether Konoha goes to assist them for free, whether we demand money to do so, how much money we demand or whether we stay out of it completely will be completely left up to you."

Fujin was surprised. Though Fujin had been a part of several negotiation teams over the last couple of years, he had never taken the lead in any discussion. On the contrary, he barely participated in any discussion, valuing his words like gold!

Fujin looked at the two Elders. To his surprise, neither objected. He thought, 'It looks like Hiruzen has already made and conveyed his decision. Otherwise, both of them would have opposed doing something so reckless.'

Fujin thought for a bit and asked, "Are you sure?"

Hiruzen nodded while chuckling to himself, 'Finally a moment where he isn't completely sure of himself. Oh well, the boy has got to learn someday. Might as well start today. Even if he messes up, it won't cost Konoha much.'

Fujin asked, "Will I be going alone or will there be any assistance?"

Hiruzen answered, "You can take our usual diplomatic team with you. In fact, they are already preparing. In addition, Elder Homura will join you as well. He will go with you under disguise and won't be participating in the discussions unless you explicitly ask him to. However, you should do that only as a last resort. This mission will be led by you and not him. Whatever is the result of this negotiation, it'll solely be your responsibility."

Fujin nodded while thinking, 'I guess he really wants me to take this responsibility... Oh well, I might as well do it in the 'best' possible way and entertain myself a bit. Besides, this is a good opportunity to build some 'reputation'. Even though it might not be a good reputation, it might just help me keep some ambitious idiots like Katsuhiko at arm's length.'

Fujin said, "Alright. However, the combat capabilities of our diplomatic team are quite low. Add a couple of Anbu squads to my team and have them disguise themselves as diplomats."

Hiruzen nodded and said, "Sure."

What he didn't notice was that Shikaku suddenly became slightly nervous when Fujin mentioned 'combat capabilities'. He thought, 'Why do I get a feeling that my days will become hectic once again?'

Sigh, nothing good happens when this boy goes on a mission. I just hope that he doesn't do something too crazy this time.'

Unfortunately, Shikaku couldn't guess what the crazy thing Fujin would be doing. Hiruzen said, "I have already assembled the diplomatic team. You can join them and plan out your strategy before moving out. Move out by this evening."

Fujin nodded. He and Homura began walking towards the room where the diplomatic discussions would usually be held. En route, Fujin created and dispelled a Shadow Clone.

Homura immediately realized, 'Hmm, he sent a message about this meeting to his Shadow Clones. I wonder what they are doing.'

It was as Homura had speculated. Fujin sent a message to his clones that were working on the seal, the clone who was guiding his 5 students, and a couple of clones that he had sent to the Training facility to guide other orphans.

Fujin had begun sending a few clones to the training facilities whenever he had some chakra to spare so that he could influence the other kids as well. The help he provided them was nowhere near what his students got. He would let Hiruzen's Anbu train them and only occasionally observe them and give some advice to help them improve further.

As a result, even though the Anbu instructors did most of the work, the kids were more grateful towards Fujin as he took time from his 'busy' schedule and 'council duties' to guide them. Some Anbu noticed it but didn't do anything as Fujin outranked them considerably and he wasn't doing anything harmful to the kids or the village.

Besides, Anbu Hiruzen had sent to train the kids were of civilian backgrounds as well because he didn't want to alert the clans about the kids having Kekkei Genkai. So they didn't mind Fujin, who represented the civilian ninjas in the council, increasing his influence.

In any case, the message Fujin sent to his clones was to inform his students that he would be out of the village for a few days and to inform the same to the Anbu Captain stationed in his compound.

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Chapter 572: An Extremely Bad Feeling

Back in the Hokage's office, Koharu asked, "Are you sure about this, Hiruzen? Even though he has done well so far, I still don't think asking him to lead such a mission is a good idea. Fighting and negotiation are two entirely different things."

Hiruzen shrugged and said, "It's alright. Besides, what's the worst he can do? At max, we will have to help them eliminate that rogue faction for free. And even then, he will be doing most of the work."

Hiruzen knew about Fujin's Wind Domain. While he wasn't entirely sure how strong it was as Fujin no longer practiced it in the open, the fact that he could steal Sasori's puppets was all Hiruzen needed to know. Even if they had to fight, he was sure Fujin would be able to take care of it without any issue. If Iwa tried interfering, then he could deploy Jiraiya to deter them.

Unlike him, the others in the room had different thoughts. Koharu wondered, 'Why does he trust that boy so much? Even though he could kill Juzo, fighting a rogue faction is different from fighting a single ninja. It could cost us several lives. But from the way Hiruzen is speaking, it's as if he is sure that we won't lose any lives.'

As for Shikaku, his mind was stuck on a few words that Hiruzen spoke. They were, 'What's the worst he can do?' For some reason, Shikaku had an extremely bad feeling.

Fujin and Homura entered the room. Immediately, 12 eyes looked at them. There were several papers on the round table and it looked like they had already been discussing how to handle the negotiation.

On seeing the two of them, one of them said, "Elder Homura, Councilor Fujin, it's good to have you. Elder Homura, we wanted to ask you a few things."

To his surprise, Homura raised his palm and said, "While I will be joining the mission, I won't be participating in the discussions. Fujin will be the one leading this mission."

Immediately, everyone in the room was surprised. They all assumed that Homura would lead the mission. While they were familiar with Fujin, he barely used to participate in the missions. For a moment, none of them knew what to say.

Fujin had expected such a reaction and wasn't particularly offended. In fact, he was surprised as well when Hiruzen informed him that he would be leading this mission.

He chuckled to break the silence and asked, "What's with this reaction? Don't worry. I won't mess up too much. Let's start the meeting."

His words caused some awkward smiles to appear on their faces. However, it broke the ice and they finally began the meeting as Fujin and Homura sat down. Fujin asked, "Did you guys decide on what resources to ask in return for helping them?"

One of them answered, "We haven't discussed that much yet. Considering the tone in their letter, our discussion so far was focused more towards what we should say to counter their points when they ask for help free of cost."

Another added, "We were also considering letting them owe us the money so that they could repay in the future."

Fujin shook his head and said, "They are facing an existential crisis. How would they pay us in the future if they were to be destroyed? Besides, they could take loans from us and ally with Iwa later. Or threaten us asking us to forgive the loans or they would ally with Iwa."

No need to consider allowing them to owe us. Just decide on how much money to demand. If they don't have the money, decide what resources to ask for instead. Be it precious metals, chakra metal, elemental crystals or even their land."

Fujin's words surprised everyone in the room, including Homura. One of them countered, "But, that won't be right. Their message emphasizes the fact that they won't be able to pay. Focusing on which resources to demand instead of convincing them that they need to pay and giving them some options is like putting the cart before the horse."

Another added, "In addition, we need to keep in mind that we have been allied for several decades. Forcing them to pay could create some resentment, undoing the decades of good work. It might also provide Iwa with an opportunity to improve their ties with Kusa, which will increase the risk of them double-crossing us in the future."

Fujin chuckled and replied, "The decades of being in an alliance didn't stop them from making a disguised threat about allying with Iwa. Anyway, you don't need to worry. I do have a plan in mind, though I need to finalize the details. Just focus on deciding the resources first.

Later, we can focus on thinking about what arguments to give when they say that they can't afford to pay. As for giving them a line of credit, there is no need. If they are serious about paying us, then their Daimyo could discuss the same with the Fire Daimyo."

As the leader of this mission, Fujin's word was the final. In addition, the way he said it implied that there was no scope for debate. They looked at Homura but he didn't say anything. Hence, they followed his order and began deciding what to ask from them in exchange for helping them.

Meanwhile, Homura analyzed, 'Hmm, he can use authority very well. As expected of someone who was an Anbu Captain. Still, he is quite inflexible. During negotiations, being flexible is the most important. Otherwise, both sides could stay at an impasse for years!

In this particular case, there wasn't any harm in letting them owe us. In fact, the negotiation should have been about how much they should owe us and what the rate of interest should be. Even Hiruzen would have done this.

His inflexibility is disappointing considering how well he analyzed the meetings after Hiruzen was done negotiating. There is a big gap between his analytical and execution skills. I now see why Hiruzen wants to give him some experience in leading diplomatic missions.'

Fujin glanced at Homura while paying attention to the discussion. Though Homura didn't show any expression, Fujin could clearly feel a sense of disappointment from him. He thought, 'I guess he wanted me to go the normal route and provide them a line of credit.

That said, he doesn't have the knowledge of the future. Not too long from now, Konoha and Iwa will be allies. Why would it matter whether Kusa is allied with us or them? If anything, they'll be scrambling to have closer relations with Konoha. In fact, it doesn't even matter whether Kusa or the rebels are in power in the Land of Grass. It'll all be the same.

As for Iwa, Onoki won't look for a direct confrontation against Konoha. He wouldn't be called the Fence-Sitter if he jumped head first in an unrewarding battle. Besides, Iwa has already lost Han to the Akatsuki. From the information Anbu gathered, Deidara seems to have gone rogue as well. He should have joined Akatsuki by now.

So, Onoki will be paying a lot of attention to Akatsuki and their movements. He won't risk a battle with Konoha while Iwa is the weaker side.'

Due to his knowledge of the future, Fujin didn't have the same considerations as Homura and others. The group discussed what to ask from Kusa. When they reached the final amount, Fujin said, "Hmm, that's too little. Even if they gave us normal missions, it would cost 25% more than this value. Increase its overall worth by 25%. Wait..."

Fujin took a pause before adding, "Actually, they are in a tough spot. And, they are asking us to deploy our forces rapidly. We should charge them a premium considering how badly they need our help. Increase it first by 25% and then increase it by 50% once more."

"..."

The entire room became silent. No one had any words. Even Homura was left speechless. Everyone just looked at each other not knowing what to say. Every single one of them was surprised by Fujin's greediness and shamelessness.

Only one person smiled. It was Hiruzen who was watching through his crystal ball. He cried imaginary tears of happiness while thinking, 'Finally, the village will benefit from his greedy nature. That said, there is no way Kusa will agree. Though the scroll mentioned that they are in a tough spot, this isn't something that they can't handle. The only thing they truly require from us is our preparedness in case Iwa makes a move.'

Though Koharu and Homura were worried, Hiruzen was truly looking forward to how Fujin would handle the negotiations against someone who didn't particularly care for his well-being as Hiruzen did. He had to see whether Fujin's greed would work while negotiating with other villages or whether it would become an obstacle.

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Chapter 573: Fujin's Effect

In the meeting room, everyone exchanged glances. Finally, one decided to speak up and said, "Councilor Fujin, with all due respect, there is no way that they would agree."

Fujin waved his hand dismissively and said, "It's fine. We can negotiate. As long as it is above what it would cost them normally, there is no harm in doing the deal. In fact, even if it goes slightly below it, it'll be fine considering that it is a bulk deal."

Anyway, finalize the amount soon. We still need to decide on the points to use to make them understand that helping them for free is off the table. That will be the main topic during negotiations."

The diplomats sighed in relief as Fujin finally showed some flexibility. They quickly finalized the normal cost and the premium cost for Kusa to pay. The discussion quickly changed towards how to convince Kusa to pay, how strict they should be during the negotiation and when to pull the plug in case Kusa refused to pay under any circumstances along with some other points.

After discussing all the aspects for a few hours, they finalized all the details. Fujin smiled and said, "Good work everyone."

He turned his gaze towards the closed door. The doors automatically opened and he said, "You guys can enter."

Two Anbu squads entered. They were dispatched by Hiruzen to assist Fujin. Fujin looked at them and asked, "Did Lord Hokage inform you about the mission?"

One of the Anbu Captains answered, "He provided us with some details. He said that we have to ensure your group's safety while you are negotiating with Kusagakure."

Fujin nodded and said, "Yes. However, all of you will follow us in disguise. You will pretend to be diplomats, but you don't need to speak during any discussions."

Fujin's words confused the diplomats and Homura once again. For the first time, Homura said, "Fujin, everyone knows who our diplomats are. While having one or two more diplomats won't be suspicious,

having 8 new diplomats will easily arouse suspicion. It'll be better to have them follow us in their Anbu uniform as Kusa won't stop them."

Fujin replied with a smile, "I know it'll be suspicious, but that's fine. I want them to be suspicious."

Fujin looked at four diplomats and pointed at them one by one and said, "You four won't speak anything during the meeting as well. Just pay attention to the meeting, but don't speak unless I ask any of you to."

The group were puzzled even more. None of the diplomats understood what Fujin's intentions were. Homura wondered, 'Why does it feel like he is going there to fight instead of negotiating? Even if our negotiations don't result in anything, Kusa won't dare to attack us. What exactly is he planning?'

Not providing any explanation, Fujin said, "We will move out in an hour. Settle your matters if you have any and return to this room in less than an hour."

Everyone nodded. Some left, some stayed there. After an hour, the group left Konoha. They travelled the night and the following day, before waiting in one of the Patrol Camps the entire night. Before the sun appeared in the sky, their group entered the Land of Grass and moved towards Kusagakure.

A few hours later, the group reached Kusagakure. They had already sent a message informing Kusagakure about their arrival. As a result, the leader of Kusagakure and other prominent leaders were waiting for their arrival.

When the Konoha ninjas appeared in their sight, the face of every single person fell without any exception. Their leader cursed, 'Damn Konoha! Where are the Hokage or other Elders? And why is that cursed brat leading the group?'

Kusagakure wasn't informed who'd be leading the diplomatic team. On seeing that it was the guy who was rumored to have cut down several of their ninjas, everyone became very alert.

Fujin appeared in front of the leader of Kusagakure and said, "Ashikaga Hiroshi-san, it's good to see you once again."

Ashikaga Hiroshi faked a smile and said, "It's good to see you as well, Suzuki Fujin."

Fujin nodded and said, "Let's not waste any time. Considering your current situation, let's get down to business right away."

Hiroshi nodded. While he would have engaged in small talk with Hiruzen or the other two Elders, he didn't have anything to bond with Fujin due to their vast age gap. They quickly entered the central mansion and entered the meeting room.

During that time, Hiroshi properly observed everyone from Konoha's diplomatic team. He became even more serious as he analyzed, '9 new faces. They are likely hiding their real identity using Transformation jutsu. Something is off. Nine ninjas hiding themselves and sending this crazy kid instead of a normal Elder. We need to be careful.'

The others from Kusa noticed the same thing as well. Without saying anything, everyone became very tense. And the Konoha ninjas and diplomats noticed how tense they were.

Homura glanced at Fujin and wondered, 'Is this what he wanted? Making them negotiate while they are under tension... That said, it doesn't explain why they are so tense. Even when Hiruzen shows up openly with his Anbu Guards, they aren't this tense.'

As everyone took their seats, a few servants appeared in the room carrying trays of food. However, Fujin said, "Let's leave the food for later and begin the discussion."

His words caused the Kusa higher-ups to frown. Hiroshi realized, 'He doesn't trust us. Why did Konoha become so suspicious of us? Even though we hinted at a lot of things in the scroll, our relationship is still very good. This isn't the Hokage's style.'

What they didn't notice was that the diplomats from Konoha's side also glanced at Fujin with eyes full of complaints. Fujin had made them run all morning without any break. They didn't complain as they would have got delicious food in Kusagakure. However, Fujin denied them that as well!

Though they understood the reason why Fujin did so, none of them were worried about the food being poisoned or drugged. Even if Kusa decided to betray Konoha and ally with Iwa, they would never do something like that as it'll only result in their annihilation.

As for the Anbu disguised among the diplomats, none of them had any complaints. After all, they were used to such situations as compared to the diplomats who had long stopped being an active ninja.

Hiroshi nodded and said, "Alright."

He glanced at the servants who immediately left the room. Once all the doors were shut, Fujin said, "Though the scroll gave some details, we are still not exactly aware of the strength and numbers of your enemy and the scale of losses you have suffered. Fill me up on it and also tell me any other details you have about the rebels."

Hiroshi nodded. The person sitting to his left began explaining the details about the rogue faction which was attacking them.

While Fujin was negotiating in Kusagakure, another interesting clash was happening on the other side of the Land of Fire. En route to the wave country, Kakashi and his squad were attacked by Momochi Zabuza, the Demon of the Mist and the current wielder of Kubikiribocho.

Just like in the original story, Zabuza trapped Kakashi in the Water Prison jutsu, putting his team in extreme danger. Zabuza's Water Clone had already sent both Naruto and Sasuke flying, showing them the vast difference that existed between Genins and Elite Jounins.

Understanding their terrible situation, Kakashi shouted, "Everyone listen! Take Tazuna and retreat! It's a fight you can't win! If he wants to hold me in this Water Prison, he can't leave this place. He won't be able to hurt me through the Water Prison either!"

Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura were very tense when they heard Kakashi's words. Suddenly, a look of surprise appeared on Naruto's face as Kakashi's words stuck in his mind. He quickly got up and weaved hand signs while shouting, "Sensei, are you sure he can't hurt you inside the Water Prison?"

His sudden question surprised everyone. Kakashi thought, 'Well he can, but if I say that, you guys won't retreat...'

He quickly shouted, "Yes he can't! Now retreat!"

A grin formed on Naruto's face as he said, "Good! Then I don't have to worry. Multi Shadow Clone jutsu!"

In an instant, a few dozen Shadow Clones formed around Naruto. Seeing that Naruto was still intending to fight, Kakashi cursed, 'Darn it! Wha... Eh, is he planning that tactic? Hmm, it could work. However, it is still very risky.'

Seeing Naruto and his clones put their hands in their ninja pouch to grab a kunai, memories of the graduation exam resurfaced in Kakashi's mind. Even so, he maintained a worried expression on his face.

"Haha... hahahaha!" Seeing Naruto planning on attacking him, Zabuza's Water Clone began laughing. His laugh immediately offended Naruto who wondered, 'Why is he laughing like a lunatic?'

Zabuza's clone said, "Apparently you don't care whether you get any olde..."

Suddenly, his eyes widened. Hanging around Fujin and falling prey to his sudden attacks without caring whether he was ready or not had an effect on Naruto. He didn't bother waiting for Zabuza to be done with his speech. At the same time, Naruto and each of his Shadow Clones launched several kunai. Each of the kunai had an explosive tag attached to them!

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Chapter 574: The Negotiations Start!

Zabuza's clone watched as several hundred kunai with explosive tags moved towards him. He immediately weaved hand signs.

'Water Release: Water Wall jutsu!'

Immediately a water wall appeared in front of him. Around 20% of the kunai hit the water wall and exploded. The remaining 80% moved towards Zabuzas main body, which was watching over Kakashi. The eyes of both Jounins were wide.

Kakashi worriedly looked towards Zabuzas and thought, 'I never imagined that someday I'd be hoping that my enemy keeps me protected! Luckily he is quite strong. Otherwise, I might lose a layer of my skin!'

Zabuzas was no longer relaxed as well. He weaved hand seals with just his left hand and created a few more Water Clones who immediately used Water Wall jutsu to stop the incoming kunai. The kunai hit the water walls and exploded. Though every water wall collapsed, the explosions were stopped.

Unfortunately, Zabuzas and his clones were left dumbfounded as Naruto followed up with several more rounds of kunai while thinking, 'Luckily, Fujin gave me a few hundred explosive tags. Otherwise, we would have no way of fighting against him!'

Seeing Naruto continuously throwing explosive tags, Sakura shouted, "Naruto, be careful! Don't hurt Kakashi-sensei!"

Meanwhile, Sasuke thought, 'This isn't enough. Though Zabuzas looks under pressure, he is able to defend against the explosions. We need something more. But what?'

Sasuke saw another set of the Water Walls collapsing under another round of explosions. His eyes widened as he saw an opportunity.

Meanwhile, Zabuzas water clone wondered, 'How many explosive tags does this damn brat have? How freaking rich is Konoha to give such a little brat so many explosive tags? I can't let this continue. Otherwise, Kakashi will take advantage of the situation.'

Even though the Water Prison jutsu was good at trapping people, it didn't mean that it couldn't be broken from the inside. If Naruto kept Zabuzas attention on him, Kakashi could break through even if Zabuzas didn't take his hand off.

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After blocking the next round of explosions, the water clone moved forward at a rapid speed towards the place where Naruto's original body initially was. A few Shadow Clones tried to stop him but were cut apart by his large blade.

He swung Kubikiribocho at Naruto, who quickly used his kunai and barely managed to block the blade. Unfortunately, the water clone quickly followed with a kick, knocking the kunai off his hand and sending him flying backwards for a few meters. In the blink of an eye, he appeared on top of Naruto and said, "You did well. Unfortunately, your journey ends here!"

Seeing Zabuza's clone about to kill Naruto, Sakura, Sasuke and Tazuna became very worried. To everyone's surprise, Naruto grinned and said, "I said that I would become a great ninja and become the Hokage! Nothing will stop me until then! That's my Ninja Way!"

Zabuza's clone felt something odd. He immediately slashed Naruto, only for him to dissipate in a cloud of smoke. At the very instant, several explosive tags exploded right behind him, dispelling the Water Clone along with several of Naruto's clones!

Seeing that it was just a clone, Sakura and Sasuke sighed in relief. Sakura looked in surprise while wondering, 'Since when did Naruto become so smart and strong?'

Sasuke merely smirked and grabbed a couple of Fuma Shurikens. He waited for a few seconds before throwing them! Under the strain of the explosions, another set of water walls collapsed. Zabuza's Water Clones created another set of Water Walls. However, before they could form, Sasuke's Fuma Shuriken moved through the area and flew straight at Zabuza! He had timed his shuriken perfectly to take advantage of the opening Naruto's explosions created.

Seeing it, Naruto, who was hiding among his clones, thought, 'Nice, Sasuke! I might not need to do the next step after all!'

Naruto and some of his clones were weaving hand signs taking advantage of the chaos created by the explosions.

Zabuza grabbed the Fuma Shuriken in his left hand before noticing another Fuma Shuriken in its shadow. He jumped to avoid it as well, making Sasuke frown. Sasuke glanced towards Naruto, hoping he'd follow up.

Fortunately, Naruto and his clones acted immediately. For once, they didn't shout the name of the jutsus!

'Wind Release: Wind Levitation jutsu'

'Wind Release: Projectile Control jutsu'

One of Naruto's clones took control of the Fuma Shuriken Zabuza had dodged. The Fuma Shuriken curved in the air and moved towards Zabuza again from the back, attracting his attention.

As for the other clones, they controlled the pieces of broken kunai that were floating on the water by first making them levitate and then controlling them with the Projectile Control jutsu. Suddenly, several sharp shards of kunai began moving towards Zabuza at a high speed. His clones, who were still focused on blocking the kunai with explosive tags, and Zabuza, who was looking towards the Fuma Shuriken, were all caught off guard. Not having enough time, Zabuza let go of the Water Prison and flickered away!

Zabuza appeared a sufficient distance away from the area overrun by explosions and shrapnel. He looked at Naruto's Shadow Clones in rage and began weaving hand signs while cursing, 'That little runt!'

Unfortunately for Zabuza, Kakashi had broken free. In the blink of an eye, Kakashi dispelled his Water Clones and directly confronted Zabuza. Just like in the original story, Zabuza would be defeated by Kakashi before being 'killed' by Haku.

Back in Kusagakure, they informed the Konoha ninjas majority of the details regarding the rogue faction targeting them. Fujin analyzed, 'Hmm, it looks like just a normal faction. Akatsuki isn't involved. Since Iwa is supporting the rebel faction, I doubt Onoki will employ Akatsuki as they have captured Han.

Even if the rebel faction employs Akatsuki, they won't directly target Kusagakure as it'll draw too much attention. Not to mention, it didn't happen in the original story either...'

Hiroshi looked at Fujin and asked, "So, how much aid can Konoha provide us?"

Fujin smiled and replied, "Well, that will depend on what you can afford."

Hiroshi wasn't surprised. He never expected Konoha to help them for free without saying a word. No one in Kusagakure did. Everyone in the room from their side was extremely well prepared to argue and convince Konoha to help them for free.

Immediately, one of their leaders sighed. He put up an extremely pitiful expression and said, "As we said in our message, our finances are completely stretched thin due to the war. The rebels have killed dozens of our ninjas. Hundreds are injured. Several towns and villages have been destroyed as well.

We have to relocate the people from those towns and villages and arrange for their shelter and food along with treating them as well. So, there is no way for us to pay you right now."

He said it in a way to invoke maximum sympathy from the other side. Fortunately, everyone on Fujin's side was an experienced negotiator as well. None were phased by his act. While they were sympathetic about their situation while discussing it with Fujin, there was no room for emotions during actual negotiations.

One of the diplomats on Fujin's side said, "While I sympathize with your situation, we can't provide help without getting anything in return. As much as we would like to help you, do understand the situation from our side as well. We can't ask our ninjas to come and risk their lives here without getting anything in return.

Every dead ninja's family has to be compensated. Similarly, everyone who gets crippled has to be paid a pension. The morale of our ninjas will be very low and they might even refuse to join if they aren't paid."

Another person from the Kusagakure camp argued back, "We understand your situation. However, Konoha is the richest village. I'm sure you can afford to bear those expenses."

A second person from Fujin's side responded with a sigh, "Actually, Konoha's finances are spread very thin as well. Even our forces are spread thin. We have to continuously send our ninjas to the

surrounding countries to deter the other major villages from doing anything to harm you. We also had to deal with many rogue ninjas from Kiri which strained our finances further."

A third person quickly added, "In fact, we sent ninjas to the Land of Grass several times as well even though you didn't pay us. Lord Hokage had even sent Hatake Kakashi, the son of the White Fang, a few months ago to deter Iwagakure. Lord Hokage is magnanimous enough to not ask for any payments for those missions. So, we should discuss the payments you will need to make to get our help."

He was immediately countered by another person from the Kusagakure camp. The discussion went on in this manner. Neither Fujin nor Hiroshi spoke and let others do the negotiating. They just looked at each other.

As time passed, Hiroshi became more suspicious as he noticed that 4 of the usual diplomats in Fujin's team weren't speaking at all. All work was done by the 8 diplomats. He wondered, 'Is someone impersonating them? Also, Konoha is awfully stubborn today. We were prepared to owe them a small amount, but they haven't even brought up the matter of loans until now.'

For three hours, the two sides negotiated! Konoha diplomats kept attempting to start discussing how much Kusagakure would have to pay to get Konoha's help. But Kusagakure's leaders never began that discussion and instead kept arguing that Konoha could afford to help them for free.

Finally, Fujin said, "Hiroshi-san, it doesn't seem like you guys actually want a deal."

A faint smile could be seen on Fujin's face, a smile that made Hiroshi very nervous.

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 575: Four Choices!

Hiroshi became slightly nervous on seeing the faint smile on Fujin's lips. While Konoha had a good negotiating team, the negotiations usually used to be very straightforward and Konoha would rarely use the threat of using force as that wasn't Hiruzen's style. If Hiruzen ever wanted to use force during diplomacy, he'd send Danzo to make a move in the dark.

However, there were too many suspicious things during this meeting. The first was the fact that there wasn't any Elder in the diplomatic team. The second was the fact that Fujin was leading the team. The

third suspicious thing was the 9 new faces. And probably the most suspicious thing was that as many as 13 members of Fujin's team hadn't said a word since the meeting began!

Due to these four factors, Hiroshi had been on edge. He thought, 'Even though a lot of things are very suspicious, Konoha has a reputation to maintain. This should just be a pressure tactic. If they wanted to make a move, they wouldn't have sent a diplomatic team here. We can't show weakness!'

Hiroshi replied, "We are serious, Fujin-kun. Though I feel ashamed to say this, it is true that we can't afford to pay anything right now."

His words immediately attracted the attention of Homura and the other diplomats on Fujin's team. Homura thought, 'Right now... It seems like he is agreeing to owe us money. Not bad. It looks like Fujin's tactic of applying pressure is a success. However, it'll only be a success if he takes a step back and accepts this offer.'

The leaders on Kusagakure's side understood it as well. In truth, they had all decided to resist as much as they could. However, they were nervous due to those four points just like Hiroshi. As a result, no one opposed. Everyone's eyes were on Fujin.

Fujin's smile faded away as he shook his head and responded, "That is impossible. Irrespective of the fact whether we can afford to do so or not, we aren't running a charity. Nor is this situation something you guys can't handle by yourselves.

I wanted to discuss the costs for various degrees of cooperation that you might require from us. Unfortunately, you guys have done everything you can to not even begin that discussion for the last three hours. From the way you are going, it seems that won't change even if we negotiate for an entire week."

Everyone's eyes were glued to Fujin. Though no one said anything or showed it on their face, everyone was blaming him for their current situation. After all, had he been a bit flexible, the deadlock could have been resolved.

Fujin continued, "So, we will end the negotiations here. Instead, I'll present you the four choices that Kusagakure has for the time being. I don't care which one you choose nor will I debate about it with you.

You can choose whichever you want as per your free will and what you think would be the best for Kusagakure."

Everyone, including the Konoha ninjas, was surprised by Fujin's words. Despite having been in several negotiations, they had rarely seen something like that. At the very least, no one had seen such a development on day 1 of negotiations. Homura watched curiously to see what Fujin was up to.

Hiroshi asked, "So, what are the four choices?"

Fujin pulled out a scroll and passed it to Hiroshi. As Hiroshi opened it to read, Fujin raised his right arm slightly and raised his index finger. He said, "Since you guys don't want to discuss different levels of cooperation, the help we will give you will either be complete or nothing.

Your first choice is to ask for our help. We will annihilate the rebel faction entirely. However, you will have to pay the cost mentioned in the scroll to get us to help you. And, the payment will have to be made before we make our move."

The Kusagakure leaders subconsciously rejected this choice. No one said anything and only looked at Hiroshi, whose expression became grimmer the more he read from the scroll.

He looked at Fujin and asked with a hint of anger in his voice, "Is this supposed to be a joke?"

Fujin plainly replied, "I am afraid not."

Hiroshi replied, "This choice is unacceptable to us."

Fujin replied, "Suit yourself. However, if you ask for our help at any time in the future, this will be the cost you'll have to pay for requesting our aid. It won't decrease even if you deal with some of the rebels yourselves. Anyway..."

Fujin raised his second finger and added, "Your second choice is to fight the rebels by yourselves. If you don't choose the first option, then Konoha will completely stay out of this conflict. We will only interfere if Iwa makes a direct move against Kusagakure as per our current treaty."

Hiroshi nodded. This was an acceptable option to them. Hiroshi asked, "What is the third choice?"

A smile appeared on Fujin's face once again as he raised his third finger. He said, "Your third option is to put the disguised threat in your message to Konoha into action. You could betray us and ally with Iwa, alleviating your current situation."

Fujin's words shocked everyone in the room. For the first time, everyone showed their true feelings on their face. Even Homura looked at Fujin with widened eyes wondering, 'What the hell is he planning?'

Kusagakure camp became nervous as well. None of them expected Konoha to directly call out their threat.

Before anyone could say anything, Fujin continued in a casual tone, "In which case, I'll kill all of you right here right now."

Those words were the last straw! Everyone in the room freaked out! The Kusagakure ninjas jumped out of their seats. The Konoha diplomats were shaking as well. They hadn't fought against another ninja for years. None of them were ready to fight. The Anbu became very serious as well. Their job had just become a thousand times more difficult.

The one who was the most dumbfounded was Homura! It had been decades since he retired from active duty. Even though he was still as strong as an Elite Jounin, he became nervous in that situation as well.

He cursed, 'Damn you Hiruzen! You never said that this boy was a lunatic! In my younger days, I could have fought my way out of this village. But in my current state, that will be extremely difficult. What is Fujin doing threatening them in their own village? We have only 22 ninjas, they have over a couple of thousand ninjas!'

As Homura expected, most Kusa ninjas drew out their weapons. In response, Konoha ninjas, except Fujin and Homura, did so as well. However, none of them actually made any move. Instead, the Kusa leaders began cursing aggressively!

"You dare to threaten us in our own village?"

"Even though we are a minor village, Konoha can't look down on us!"

"Do you think you can make it out alive if you attack us?"

"Since when did Konoha become so arrogant?"

"..."

Several more such statements were made, making the Konoha diplomats very tense. However, Homura became slightly relaxed and puzzled as he noticed two things.

He thought, 'That's weird... Even though they are showing an aggressive front, not one of them has any intention of attacking. I can understand that they will refrain from attacking as it'll bring Konoha's retaliation, but it is almost like they are scared of attacking. What's even more peculiar is that none of them launched any personal insults at Fujin despite his open threat!'

It was as Homura observed. Not a single person had any intention of attacking. And not a single one wanted to stand out in front of Fujin. While 'The Spectral Swordsman' was only a myth and a rumor in Konoha, no one in Kusagakure had forgotten about him despite Fujin not being very active for over a year.

They knew that whoever attacked first would lose their life. Even if they somehow managed to kill him eventually, none of them wanted to be a sacrifice for others. Similarly, they knew The Spectral Swordsman's reputation. None of them wanted to be hunted down by Fujin after the meeting ended. They had no confidence in surviving if Fujin decided to hunt them later.

Sitting calmly in his chair, Fujin asked plainly, "So, should I assume that you are making this choice?"

Hiroshi immediately said, "Everyone, calm down and return to your seats."

He looked at Fujin and replied, "Please don't joke around. Konohagakure and Kusagakure have been allies since the end of the First Great Ninja War. We have no intention of changing that. There wasn't

any hidden threat in the scroll either. I am afraid that you might have misinterpreted it. Can you tell us what our fourth choice is?"

Fujin nodded and answered in the same casual tone while raising his fourth finger, "Sure, your fourth option is to lie to me and ally with Iwagakure after we leave. In that case, I'll return later and assassinate every one of you and kill every single person living in your houses."

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Chapter 576: Kusagakure prepares for a war!

The room was left speechless yet again. Even when Kusagakure leaders had taken a step back, Fujin threatened them once more! It was so strange that the Kusa leaders were confused about whether they should put up a strong face again or just sit in their chairs.

In the end, no one got up. Even the Konoha side was weirded out by the situation. Finally, Hiroshi replied, "You can rest assured that we won't be betraying Konoha."

Fujin nodded and said, "That's good."

He smiled and added, "We would hate to see such a long-standing alliance getting broken as well."

Hearing that, everyone on Kusagakure's side cursed him internally. All of Fujin's actions made them think that he wanted a fight instead of a peaceful negotiation. Yet, he shamelessly claimed that he wanted to preserve their alliance.

Fujin got up and said, "Let's conclude the meeting. I have already informed you what the cost would be to ask for our help. And that cost won't decrease in the future. If you change your mind in the future and decide to ask for our help, you can send a message to Lord Hokage."

Seeing that Fujin was prepared to leave, Hiroshi asked, "Why not wait for some time and experience our hospitality?"

As offended as he was by Fujin's attitude, he understood that he couldn't make Konoha too upset. In addition, if someone like Fujin stayed in Kusagakure for a few days, it would send a message to the rebels and could make them tone down their aggression. It could even make Iwa back off.

Fujin understood his thoughts. However, why would he do something like that? He smiled and replied, "Some other day for sure, Hiroshi-san. I have to return to the village quickly. The world is too tumultuous right now. I'm sure you understand it the best."

Hiroshi sighed and said, "That's a shame. Alright, we will show you our hospitality some other day."

Fujin nodded and turned around. The Konoha ninjas got up and followed him. Within a few minutes, the group left Kusagakure.

Back in the meeting room, there was a total silence. Seeing that no one was leaving the room, the ninjas, who were overlooking the security, assumed that they wanted to discuss among themselves and closed the door.

As soon as the door closed, curses were heard inside the room!

"That fucking bastard!"

"Konoha crossed all limits today!"

"That brat is too damn arrogant! I wish I could cut him down right in this room!"

"How dare they treat us in this manner?"

"Hiroshi-sama! We need to make Konoha pay for humiliating us in our own village!"

Hiroshi looked at the person who said that and asked, "What do you recommend we do?"

That man went silent. However, one impatient youngster replied, "Let's carry out that threat and ally with Iwagakure. We will prepare a trap for Suzuki Fujin with their help and eliminate him when he tries to carry out his threat!"

Hiroshi shook his head and said, "Don't forget that the ones supporting the rebels are Iwagakure. If we try to negotiate with them now, we will be in a weaker position. They will force us to accept the existence of the rebel faction and might also use us as cannon fodder in the next Great War. It might spell our doom."

An old man added, "Besides, even with Iwa's help, there is no guarantee that we will be able to kill Suzuki Fujin. His bounty was actually put up by Iwa. In addition, the rumors about him being the Spectral Swordsman also came from Iwa.

For the Tsuchikage to put up such a large bounty, Iwa should have suffered heavily at his hands. And that something can't be his fight against Roshi as Iwa put the bounty several months later. From my sources in the Land of Waterfall, some Konoha Anbu ninjas had clashed with some Iwa ninjas in that country. My sources said that even Kitsuchi was involved.

I believe that Anbu unit was led by Suzuki Fujin. And that clash should have caused heavy losses to Iwagakure despite Kitsuchi's presence. Considering that Suzuki Fujin is still alive and well, Iwa has failed to do anything to him even after placing that huge bounty.

If we ally with Iwa and fail to kill him, our ninjas will suffer heavily. And that isn't even considering what will happen if he doesn't make a direct move on our village and instead begins hunting down our ninjas after they leave the village. The losses we are facing right now will be nothing compared to what we will face then."

His wise words made the room calm down. Though they were still angry at Fujin, they understood that acting rashly could spell their doom. One person sighed and said, "This doesn't feel good. Despite being insulted in such a manner, all we can do is swallow our pride and endure the humiliation."

Hiroshi said, "There is no choice. This is the reason why we focus on diplomacy. Even though we have experienced a peaceful decade, don't forget the difference in strength between us and the major villages.

That said, not everything that happened in this meeting was bad. While we messed up a bit by threatening Konoha in this way, we now have a clear picture of their attitude."

He took a pause and looked at everyone in the room before continuing, "Their stance can be explained in three points. Firstly, they won't help us in dealing with the rebels for free. Instead, they will charge us a premium for saving us. If we fall into a difficult position in the future, we could request their help even though it'll cost us an arm. However, that is better than losing the entire body.

Secondly, they will help us if Iwa attacks us directly. In that case, it will become an all-out war between Konoha and Iwa. Things might even escalate further. In the worst case, the Fourth Great Ninja War might start. However, I don't think either Konoha or Iwa want that to happen. So, things might not escalate much.

Thirdly, if we ally with Iwa, then Konoha will go all out to target us. Even with Iwa's help, that isn't something we can endure. We can't consider this option unless Konoha takes heavy losses and becomes much weaker."

Everyone in the room nodded. The old man, who spoke earlier, said, "Though his words were humiliating and we were refused any free or cheap help, the situation isn't bad. We can deal with the rebels ourselves. So we don't need to consider whatever Konoha wants to charge us for help. It's just that our losses will be significant."

Hiroshi nodded and added, "Yes. But since we don't need to worry about Iwa's interference, we can finally stop being on the defensive and begin our counterattack. I want to see how much unity they show once their losses start mounting."

He got up and looked at everyone in the room. Making eye contact with everyone, he said, "I know that none of us have deployed all our forces until today due to our worries. However, from this moment onwards, we will be focusing entirely on this war. No more holding back. It's time to eliminate those fucking traitors!"

Hiroshi's words had the intended effect. Everyone in the room began making plans for their counterattack.

As the Konoha group left Kusagakure, Homura looked at Fujin. By that moment, he had analyzed everything that had happened in the meeting. He thought, 'The Spectral Swordsman... I almost forgot that he was called that when he was in the Anbu.'

I never imagined that he would have such a deterrence effect in the minor villages! None of them had any intention of fighting him. Even though they tried to hide their emotions, fear was visible even in Hiroshi's eyes when Fujin said that he would hunt them down later.

It seems that Koharu and I underestimated his reputation. However, Hiruzen should know it very well. Is this the reason why he insisted upon training him to become a negotiator?'

The others from Konoha had their thoughts as well. The ones from Anbu had worked with Fujin earlier. As a result, they weren't too surprised with the effect he had. However, seeing the Kusagakure leadership being so afraid of him increased their respect for him.

As for the diplomats, they were still full of complaints. They suffered several panic attacks once Fujin started speaking. One of them asked, "Did we need to be so harsh? It could hurt their ego and push them towards Iwagakure. Due to your open threat, they might even do so in the dark."

Fujin replied, "If they want to do so in the dark, then there was nothing stopping them earlier either. It's better to just deter them right now instead of hoping that our goodwill moves them. Besides..."

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Chapter 577: Changing Konoha's Image!

Fujin took a pause of half a minute as they continued moving forward. Even Homura became curious to know what Fujin was intending to say. His eyes widened when he finally heard Fujin's words.

Fujin continued, "Besides, which village has helped out another village in such a huge matter for free? Their demand was completely unreasonable in the first place. And the tone of their letter implied that Konoha was weak.

It's not surprising for other villages to think that. After all, we suffered innumerable losses post the Third Great Ninja War. The Kyubi assault and the Uchiha Massacre caused grave losses to our combat power. On the other hand, our diplomatic potential took a great hit due to the Hyuga incident.

Even though we were recovering, the recent massive attack in the middle of our village where we failed to even identify the culprit caused another blow to Konoha's image.

These losses have changed the perception that other villages had towards Konoha and might make them think that it is easy to push us around. While we can't stop them from thinking in this manner, it is important to let them know how bad the consequences will be if they act while thinking along those lines."

Fujin's words surprised the diplomats and Homura. All of them were aware that Konoha's diplomatic powers had waned drastically after Minato's death. They had to keep it in mind while negotiating. It was after a long time that someone had negotiated like Konoha was still the strongest village! Even so, not everyone agreed with his viewpoint.

One of the diplomats immediately argued, "While I understand your point of view, it is the truth that we are no longer as strong as we once were. Even though Lord Hokage has done a lot, we are still far from our peak strength. If we go to war with Iwa now, we will be in a very difficult spot."

Fujin chuckled and said, "True. But that is if we go to war with Iwa. Don't worry, it was the first thing I considered when Lord Hokage gave me this mission. There is no chance that Iwa would act unless we show that we are weak."

Some of the diplomats agreed with Fujin's confidence due to Onoki's reputation. Some were still doubtful but didn't say anything as there wasn't any point in doing so. Fujin had already threatened Kusa and there was nothing anyone could do to reverse that. If anything went wrong, Fujin would be the one to shoulder the responsibility.

Only Homura was stuck in deep thought as he analyzed Fujin's words. After thinking for a while, he muttered to himself, 'I now see what you were aiming for, Hiruzen. You wanted to use him to change Konoha's perception in the eyes of other countries. From a gentle and patient image that we were forced to project to a fierce one, indicating that our weak phase has already passed.

As long as this matter plays out properly, Fujin will become the face of our negotiation team whenever we have to make tough decisions. He is already a rank S ninja. Once he grows older and stronger, he could even negotiate with other Kages on equal grounds.'

Homura glanced towards Fujin and couldn't help but wonder, 'Are you planning to raise him as your next successor, Hiruzen?'

Homura didn't voice out his thoughts. The group continued their journey towards Konoha.

In the Land of Waves, Kakashi's eyes snapped open and he immediately sat upright, scaring Naruto and Sakura who were trying to peek under his mask. Kakashi didn't pay any attention to their antics and thought, 'What's this odd feeling? I know that Zabuza is dead. But I can't shake the feeling that I've overlooked something... Something big!'

Kakashi's brain went into overdrive as he recalled and analyzed his clash against Zabuza. Very soon, he realized the peculiarities in the hunter-nin's actions. He quickly speculated, "Zabuza is most probably still alive!"

His words shocked everyone in the room. He explained to them his analysis causing Naruto, Sakura and Tazuna to freak out. They only calmed down after Kakashi informed them that Zabuza wouldn't be able to move around for over a week. Or rather, the other two calmed down. Naruto, on the other hand, became excited at the prospect of facing Zabuza once again.

Kakashi informed the group that they would prepare which made Sakura enquire how he would do so when he couldn't even move due to having overused his Sharingan. Kakashi answered, "I can't move much, but you three can. I will conduct a special training session for you three to prepare you for the battle."

Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura shivered on hearing Kakashi's words! They were still very fearful of the training Kakashi was putting them through. And now he was saying that the training session would be even more 'special'!

Sakura complained, "Sensei, we won't be able to fight if our bodies are aching and we don't have any energy."

At the same time, her inner self cursed, 'Do you want to kill me, old man? Why don't you know the difference between training and torture?'

Naruto and Sasuke didn't say anything but silently agreed with her. Kakashi looked at the trio and said, "Don't worry, you three will like this training."

The three Genins doubted their sensei's words. Unfortunately, they didn't have any other option and could only hope that it was true. None of them wanted to face Zabuza when every single muscle in their body was aching.

The next morning, team 7 had assembled in the woods near Tazuna's house. Naruto asked, half in excitement and half in fear, "Sensei, what will our special training be?"

Kakashi explained, "We don't have a lot of time to train. So, I can't teach you something entirely new. Hence, we will focus on increasing your chakra control. We will do so by climbing trees."

Sakura wondered, 'Climbing trees? How will that be training?'

At the same time, Naruto's eyes widened, 'Climbing trees? Does he mean the same exercise that Fujin taught me?'

Kakashi observed Naruto's reaction and thought, 'Fujin seems to have already taught Naruto this. I have seen him walk a bit on walls while chasing that cat. However, his chakra control is still quite bad. I guess I'll teach him water walking.'

Kakashi said, "This won't be normal tree climbing. You'll do it without using your hands. Watch and learn."

In front of the three Genins, Kakashi walked up a tree, causing Sakura and Sasuke to be surprised. On the other hand, Naruto felt excited as he already knew it.

Sakura asked, "But Kakashi sensei, how will climbing trees in this way make us stronger?"

Kakashi explained to the trio about chakra control and also informed them about how it could help them build their stamina. Naruto listened carefully as well as he didn't know about it either as Fujin didn't

bother wasting his time doing something as meaningless as teaching theory to Naruto. Naruto realized, 'So this is why Fujin made me learn this and Water Walking!'

Kakashi added, "The only way you can learn this is by doing it. Use the kunai blades to mark your progress."

Naruto didn't bother picking a kunai and instead claimed loudly, "I already know this, Kakashi sensei!"

His words surprised Sakura and Sasuke. Though Naruto had used this skill at times, he had used it for extremely short durations as none of the rank D missions required that skill in particular. As a result, neither of them had noticed it.

Naruto immediately ran up the tree and said, "See, I told you! Big brother Fujin already taught me this when I was in the academy! Hehe!"

Sasuke and Sakura were surprised once again. Neither expected Naruto to do something that would look so cool! Sakura's inner self shouted, 'Since when did Naruto become this cool? Even my Sasuke-kun seems a bit upset!'

Meanwhile, Sasuke frowned and asked softly, "Who is this Fujin that he keeps talking about every time?"

Though Naruto mentioned Fujin's name several times, neither Sakura nor Sasuke had paid much attention to him. It was only when he learnt that Fujin had taught Naruto this technique that Sasuke became interested in knowing about him.

Sakura looked at Sasuke and said, "I am not sure. I never heard anyone other than Naruto speaking about him."

Hearing their words, Naruto, who was now standing upside down on a branch, said loudly, "Fujin is an extremely strong and cool ninja, believe it!"

Both just stared at Naruto with a deadpan expression. Kakashi couldn't help but chuckle as Naruto spoke about Fujin while not giving any information.

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Chapter 578: Who is Fujin?

Kakashi got down from the tree while saying, "Suzuki Fujin... He is one of the few Elite Jounins in Konoha, the same rank as me. He isn't particularly famous as most of the missions he did were undercover missions. However, there is no doubt that he is one of the strongest ninjas in the world.

Sakura, you in particular need to know about him as he is the one who represents the civilian ninjas in Konoha's Council. If you face any political issues, then he is the one you need to approach."

Sakura and Sasuke were surprised. Sakura's inner self screamed, 'What the hell is going on? First, we learn how impressive the old Hokage is. Then Zabuza said how cool Kakashi-sensei is. And now even the person Naruto always keeps talking about is so strong? Why is everyone so impressive?'

Even Naruto was surprised. He thought, 'Man, I thought that his title was cool. But I didn't know that he was one of the strongest ninjas in the world!'

Kakashi chuckled on seeing their reactions and asked, "You guys know that Zabuza is one of the Seven Ninja Swordsmen of the Mist, right?"

All three nodded. Kakashi continued, "While there is no question about his strength, Zabuza could become a Seven Ninja Swordsmen of the Mist only when he was given the Kubikiribocho blade. And, the only reason why he could get that blade was because Fujin killed the previous wielder of Kubikiribocho, who was as strong as Zabuza."

The three Genins were stunned once again. For a moment, Naruto didn't control his chakra properly and lost his footing. Luckily, he flipped in the air and landed on his feet. He looked at Kakashi and exclaimed, "No way! Big brother Fujin killed someone who was as strong as Zabuza!"

Meanwhile, Sasuke clenched his fists and thought, 'So Naruto has been getting the help of someone that strong? No wonder his strength has increased so rapidly. I need to get stronger faster as well.'

Kakashi noticed Sasuke's emotions and thought, 'Good. This should motivate him to work harder.'

Kakashi looked at Naruto and said, "He did. But that is a secret that very few in Konoha know. So, never speak about it."

The three Genins nodded. Kakashi said, "Anyway, that's enough chit-chat. Sasuke and Sakura, try climbing the tree. Naruto, come here."

Sakura and Sasuke immediately began trying while Naruto walked over to Kakashi. Kakashi said, "Since you have already learnt this, I'll teach you another trick. It's a more advanced application of chakra control. Instead of climbing on trees, you'll walk on water."

Naruto immediately replied, "I know that exercise too, sensei! I can walk and run on water with ease."

Kakashi wasn't very surprised. Since Fujin had taught him one exercise, it wasn't far-fetched for him to have taught the other one as well. The only reason why Kakashi was surprised at all was that Naruto's chakra control despite knowing these two exercises was lacking.

Kakashi sighed internally while thinking, 'Fujin... He keeps making my job more difficult. What do I teach Naruto now?'

As he thought of Fujin, Kakashi couldn't help but think about his meeting with Fujin.

A few weeks ago, Fujin had just gone through his morning workout and was about to return to his house when he suddenly stopped and said, "Kakashi... What a pleasant surprise."

A couple of trees away from Fujin, Kakashi was reading his book with his back resting against a tree. Hearing Fujin's voice, he closed his book while saying, "Your senses are sharp as always."

Fujin chuckled and said, "It's not every day that someone visits the training ground while reading porn. Anyway, what's up?"

Unsurprisingly, there wasn't even a hint of embarrassment on Kakashi's face on being called out. He replied, "Nothing much. I just noticed some interesting changes in my students recently. I was wondering whether you knew anything about it."

Kakashi stared directly into Fujin's eyes as he asked the question. However, Fujin didn't show any signs and instead feigned ignorance perfectly and asked in a confused tone, "What changes?"

Kakashi thought, 'Looks like he has mastered the art of poker face. I shouldn't be surprised considering how he fooled those bounty hunters.'

Kakashi answered, "Well, they suddenly began trying to unmask me and steal my books. Since you are close to Naruto, did you notice anything strange or did he tell the reason behind them doing so?"

Kakashi gave his famous eye smile while talking with Fujin. Even so, his eyes were scrutinizing every muscle movement that Fujin made. Thankfully, having to deal with the likes of Hiruzen and Shikaku on a regular basis had made Fujin just enough shameless to not show anything.

Instead, he just chuckled and said, "Eh, they do that? That's cute. It looks like they really like their sensei. I suppose they wanted to impress you. Was that the only weird thing?"

Even though Fujin didn't give away anything, Kakashi cursed internally, 'It was him for sure! There is no doubt about it. All my instincts say that he is enjoying the situation. The one spying on us might be him as well. Though I can't be too certain about it. However, he is undoubtedly the one behind their irregular behavior.'

Even though Fujin's act was good, he couldn't do anything about the instincts of an experienced ninja. That said, he didn't particularly care about it either. After all, even if Kakashi got irrefutable proof to blame Fujin, what could he do? Complain to Hiruzen? Knowing Fujin's tendencies, Hiruzen might not even raise this matter with Fujin!

The only thing he could do was make the lives of his students hell. However, why would Fujin care about that? If Kakashi's sense of smell wasn't as good as it was, his clones would have grabbed some popcorn to enjoy their 'training' sessions.

Kakashi understood it as well. He just wanted to confirm a few things. Since he wouldn't get anything else from Fujin in this matter, he said, "Yeah, that's probably it. I was definitely 'impressed'. Anyway, Naruto speaks quite often about you."

Fujin thought, 'He'd better. Apart from Phantom Haven, I have spent the highest amount of my money and time on him.'

He smirked and said, "That's good to hear. He speaks quite 'highly' of you and your special Taijutsu as well."

Kakashi immediately understood what Fujin implied. He smiled once again and said, "I didn't know he thought so highly of my Taijutsu. Anyway, I saw that you have taught him quite a few Wind jutsus. Does he have an affinity to Wind nature manipulation?"

Fujin shrugged again and said, "No idea. I never checked his affinity."

Kakashi looked at Fujin with a deadpan expression and asked, "Why did you teach him Wind jutsus then?"

Fujin replied, "Those are just rank E jutsus. Anyone can learn them. Besides, these jutsus went perfectly with his prankful nature. I felt that it might be a good way to motivate him to train. Considering how well he has progressed, I wasn't wrong."

Kakashi kept staring at Fujin while thinking, 'Why do I feel like he only did that to cause chaos through his pranks?'

He said, "Alright. Can you tell me what you taught him regarding Wind Release? I'll have to plan his training accordingly."

Fujin nodded and informed Kakashi about the same. Kakashi had already figured out most of it. The only thing that surprised him was the fact that he had made Naruto complete the Leaf Cutting exercise.

Kakashi replied, "I see. So he already has the basics down. That should make my work easier. Anyway, I'll see you around. I have to continue the training of my 'cute' students."

Fujin chuckled and said, "Enjoy."

Kakashi's figure disappeared from the training ground. A smirk appeared on Fujin's face as he thought, 'I didn't expect him to connect the dots so quickly. His instincts are quite good. Oh well, Naruto should get used to that training routine in a month or two. I'll manipulate him to create more trouble for Kakashi then. For now, he can continue teaching those 5 how to prank.'

Kakashi, who was moving towards his team, sighed and thought, 'Such a troublesome fellow. Even though he didn't show any peculiarities, I got a feeling that he wanted to see me in trouble. Did the Third put him up to this? Or is he still fond of causing trouble like he was when he asked the Third for chakra metal swords...'

Even though it had been some time since Kakashi met Fujin, he still wasn't sure of the answer nor could he find Fujin's motives.

"Well, Sensei? Can you teach me some cool jutsus like Sasuke's Fireball?" Naruto grew impatient as Kakashi didn't say anything for a few seconds.

Kakashi was about to answer when they heard, "This is easier than I thought!"

The voice immediately attracted everyone's attention. Kakashi, Naruto and Sasuke all saw Sakura sitting on the branch of a tree. Sasuke frowned as it meant that he was the only one who couldn't do so. Meanwhile, Naruto thought, 'So quickly? I needed more than a week to do it properly!'

Even so, Naruto cheered for her while Kakashi praised her chakra control while teasing, "It looks like there is just one of you who can't do this exercise then."

Sasuke's frown intensified but he didn't say anything and continued training. Kakashi asked Sakura to keep training as well and said, "Naruto, follow me."

Naruto: The Wind Calamity

Chapter 579: Great Breakthrough jutsu

Kakashi and Naruto moved around a hundred meters deeper into the woods before Kakashi stopped moving. Naruto asked curiously, "What are we doing here, Kakashi-sensei?"

Kakashi said, "I'll be teaching you a special jutsu."

Naruto immediately became excited and exclaimed while jumping in joy, "Really? Yahoo!!! Which special jutsu will you teach me, sensei?"

Kakashi sighed at Naruto's antics and said, "Calm down, Naruto. Before I teach you, run your chakra through this piece of paper."

Kakashi handed Naruto a chakra paper. Naruto was confused but followed his instructions. As soon as his chakra flowed through the paper, the paper split into two, surprising Naruto. Kakashi thought, 'It looks like Fujin's decision wasn't entirely random.'

Naruto asked in surprise, "How did that happen?"

Kakashi explained, "This is the chakra paper. It is used to find out your nature affinity."

Naruto asked in a confused tone, "Nature affinity? What's that?"

Kakashi slowly explained to Naruto the basics of nature manipulation and how chakra paper reacts to each affinity. It took a few tries and a huge portion of Kakashi's patience, but Naruto finally understood.

He said, "So my affinity is Wind Manipulation. That's why the paper split. Does that mean the paper will begin burning if Sasuke tries it?"

Kakashi answered, "Not necessarily."

Naruto became confused once again and asked, "What do you mean? Doesn't he have an affinity for Fire Manipulation?"

Kakashi said, "You don't need to have an affinity to be able to perform the jutsus of that particular nature. Even though you have an affinity for Wind Manipulation, you can learn jutsus of other natures as well. It's just that you'll have a harder time doing so.

The Chakra paper only shows your strongest affinity. For you, it is Wind. For Sasuke, it might not be Fire."

Kakashi thought, 'From his chakra, I have a feeling that Sasuke is the same type as me. Even though he didn't say so, I guess Fujin had the same feeling with Naruto, which is probably why he decided to teach Naruto Wind jutsus.'

Naruto spoke with a confused expression, "I don't understand. But whatever. Can you teach me the jutsu now, sensei?"

Kakashi nodded and said, "Sure. The jutsu I'll be teaching you is called The Great Breakthrough Jutsu. It is a very strong Wind Release jutsu. Listen carefully..."

Since Fujin had already built up Naruto's basics, Kakashi decided to teach Naruto a jutsu that he could use more effectively in battle. While he could have decided against teaching Naruto and just let him protect Tazuna, like he would soon do with Sakura, he decided against it knowing that Naruto would annoy him constantly the entire time.

He carefully explained everything to Naruto and even demonstrated it once despite the state of his body. Naruto immediately began practicing it. Kakashi looked at him and wondered, 'Will he manage to learn this jutsu in a week's time?'

While team 7 trained while awaiting their rematch with Zabuza, Fujin's group returned to the village in the evening. Fujin said, "I and Elder Homura will report the mission to Lord Hokage. The rest of you can return to your homes."

The group nodded and dispersed. Fujin and Homura continued forward and entered Hiruzen's office. Hiruzen was pleasantly surprised to see them. He said, "You two are back early. Did the negotiations go well?"

Fujin smiled and answered, "It went as I had expected. I don't think they will be asking for help considering that their opponent is considerably weaker. On the off chance that they can't defeat them, then we can earn a fortune. As for allying with Iwa, I don't think they will do anything that foolish."

Fujin's reply intrigued Hiruzen. He wondered, 'What exactly happened there? Maybe I should have disguised myself and gone with them as well. From Homura's reaction, whatever happened there sure seems interesting.'

Hiruzen said, "That sounds good. What exactly happened during the negotiations?"

Fujin nodded and gave a rundown. Initially, Hiruzen was pleased with how the interaction had gone. Fujin's insistence on not doing anything for free and not taking the initiative to allow them to owe him was something he had anticipated even before he assigned Fujin that mission. Apart from his reputation as the Spectral Swordsman, it was the main reason he chose Fujin to lead the negotiations.

However, when Fujin informed him about the four choices he presented to Kusagakure, sweat appeared on his face. He was left speechless.

He cursed, 'What the hell? Why does it feel like he was actually wanting a fight instead of negotiating? Even Sensei was never this overbearing! If he had an issue, he would just assassinate everyone he had an issue with, leaving no survivors or witnesses. Heck, even Danzo has never threatened an ally so openly!'

While threatening during negotiations wasn't anything new and Hiruzen himself had employed that option several times, he had never threatened an ally directly. Hiruzen would generally utilize the danger that other major villages posed along with the long list of rank S ninjas from Konoha to disguise his threats as compassion and reminders.

Hiruzen's eyes wandered towards his old friend, whose face was full of complaints. He immediately understood why Homura was angry at him. In Hiruzen's defense, he hadn't anticipated Fujin escalating the issue to such an extent.

Fortunately or unfortunately, Fujin's threat had achieved the results he desired. So, Hiruzen couldn't even 'educate' him and ask him to tone down his aggression slightly. He could only say, "I am glad that the negotiations went well. Prepare the mission report and hand it to me."

Fujin replied, "I could, but considering that Elder Homura travelled such a long distance to ensure that I didn't mess up at the negotiations and also observed everyone properly, I believe that it is only fair for Elder Homura to have this honor."

As Fujin was speaking, he turned his eyes from Hiruzen to Homura. Homura, who was still thinking about how to eat Hiruzen's head for sending someone so reckless to lead such a mission, was caught off guard.

For a moment, he didn't know how to react on hearing the sudden 'praise'. Before he could gather his thoughts, Fujin bowed slightly and said, "Thank you for your guidance, Elder Homura. I'll leave the mission report to you. See you later, Grandpa."

Not waiting for anyone's response, Fujin disappeared from the room, leaving the two old men alone. With a few flickers, Fujin arrived at his house and muttered to himself, 'Creating a mission report for a negotiation mission is a pain in the ass. It takes several days to complete even with the help of the diplomats. Though I can have my clones work on it, why should I waste them on such a pointless task when there is someone more experienced to take care of it?'

Back in the office, both Hiruzen and Homura were left speechless. Given their experience, both could see the lack of sincerity in Fujin's gratitude. He had just dumped the work on Homura and escaped. As someone who had gotten used to dumping his work on others, Homura felt that he had returned half a century into the past!

Hiruzen was the one to gather his thoughts first. He said with a smile on his face, "In that case, I'll be waiting for your report, old friend."

Homura immediately cursed, "Old friend my ass! Why didn't you tell me that this boy is such a lunatic? He is even worse than Danzo! Danzo would have ensured that Kusagakure was surrounded by a thousand Root ninjas before even thinking about making such a threat!

Instead, I nearly suffered a heart attack due to this boy! What would have happened if they didn't stay calm and attacked us instead? Do you think these old bones could have endured such an attack?"

Hiruzen knew that there was no point in debating with Homura as there wasn't any way he'd win. He instead chuckled and said, "But everything worked out well, didn't it? I have to admit that even I underestimated how much he is feared though. When he was active in the Anbu, all the minor villages were terrified of him. I didn't imagine that that terror would still exist to such a degree."

Hearing Hiruzen's words made Homura think about the reactions of the Kusagakure leaders. He said, "I didn't know that his reputation was so fearsome back when he was active either. You should have seen their reaction when Fujin mentioned their third choice. Even Hiroshi's eyes showed fear. It was as if he was certain that he would die if a battle broke out.

Which missions was Fujin exactly a part of when he was in the Anbu? And how many of the rumors regarding him are true?"

Hiruzen replied, "Most of his missions were assassination and elimination missions. With how efficient he was, he gained a reputation very quickly. That said, there is no record of his mission reports. We burned it a long time ago. It'll create a lot of diplomatic issues if they ever come out. As for the rumors, there is not much point in paying attention to them. They are exaggerated as always."

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Chapter 580: The Compassionate Elders

"As for the rumors, there is not much point in paying attention to them. They are exaggerated as always."

Homura was annoyed by Hiruzen's response. Even though it seemed like Hiruzen answered his queries, in truth, Hiruzen didn't give him any details. Understanding that Hiruzen didn't intend to leak details about Fujin's past and abilities, Homura didn't push and instead said, "By the way, when we were returning, Fujin said something that was very intriguing. I didn't expect someone as young as him to have such thoughts."

Hiruzen was surprised. Fujin hadn't mentioned anything that had happened after the meeting was over. He asked, "What did he say?"

Homura informed Hiruzen about Fujin's words to the diplomats when they questioned his methods. It caused Hiruzen to fall into a deep thought. Homura asked, "What are you thinking?"

Hiruzen sighed and said, "It looks like the next generation isn't fond of my conservative methods. Though I guess I shouldn't be surprised considering that they grew up on stories of how strong Konoha once was and the mighty warriors we produced but only got to experience a weak Konoha."

Homura nodded and said, "In terms of approach, he is more similar to a young Danzo than you."

Hiruzen agreed and said, "That said, a bit of aggression isn't bad. Konoha has been passive ever since Minato's death. Though I and Danzo schemed quite a bit, all our work was done in the dark. With youngsters like Fujin and Kakashi stepping up, there is no harm in loosening up a bit and flexing our muscles. It might just be a good deterrent."

Homura shook his head and replied, "A bit of aggression will be good. However, being overbearing will have the opposite effect. Even though Konoha's strength has recovered to a great extent, we are no longer as strong as we were during the Second and the Third Great Ninja Wars when we could take on all four Great Villages at the same time.

Both Iwa and Kumo are as strong as us and have an advantage in terms of numbers. They only lack in terms of rank S ninjas. When the next Great War takes place, we can't take on both of them at the same time. If Suna or Kiri were to help them, we would collapse for sure and might be forced to give up the majority of our lands or even the village.

Fortunately, the current situation is favorable for us. Suna is very weak. All their old rank S ninjas have retired or died. Apart from the Kazekage, they don't have any rank S ninja. And, Kiri is in ruins due to their civil war. Considering their weak strength, both will be wary of Iwa and Kumo's strength, worrying that they will be the next if we fall.

We can use that fear to ally with these two countries. As long as we do that, we won't be at risk of confronting Iwa and Kumo by ourselves. However, if Fujin deals with the two of them just as aggressively, then there's no chance of making a lasting alliance."

Homura's expression became serious as he continued, "Hiruzen, I can see that you are planning on grooming him to become a Hokage candidate. However, you should wait for him to become more

mature. Otherwise, Konoha's future will be in danger. Becoming a Kage requires not only strength but also wit and willingness to scheme in the shadows."

Homura's concerns weren't unfounded. Even though Konoha had an advantage in rank S ninjas, in a large war, a single ninja had limited ability. Of course, that was unless someone like Hashirama or Madara, who could solo even the great villages, appeared.

It was the reason why Minato was so feared and became the Hokage so easily despite the village having so many ambitious ninjas. Though not at the same level as those two monsters, killing a thousand ninjas by himself had a great psychological impact on every single village. A few rounds and Minato alone could destroy half of their armies. No village could afford such losses.

Had Homura known that Fujin had mastered the Flying Thunder God jutsu or knew about the degree to which Fujin could control winds, Homura might not have said what he did.

Hiruzen replied, "You are forgetting that he is still only 16. We were very hot-headed and reckless back then as well. As for scheming in the darkness, Fujin isn't a slouch either. I guess he just felt that a direct approach was more convenient in this particular case."

Hiruzen still remembered the stunt Fujin had pulled off in Suna. It was something that he never anticipated. As far as scheming in the dark went, it was one of the most brilliant ploys Hiruzen had seen. Even Danzo would have considered it as one of his best achievements had he been the one to do it. And Fujin had done so when he was just 13. So, Hiruzen didn't doubt Fujin's scheming ability at all.

He continued, "As for his wit, I am sure I don't need to say anything about it to you."

A smile appeared on Hiruzen's face as Homura understood what he was implying. He became slightly embarrassed on recalling that Fujin had dumped a rather time-consuming task on him and escaped before allowing him a response just a few minutes ago. He would be stuck with that work for more than a week.

Homura replied, "I am not saying that he is a bad choice, just that he'll need to show a lot more maturity for us to consider him over Kakashi."

Hiruzen nodded and said, "That's true. However, we can worry about them later. Unless Jiraiya or Tsunade returns to accept the responsibility, I'll hang on until either of them is ready."

Homura nodded. That was all he wanted to hear. The two discussed some more stuff before Homura left.

The next day, Fujin completed his morning routine and freshened up while thinking, 'My clones didn't find Naruto or the others inside the village. I guess they finally went to the Land of Wave. I wonder if there will be any changes...'

Fujin didn't particularly care about Zabuza or the sword. Neither was very useful for him. The only one he thought of was Haku. He sighed and thought, 'A shame that he is very loyal to Zabuza. Otherwise, he would have been a great subordinate to look after Phantom Haven.'

Oh well, nothing I could do. Zabuza probably recruited him even before I graduated. The same as Kimimaro, another great option if not for his disease.

Anyway, the next council meeting will be in three days. It's time to make my move.'

Since Fujin had decided to increase his influence in the village and make his position in the council unmovable, he had made up his mind to do something very impactful. He created a Shadow Clone and sent him to the office.

Just when the clone left the house, an Anbu Captain, wearing the Monkey mask, approached him and called out, "Fujin, I have something to discuss."

The clone stopped and looked at him. Ever since Fujin took over the training of the 5 kids with Kekkei Genkai, the Anbu Captain had become free. As a result, he was put in charge of handling the things inside Fujin's compound, other than his house.

The clone asked, "What's the issue?"

Monkey answered, "We are facing some shortage in training equipment. In addition, I feel that a particular facility should be added to our Training Building. It will help the trainees a lot. There is also some damaged equipment that needs to be replaced..."

Monkey listed a few more things that were needed. One thing Fujin had learnt over the last couple of months was that managing a compound with over a hundred people was no joke. If trained Anbu ninjas weren't assisting him, that would have been a full-time job. Even with Hiruzen's arrangements, there was still a lot he needed to do. It had increased his respect for the Clan Leaders.

Thankfully, he had a way out. After listening to Monkey, Fujin's clone replied, "Hmm, these will assist the kids a lot. I agree, we should make these changes. Visit Elder Koharu and inform her about the situation. Ask her to get these done as soon as she can. It'll be best if everything is done within 3 days."

Despite wearing a mask, Fujin's clone could observe that Monkey was feeling awkward. He said, "With all due respect, I don't think we should trouble the Elders for such small issues. The last time I went to Elder Koharu, she was looking extremely annoyed."

In the last couple of months, Monkey had visited Koharu five times. The first couple of times, she didn't mind. The next couple of times, he could sense that she was annoyed. The last time, she directly scolded him for coming to her with such small issues.

Fujin's clone became extremely serious and replied, "Don't view our respected Elders through the same lens as other officials. Unlike them, who only have those jobs because they are afraid of risking their lives, Elder Koharu and Elder Homura do it because of their compassion and love for the younger generation. Nothing makes them happier than seeing the young kids grow."

Even though they might act like they are annoyed, in truth, they are happy that they get to guide the youngsters. It's just that they don't show it on their face. However, having worked closely with them on the Council, I can guarantee this.

So, you don't need to be concerned. Just ask her. If she acts unwilling, just tell her that I requested it so that the kids can train in the best possible environment."

Despite Fujin's seriousness, Monkey was very skeptical. He thought, 'I'm afraid he has the wrong impression of the Elders. It didn't look like she was acting at all! But...'

Despite what he thought, there was nothing he could do. He could only follow Fujin's instructions and went to see Koharu.