

***Title: Darkest Night Hidden in The Leaf (1)***

A little more than six months have passed in the blink of an eye since the last batch of shinobi graduated from various levels in the academy. Some persisted in training, some reevaluated their choices to adopt less dangerous professions after their blood cooled off, and some corpses were incinerated based on the Shinobi Code for funerals.

A majority of the teams fell in the first category.

A few cases, like Anya, one of Mikoto's former team members, fell in the second category. The administration of the village always accounts for such issues. It is one of the reasons why the administration encourages bright students to complete their courses before graduating—Not only are the graduates older and more tempered, but the students are also *'taught'* about the prosperity of the village and the will of fire to push them beyond their base fears.

Undoubtedly the numbers of genins who jumped ships to more stable professions were more significant in this batch, but Hiruzen felt glad he allowed unusually early graduation. Things are turning out terribly, after all.

The chances of increased causality are high. So, the more teachings the previous generation can leave behind, the better.

"Hokage-sama, the meeting is about to start." Shikudo glances at his leader.

"What about the preparations?" Hiruzen wears his hat to hide his noticeably worse bald spot and somewhat increased whiteness in his hair. The increased stress from the recent events has tested Kage's nerves intensely. His cheeks are fairly sunken, his wrinkles are far more prominent, and the shadowy eyebags under his eyes have chosen to become permanent tenants on his face. He thins his dry lips as Shikudo's words barely bring any comfort.

"The preparations are complete, Lord Third."

"Hmm."

"And what about the latest patrol? Did they find anything?"

Shikudo's gaze darkens. Even his nerves feel tense as he replies quietly, "Not yet. But the civilians, including clan members returning from outside businesses, are relocated to the bunkers. Hokage-sama... forgive me for saying this, but we have put all our eggs in one basket rather literally this time."

"And months of planning led us to conclude this course of action," Hiruzen sighs deeply.

“Forgive me,” Shikudo whispers. “Even I never imagined things to worsen to this extent. We could have adopted a more active position if the Hyuga Clan did not remain an internal threat.”

“No matter. What we need to do now is make the best of the situation as we planned. As crude as our course of action is, it is the only thing that can trump dissemination of information from unknown sources.”

Hiruzen cast a glance out of his window. The sun isn't harsh as the afternoon light radiates a sweet warmth on the village, making the elderly civilians want to take a blissful nap. But instead, Hiruzen makes out shut shops and empty streets. Hiruzen did not hide the relocation of the civilians of the village. It was useless to hide it.

And Rikudo bless the Hyuga's Elder's rotten hearts as they allowed the civilians of their clan to relocate alongside themselves. In the grand scheme of things, the Elders of the Hyuga Clan meant little to Hiruzen. After all, he has a sneaking suspicion that the day will not end peacefully.

The Hyuga Elders may want to enter the bunkers for safety, but Hiruzen wished to deal with them later—peacefully or otherwise.

Major threats that should resurface somehow occupy Hiruzen's mind. Just because the patrol of the village came up with nothing did not entail the other leaders of the Shinobi will sit back and not use Konoha's internal destabilization.

Maybe all of this is an old man's paranoid thoughts getting the better of him—but better safe than sorry.

Maybe, other villages have similar internal conflicts, and they all are holing themselves in fear of a similar attack.

But the truth is that Konoha houses Third Raikage's son. And if Hiruzen recalls that cunning behemoth correctly, 'A' will not take this lying down.

“Lord Third?”

“Hmm?”

“The meeting?”

“Oh, yes.”

Hokage nods. Shikudo still doesn't know the truth behind the Hyuga Conflict. But then again, aside from Mukai, Yata, Hiashi, Hizashi, and Hiruzen himself, all the other clans are kept in the dark.

There is no way Hiruzen reaches on top of this situation personally if his involvement with a clan's conspiracy is brought to light. Even his ardent backers will build a thin layer of caution around him.

So, Hiruzen knows things will not settle in this meeting, but one must keep appearances.

The duo leaves the Kage Office and enters the meeting chamber, where all the other clan heads, advisors, Senju Clan's Proxy, and Mukai Kohinata are already present.

---

Nawaki isn't losing his marbles like his first meeting, and Tsunade seems intent on making him see-through this event till the end. He understands that it's one of the reasons why Tsunade took it upon herself to spar with him and force him to polish his skills further.

Tsunade even made him seek Orochimaru for more tips in training.

Not being as clueless as before, Nawaki felt there was an odd tension between Tsunade and Orochimaru that, to quote his former Jonin Sensei, made him the perfect tool to annoy Orochimaru. Not that Orochi left him hanging. Instead, he made Nawaki follow the basic training again with his adopted son Mitsuki.

It didn't help at first, but Nawaki soon realized the simple meaning behind this training.

No, it wasn't anything cliché as returning to the roots and mastering some hidden power.

No, it's a hint.

Training must start from the basics, and Nawaki skipped one of the most crucial basics. It wasn't his fault.

It skipped his mind since he had a team to teach and bear more clan responsibilities.

Nature Transformation Training.

He threw his shadow clans in the grinder the second he realized the big step he skipped, even if it meant perpetual migraines that were only starting to feel better now.

And all his training is visible through his composure.

Of his two nature transformations—Fire and Wind—Nawaki chose to accomplish mastery of Fire Nature Transformation. The latter was hard to train as both his sister and sensei made it very

clear that he should master the relatively easy stuff as quickly as possible and add to his arsenal.

How does his training translate to not losing his marbles in front of other clan heads and not feeling insecure?

Simple.

He was jaded by the conflict of a higher tier after Tsunade broke and healed him multiple times.

Not his clones.

Him.

Cracked ribs would be the least of his worries when facing his demonic 'Onee-san.'

He always felt an innate, and frankly, a brotherly caution against Kai for his actions. The youth was younger than Nawaki and trying to get in many panties at the same time. But now?

Nawaki is relieved that his sister even has a shot at being in a relationship.

As for age?

Nawaki was on Kai's side on this matter. Hundreds of nobles marry young girls less than half their age just because they can—unwillingly. At least, here, both parties had consent.

His musings, unfazed by the glances of the clan heads, broke apart when Hiruzen walked in with Shikudo.

He stands alongside others in respect for the Old Kage before resuming his seat.

Only Mukai remained standing beside the three advisors.

"I admit that tensions are high in this room and the village, but I am here to assure everyone Konoha only deserves our best. The appointed timeline for the Hyuga Clan to voice their defense is here, and as ordered, all their civilian members in disguise to control their businesses have returned in a reasonable time. With this in thought, what do you have for us today, Clan Head Hyuga Hiashi?"

Hiashi lets his milky pale eyes wander onto everyone in the room. Just like Shikudo is unaware of the truth behind this incident, he and others are unaware of the plans Hiruzen has in motion to counter any external forces.

In essence, Hiruzen is juggling two different but equally important issues at once while forced to divide and limit the knowledge to his underlings.

On one side, he needs to conclude the Hyuga incident in a manner the Hyuga Clan is no longer suppressed and contributes to the village, including Mukai, using Hiashi, Hizashi, and Yata's assistance.

On the other hand, he needs to work with Shikudo and employ his students to make sure the external forces cannot deal with them despite the possibility of their plans being exposed to the enemies.

Other clan heads look similarly tense. They may not understand the reason behind the relocation of the civilians, but they can make a guess.

"Before we begin, I would like to apologize to Mukai Kohinata for one of my clansman's actions." Hiashi begins and looks the prodigious teen in the eye. "The Hyuga Clan may disagree with your notions, but our noble clan will never condone such actions."

Tsume's mother—Okami Inuzuka—scoffs under her breath as she interjects crudely with a low growl.

"Noble Clan? The only thing noble about your clan is your ability to avert responsibility on your slaves. Don't think we don't understand that you and your elders allowed this attempt to happen in the first place."

Inoshi Yamanaka leans forward with a smirk.

"Okami-san has some merits to her words. Everyone present, including Tsunade's successor, understands how things work, and if Mukai held any issues, he would have raised a ruckus months ago. Let's skip these unnecessary formalities."

The blonde patriarch of the Yamanaka Clan earned a nasty scar traveling from his left cheek to the left portion of his neck in this short duration from one of the *'missions'* he was assigned to interrogate.

"Now, now," Yata chuckles. "It would be wrong to accuse one clan of something for the actions of one man. The Uchiha Clan would not have survived if Konoha minded such reasoning. Let's give the Hyuga Patriarch the respect he deserves."

While Yata has all but retired officially, his words carry more weight than ever. Uchiha Clan is thriving despite the small wrinkle caused by Mikoto that caused a few Uchiha Clansmen to suffer varying degrees of punishment from the Administration once some evidence came to light under the Anbu's investigation.

“There isn’t much to say.” Hiashi stares at Okami and Inoshi before stating plainly, “The Hyuga Clan accepts that Mukai deceived the whole village by hiding Hyuga Clan’s valued kekkei genkai. As such, the Hyuga Clan perceives no malicious intent toward the Village and its organization. However, we cannot accept Mukai disavowing the promises of his ancestors to use the byakugan for his individual desires.”

Hiruzen raises an eyebrow.

“Explain.”

Wanting to conserve as much strength as possible for his reason, Hiruzen went as far as to keep the conversation short from his end. He already knows the outcome. The quicker this meeting ends, the better.

Hiashi nods and looks at Mukai.

“Mukai Kohinata’s grandfather from his father’s line was Jusho Kohinata. Initially, Jusho Hyuga—a civilian member of the branch family—married into the prosperous trading family at the time, the Kohinata Family. He was allowed to have children by the clan on the condition our Clan shall mark his offspring with the cursed seal. Perhaps, due to a genetic defect, his children were not born with Byakugan. His daughter had three children—none of them had Byakugan. His second son and fourth son were killed by bandits. His First Son was tried for traitorous actions in the capital, leading to the Kohinata Family’s downfall. His surviving third son married, lived a simple life in Konoha, and sired Mukai Kohinata.”

Letting the information settle with the group, Hiashi concludes. “The Hyuga Clan is merely holding Mukai to the end of the vow his ancestor took.”

“Is there any written evidence?” Hizashi raises an eyebrow and looks at his elder twin.

“A verbal vow does not require written confirmations.”

“As pretty as this story sounds,” Yami Uchiha chuckles, “The problem is that Hyuga Clan made a blunder. If you were this obstinate about a vow, your clan should have marked every Kohinata offspring with a seal regardless of their genetic mishaps. Lord Third, this is a simple case of incompetence bred by complacency, and one of the valued shinobi of the village should not pay the price.”

“I disagree.” Ane Aburame, the third advisor, speaks up. “Given the turbulent external situation, it is to Konoha’s benefit not to pursue conflict. If such a vow exists between Kohinata’s family with the Hyuga Clan, I suggest we act as a mediator. Mukai Kohinata would not reveal Anbu secrets and stay an Anbu member under a different code name while retiring to Hyuga Clan once he feels ready.”

“No,” Hizashi scoffs and stares at Ane. “What you offer is a way out of incompetence. Aburame Clan, of all, should realize where incompetence can lead us. Or did you forget the catastrophe leading to Sakumo Hatake’s disappearance?”

“I will not entertain baseless allegations with comments,” Ane replies calmly.

While the official statement about Sakumo’s disappearance is still the same that he and the reinforcements were ambushed, a few voices have started to appear that the Aburame Clansmen were compromised.

Hiruzen watches Ane and Denji—Aburame Patriarch—quietly. The truth is far simpler. Hiruzen and others knew that the Aburame Clan would try to vouch for stability and skirt over the issue. In some scenarios, it does benefit Konoha.

But Hiruzen has to integrate the Hyuga Clan into the village’s military to try and weed out the source of informants plaguing the village.

So, he needed Aburame Clansmen to have less credit to their name for a period, and that’s what he did by alluding to Danzo controlling the previous Root Members.

But with A’s son in custody, it is clear Danzo has nothing to do with this. At least, that’s what Hiruzen senses about the situation.

Right now, Sakumo’s disappearance is one of the unsolved mysteries of the village.

“If I may,” Yata raises his voice with a clear of his throat.

“The Uchiha Clan has found a way to solve this situation peacefully. I believe this will benefit the Hyuga Clan, Konoha, Mukai Kohinata, and most importantly, the many talents of the village who are born with special gifts.”

Shikudo furrows his brows. “And your clan would like something in return?”

“Ah, well, if you insist.” Yata smiles and sets his elbows on the desk. “But let’s not get caught up in my simple wishes. Before any individual desires, I have the village’s well-being in my heart.”

“And your colon ‘cause that’s a load of bull.” Choku Akimichi speaks for once. His narrow eyes, credit to his round cheeks, narrow further as Yata smirks.

“Still upset about that fish stick? It was years ago!”

“Indeed. Years ago, when they were still available. Now with the import from Uzu up to shit, you’re the one who ate the last piece of it!”

Yata raises an eyebrow before shrugging, "We'll figure something out in your restaurant."

Yata's words placate the Akimichi Patriarch. Others did not downplay Choku's annoyance because the Akimichi Clansmen rarely lose shit for political issues or usual ongoings of life. But their anger multiplies when it comes to their gullet.

"As I was saying, I have a way. A seal."

Others stare at Yata quietly. Even the Uchiha Advisor did not know anything about Yata's circumstances.

"A close associate of mine has developed a cursed seal capable of functioning the same way as the Caged Bird Seal of the Hyuga Clan."

"That's preposterous!" Hiashi slaps the table and raises his voice.

"Hiashi Hyuga!" Hiruzen whispers hoarsely. The Kage's eyes fall over the offending Patriarch while releasing the full brunt of his chakra. Hiruzen's reserves couldn't hope to contend with the likes of the First and Second Kage, but his reserves were the highest in this room. Hiashi grits his teeth and lowers his head.

"I... apologize. But this sounds like a scandal perpetuated by the Uchiha Clan to demean ours. Everyone knows the rivalry between the two clans, and I don't think it is beneath the Uchiha Clan to invade another clan's privacy. After all, Yata Uchiha needs merit to regain the trust of the village squandered by the youths of his clan by desecrating the rules of the Uchiha Police."

Yata narrows his eyes.

"So, Yata stood up for you, and this is how you respond? Some Noble Clan the Hyuga is," Okami sneers.

"Please continue on with the seal. And I would like to know about this close associate who developed the seal that can solve this issue."

Yata blinks in surprise. For all purposes, a proxy like Nawaki shouldn't be speaking. His task must only be to listen to everything and inform Tsunade.

So, his voice means Tsunade's approval of the youth. And if it isn't like this and if Nawaki is overstepping his bounds, it would mean a lashing of a lifetime from Tsunade once he returns.

Still, Yata takes the chance to speak.



“I cannot speak about this close associate in front of others, but this information will be readily available to Lord Third to prevent misunderstanding. I am taking caution because of the assassination attempt on Mukai’s life. As for the seal—”

Yata begins weaving another story that roots everyone in their seats. A seal that can be manipulated individually and lock the special benefits for themselves.

A combination of the Hyuga cursed seal alongside the Uchiha Clan’s baby-killing seal added something better.

A seal that can prevent the corpses of Aburame Clan’s insects from falling into the wrong hand.

A seal that can allow the Inuzuka Clan to breed a rare variety of Chakra Ninken once again and keep them away from the paws of their enemy.

A seal that can become one banger of a kamikaze during the approaching time of war.

Hiashi’s *‘resistance’* fall on deaf ears as Mukai watches everything unfold with quiet, indifferent eyes.

\*\*\*

**Alternate Title:** The Kage Juggler; Hosting Another Kage’s Son in a Special Treatment; Nawaki Grows Some Senju Nuts; Tsunade Lucked Out With Kai?; A Callous Play; None With Honor; A Shinobi’s Battle Start Way Before the Drawing of Kunai; Yata’s Seal; The Yata-Choku Conflict; A Rare Breed of Ninken?; Indifferent Mukai; Verbal Vow; Elders’ Useless Plan; The Dawn of Conflict; One Proxy

## ***Title: Darkest Night Hidden in The Leaf (2)***

As talented as Mukai is, he is far too young to understand the implications of his indifference. Was he always indifferent? No. He cared about money to use his financial development to start a family eventually. In essence, he had less '*Honorable*' ambitions expected from weapons like him. Politics wasn't for him, using his genius to write a new chapter in the development of Jutsu wasn't for him, and meddling in war definitely wasn't for him.

Being a shinobi is a job.

That's all.

A job he enjoys excelling in because excellent performance leads to more jobs, hence, more money.

His reasoning may be unfounded on the Hyuga Twins, who are trying to revolutionize the social standing within their clan. But Mukai simply doesn't care. He is living through the motions. Quietly and calmly.

Given his nature, he should have implied his need for more compensation from the Hyuga Twins once someone tried to assassinate him, and he did, but for some strange reason, Mukai felt the money was a waste of his time.

He remains seated on his cushion. His dull eyes stare blankly at a piece of scroll. His hand moves the brush on the scroll's surface as he writes the meeting's minutes before setting the furled scroll on the floor.

A pale white arm snatched the scroll from the floor the next second.

Mukai's dull gaze regains a bit of brilliance as he looks around oddly.

'Hmm? A brush? What was I going to jot down... and on what exactly?' He sighs and sets the brush on the table before lying on the cold floor.

'Shit hits the fan today, eh.'

A thought from unknown origin blooms in his very soul.

'If I can't find anything interesting in Konoha, I should try looking out. But Hiruzen and others won't let me leave as easily as I'd like. Not even giving up the Byakugan will work.'

His thoughts ring no alarm in his mind. His indifference feels as simple as breathing.

'But if I do leave, I should make it engaging. The village will pursue me no matter what. Same old thing—being branded a Nuke-nin.'

A yawn escapes his lips as Mukai closes his eyes to rest. His body radiates a sense of unreal relaxation that does not befit the situation at all!

---

"A Seal, huh?" Tsunade narrows her eyes as Nawaki recounts the meeting. She has a pretty good idea who Yata's unknown associate is, and the persona in question would never contribute to something of this stature in the village without knowing the great extent of the situation.

'But he did not inform me.' Tsunade frowns secretly while Nawaki explains the workings of the seal with an impressed expression.

'He has a plan. That little bastard is devious when it comes to such matters.' She muses confidently.

'What I wonder is who's in on the situation. Kai loves having accomplices while making long-winded plans.'

Tsunade recalls when they planned Dan's downfall and recalls Kai's distaste for planning without a partner to share some laughs with.'

Tsunade glances at Nono discreetly as the bespectacled teen writes whatever Nawaki speaks.

'Mikoto is busy with the Uchiha Police, Kushina is too drunk on cock for now to form coherent thoughts, Tsume's got intelligence as great as her ninken, Orochi's still acting like an indignant mother left by her man for a cart of milk, and Minato is too honest to take part in any of Kai's discreet plans. That leaves... Nono.'

And Tsunade feels that she's pretty much hit the mark.

But would she do anything about it?

Probably nothing. Tsunade has duties for the night, and the Senju Matriarch is more than glad to see her paper bitch working her way up in actual plans. Now Tsunade feels a bit of a chump.

After all, she asked Kai to make their Compound's security airlocked after cautioning him of a mysterious entity snooping around to collect information on the village. Hiruzen forbade his students to disseminate the truth to others, but Kai is Senju Clan's salient security detail, and this information pretty much belonged to him.

Only now she realizes Kai must have known about the situation long ago. Given his nature, he must have known it before Hiruzen found out.

‘So, the one week I leave for my mission, he decides to discard me as his partner-in-crime and sniff Nono out?’ Tsunade attends to the conversation with Nawaki through a few nasal hums while resolving internally. ‘But, if I play my cards right, I can pretty much shake him down for some more vats of Somarasa~! I hear from Nono that he’s pretty weak to Kushina’s puppy eyes. I’ve got some good stuff, too!’

And there you have it—the dangers of a Kunoichi Harem. They’ll drain ‘ya!

Kushina is just the start, and the fact is, Tsunade has some Uzumaki coursing through her veins, too.

“What about Hiashi? How’d he take the news?” Tsunade cuts to the point.

How this night ends is upto the Hyuga Clan, or so the vast majority of Shinobi believe. But the truth cannot be far from it. Tsunade is aware of how devious her Sensei can be at such times. After all, he once turned a blind eye to the silent assassination of the prominent Senju shinobi by his war buddy. While Tsunade admits things will never go the way they were before, Hiruzen is not the same as he was a decade ago, too. Nawaki demonstrates the sentiment with a very strange expression.

“Once Yata Uchiha explained how his seal performed similar functions as the Caged Bird Seal, Hiashi Hyuga loudly condemned the village and accused the Uchiha Clan of stealing Hyuga Clan’s secrets. When Lord Third tried to calm him down, Hiashi accused Lord Third of spitting in the face of Grandfather’s promises to the Hyuga Clan. Lord Third ordered the temporary imprisonment of Hiashi Hyuga, but he disarmed the three anbu members fairly easily before attacking Mukai Kohinata.”

Even Nono looks up with an odd glint in her eyes which she hides quickly. She would have hidden it from Tsunade if not for the latter already stalking Nono’s reaction.

“Mukai is dead?” Tsunade questions.

“No, Hizashi Hyuga intercepted his elder twin and sealed the man’s chakra in a flurry of movement.”

Tsunade digests the information.

“Lord Third ordered Hiashi and his wife to be confined by the Anbu members. Meanwhile, Lord Third asked Hizashi and Yata to follow him after adjourning the meeting.”

“And the conclusion?” Tsunade leans forward slightly.

Nawaki gulps softly.

“Lord Third announced that these trying times may have a large hand in Hiashi’s *‘stress-induced’ outburst*, and Mukai agreed with this assessment. However, Mukai will accept the seal Heavenly Blessing-Earthly Restriction instead of the Caged Bird Seal. He also conveyed another meeting and sent two Anbu members to the Hyuga Elders to demand a response for Hiashi’s actions.”

Tsunade nods calmly.

“And what were you doing when Hiashi went berserk?” She questions out of nowhere.

Nawaki blinks before replying naturally.

“I had ten shadow clones around me the moment the Anbu members flickered in the room.”

He adds with an annoyed expression.

“You really broke my natural reaction, Onee-san! I felt dumb having such a freaked-out reaction!”

Tsunade smirks at his words and replies fondly.

“You’ll have all the time you need to act composed when you survive worse situations than this. And believe me, others in the room felt more of a fool than you when they saw a kid half their age having a better reaction time than them.”

Nawaki carefully considers Tsunade’s words and nods. He then vibrates in his seat hesitantly.

“Out with it.”

“What’s with the evacuation? All the civilians and genins are relocated. Shouldn’t we be preparing for a predicted attack more carefully? All this feels so... lethargic.”

Tsunade smiles at her brother quietly before shrugging.

“You’ll be told what to do when the time comes. Nono is the same. She knows nothing either.”

Tsunade turns to look at her assistant with a narrowed gaze.

“It truly is annoying,” Nono asserts with a sweet smile.

---

“I apologize from the depths of my heart to have kept this from you.”

Hiashi whispers to a dark-haired, fair-skinned woman. Her looks are traditional, close to the likes of Mikoto Uchiha, and for a reason. Clans like Uchiha and Hyuga groom their clanswoman, especially their princesses, in all the traditional values to plaster a face of demurity. The Sharingan's existence makes it harder for the Uchiha Clan's women to remain as demure and submissive as possible, but Byakugan has no such emotional issues.

Hon Hyuga, Hiashi's wife, and distant relative is one such woman. Cared after by attendants from the branch family, Hon was groomed to be the perfect wife for the next clan patriarch. Neither Hiashi nor Hon got any say in whom they were to marry. But it did not matter to the duo.

Marrying according to their elder's will is the price of being a Main Family Member. And as fortune would have it, both of them faced no marital issues. Hiashi kept his professional and personal life separate, learning this from his young twin to become a better husband. Meanwhile, Hon gave no reason for anyone to complain about her.

The two remain seated in a confined room. It truly is a prison cell in the Uchiha Police Building.

But Hokage's order of leaving the two with sufficient furniture and privacy makes his intention clear to Fugaku. And a personal word with Yata persuaded Fugaku to clear the floor entirely as two Anbu members guard the prison bars.

“Please do not lower your head,” Hon supplies softly. “You did what you believed right for the Clan.”

Hiashi works his jaw and then clenches his fist.

“I cannot speak further of it. But I'm relieved to know your trust in my actions. I—”

He takes a shuddering breath. He already knows how this will end for him. While it would have been unacceptable for the young and past him, Hiashi understands what he needs to do.

Hon casts her gaze on her husband before smiling gently and reaching out to overlap his clenched fists on the table with her warm and supple hands.

“Dear, nothing you can do will make me repulsed by you. Nothing. Bear that in mind and act appropriately. And know this—I shall be right behind you when circumstances become too hard to bear.”

Hiashi locks his gaze with his wife's equally lilac eyes before nodding quietly.

“Follow the guard’s lead in time. They understand the situation, and your safety is their greatest mission. They will lead you back to the evacuation point later.”

Hiashi stands and straightens his back. He half-turns before leaving and questions, “Do you feel free?”

Hon blinks in surprise, but the answer is surprisingly easy.

“Freedom is a luxury not many can afford. I don’t believe freedom is necessary for our life. Peace is.”

“Are you peaceful?” Hiashi whispers.

“With you, I am.”

He nods quietly and leaves. The Anbu members don’t stand in his way as he flickers away from the open window of the floor.

Silence descends on the floor as two masked Anbu secure the prison gate while Hon closes her eyes and lets time flow by without an ounce of anxiety.

---

*Eagle*, or precisely, Enma’s Sarutobi’s duty is to locate the few Shinobi specifically asked by Shikudo. The Leader of Anbu won’t have any issues with other clans, but finding Kushina was hard until she let her presence known from Tsunade’s manor. That wasn’t all. Enma had to deliver a sealed scroll to Kai, who happened to be with Kushina, as the duo enjoyed bowls of milk and fruit in Tsunade’s kitchen.

He couldn’t stop, however. The specific seal of the Kage made it clear that the mission on the scroll is the duo’s priority, and he left the Senju Compound soon after to travel along the Naka River cutting through Konoha. He enters a specific sealed entrance within the Forest of Death and travels through the underground passage to exit into a spacious chamber covered in grey-brown tiles. His gaze rests on the laughing and giggling group of four sitting around a short-legged table with cards and literary pornography set on its surface.

“Yo, Eagle. We’re sharing stupid stories from our time in the academy. Wanna join?” Jiraiya looks back with a casual smirk as the successors of the Yamanaka, Akimichi, and Nara Clans have different reactions.

Inoichi and Choza wave at the Anbu Leader casually while Shikaku yawns and slumps his upper body on the table.

"I'm about done sharing stories. Just wake me up when it's absolutely vital. If possible, just find my old man. He's far more responsible."

"I shared the necessary orders with Kai and Kushina Uzumaki. What next?" Eagle questions sternly.

Jiraiya huffs and questions, "What's the result of the patrol?"

"No presence on or under the ground. The river is clean, too."

Jiraiya scratches his chin thoughtfully before nodding.

"Great, send half of my share of Anbu to Orochimaru's side."

Eagle and others still.

Once the mysterious organization targeting them became the prime suspect, the former members of Root, suspended from the force after suspicions of Sakumo's disappearance fell on Danzo, returned to Anbu. As things are, Hiruzen has divided these forces under Jiraiya's, Orochimaru's, and Tsunade's command, who have decision-making power unless Shikudo or Hiruzen step in personally.

"A half?" Eagle confirms. For the moment, he fell under Tsunade's command, so he had no say in the deployment of his organization's members.

These are extraordinary times, so Eagle can only accept the situation, but he advises patiently once Jiraiya nods.

"That will leave the village partially blind with the lack of scouts."

Jiraiya smirks and whistles loudly.

"Did you set up?"

A weak voice musters from the dark corner of the chamber.

"I did *\*gero.\** I've got my eyes around the village." The soft croaking voice announces, "But my children cannot sense chakra just yet. Leave the sensors and some useful scouts to spread out... I'll inform you when I see something unusual."

Eagle gazes at the palm-sized cloaked grey frog with a bushy white beard. Unlike usual toad eyes, this toad has insectoid compound eyes that stare back creepily.



“Thanks, Gamamata!” Jiraiya grins and looks at Eagle. “Send my half to Orochimaru and tell... him to remain prepared. If anything happens, the first assault will be a speedy affair. What’s Tsunade doing?”

“She is in her office filing the renewed wills of her clansmen.”

Jiraiya thins his lips and massages his head.

“Sounds like a headache.”

“Anything else?” Eagle curtly questions.

Jiraiya ponders for a moment and reaches into his clothes to retrieve another small scroll.

“This one is for Fugaku. The remaining scrolls are already assigned. Return to your position after this.”

Eagle scoffs and flickers away.

“That man has no joy in his life,” Jiraiya comments as Inoichi supplants. “Well, we shouldn’t judge a book by its cover.”

Jiraiya looks at his subordinates for this catastrophic mission as his lips twitch in annoyance. Someone like Orochimaru would have been a better choice to lead the current generation of the ino-shika-cho team. But he can’t complain over spilled milk.

“Stay sharp.” Jiraiya cautions while leaving his seat to walk into the lower chamber.

“Staying sharp won’t help, though,” Choza bites on his snack. “We can’t move unless we get a signal from the detection team.”

Meanwhile, Jiraiya enters the said Detection Team’s chamber within the Hokage Residence.

A Hokage’s Residence is used for anything but a residence. Hiruzen resides in his Clan’s compound or his office most of the time, as the Kage residence is a sealed structure used to store multiple Jutsu and documents alongside housing Konoha’s Barrier team.

The Barrier Team is divided into two teams, the Interception and Detection Team.

The current generation of Ino-Shika-Cho led by Jiraiya is the Interception Team.

The detection team resides on the lower floor where Jiraiya observes the globe of floating chakra controlled by a group of Fuin-shinobi cultivated by Konoha to devise fuin ingenuity in-house.

These three middle-aged men are garbed in long white robes from head to toe as the central shinobi is seated between four earthen spikes. The other two shinobi look at Jiraiya and nod respectfully, but the one in the center focuses on the globe of water.

Jiraiya looks at the sphere of water quietly.

As impressive as a Barrier around the village sounds, this ingenuity is far from complete. Yes, there is a thin layer of barrier around the village made of intangible chakra, but it cannot stop any attack. This enormous barrier works alongside the small liquid sphere hovering not far from Jiraiya, thanks to the seals shaping it.

What this barrier does is register foreign chakra and reveal its position on the water sphere controlled by the Detection Team under the Hokage Residence.

But differentiating the Chakra of the village's force from the foreign entity is easier said than done. No spy could have entered if this barrier was foolproof.

And as if the differentiation of enemies from allies isn't hard enough, this barrier faces other weaknesses, such as the enemy shinobi's ability to mask their chakra. This use is rather common within the ranks of Jonins and elites. Even Jiraiya is prone to suppressing his chakra when traveling in other lands.

Not only Konoha but other villages have similar ambitions to secure their privacy, but necessary ingenuity still isn't invented. So, the village settled for detecting any odd concentration of chakra from the other side of the barrier.

Jiraiya did not consider this a dead job. He's Hiruzen's eyes and ears outside the village, and Konoha is aware of how other villages have stunningly similar seals in development, no thanks to the scrolls present on their doorsteps every odd day.

His job is to ensure that their enemies don't catch them by surprise, and Jiraiya has a pretty good idea of the enemy's mode of transportation.

"Any news?"

"The village's jinchuriki left the restricted spot of the Senju Clan alongside another source of chakra noted as Jonin Kai. They are traveling to Hokage's Office."

Jiraiya nods and listens to other updates before determining a lack of any action from their side.

'The Senju Clan's seals even restrict Sensei's Telescope Technique,' Jiraiya muses while returning to the upper floor. 'Kai would have made one hell of a sealing leader of the village, but can't expect one kid to shoulder all things. He's already training with Kushina to help her control

the Kyubi to a moderate extent while lending a hand to Orochimaru's research. Not to mention having a team to train...' Jiraiya shakes his head.

Jiraiya himself was adept in seals but not the detection kind. After all, his sealing knowledge did not stem from any clan. He's a self-taught Fuinjutsu practitioner.

'Minato will make a heck of an initiative.' Jiraiya furrows his brows soon.

'While Minato's chakra reserves lack in intensity, he should be starting his sage training. What's with that Old Toad still sleeping and not giving the green light?' The Sannin quietly sits beside his team, deep in thought.

'And I can't just use the same excuse as Minato being the child of prophecy to excavate more from the Forbidden Scroll. Minato needs contribution to learn more things. Sensei should understand his drive to innovate after Taiyogan's fiasco, so he'll give Minato a shot in trying to do something out of this Barrier Seal. That's the least I can do before leaving the village one final time after weathering this storm.'

Since his freedom will be greatly restricted after the beginning of the predicted war, Jiraiya has to make a final trip around the different lands and settle a few things.

"The silence is stifling."

Choza comments.

"You get used to it," Jiraiya smiles thinly. "Else, you know other ways to relax your nerves if you don't get used to it."

Shikaku blearily looks up and mutters, "It's just silence. It's a terrific environment for sleeping. So, can we just put our heads in the game and keep quiet?"

Jiraiya, Choza, and Inoichi look at each other before announcing simultaneously.

"No."

---

"Tailed Beast Bomb..." Kushina hesitates with Kai, Minato, and Tsume one step behind her.

Hiruzen nods calmly and awaits Kushina's response.

*"Like you practiced. Lie through your teeth. A slut and a liar aren't mutually exclusive."* Kyubi haunts the redhead's mind as her lips twitch, something she uses to her advantage by presenting a conflicted look.

"I've trained a lot with Kai, dattebane. I used to lose control, but now, I can pull enough chakra to go one-tail without snapping. A Tailed Beast Bomb takes too much chakra."

Hiruzen looks past Kushina and questions Kai, "Can I trust you to handle Kushina-kun going out of control?"

"We'll be fine as long as she's under six-tails state," Kai nods calmly. "But Lord Third... if all you want is destructive power, we have a better way."

Hiruzen looks at Minato before shaking his head.

"That technique cannot be mobile, right? You four know of the situation that we predict an invasion. We expect a Jinchuriki, a Jinchuriki capable of mass destruction. We need an equivalent counter once you get your signals."

Kai looks at Minato and gestures to the boy with a tilt of his head.

"What?" Hiruzen makes a curious sound as Minato nods and steps forward.

"Lord Third... I have devised a jutsu. Here." He sets a palm-sized scroll on the desk for Hiruzen to peruse through.

Hiruzen continues through the scroll before his eyes widen slightly and he sighs.

"This technique is untested. I cannot—"

"Actually, Lord Third, Minato, and I brainstormed a few possibilities while our teams trained together. I have a similar prototype planned."

Planned, not developed—Hiruzen notes.

"And I can complete this jutsu with no margin of error in execution."

While Kai knows very well that Kushina may never lose her control, he understood that she still hasn't mastered the Tailed Beast Bomb. And, to be honest, he couldn't just let Hiruzen assume that he could command his lover to a hysterical state.

Hiruzen's trust in Kai is unmatched at this point. Hiruzen questions while perusing through the scroll again, "And Minato-kun, is it alright with you if Kai masters this technique?"

"Kai's contributions were necessary for me to get to the ground floor for this seal, Lord Third," Minato replies softly. He is happy his contributions are recognized, but now isn't the time or place to act cheerfully.

Hiruzen thins his lips.

“This technique will allow us to mitigate needlessly losses. But this also makes your team the most mobile. How do you plan on coping with that?”

Kai fishes his hand in his glorious shinobi fanny pack along his hips and takes out twenty senbons with tiny seals engraved on their thin surfaces.

“Again, this is Minato’s idea. But if you spread these twenty senbon needles in the village, I’ll be able to teleport to them at a moment’s notice. Lord Third, if I understand correctly, our team is to intercept major attacks using Kushina. While I can seal Kushina, the enemies may have another trump card up their sleeves aimed at Jinchuriki.”

Hiruzen narrows his eyes and looks at the rest of the gathered shinobi.

“I’d like to have a word with Kai alone.”

Kushina and others quietly retreat as Hiruzen cuts to the chase, “You don’t want Kushina’s life to be at risk. Is that it?”

Kai shakes his head.

“If that were the case, I’d be making cases about why Mikoto shouldn’t be at the Police Station right now, or why Tsunade should evacuate with the rest of the girls. My point is that Kyubi is unpredictable. One thing I understand from facing a berserk Kushina in small spaces is that the Kyubi has a more dangerous way to use its Tailed-Beast Bomb. What you will be doing by placing Kushina in the middle of the combat, is betting on Kyubi’s sensibility.”

Hiruzen narrows his eyes and leans back on his chair.

“What do you propose?”

“I’m sure you have information and plans outside my knowledge, but I can deal with Tailed Beast Bombs. Minato, Tsume, and Kushina’s presence is spent better elsewhere.”

“I cannot risk Kushina with others. Tsunade has assured me that you are more than capable of handling a Jinchuriki. But you and Kushina alone may get distracted.”

Kai doesn’t dissuade Hiruzen’s fears and nods slightly.

“That’s possible. I didn’t mean to ask for going solo, Lord Third. I just wanted to emphasize that there are better ways of dealing with a Tailed Beast Bomb, in my opinion. But I wouldn’t trust Minato’s and Tsume’s current skills against a tempered enemy Jinchuriki should we face one.”

"But they can assist you, right?"

"Yes."

Hiruzen begins to tap his table with his index finger.

"I will be frank with you only because I expect you to assume my responsibilities someday. I expect a Kage and a Jinchuriki to be present in the predicted attack. And as of now, we aren't aware of the actual invasion plan. All possible mode of travel on the ground is checked and cleared."

"That leaves the air and space-time ninjutsu like the summoning Jutsu." Kai nods.

"Indeed. Once you deal with the expected Bijudama, chances are that the enemy Kage will intercept you."

Kai nods and questions, "How long does my team need to hold them?"

"Until my arrival."

"Well, the Dragon Sennin is known to be stronger than the Sannin of the village, right? But his bounty barely matches the claim. I suppose tackling a Kage will be an appropriate wake-up call for other Villages to fear the strangely masked shinobi."

Kai presents a quirky grin.

A grin that relieves Hiruzen's tense nerves slightly.

"Konoha's Dragon Sennin," Hiruzen corrects the youth.

"Tch, a cheap political ploy."

"Ploys you're expected to utilize to their greatest extent once you sit in my position."

Hiruzen chuckles and heaves loudly.

"Lord Third, are you alright?" Kai finally questions with faux concern. Well, he didn't particularly dislike Hiruzen for his past weakness. Hey, everyone's a human, right? Mistakes aren't unfounded to humankind.

"I'll be fine once we weather this. Call your team back. I'll have to adjust a few orders that I'd like you to relay once you leave my offices."

\*\*\*

**Alternate Title:** The Calm Before the Storm; Locked Patriarch; Better a Fool than Being Unprepared; Failed Negotiations; Startling Indifference; Indifferent Undercurrents; Where's the Scroll?; Incomplete Barrier; Minato Didn't Waste His Time at All; Standing Up for Kushina; The Dragon Sennin Rises Again; Not Freedom But Peace; Determined Hiashi; All for the Sake of Clan; Silence is Required to Sleep!; Eagle's Annoyance; Surplus of Anbu; Expected Conflict; Air? Summons? Both?; Faux Concern is still a Concern; Muddying Kyubi's Honorable Name

\*\*\*

A/N: Bruh, Hiashi gonna get that Itachi treatment.

***Title: Darkest Night Hidden in The Leaf (3)***

The Hokage Mountain, or as Kai calls it, Mount Kage, doubles as a safe spot for the village in their time of need as many earth-supporting jutsus and seals secure the mountain's interior.

Tobirama had this mountain altered after accepting the mantle of the Hokage once Hashirama's and Madara Uchiha's great battle concluded. Since Hashirama was still alive at the time, Mito also contributed to the project. The interior also has a different level where the Village archive is stored.

The divided sections of the interior house various civilians and Genins at once. It is necessary to secure clan civilians because any potential spy can swap places with an influential civilian and infiltrate a clan.

The entrance to the archive built on the mountain's surface isn't fake, yet, the structure does not contain more violent information about wars and the strategies of various commanders and Kage at the time to help Konoha survive.

The bottom two sections of the interior store the information about the war as three teams of Anbu secure the spot at all times.

The remaining eight levels house the civilians and genins.

"More men, huh?" Orochimaru muses before nodding at Eagle. "That is fine. Leave their positioning to me. And what about this?"

Orochimaru looks at the five needles in her hand. Tiny chakra seals on the surface of the needles seem incoherent at first sight, as Orochimaru understands only the creator of these key seals can unravel the code to use renowned space-time ninjutsu.

"Place the needles on five different spots susceptible to being targeted during an external and internal skirmish and report these positions back to me," Eagle replies calmly. "I will return the information to Lord Third."

Orochimaru hums and lets a shadow clone take care of the task. She herself informs the spots where the needles will be before the Anbu Captain leaves. She did not have to think about how her Shadow Clone would act since they were identical.

'As much as I hate to say it, Tsunade really outshone us this time.' Orochimaru climbs down the dimly lit stairs with an odd look. When Hiruzen described the situation to them, she was a little flabbergasted. After all, information is pivotal in planning strategies. But this was the classic case of wise men thinking more than they should.



Tsunade's idea of sticking to the basics with a tremendous force felt too good to be true.

An attack from the Jinchuriki?

Deflect the attack and beat it up.

Invasion of an army?

Kill them.

Her methods sounded a little passive, as in Konoha needing to react to the enemy instead of initiating an attack, only because they lacked untampered information. But only this kind of response felt satisfactory to Hiruzen, allowing him to leave the Village's primary defense in Tsunade's hands. Their method of dealing with the situation is to play things by ear.

Or so Orochimaru would believe if she did not find Hizashi and Yata waiting for her in her spot.

"So it is true. Sensei expects other villages to have some information about Konoha, leading them to form a predicted attack." She sets her narrowed gaze at the duo, her hoarse voice sounding as manly as ever.

"And the cause of the internal conflict inviting external troubles must be something less than noble. Or else Jiraiya or Tsunade would be leading the safety of the civilians."

"It is a noble cause." Hizashi sighs softly.

"I'll be the judge of that. But I am aware that the things Sensei lets me lead on are rarely for a just cause. But if it really is a noble cause, then it means the process of achieving the best result will be unsavory to Tsunade and Jiraiya."

Since Orochimaru only started to use her Sage Mode to scope the village after understanding that an unknown party spied on Konoha without anyone else's knowledge, she didn't know anything about the undercurrents of the Hyuga Clan.

Tsunade and Jiraiya are the same, leading Jiraiya to discover that Tsunade had mastered Senjutsu on her own once their natural sense clashed against each other—another one of the major reasons why Hiruzen is confident in leaving the village's primary defense to Tsunade.

And this also cleared the mystery of how Tsunade took care of an Iwa Explosion Corps, A's Son, Kakuzu, and another Kage of Takigakure in his empowered state. Yet, the truth is, fearing her strength's exposure, Tsunade never used Sage Mode aside from ambushing A's son to get a clean hit in and capture him.

But this made things a bit more complicated. The fact that three sages found nothing meant that the spy was likely present when Hiruzen revealed almost everything to his students and was aware of their sage modes, stopping him from snooping around or only appearing when the time was ripe.

“Everything that Lord Third needs you to know is in this scroll.” Yata smiles and passes Orochimaru a small scroll which she peruses while smirking.

“Everything I need to know. But not the complete truth.”

“Indeed,” Yata nods and looks at Hizashi, “Get things done swiftly, Dear Advisor. I have other posts to man.”

The Uchiha Patriarch disappears with that and leaves the hallway between the multiple flights of stairs.

Letting a rather uncomfortable silence descend, Orochimaru goes through the same scroll time and again.

“Are you done?” Hizashi finally questions with a sigh. Aside from his interactions with the Three Sannins during the war and sparring with Kai in the Senju Compound, Hizashi did not know the Sannins personally.

How she keeps her gender hidden with a roomful of Hyuga is a mystery. Just hours ago, Tsume’s mother, Okami, outed her as a woman after the first few minutes while Orochimaru was still delegating duties. At least Okami had a sense of pinching her butt privately and winking knowingly.

So, Hizashi underestimated Orochimaru’s estrogen-fueled curiosity as she smirked.

“Let me get this straight, you and your brother are planning to act the hero and the villain, is that it? The Elders will be ousted. One of you two will be deemed a villain in this event, while the other will be a hero who saved the clan.”

“That scroll mentions nothing of the like.”

“It doesn’t need to,” Orochimaru shrugs and tosses the scroll back to Hizashi before adding, “Come along. Let’s get you to your station, too. I’d hate it if the Hyuga Clan destroyed any part of the archive under my watch. And...”

“And?” Hizashi questions.

“It is not my business what happens with you two twins. But if one of you two plans on dying, I’ll be happy to research your corpse as one last hurrah of freedom.”

Hizashi scowls quietly. But he did not activate his byakugan as a faux threat. It would achieve nothing.

---

“What?!” Hibi Hyuga snarls at the boar-masked Anbu. “You deceived the Hyuga Clan by ushering my daughter-in-law out of this room and imprisoned her alongside my Son! He is the Hyuga Clan’s Patriarch! What is Third Hokage smoking this time?!”

The Anbu narrows his eyes under the mask and replies calmly.

“Elder Hyuga, Hiashi Hyuga openly attacked Mukai Kohinata in the meeting.” Other Elders and the surrounding members of the clan freeze in shock as the shinobi’s muffled voice continues.

“Lord Third demanded Hon Hyuga’s captivity only in respect for Hiashi Hyuga’s demand, as he wanted to inform his crimes to his wife personally. Please, rest assured. His imprisonment won’t last long.”

“But they are out of this secured chamber! The Village is expecting an attack, right? The Clan’s patriarch should be right here!”

The Hyuga Clansmen weren’t the only ones in the third-last section of Mount Kage. The civilians of other noble clans toss disgusted looks in their direction.

After all, having retired Shinobi in safety is acceptable. But the Hyuga Clan even brought their young shinobi to hiding instead of contributing to the village.

Of course, honor for Konoha does not fuel this disgust but envy instead.

Why should the Hyuga Clan have such rights? Why should they get to save their military forces?

Such thoughts soon isolated the white-eyed clansmen from others.

“Hiashi Hyuga’s safety is Lord Third’s utmost priority. I am also here to relay the Hokage’s wishes.”

The Boar-masked Anbu hands Hibi a scroll before departing.

The Old Elder’s eyes pop open as he exclaims, “What?!”

---

“So, we finally have a seal of our own.”

Unlike the Hyuga Clan’s outrage, Fugaku reveals a pleased expression as he nods at Yata.

Standing atop the roof of the Police building, Yata smiles while gazing at the setting sun. “We do have a proper seal now. But this will make things difficult. People lose precious things during wars. For an Uchiha, this means unchecked strength. You and I could, fortunately, keep our minds from being impacted heavily, but others may not share our sentiments.”

Fugaku hesitates for a moment.

“What is it?” Yata inquires.

“I know that the Clan Meetings is none of my business—”

“Yet. It’s none of your business yet. If something happens to Sarachi or me, you’re the next Patriarch. You know it as well as I do. So, out with it.”

Fugaku exhales heavily.

“Everything I wish to do is for the clan. You have been a splendid influence on Mikoto. You’ll likely influence Sarachi-kun just as well. So, I only see the Clan prospering under your line. My need of being the next Patriarch diminished greatly.”

“I heard. Never got around congratulating you, did I?”

“You did send me a bouquet of... sweets.”

“And it helped, didn’t it?”

“Yes, she ate through them in three hours,” Fugaku smiles a little and then exhales.

“Did Hokage say something about seal increasing the Uchiha Clan’s prospective strength?”

Yata purses his lips.

“He didn’t have to. But if we prosper, we’ll need a stronger Hokage.”

“What do you mean?” Fugaku furrows his brows.

“I saw Hiruzen today, and he looked... weak. Not as in malnourished or lacking sleep. I can empathize with that. But he looked done with his responsibilities.”

“What does it have to do with us?”

“Weak men in power are known to make mistakes even if accidentally. Tsunade may bear with Hiruzen after everything Danzo did due to her past relationship with him, but do you think the Uchiha Clan is capable of such generosity? The slightest arrogance set our clan’s youngsters in a spiral of disobedience. Disobedience that may snowball into rebels and cost the clan’s life.”

Fugaku looks distressed with the news and admits, “The Clan wants to see an Uchiha as a Kage.”

Yata raises an eyebrow but adds nothing to this notion.

“Nothing?” Fugaku stares at Yata, who shrugs.

“What Clan needs is peace of mind. Say we have an Uchiha as a Kage. Will you bet on one of your clansmen to stay in their right mind with a Mangekyo Sharingan?”

Fugaku grows silent.

“If you cannot trust your own blood, how can you expect outsiders to trust us with this curse?”

Yata concludes, “That’s why we need a strong Kage. A Hokage who is similar to Hashirama Senju and does not fear others for their strength but accepts them.”

“I suppose that’s a good way of seeing it. Anyone particular in mind?” Fugaku questions. “And do I get to know who created this seal? Because none from our clan is capable of its creation.”

Yata smiles and questions instead, “How is Mikoto doing? She doesn’t like to talk about her work with me. Is Kiri still a problem?”

“Mikoto is on the right track. She brutalizes Kiri whenever he goes against her order. Yami wanted to interject, but I stopped him.”

“And what about Kiri? Is his change influencing his social underlings? The only reason we started with Kiri is that he has adequate backing and an intense influence on lower members of the clan.”

Fugaku shrugs slightly.

“It will take some time. Kiri personally doesn’t antagonize Mikoto anymore and has accepted harsher truths by following rules, but he likes to act his former self in front of his underlings.”

“All in due time, I suppose,” Yata smiles before looking at Fugaku teasingly. “Now run back to your position. To think I’ll be called to lead the police... tch, tch, my dear protege, Hiruzen must not have trust in your capabilities.”

“Only because of Mikoto’s actions that caused Anbu to snoop in our matters,” Fugaku scoffs.

“What can you do? She takes after her fiance.”

“Her father, more like.” Fugaku flickers away after saying his piece.

“Hah! Lucky me, she’s daddy’s girl!” Yata chuckles.

‘Damn right, she is *‘Daddy’s’* girl,’ Kai’s wooden clone hidden away smirks. Just because the cum-man stopped poking in the village did not mean Kai would let anything pass him until this matter concluded successfully. Besides, Mikoto is also nearby, and he wouldn’t let her face this kind of danger, as hypocritical as he may sound.

---

*\*Whoosh\**

Winds whip over Onoki’s head as his tiny body floats far above Konoha, hidden by a long strip of cloud.

He isn’t alone. Held by his small but remarkably sturdy and calloused hand is a middle-aged man with an eyepatch over his left eye and a top hat covering his dark hair. This man in question wears a single-strapped greyish-white flak jacket as the forehead protector of Kumogakure on his forehead makes his affiliations known.

However, Onoki focuses on the quiet pixie-cut blonde girl not more than five years old in the man’s hold. She wears a similar Kumogakure attire over her thin frame but lacks a similar forehead protector.

Her pitch-black pupils try to peer through the covers of the cloud and observe Konoha underneath them.

“A should have sent Hachibi’s Jinchuriki.” Onoki finally speaks up calmly.

“What the Raikage plans are none of my business. My duty is to follow his plans.”

“Your duty is also to advise him. Isn’t that right, Dodai?” Onoki scoffs.

Dodai looks at Third Tsuchikage calmly before answering, “You have grossly overestimated my capabilities, Tsuchikage.”

“Then I should drop the two of you here. A capable man must lead this raid from your side as I supply a Kage-level strength. That was the deal.”

The girl in Dodai's arm flinches, and an unhinged aura of hostility leaks from her tiny frame without any expression on her face.

"And A's son is also caught. Tch, tch."

Dodai narrows his eyes but doesn't comment on the situation.

"The sun is about to set," Onoki muses with his free hand stroking his goatee. "With all our country's information muddled, I expect Hiruzen to be as paranoid as your Raikage."

Dodai speaks nothing again.

"Why we don't band together to eradicate this mysterious party is just surprising."

"Because we trust each other even lesser," Dodai finally supplants coolly.

"And yet here I am holding you high in the air."

"Indeed. It says quite a bit about our lifestyle and culture."

Onoki looks at Dodai with a narrowed gaze. While Tsuchikage does not reveal his killing intent, Dodai doesn't need an explicit gesture to know what's going on in the old Kage's head.

The sky above them eventually turns misty-blue as Onoki chuckles and adds.

"Let's hope you survive."

He lets go of Dodai as he and the girl fall at high speed.

Meanwhile, Onoki claps his hand and forms multiple seals before his chakra creates a giant boulder with a diameter surpassing thirty meters!

He then touches the mountainous boulder with his palm and closes his eyes.

*'Earth Release: Added-Weight Rock Technique.'*

The Boulder's descent exponentially heightens in pace as wind screeches around the surface of the boulder to create a massive force of friction that heats the rock after a few seconds.

"The only thing powerful or nifty enough to deal with this is an Uchiha with troubled eyes, space-time ninjutsu, or one beast of a Shinobi. Konoha did not produce another Hashirama, anyone with Hiraishin will die because of the boulder's collected heat and momentum, and a

possible Uchiha with trained Mangekyo will have to burn their eyesight for that Jutsu. Konoha... will weaken with this attack alone.”

Even if his attack does not kill as many shinobi as he'd like, the loss of infrastructure should set back Konoha quite a lot. And he isn't the only one eyeing Konoha.

Unlike their previous cooperation against Uzu, Kumo, and Iwa changed things slightly.

Kumo will provide the men and jinchuriki, while Iwa will provide a Kage-level force.

Naturally, Onoki had other thoughts, too.

‘That mysterious informant suggested a great mystery in the Senju Clan’s compound. While there is no proof, I expect Kumo to have a similar report, and they will try to see what is going on. I could use them... and maybe even capture that little Jinchuriki.’

He begins descending moments before the artificial meteor hits Konoha.

\*\*\*

**Alternate Title:** Strength Known; Simple Tactics; Okami's Got a Hound's Nose; Hizashi Was So Close to the Truth; The Hero and the Villain?; The Distrust Toward Hyuga; What the Hell is Hiruzen Smoking?; Yata's Insight; Need for Powerful Leaders; Unreliability of the Uchiha; A Tamed Kiri?; Mikoto Really Learned from the Best; Daddy's Girs; **DADDY'S** Girl; Two Sides Unite; Anything for Strength; The Meteor; Aerial Strike; Konoha Will Weaken; Onoki's Extending Plans



***Title: Darkest Night Hidden in The Leaf (4)***

Kiri, Yami Uchiha's Grandson, is somewhat influential due to his grandfather's position as the Kage's Advisor. While Yami has been a straight-shooter of a shinobi in his entire career, becoming one of the rare few Uchiha Jonins to survive till their old age, Kiri was anything but obedient.

Coddled by his grandfather from an early age after his parent's eventual demise, Kiri grew to be quite assertive of his desires, even compared to other Uchiha members. Yami becoming an Advisor served to increase his circle of influence within the clan. And to be fair, Kiri is hard-working and dedicated to mastering his craft like most Uchiha members. He worked his way up the ranks of the Police before having a team of his own, only to eventually fall under Mikoto's leadership a few weeks ago.

"Kiri, you and Igari scout the southern exit of the prison."

Kiri perks up a bit at the mention of his name. He looks similar to what others will consider an Uchiha in terms of appearance: Sharp facial features, jet-black hair worn in unruly natural spikes, and pitch-black eyes contrasting with his fair skin. But the slight perkiness in his actions is carefully hidden by a scowl as he only snorts in reply.

Igari Uchiha: A fair Uchiha maiden with dark-brown hair tied into a bun and Juzo Uchiha: A muscular Uchiha variant with a squarish jaw and flat chin; flinch in Kiri's response.

The duo worked under Kiri for a while and could be considered the young chunin's confidantes. Hence, they took part in beating blessed upon Kiri just as much. Mikoto gave no quarters to Igari despite the woman being older and married to Juzo.

The fact that Kiri could even lead an Internal Police team as a Chunin spoke more about the youth's skills than the Organization's administration.

Yet, Mikoto bulldozed her way through their anger and rebellion as a team with her thin frame and surprisingly twisted Taijutsu somehow made to counter the Clan's techniques.

"Anything you would like to say?"

Kiri stares at Mikoto quietly and decides against replying. He and Igari disappear while Juzo is stuck with Mikoto, who quietly observes the forested ground between the Intelligence Department (T&I) and the Police Building. Under their feet is the massive prison accessible to both departments for safekeeping and information gathering.

"Um... Mikoto-san—"

“How many times do I need to tell you that no honorifics are required? Besides, You are older than me, Juzo. Just... call me Team Leader, Leader, or Boss.”

Juzo nods and gulps.

“B-Boss. What are we supposed to do?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

Mikoto narrows her eyes, Sharingan spiraling into existence as she demands, “Did I stutter?”

Juzo shakes his head.

After much deliberation, Mikoto decided to treat every Uchiha as she would treat her young brother. Not exactly the same, but how she would treat Sarachi if he grew so disobedient—Ass-whoopings till he regains his wits. Now this strategy doesn't work on people with a tremendous age gap.

Mikoto can't just whoop the likes of Yami or her father. But the situation is simple. Mikoto's success encouraged Fugaku to set personal guidelines with other Shinobi he trusts. More and more Clan shinobi are getting stricter with their children. Yata controls the clan's side, while Fugaku controls the active shinobi side. Mikoto and the rest are the executioners of set guidelines.

And the results are apparent.

“Boss?”

“Shut up!” Kiri hisses at Igari and glares at the woman while traveling on tree branches. “If that crazy woman hears you call me the Boss, you'll get us to the hospital again! We'll be lucky if she lets us get to the hospital in the first place and doesn't get all Tsunade on us. Juzo graduated from the Iryo-nin course. Why isn't your husband half as good as... Team Leader?”

Igari seals her lips shut as their surroundings grow dark eventually while they inspect the southern exit of the prison in the form of a sealed boulder.

“I just wanted to say that others are questioning your...”

“Questioning what?” Kiri raises an eyebrow.

“Well, you haven't been to any meetings for the last two weeks.”

“Those meetings are pointless.” Kiri turns around after the inspection and supplants. “I refuse to gather weak punks who think Sharingan is all that much compared to other talents. What happens when we lose our eyes? No. I’m gonna be better.”

“Sharingan is our gift!” Igari retorts, her pride in her strength taking a slight hit from Kiri’s words as he snarls.

“Some gift it is that makes the lot of you lazy once you unlock the first tomoe. Who among the three Sannin is an Uchiha? The Clan went into the war, did it not? Aside from Madara, who went batshit crazy on us, who else made a name for themselves that stood out?”

Igari turns silent as Kiri exhales a nasal huff. As much as his cheeks burn in embarrassment, and as much as he resents admiration blooming within him, Kiri adds, “Tell the others in the meeting: I’m done playing politics when I’m not even the best I can be. Heck... Fugaku is only two years older and is stronger than the rest of us combined. Mikoto, too. She’s only ever used Taijutsu when beating us for questioning her abilities.”

Igari lowers her head. Her expression was sullen.

Not everyone will perceive Mikoto’s actions in the same manner. Some will resent her, others will fear her, and a small group will admire her. But in the end, Mikoto did not care too deeply. As long as they reached their desired results, she was willing to play the bad cop... only Rikudo knows Kai and others are enjoying her *‘darker’* side.

The duo soon reports to Mikoto as she nods quietly and remains in their positions until Mikoto frowns and looks to the sky.

The sun has already set, and that’s when she feels something odd. Her hones instincts and senses as a nature chakra sensor goes off in an immediate alarm. Other similarly skilled Shinobi feel the same as Mikoto as they look at the sky.

Those with an impossibly sharp gaze notice a small beige-like sphere freefalling from the surface of the cloud, but in the next few seconds, the layers of cloud are torn open in one fell swoop as a gigantic hill hurtles its way on Konoha.

Toward Konoha’s prison!

“Well.” Tsunade narrows her eyes, not even dressed in her jonin attire. A green haori with the word ‘Gamble’ on the back covers her sleeveless grey kimono blouse held together by a broad dark-blue belt, emphasizing her bust and cleavage, over similar-colored pants, and open-toed sandals. She likes the fit so much that she has four pairs of it! She crosses her arms under her breasts and focuses on the tiny ball pressed against the artificial meteor.

“Well, what they’re looking for isn’t in the prison.”

Not far from Tsunade, within the Hokage’s residence, Jiraiya claps his hand.

“Alright, Shikadai, wake up!” Jiraiya looks at the fly-eyed toad in the shadow and nods, “Just keep an eye on the surroundings. That mountain is a distraction.”

As if confirming Jiraiya’s suspicions, one of the men from the Detection Team informs promptly.

“We just detected three shinobi entering the barrier. One of them is a Jinchuriki, and the other two Shinobi have high chakra reserves! Elites, at least!”

“Modes of entry? For the one with the Jinchuriki.”

“Some kind of sphere. We couldn’t pinpoint the nature transformation, so it’s likely a Kekkei Genkai.”

“Hmm.”

Shikadai, meanwhile, scratches his head and yawns. “Only Third Tsuchikage and his immediate family know how to fly, right? But they won’t offer a Kage and a Jinchuriki. So, I think Onoki is here himself. We should worry about what Jinchuriki they sent our way, Nibi or Hachibi?”

“No,” surprising Shikadai, Jiraiya corrects the lazy prodigy. “We need to worry about the guy carrying the Jinchuriki. If I’m not wrong... then we’ll have trouble getting rid of the enemy’s defense. But we’ll worry about it once we confirm our border is safe.”

“And the mountain flying toward the prison?” Inoichi questions as Jiraiya plays with a senbon crafted from chakra metal in his hand.

“I suppose we all have to trust that we are capable of fulfilling our roles.”

“Then why’d you wake me up if we aren’t going to move?” Shikadai snorts and lays his head on his hands again.

Her pale-yellow eyes focused on the rapidly reinforced ball pressed against the giant mountain. Orochimaru’s senses went crazy with the sheer hostility emanating from this ball.

‘The impact range should devastate a large portion of Konoha. Things would have been troublesome if the mountain descended from a higher point, but my area should be largely untouched.’

She looks sideways at the small white snake coiling around a thin needle stabbed into the mountain’s surface.

'I do wish Onoki attacked my side. I could question the original Kai about what he'd been working on for so long. But... it's also a pleasant turn of events that he isn't here.'

"Planning on attacking Konoha, too?" She looks at the small snake, who hisses in reply.

"What do I earn from thatssss? I am here to ssssseeeee."

"See what?"

"The stone moved... that stone never moves, but ihhhtttttt did. The entire Shikkotsu is abuzz."

Orochimaru frowns as the Snake Sage hisses.

"Predictions point that all the Five Villages will have a hand in something monumental... I wish to see it myself."

"Is it happening anytime soon?"

"Compared to my lifespan, yes. Within a decade, maybe."

The Snake Sannin rolls her eyes and turns around to return to her position.

"The only reason I am not devouring your 'son' is because you somehow pppaaaaassssed. Never forget that. We are cold-blooded by nature."

Orochimaru half-turns to stare at the tiny stage, which is merely a vestige of someone large and terrifying.

"I will be making use of my summons again from now on. Mitsuki is closer to your teaching. You can confirm it with the summon he binds with. As for devouring him or not, I don't particularly care. You have always been the master of your slither, and I'll act appropriately the next time you decide to drop such a fruitless threat."

The tiny snake slowly crumbles into the ground while Orochimaru returns, but her pupils were slitted like snakes and pointed.

"Onoki." Hiruzen meanwhile disrobes to reveal a dark outfit and wears a plated helmet. He adjusts the guards on his limbs before looking at Inoshi, Shikudo, and Choku.

He taps the small sphere set on his table above a purple cushion. The glass ball seems ordinary on the surface.

“You shall use the Telescope Jutsu until we weather these events. Shikudo knows what to do next.”

Shikudo nods as Hiruzen performs a few seals before slapping the nearest wall.

“Summoning Jutsu.”

\*Poof\*

A humanoid, white-furred monkey, much taller than Hiruzen, waves his hand and clears the smoke before looking around and nodding at the Ino-Shika-Cho trio.

“What happened? You called me before the battle even began?”

“Well,” Hiruzen looks past his window, causing others to follow his gaze as they watch the descending mountain seriously.

“Onoki is not the kind to give us time for things we ought to prepare. Shikudo, keep an eye on Onoki using Telescope Jutsu, and Inoshi, keep me informed about the Jinchuriki’s actions—theirs and ours.”

“I bet I can pierce the mountain, but destroying it will be hard.” Enma, Hiruzen’s summon, strokes his fur, similar to a goatee on his chin.

“That won’t be necessary. Our only worry is dealing with Onoki.”

“Hmm. Don’t wave me against his Dust Release.”

“I know better than that.”

---

Anyone would try to leave their positions if they saw a flaming mountain flying in their direction. Not Mikoto.

Why?

She just felt a rather familiar hand pinch her butt before disappearing before anyone could even sense this individual.

None of the four Uchiha felt anything!

And that became a source of her trust in this ruthless world.

“We cannot stay!” Igari hisses as Mikoto uses this chance to stabilize her position in this group as the top bitch by narrowing her eyes. “You move, you die. Stay in your position.”

As hypocritical as she sounds, Mikoto finds herself on the side of morality, where the end justifies the means. She feels she wasn't like this. But then again, she would instead prioritize the safety of her people through brutal means than go soft and let them be the reason for their own downfall. Besides, she has an individual to control her if she ever gets out of hand, so it is comforting to her in a twisted sense.

Igari and Juzo are intimidated, but the flaming meteor happens to be quite a compelling reason for them to go against their orders—

“Just listen to what is asked of you!” Kiri snaps at his teammates. “If you're afraid of death, stop being a Shinobi while pompously posing as the mighty Uchiha, you runts! Wherever we run, it'll get us! I have a mole as my summon—”

Mikoto raises her hand and points up without looking.

“That won't be necessary.”

“Huh?”

Her team looks to the sky at once. Their vision was compromised by the flaming meteor.

“Huff, you two run too fast!”

\*Ruff\*

The trio then looks to the side and finds three other shinobi—A blonde, a redhead, and another one with a dog.

“Train more, dattebane! Kai and I have been training without rest!”

“I know what kind of training that is.” Tsume scoffs and sniffs in Kushina's direction before pouting slightly. As she grew... her head pat privileges almost disappeared without anything more fulfilling in exchange!

“M-Minato?” Kiri recognizes one of them. Others still try to ignore Kushina since anything wrong may get them another beatdown of their life.

Women around Kai... are surprisingly violent.

“Ah, Kiri-san. And Mikoto-san. Our team leader wants us to keep up with his pace.”

“Your team leader being?” Mikoto questions leadingly as she already noticed the ridiculous mask on her fiance’s face.

“The Dragon Sennin.”

Minato chuckles wryly. Only those around Kai and the Hokage know of his identity so Kai wanted to keep the pretense for some reason.

Kirin and others blink in surprise as they look up to the sky. Their Sharingan spiral to life as they observe a muscle-bound figure with brown-greyish claws and rough scales spreading from the back of his hand. His grey-blue hair flows wildly behind him while the pink octopus mask with pronounced lips reflects the orange glow of the flaming mountain.

His speed doesn’t falter one bit.

Upon closer inspection, the Sharingan users notice a strange chakra reminiscent of Wind Nature flowing through the figure’s pores that seems to allow him the ability to... fly.

### **[Sage Art—Air Stream.]**

Kai quietly closes in the distance with an odd look of disappointment.

Time is always short.

He isn’t disappointed he had to dig into his reserve of SP to master a new thing, but Kai is disappointed that he didn’t get to master it through the grind. But he did not want to face the top dogs of this world without knowing he could have been stronger.

**[Hiraishin-Guiding Thunder (20/20): Creates a barrier connecting one point to another in space-time through unique key seals developed by the user. Every level reduces the formation of the seal by 2.5%. Every level reduces chakra consumption by 2.5%. Current Consumption: 17000~??]**

**[Yin-Yang Chakra Cloak (2→5/5): Converts chakra into a certain proportion of yin and yang nature to bolster the mind and the body. Each level increases the three stats by 10 points. Each level increases the boost by 100%. Reduces the consumption of charka by 10% at every level. Current Consumption: 2812/sec.]**

**[Name: Kai**

**Age: 15**

**Title: Jonin Instructor**

**Gamer Traits: Skill Tree; Sleepless Gamer**

**Rank: Jonin**

**Hit Points: 100%**



**Stamina: 100/100% (50.1%/min)**

**Senjutsu/Chakra: 350014 (100004→ 106604+250%) || (3377.5/min) (920→ 965+250%)**

**Physique: 505→ 535/1000**

**Mental: 587→ 617/1000**

**Perception: 522→ 552/1000**

**Water: 55/100%**

**Wind: 33/100%**

**Fire: 21.3/100%**

**Earth: 46.8/100%**

**Lightning: 31/100%**

**Yin: 50→ 56/100%**

**Yang: 50→ 56/100%]**

**[Skill Points: 3103→ 1828]**

**[Reduction of Chakra Wastage: 100%]**

**[Reduction of Senjutsu Chakra Wastage: 54.5%]**

{A/N: Hiraishin and its variants are S-ranked so 60 Sp for each level up.}

Kai scoffs as he stares at the rubbery balloon. There is no way he could just let it pass through him for fun and receive no consequences from Hiruzen, so he stops his flight midair and senses the three sources of surprise intent lock on him.

‘Cunts. Told you I’m better even with all three Sannins combined.’

He extends his chakra senbon as his hands form hundreds of seals in a blink of an eye that leaves the watchful Mikoto shaken. She only caught three seals.

Even Minato stares with awe. Yes, he is aware that he created the jutsu, but putting a newly theorized jutsu formed from Fuin into practice is easier said than done.

Kai feels Senjutsu Chakra drain rapidly from his being since he can create fuin with Senjutsu after hours of practice, and a web of seals easily beyond 30 meters in diameter spreads from the tiny senbon. Yet, showing the difference in use compared to Minato’s expectations, Kai finally feels a little in tune with the feeling of the seal.

It’s the same instincts that make him want to bang his head against the wall because of how irrational it feels.

Yet, in this barely excitable moment, Kai feels dull. And in this depression of being unable to practice the seal through hard work, Kai sinks into a strange mood.

Onoki feels his heart twist with worry as the supposed seals... move.

Seals don't move, once they are set. That's why they are called seals and not some Ink-Jutsu. Seals work with nature and already stored chakra to perform specific functions.

So, when Onoki watches the web of seals converging forward like a flytrap, he flies high to avoid anything unknown.

But the travelers in the rubber sphere are not that lucky. After all, the seals converged in an instant like the bloom of a lotus occurring in an inverse!

\*Fwip\*

The mountain disappears from the sky above Konoha as one of the senbons planted far from the village at Kai's behest glimmers and reveals the same seal.

The seals converged into the single point bloom open in the next instant, and the mountain crashes upon the forest tens of kilometers away from Konoha!

'That... was new.'

As if trying to cheer him up, he receives an unsolicited notification from his trait.

**[Affinity with an external element has reached the basic trait category.]**

**[Added Space-Time Affinity.]**

\*\*\*

**Alternate Title:** Mikoto Loves Playing a Baddie; The Future Mom of the Decade; Kiri's a Tsundere?; Uchihas are Filled With Tsunderes; No Uchiha Among Sannin; Madara Did Go Batshit Crazy; Onoki's a Stone Cold Killer... Get it?; Why Did You Wake Shikadai?; A Reaffirming Pinch; Kushina's Getting her Cardio, Dattebane! \*Kyubi from Distance\* Sluuuuttttttt; Don't Threaten Mommy Orochi's Child; The Stone Moved? Which One?; A Depressing State that Leads to Good Things; Space-Time Affinity

\*\*\*

A/N: I think there should be an affinity of this kind since Otsutsuki and their devil spawns can do shit with it without a single hand seal.

***Title: Darkest Night Hidden in The Leaf (5)***

Onoki, the Third Tsuchikage, has led a long life of conflict. As the Leader of Iwagakure, Onoki realized a leader must never emotionally account for conflicts. *NEVER*. The death of one of his sons at Tsunade's hand did not faze him even a little. It did not spark any hatred in him. How many sons and daughters has he butchered over the years? How many children has he orphaned?

Only Iwagakure.

Only his village's survival is his priority. He accepts the simple understanding that the path of Shinobi only concludes with death.

Not as in life is beautiful because of death.

The Third Tsuchikage scoffs at such sentiments.

Nothing is captivating about life and death. Does one find a dead boar a sight to sore eyes? Does one view a living mosquito as exquisite?

Humans, especially Shinobi, must not be above such standards.

Only one thing surpasses such mortal sentiments.

Only one thing is honestly immortal in his eyes. After all, he still remembers *THAT* man. His malevolent crimson eyes and dreadful legacy.

*The Ghost of Uchiha.*

A legacy that is spoken of to the end of times—A legacy that will persist as long as Iwa stands the test of time; The Will of Stone.

His actions have garnered him an unhonorable alias. The Fence Sitter, they call him—Onoki of Both Scales.

A man willing to stab his allies in the back, procure thousands of slaves, raid hundreds of settlements, and degrade human lives to their absolute worst. But he knows just as well as other Shoguns and Nobles that the rest are no better.

This outlook on life also allows Onoki to adapt tactics he considers comprehensively rational unless it's a force of nature storming his way. And he knows two such men, but only one of them left a mark as deep as the Ghost that haunts him in the night.

An artificial meteor heated with friction needs no other finesse or gimmick to cause the desired destruction, a method Onoki chose after thinking about the real troubles hiding in the vast depth of power that Konoha is: The Sharingan, Second Hokage's Jutsu, and a Shinobi with the strength and expertise similar to the First Kage and his fiercest competitor.

Onoki crossed the last one out of his list.

Why?

Konoha would not settle for anything less if they had someone like Hashirama to flaunt. Hiruzen is too intelligent to underutilize such means as a chip to suppress the war and get other Shoguns to settle down.

What?

Shinobi, the master of stealth, prefer infiltration and other backhanded means if it gets them what they want.

War is bad for the business of all players, but not the spectators. No.

So, this leaves him with two problems.

One Uchiha Patriarch, likely possessing the Eyes of Nightmare. And a significantly tamer talent who got his hands on one of Second Hokage's Hiraishin, which should have been a forbidden jutsu if not for its glaring issue.

Now both these options needed to harm the user.

The force of his attack should put such war potentials out of the commission. Onoki's knowledge of the Mangekyo Sharingan was low but not non-existent. And thus, he understood that it bore massive pressure on the user. As for any user of Hiraishin?

The sheer heat from the friction would destroy any clone before they near the meteor, forcing the real body to sacrifice itself to teleport the attack.

\*Whoosh\*

Konoha exceeded his expectations as Onoki observes the masked youth floating not far from him. His greyish claws gleam with a cold light as the wind picks around them due to the sudden disappearance of a heated mountain.

'The Dragon Sennin.'

Onoki narrows his eyes and calms the tide of emotions coursing through his veins.

“Dragon of Konoha, worth 20 Million by Kai.” Onoki presses his hands together while eyeing Kai, adding with a vicious smirk.

“Or did you believe we are unaware of your true identity, Legacy Guardian Kai?”

Kai blinks from behind his mask before frowning at himself. He admittedly took the cum-man as a source of trouble way later, so he has no way of finding out what they found about him before that. Maybe Hiruzen spoke about him with Jiraiya, or it could be something else.

“Still wearing your mask?”

Onoki’s eyes twitch as the weak impact from the wind burst from the point of collision of the mountain outside Konoha finally reached them.

‘Or, he could just be fishing for information here.’

Kai narrows his eyes.

‘Just stick to the plan and prepare for counters as Nono discussed.’ Kai shrugs to himself. Even if his identity leaked, what of it? And if not, why should he open his mouth and confirm any suspicion?

He could, however, keep Onoki a bit occupied until his own Kage arrives.

He may assassinate a Kage, but revealing his strength in the open solely invites all sorts of trouble for no good reason. He wants a harem of babes, so showing off must be done professionally and not to jack old men off.

So, Kai is forced to adopt the only way of stalling taught by the best master for this form—Bad Puns.

“My name is Jeff.”

“Well, we tried,” Onoki replies as his palms open to reveal a cuboid of white translucent chakra that houses an intensely glowing white orb in the center!

Kai shrugs. He truly tried. But Kages are sometimes a flawed audience.

His vision shifts the next second as he taps Minato’s shoulder, “Enjoyed your technique screwing up a Kage?”

Minato half-turns with an almost puckish grin as awe laces his stark-blue eyes.

“It was more than my technique! We have a lot to consider after we get through the night.”

Mikoto eyes the duo before looking at Kiri, Igari, and Juzo.

“We regroup at the police station. Retreat.”

Kiri and others nod quickly and disappear into the forest as Mikoto quietly watches Onoki aiming the cuboid of chakra in their direction once he noted some movements.

“Should I get it, dattebane?” Kushina practically snarls as her violet eyes adopt a crimson hue.

“None of us will be facing a Kage unless ordered to.” Kai narrows his eyes.

“And what of the famous Dust Release pointed at us?” Mikoto questions.

“Go and regroup with your team,” Kai replies as Onoki releases the deceptively quick shape of chakra in their direction.

“The honor of facing a Kage should go to another one, after all.”

“Five Dragon Explosions!”

A chorus of hoarse voices snarl sharply as five dragons rise from the ground and around them—Mud, Earth, Fire, Water, and Lightning—before throwing themselves at the small chakra cuboid as a harsh white light expands from within the ball of element dragons, and turns the attack into dust.

“I don’t recall you underestimating even a small bunny, Onoki?” Five shadows quickly flicker into existence on top of the trees—Hiruzen and his clones. One of them continues.

“But to use so little Chakra to attack my men that it could be countered by simple elemental dragons? You truly have grown old.”

Onoki raises one of his bushy, Guy-Duy class brows but doesn’t respond verbally.

Instead, one of Hiruzen’s clones looks back at the group and nods calmly.

“Return. You will have new orders flowing shortly after. Leave this to me.”

As others nod calmly, Kai adds a short saluting gesture before leaving with the rest.

“A part of me believed that you would want to tackle the Organization dispensing our Village’s information to each of us. But it’s clear that you find that whatever we may or may not know is too dangerous.”

Hiruzen looks at his flying enemy as he adds. “There aren’t burned bridges as of now, Onoki. Quit it while you still can.”

“If you believe I can be manipulated into fighting another’s War just because of some information, then you, too, may have lost your touch,” Onoki observes his supposed equal.

“I do all for Iwagakure.”

“Men like us keep telling ourselves that,” Hiruzen chuckles. He once pulled himself out of reality and let Danzo do whatever he wished by lying to himself. “We may lie to ourselves just enough that it feels like reality... but Onoki, men like you and I only do things that serves our best interest. It just so happens WE want our Villages to thrive.”

“I see no difference.”

“When you do, it will already be too late. It IS already too late.”

Hiruzen smirks thinly, but his shriveled face lacks any warmth. His wrinkled eyes regard Onoki with no hate or fear.

“The things men do just to prove a point.”

A short memory resurfaces in Onoki’s mind as he recalls his earlier exchanges with Hiruzen in their primes.

“The things men do to surpass ancestor’s heritage.”

Their smirks turn upside down into grim looks as Onoki forms the first seal, and his chakra forms an encasing of rock around his hands.

Hiruzen’s attack is even quicker as the pitch-black gold-ended staff elongates at a quick pace before crashing into Onoki with force no less than mountains crashing!

---

Nono is sleeping on a thin mattress, or at least, that’s what it looks like to others. The floor is shared by other clans like the Yamanaka, Nara, and Akimichi Clans, but they keep to themselves except for a few children, and Genins already in teams have taken it upon themselves to gossip about the happenings outside the Hokage Mountain.

But Nono is not sleeping.

“Excuse me, is she in a Genjutsu?” One of the four stationed Anbu members finally approaches Hiroshi Senju, Nawaki’s attendant tasked with the clan’s supervision.

“Hmm, yes, she is.”

Hiroshi nods and helps one of the old women sit properly and lets her drink water. Other teens are volunteering to help the few and not feel congested by staying in such a small space.

After all, a better portion of the village is crammed in the hollow interior of one mountain!

“Is that—”

“She did that to herself, and if you don’t want to see men fucking each other in the most degrading manner, I suggest you don’t poke in her illusions,” Hiroshi cuts to the chase and sighs. “Please, many find themselves on edge, including Nono. Self-genjutsu is her way out whenever she is not working.”

With the sole intention of clearing things up and not poking his nose in the wrong crowd, the Anbu member accepts the explanation and leaves.

As one of the volunteers to help others feel comfortable, Konan passes Nono again and cringes at the sight of her obscene smirk.

The Bluenette, however, is surprised to find two girls descending to her floor.

“They let you enter?” Konan looks at Kurenai and Shizune.

“Well, our movements aren’t restricted. We aren’t prisoners, after all.” Kurenai looks around and sighs at the glum surroundings.

Children from the clans are usually taught manners, and such, at an early age, so things aren’t as lively as things on the upper floors that house more commoners. The children are going absolutely crazy by playing and running around!

“And why are you two here?” Konan questions as Kurenai smirks in reply.

“Payback.”

“You said testing our biology and revising a few more topics. The test set by Mikoto-san and others are still hard.” Shizune frowns.



“Well, Sensei taught me to lie good enough so you couldn’t see through it.” The crimson-eyed girl sticks her nose high.

“Says the girl who still falls for Sensei’s words.” Konan narrows her eyes.

“It’s called being a good student!”

“A kiss-ass.”

“At least, he doesn’t steal my dumplings!”

“Because the dumplings he steals from me are just THAT delicious.”

“If I may, is it about Kinju?” Shizune cuts in and questions as Kurenai nods earnestly.

“So, you plan to attack an Uchiha Genin under the watch of Anbu members?” Konan blinks in surprise.

“They said it’s alright.”

“Did they?” Konan and Shizune gape simultaneously as Kurenai huffs.

“I thought about it and asked Sensei privately before we were placed here. He said, and I quote—Go crazy. Break a leg.—I assume the last part was... metaphorical.” Then she adds thoughtfully. “Maybe not?”

“It’s metaphorical!” Shizune hisses while Konan considers things calmly and looks around, only to feel four watchful gazes in their direction.

“What do Sensei’s words have to do anything with you asking for the Anbu’s permission?” Konan questions.

“Oh, no. Orochimaru-san sent the message through one of the Shinobi. He said he understands their position as long as we don’t kill anyone or get killed.”

Shizune and Konan purse their lips until the former questions, “And you don’t find any problem in that itself?”

“It seems pretty simple.” Kurenai crosses her arms, “We make an example out of Kinju, so others stop calling Shizune names.”

The short-haired brunette finally sighs and shakes her head, “If it’s just that, I’m returning.”

“Huh?” Kurenai looks at Shizune in surprise as the girl replies with a stony look. She had already put the whole thing behind her once she made up her mind to deal with her situation by making statements about her actions and cleaning her name instead of lashing out.

“I am not going to attack Kinju Uchiha just over some names. Besides, he believes it because I have no notable contributions to refute his claims. My body was used to commit a crime, that’s all.”

“That’s not all.” Kurenai asserts, “You cannot just let him walk all over you—”

“And if I do what you want, is it me letting you roll over me?” Shizune retorts sharply with a glare. She rarely loses her gentle nature, but she’s been leading the team for the better part of the year.

Kurenai shuts up as Shizune continues, “I’m... very happy that you two would go so far for me. I would, too.”

Blushing a little and averting her gaze in embarrassment, Shizune mutters, “But I don’t think it’s wise to lash out. I’m not like Kushina-san or Sensei. Don’t misunderstand. I hate it when someone calls me a traitor, but being violent may just prove their point. It may just send the wrong message to Konoha’s administration.”

Kurenai thins her lips before her shoulders slump.

“All my plans... for nothing.”

“Maybe we can goad Kinju to attack us, then beat him in self-defense?” Konan muses, making Shizune look back helplessly. Yet, Konan smirks.

“But duly noted. If you don’t get moody over words, we have no reason to make matters worse for you.”

“Since we’re here, let us help out.” Shizune smiles in relief.

“Yeah, better than getting bored. And since Sensei allowed us to remove our weights... I feel hard sitting still.” Kurenai waves her arms around.

Konan shrugs and leads them around as Kurenai and Shizune note something odd.

“Hey, what’s with Nono-san’s expression?”

“A lewd illusion... maybe.”

“Gross, but I would like to whip up Genjutsu as well as her,” Kurenai mutters.

“Your reputation is really sinking, huh?” Kai chuckles as they are in the same illusion of their bedroom where he and Nono did illusion-nasty again as Nono lies on his chest.

“It doesn’t matter. Reputation is needed to find a great partner, establish political strength, and whatnot. I already have the former and don’t care for the latter. Besides, it’s this reputation of mine that can let us communicate like this without an issue.”

Kai chuckles. One of his wooden clones stayed with Nono and formed this simple genjutsu to converse with her. The other six clones are in various spots of the village.

“I can actually create another wooden clone. But it’s not the division of mind that’s stopping me. It’s my chakra. Adding more clones has no meaning for now.”

“Do you think Lord Third will survive?”

Nono is a rare existence that has all the happenings in the village since the wooden clones share information live.

“I wouldn’t know. But his death will affect Konoha negatively, so one of my clones is near him at the Police Station. Mikoto’s my priority, after all.”

“And the Hyuga Clan’s treasury?”

“Empty. They stored most of their secrets in storage scrolls and brought them along.”

“I still think you are reaching a bit here.” Nono looks at Kai as he works his jaws.

“Byakugan is hailed as Sharingan’s rival since ancient times... since the likes of Madara Uchiha. I want to see if that’s true. After all, I already like Byakugan more than usual Sharingan... just never got my hands on one or even replicate it... even with Senjutsu Chakra.”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know. I even went as far as replicating their nervous system after memorizing their medical records, but the shadow clone... dispersed the second it was formed.”

Nono mulls on the matter and mutters, “What about Lady Biwako?”

“No movements.”

“And Mukai?”

“He’s already here. Orochimaru had him wear an Anbu outfit after she had a chat with Hizashi.”

“So, they are prepared for the worst.” Nono clicks her tongue.

“It’s only the worst in their eyes,” Kai purses his lips and then exhales quietly. “But... I’m not letting go of this chance. Having dojutsu is not important to me. It’s replicating them. But for now, given my priorities, I can only settle for experiencing Dojutsu firsthand.”

Nono merely smiles and slips under the blanket once again.

“Haven’t you had enough practice for your real body?” Kai smirks as Nono scoffs in reply.

“Practice makes perfect, but since perfection does not exist, my path is endless!”

“Quite a way to call yourself a slut.”

Nono’s smirk widens as they continue to share more things than information.

“By the way, do you really think Onoki knows your real name?” Nono questions in between her illicit actions.

“Probably not. Now that I have more time to think about it, the information in Bingo Book must have been updated, too. After all, my stock only rises as Tsunade’s Legacy Guardian. But the cum-man must have some suspicion about me. He’s been strictly off the Senju Property... and I think it’s because of the seals I refurbished.”

Nono agrees with him on that and smiles a bit wider.

“But I have to question? Are we really in the right here?”

Kai grins as he cups her cheeks. “And what’s that in our world?”

---

“We will get our chance soon.”

Three ‘*Anbu*’ members gather within the mountain’s interior. Two of them have precisely similar stature, while the third is thinner and less remarkable.

Hizashi stares at his elder twin and adds after a second, “Only if they are the ones to act out of control. They should be allowed enough time to form their decision.”

“And what does that mean?” Hiashi narrows his eyes.

“I noticed it some time ago,” Hizashi shakes his head calmly, “I speak from experience. Don’t let short-sightedness shackle you. The Clan Elders do not have our trust, but they should still have a chance.”

Mukai quietly observes the duo.

Hiashi grows silent and finally musters quietly.

“I have made my peace.”

“Doesn’t make it any less selfish.”

“You don’t have any choice.” Hiashi points out.

“I’m free of the caged seal. I have all the choice in the world.”

Hizashi turns around and flickers away. Only his voice remains behind.

“Return to your positions. It won’t be long if the clan wants to make a move.”

\*\*\*

**Alternate Title:** Fishing Information; A Professional Show-Off; Inadequate Crowd; My Name is Truly Jeff; Choices; Shizune’s Resolution; Konan and Kurenai are Gaslighting Menaces; What Men Must Do; Immortal Legacy; When Rationality Meets Freaks of Nature; Losing Touch; Nono’s Reputation is Her Greatest Asset; Clapping Illusory Cheeks; There is No Right; Break a Leg... Metaphorically, Of Course?; Shackled by Guilt—Indifferent—Free of The Caged Seal