

The Elder Scrolls 3: Naruto

By Master_Chief60

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Kakashi, taken by surprise to another world filled with danger, was forced to help Tamriel activate a mysterious Index. Story contains mild violence, nothing else. :) Its a safe read.

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((Due to some errors on my Pc's security settings, chapters can't be added. Sorry. However, this is the whole story of what I have so far. Enjoy.))

The Elder Scrolls 3: Naruto
THE INDEX

Autor's Note: Brought to you by MinorKey, Master_Chief60. You may have noticed I love to write. I am actually a LOT younger then my text may make me sound, because I've had much typing experience as well as literatural experience. I have a good mind in grammar and literature, but I stink at math and spelling. My friends sometimes call me the Creative One, or sometimes the Writing Mastermind. This story, The Index, is probably the best fanfiction I have ever written. Its got an EXTREMELY detailed storyline, all thanks to the geniouses behind Naruto and Morrowind at Viz Media, Shonen Jump and Bethesda Softworks, combined with my mind.

((Yes, this story IS based on the dubbed version of Naruto. That is how I'm imagining it as I write because the dubbed is the only I've seen and do not want to see the Japanese version.))

Join me, Bethesda and Shonen Jump... and together, we shall rule the Fanfiction galaxy!!!

FORWARD

IF you haven't played Morrowind, don't worry. Kakashi hasn't played it either, and this story is basically told though his point of view, but I'm still the one writing this and not him. So if you are ignorant to everything about Morrowind, you'll find out all you need to know as you read along in this terrifying, nerve-rattling story which I like to call my best fanfiction ever written. Though the beginning and second chapters may be a bit boring, DO NOT BE FOOLED. There is a tremendous amount of action later on; "more then you or your grandfather can handle!" (Quoth Strong Bad XD)

This book is a Morrowind (Xbox and PC RPG) and Naruto (popular anime) crossover. Please note that some facts in this story are well researched on both fandoms, but some of the plot and storyline I have made up myself and do not apply directly to either fandom. When you read you may notice that I have some strange details that aren't in Morrowind that I have made up, such as the Finders of the Index and the Portals they unlock. (You see, instead of Propylons, they are portals that lead strait to Oblivion or other allied worlds depending on... well, just read the story.) However, the weapons, characters, people, places, races, alchemy potions that the characters learn, enchantments, Magicka, and other Morrowind items are all ideas taken directly from the game that I haven't made up myself. Note that this story is more of a Morrowind setting then a Naruto setting because, believe it or not, I like Morrowind a lot better then I like Naruto. I only really enjoy the show because of Kakashi. So basically, this story is about four Naruto characters (team 7) being flung into the world of Morrowind. If you came to read this story because of Rock Lee or Gaara or one of them, they won't be in the story, but they may be mentioned.

Concerning the Index, in the Morrowind world, there is such thing as chambers that are activated by Indexes, called Propylon Chambers, but though I have found a few Indexes in the game, I haven't used any yet so I don't know what happens when you actually use one, so... yeah.

And yes, I know, Darius isn't from Fort Moonmoth (he's actually from Gnisis at Fort Darius obviously if you've played Morrowind), but he's the only Imperial leaderguy who's name I could remember.

For more information on Morrowind, please visit www.elderscrolls.com or its unofficial wiki, <http://uesp.net/wiki/Morrowind:Morrowind>.

STORY RATING: PG for violence.

CENTER CHARACTERS: Kakashi (Kuh-KAH-shee), Naruto (NAH-roo-toh), Sakura (SAH-kur-ah), and Sasuke (SAHS-kay) (all from Naruto); Artonai (AHR-tone-aye) and Shantar (SHAHN-tair) (OCs from Morrowind); Dagoth Ur (DAH-goth UR) and Darius (DAH-ree-us) (From Morrowind)

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It began like any other day.

Kakashi awoke in his apartment room and tied his black mask onto his face. The fabric mask shadowed the lower portion of his face, hiding what he looked like from all eyes. He then grabbed his Hidden Leaf headband off of his desktop and slipped it onto his forehead. The swirl engraving with a triangle attached to it in the metal of the head protector vaguely resembled a leaf. He tilted the headband just enough so it covered his left eye, without covering his right eye.

His left eye had a scar just across the lid, but the iris and pupil were truly remarkable. Three comma-like markings were positioned in a wheel around a very small pupil, and the iris was blood red. This was a Sharingan, the eye Kakashi was most known for. With it came the Hypnotic Eye and the Mesmirising Eye which he used to copy other ninjas' skills.

Kakashi was a Ninja, like many others in the villages of this land, but a very powerful one. He was famous for his ability to survive in the toughest battles, but how he got the Sharingan and why he wore a mask was a mystery.

Kakashi ran his fingers through his silver hair, trying to comb out the knots which formed while he was asleep. His hair always stood up in a crazy fashion. His three students had never seen him with flat hair. A sigh escaped his lips as he thought about what he was going to do that morning.

'I could show up early, just this once...' He thought. 'I'd like to see the look on their faces when I do... but I don't want to...' his thoughts trailed. '...miss talking to Obito...'

He slipped on his black jumpsuit which covered his arms, chest, and legs. He tied white bandages around his right leg, where most ninjas kept them. He then zipped on his jade green Shinobi vest. The vest had a red swirl on the back of it, and had two pockets in the front. Padded chitin armor, the same color as the rest of the vest, swept across his shoulders, held in place by a black button. A long collar on the vest acted as neck protecting padding.

"I'm all set," he muttered and jumped up. He filled his pockets with shurikens and kunai then exited his apartment, holding an orange book in his right hand.

He took slow strides as he walked through the woods that surrounded his house, reading the book but paying attention to where he was going at the same time. Suddenly, chill wind picked up, carrying leaves and dust and sent a jolt down his spine. He could feel the hairs on the back of his neck prickle. Something was odd about this morning... he could tell something was watching.

He shot a glance into the trees, then caught sight of a dark shadow looming above him. Kakashi drew a kunai from his pocket, his senses becoming alert. "Who are you?" He demanded, not wanting to hurt the person if it was just a Kohona resident who was just spying on him.

The person jumped down with an elegant landing directly in front of Kakashi. The person wore an extravagant blue robe which dropped to his ankles. His face had black and dark blue skin, and his eyes were reddish orange, with a hint of yellow. His hair was black and murky, and somewhat long and spiked. His hair also had two red highlights, and he wore a brooch, with a spiked stone embedded in it, on his forehead which kept his hair out of his eyes. His ears were pointed and were slightly longer than normal. In his hand, he held a long staff, and in the other, a scroll.

"Who are you?" Kakashi asked, not dropping his guard.

"I am a Dark Elf, a Dunmer from Vvanderfell, and I have come to capture you. You have something that belongs to my master, and he wants it." The person replied, his voice low and grumbly.

Kakashi knew the Dark Elf was not joking. He flung the kunai at the Dark Elf then exposed his Sharingan. Obviously the man knew that Kakashi was nothing to be taken lightly, so he had to be ready.

"Give up the Index, Kakashi Hatake, or suffer the consequences!" The Dark Elf yelled. His hand began to glow red, and sparks flew out of his fingers. He then shot a large ball of flames toward Kakashi.

The skilled Jounin evaded the fireball, but the Dark Elf had already shot another one to the spot that he jumped for. The fireball slammed into Kakashi's chest, knocking him to the ground. While he was still stunned, the attacker was once again on him, beating him with his staff. Kakashi grabbed the staff around the fourth swing, then yanked it from the surprised man's arms.

Kakashi, despite the wound on his chest that was beginning to throb with pain, and the bruises on his head and neck, attacked with much enthusiasm again. 'This man is no ordinary bounty hunter... and what is this Index he wants so badly? Oh... if I get defeated... what will my Genin think? I'm always late... they'll be waiting for hours before they decide that I am not going to show up...' He thought.

As the two battled, Kakashi was becoming weary while the 'Dunmer' was showing no signs of fatigue. Suddenly, Kakashi realized what was happening. 'This man can do Jutsu that I can't copy! The Jutsu he is using is draining my energy and chakra! But why can't I see it? I don't know what it is!'

The man then shoved his glowing green hand towards Kakashi's injured chest, pushing him into the trunk of a tree so he could not back up. The powerful creature pressed his hand to Kakashi's chest very hard.

The Jounin didn't know what was going on, but he was beginning to feel weak and ill. Kakashi tried to move, but his legs and arms wouldn't work. He tried to take a deep breath, but every inhale was

staggering. Suddenly, he lost consciousness and the Dark Elf removed his hand.

"You were harder than I expected..." he muttered. "But no worries know, n'wah. I've got you in my clutches." He grabbed Kakashi around the waist, then disappeared, just after Kakashi's headband slipped off of his forehead and onto the damp forest floor.

"Sensei's LATE!" Naruto screamed. "This is later than he's EVER been!" He kicked the railing of the bridge so hard his foot hurt badly, but he didn't show his pain in front of his other two teammates, Sakura and Sasuke. They waited on the orange bridge near the village every day for their teacher Kakashi to show up and begin the lessons and trainings on proper Ninjahood, but he was always late.

Naruto was blonde-haired and blue-eyed. He was stubborn and angry most of the time, but he also had a good sense of humor and loved to pull pranks. On each of his cheeks were three lines, like whiskers, that resembled the whiskers of the Fox he contained within himself. Though he was only a Genin, or young Ninja in training, he had such power that he tried to keep concealed. Naruto wore an orange jumpsuit with the shinobi swirl on the back, and a strange stick was attached on his shoulder by small strings. The jumpsuit also had patches of blue on the shoulders and a zipper down the front.

His other male teammate, Sasuke, was brooding and dark. Sasuke was proud but at the same time, calm. He didn't talk a lot, and he felt like he was much more skilled than all of his teammates. He had black hair and black eyes. Being part of a very powerful clan known as Uchiha, Sasuke possessed the power to turn his eyes into Sharingans that looked like his sensei's but were less advanced. He wore a black Uchiha vest with the circular red-and-white Uchiha symbol on the back and black shorts.

Their female teammate, Sakura, on the outside, was outgoing, playful, and happy, but she hid most of her emotions. She had a crush on Sasuke, but Sasuke didn't really like her. She never had a chance to show her skills- never had a chance to show what she was made of, which made her angry. Sakura had bright pink hair, green eyes, and a red dress with a white circular mark on it. The dress had very small sleeves. Under the dress she had black shorts which were impossible to see from the outside.

"He's always late, Naruto." Sasuke grumbled. "Give him some more time."

Naruto growled and crossed his arms, tapping his foot. "I'll give him ten more minutes." He said. "If he doesn't show up then I'm going home."

Ten minutes slowly ticked by, and Kakashi was nowhere to be seen. The Genin were beginning to become worried.

"Maybe he's sick and can't come." Sakura suggested. "Or maybe he broke his leg. Or maybe he just doesn't want to come."

Sasuke shrugged. "Dunno. Do you think we should go over to his apartment and check on him?"

"Better than just standing here." Naruto said and walked off the bridge. The Genin followed Naruto towards Kakashi's residence.

On the way there, Sasuke's keen eyes spotted something glimmer on the ground, like sunlight reflecting off of metal. "Hey, look... is that a headband?" He pointed out.

The other two Genin paused to see what Sasuke had discovered. Sasuke knelt down near the ground, resting his arm on his knee as he examined the headband. He lifted it up off the ground. It was stained with blood.

"Does this look like Kakashi's to you?" He asked, holding it up so the other two could see.

"They all look the same to me," Naruto said.

"I'll hold onto it. Let's go check out Kakashi's apartment." Sasuke said, stuffing the headband into his pocket.

The Genin searched Kakashi's room thoroughly, but there was no trace of him anywhere. His apartment was strangely clean, and the Genin had no idea until now how much of a neat-freak their sensei was.

"Where could he be?!" Sakura asked the others, knowing that she wouldn't get an answer. "He has to be around here somewhere..."

Kakashi wasn't, in fact, anywhere near where the Genin were. He wasn't even on the same planet.

The slow, gentle swaying of the giant transport insect rocked Kakashi, but his mind was too bewildered and his body too weak to rest. He had no idea where he was or why he was taken here. All he knew is that he had to get out, but he found it impossible. The things he had seen so far were overwhelming, and he had only been in the world for a few minutes. The insect he was riding in was a Stilt Strider- a large bug which was used as transport.

The "Dunmer" that had caught him was not a Ninja. Kakashi heard much from his conversation between another man in the insect about where he was, but he still didn't know where he was at the same time. He had never heard of the place, or the people. But he knew that the planet that he was on, Tamriel, was real and it was not a dream.

He was in the land of Morrowind, on the island of Vvanderfell. He heard something about an "Index" and something else about a "Daedric ruin", but the rest of it was all blabber to Kakashi. He knew now that the 'Jutsu' that the Dunmer used to capture him was not jutsu at all because the creature had learned the skills from people of the planet Tamriel. The powers were something different and mesmerizing, and that was why Kakashi couldn't defend himself well.

The technique the Dark Elf had used on him to keep him from escaping was powerful. Kakashi had a splitting headache and his intestines felt like they were being ripped out of his stomach. He knew it couldn't be any sort of illness- it was the effect of whatever strange trick the Dunmer did to him. He didn't dare talk them- the last time he tried to ask them where he was he was answered with a swift blow to the jaw.

"Well, were at Balmora now. Unload the prisoner." said the Dark Elf.

"Alright, Artonai." Replied the other man, who had normal skincolor but he had warpaint on his face. Kakashi thought he heard the Dark Elf, identified as Artonai, call him a "Nord."

The Nord wrapped his massive arms around Kakashi's chest and carried him down a slope that was used to reach the Stilt Strider. The insect moaned, glad to have the weight off its back.

The Nord dropped Kakashi in the dirt. Many civilians of the city before him gave him looks of curiosity, uncertainty, and pity.

"This is Imperial buisness. Move along!" Artonai called as he stood near Kakashi.

"Stand up." He ordered.

Kakashi, his knees shaking, tried to stand, but the pain in his abdomen drove him back down to the ground.

"I said stand up!" Artonai kicked him in the ribs. Kakashi gasped for breath, but did as Artonai said.

He took him onto a path which seemed to go on forever. Instead of going into the large city behind them, they followed the path a while. Kakashi was facinated at the strange plants he saw everywhere. Soon, the terrain began to change slightly until Kakashi could see large, black mountains on the horizon. Just before the mountains, he could see a small fort nestled near them.

Artonai took him into the fort. There were many men with shining silver armor holding dangerous looking weapons. They didn't seem to notice Artonai and Kakashi, or they didn't care about what was going on.

Artonai opened a door to the fort and walked inside. The room was lit by candles. In the middle of the room was a man at a desk. He had short black hair, but the rest of his body was covered with silver armor. He had a quill pin in his hand and he was scribbling his signiture on a document. He looked up when he noticed Artonai enter.

"I have the suspect." Artonai said. "I had to track him a long way to get the Index he has. He claims he does not know what I'm talking about, but I clearly saw him take it."

Kakashi was bewildered. He didn't know what an Index was or what he was doing with one. Did he accidentally pick up an object from this world? But how? He had never been here before. *Unless... he thought, someone else I know has been here before, and I accidentally took it off of him. But do I still have this Index they want so badly? If I search myself and find it, will they let me free?*

"Artonai, how have you treated this man?" The Imperial asked. "He looks like he is in horrible condition. How many times have I told you not to injure your captives from other worlds?"

Artonai scoffed. "He is strong. If I didn't use those spells he would've excaped and very well killed many. I had to treat him badly."

"Or you could have just told him kindly what he had and see what he would do. I'm sure he means no one any harm." The Imperial replied, then turned to Kakashi. "Sir, what is your name?"

"K...Ka... Kakashi. Kakashi Hatake." He replied, trying to find his voice. It was hard to talk.

"My name is Darius. You're at Fort Moonmoth, in Morrowind. What world did you come from?"

"I... I don't know... I didn't think it was possible to visit another planet..." He stammered. "What do you want from me?"

"Are you even aware about the item you carry? Do you know anything about the horrible and mysterious powers it possesses? You, Sir Kakashi, have an *Index*, an extremely rare piece to the puzzle of teleportation in this world. For found in many dangerous ruins built by the evil Daedra, are teleportation areas. They are horrible and beautiful, and could very well lead to doom for good or evil, depending on who has the key to open the Teleporters. And the holder of that key is *you*."

Kakashi swallowed. He now realized why this Index was so important to them. He understood that if these people had it, they could keep evil beasts from entering their world. He remembered hearing about Daedra in the Stilt Strider on the way here. He heard that Daedra were evil, vicious beasts capable of monstrous power. He had also heard that their master was someone named 'Dagoth Ur'.

"Well, I never remember taking an Index. What does it look like?" He asked.

"A tube. But very extravagant."

Kakashi thought for a moment, then remembered something. He remembered taking down a rogue Ninja back in his land, and he remembered searching the Ninja. He found stolen gold which he returned, but he also found the tube. He thought it was interesting so he stuffed it into his pocket for examining later. Then he forgot about it.

"I have one of those." He said. "Here, take it." He pulled it out of his pocket.

Artonai and Darius's eyes lit up with excitement.

"I knew it." Artonai said. "He took it from someone he had killed. I saw him do it. But he ran away before I could interrogate him, he was probably in a hurry to return the gold he found. But now that he has it..."

"Yes, I know..." Darius said, standing up from his desk and taking the Index from Kakashi's hands. "Listen. We cannot activate the Index ourselves. Only the first finder of the Index can activate it if that finder is still alive. And I'm assuming that the Finder of the Index is now you, Kakashi. Will you please help us and save us from a certain doom in this world?"

Kakashi frowned. "What about my students? They need me!"

"Artonai will bring them here if you promise to help us. Did you know that each world is linked? Whatever happens in Tamriel will effect your world as well. Say the Daedra were able to take over the Index by

killing you, thus, they become the Finder. Once they take over this land they would take over all adjacent lands as well, eventually, getting to your world. Kakashi, we don't want to kill you. We NEED you to activate the Portals. You are the Finder, and us Imperials enforce laws. Since I made the law, I would be breaking my own law and being severely hypocritical to kill you, because you are innocent."

Kakashi pondered this. He was right- if Tamriel was infected, the disease would spread to Kohona. He looked up at Darius with a trustworthy eye. "I will help you. Please bring my students."

TO BE CONTINUED

Sasuke kicked the ground in frustration. The three Genin had searched all over Kohona, asking everyone if they knew where Kakashi was. Everyone denied they knew where he was, even Iruka, who usually knew exactly what Kakashi was doing. The three Genin had even split up to search for him, but came up with nothing. Sasuke searched the entire academy, Sakura, the fields and the memorial stone where Kakashi normally went when he was mourning but found nothing. Naruto searched the city streets but Kakashi was nowhere to be found.

The three Genin met at the bridge, exhausted, angry, and afraid.

"This is getting nowhere... where could he be?!" Naruto said.

"Well, he couldn't have just vanished off of the face of the earth!" Sakura yelled.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that statement, young one." A sudden voice said behind the Genin.

They turned around and gasped. Sasuke drew a kunai, but the being at the other side of the bridge raised his hands in a defensive gesture. "I mean you three no harm. I come from Morrowind, the planet Tamriel. Your sensei is there, and he is waiting for you. You three must come with me."

Sasuke grimaced. "What?! What did you do to sensei, and how do I know I can trust you!?" Sasuke demanded.

"Do not be afraid, human. My name is Artonai, and I have not truly harmed you sensei. Listen, my teleportation time is running out, if you trust me and come with me, I can explain what has happened when we get to Morrowind. I can only teleport the three of you so there's no bringing along friends."

Sakura glanced at Sasuke, then Naruto. "How do we know if we can trust him?" Sakura asked.

"He knows where Sensei is, that's true enough." Naruto replied. "I think we should trust him. He looks sincere enough..."

"Well I don't think we should." Said Sasuke. "He's... shady. Look at his skin! And his eyes! They're red!"

"Don't judge a book by its cover, Sasuke." Artonai said, his keen Elfish ears picking up what Sasuke said. "And Sakura and Naruto, you two were also mentioned. Don't worry, your sensei told me your

names so I could properly address you."

"He knows our names." Naruto said. "And he said he knows Sensei. Should we go?"

Sasuke frowned. "Alright, I'll go if you can answer me. Do you know my sensei's full name, first and last?"

Artonai, without thinking, replied, "Kakashi Hatake. Now hurry up, my Magicka's running out."

Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke reluctantly stepped forward, and were immediately immersed in a chill wind. The wind swirled around them, surrounding the three and Artonai in a cloud. Then there was a loud buzzing noise, and the three Genin couldn't see or feel anything. Then, there was light again as the winds left, and they found themselves standing in a beautiful field with gigantic mushrooms sprouting up out of the ground like trees.

"Alright. That wasn't too bad, now was it?" Artonai said. "Come along now. I miscalculated a tad. We're in the Fields of Kammu. Not too far from Balmora, but far enough for there to be possible danger. While we walk I suppose I should let you three know what's going on."

Naruto, Sasuke, and Sakura exchanged glances, then followed Artonai. He led them onto a beaten path which swirled through the grass and under many of the mushroom-trees. Colorful flowers surrounded the ground, and there was a bank which dipped down into a river.

"This is the island of Vvanderfell, in Morrowind. When I came to your world, I was using my power, Magicka. Magicka is much different than the Jutsu your sensei told me about. That was why I took him down so easily when I came here."

The Genin gasped and stopped in their steps. This man hurt Kakashi!

"But don't worry, he's quite alright. I attacked him because I thought he was a thief and a threat to our world. It turns out, I was wrong. I did a few tricks to him, but I gave him a cure common disease potion. He's fine now, and I apologize for hurting him. Now, back to my story. Before you ask the question I know you're going to ask, let me answer it." Artonai said.

"I attacked your sensei and brought him here because he had something. Something important. You see, kids, it's called an Index, and with it, the Finder has the key to saving this world- and all others as well, or destroying it. Since I know it's in the hands of Good, Good will come to the world when he uses the Index. However, if he was evil, and that is what I assumed when I attacked him, evil will come to the world if the Index is activated. The Index, you see, unlocks teleportation systems that go through the lands, connecting with other lands and thus, creating alliances. Troops can come in and out of the Teleporters, and we want those troops to help Vvanderfell destroy the evil Lord Dagoth Ur, not serve Dagoth Ur in his quest. His quest... to destroy Vvanderfell and all adjacent worlds."

"I see now," Sasuke muttered. "But why Kakashi? Can't you just let him go back home and give the Index to someone else?"

"No. Only the first Finder of the Index can activate it, and we believe that Kakashi is the Finder. Here's

how it works. Someone finds the Index first from its hiding place. Because its so important, say that person was assassinated for it. Now, the assassin has the Index. But say that assassin got assassinated and, now, a new person has found the Index. Since the Index has a trail of death following it, a new Finder is selected each time someone else takes it from its previous Finder which is now dead. Somehow, someone who has been to Vvanderfell before got the Index and brought it to your world to supposivly be sold or put in a museum. This person happened to be a Rouge that Kakashi was ordered to find. When Kakashi killed him, he searched the Rouge for the loot the Rouge stole, and found the loot and the Index as well. Thus, Kakashi is now the Finder. And we don't want to kill him because he is a good man and that would be breaking our own laws."

The three Genin understood well now what was going on. This was very important, but they needed to know more.

"Who is Dagoth Ur?" Sakura asked. "The evil thing you talked about earlier?"

"Dagoth Ur is the vilest of evil, the Being in the Red Mountain. He wants to take over this world, but he knows that the powers of Good cannot be suppressed. He knows that if he gets the Index and activates it, destruction will follow. We need to get Kakashi to activate the Index before its too late. Now that he's here, we will need to have bodyguards for him twenty-four seven. If he dies, its all over."

A shudder went down the three Genins backs. Kakashi was in grave danger now...

Kakashi was trying to wait pateintly for his Genin to arrive, but he couldn't stop thinking about what awful things could've happened to them. The horrible thoughts made him feel sick to his stomach, even if he was no longer physically ill. He had been given a potion which took away the horrible headaches and abdominal pains, but now emotional pains were driving him to the corner of the room he had been given. The thoughts about losing his Genin reminded him of friends he had lost in the past, which were thoughts he hated so much he wanted to rip them out of his memories, but he knew it was impossible no matter how hard he tried.

Suddenly there was a loud knock on the door. "Kakashi, I found your Genin. They're dead." Artonai's voice sounded.

Kakashi knew he was kidding by the way he said it. Kakashi rushed to the door and flung it open, only to be tackled by Naruto and Sasuke. "Don't you EVER leave us like that again, Sensei!" Naruto screamed. Sakura stood away from them, rolling her eyes.

"Hey, it wasn't my intention to leave you three like that!" He said. "In fact, I was actually planning on showing up on time."

"If you had shown up on time, the world would've exploded," Sasuke said. "Just think of all the disorders that would happen if you did. Maybe that'd be the same day Shino swatted a fly."

Kakashi chuckled. "I doubt that'd ever happen..." His gaze fell. "So, Artonai told you about the Index,

right?"

Sasuke nodded. "Every word."

Kakashi sat there and stared off into space, in thought. A question popped into his mind- when would they start the journey, and why had Artonai only brought his Genin and not an army from the Hidden Leaf clan?

"My question is why you don't have an army. You only brought my Genin." Kakashi said.

"We have an army ready in Morrowind. But, as for the Genin..." Artonai began, "You must understand this concept, Kakashi. In this world, we have Magicka. Our Magicka here is similar to Chakra in your world. Yes, I know about Chakra. I had to study about your land before I could go there and defeat you. You see, it requires Magicka for certain spells, and the Teleportation and Transportation spells require a LOT of Magicka depending on how many you take. I could only take your three Genin."

Kakashi nodded. "I see. So, when do we set out?"

"We leave tomorrow," said Darius. "That'll give you four enough time to study a bit more about Morrowind and our plans. I'll give you the rough draft of what we're going to do."

"The Index Chamber is hidden, and none of us here know where it is. But we do know *someone* who knows where it is, and that certain someone is a slave at the Dren Plantation near Pelegiad. She is a Khajiit named Shantar. Khajiits are like man-cats. You can't miss them. Most of them look like your average tabby except they're our size and they walk on two legs. One of our scouts went over there to ask her if she could tell us, but she said she would only tell us if we free her and her family. That, we cannot do even if we are the Imperials. What we need is the key to the Slave Bracers, but to get it, we need someone stealthy. Since you and your Genin are Ninjas, this should be a cakewalk, right?" Darius explained.

"I think I can do it, I just need to know who has the key." Kakashi said.

Darius paused, the glow of the candles illuminating his stern Imperial face. "That is the piece of the puzzle that we don't have. We don't know where the key is. But when we find it, we can free Shantar and she will lead us to the Index chambers. The sooner we get there, the better. Dagoth Ur has bound to have heard of our quest and he wont be happy."

Kakashi said nothing, then took a deep breath and said, "Well, I guess my students and I should go brush up on our Morrowind knowledge, right? What all do I need to know?"

"Go to the library in this fort and check out the books. I think you should work on your knowledge of plants and their magical properties. If you're good at alchemy, you'll need to learn how to make potions from Morrowind's foliage, or maybe you'd like to learn how to capture animals in soul gems and enchant weapons and armor. Or perhaps you'd like to learn more about animals all together? Its up to you what you teach yourself, but make sure it will make your time worth while. Don't go to the libraries and read any fiction of any sort, you need facts." Darius replied.

"I like to read. No matter what it is." Kakashi replied. "That's probably my hobby."

"One of his few," Sakura said with a chuckle, remembering what he said the day they met him.

Kakashi and the Genin were directed to the libraries, where they read to their hearts content on the books on Morrowind. They learned valuable facts such as different plants' magical properties when used in potions. Naruto found it fascinating to read about the different creatures of Morrowind as Sasuke dug into his book on weapons and armor of Morrowind. Sakura read about enchanting with soul gems, and Kakashi checked up on alchemy.

But most of all, each of them read about the monsters and foliage commonly found in Morrowind. They were instructed from the writings that some monsters in Morrowind range from Alits, Guar, and Kagouti, reptilian beasts which roam the grasslands, and Kwama Foragers which look like worms. Mudcrabs who are very slow and live near the water's edge. Nix-Hounds who are ugly four-legged creatures usually attack on sight in the plains and ashlands. Cliff Racers, who are giant featherless birds of the sky that circle mountains, and giant rats also infested the plains. Some less common creatures included Ancestor Ghosts and Bonewalkers, usually found only in dungeons or tombs scattered throughout Morrowind.

They also learned about the different foods and plants in Morrowind. Saltrice is a delicacy in Morrowind, as well as scuttle, a fine meal. Monster hides are usually used in potions, and Cliff Racer plumes have the magical properties of levitation. Hound meat and rat meat can be cooked and eaten, along with spices like saltrice. Most farmers also grow comberry, marshmerrow, and corkbulbs. Corkbulb roots oftentimes replace wood in Morrowind, for trees are fairly scarce, but still they are everywhere, scattered.

Some wild flowers include stoneflower, willow and black anther flowers, gold kanet, and heather (which has the magical property of 'feather', which makes you feel less burdened).

As the day slowly passed, Naruto, Sasuke, Sakura, and Kakashi were becoming more anxious. They all trembled with fear, for the knowledge that they were in constant danger now threatened their minds. This Dagoth Ur... it haunted the minds of the Genin and Jounin. Kakashi knew that sooner or later, Dagoth Ur will notice Kakashi was now the Finder. Dagoth Ur would come looking for him soon...

...too soon...

It was about nine in the morning when the group set out. Artonai led the way as Darius and five other soldiers guarded Kakashi and his Genin. It was a small army, but they would get reinforcements along the way, because Fort Moonmoth still had to be guarded and could not be left empty. Artonai and Darius each had large backpacks filled with essential supplies such as cure common disease potions and scrolls. For the soldiers and the ninjas, smaller backpacks with their personal supplies were contained inside.

"We'll follow the road through the mountains. It won't be long until we reach the other side, which leads right into the Ascadian Isles region. From there, we'll travel to Pelegaid for information and equipment. Then, from Pelegiad, we'll go to the Dren Plantation to free Shantar. This'll be a one to three day

journey depending on our rate of speed." Artonai said. "Any questions?"

The four outlanders were silent.

"Good."

The line of troops began moving. They traveled onto a beaten path which led through a valley in the mountains. The rocks were grey and black, and a chill wind whistled through the crevices. From overhead, a large, red, pterodactyl-like bird swooped overhead, cawing loudly.

"That's a cliff racer." Artonai whispered. "Be careful, they attack on sight."

The Cliff Racer, as if hearing the Dark Elf, swooped down...

...strait towards Sakura!

Sakura, a smart Ninja, drew a kuna and tossed it into the air with inhuman speed, the point of the knife grazing the Cliff Racer's chest. The Cliff Racer, using its spiked tail, lunged for Sakura. She dodged aside with a yelp, just as Darius shot an arrow into the Racer's heart. It fell to the ground with a defeated screech, then the danger was no more.

"Should we take its plumes or just leave it be?" Darius asked.

"I like alchemy," Artonai replied. "And I've been wanting to make a 'rising force' potion with something for quite some time. Go ahead and take it."

Darius took a knife and headed for the defeated racer. The Genin, and most of the troops, turned away as Darius cut through the racer and got what he wanted- the magical section of the racer's insides.

"That's disgusting," Kakashi commented, his eye twitching.

Darius tossed the piece of flesh to Artonai, who swiftly caught it. Without a 'thank you' or a 'thanks,' Artonai stuffed it in his backpack and began walking again.

When they made it out of the dull black valley, they had entered the new region. It felt like stepping from earth onto heaven for the group- that was how dramatic the change was. The grass was fruitful and flowing, giant mushrooms rose up out of the ground, their caps shading the ground, and exotic flowers littered the dusty turf. A beaten dirt path winded down the slopes and off into the distance. On the horizon, Pelegiad could be seen, the smoke from the chimneys in the distance rising gently into the air.

"That's where we're headed." Artonai said. "Let's get a move on."

As they walked, Kakashi began to think about how they would free the slave. He knew he needed to think ahead of time, but how was he going to do it? He didn't know where a key was being kept or what he needed to do to free her.

"So, this... slaving... in Tamriel... how does it work?" He asked. He still didn't trust Artonai much, the man

was shady and Kakashi began to wonder if Artonai and this group of Imperials were the bad guys and the Daedra were actually the good. He knew evil could be deceiving, but somehow, he felt that he was on the right side.

"Slaving should be outlawed in Morrowind, but others just aren't paying attention and say slavery is perfectly legal. To capture the slaves, they force a bracer on the slave that drains their Magicka, and thus disabling their ability to escape. If they do manage to get away, they are tracked down by bounty hunters. You need a key to the bracers so you can free the slave, but even if they are free, they still have the risk of being hunted down by bounty hunters. That's what we're doing, see, we're freeing her and then we're clearing her name so she may live her life in peace. In return, she will tell us the exact location of the Chambers." Artonai explained. "We think Dren has the key, and if Dren has it, we have to take it from him. If you're a good thief, show off your skill then."

Kakashi pondered this. His thoughts were interrupted by a comment from Sasuke.

"I think I've got an idea. What would happen if one of us wore the bracer and pretended to be a slave? Then we could get close to Dren without any suspicions, and take the key from him. Remember, we don't use Magicka, we use Chakra." Said the Uchiha boy.

Artonai hummed in thought. "Hmm, I suppose that would work... I don't think Dren would keep track of what each of his slaves look like. I see your point though, he would probably think something was up if an army suddenly charged into his plantation."

Kakashi was impressed. Sasuke made a good point, but he missed one: who would do the task?

"Who's going to pull it off?" He asked.

"Whoever's the stealthiest." Artonai suggested. "And that would be you, hmm?"

Kakashi paused. "Possibly."

"Besides, Dren would know the ages of his slaves. I don't think he has any kids. He'd most likely have someone old, like you." Artonai replied.

"Old?!" Kakashi cringed. "Do I look old to you?"

"Concerning your haircolor, yes."

"I'm twenty-six."

"My apologies, Mr. Hatake."

"Please don't call me that... it makes me *feel* old."

Artonai chuckled. "Well, look who woke up on the wrong side of the bedroll?"

"That thing killed my back."

"If you already have back problems, you must be old."

As the two's conversation dragged, they were getting closer to Pelegiad, but the city was still off in the distance. The group set up camp, taking out the parts for a large tent out of Darius and Artonai's backpacks. The tent was quite large and could provide shelter for all eighteen of the travelers. Artonai cast a small spell on a pile of wood that the Genin had collected and started a fire, then began to cook nix-hound meat on a stick. "Everyone, grab a stick and take some Hound meat. Its actually pretty good if you cook it right."

The soldiers gladly found themselves a sharp stick and sat around the fire talking amongst themselves, but the four Ninjas were reluctant.

"I'm... hesitant..." Sakura said, crossing her arms. "That stuff looks... wierd..."

"Its a common food in Morrowind. Its not good but its not bad either, ya' know?" A soldier said. "Takes some time to get used to, I guess."

Kakashi grabbed a stick and began roasting the meat. After he got it golden brown, he disappeared into the tent so he didn't have to remove his mask in front of the army. He returned a few seconds later, a curious look on his face. "That was... intresting. Come on, Sakura, I think you'll like it. You too, Naruto, Sasuke."

The three Genin exchanged glances, shrugged, then sat with the older men around the campfire.

The village was made up of cottages and small houses, which surrounded a large Imperial fort similar to the one near Balmora. Some of the farmers stopped what they wre doing to stare at the small group, saying nothing. In other places, Nord's sat on the grass, a tankard in hand, talking loudly and laughing. A few soldiers patrolled the cities, keeping an eye out for crime. Pelegiad was a lively city, even if its population was few.

A guard approached the army, a spear in hand, but it was held in a friendly gwesture. "Darius and Artonai, huh? What are you doing so far from your post here with these... outlanders?" The Imperial asked, the head of his spear pointing to the clouds. He seemed freindly, but stern. His hairstyle could not be seen due to his helmet, but his face was calm and perplexed.

"Its quite a long story," Artonai said. "Let's just say these off-worlders need some refreshments and some time to plan on how they're going to save the world."

"What? What? Slow down!" The guard coaxed. "Artonai, you rush into things too fast. Tell me what in the name of Oblivion is going on!"

"Long story short." Artonai replied, "The grey-haired one found the Index and he's going to activate it to keep Dagoth Ur from destroying Tamriel."

The guard's eyes widened, and he staggered, as if being struck by an arrow. "Wh... wha... say what?!" His voice had changed, as if he had just seen a ghost.

Artonai chuckled. "See you later," He edged past the guard, who was still dumstruck. The guard did not bother to stop Artonai and ask more. The guard knew he was telling the truth.

"You can get refreshments at the tavern." Artonai said. "Once you think you're ready, tell me and Darius and we'll set up Kakashi for his stealth-sneak to the next mission."

"What about us?" Naruto asked.

"You three... I have something different in mind for you. And trust me, your sensei probably won't approve but I'll make sure you can handle the mission."

Kakashi shot Artonai a glare. "Last time I checked, I was the one in charge of my genin, not you."

"I know, calm down." Artonai said. "I only wanted to teach them how to use Magicka. You see, anyone who's anyone can use magic in Tamriel, even if you aren't born here. I think if I can teach your Genin Magicka and how to use it, they will become much more useful on our journeys. Don't worry, I won't teach them the dangerous 'one-mistake-and-you're-fried' kind of spells."

Kakashi let out an exasperated sigh, and walked into the tavern door. "Fine," he said, "just don't kill them."

Sasuke grumbled. He didn't want to learn anything new.

"I doubt they can teach us anything useful," Sasuke said under his breath. "What do they know that's better than our Jutsus anyway?"

"Calm down, Sasuke." Sakura said. "Why are you so hesitant to learn anything new?"

Sasuke was silent.

"He's just on a bad mood." Naruto said. "He'll get over it, soon enough."

"What we can teach you in Morrowind is more than you can imagine, and more than I can ever learn. But I know quite a few tricks, some that will help you cast destruction, alteration, and mysticism spells. Some of which include blasting fireballs, electricity, or sheer frost at your opponents to rupture their organic tissue and pulverise organs. Others include messing up the very minds of your opponents, causing them to hallucinate and think they see something that isn't there and cause them to be terrified or, cause you to become cloaked from their vision so you can sneak past. Or, you could try simply draining their health and fatigue which cause them to faint at your feet. An effective way of doing that would be on Touch- to grab your opponent and suck the very life out of him with your hand..." Artonai's gaze shifted to Kakashi.

"That's what you did to me to capture me." Kakashi said, remembering when Artonai shoved his glowing-green hand into his chest and clutched so tight he couldn't move. "Is that your favorite spell? Because my stomach felt as if it was on fire when I woke up."

"Its not my favorite, but I didn't want to kill you, and that's what I needed to do to get you where I wanted you." Artonai replied. "So, Sasuke, have you changed your mind about this Magicka thing? You want to try it?"

It was about sundown, and the group felt like they were ready to depart. The three Genin learned a little bit about Magicka but did not cast any spells. Artonai had told them that they didn't have enough willpower.

Kakashi was given a slave bracer. It made him feel slightly drained in a way he never felt before, as if it was draining power he never knew he had. Darius said that it was Magicka that the bracers were draining, and he explained that everyone has Magicka but can only use it in Tamriel due to the fact that molecules are different in certain planets.

The bracer was fastened onto his left arm. It had a strange silvery-grey color, and it glinted in the slightest light, which was the glow of the candle in the room. Kakashi was instructed that it seemed to glow in the light because its the Magicka. The color of the glow determined what type of Magicka it contained. The glow was red, so it was a draining Magicka.

"Since you use your so called 'jutsu', the bracer won't effect it because it does not use Magicka, but Chakra." Darius said.

"I know," Kakashi replied, adjusting the bracer. "So, do I go to... this... Dren place... alone, or do my Genin come?"

"Your Genin will stay outside along with the rest of us, in the shadows. If you get in trouble we'll come in and save you. But we can't all go in there or they'll be suspicious." Artonai said. "I tried to teach them Magicka, but they're a bit blunt."

"Hey!" Sakura yelled.

"I should take that as an offence," Sasuke mused.

Artonai chuckled. "Anywho, let's hit the road. The Dren plantation is about a day ahead of us."

The sun was setting over the mountains, causing the sky to have a pinkish-orange hint to it in the distance. Strange bird-calls and other animal noises mused in the distance. A warm breeze brushed the hair of the company as they continued walking over the beaten forest path.

They passed many small plantations, casting looks of pity at the slaves whom they had not the time to free, until they reached the large plantation: the Dren plantation.

The slave fields were surrounded by clay walls which were about ten feet tall. There was a doorless entrance nearby, and it was guarded by a Nord man, with golden hair, blue eyes, and warpaint on his face. He didn't see them, they were too far behind.

"Alright, this is the place. Kakashi, you have to go in over the wall so the guard doesn't see you enter. You're a ninja, you can jump that high, right?" Darius said.

"Yes."

"Good. While you're in there, a guard will be on standby. Meanwhile, Artonai will continue to teach your Genin valuable magicka lessons."

"Fine with me..." Kakashi said, his voice trailing. He was becoming excited- this mission sounded interesting and not too hard. Without any last words, he crept towards the back wall of the plantation. Gripping a kunai with his hand, he dug it into the clay wall. It stuck in firmly without cracking the wall. Kakashi used it as a foothold to jump over.

When he had landed successfully on the other side, he ducked behind a building. 'How am I going to make my appearance?' He thought. 'I guess I could just join in on the work of another slave...'

He peered around the corner of the building, then looked left and right. No one saw him. Quickly, he dashed into the clearing. All of the guards were busy reprimanding slaves, and all the slaves were busy cultivating the grass or picking up plants. Kakashi decided to join a nearby slave, a catlike being called a Khajit.

The Khajit had brown fur and a feminine build. Her tail snaked out of a slit in her pants, just above her rear-quarters. She had a powerful but slender body, and bright green eyes. She was working on pulling a Corkbulb plant from the ground.

"Here, let me help you with that." Kakashi bent down near her.

The slave sniffed. "This scent is new... what is its name?" Her voice was like a quiet chime, beautiful but powerful, with catlike grace.

"My name is Kakashi. I'm a new slave here." He replied, digging his fingers into the ground under the fat, woody plant. "And what's your name?"

"I am called Shantar." She replied. "It is assigned to help?"

"If I'm it, no, not really. I just picked someone to help..." Kakashi's voice trailed, then lowered to a whisper, and he knelt close to Shantar's ears. "Listen... now I know you're Shantar, I'll tell you the truth. I'm not a slave, I've been sent by Darius and Artonai from Moonmoth to save you."

Shantar's eyes lit up. "It's about time those scuttleheads sent someone." She said. "It is very brave to come here."

Kakashi smiled. "I need to know where Dren is so I can save you."

"You cannot save me with that bracer, you need magic to get into that door." She said, disappointed.

"Ahh," Kakashi smiled wider. "But I don't use magic. I use a ninja art called Chakra."

Shantar, not understanding, nodded anyway. "Well, Dren is in his chambers, in that building over there," Shantar pointed to a large, yellow-bricked building. "It must work well to get in."

Kakashi nodded. "I will." He clasped his fingers together and did a few special hand-seals. Hand-seals are the way of performing jutsu used with Chakra. He muttered something under his breath, then suddenly disappeared, leaving a silvery glimmer to outline him. It was a camouflage technique, and he could barely be seen.

Shantar's eyes widened with excitement. But when she saw a guard look her way, she quickly turned around and dug at the corkbulb, sweat forming on her brow. Hopefully, they won't be suspicious...

Kakashi slowly walked through the hallway, praying that his invisibility jutsu would last long enough for him to find Darius, free the slave, and escape. Silently, he made his way upstairs.

He heard footsteps down the hall above him. Cautiously, he pressed his back up against the wall as he watched a man walk right past him, a key dangling from his belt. Kakashi smiled. 'That's Dren,' he thought and kept towards Dren, but the man was moving faster than Kakashi was.

Suddenly, Dren stopped. Kakashi froze, wondering if Dren heard him.

Another man walked around a corner, and began talking to Dren about the slave progress. Kakashi's eyes narrowed. 'Now's my chance...'

Kakashi took a kunai out of his pocket and slowly cut the key loose of its leather loop. The key fell into Kakashi's hand and disappeared, for anything touching his skin would vanish. Kakashi sheathed his dagger and walked past Dren, cautiously.

He made it outside, and sighed with relief. His cloaking vanished suddenly.

"Just in time." He muttered, then located Shantar, who was still tugging at the corkbulb.

"Hey, Shantar!" He called. "Got it."

Shantar's heart jumped with excitement. "Here! Unlock my bracer!"

Kakashi shoved the key into the hole on the bracer, gave it a clockwise turn, and the bracer came off with a click.

Shantar shot Kakashi a smile of joy, then hugged him. Kakashi, taken by surprise, staggered, but then realized that Shantar weighed about eighty pounds.

She let go, then said, "Now we must leave. But the guards are at the doorway. Any other suggestions of escape?"

"Well, I can't jump over the walls. The land elevation from the outside was higher than in here. It's too far of a way up. So you go," Kakashi said, "I'll create a distraction. When you slip by, I'll go too, but I'll close up the way out with a fire wall jutsu." Kakashi took off his own bracer as he spoke. "Alright?"

Shantar smiled. "Alright."

Kakashi walked up to another nearby slave, an Argonian. Its lizardlike body was about as big as Shantar's, but its tail was longer and its head spiky. The slave was standing right next to a guard.

Kakashi shoved the key into the slave's bracer loudly, and with a click, the bracer came off. The Argonian looked at Kakashi, wide-eyed with terror. The guard looked over at him, then yelled, "HEY! You have the key!" The guard shouted to the others. "THEIF!" He pointed to Kakashi.

The Jounin made a break for it, using Chakra as a lift. He jumped clear over the guards' heads and onto a building's roof. "I've got the key, and I'm loving it!" He yelled.

"That man is drunk," A Nord muttered under his breath.

"No, I'm not." Kakashi said. "Just being as psycho as I usually am."

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Shantar leave.

"Gotta go!"

He jumped down from the rooftop and, using Chakra as a gain, charged through the crowding guards. He felt their weapons graze his back as he dashed past, but he had lost them in the dust as he escaped through the doorway.

But there was one man- a Redguard- behind him, who had used some kind of Magicka to boost his adrenaline. The Redguard got close enough to throw his claymore. The claymore smashed up against Kakashi's right leg, causing him to stagger. Kakashi collapsed into the dust just as the Redguard retrieved his weapon and jumped on top of Kakashi, causing him to groan. The wirey-haired, black-skinned man held the sword high above his head...

...Kakashi shut his eyes tight, awaiting the pain...

"Freeze!"

Artonai jumped out of a nearby tree, his hands glowing blue. Suddenly, the Redguard was surrounded with a solid block of ice.

"Good job, Kakashi. Now we have to get out of here." Artonai said, helping the man to his feet. "Don't worry, I didn't kill the Redguard, just froze him. Murder is illegal here, and that's what those men are trying to do. They'll catch up really soon so we've gotta go."

Kakashi gasped for breath. "I... I can't walk... my leg... is broken..." He said in between breaths.

Artonai got down on his hands and knees. "Climb on my back."

Kakashi, without second hesitants, climbed onto Artonai's back. The Dark Elf, without staggering under his weight of 120 pounds (not including weapons and clothing), took off across the path, then made a sharp turn to the left and jumped over a fallen log towards the water's edge of the Odai river. Hiding in the bushes were the other soldiers, the Genin, and Shantar.

Artonai carefully lowered Kakashi to the ground. "He's going to be fine." Artonai said, looking over Kakashi's leg. The Jounin groaned, but said nothing.

"Oh, Kakashi-Sensei!" Naruto gasped. "He broke it, didn't he? He broke his leg?"

"Yes." Artonai said. "I watched it happen... I could've stopped it but I was preparing my ice magicka."

Sasuke frowned. "Why didn't you do something?"

"I didn't react fast enough, okay? I can't be everyone's lifesaver!" Artonai yelled.

"Guys, stop fighting... I need bandages and a healing scroll. That's all I need." Kakashi said. "Artonai... I don't blame you, in fact, I'm glad you were there anyway..."

Shantar rummaged through Kakashi's medical bag, pulling out bandages and a scroll. "Watching you get struck by that claymore was dreadful," she said.

Kakashi gasped as she accidently pulled the bandage too hard, but he calmed down as the pain lessened. "I'm okay, I've broken bones before... this is nothing... thanks for the concern though. Are you okay? That's all that matters."

"I am okay and am forever in your dept, Savior." She muttered as she bandaged his leg. "Anything you need I shall give it to you."

"And what we need now," Darius said, "is the location of the Index chamber."

Shantar's face fell, and her ears drooped. "Oh, it is a horrible tale... I have heard from many different sorces, and the same location from each sorce, that the Chambers are..." she swallowed. "They are in the middle of Red Mountain, and Dagoth Ur is standing over the chamber, pacing and waiting for one of his minions to bring him the Index... but I can lead you to the safest path to get there."

The group gasped. "Impossible!" Darius yelled. "In the MIDDLE of Red Mountain?! How in Oblivion are we ever going to get there?"

to be continued

The moon was high in the sky, and the group sat in silence for a few minutes, thinking to themselves. There was no fire built, for fear of catching the attention of the Dren Plantation guards. The water was quietly rippling near the bank, which was a few yards south of the group. Finally, Darius said something.

"Shantar, is this true? Is this ABSOLUTLY true?"

The cat woman nodded sadly. "Yes, Sire Darius, it is true."

"We can try to get there...and we will." Sasuke said. This seemed to surprise them. Sasuke, who was so hesitant before, was now itching to get there.

"I appreciate your eagerness." Darius said. "But this mission is too much for this group now. And as I said, no other person would be crazy enough to join us on this... suicide mission."

"But Shantar knows the way," Kakashi put in, a hint of pain in his voice. "She can take us on the safest route."

"But its not going to be safe nonetheless." Artonai added. "Face it. Its hopeless now."

"Artonai, did you actually say that?!" Kakashi scoffed. "You're the Optimistic Dark Elf! How could you say that?"

Artonai shot him a glare, then his expression changed. A few moments later, he said, "Look on the bright side. We've got a group, and we've got ninjas from a different world fighting alongside us. Though you may think its a suicide mission, I think its a new hope for our world. We can do this, all we need is a plan, supplies, and hope."

The group exchanged glances.

"I agree." Kakashi said. "We can do this. All we need is hope... and eachother."

Darius let out an exhasperated sigh. "Well... we will rest here until the ruckus at the plantation calms down a bit. Kakashi, what did you do with the key?"

"I kept it so that they can't enslave anyone else. If I left it with any slaves at the plantation, the slave which had it would be killed, and we woudn't want that to happen. I think its better if I hold onto it, and if we live, we'll do something about it afterwards." Kakashi replied as he pushed his back up against a tree with his hands. "Now, about my leg... I know you guys have some sort of healing trick?"

Artonai took a scroll from his backpack. "This is a healing scroll, one of my more powerful ones. It may take a few hours for it to kick in though." He unrolled the scroll, laid a hand on Kakashi's knee, then spoke in a strange language, reading from the scroll. Red energy swept over Kakashi's knee, healing the outer bruises, but his leg was still broken. The scroll in Artonai's hand vanished without a trace.

"Danged scrolls... they never last." He muttered. "Let us know when you're better, then we can head onto... Red Mountain..." His voice faltered as he walked away to pitch a tent.

Sakura sat next to Kakashi while Naruto and Sasuke engaged conversation with one of the guards. Darius was sitting on a nearby rock, pondering.

"Are you alright, Sensei?" Sakura asked. "You look like you're in a lot of pain."

"I'll be fine." Kakashi replied. "I think I'm just going to go to sleep. When I wake up I'm sure I'll be able to walk."

"Need someone to drag you into the tent?" Sakura asked. "I bet I can."

"No thanks," Kakashi said with a chuckle, "I'd much rather stay here, its better on my back. I can imagine the pain of being scraped across the ground into that tent Artonai put up way down there."

Sakura looked over at the Dark Elf, who was mumbling to himself as he hammered the tent stable. He smashed his finger once, but no curse escaped his lips. He just yelped with suprise and began shaking his hand, as if trying to extinguish a fire that had been lit on his finger, then he chuckled and blushed. Afterwards kept brooding over what Shantar had said.

"Hey, Sensei!" Naruto said, jumping down next to the immobile sensei. "Guess what that guard over there said? He said that Red Mountain is FILLED with undead! I think it will be cool to fight one!"

"Cool to fight an undead, huh?" Kakashi grinned. "I doubt you'll be thinking that when you come face to face with one. Artonai had told me that Corpus Beasts shouldn't be messed with."

"Corpus?" Naruto asked, cocking his head.

"The Corpus disease causes your mind to go insane and also causes strange bulges and scrapes on your skin, making you a hideous, deformed creature with nothing but an appetite for flesh. Nothing I want to mess with." Kakashi explained. "You know, I'm starting to get used to this strange new world... but I doubt it'll be easy to get to Red Mountain with this small group." Kakashi chuckled as he watched Naruto shiver with fear and thrill, but the same lust for adventure still glinted in his eyes.

"There will be no reinforcements." Darius said from over on his perch. "No one I know will have the courage to go strait to Red Mountain in these parts. These men stick with us because I paid them to, but in their hearts they want to leave now... as do I." He motioned to the soldiers, who were slightly insulted but at the same time, they knew Darius was right.

"Well, I want to leave too, but unluckily, I think I'm stuck." Kakashi said. "I mean, if I'm the Finder of the Index, I can't leave. Definatly can't. And you all know I *need* you to help me. So, guys, if you get any funny ideas and try to leave, you gotta realize that if you leave, if you make one cowardly mistake, the entire universe could fall under the hands of Dagoth Ur."

The soldiers, Genin, and Shantar pondered his words.

"I hope he is right..." Shantar said under her breath.

The group, minus Kakashi, entered the tent and picked their resting places out for the night. Kakashi, while leaning against the tree, shut his eyes, but not all of his alertness. If anything goes wrong in the night, he would automatically wake himself up to fight. This trait was something he learned while being a Ninja- only resting half of his brain but keeping the other half wide awake.

It seemed that he had barely shut his eyes when his alertness took full course. Something was approaching.

Kakashi, his knees shaking, tried to stand, but his leg still hurt, though not as bad as it was a few hours ago. He looked around, trying to see what caused him to wake up. He looked over his shoulder, but nothing was there.

Then, he heard something which sounded like a wheezy growl. His eyes widened as he looked to the source of the growl, then he realized why it took him so long to find the beast- it was perfectly camouflaged.

The beast charged at him, and he jumped out of the way, making sure he landed on his good leg. He noticed that it had huge, ramlike horns that poked out of its head. It walked on two back legs and had no front legs. Kakashi didn't know what it was, but he knew one thing- it was dangerous.

He rolled aside just as the beast charged again. "Artonai! Darius!" He called, and the two, along with everyone else, came rushing out of the tent.

"Kagouiti!" Artonai shouted. "Its a Kagouiti! Be careful!"

He raised his hands and they began to glow. Then, out of them, shot a large fireball, similar to the one Artonai used to capture Kakashi four days ago. The memory caused a shiver to go down Kakashi's spine. He knew Artonai was more powerful than he was concerning that Artonai was unaffected by his Sharingan, and Kakashi still had some suspicions about the Dark Elf Dunmer. But, Kakashi also felt secure in Artonai's presence, as if the Dark Elf really wasn't as bad as first impressions go. Maybe he and Artonai were friends? Or maybe Artonai still had burning hatred deep within for the Jounin whom he almost, and very well could have, killed? Kakashi wanted to know more about Artonai, something was about him that wasn't right. Kakashi didn't know what it was- it was an eerie feeling that caused him to feel safe and secure, and at the same time, doubtful and fearful. He knew he needed knowledge so the feeling would go away.

The Kagouiti was dead, and Artonai had collected its hide for alchemy. He disposed its remains into the water. "That was an interesting wakeup call. Are we ready to go? Is your leg better, Kakashi?"

"Yeah, it is..." His voice trailed as he thought about how he was going to ask Artonai about his past or personality. "Do you... what is your..." He scratched the back of his head thoughtfully.

"Huh?"

"Nevermind."

He felt Sasuke tug at his sleeve. "Sensei, I didn't get enough sleep..." He muttered. "Are we already on the road?"

"Yeah."

Sasuke grumbled.

As Artonai and Darius led the way onto another path, Kakashi knew exactly what to ask Artonai. He fell into step with the Dark Elf, and looked into his red eyes. Artonai didn't notice that his Sharingan was exposed, but Kakashi noticed that the Sharingan did nothing to see into Artonai's mind.

Kakashi then went off to plan B. "Hey, Artonai, you're much different than all the other Dark Elves I've met here in Morrowind, which isn't much, but you're still different. You have a sense of humor, and you seem to care for others. That's something I didn't find in anyone."

Artonai sighed, then looked over at Kakashi. "You're very nosy, you know that, right?"

Kakashi grimaced. "Just trying to find out more about you."

"Well, here it goes. It's a long story, but it's your fault I'm telling you." Artonai took a breath. "When I was old enough to talk, my parents noticed I was very different. They tried to isolate me from people, so I didn't make many friends. But I was always so cheerful... so optimistic. They tried to retrain me to be like a Dark Elf, but I wasn't cut out to be like one. When my Village Elder found out, he banned me for some reason, which I still don't know why and don't understand why they would ban a child just because he's different. You see, I am an Ashlander, and everyone knew that but you and your Genin because I had no reason to tell you. Just so you know, an Ashlander is someone sort of tribal, their tech is very blunt. And they have crazy prophecies that they seem to believe, and I think I was part of one that they were afraid of. Look at me now? I'm a Lieutenant in the Imperial Forts."

Kakashi looked down. "Oh, now I see... thanks for telling me." There was a long pause.

"Darius! LOOK OUT!" Sasuke suddenly cried.

The Imperial perked up, but noticed too late that a large, yellow-grey reptilian beast with a rounded snout was charging right towards him. "Guar!" Artonai shouted, charging up magicka, but someone else got the Guar first. The monster screeched, then fell down, a large black splotch of energy was surrounding a spot of missing skin and flesh on its chest.

Kakashi almost fell backwards, dumstruck. "S... Sasuke?!"

Sasuke's hands were glowing black. "Wha... what did I just do?!"

Everyone turned around and stared at Sasuke with expressions of wonder and surprise. "You... you just used Magicka!" Shantar said.

"That was the spell I taught you two nights ago!" Artonai said. "Good job, Sasuke! I think you're catching on!"

Sasuke smiled for a second, then he grimaced, feeling a new wave of power enter him. He had just learned how to control magicka, and he was looking at the downside- more training from Artonai.

Naruto and Sakura grumbled. "Its ALWAYS Sasuke who learns something new first!" Naruto yelled.

"Well, maybe if you train harder, you can uncover Magicka." Kakashi suggested.

"But HE didn't train any more then WE did! He's just got natural talent!" Sakura said, pouting. She had never put down Sasuke before, but now she thought she'd go ahead and do it.

"Face it." Sasuke said. "I'm better and stronger then both of you combined."

Naruto charged for Sasuke, roaring, but Kakashi caught the boy around his collar. "Easy now, you two."

Naruto and Sasuke shot firey glares, but said nothing else.

"We make way for Ald'Ruhn." Said Darius. "From there, we will go to Red Mountain. We will try our best to sneak through the Ghostfence without being spotted by any undead, but I doupt we will make it far without being detected." He said.

Kakashi felt a shiver run down his spine. He didn't want to go, yet he knew he had to. There had to be something he could do... something that would give someone else his burden, but he knew that the only way he could do that was through death. And he wanted to live.

As they walked, they came closer to a large lake. The lake was right on top of the invisable path that Artonai was taking them on, which led towards the Red Mountain. The lake was about a mile long and wide.

"We need to swim across," Said the Dark Elf, "But you MUST be cautious. The waters are filled with Slaughterfish and Dreugh. Both aren't too harmful but they do hurt. And if you happen to kill a Dreugh, be sure to collect its wax, because its a valuable substance."

"Swim in THERE?" Sakura said. "The water's so murky!"

The water was dirty and it was impossible to see the bottom, even if the water wasn't very deep. It was about twenty feet deep, which wasn't too much.

"Its the only way," Artonai said. "Unless if you want to go around, adding a few more hours to our already long walk. And time is of the essence, because Dagoth Ur or other anxious-for-the-index 'travelers' might find our trail, and kill your sensei."

No one questioned Artonai's judgement, and walked down towards the lakeside. Artonai was the first one in the water, and he was a fast swimmer, along with Darius and a few other soldiers, but Kakashi was faster. He sped ahead of Artonai with quick strokes. His Genin, however, were not as fast, especially Naruto.

Naruto felt something touch his foot. He yelped, then he felt a jab of pain grip his ankle. He floundered wildly. "Sensei! Sensei! Something's got me! HELP!" His voice was becoming weaker as the unseen attacker began to pull Naruto underwater. He was beginning to sink, until only his hand and fingers were above the water.

Sakura, without thinking, dived under the surface and opened her eyes. The murky water stung them, but she was able to see a slaughterfish that had Naruto's ankle in its gaping mouth. She charged forward, her ears beginning to pop, but she got down just far enough to stab the fish with a kunai. Its underwater shriek filled her ears as it let go of Naruto and retreated.

The two Genin resurfaced, gasping for breath and coughing. Kakashi was at their sides. "Next time, be more careful!" He reprimanded to Naruto. "Good job, Sakura. Is everyone okay?" He said in a calmer voice.

"Yeah, I think so..." Naruto replied.

"Come on, you guys are tough. Let's make it to the other side. We're almost there." Artonai said as he treaded water.

In about an hour, the group made it to the other side with no further complications. The terrain style had changed slightly, the ground and plants were duller in color, and a dark cloud loomed in the sky, shadowing the light of the sun. The grass was wet from rain, which had recently happened in the region. This was the West Gash region.

"If you want, we can stop at Caldera on the way for some food and refreshment." Artonai said. "Otherwise, we will live off of what we've got in our backpacks, and what the land has to offer."

"I say we stop there," Kakashi said. A few guards nodded with hums of agreement.

Naruto sat down on the bank to bandage his ankle, then limped quickly to catch up with the soldiers who were leaving.

While the group walked, the cautious Khajit, Shantar, fell into step with Kakashi. "Kakashi, I hear something... and feel something. I know something is not right today..." She said quietly. "I don't want to frighten your children, but I feel something in the wind... it carries the scent of ill news..."

Kakashi shot glances into the woodlands cautiously. He looked behind his shoulder at his students, who weren't paying any attention to he and Shantar.

"What do you think it is?" Kakashi whispered. "Oh, and I'm not married, and they're not my kids."

"I apologize." Shantar giggled quietly, but then her mood swiftly changed as she added, "I do not know what I feel, but I know it is a feeling of bad."

Kakashi didn't say anything else, but kept his senses alert.

As they walked, daylight turned to darkness. The soldiers began to pitch the tent while Shantar sat on a

nearby rock, still suspicious about what she had felt. Being an animal, she could sense when something wasn't right. And there was definitely something wrong, but she just did not know what.

It took a lot of convincing to get her to come inside the tent, but even then she didn't sleep for a few hours, until finally, she was able to rest.

But she should have stayed awake...

Something scraped across Artonai's side as he slept. The motion caused him to wake, but he wasn't able to yelp or say a word, for something was tied over his mouth, muffling his yelps of terror. He struggled in the arms of his captor as the person carried him out of the tent and into the open. His hands and feet were tied together, and Artonai couldn't see who had him, but it was something strong.

He was suddenly thrown to the ground after a few minutes of swift moving, and he could now see who had him. It was a being clad in black armor known as Dark Brotherhood armor. The protective padding had a red symbol on the shoulder which gave it away.

"Where is the index?!" The Dark Brotherhood member growled, pointing a sharp dagger towards Artonai's neck. His voice suggested that the man was a Brenton, a monklike person who are at home with spells or stealth.

The Dark Elf said nothing.

The slipknot which was placed over his mouth was removed. "Where is it?!" The man said again, pointing the dagger closer to Artonai's neck.

"Kill me or release me, but I'll never tell you where it is. But I don't have it." Artonai said. Sweat beaded his brow as he watched the Dark Brotherhood member with terror, praying that he would not be killed.

"I know one of you has it. Tell me or I'll kill you."

Artonai said nothing, then screamed with surprise and pain as he felt the dagger tear across his chest, ripping his tunic in half. His scream, even if he was far away from the camp, was picked up by Shantar's sonar ears.

"Artoani!" She yelped as she bolted upright. The guards stirred, and Kakashi leapt to his feet.

"Artonai is gone!" Said a guard. "Without a trace!"

Kakashi's eyes narrowed. "There's always a trace." Kakashi exited the tent, then knelt near the ground, examining the tracks. "The captor went this way. Hurry!"

The guards followed Kakashi until they could see the Dark Brotherhood member standing over Artonai,

a dissatisfied look on his face. Artonai was breathing rapidly, his injuries were severe.

"Artonai! No!" Kakashi gasped.

"Ka...kashi... Leave!" Artonai said through his staggering breaths. "That man wants the Index! Make sure the person that has it leaves!"

Kakashi sweatdropped. He couldn't leave Artonai here to die- obviously the man was torturing Artonai for information- for the information that rested on Kakashi's shoulders, and he felt that it was his fault Artonai was in so much pain... Kakashi knew he had to do something for a person whom Kakashi thought would never be his friend, because of the first impression as well as his shady figure- a man with red eyes and blue-grey skin would frighten any child.

"Who has the Index? Hand the Finder over in exchange for Artonai now!" The Brenton roared.

Kakashi, without thinking, leapt over the man's head, and then, while falling back towards the ground, knocked the dagger right out of his hand with a swift kick.

The man, suprized at Kakashi's power, staggered backwards. Artonai scrambled away after his bonds were cut by Kakashi's kunai and quick reflexes.

"Big mistake!" The Brenton captor hissed. "Real big mistake!" He raised his hands, then instantly, four Lesser Bonewalkers appeared. They were huge, bulky, manlike zombies with missing flesh and some rotting flesh. The hideous beasts charged towards Kakashi. "That one has the Index! Kill him!" The Dark Brotherhood man ordered to his henchmen.

A soldier dragged Artonai back and began to use healing potions on his wounds while the other soldiers rushed up to defend Kakashi from the corpus beasts.

"Naruto!" Kakashi yelled. "You said you wanted to fight an undead?!"

"No thanks!" Naruto replied from watching on the sidelines, his voice trembling. Sasuke, from near Naruto, tried to use the magicka Artonai had taught him. His hands glowed black, then he thrust his palm outwards, a ball of energy slamming into a nearby undead. The Undead vanished into thin air, leaving Sasuke feeling proud, but suddenly, something hard slammed into the back of his head before he could shout with triumph, and he collapsed.

Kakashi, from fighting the undead, noticed and looked over his shoulder at the fallen Genin, who was knocked unconscious by the Dark Brotherhood man.

"Sasuke!" Kakashi screamed and withdrew from combat, the Bonewalker he was engaged in moaned and began to follow him, but its stride was slow and unsteady.

"I'll kill your kid if you don't give yourself up!" The man hissed, standing over Sasuke with his dagger pointed at the child's heart.

"No! He's just a kid! You can't do that!" Kakashi cried.

"Sensei! LOOK OUT!" Sakura screamed, pointing, but it was too late. His distraction proved lethal as the Bonewalker which had pursued Kakashi finally caught up, and chomped its teeth right into Kakashi's shoulder. Kakashi's eyes widened with surprise, but then they closed and he collapsed, unconscious.

"NO!" A guard cried, leaving his combat station and jumping at the undead, a sword raised high. He chopped the Undead's chest, but it wasn't enough to cause it to disappear. The undead spun around and struck the guard, sending him toppling to the ground. Suddenly, Artonai shot a blast of fire into the undead, causing it to vanish, then, the injured but mobile Dark Elf charged for the Dark Brotherhood man, scraping the enemy with his magical sword, which could poison an enemy on contact. The blow was enough to kill the Dark Brotherhood man, and his two remaining henchmen disappeared, their master defeated.

Sasuke was taken to be healed by another soldier, and the one that was knocked down was also given medicine. But the biggest concern was the unconscious Jounin on the forest floor.

Artonai and Darius knelt next to Kakashi while the soldiers, Shantar, and his (conscious) Genin watched with fright. Shantar held her breath as she watched Darius slowly peel the bloodstained cloth surrounding Kakashi's shoulder away to view the gash. Using his hand, Darius wiped away blood from the wound. Teeth marks penetrated Kakashi's skin, and around the marks were obvious signs of infection.

Artonai's eyes widened. "Darius..." He whispered, his voice stricken with fear. "He's got it... he's got the corpus disease."

The group stood speechless for a few minutes, as if not believing Artonai's words. Sakura burst into tears. "S... s...sensei!" She stammered, falling onto the ground near him, wailing. "You can't be serious!" She cried at Artonai. "He's going to turn into one of those?!" She buried her head into Kakashi's chest, crying.

"Not yet... we have to find a cure, but... its almost impossible to find one." Artonai said.

"But we'll make it possible!" Naruto said, standing up confidently. "How do we make a cure corpus potion?"

"That's the impossible part. No mage has ever gotten it right." Artonai replied, his face fell. "I'm sorry, kids... if Kakashi turns into a beast, we'll have to kill him and one of us will take his burden."

Sasuke groaned and returned to consciousness. He heard Sakura's cries, and then he knew something was wrong. He jumped to his feet, then saw his sensei.

"Kakashi!" He cried, dropping to Kakashi's side. Sasuke looked up at Artonai. "What's wrong with him?"

"He has Corpus..." Artonai said quietly.

"And we're going to cure it!" Naruto cried, jumping at Artonai. "What's the ingredients we need? Tell me so I can find them!" Naruto yelled. "Hurry up!"

Artonai heaved a sigh, his eyebrows scrunched with overwhelm and discouragement. "Naruto, there's nothing you can do, you've never taken alchemy, and I've been studying it for years, and I can't even-"

Naruto cut him off. "TELL ME!" He screamed.

Artonai paused, and he let out an exasperated sigh. "Fire petals... cliff racer plumes... ash salts... and daedra's heart. Mix and boil in water heated in 500 degrees. Let cool and place in bottle...The problem is that we don't have fire petals, ash salts, or a daedra's heart."

Naruto pondered Artonai's words, then said, "You're right... we don't." His face fell, and he buried his face in his hands with devastation.

The crowd stood around Kakashi, motionless and wordless, not knowing what to do. Not even a cricket penetrated the silent-as-death atmosphere.

Suddenly, a guard shouted with excitement, breaking the silence. "Look! Look! The fireplace! I didn't light it but it started burning!" He cried, pointing to the fireplace which was previously unheated.

Everyone but Kakashi looked over at the fireplace, which started by itself. "That blazing fire is at least 500 degrees fahrenheit..." Darius said under his breath. He paused, then he and Artonai exchanged glances. What in Oblivion was going on?

Sasuke, as if spellbound, picked up his backpack without thinking and turned it over. Out came fire petals, two cliff racer plumes, and ash salt which was contained in a jar, and a daedra's heart. Everyone gasped.

"No... no way!" Artonai said, his eyes widened with disbelief. It was a miracle, but who did it?

Shantar quickly grabbed a pot, filled it with water from the lake, and stuck the pot in the fire. Artonai dropped the ingredients inside and stirred it vigorously with a stick.

"One question..." Naruto said after he recovered from the shock of the incident. "How are we going to give it to Kakashi? Through his injury?"

"He has to drink it." Artonai said as he pulled the pot from the fire with quick hands, then cast an ice spell on the pot to cool it.

"How?"

"We lower the liquid into his lips and he drinks it. How else can I explain it? Isn't that obvi-" Artonai paused, then remembered that he wore a mask. "Oh."

Naruto grinned. "Now you see my point?"

"The real question is, who did this?" Darius said. "It's impossible for a fire to start on its own, and its

definitely impossible for all those ingredients to appear in our backpacks."

The group was silent. The only sounds were the crickets and Artonai's hussling to get the chilled potion into a bottle.

"I think its the Beast." Said a guard.

"The who?" Asked Sasuke.

"The Beast of Vvanderfell... rumor has it that a nameless spirit roams the plains, cloaked from all eyes, and he preforms lifesaving miricles that change the world. All you have to do is believe in him, and he will turn your death to life." Said the soldier. "Its just a legend, but I believe it now..."

Artonai hummed. "Yes... he's right. The Beast of Vvanderfell is more then a legend. Strange miricles like this have been happening for a while, but only people who believe in him and have a heart of good. I never really thought of the Beast very highly, but I believe in him... I guess now I should start thinking of him more highly..."

Things went silent again. Artonai made his way towards Kakashi, and stared pitifully at the victim.

"I hope this works..." he said under his breath. "No one watch. I'm going to close my eyes, and on the count of three, I'm gonna take off his mask and see if I can get him to drink this."

Artonai, with a trembling hand, removed Kakashi's mask.

As much as Naruto, Sasuke, Sakura, Shantar, and the guards wanted to see what he looked like, they turned away and stared into the forest instead of Kakashi.

Artonai, his eyes shut tight, uncorked the bottle and touched it to Kakashi's lips. Kakashi, as if knowing that it was a potion, began drinking it despite his unconsciousness. Artonai, after about a minute of waiting, took the bottle away and slipped Kakashi's mask back on, by feeling for it with his fingers.

"It may take a day or two for it to start working," Artonai said. "And it takes a day or two for corpus to kick in, so let's see... by the end of tomorrow, we'll know it worked if he's not a hulking, hideous zombie..."

A day and six hours passed, and the impatient Genin were beginning to worry. Kakashi hadn't moved a muscle, except for his breathing, which had somewhat returned to normal. This was comforting to know that he was breathing normally, but the Genin weren't completely satisfied.

Then, late that night, he began to stir.

Shantar was the only one awake that night, and she noticed him begin to move. Exitement filled her heart, and a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. She jumped to Artonai's side. "Wake up the others! Kakashi is moving!"

Artonai woke quickly, and rushed to tell the others while Shantar watched Kakashi.

"Ugh..." Kakashi groaned as he opened his eyes. He felt horrible- his head swam and the world spun, and he was very nauseated. But he was alive. The last thing he remembered was a bonewalker digging its teeth into his flesh, then he remembered being submersed with pain from the tip of his toes to the top of his head.

"What... what happend?" He asked groggily, then grunted as his students bombarded him with hugs and praises.

"Be gentle with him, guys. He's not completely recovered yet." Artonai said with a chuckle, shoing them off of their sensei. "Kakashi, you were attacked by a bonewalker and contracted the rare but lethal corpus disease. But, a miracle happened, believe it or not, and we were somehow given the necessary ingredients to heal you. We believe it was the doing of a mystical spirit of the island dubbed as the Beast of Vvanderfell."

"Oh..." He said, staring into the blue sky. The Beast of Vvanderfell? Who was it?

"Who's that?"

"The Beast? Well, no one knows much about him. Some people who don't believe in Vivec, the god of Morrowind, say he's the actual creator of Vvanderfell, and much controversy follows that belief, because the Temple is built around Vvanderfell's gods, such as Vivec, and not the Beast. However, since that miracle happened last night, I guess I, or we all, should start believing more in the Beast and not Vivec... I mean, what has Vivec done? Nothing."

"Well, its better to name the city Vivec after the god instead of the Beast," joked Darius, "I mean, who would want to go to the city called 'Beast of Vvanderfell' anyway?"

The guards, Shantar, and Artonai chuckled, but the others were completely clueless.

"How long have I been asleep?" Kakashi asked after pondering Artonai's words.

"Almost two days."

Kakashi grimaced, his fever was unbearable. "Ugh... I feel horrible..." he moaned.

"At least you don't have corpus." Darius said. "Let us know when you feel better so we can move on."

"Let's see what he DOES have, though." Artonai said, kneeling next to Kakashi. He laid a hand on Kakashi's forehead, which was still missing the headband ever since he lost it on his first encounter with Artonai.

"You could probably fry an egg on his forehead," Artonai commented, "but there is good news. We've reduced his corpus disease to a mere fever. That's a dramatic leap- I didn't think we could get the potion that close."

"Speaking of forehead," Kakashi said, "Where's my headband?"

"Oh!" Sasuke said, pulling it out of his pocket. "I forgot all about it," he tossed it to Kakashi, who caught it in midair.

"Thanks," He said, tying it on. "Well, thanks for saving my life and all, but we've still got a lot of danger ahead of us. Hopefully we all can make it to Red Mountain alive."

"That's very cheerful." Artonai replied. "We will make it alive- and we'll get a whole bunch of rewards afterwards. Just think of all that money..." Artonai clasped his fingers together and smiled, a twinkle in his red eyes.

Shantar once again took watch that night, because of her ability to see in the dark better than anyone else. She sat on a stump next to the tent, humming to herself. Tonight, she didn't feel the least bit worried- no scent was carried in the air, and knowing that Kakashi was better brought a warm feeling to her heart. As she waited, she felt someone's presence behind her.

"Hmm?!" She said, surprised. She turned to see Kakashi. "It is awake?" She asked.

"Yes. I just wanted to ask you something, since you're the only other one awake. I didn't want to wake up anyone else."

"It has... questions?"

"Yeah. You see, I just wanted to know more about the Beast." He said, sitting next to Shantar.

"It feels... okay?"

"Yeah, a lot better, thanks. And about my question?"

Shantar sighed. "I know about him more than anyone else in this camp, and I know that for a fact. We would talk about it at night in the slave shanties when the guards were asleep... The Beast," she continued, "it is a legend. A living legend. It is said that he is in three forms- the form of Spirit, which roams the plains, doing miracles for the noble and those who have him in its heart. Then there's the form of Flesh, which can actually be seen, touched, and felt, for some people need a tangible God to believe it. And last, but not least, is the form of Himself, the greatest form that no one has ever witnessed but yet, he is in Heaven, governing over his creation with his other forms. Shantar knows that the Beast of Vvanderfell is the true God of Vvanderfell, not any of these madey-upies of the Temple Cult."

"Madey-upies?" Kakashi echoed, chuckling.

Shantar giggled. "Er, yes..."

Kakashi stared off into the sky, pondering. "I think I've witnessed some of this Beast's activity on my planet as well, believe it or not."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Maybe the Beast of Vvanderfell is more than just the Beast of Vvanderfell. Maybe he's the Beast of the Universe?"

"Shantar doesn't know. But what she does know is that the Beast is the true creator of Vvanderfell."

That morning, the camp was once again packed into the backpacks, and the area resumed to what it once was- a riverbank. Kakashi was feeling much better, but his face was still slightly pale, either from fear, overexitement, or his previous illness.

"Good to see you're alright," Darius said. "Did I mention how worried your Genin were? Over the past nights you were unconscious, they wouldn't stop staring at you and asking about you."

"They were that worried?" Kakashi asked. He knew his Genin liked him, but he didn't think they liked him that much. He had pushed away so many people, but his students had managed to grasp his heart, slipping their hands through the chains he bonded it in. He had lost so many people who were dear to him in his past, and in his mind, friendships were dangerous. He knew that their worriedness for him would only worsen the wound in his heart if they should die.

"Yes."

As they walked, they could now see the mountain range in the distance. The mountains' stones were black as death, and eerie, grey clouds hung over their peaks. A deep, black river ran in a ravine below them, the ravine was about 100 feet deep.

Artonai peered over the side and whistled. "That's a long way to fall," he said.

Naruto looked over the edge, then shivered. Just the thought of freefalling through an abyss and into nothing but rocks or a river was petrifying. He screamed when Kakashi lightly tapped him on the back and shouted, "DON'T FALL!" Of course, the careful Jounin made sure that he didn't accidentally REALLY push Naruto over the edge.

"Sensei!" Naruto growled, then tackled him. Kakashi fell onto the ground, laughing.

"Hey! Enough funny business, you two! Let's get going!" Darius ordered.

"Fine, goodness. Just trying to help the kid have some fun in these deadly times." Kakashi scoffed.

Naruto climbed on his sensei's back as he walked, and Kakashi accepted his weight, carrying him easily after the group.

As the group trekked, it began to rain. Lightning flashed overhead, and the eerie shadows of cliff racers in the clouds caused fear to enter everyone's hearts. Shantar's fur stuck to her skin and made her look

innocent and cute, like a wet kitten. The soldiers' armor was glistening and their hair was flattened, as well as Artonai's and Darius's, but Kakashi's hair, for some strange reason, still stuck up more than anyone else's, and wasn't completely flat.

Sakura eyed her sensei's hair curiously, and he noticed her looking at him. He shot her a glance, and she quickly looked away.

"I wonder about that, too." He said, as if knowing what she was thinking. "Must be because I was struck by lightning when I was three."

"You were?" Sakura asked, surprised.

"Maybe, maybe not." Kakashi replied, a twinkle in his black eyes, and Sakura wasn't sure if he was pulling her leg or not.

Suddenly, something caused the hair on the back of Kakashi's neck to prickle. Something was watching him- he could feel its presence. He shifted past Sakura to the watchful Khajiit up the path.

"Shantar, do you feel something? Anything suspicious?"

"Yes." Shantar replied. "Dagoth Ur's spies, no doubt." She replied. "I will warn Darius. You stay with your child- I mean, *students*."

Kakashi nodded and stopped, waiting for his Genin to catch up. When they passed him, he whispered, loud enough so they could hear, "Be wary."

They could tell from the tone of his voice that something was wrong, and they immediately became more watchful. They shifted their gazes to and fro, making sure the coast was clear.

Kakashi hesitated. He heard something approach with amazing speed from behind- something small was whizzing behind him. A split second after he noticed it, he ducked just as a glimmering glass dart swished past his head and pinned a tree. "Ambush!" He cried, and everyone turned around to face the action.

Three Dunmer clad in robes jumped at them from behind, their hands raised high. One of them blasted a green ball of energy towards Kakashi, but he jumped aside, not knowing that Sakura was behind him. "Move!" He yelled, but too late. The ball collided with Sakura before she could make a move. Fear struck Kakashi's heart- what would happen to her?

But she did nothing- she didn't move a muscle. She didn't move an inch. She didn't move a hair. She just stood there, blankly, as a cloud of green mist swirled around her body.

"She's paralyzed!" Artonai cried as he leapt into combat. "Don't worry, it'll wear off!" His voice was being drowned out by the sound of clashing swords and flying energy balls.

"Now you die, n'wah!" One of the Dunmer wizards yelled as his hands glowed white. Suddenly, after a white cloud of mist and particles swept up, five small, rodent-like beasts took form. They stood on two

legs and were slightly smaller than the average man. It had the torso of a man, the face of a rodent and elf, but from its waist down, it had scaly and purple-brown colored skin. Its claws were sharp as daggers.

"Scamps! Kakashi, get out of there!"

Kakashi had grabbed Sakura and dragged her away from the action and placed her somewhere safe, then jumped back into the battle with Artonai. "I won't let them overpower you!" He yelled. "Shadowclone Jutsu!"

Artonai and the guards' eyes widened with surprise as copies of Kakashi appeared all around him and charged for the scamp.

"Hey! That's MY jutsu!" Naruto yelled as he used the jutsu himself. Copies of himself also appeared to join the battle.

"The real one! Find the real Index Finder!" One of the wizards ordered while another wizard conjured a new monster- this one had a body of fire, and black metal armor.

"Flame Atronach!" Darius shouted as he battled a scamp. "Kakashi, watch out! That monster may be too much for you!"

The Flame Atronach was demolishing Kakashi's and Naruto's clones quickly until only the originals were left standing. Kakashi quickly tried to devise a plan. Pressing his fingers together, he forged a Rainfall Jutsu. The rain began to thicken, but only in the area around the Atronach. Soon, its fires were put out, with only the armor left steaming in the dirt. While the guards defended the children and their sensei, Artonai had his own problem to worry about.

He had been backed over to the ravine by a wizard and his conjured monster- a Frost Atronach, which had a metallic, steaming body and bulging muscles. The ravine, down below, had a rushing river which was rising due to the rainfall. Artonai looked over his shoulder at the madness with dread.

"Long time, no see, Artonai?" The wizard growled, his hands raised, ready to cast a spell. An evil glare lingered in the Dunmer's red eye, but Artonai felt within the man, an inner pity, and a feeling that he did not want to kill Artonai- as if the man were being forced to act against his will.

Artonai's eyes widened with surprise when he realized who the man was. "F... Father?!"

Sakura came out of paralysis. She saw the heated battle before her, with her friends in danger. She wanted to go help them, but she knew there was nothing much she could do. She soon heard some commotion behind her.

Sakura stood up and turned around, to find Artonai and his father, who had backed him to the edge of a ravine. Sakura didn't know what to do, she just stood motionless, panic rising up in her heart, but she strained to listen over the clashing swords and scamp cries to hear the conversation between Artonai and the Dunmer.

"You are too much like your mother, Artonai. You might as well have taken on her looks instead of mine,

you son of a High Elf." The man said angrily.

Artonai looked hurt. He knew that he was nothing like a Dark Elf. That was why he was banished. He was more like his mother- a High Elf- the complete opposite of a Dark Elf. His eyes switched to his father, who was beginning to look strange.

His father fell to one knee, his face contorted, as if he was fighting something inside of him. "A... Artonai..." He wheezed. "I... I don't mean it... I... just remember that I... I wanted to help you... it wasn't my decision to banish you... aagh...." His father took a breath. "I love you Artonai... but... I am being controlled by Dagoth Ur... he has taken me prisoner... Artonai... I am a Sleeper- a follower of Dagoth Ur... you must kill me, Artonai!"

Sakura, from the sidelines, clapped a hand over her mouth in surprise. She didn't know that Artonai was a mix-breed, or that his father was a Sleeper. What would happen next?

Shantar was suddenly at her side. "The battle is too much for me." She whispered. "But what is going on with Artonai?"

Artonai did not know what to do. He couldn't kill his father! All he did was stand and stare in surprise.

His father suddenly stood up again. "Begone with him!" His father yelled to the Frost Atronach, Dagoth Ur once again taking control over his mind.

Artonai tried to move, but the shock of his father's encounter kept his legs from moving.

"Artonai! Watch out!" Sakura screamed, and she couldn't keep herself from saying it, for the Atronach had moved forward and shoved one icy fist right into Artonai's chest.

The Dunmer stumbled over the edge of the ravine-

-and plummeted towards the river!

"NO!" Shantar screamed, dashing for Artonai's father with rage. With her claws, she jumped onto his back and scraped with all her might. The Atronach tried to punch Shantar, but it missed and hit the wizard instead, thus, ending his life. The Atronach disappeared, and Shantar looked over the edge with fear. "Sakura! Do you have anything that will help me get down?"

Sakura nodded, then ran back to camp. She glanced at the battle, which was thinning. Kakashi and the Genin, and the soldiers were winning. Quickly, she grabbed a backpack and took out a grappling hook, and took the hook to Shantar.

The Khajiit grabbed the hook, smashed it into a rock, secured it, and lowered herself over the edge of the ravine.

Artonai's unconscious body had been carried away down the river, but he had washed ashore on the riverbed. Shantar was praying that he was still alive.

Cautiously, she made her way down the wall of the ravine, with Sakura looking over the edge fearfully. Moments later, Kakashi and the others had also found her, and found themselves looking over the edge.

Shantar dashed for Artonai and dropped at his side. She looked over her shoulder to find that Kakashi had jumped down the side of the ravine, his skilled Ninja arts kept him from getting hurt when he fell to the ground. He dashed for Shantar. "What's wrong?" He asked. "Artonai fell?"

Shantar nodded, not knowing what to say. When she found her voice, she moaned. "He's not breathing!"

to be continued