

Fairy Tail 140

Chapter 140: The Opportunity to Redeem Herself

Earth land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Galuna Island.

July, x784.

After finishing breakfast, Alfonzo and Elicia headed out from the village on Galuna Island to scout the area. Meanwhile, Ultear and Erza stayed to serve as a line of defense should the centipedes come to attack during the day.

Spreading their detection spells to cover most of the island, Elicia was the first to notice an anomaly.

While her [Detection Threads] were able to reach most of the surface of the island, and even some caves, there was one cave, that led below the temple, she couldn't access.

As it turns out, every time her threads crept along the ground toward the cave, they were dissolved by a corrosive substance.

"I think I found the centipede's lair." Elicia said with a solemn expression on her face.

"Then why do you look so serious?" Alfonzo asked curiously as he continued deploying his [Magic Power Detection]. "Shouldn't you be more excited?"

"Well, there are two reasons." Elicia said while raising the index and middle fingers on her left hand. "First, there are hundreds of centipedes in the area."

"Well, damn." Alfonzo muttered. "We killed hundreds of those things last night. Now, you're telling me there are hundreds more?"

"Yeah." Elicia replied with a nod. Then, she lowered her middle finger and continued. "Second, they're surrounding a cave. But when my threads try to enter that cave, they start dissolving almost immediately. It doesn't even matter how much magic power I pump into them."

"That's gotta be some pretty nasty shit." Alfonzo said with a frown.

"Exactly." Elicia said, nodding once again. "So, I don't know what to do. We should probably investigate, but do we really wanna charge in headfirst? I mean, we have no idea how many of those things are in there."

"That's true." Alfonzo replied with a nod. Then, he frowned once again. "*Sigh* If I could control radio waves, I could get a good look at what's inside that cave. But I'm still having trouble controlling the lower end of the EM spectrum."

Hearing that, Elicia quickly wrapped her arms around Alfonzo and spoke in an encouraging tone.

"Come on, Fonzie." Elicia said with a smile. "You've only been practicing this magic for four years, or so. But you already have a level of control over six of the seven EM wavelengths. Don't you think you're asking a bit too much from yourself?"

Returning the hug, Alfonzo could only smile wryly.

'It was only a few years ago that she was always worried that my confidence was overboard.' Alfonzo mused. 'But now, she's afraid that my confidence is taking a hit. Now that's what I call irony. Did Erza's slap flip her whole world view upside down?'

"I think you're misunderstanding me, Lici." Alfonzo said in a soothing tone. "All I meant is that if I could use radar waves, I would have an easier time finding out what's in the cave you found."

"Oh..." Elicia replied, a slight embarrassed blush appearing on her face. "I see. I guess I overreacted."

"Anyway." Alfonzo said, combing his fingers through Elicia's hair. "Why don't we take a look at that cave. We can at least try to come up with a plan of attack in case we find no other option but to attack up front."

"Okay." Elicia replied, enjoying the feeling of Alfonzo's fingers running through her hair.

With that, the duo made their way toward the ancient temple. Along the way, Elicia used her [Camouflage Magic] to bend the light around them, rendering the two invisible to the naked eye. Although Alfonzo could manage the same thing with his control over the visible light waves, Elicia's spell was more simple and involved less calculation.

After traveling through the forest for nearly twenty-five minutes, Alfonzo and Elicia arrived at the tree line around the temple. Looking down at the clearing around the temple, there were centipedes as far as the eye could see. On top of that, there were many more centipedes hiding just below the ground's surface. Though, Alfonzo's [Magic Power Detection] couldn't reach much more than ten feet (3 m) deep.

"I knew there were a lot of them, but seeing them all in person makes me feel icky." Elicia said while rubbing the goosebumps that rose on her arms.

"Seriously." Alfonzo replied. "And there are even more underground. But I can't tell how deep they are buried."

"So, what should we do?" Elicia asked curiously. "If we used our [Unison Raid] we could get rid of most of them without any problems."

"but if we did that, we'd use up a lot of magic power." Alfonzo countered. "And if there were a lot more than we expected hiding underground and in the cave, we'd have trouble running away."

"Ugh! This is so frustrating." Elicia whined. "Nothing like this happened in the anime or the manga."

"This isn't the anime or the manga." Alfonzo replied.

"I know that." Elicia said with a pout. "But what could have changed this arc so much."

"Well, let's see." Alfonzo said feigning a contemplative tone. "First we let Gildarts know that Cana was his daughter way early. Then, Cana asked Gildarts to kill Deliora..."

When Alfonzo started listing the changes their presence has brought to the world, Elicia could only look at him blankly. Her question had clearly been rhetorical. Still, he answered it seriously.

"... which he did. That stopped Ur from using the iced shell. Oh, and don't forget that Ultear was reunited with Ur shortly after that."

"Okay, okay, I get it." Elicia said in an exasperated tone. "You don't have to keep going."

"But I was just answering your question." Alfonzo said in an innocent tone with the most innocent expression he could muster.

"I'm not foolin' with you, Fonzie." Elicia said in an annoyed tone.

"Lici, what's wrong?" Alfonzo asked in feigned shock at Elicia's tone. "Did I do something to upset you? Please, tell me what's wrong and I'll do my very best to correct it."

"Ugh... I can't stand you sometimes." Elicia said as she looked away. "Let's just go back to the village and report what we found to the others."

Smiling brightly in response, Alfonzo turned and quickly swept Elicia into his arms in a princess carry. Then, he leapt off the tree branch they were both standing on in the direction of the village.

"Thread Magic: Thread Slicer]." Elicia chanted as the duo left.

Less than a second after the two jumped away, a centipede fell from a high branch, landing on the spot where Alfonzo and Elicia once stood. Although none of the centipedes could see them, their scents were not masked. So, they were quickly discovered.

Swish!

Splat!

Fortunately, neither Alfonzo nor Elicia had let their guards down despite their rather lighthearted conversation. So, they were able to easily avoid the centipede's sneak attack. Then, just before the attacking centipede could screech to alert its brethren of the intruders, thousands of threads wrapped around it before cutting it into ribbons.

Even so, the sudden death of one of their own alerted the rest of the centipedes to the intruders presence. However, since they did not receive the order to pursue, Alfonzo and Elicia got away without issue.

"They aren't chasing us." Alfonzo said, Elicia still in his arms as he used [Electromagnetism Magic] to fly between the trees. "Either they're weakened in the sunlight, which I highly doubt, or they have a leader with a much higher level of intelligence."

"But this leader is too smart, right?" Elicia asked. "I mean, even though they are magical beasts, they're still animals... bugs at that. How developed can their intelligence be? Their instincts should have taken over when one of them was killed, right?"

"That's what I thought would happen, too." Alfonzo muttered in response. "At the very least, I expected a few of those big bastards to be sent after us. But from what I can tell with my [Detection Spell], they only raged for a little bit before calming down and going back to doing whatever it is that centipedes do."

"*Sigh* This is so weird." Elicia said with a pout.

Meanwhile, in the cavern under the temple, the strange little bear was still seated on top of the King Centipede's head.

Patting the giant centipede to calm it down, the bear was furious.

"No one's ever made it this deep into the forest." The bear said angrily, its red eye starting to glow maliciously. "Having seen all my lovely little pets, they will know something is up if I only send a hundred at a time to attack them every night for a while."

Angered that his plans to drive the people of the village towards despair were being interrupted, the little bear slammed his left paw down on the centipede's head, causing it to whine with discomfort.

"Shut up, you useless bug!" The little bear shouted angrily. "If your damn children weren't so weak, my plans wouldn't have been exposed."

Screech!

Hearing the little bear's tone, even though it could not understand the words, the centipede was angered. With its increased intelligence as a magical beast, it could understand the intent behind the tone.

Likewise, the little bear could also understand the centipede's intent. With his eye glowing even more menacingly, it glared down at the King Centipede.

"Don't get too full of yourself, little bug." The bear said threateningly. "Don't forget, you were only an experiment. As long as we have the queen of your little brood, we can make more like you without a problem. You're not necessary anymore."

Feeling the malice and the mental pressure from the bear, the King Centipede immediately dropped its aggressive posture. Then, it lowered its head in submission.

"Good." The bear said in a much friendlier tone. "I would hate to have to get rough with you like we did back in the old days."

Months ago, back when the experiments on the magical centipedes were completed successfully and this King Centipede was first created, it was tortured and subjected to many kinds of abuse to break its will. Even though its more base instincts would surface from time to time, the heightened intelligence made sure that it never forgot the process that led to its subjugation.

Back on the surface, Alfonzo and Elicia returned to the village after another thirty minutes. Then, as soon as they arrived, they informed all the relevant personnel of their findings. Or... That was what they intended to do.

"Who are you?" The village chief, Moka, a bald, tan-skinned, old man with long white sideburns that grow down to his hips dressed in what appeared to be tribal attire, questioned as soon as Alfonzo and Elicia entered the meeting room. "Why are you outsiders in my village? Guards! Arrest these intruders!"

Smack!

Hearing Moka's outburst, Alfonzo and Elicia stared at him blankly. At the same time, Ultear and Erza could not help but giggle while most of the villagers did not react in the slightest. Only Bobo, Moka's son, reacted by face palming loud enough for half the village to hear.

"Dad, we went over this less than an hour ago." Bobo said in an exasperated tone. "Like the other two, those are the wizards I brought to help protect the village."

"You brought in those outsiders?" Moka asked angrily while pointing an accusing finger at Bobo. "Guards! Arrest this unfilial son!"

From there, the argument between the father and son escalated.

As it turns out, Moka, in his old age, was becoming senile. So, other than those he was close to, he did not remember many others. On top of that, this exact same argument had taken place shortly after Alfonzo and Elicia left to scout the forest with Ultear and Erza.

After another ten minutes, the argument between Moka and Bobo stopped abruptly. Moka, having regained his memories of the four wizards, looked at all those gathered and addressed them in a solemn tone.

"Alright, now that everyone is here, we can start this meeting." Moka said sounding quite dignified. "Now, let us discuss our plan for destroying the moon."

"Dad, we're here to discuss our defenses against the centipedes." Bobo said, sounding more tired than if he had spent an entire night fighting the centipedes.

"What Centipedes?" Moka asked angrily. "We need to destroy the moon! Then, we can be rid of this curse!"

Once again, the father and son started arguing while the rest of the villagers watched on as if this were a common occurrence. Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Elicia, Ultear, and Erza all sighed in unison while thinking the same thing.

'This is gonna be a long day.'

Earth land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

Shortly before the sun would set completely, while the villagers of Galuna Island were preparing for another attack, Makarov was sitting on top of the bar in the guild hall with a scowl on his face.

"None of those brats came back." Makarov muttered with discontent. Then, he looked to the side, behind the bar and continued. "Mira, where was that quest taking place?"

"In Lupinus Town, Master." Mirajane replied with a pleasant smile.

"Lupinus, huh?" Makarov muttered while stroking his mustache. "That's only a night away from here by train."

After considering things for a little while longer, Makarov looked at Mirajane once again.

"Mira, I want you to bring those brats back to face their punishment." Makarov said in an authoritative tone. "Do so, and I will reinstate you as an S-Class wizard."

Hearing that, Mirajane's eyes lit up. Then, her expression turned into one filled with determination.

"Yes, Master, I understand." Mirajane replied in a serious tone, her pleasant smile nowhere to be seen. "Thank you for trusting me. I won't let you down again."

Nodding in response, Makarov watched Mirajane as she walked away to prepare for her task.

"I believe in you, Mirajane." Makarov said quietly as Mirajane walked through the doors of the guild hall.

"Your growth over the last two years has made this old man proud."