

Fairy Tail 162

Chapter 162: The Reason to Get Stronger

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

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After their battle with Juvia and Sol ended and Lucy was unfrozen, Gray and Ultear also unfroze the street where the battle took place before taking their prisoners to what was left of the guild hall. Instead of taking them inside, however, they took them to the building that housed the three transport vehicles.

Considering Juvia's ability to liquify, they did not dare to take them to the guild's underground prison. She would simply liquify and slip between the bars. But the building behind the guild hall would make a perfect prison for someone with Juvia's unique set of skills. Especially since Alfonzo built it with his magic and used so many sigils in its construction, it would be extremely difficult for anyone to enter or exit without the permission to do so.

Meanwhile, Lucy returned to the hospital to explain the situation to Levy. But when Levy saw her, she was completely shocked.

"Lu, are you okay?" Levy asked as she stood from her seat in Jet and Droy's hospital room.

Currently, Lucy was shaking like a leaf in the wind. Although she had been unfrozen, she was still exposed to a cold that could freeze over an entire street in an instant. Had she not been a wizard, and had Gray and Ultear's control been any worse, there's a good chance she could have lost her life.

"*Sniff* Yeah..." Lucy said with a wry smile. "kinda got caught in the crossfire between S-Class wizards and an S-Class candidate."

Hearing that, Levy's expression turned solemn.

"What happened?" Levy asked in a concerned tone.

In response, Lucy explained the chain of events. How it started raining and she got soaked on the way to the shopping district. How she decided to go to her apartment to change clothes and get an umbrella. How two wizards from Phantom Lord were waiting for her at her apartment. And finally, how Gray and Ultear arrived just in time to save her from being kidnapped and subsequently defeating the wizards.

Hearing all that took place since Lucy left the hospital, it would be an understatement to say that Levy was surprised. Although she could use [Magic Power Detection], just like all the other wizards in their group of friends... Other than Natsu, who did not have the patience to thinly spread his magic power around his surroundings. She did not have enough magic power to see what was going on on the other side of the town.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there to help you, Lu." Levy said as she walked toward the still shivering Lucy.

A moment later, when she arrived in front of Lucy, Levy wrapped her arms around Lucy in a tight embrace.

"Twice my friends were attacked and there was nothing I could do about it." Levy muttered with her head on Lucy's shoulder. "I hate this feeling."

"Levy..." Lucy muttered in response, wrapping her own arms around her petite best friend.

"I'll make sure nothing like this ever happens again." Levy continued in a resolute tone. "I'll become strong enough that my friends will never be in danger again as long as I'm close by."

Hearing Levy's resolution, Lucy felt her heart stir. Tightening her arms around Levy, Lucy's determination to get stronger grew as well.

"Yeah, and I'll be right there getting stronger with you." Lucy replied.

Hearing that, Levy raised her head and made eye contact with Lucy. Seeing the determination in her eyes, Levy was sure that she had the same spark in her own. With their resolve secured and their determination set, the two girls smiled and hugged once again.

Though Levy and Lucy shared a moment that strengthened their friendship and would determine how their paths as wizards would unfold, it was quickly broken not long later.

"Ugh... Where am I?" Droy groaned as he opened his eyes in one of the hospital beds.

"Ow! I feel like I got hit by a train." Jet groaned simultaneously from the other bed in the room.

After a moment passed, Jet and Droy regained their senses and scanned the room they were in. It did not take long for them to realize they were in a hospital room. The next thing they noticed was a pair of young women hugging intimately. A moment later, they recognized the two women and were surprised to see that one of them was Levy.

"Levy... Wh-wh-what are you doing?" Jet asked in disbelief.

"No, Levy, tell me it's not true." Droy exclaimed with just as much disbelief in his tone as Jet.

"Is that why you never showed any interest in me?" Jet and Droy asked simultaneously. "Were you into girls all this time?"

Meanwhile, when Levy and Lucy heard the boys groan, a sign of them waking up, they looked in their direction, not even realizing that they were still hugging. But when they heard the question they asked in unison, both girls froze. A moment later, they reacted in completely different ways.

Though they both realized Jet and Droy were misunderstanding the situation, Lucy could not help but giggle at their reaction. Levy, on the other hand, frowned as her face reddened instantly.

"Are you two stupid?" Levy asked, releasing Lucy. "Of course I'm into guys! And you two are like family to me. I've seen you like my older brothers ever since we were little kids. So, tell me, why do I have to be into girls just because I'm not into you like that?"

'Ooh, she friend-zoned them again.' Lucy thought as she watched Levy yell at Jet and Droy. 'And this time, it wasn't unintentional, and she told them to their faces. I kinda feel bad for them.'

Immediately after getting confirmation that Levy was not interested in them romantically, something they had suspected for a while, Jet and Droy paled instantly.

"But why not us" Droy asked with his head hanging low.

"Seriously, haven't we been good to you?" Jet asked, his eyes filled with unshed tears.

Seeing the expressions on Jet and Droy's faces, Levy paused for a moment. Then, she looked at them with a serious expression.

"*Sigh* Yes, you've been great to me." Levy replied to the boys' questions. "But so has everyone in the guild. But you two are too protective. You don't give me room to grow. I mean, even when I said I wanted to, you two have never let me take a quest alone, claiming it's too dangerous and how you want to protect me. But for goodness sake, I'm a wizard, too. I'm not a weakling. And to reach my full potential, I have to go through difficulties of my own."

With that, Jet and Droy fell silent, surprised to hear Levy's true thoughts on their time spent as Team Shadow Gear. Since the only thing on their minds was keeping Levy safe, They had never considered Levy's feelings on the matter.

"but we just wanted you to be--" Jet muttered.

"I know." Levy said, cutting off Jet's words. "You just wanted me to be safe. And believe me, I'm happy to know that you care about me so much. But, if the two of you keep on trying to protect me, I'll never get the chance to grow into my own wizard... To reach my full potential. And the same goes for the two of you."

Once again, Jet and Droy fell silent and hung their heads.

"I'm not saying that all of them would have been able to fend off that guy from Phantom Lord, but I don't think they would have lost as badly as we did." Levy said, laying out the cold hard truth in front of her teammates. "In case you're wondering who I'm talking about, I'm talking about our group of close friends in the guild. As a matter of fact, the truth is that we are objectively the weakest of all our friends."

Hearing that, the boys both gritted their teeth and clenched their fists. Neither of them wanted to admit that they were weaker than anyone else. But after the thrashing they took the night before, they had no words to refute Levy's claim.

"Because we always worked in a team, we never faced any real difficulties on our quests, because we always had someone who could bail us out." Levy continued, her tone softening after seeing her teammates' expressions. "Although that made our quests much safer than they would have been otherwise, it stunted our growth as well."

With that, Levy approached Jet and Droy's beds. Then when she was standing between them, she reached out and took hold of their hands.

"I never again want to feel as helpless as I did last night." Levy said, gripping her teammates' hands tightly. "I want to be strong enough so that I can defend not only myself, but the people I care about. To

protect the two of you should you ever need it. And to do that, I have to grow. I have to push myself past my limits. And so do you."

Hearing Levy's heart-felt words, tears fell from Jet and Droy's eyes. Like Levy, they too felt helpless during their fight with Gajeel. So, they could understand where Levy was coming from. But the thought of leaving Levy alone scared them. Just imagining her coming back from a quest with injuries made them feel as if their hearts would stop.

Still, since Levy laid out her true feelings like that, all they could do is nod in response.

"I guess that's the end of Team Shadow Gear." Droy said in a sorrowful tone.

"Yeah, it was fun while it lasted." Jet added in an equally sorrowful tone.

Hearing the two, Lucy, despite the chill that was still present in her body, face palmed hard enough to turn her face red. Meanwhile, Levy looked at her teammates with an incredulous expression.

"*Sigh* Looks like you two answered my earlier question." Levy said with an exasperated sigh. "You really are stupid."

"Huh? What do you mean?" Jet and Droy asked in unison.

"Why would that be the end of our team?" Levy asked.

"Because you said you wanted to take quests alone." Jet replied.

"Uh huh." Droy added.

"*Sigh* You two have a one track mind." Levy said while shaking her head. "Teams are not the norm in our guild. Most wizards take quests alone. They only team up when they want to do something different or find a quest that they can't complete alone. We're actually the odd ones out, doing every quest together."

"Seriously?" Jet asked in a surprised tone.

"Now that you mention it..." Droy said contemplatively.

"Look at team Steel Threads, Alfonzo and Lici." Levy explained, trying to help Jet and Droy understand. "Sure they work together on quests. But most of the time they work alone. The same is true for Team Natsu. Though they've been taking more quests together recently. Probably to work on their coordination in a fight. Still, they usually work alone, too."

"I guess you're right." Jet muttered.

"Yeah, I never thought about it like that." Droy said.

"So, this doesn't mean that we'll never work together again." Levy said with a smile. "It just means that we'll push ourselves alone. But if there's ever a situation we can't handle on our own, we can always come together again as Team Shadow Gear. And we all know there aren't many things we can't accomplish if we work together. I mean, we proved that hundreds of times over the last few years, right?"

With that, the smiles returned to Jet and Droy's faces. Though they were still saddened that they would not always be together like they were, they could still be comforted that they would be able to come together again whenever they wanted or needed to.

Then, Jet and Droy exchanged glances. From the look in the other's eyes, they could tell that they were both thinking the same thing.

'And if I can get strong enough working alone, maybe Levy will look at me differently.' The boys thought simultaneously.

At the same time, Levy smiled happily when Jet and Droy agreed to let her grow without them. Though she did not want to, if they had put up a fierce resistance to the idea, she was willing to do things in a more... forceful way... The Fairy Tail way.

Meanwhile, Lucy watched the conclusion to this episode with a gentle smile.

'You can see just how much Levy cares about them.' Lucy thought to herself. 'It takes a lot to tell someone the truth sometimes. Especially if you know they don't want to hear it. On top of that, she showed the patience to help them understand it, too. *Sigh* Those two are lucky to have her in their lives. Hehe... I guess I'm pretty lucky, too. Levy is my best friend, after all.'

