

FAIRY TAIL: METAL AND THREADS

Chapter 17: Dread Locks

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

July, x773.

In the afternoon a few days after Elicia's fight with Evergreen, her hand had healed, and the swelling was gone. Sitting in the guild hall, Elicia and Cana were seated at one of the long tables on one of the benches. However, unlike they usually would when eating, they were both facing away from the table.

While Cana was leaning back against the table and watching Elicia. Elicia was sitting with her legs spread. On the floor, sitting between Elicia's legs, Alfonzo was seated while molding his [Metal Magic] while Elicia used her [Thread Magic] to style Alfonzo's hair, twisting it into the initial form of the thin dread locks he liked to wear.

The reason Alfonzo was using his magic right after the morning training was simple. After Elicia's fight with Evergreen, Alfonzo checked the state of Elicia's training clothes they had fashioned out of metal threads. Seeing that it was heavily damaged by Evergreen's [Fairy Bomb: Leprechaun], Alfonzo was trying to find a way that the clothing could better protect the wearer without losing its flexibility.

Until that day, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Cana only wore the metal training clothes to add weight to their training regimen. So, Alfonzo had only put minimal thought into their defense. But after seeing that they had kept Elicia from losing that fight, he decided to invest more time and thought into it.

"So, how would you make Alfonzo's hair stay twisted like that if you weren't using your magic?" Cana asked, intrigued by Alfonzo's new hair style.

"If I were using just my hands, I would be using some hair products that were made to cause each strand of hair to stick together." Elicia said with a smile.

"The downside is that Fonzie wouldn't be able to wash his hair for a while."

"Eww... That sounds gross." Cana said, running her fingers through her own beautiful glossy hair. "How can anyone live without washing their hair?"

"Well, if he wanted his hair to stay like that, he couldn't wash out the hair product." Elicia said with a shrug. Meanwhile, she never stopped moving her fingers that were floating just above Alfonzo's head. "But in truth, I can do this same technique without my magic. It would just take much longer."

"How much longer?" Cana asked curiously.

"A couple of days... maybe?" Elicia replied unsurely. "It might not even finish. I'd have to use a pair of knitting needles to do it."

"No, it wouldn't get done." Alfonzo said without changing his expression.

"Mom tried that with dad back in the day. And I heard him screaming like a baby every time she started at the base of each twist."

Cana could not help but laugh after hearing about a grown man crying in pain from just getting his hair done.

"You think it's funny, huh?" Alfonzo asked with his eyes narrowed. "Lici, so you can get some practice you should ask Cana if you can practice on her with the knitting needles."

"That's a good idea." Elicia said happily. "Cana, can you help me practice?"

Thinking about the possibility of those needles digging into her scalp, Cana paled immediately. Then, she bowed her head in Alfonzo's direction with sincerity.

"I'm sorry for laughing." Cana said with trepidation. "Please don't let her experiment on me."

Looking up at Cana, Alfonzo smiled smugly. Needless to say, Cana pouted at the sight of his smile. However, Alfonzo did get her out of the situation he himself had put her in.

"Now that I think about it, Cana's hair may not be the best for dreads." Alfonzo said with a chuckle. "Although it's thick, it's not coarse enough."

Looking away from Alfonzo's hair for a moment, Elicia evaluated the grade of Cana's hair. Then, with a pout of disappointment, she returned her attention to Alfonzo's hair.

"You're right, Fonzie." Elicia said. "Her hair isn't coarse enough. It would take a lot of grease and other hair products to get it to stick."

Sighing in relief, Cana started talking once again to change the subject. Just in case Elicia changed her mind.

"Anyway, I think you two should be careful." Cana said with a slightly worried expression. "Ever since Evergreen lost, Laxus and his group have been training a lot harder. I wouldn't be surprised if they were planning to take revenge in the future."

"Yeah, but so have we." Elicia said excitedly. "I've come up with some new ways to use my magic and I've started learning Capoeira, for when I have to fight in close range."

"Capoeira?" Cana asked in confusion.

"It's a dance-like martial art." Alfonzo explained. "It will help take advantage of Elicia's flexibility and acrobatic movements."

"I see." Cana replied, imagining Elicia dancing around her opponents with graceful movements while hitting them over and over.

Just the thought of Elicia waltzing around while hitting people made Cana laugh once again.

"I think you've got a misunderstanding, but whatever." Alfonzo said after hearing Cana laugh.

While Cana giggled, Elicia and Alfonzo focused on their tasks.

Alfonzo knew that if he wanted to make better metal clothing, he would have to get a more defensively stable metal in his repertoire. Unfortunately, he had yet to come across any adamantine or orichalcum.

'I'll have to be careful if I use orichalcum, though.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'In some worlds, it's a very magically conductive metal. In others, however, it's an anti-magic metal. I don't know which it is here. It's so rare, that not much about it is written in books and Master Goldstein won't tell me about it.'

At that moment, Alfonzo imagined an image of Nell holding a cigarette and scolding him to not bite off more than he could chew. And he knew she was right. He should focus on learning the basics and the more common metals before jumping into the rarer ones.

After a bit of comfortable silence, Alfonzo dispelled his magic, letting the metal he was molding into threads vanish into thin air.

"Hey, where did Laki and Alzack go?" Alfonzo asked.

At this time of day, unless Alfonzo had a lesson with Nell, the five of them would usually be hanging out together, bouncing ideas off each other for new spells they could use with their magic.

"Oh, Alzack took an E-Class quest." Cana replied. "I think he's washing dishes at a restaurant, or something."

"Huh?" Elicia exclaimed in confusion. "I thought we couldn't take quests until we were eleven."

'She wasn't listening during the explanation, huh?' Alfonzo and Cana thought simultaneously.

"We can't take D-Class quests and above until we're eleven." Alfonzo said with a smile. "But E-Class quests are fine."

"Yeah, D-Class and above require us to leave the town." Cana continued. "But E-Class quests are more like helping with chores or jobs for regular people."

"Oh..." Elicia said, lowering her head in embarrassment. "I knew that... Haha."

Hearing the awkward chuckle, Alfonzo and Cana both knew that she did not know that. But they decided to let her have this one. Alfonzo especially. His mother in his past life drilled one piece of advice into his head until it became a creed he lived by.

'There are three people that you make sure to never piss off.' Alfonzo's mother in his past life would always say. 'The person that delivers your mail, the person that prepares your food, and the person that does your hair. Always remember that, or you could end up in a bad way.'

"Anyway, that's where Alzack went, but where is Laki?" Alfonzo asked curiously.

"Oh, I know the answer to that." Elicia said excitedly. "She went to buy a book. Apparently, she's looking for different types of wood she could try to make with her [Wood Make Magic]."

"So, she's doing like Alfonzo does." Cana said with a contemplative expression. "But does knowing about other types of trees and their properties help Laki make different kinds of wood?"

"I dunno." Elicia said energetically. "But you have to try if you want to find out, right?"

"Speaking of that." Alfonzo said. "Cana, have you tried using cards other than tarot cards to use your magic?"

"I haven't." Cana replied. "I haven't found any magic cards other than tarot cards. I wouldn't even know what kind of spells to expect. I mean, what would a royal flush or a black jack even do?"

"Got me." Alfonzo replied.

"But isn't finding out the fun part?" Elicia asked excitedly. "And... I'm done."

Releasing Alfonzo's hair from her [Thread Magic], Elicia watched it fall messily. Using his hands, Alfonzo pushed the locks that fell over his eyes, down to his cheek bones, back and to the side. Now, there was a lock hanging from the center of his hair line that fell between his eyes. The rest were pushed to the side, covering his ears and hanging down to the base of his neck in the back.

Using his magic, Alfonzo created a well-polished circular plate of silver that he used as a mirror. Turning his head left and right, Alfonzo checked out his new look. Then, he created a second mirror behind his head and made it float in place. Then, using the two mirrors, he checked out the back of his head.

Nodding in satisfaction, Alfonzo allowed the two mirrors to dispel. Then, he stood up and spun around quickly. Wrapping his arms around Elicia, he picked her up off the bench and planted a kiss on her cheek.

"Thanks Lici. I love you." Alfonzo said with a smile. "It looks great."

Smiling happily, Elicia returned the kiss on the cheek.

"You're welcome." Elicia said with a big, bright smile on her face.

"Whoo~~~~!" Macao exclaimed from a nearby table. "When's the wedding you two?"

"Yeah, we better get an invitation." Wakaba added to the teasing.

While Alfonzo was unbothered, Elicia hid behind Alfonzo. Unlike in the past, however, she was genuinely embarrassed this time.

Poking her head out from behind Alfonzo a moment later, Elicia saw the conflicted expression on Cana's face. A mixture of embarrassment, annoyance, and jealousy. Embarrassment because of the public display of affection. Annoyance and jealousy because over the last year and a few months, it was clear to Elicia that Cana had developed a crush on Alfonzo.

In fact, Elicia was sure that Cana had developed a crush on Alfonzo from the first day. Not at first sight, though. If her guess was correct, Elicia would place the time for Cana's crush at the moment Alfonzo stood up to Laxus on Cana's first day in the guild. Though Elicia doubted that Cana had realized it back then.

Before Elicia could think about it any further, however, bells throughout the town began to ring.

"What's going on?" Cana asked, standing up from the bench and moving closer to Alfonzo where she felt more secure.

Though Alfonzo and Elicia did not respond, they both smiled slightly. They both knew what these bells meant, after all. And they were excited. However, when they glanced at Cana, their excitement dimmed, and their slight smiles turned into slight frowns.

"I know I said I was gonna kick him in his nuts if he flirted with me...' Elici said with a conflicted expression. 'But should I do it when I see him for making Cana sad? No, that would be unreasonable. He doesn't know what he's done yet... Should I do it anyway?'

Although his thoughts were not as extreme as Elicia's, Alfonzo wanted to punch Gildarts for Cana's sake as well. But he knew he should hold back the urge. Cana had not told anyone that she was Gildarts' daughter yet, after all. It would be a huge red flag if he knew something he should not.

Before Alfonzo and Elicia could think any further, however, an announcement rang out over the whole of Magnolia.

{"Citizens of Magnolia!"} A male voice said over the public announcement magic item. {Please make your way into the nearest building, immediately. The Gildarts shift will be in effect in exactly three minutes. I repeat..."}

While most of the members of Fairy Tail were excited by the announcement, there were naturally a few exceptions. For example, Laxus and the Thunder God Tribe seemed to be completely indifferent to Gildarts' return. While Cana seemed to grow more nervous by the second. And after seeing Cana's expression, Alfonzo and Elicia grew more upset.

"Cana, what's wrong?" Elicia asked, wrapping Cana in a hug.

Startled by the sudden hug, Cana jumped. But she did not try to pull away from Elicia. Instead, she buried her head in Elicia's embrace.

Drawing near, Alfonzo wrapped his arms around both Elicia and Cana, as added moral support.

"He's coming." Cana said nervously. "My father is coming..."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia showed shock and confusion on their faces. Their expressions were genuine, as well. Although they were not shocked or confused by Cana's declaration, they were shocked and confused that she told them so readily.

Surprised at her own utterance, Cana covered her mouth with her hands. However, she also felt relieved that someone she trusted knew her secret.