

Fairy Tail 186

Chapter 186: Confronting Jellal

Earth Land, Ishgar, Era.

September, x784.

"I've said all I can regarding this issue." Siegrain said while standing at his seat in the Magic Council's meeting room. "So, I believe we should put the motion of firing the Etherion at the Tower of Heaven to a vote."

While the wizards from Fairy Tail spent the last few hours fighting, evacuating, and climbing the Tower of Heaven, Siegrain spent that time lobbying his fellow Counselors. And by now, he had thought his efforts sufficient to get their agreement.

"*Sigh* I still think we're making a big mistake." Yajima said, shaking his head in disapproval.

"You only say that because of your favoritism for the wizards of Fairy Tail." Org barked in response. "Can't you see? This is bigger than the lives of a few members from a guild full of ruffians."

Instead of replying, Yajima once again shook his head. As a former member of Fairy Tail, he would be lying if he claimed that he did not have a soft spot for the guild. However, he could see past the immediate future of this action.

Although the probability that the Etherion would completely destroy the Tower of Heaven was high, the fact that the Council was firing it within the continent's borders without warning the populace would definitely come back to bite them in the long run.

'On top of that, Siegrain seems too hellbent on using the Etherion.' Yajima thought to himself while his eyes opened slightly. 'He's definitely up to something. But what could it be?'

Unfortunately, Yajima's suspicions were not enough to stop the vote from taking place.

Though he expected the outcome, Yajima was thoroughly disappointed when the results of the voting were announced. Every member of the Magic Council eligible to vote had voted in favor of firing the Etherion. Yajima, on the other hand, had abstained from voting.

"Very well." Siegrain said in a solemn tone. "It will take a few minutes to ready the Etherion. Until then, we must calibrate the aim. We wouldn't want to hit the wrong island."

With that, all the members of the Council, except Yajima made their way to the Etherion control room. Meanwhile, Yajima could only sit in his seat and pray for the safety of his friend's children.

At the same time, as the Counselors were leaving the meeting room, Junko could not help but imagine the despair the people of Ishgar would feel if the Etherion misfired and wiped out a random, unsuspecting town or city.

'Mmm~~~! That would be spectacular.' Junko thought to herself as she stealthily licked her lips. 'I wonder what kind of preparations I would have to make to facilitate an event like that.'

As soon as that thought ran through Junko's head, the vast majority of Magic Councilmen felt a chill go down their spines, though they could not identify a reason for it.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Caelum, Unnamed Island.

While the members of the Magic Council were making their way towards the Etherion's control room, Alfonzo and Ultear had just returned to the ship they used to arrive on the island with Simon, Shô, Wally, and Millianna.

"Okay, let's pull the ship a little further out from the island." Alfonzo said as he approached the ship's wheel house. "Simon, Wally, lift anchor."

"Why are you ordering us around?" Wally asked indignantly.

Simon, on the other hand, followed the instructions without complaint.

"Come on, Simon!" Wally shouted in disbelief. "Don't let him boss us around like that."

Although Wally continued to complain, he still helped Simon pull up the anchor so that they could get a little further away from the island.

"What's the matter, Alfonzo?" Ultear asked as she drew near to Alfonzo. "Is there something else we need to worry about."

"I don't know." Alfonzo replied. "I just feel like something big is going to happen."

'I already know that Siegrain is a member of the Magic Council.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he started the ship's engine. 'So, there's no doubt that the Etherion is on its way. Although when the Tower of Heaven absorbed the Etherion in the anime, I don't remember it doing all that much damage to the surroundings, but it definitely destroyed most of the island. And that's got to cause a tidal wave, at the very least.'

A few minutes later, Alfonzo had moved the ship to a greater distance from the island and instructed Simon and Wally to drop anchor once again.

"Like I said before, Ultear, I have a bad feeling about this." Alfonzo said in a serious tone. "So, I'm gonna go back and make sure that everyone else is okay. They should be near the top of the tower by now. Meanwhile, I need you to stay on the ship and make sure nothing happens to it. Swimming back to Akane Beach would really suck."

"*Sigh* Fine, I'll keep the ship safe." Ultear agreed reluctantly after Alfonzo made his request. "Just be careful."

With that, Ultear drew near to Alfonzo, wrapped her arms around his neck, and pulled him in for a kiss. After that, she stared into his eyes with concern before letting him go a few moments later.

Smiling to reassure Ultear, Alfonzo leaned in for another kiss before using his magic to fly away from the ship.

Meanwhile, Erza had just finished climbing the stairs that led to Jellal's throne room. As soon as she arrived, without wasting any time, she kicked the doors open and set her eyes on the man sitting on the throne.

"Jellal..." Erza said quietly as she looked upon her old friend.

"Erza, it's good to see you again." Jellal said calmly. "I'm glad I could show you the finished Tower of Heaven."

"Why would you finish this... tower?" Erza asked as she started walking towards Jellal. "Have you forgotten everything we lost while this tower was being built?"

"I would think that was obvious." Jellal said as he stood from his throne. "To resurrect Lord Zeref. Once Lord Zeref has been resurrected, regaining everything that we've lost will be of little consequence."

"I can't allow that to happen." Erza said, readying her remaining sword. "If you were to bring back someone like that, the continent... No... The world would be thrown into chaos."

"It's too late to stop me." Jellal said as he began flaring his magic power. "All the preparations for the R-System have been set in motion."

"If I were to kill you, would that not end this madness?" Erza asked.

"Indeed, it would." Jellal replied with a nod. Then, he materialized a greatsword made of magic power in his hands as he continued. "But that would require you to actually be able to do so."

With that, Jellal dashed forward, swinging his greatsword vertically once he was in range. In response, Erza parried the overhead slash to the right while stepping in even closer. Then, she used the pommel of her sword to strike Jellal in the abdomen.

"Gah!" Jellal grunted as the air was forced out of his lungs.

Erza followed her strike to the abdomen by ramming Jellal with her shoulder and forcing him a step back. Then, she raised her sword, slashing from Jellal's left waist to his right shoulder.

Even while short on breath, Jellal managed to dodge Erza's slash by slightly turning his body and leaning away from the incoming slash. Then, he quickly leapt backward to gain some distance as he raised his right hand in Erza's direction.

"[Darkness Cage]." Jellal chanted as a sphere of [Darkness Magic] formed in his hand.

At the same time, a sphere of [Darkness Magic] also began forming around Erza. Despite this, Erza's expression did not change in the slightest. Still, the sphere formed around her successfully.

A moment later, however, a golden line bisected the sphere before it dissipated into particles of [Darkness Magic].

"If that's all you have, Jellal, it would be better if you surrendered now." Erza said.

"Why would I do that when I'm so close to achieving my goal?" Jellal asked as he readied his sword once again.

"Very well, I've given you your last chance." Erza said as she dashed forward.

"[Dark Rondo]." Jellal chanted as he once again stretched his right arm towards Erza.

A moment later, several ghostly, humanoid creatures appeared between Erza and Jellal and quickly made their way towards Erza.

Not slowing down at all, Erza cut the first of these creatures to approach in half, spilling its blood, which was dark red in color, all over the floor.

Unbothered by the gore, Erza continued forward, cutting off the arm of one of the creatures that attacked from her left before ducking under an attack from the right.

Stepping back to avoid an attack from above, Erza thrust her sword through the creature's head before kicking its corpse away. Then, she dropped low once again to avoid attacks from both sides. From her

lowered position, Erza made a three hundred sixty degree turn and cut off the legs of the two attacking creatures before she leapt to her feet once again and continued forward.

As Erza continued forward, more of Jellal's dark creatures lost their arms, legs, heads, and more parts of their body with every slash of her sword. Eventually, she dashed out of the crowd of dark creatures to confront Jellal directly once again.

Realizing that none of his spells would be effective at this range, Jellal once again took his stance, lowering his greatsword behind him. Then, once Erza was in range, he made an upward swing, forcing Erza to halt her forward momentum.

Once again, Erza parried Jellal's sword swing to the right before she followed up with a downward slash from Jellal's left shoulder to his right waist.

Knowing that he would not be able to use his blade to defend, Jellal stepped back and caught Erza's blade between his hands with his sword's hilt. Then, he clapped his fists on each side of the blade and violently twisted his hands, trying to disarm Erza.

Reacting quickly, Erza flipped in the direction Jellal twisted her sword, wrenching it from his grip. Then, as soon as she landed, she thrust her sword forward.

With the time Erza's maneuver bought him, Jellal was just barely able to defend against Erza's thrust with the flat of his blade. Still, he was pushed back by the force behind her thrust.

Taking advantage of Jellal's loss of balance, Erza stepped forward and quickly at Jellal's fingers that were wrapped around the sword hilt.

Noticing Erza's aim, Jellal pulled his hands back quickly. A moment later, however, Erza slid half a step forward, placed her blade against Jellal's, and quickly moved her sword in a crescent moon pattern. As a result, the greatsword was spun around to the point that Jellal lost his grip.

Then, before Jellal could create a second greatsword to replace the one that he lost and was currently dissipating into particles of magic power, Jellal found Erza's blade pressed against his throat.

"*Sigh* You've really grown strong over the years, Erza." Jellal said, raising his hands in surrender.

"Of course." Erza replied matter of factly. "I have great comrades who always push me to be better."

"I see." Jellal said, looking directly into Erza's eyes. "That sounds like it would have been nice."

"You could have had the same, Jellal." Erza said her tone softening ever so slightly. "Instead, you continued the work that so many died for. Why? What happened to you? Why did you turn into this?"

In response, Jellal fell silent and lowered his head.

"I was so angry." Jellal said quietly. "Angry because of what they did. What they did to your eye. I wanted to make them pay, Erza."

Hearing that, Erza lowered her sword slightly.

"And what better way to make them pay than to take their life's work from them and complete it myself." Jellal said with a manic smile on his face.

"There were other ways to make them pay, Jellal." Erza said in response. "Ways where you would not have had to become just like them."

"I see that now." Jellal replied. "But it is too late for me now. If I could go back and do it all again, I would have left this accursed island with you. But now..."

"It's not too late, Jellal." Erza said passionately. "All we have to do is destroy this tower. Then, you will be free to live the life you desire. Just take my hand, And we can make everything right."

"Is it really that... simple?" Jellal asked in an uncertain tone.

"Of course." Erza replied with a nod. "Please, just trust me."

With that, Erza lowered her sword and held out her free hand for Jellal to take. Unsure of what to do, Jellal raised his hand hesitantly before resolve flashed in his eyes and he grabbed Erza's hand tightly.

Seeing that, Erza smiled brightly. However, when she saw the devious smile on Jellal's face, she immediately tried to take her hand back.

"[Bind Snake]." Jellal chanted before Erza could take her hand back.

In the next instant, a black, snake tattoo, starting from her hand, quickly imprinted itself all over Erza's body, restraining her completely.

"You're too naïve, Erza." Jellal said with a manic smile on his face. "Why would I give up on my ambitions at the last step. Especially when I had the key person to complete everything in my grasp... You. You, whose body should be comparable to a Wizard Saint's, will be the necessary human sacrifice to resurrect Lord Zeref."

"Jellal..." Erza muttered with a bit of disappointment and pity in her gaze. "I gave you the chance to turn things around. But now, I'm afraid you've decided your fate."

"Indeed." Jellal said as the sky outside the tower brightened unnaturally. "I will usher in a new era. The era of Zeref!"

Boom!