

## Fairy Tail 198

Chapter 198: Before the Pageant

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

October 15, x784.

A week or so after Gajeel's confrontation with Team Shadow Gear and Laxus seemed to pass within the blink of an eye as today, October 15, the day of the harvest festival in Magnolia, hard finally arrived.

In the town, around eleven in the morning, the streets were covered in festive decorations. On top of that, those involved in harvesting the autumn crops had just finished and were in a jubilant mood, which had spread to all the townsfolk.

Naturally, the jubilant atmosphere had also spread to the most prominent group of people who called Magnolia home. Namely, the wizards of Fairy Tail.

The guild hall's exterior had festival banners hanging from its walls that flapped in the wind. Meanwhile, colorful decorations could be seen all over the guild's first floor. On top of that, one of the features Alfonzo built in to the hall on the first floor was finally being put to use. On the wall opposite of the bar, a large stage, that had not been present before, could be seen. According to Alfonzo, it was built to fold into or out of the wall when a bit of magic power was sent into a certain sigil.

"Every time I see some of these features, I'm amazed." Makarov said from one of the front row seats in front of the stage. "You really outdid yourself, Alfonzo, my boy."

"I aim to please." Alfonzo said with a satisfied nod from the seat to Makarov's right.

"Still, I can't believe this is really happening." Macao, who was sitting on the other side of Makarov said with a smile. "So many of the girls in our guild signed up for this Miss Fairy Tail Pageant of yours, Master. This is truly a great day."

Instead of the smug smile everyone was expecting to see on Makarov's face, the old man wore an expression as if he had just solved world hunger.

"If you think that just the pretty, young girls in the guild will be the only ones in the pageant, then your imaginations are truly lacking." Makarov said before putting on the expression of a senior teaching his juniors. "And you must remember, imagination is one of the keys to advancing in your study of magic."

With that, Macao, Wakaba, Reedus, and other wizards from the older generation first wore shocked expressions before those expressions morphed into enlightened ones.

"Master, do you mean...?" Wakaba asked, anticipation glowing in his eyes.

"Yes, it's exactly what you're thinking, Wakaba." Makarov replied, the smug smile everyone was expecting finally appearing on his face.

"But how?" Reedus asked curiously. "She won't even let me use her as a model for my paintings."

"All I can say is a refined gentleman, such as myself, can be very persuasive when I need to be." Makarov said with a smile. "And with my refined tastes granted by experience, I did my best to persuade her to join. She'll even be in the swimsuit portion of the pageant.""

"So, you got Porlyusica to join, huh?" Alfonzo added casually. "You really are impressive, Gramps."

"Exactly, I got Porlyusica to---" Makarov began to agree smugly.

However, as soon as he completely registered Alfonzo's words, Makarov froze. Immediately afterward, his face paled after involuntarily imagining Porlyusica striking a sexy pose while wearing a swimsuit.

Unfortunately, Makarov was not the only one who was effected by Alfonzo's words. Macao, Wakaba, Reedus, and all the other male members... and some female members... of the previous generation recoiled before gagging after a nearly identical image appeared in their heads.

Meanwhile, Levy, Mirajane, and Chica, the daughter of Fairy Hills owner, sat a few rows back and watched all the old perverts in the guild wretch thanks to Alfonzo's question.

"Hmph!" Serves those old men right." Chica said with a snort.

"Seriously." Levy chimed in. "Other than take the occasional quest, all they do is stare at the girls in the guild all day."

"To be fair, though, the girls in our guild are really pretty." Mirajane said with a smile. "So, can you really blame them?"

"Of course, we can!" Levy and Chica replied simultaneously. "They only stare at the girls with big boobs like that!"

"Ah... I see." Mirajane said with a knowing smile after being taken aback for a moment. "So that's what this is about."

Of all the girls in Fairy Tail, Levy and Chica were two of the three girls with the worst natural endowments. Unlike the two of them, however, the third, Marin, seemed completely unbothered by the fact that her figure was on the modest side.

"Anyway, I'm surprised you won't be joining the pageant, Mira." Levy said with a blush to cover up the embarrassment she felt after Mirajane saw through hers and Chica's anger.

"That's right, as a model in Sorcerer Weekly, I thought this would be right up your ally." Chica added.

"\*Sigh\* I was going to, but Lisanna said that she wanted to participate." Mirajane replied, sounding a bit sad that she was not participating. "And I really didn't want to compete with my sister in a competition like this."

Upon hearing Mirajane's reason, Levy and Chica smiled at her warmly. However, when they heard her following words, those smiles began to strain, immediately.

"Besides, like you said, I'm a model in Sorcerer Weekly. I even overtook Karen Lilica... Pfft! \*Cough\* Excuse me... for the position of the most popular model at the end of last year." Mirajane continued.

When they heard Mirajane cough to cover a laugh, both Levy and Chica were surprised and confused. To them, it sounded as if Mirajane was looking down on Karen. And although that was something rather common back when Mirajane was first called the Demon Girl, it was not something one would see very often now-a-days.

Like in the case of Levy and Chica, to most people, it would sound as if Mirajane was laughing at Karen as the former number one most popular model of Sorcerer Weekly. But anyone who ever saw the way Karen acted around Elicia, it would be hard not to laugh at least a little.

"So, it would be unfair to everyone else if I participated." Mirajane concluded her short speech while acting as if that little peel of laughter never happened.

"I guess the old Mira really does show up every now and then, huh?" Chica whispered after leaning into Levy's ear.

"Yeah, every now and then when we train together, she gets like that whenever things get too competitive." Levy replied with a whisper of her own.

"Kinda makes me glad I never trained with you guys." Chica said. "The old Mira was really hard to deal with."

"It's not that bad." Levy replied with a wry smile. "Even back then, she was just a tsundere."

"What have you two been whispering about over there?" Mirajane asked with a kind smile on her face.

That kind smile, however, had the exact opposite effect a kind smile should have on Levy and Chica, leaving them absolutely terrified after seeing it.

"Oh, nothing." Levy and Chica replied simultaneously with cold sweat flowing down their backs.

"Anyway, I'm surprised you didn't participate in the pageant, Chica." Levy said, trying to change the subject swiftly.

"\*Sigh\* I might have if there was a chance that Laxus would be here to see it." Chica replied in a down trodden tone. "I mean, maybe seeing me in a bikini might have made him notice me. But since he would never come to something like this, what's the point? It's not like I would have won with all these boob lovers in the guild."

"But Marin is participating, so that's not really an excuse.." Mirajane pointed out, more interested in this topic than the previous one. "And from what I've gathered, she's got just as good a chance of winning as any other girl whose participating."

At the same time, in the backstage area.

\*Sneeze!\*

"Marin, are you okay?" Lucy asked with concern. "You're not catching a cold, are you?"

"Yeah, I'm fine." Marin replied with a smile while waving off Lucy's concern. "Someone's probably talking about me, that's all."

Back in the audience, the conversation between Levy, Mirajane, and Chica continued.

"She doesn't count." Chica denied. "Marin isn't really on our side."

"Yeah, she's not really part of the itty bitty titty committee." Levy added. "I mean, she can make hers whatever size she wants with her magic."

When Levy said that, Mirajane noticed the envy on not only Levy's, but Chica's expression, as well.

"You know, having big boobs isn't as great as you two make it out to be." Mirajane said with a wry smile while shaking her head. "I mean, they--"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Chica said, interrupting Mirajane. "I know exactly what you're gonna say, Mira. They cause back aches and stiff shoulders. Yada, yada, yada. Although that's probably true, I know you only say that so that girls with tittle litties like us don't feel so bad."

Levy nodded along fervently.

In response, Mirajane could only shake her head while once again smiling wryly. Although the bit about back aches and stiff shoulders are almost always said in a conciliatory tone, that made it no less true.

'I should get Alfonzo to give me a massage after the parade.' Mirajane thought to herself. 'My shoulders have been pretty stiff while working on the preparations for the Fantasia Parade.

At that moment, the front doors to the guild hall slid open, drawing everyone's attention to them. But when Laxus, Bickslow, and Fried were the ones that walked in, everyone was thoroughly shocked.

"He actually showed up." Chica muttered in frustration. "If I knew he was gonna be here, I would have shown off my newest swimsuit in the pageant."

"Don't worry, Chica, there's always next time." Levy consoled while patting Chica on the shoulder. "Plus, you should have a chance when the Rainbow Cherry Blossoms bloom next month. Everyone will be drinking together, right?"

Hearing that, Chica perked up a little. However, it was clear that she was still a little sad about the missed opportunity.

Levy, Mirajane, and Chica were not the only ones who were surprised by Laxus' sudden arrival. Alfonzo, who was expecting the pageant to be interrupted by Laxus doing something stupid, was even more surprised than Chica.

'Well, this sure as hell isn't canon.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he watched Laxus, Bickslow, and Fried take some seats while keeping a distance from everyone else. 'But looking into his eyes, Laxus is definitely up to something. But for the life of me, I can't figure out what it could be.'

Although Alfonzo was quite surprised by Laxus' arrival, he was definitely not the most surprised. Instead, that honor went to Makarov.

'I didn't expect Laxus to show up today.' Makarov thought to himself as he remembered all the good memories he made with his grandson over the years at the Fantasia Parade. 'Maybe we'll get the chance to spend some time together like we used to. Except I'll probably be the one sitting on his shoulders this time.'

Seeing the happy, nostalgic smile on Makarov's face, Alfonzo simply shrugged his shoulders before smiling and returning his attention to the old men who were still occasionally throwing glares at him for the mental image he gave them.

Those in the audience were not the only ones who were surprised. At around the same time Laxus, Bickslow, and Fried entered the guild hall, Evergreen strolled into the backstage area confidently.

"Alright girls, now that I'm here, none of you have a snowball's chance in hell of winning." Evergreen declared in the changing room loud enough for everyone to hear. "So, I have a question for all of you. Who's coming in second?"

Hearing that question, the tension in the changing room began to rise. However, there was someone in the room who either could not read the atmosphere, or did not care to.

"Hey, Ever!" Elicia shouted while waving at the late arrival. "I didn't know you were gonna be in the pageant. But I should have known, I guess. I mean, you did ask me to rush a swimsuit for you."

Just like that, the building tension was shattered immediately. Then, after everyone gave Elicia an incredulous look, they all went back to making their final preparations for the pageant.

Evergreen, on the other hand, frowned at Elicia for destroying her intimidation tactic. Even if she did not realize that she was only lighting afire under the other proud young women of Fairy Tail, who were just as confident in their looks as she was.

Seeing that no one was paying attention to her anymore, Evergreen pouted before she walked over to a locker and started changing out of her casual clothes and into an evening gown, the first event in the beauty pageant.

"\*Sigh\* These girls sure have spunk." Ur said while casually changing into her evening gown.

"Yeah, it's all over their faces." Ren replied.

That reply caused Ur to stop and take a glance at Ren, who did not seem to be bothered by what she just said. Shaking her head, Ur turned her focus back to getting dressed. Still, she thought she needed to say something.

"That was a poor choice of words, Ren." Ur said.

"I know, right." Ren replied with a giggle.

Immediately, Ur snapped her head in Ren's direction only to see her grinning back cheekily. In response, Ur could only smile wryly and shake her head as she went back to getting dressed.

"You're bad, Ren." Ur said with a smile.

"I have no idea what you could possibly be talking about." Ren replied with a smile of her own.

A few minutes later, a waitress from the guild's bar entered the room. However, instead of taking orders, she was acting in the capacity of a member of the pageant staff for today.

"Ladies, the pageant will begin in three minutes." The waitress said while holding a clipboard in her hands. "Please finish your preparations before then."