

Fairy Tail 201

Chapter 201: Who's Gonna Win?

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

October 15, x784.

After Warren's announcement, the waitresses come pageant staff made their way into the crowd and handed out ballot forms to everyone present. Then, they explained that everyone could only vote once before directing them to the ballot boxes on either side of the stage.

After receiving words or nods of understanding from the crowd, the pageant staff made their way out of the audience and waited nearby, on the off chance that anyone had any questions. Another two took up positions near the two ballot boxes, as well.

"Master, that was amazing." Macao said excitedly after the pageant staff walked away.

"Yeah, that was everything I ever dreamed of, Master." Wakaba chimed in.

With that, many more of the middle-aged male members of the guild heaped praise on Makarov for his ability to get Ur to join the Miss Fairy Tail Pageant. Naturally, Makarov puffed with pride after receiving all that praise.

"Of course." Makarov said with his nose in the air. "Just who do you think I am?"

"An old man who shamelessly asks one of his young wizards to convince a woman who already said no to join his little pageant." Alfonzo interrupted.

Immediately, all the men who were just praising Makarov turned their heads towards Alfonzo with confused expressions. Meanwhile, Makarov began to drip cold sweat from his forehead after being exposed. Still, he tried to remedy the situation.

"Now, now, Alfonzo, there's no need for all that, is there?" Makarov asked in a pleading tone.

"Oh, you guys thought that Gramps got Ur to join the pageant on his own?" Alfonzo continued, completely disregarding Makarov's entreaty. "Nope, after she refused him for... the twelfth time, I think... Gramps came to me and asked me to help him out... For a fee, of course."

With that, the men turned back to Makarov with disdainful gazes this time.

"Don't look at me like that." Makarov said in defiance. "Even if I was not the one who convinced her directly, it's still because of me that she joined. So what if I had to ask someone for help? No man is an island.. there's no I in team... Teamwork makes the dream work..."

"Okay, Master, we get it." Macao said, cutting off Makarov's self-righteous speech.

"Still, you should be ashamed for trying to take Alfonzo's accomplishment for you own, Master." Reedus said, sounding a bit disappointed.

"Hmph!" Makarov snorted before looking away with a slightly guilty look on his face.

Meanwhile, Levy, Mirajane, and Chico, who were sitting nearby, overheard the entire conversation between the men.

"Really? It was Alfonzo who convinced Ur to join the pageant?" Levy asked in a tone of disbelief. "But how?"

"Yeah..." Chico added, glancing at Laxus to see if he was interested in this information as well. However, when she saw that he was sitting with his eyes closed and his arms crossed, she breathed a sigh of relief. "Why would Ur listen to Alfonzo's request, but not Masters?"

"That's simple, actually." Mirajane replied, answering both questions simultaneously. "It's because Master doesn't know Ur well enough."

"But Ur has basically been his right hand ever since she joined the guild." Levy said, not following Mirajane's answer.

"Oh, don't get me wrong." Mirajane said with a smile. "Master knows Ur as a wizard. But he doesn't really know her personally. How she ticks."

"And you're telling me that Alfonzo does?" Chico asked, not really buying the explanation.

"Well, she was friends with his and Elicia's parents a long time ago." Mirajane replied. "So, she's always treated the two of them like family... Or so I hear. I wasn't part of the guild yet when Ur, Gray, and Ultear joined."

"You're right, though." Levy replied. "She jokes around with Alfonzo and Elicia more than anyone else in the guild. But then again, it's probably because the two of them learned how and when to press her buttons, too."

Nodding in agreement, Mirajane continued.

"That's right." Mirajane said. "Besides, even if Alfonzo doesn't know her well enough to get her to change her mind, Ultear is one of his fiancées, remember? He only had to ask her for advice about her mother."

"Oh, I really did forget about that, actually." Chico said with an enlightened expression. "I guess that was convenient., then."

In reality, everyone who went on the trip to the Akane Resort knew the way to get Ur to join the pageant after Ultear revealed it on the way back from their ruined vacation. They would only have to get Ren to join. And getting Ren to join was quite simple, actually. Once she heard that Elicia would be making all the participants outfits for the various stages, she agreed immediately. Stating that "getting free clothes from the Taylor Shop was payment enough" for her participation.

"now that you mention Alfonzo's fiancées, there are a lot of them participating." Levy said with a contemplative expression. "In fact, I think you're the only one who isn't, right, Mira?"

"That's right." Mirajane replied with a smile.

"Then, who will he vote for" Levy asked. "I mean, I can't see any of them being happy if he voted for any of the other participants. And they would say he was playing favorites if he voted for any one of them, right?"

Chico also showed interest in the answer to Levy's question.

"*Sigh* I can see why you think that would be an issue, Levy." Mirajane said in a somewhat envious tone.

"What do you mean?" Levy asked curiously. Her curiosity intensifying after seeing Mirajane's expression.

"In most cases, a guy with a harem would try to not show that he favored any one girl." Mirajane said. "At least, he wouldn't be too obvious about it."

Hearing that, both Levy and Chico nodded in understanding.

"Alfonzo, on the other hand, is completely different in that regard." Mirajane continued. "He has a favorite, and he's never hidden that fact from any of us."

"really?' Chico asked in surprise. "Who?"

"It's Elicia, isn't it?" Levy asked, understanding flashing in her eyes.

"That's right." Mirajane replied with a nod. "*Sigh* And we all knew it before joining his harem. In fact, he wouldn't have even started the harem if not for Elicia."

Though there were more than a few people who knew about why Alfonzo started the harem life, Levy and Chico were not among them.

Levy, although she was close to Alfonzo and Elicia over the years, never got to close because of Jet and Droy's jealousy. So, she never got close enough to hear the reason.

Then, there was Chico, who although could be considered friends with Alfonzo and Elicia, was nowhere near close enough to know information like that. And the fact that she usually kept some distance from Alfonzo because of her crush on Laxus certainly did not help, either.

"Anyway, to answer your question, Levy, Alfonzo is definitely going to vote for Elicia." Mirajane said, bringing the topic to a close.

To that, Levy and Chico could only nod in response.

"Anyway, who are the two of you going to vote for?" Mirajane asked, changing the subject.

"My vote is for Lu." Levy replied with a smile.

"I saw that coming." Mirajane replied with a smile of her own. "What about you, Chico?"

"*Sigh* I was thinking of voting for Evergreen because of.. you know." Chico said once again glancing at Laxus. "But, her personality just rubs me the wrong way. So, I think I'll vote for Marin, I guess."

Nodding in understanding, Levy and Mirajane knew exactly what Chico meant.

"Anyway, you're voting for Lisanna, right, Mira?" Levy asked with a smile.

"Of course." Mirajane replied with a radiant smile. "If I don't support my little sister, who will?"

"Him." Chico replied while pointing in a certain direction.

Following the direction where Chico pointed, Levy and Mirajane saw Elfman standing in front of one of the ballot boxes while filling out his ballot.

"Real men vote for their sisters." Elfman said loudly.

"But Elfman, what would you have done if Mira joined the pageant, too?" Happy asked curiously.

Hearing that, Elfman froze just before dropping his ballot in the box. A moment later, he snapped out of it and dropped the ballot before turning to Happy.

"I would have done what any real man would do." Elfman declared confidently. "I would have voted for both of them."

"The rules say you can only vote for one of them, though." Natsu chimed in.

"Ha! I'm a real man!" Elfman shouted confidently. "Rules like those can't stop me!"

Seeing that exchange, Levy smiled wryly while Mirajane could not help but cover her face with her hands.

"I should kill Alfonzo." Mirajane muttered. "This is all his fault."

"Yeah, and he says how much he regrets it every day." Levy said with a chuckle.

At the same time, Alfonzo's head popped up before he started scanning the hall with his [Magic Power Detection] after he felt a spike of killing intent directed at him for the briefest of moments.

Then, he lowered his head and supported his chin with his right hand for a moment while contemplating. After that, he heard Elfman shouting about being a real man. Immediately, he understood what was going on and raised his head again, smiling apologetically at Mirajane as he did.

Meanwhile, back in the changing room, the girls were having a similar conversation about who they thought would get the most votes.

"No matter how I look at it, Ur is going to get the most votes." Bisca said.

"Preposterous.!" Evergreen refused strongly. "Do you really think I, the most beautiful girl in the guild, would lose to an old woman like---"

"Do you really want to finish that sentence, little girl?" Ur said after appearing behind Evergreen and clamping an iron claw on the back of her head.

Due to both pain and shock, Evergreen was incapable of replying verbally. So, she tried to shake her head frantically in the hopes that Ur would let her go.

Though the pain Evergreen felt was obvious, the reason she was shocked by Ur's sudden appearance behind her was simple if you knew the situation in the changing room.

While the younger girls were on one side of the changing room so they could chat amongst themselves, with Evergreen choosing to mingle with the others, surprising them in the process. Ur and Ren chose to use lockers on the other side of the changing room so that they could have a little bit of quiet.

So, when Ur, who should have been on the other side of the changing room, a fact that Evergreen checked before she spoke, suddenly appeared behind her without her even noticing, the reason for Evergreen's shock was apparent.

Actually, Ur's appearance behind Evergreen could largely be attributed to Alfonzo and Elicia's influence. Since Ur was the most accomplished [Ice Magic] user either of them knew, they pitched the idea of Haku's [Ice Crystal Mirrors], from Naruto, and how they could be used for teleportation, to her.

Ur, finding the idea interesting, spent a considerable amount of time researching the new idea. And although she could not use it in battle yet, she succeeded in developing a working version of the spell, which she used sneakily to sneak up on Evergreen due to her rude remark.

"Good." Ur said with a satisfied nod.

After that, she released Evergreen and walked away as if nothing happened, most of her body still on display. She was still wearing her "swimsuit," after all.

Not only Ur, but all the participants were asked to keep their swimsuits on. After the votes were tallied, they would all reenter the stage in their swimsuits for the announcement of who would be crowned Miss Fairy Tail.

"Anyway, I don't think Ur is going to win." Elicia said with a shake of her head.

"Really? Why?" Lucy asked curiously. "I mean, we all heard the way they cheered for her."

"Actually, I agree with Elicia." Ultear replied. "Mom has beaten too many of them up over the years. I think they were only excited to see her almost naked."

"She worked that evening gown, too." Elicia chimed in.

The rest of the girls could not help but nod in agreement with that, as Ultear did look quite good in her evening gown.

"But still, the men in the guild are too afraid of her." Ultear continued.

Once again, all the girls nodded in agreement with Evergreen nodding the most vigorously.

"Then, who do you think will win?" Marin asked curiously.

"Who knows." Elicia replied with a shrug.

"You don't even care, do you?" Laki asked.

"Not really." Elicia replied.

"Then, why even enter?" Laki asked once again.

"Because I know I'll be getting the only vote that I want to get." Elicia said with a smile.

That statement caused Cana, Ultear, Erza, and Sun to look at Elicia with hints of jealousy. Just like Mirajane, they also knew that Elicia was Alfonzo's favorite. And what made it even worse was that Elicia knew it, too.

At the same time, however, Elicia also encouraged them to do their best. Not in a condescending way, either. No, she encouraged them from the bottom of her heart. Stating that "Fonzie's heart is big enough to give everyone an equal piece. But he's still getting used to dividing it."

That naturally made the other girls more determined to gain his affection without going overboard. And they would all say that they've made good progress over the years. Some more than others, of course.

{"The time for voting is up and all the votes have been cast."} Warren's voice sounded over the announcement system in the guild hall. {"In a few minutes, all the ballots should be counted. Then, we'll be inviting all the participants back on stage to announce the winner of the first ever Miss Fairy Tail Pageant."}