

Fairy Tail 253

Chapter 253: The Flash Goddess

Near the mouth of the Ravine, a short distance into the Valley of the End, Bacchus was sitting outside the adamantite shelter created through Alfonzo's magic with a wine gourd in hand.

"Damn, how long are those guys gonna take?" Bacchus asked as he lifted his wine gourd to his lips. "***Gulp* *Gulp* *Gulp*** I'd much rather be drinking in the town than out in the wilderness."

"Then why not help Mirajane instead of sitting out here and getting drunk?" Kagura asked as she approached the shelter from the direction of the Ravine."

Lowering his gourd, Bacchus glanced at Kagura with a grin. Then, he lifted his free hand, showing off the bandages around his forearm.

"As much as I'd love to, I'm heavily injured." Bacchus said cheekily. "Honestly, my hands are barely steady enough to hold my gourd stably. So, taking care of all those injured people is definitely out of the question."

"Your hands would be steadier if you weren't so intoxicated." Kagura replied dryly.

"Yeah, that would probably help, too." Bacchus said with a smile before taking a long swig from his gourd. "***Burp~~~~!** Oh, yeah! That hit the spot."

Rolling her eyes, Kagura continued walking towards the shelter without dignifying Bacchus' behavior with a verbal response. The next person to arrive, however, had something to say about it.

"Come now, Bacchus!" Guy said, carrying Kabuto's unconscious body over his left shoulder. "With an attitude like that, you'll let your youth slip away from you. Instead, you must stoke the flames of your youth and let it burn brightly!"

Hearing Guy's exclamation, both Bacchus and Kagura glanced in Guy's direction. And after seeing Kabuto being carried like a sack of potatoes, they were both mildly impressed, Kagura more than Bacchus.

"It would seem I underestimated you." Kagura said. "Though I knew you were an A-Class wizard of Quatro Cerberus, your magic power reserves were quite underwhelming."

"I've been hearing that for years." Guy replied with a winning smile while raising his right thumb in Kagura's direction. "But with the flames of my youth burning brightly, any adversity can be overcome."

"I see." Kagura replied as she nodded blankly. Then, she turned back towards the entrance to the shelter as she continued. "Well, I'll be heading inside to see if I can offer any assistance."

"Indeed." Guy said, his smile widening as he spoke. "We should offer these unfortunate people all the assistance we can."

With that, Guy followed Kagura who had already started making her way into the shelter.

"Well, you two have fun." Bacchus said after taking a large swig from his gourd. "I'll do my best to recover. And if I recover quickly enough---"

Let's go, Bacchus!" Guys said, ignoring Bacchus' speech as he grabbed him by his uninjured upper arm. "I'm sure our youthful displays will help these people overcome their traumatic experiences."

"Were you even listening?" Bacchus asked, struggling to free himself from the ever-youthful Guy. "I'm too injured for this. My hands won't be steady when tending to injuries. Do you want these people to get even worse?"

"Surely your youth will help you through this!" Guy cheered excitedly.

"Damn it, Guy!" Bacchus wailed as he was dragged away. "Let me go! Let me drink in peace!"

Like that, the three wizards of the allied forces, with Kabuto, Orochimaru's right hand, in tow, entered the large, dome shaped shelter to help as many of the people they rescued from the enemy hideout with medical aid as they could.

A few minutes later, a slender, pale-skinned young man with short, messy black hair, green eyes with slitted pupils, teal lines running down his face that start just below his eyes, and a black upper lip wearing a white jacket, a black sash, a white hakama, and a katana on his left hip slowly approached the shelter from the direction of the ravine.

If anyone saw this man, they would realize that his outfit was remarkably similar to that of Coyote Starrk, Mirajane's earlier opponent. And if that was not enough to surmise their similar origins, the hole

at the base of his neck and the horned, bone-like mask fragment he wore on the upper-left side of his head should have been more than enough to do so.

"I will never understand the reason why these humans insist on so fervently protecting the weak." The pale-skinned young man said in a dispassionate voice as he came to a stop a short distance away from the shelter. "What point does compassion for the weak even serve?"

Seeing to contemplate his own words, the young man stayed still for a short while before he shook his head in disinterest, not changing his melancholic expression all the while.

"The so-called human heart and its various emotions are not but illusions. Either way, I was ordered to destroy this shelter and kill all the lab rats who managed to escape." The young man said as he raised his right hand, his index finger pointing at the adamantite shelter. "It doesn't really bother me if the wizards die alongside them."

Buzz!

As he spoke, a small, green orb began forming at the tip of the young man's outstretched index finger. And as time went by, the magic power forming it grew in density while the size did not change much.

"[Cero]." The pale-skinned young man said as he prepared to fire his attack at the shelter.

Just before he could fire off the [Cero], however, his arm was raised into the air. As a result, a green energy blast was fired up into the sky, making the sun's rays look dim by comparison as it disappeared beyond the azure sky.

With no change in his expression, the young man first looked at the slender, brown-skinned hand that had forcefully raised his arm upward. Then, following the arm attached to that hand, he saw a wryly smiling, beautiful woman with yellow eyes and long dark purple hair tied in a ponytail.

"Although that would not have been enough to destroy the shelter, I'd rather you didn't scare all the people inside." The brown-skinned woman, Yoruichi, said as she made eye contact with the young man whose arm she held.

"Your concerns about their mental stability are irrelevant." The pale-skinned young man said with little inflection in his tone. "That trash will die by my hand."

"*Sigh* It looks like we're at an impasse, then." Yoruichi replied, her expression turning serious as she spoke.

Then, as soon as Yoruichi's words ended, the young man's left hand lashed out at the left side of Yoruichi's chest, attempting to rip her heart out with his bare hand.

Reacting quickly, Yoruichi, with the young man's arm still in her grasp, used it as a pivot point to shifted herself behind the young man. Then, stomped at the back of his left knee with her own left foot.

Sensing the incoming attack, the young man raised his left leg, stomping it down a moment later in an attempt to shatter Yoruichi's shin. But just as he had done, Yoruichi anticipated the incoming stomp, turning her kick into a knee strike that landed on the young man's lower back.

"Urgh!" The pale-skinned young man grunted, though he did not feel much pain from the strike.

Nearly at the same time, the young man reached his left hand to the hilt of his katana. Then, in one swift motion, he unsheathed it and stabbed it backwards.

Deciding she'd rather not be stabbed, Yoruichi once again used the young man's arm as a pivot point. However, instead of just shifting herself to his side or front, she leapt off the ground, swung herself around to his front, and threw her knee into his face.

Bang!

An instant later, the young man shot backwards into the ravine from whence he came, skipping off the ravine's walls as he flew at high-speed.

"Damn..." Yoruichi groaned as she rubbed her knee. "What the hell is that guy made of? hitting him was like hitting orichalcum."

After rubbing her knee and shaking off the soreness she felt from sending the young man flying, Yoruichi vanished from where she stood in a burst of speed. And just as she did so, the same young man appeared, slashing his katana down from above.

"Not bad." Yoruichi said, reappearing just to the left of the young man. "Whatever you did is almost as fast as my [Flash Step]. Well, a few years ago, anyway. What do you call that technique?"

"[Sonido]." the young man replied as he vanished in a burst of speed. Though, his departure was not nearly as quiet, as his movement was accompanied by the sound of static.

"I see." Yoruichi replied as she crouched to avoid a horizontal slash aiming to decapitate her. Then, she pointed her right index finger at the young man's chest as she chanted. "[Lightning Magic: Byakurai]."

A moment later, a bolt of white lightning was fired from the tip of Yoruichi's finger, causing the young man to avoid it with his [Sonido] technique. Which was quickly followed by Yoruichi vanishing from where she crouched with her [Flash Step].

In the next instant, the spot where Yoruichi had just vanished from was showered with a number of red bullets of condensed magic power.

Bang!

Before the bullet storm could continue any further, however, the young man, who had been rapidly punching at the air to form the energy bullets, was knocked out of the air, once again crashing into the ravine walls after Yoruichi landed a roundhouse kick on the side of his head.

"Well, this feels like bullying at this point." Yoruichi muttered as she [Flash Stepped] towards her downed foe. "Then, again, what did I expect? I mean, I'm facing off against an A-Class threat."

Having kicked the young man much harder than the last time she sent him flying, by the time Yoruichi arrived at the crater his body had created, he was just pulling himself out of it with blood running down

his face. Meanwhile, there were many bloody gashes that were covered by torn clothing all over his body.

"Alright, I think this has gone on for long enough." Yoruichi said with her left hand resting on her hip. "So, why don't you tell me your name so we can bring this little song and dance to an end."

Without paying much mind to Yoruichi, the young man continued pulling himself out of the hole in the ravine wall at his own pace. Then, once he had extracted himself completely, he quickly dusted himself off before finally looking into Yoruichi's eyes.

"I am called Ulquiorra Cifer." The expressionless young man, Ulquiorra, replied while pointing the tip of his katana between Yoruichi's eyes. "But you should know, this is far from over. [Enclose, Murciélago]."

As soon as his chant ended, Ulquiorra was engulfed in black and green magic power that shot up into the sky, whose pressure caused Yoruichi to hop back a short distance in caution. Then, once the energy reached the top of its ascent, it began to cascade down around Ulquiorra who's appearance had changed by quite a bit after that eruption in power.

Now, standing amidst the falling magic power, Ulquiorra wore a more form fitting version of his previous attire with the jacket closed completely, hiding the hole at the base of his throat. On top of that, a pair of large, bat-like wings had grown from his back while the mask that had previously only covered the top-left side of his head now extended over the whole of his head, giving him a pair of horns that grew from the sides of his head before curving forward, the lines on his face had widened and turned black, and his fingernails lengthened after his transformation.

"I'll admit, that's a pretty impressive boost in power." Yoruichi said as she looked over her opponents new form. "You even managed to reach S-Class levels of magic power But if you think you have a snowballs chance in hell..."

Before Yoruichi could finish, with the sound of static and a burst of speed, Ulquiorra vanished from where he stood before reappearing behind her with his right hand reaching for her back, a spear hand strike aiming for her heart.

Smack!

Before his fingertips could get too close, however, Ulquiorra found his wrist had been grabbed while Yoruichi had turned around to face him faster than he could perceive.

"... of winning this fight." Yoruichi said, finishing her sentence in an unbothered tone.

Then, with much more force than her slender frame would suggest, Yoruichi threw Ulquiorra upward, ascending past the top of the ravine in less than a second.

Once he reached the peak of his ascent, however, Ulquiorra spread his wings, stopping his descent, and drew his right arm back into a throwing position.

"[Luz de Luna]." Ulquiorra chanted as a green energy javelin appeared in his drawn back hand.

Before he could throw it, however, Ulquiorra was forced to pull the energy spear in front of his chest to defend from a devastating punch that once again sent him flying.

Rocketing towards the ground on the side of the ravine opposite the hideout, Ulquiorra once again pulled his arm back. Then, at blistering speed, he threw the energy javelin in Yoruichi's direction, leaving a glowing green streak along the javelin's path.

Boom!

Eventually, Ulquiorra crashed into the ground with enough force to kick up a mushroom cloud of dust and debris. Before he did so, however, he noticed that his [Luz de Luna] had pierced through Yoruichi's torso before his vision was blocked by all the dust.

Bang!

A moment later, however, the dust cloud was disperse forcefully as Yoruichi appeared standing over Ulquiorra's body with her raining down punches that caused shockwaves due to their speed.

"[Lightning-Speed Magic: Raiōken]." Yoruichi chanted as the speed and power behind her punches decimated the area.

Meanwhile, confusion flickered in Ulquiorra's eyes as he received Yoruichi's punches. He had been sure that his javelin had pierced her chest. Yet, the Yoruichi in front of him seemed to have received no damage.

Doing his best to look past the flurry of punches that landed on his head and torso, each one breaking past his physical defenses and breaking bones, he noticed another Yoruichi standing in the air with a gaping hole in his chest.

"Oh, that?" Yoruichi said with a smile as she noticed where Ulquiorra's eyes were pointed. "Pretty nifty trick, isn't it? After-images are great sources of distraction. I can make about six more of them if I push my movement spell, [Utsusemi], to its limits. So, like I said, why don't you just give up. You have no chance of winning."

With that said, Yoruichi prepared to land the final blow from her technique, a punch that would undoubtedly crush Ulquiorra's skull beneath it. Before she could, however, Ulquiorra chanted another spell.

"[Resurrección: Segunda Etapa]." Ulquiorra chanted in a tone that suggested the pain he was feeling did not bother him.

Once again, Ulquiorra was covered in black and green magic power. This time, the magic power covering him was dense enough that it stopped Yoruichi's final attack before flinging her backwards on contact.

"Well, this is interesting." Yoruichi said as she landed on the ground a distance away. "After seeing the hole in your body, I was expecting the first transformation after hearing about the She Devil's battle with those other two. But... to think you have a second transformation. This may be fun."

Once the burst of magic power died down, Ulquiorra could be seen floating above the crater his body had created. Instead of wearing his white clothing, he was now without clothing of any kind. Instead, his lower body and his arms were covered in black fur while his hands had taken on the form of claws and his feet the form of talons. He also had a long, thick tail growing from his back.

While his wings were unchanged, the bone mask fragment on his head was gone completely, replaced by a pair of large bat ears. On top of that, the markings on his face had become more pronounced while his irises changed to a yellow color and his sclera turned green.

Then, before Yoruichi could comment on this change in appearance, Ulquiorra, with the sound of static, once again vanished from his spot. And with another [Luz de Luna] grasped in his hands, he thrust towards Yoruichi's heart from directly in front of her once he reappeared.

Side stepping the thrust, Yoruichi threw a high kick that landed on Ulquiorra's chin. Unlike all the other times she had hit him, however, Ulquiorra did not move in the slightest. Instead, he grabbed her by the ankle and swung her into the ground.

Bang!

On impact, a small crater was created. Then, with Yoruichi's ankle still in his grasp, Ulquiorra thrust his energy javelin down at Yoruichi's torso.

Reacting quickly, Yoruichi kicked up at Ulquiorra's attacking wrist, diverting the trajectory of his thrust. Then, using her hands, she pushed off the ground and drove both feet, into Ulquiorra's abdomen. And although she was not able to harm him in any significant way, she did manage to free her leg.

From there, the two began flashing around the area using their movement techniques while exchanging blows. And although it was clear Yoruichi was the faster of the two, Ulquiorra had closed the gap by quite a bit.

Unfortunately, the difference in speed still made it impossible for Ulquiorra to land a hit on Yoruichi again. Similarly, Yoruichi's attacks were unable to deal any lasting damage on Ulquiorra's heightened defenses after his second transformation.

"Alright, you're stronger than I expected." Yoruichi said in a solemn tone. "And if I don't take it up a notch, then we'll be here all day."

"You should just give up." Ulquiorra said with an impassive expression on his face. "I was only ordered to kill that trash you rescued. But you will at least remain alive should you surrender... for a while, at least."

"*Sigh* I guess you weren't listening." Yoruichi replied while shaking her head. "I said I'd kick it up a notch. Sure, your defense is strong, but I haven't even really gotten started. [Lightning Magic: Shunkō]."

With her chant, Yoruichi's magic power was released in torrents before it transformed into white currents of lightning that wrapped around her exposed arms and formed a pair of lightning wings on her back.

Meanwhile, Ulquiorra, after feeling Yoruichi's increase in power, raised his right hand, its index finger pointing at Yoruichi as he formed a [Cero] on its tip. Instead of green, however, a black orb with a green shine was formed at the tip of his finger.

"[Cero Oscuras]." Ulquiorra chanted as he fired his improved [Cero].

Seeing the black energy beam approaching, Yoruichi, like Ulquiorra had done a moment before, raised her right hand with her index finger pointed at Ulquiorra's attack. Then, the lightning wrapping around her arm was focused on the tip of her finger. And without a chant, she fired it forward.

The next instant, the two attacks collided. However, instead of a struggle for dominance, Yoruichi's spell cut straight through Ulquiorra's [Cero Oscuros] and continued forward towards Ulquiorra.

Reacting quickly, Ulquiorra used his [Sonido] to avoid the incoming bolt of lightning. However, as soon as he reached his destination, the only thing he could see was a lightning covered fist heading straight for his face.

Bang!

On impact, Ulquiorra was thrown backward with great force. Before he could right himself, however...

Bang!

... a kick sent him flying upward. In the next instant, Ulquiorra saw Yoruichi appear above him with her right leg, lightning focused on her heel, raised. Then, when he was in range, she brought it down on his chest.

Bang! *Bang!* *Bang!*

After Yoruichi brought her heel down, she continued to shoot Ulquiorra through the air with powerful strikes.

Surprising to Ulquiorra, every one of Yoruichi's lightning clad attacks were able to break through his defenses, causing considerable amounts of damage.

After nearly a minute of this one sided onslaught, however, Yoruichi decided to end things. Focusing all the lightning that made up her wings and wrapped her arms onto her right fist, Yoruichi drove her entire arm through Ulquiorra's chest, just to the left of the hole in its center.

"*Cough*" Ulquiorra coughed up a mouthful of blood as soon as his momentum was stopped by Yoruichi's punch. "It would seem... *Cough* I was not as strong as I thought..."

As he spoke, Ulquiorra's body began breaking down into motes of magic power, starting from his feet.

"Quite the contrary." Yoruichi said with a gentle shake of her head. "You were much stronger than I expected. You were just unlucky, running into someone like me who outclasses you in almost every aspect."

Hearing that, Ulquiorra's impassive expression did not change. However, just before he faded away completely, he nodded his head in understanding.

Meanwhile, Yoruichi simply watched the end of her opponent. Then, once Ulquiorra's body had faded completely, she released her [Shunkō] spell and stretched her arms over her head.

"Well, that was a pretty good work out." Yoruichi said in a satisfied tone. Then, she turned her head in the direction of the hideout. "I wonder how Alfonzo and Marin are doing, though. I mean, I'm sure Alfonzo will be fine, but I'm a little worried about Marin."

Shrugging her shoulders, Yoruichi smiled.

"I guess I'll go take a look." Yoruichi said to herself as she vanished from where she stood in a burst of speed using her [Flash Step].