

Fairy Tail 254

Chapter 254: Thinking Outside the Box

"I wonder how Big Sis is doing." Lisanna said from her usual seat in the guild hall.

"Yeah, I'm worried about Marin, too." Sun added with a nod.

"Well, it's the first time quests like this have been issued by the kingdom." Levy said with a smile. "So, it makes sense that you're worried. But they went with Alfonzo, so they should be fine."

"Yeah, Alfonzo will protect them." Elfman said energetically. "Just like a real man should."

"Wow!" Lisanna exclaimed in surprise. "I think that's the first time I've heard you say that and didn't feel like face palming right afterward."

"Well..." Elfman said, puffing his chest out proudly.

"Please don't follow up." Lisanna said, holding her hand up in a gesture to stop. "I don't want you to ruin this feeling, Big Brother."

"But aren't you four worried about Alfonzo?" Bisca asked curiously while turning her attention to Alfonzo's girlfriends.

"Nah." Cana said waving dismissively.

"Alfonzo is really strong, ya see." Sun said energetically.

"Indeed." Erza agreed with a nod. "There isn't much Alfonzo is unable to overcome."

"And what about you, Lici?" Levy asked after noticing that Elicia had not chimed in.

"Worried? Of course I am." Elicia replied with a smile. "But that's only because I love him. I mean, I worry about him no matter what he's doing. But if you're asking if I think he'll be okay? There's no doubt in my mind. I have and always will have faith in him"

"Tch!" Cana clicked her tongue at Elicia's response while simultaneously wrapping the shorter girl in a hug. "And that's why you're still his favorite. Saying stuff like that even made my heart skip a beat. But don't get too comfortable in that position. It'll be mine soon enough."

"Do your best, Cana." Elicia replied with a smile. "But I won't make it easy for you."

As she spoke, Elicia returned Cana's hug before letting her gaze wander over Erza, Sun, and Lucy, who blushed when she received the same gaze as the other three.

"I really hope Ur brings her team back soon." Jet, who had been silent through this conversation muttered quietly.

In response, Alzack, Droy, and surprisingly Gajeel, who had started sitting at their table after the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament, nodded in agreement. And the reason for that was simple...

"Oh, Juvia's soul mates, where are you?" Juvia muttered as she fidgeted and tapped the heel of her boot against the floor repeatedly while staring.... No, glaring at the guild hall's front entrance. "Juvia misses you so much. Why did you leave Juvia behind?"

... Ever since Lisanna arrived, dragging Juvia along with her, Juvia had been changing her mood frequently. One moment, she would be blushing in embarrassment. Then, her mood would become gloomy after remembering that she had been left behind by her so called soul mates. After that, she might start crying, which was enough to flood the guild hall if she was not stopped quickly.

Finally, as if to answer Jet and the other boy's prayers, the doors to the guild hall slid open. A moment later, five people and two flying, talking cats entered the guild hall.

"Juvia's beloveds!" Juvia shouted, shooting up to her feet. "Water Jigsaw]."

In the next instant, Juvia transformed herself into a cone of spinning water that shot towards the new arrivals.

While Natsu wasn't paying attention and Happy was busy being ignored by Carla as he tried to introduce the guild hall to her, Ur, Gray, and Ultear could only look on at Juvia with exasperation. Meanwhile,

Wendy and Carla, who were seeing everything for the first time were thoroughly flabbergasted by the spell that was launched in their direction as soon as they stepped through the guild's front doors.

"*Sigh* Knock it off, Juvia." Ur said in a fed up tone.

Then, as Juvia drew near, Ur held up her right hand, just as Juvia returned to her normal form to wrap her in a hug, stopping the overexcited, blue-haired girl in her tracks while simultaneously freezing her solid.

Now, with Juvia completely immobilized, Ur casually handed her to Gray.

"Now, go take care of her, Gray." Ur said, walking towards the guild's elevator. "I'll go give the report of our successful quest to the old man while introducing our new members. Wendy, Carla, follow me to meet the guild master."

'Juvia can feel Ur's love permeating her entire body!' Juvia exclaimed internally as she was frozen. Then, once she was handed over to Gray, the ice around her nose turned red as her thoughts continued. 'And now Gray is holding Juvia lovingly! Ooh! When will Ultear shower Juvia with her love, as well?'

"Ye-Yes." Wendy replied, feeling nervous to be around so many new people.

Though Carla did not reply, simply following Ur and Wendy through the guild hall, her mind was spinning quickly as she moved forward.

'I'm starting to think joining Fairy Tail in the heat of the moment might have been a bad idea.' Carla thought to herself as the elevator door closed.

And that thought would strengthen after seeing the guild-wide brawl that had broken out when she, Ur, and Wendy returned to the first floor from Makarov's office as the newest members of Fairy Tail.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Hidden Leaf Ravine.

"... You all need to pay for all the horrible things you've been doing to these people." Marin said wither daggers drawn in reverse grip.

As soon as her words fell, Marin dashed forward. Meanwhile, without a word, Nemu took her own fighting stance.

As soon as Marin was in range, she swung a right hook at Nemu's jaw.

Forced to evade with a much larger movement than she would usually have to, due to the dagger's blade, Nemu bent back into a bridge. Then, with her hands as support, she flung her legs up to kick the dagger out of Marin's hands.

Swiftly pulling her right arm back, Marin narrowly avoided the kicks from below. Without stepping back, however, she slashed her daggers at Nemu's ankles before they were once again out of reach.

A moment later, Nemu remained standing on her hands with blood dripping down her legs, as Marin's daggers were able to find their marks, severing Nemu's Achilles tendons.

"Alright, that should be the end." Marin said, preparing to sheath her daggers. "If you surrender, we should be able to get those tendons reattached so you'll be able to walk once again."

"Master Mayuri has not given his permission to surrender." Nemu replied as she pushed herself upward into the air.

In the next instant, Nemu had flipped herself over and lashed a kick at the side of Marin's head. Meanwhile, Marin, not expecting someone with slashed Achilles tendons to retaliate so quickly, was caught off guard, receiving Nemu's kick and being blown away.

Bang!

Due to the kick, Marin slammed back first into the cave wall. Luckily, she had reacted quickly enough, using her [Transformation Magic] to turn her sheaths into an air bag that she deployed behind her and weakening the force she felt from the impact.

Meanwhile, Nemu had landed on her feet after the kick she delivered. At first, she stumbled. Before she could fall, however, she was able to catch herself and stand straight a few moments later.

"How?" Marin asked as she picked herself up from the cave floor. "How are you even standing after that?"

"Master Mayuri has modified my body quite heavily." Nemu replied without changing her expression. "And one of those modifications was a rather powerful regenerative healing factor."

"Well, this is gonna be a pain." Marin muttered with a pout as she raised the dagger in her right hand and pointed it at Nemu. "[Transformation magic: Shoot to Kill]."

Even while pouting, Marin cast her next spell. Then, at a speed that most A-Class wizards would not be able to follow with their eyes, Marin's blade extended.

Thanks to the modifications she had received, Nemu was among the few A-Class wizards who could follow the speed at which Marin's blade extended. Unfortunately, her body was not fast enough to evade completely.

As a result, instead of being skewered through the left shoulder and pinned to the wall behind her, Nemu only received a deep gash that reached the bone. Still, an injury of that level would not be enough to stop her.

With her left arm dangling lifelessly, Nemu charged forward while Marin retracted her blade. By the time Nemu was close enough to strike, she had regained the ability to move her left arm, though it was not fully healed. As a result, the palm strike she aimed at Marin's chin was easily evaded.

Ducking underneath Nemu's palm strike, Marin pulled her daggers back, ready to stab them into Nemu's abdomen. Unfortunately, her plans had to change when she saw Nemu's right arm start twirling at the elbow.

"[Body Augmentation Magic: Hand Drill]." Nemu chanted softly as she drove her right hand towards Marin's head.

With her eyes widened in surprise, Marin did not stop her thrust to evade Nemu's attack. Instead, she used her [Transformation Magic] to turn the tips of her daggers into flat surfaces. Then, once they made contact with Nemu, she once again cast the [Shoot to Kill spell.

Boom!

As a result, just before Nemu's spinning hand could penetrate through Marin's skull, she was pushed back at high speed, slamming into the wall on the other side of the arena-like chamber, creating a crater on impact.

"*Pant* O.*Pant* M. *Pant* G. *Pant*" Marin said through ragged breaths while holding her daggers out and pressing Nemu into the opposite wall with shaky hands. "That was, like, uber-scary. I almost wet myself just now."

Though this was not the first near death experience she had been through in her years as a wizard, this was the first time Marin had ever seen death approaching so closely.

Nemu, on the other hand, was taking advantage of the fact that Marin had been so shaken. The amount of damage she had taken to her spinal column would have been more than enough to take any other wizard out of the fight. But thanks to her healing factor, her bones would knit themselves back together in no time. If there had been any damage to her spinal cord, the story would be different, though.

Eventually, Nemu had healed enough to use her arms to push herself free from between the wall and Marin's daggers. Then, like before, she charged forward, this time with both of her hands spinning like drills.

'With her ability to heal so quickly, just beating her up won't be enough.' Marin thought to herself as she watched Nemu close the distance once again. 'I guess I'll have to get creative. I haven't tried this technique against another wizard before, so, I really hope it works.'

"Transformation Magic: Growl]." Marin said as she returned her daggers to their normal size and shape.

In the next instant, the dagger in Marin's left hand broke down into dust. Instead of falling to the floor, however, it formed a cloud that wafted towards the approaching Nemu. At the same time, Marin dashed past the cloud of dust while reaching into the pouch on her waist to pull out a backup dagger.

Like that, Marin and Nemu started a round of high-speed close quarters combat. Though, it was evident that Nemu held the advantage in both strength and speed. Luckily, thanks to all her training with Alfonzo, Elicia, and the others, Marin held the advantage in skill, enabling her to break even with the modified human in front of her.

With the sound of clashing metal as background music, Marin and Nemu were eventually engulfed by the cloud that was created when Marin broke down one of her daggers with [Transformation Magic].

At first, Nemu did not deem the dust cloud enough of a threat to avoid it, casually ignoring the small cuts she received while moving through it. However, as the speed at which she could move her limbs slowed over time, she realized that was a terrible mistake.

Instead of just leaving thin cuts and stab wounds all over her body, the tiny shards of Marin's dagger were digging into Nemu's joints, slowing her movements significantly.

'Finally...' Marin groaned internally while a splitting headache tore at her mind. 'Using [Telekinesis Magic] while fighting like this is still a little too much for me. But this is the only way I could think to win against this girl.'

With those thoughts running through her head, Marin slashed her backup dagger at Nemu's significantly slower right wrist. Before cutting off her wrist, however, the dagger turned into a pair of anti-magic cuffs.

Click!

As soon as the cuffs were closed around Nemu's wrist, both her arms reverted to normal and stopped spinning. That did not stop her from continuing her attack, however, as her physical strength and healing factor were due to the experiments performed on her and not her magic.

This time, Marin was not caught off guard, though. Ducking under the punch Nemu threw with her free hand, Marin moved to Nemu's back. Then, she took hold of Nemu's other wrist, wrenching her arm back over her head before snapping the other end of the anti-magic cuffs on it.

Releasing Nemu's arms, which were now cuffed behind her back and neck, Marin dropped into a crouch before sweeping her legs out from under her and slapping a pair of cuffs on her ankles to keep her from running away.

Then, once Nemu was immobilized completely, Marin used her [Telekinesis magic] to extract all the shards of her dagger from Nemu's body, as well as those that were scattered around the duo, and reconstructed her daggers by releasing the [Transformation Magic].

"Master Mayuri will be disappointed." Nemu muttered to herself as she lay on the cave floor. "I will be punished for failing to carry out his orders."

Ignoring Nemu's muttering, Marin raised her hands to the sides of her throbbing head and started massaging it.

"Ugh! I'm so tired and my head really hurts." Marin whined as she made sure everything was in order. "I wanna go to sleep."

As she spoke that last sentence, Marin wanted to take a seat on the floor. However, due to her mental exhaustion, she just fell backwards.

'This is gonna hurt.' Marin thought to herself as she fell.

Instead of hitting the hard cave floor, however, she felt her head sink into something soft. Looking up, she was surprised to see Yoruichi had caught her with her head resting on her breasts.

"Well, I think you've earned yourself some rest." Yoruichi said with a smile. "I could even give you a massage to help you relax if you'd like."

"Uh... No thanks?" Marin replied, surprised that Yoruichi would start teasing her at this moment.

Continuing to tease Marin with a smile, Yoruichi hoisted her and Nemu over her shoulders. Then, using her [Flash Step], she left the hideout as swiftly as she could. If the killing intent Alfonzo had leaked when he saw Kabuto holding that child's heart in his hands was any indication, staying in the hideout probably wouldn't be safe when their battle really got started.