

Fairy Tail 257

Chapter 257: What Will the Future Hold?

"Hey, everyone!" Yoruichi, who was taking a short break outside the shelter, shouted upon seeing a group of people approaching the shelter from the distance. "I think the knights are almost here!"

Hearing Yoruichi's shout, the other six wizards, Alfonzo, Mirajane, Marin, Kagura, Bacchus, and Guy, finished what they were doing, whether it be patching up or listening to the troubles of a civilian, and made their way outside the shelter.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo dragged Mayri and Orochimaru, who was still locked in the box in his snake form, along with him while Mirajane did the same with Kabuto and Nemu.

Eventually, all seven of the allied wizards stood together just outside the shelter's entrance.

"Ugh... I really hope she's not with them." Alfonzo muttered while looking towards the approaching group of knights and kingdom personnel.

"You just raised a flag." Marin replied with a smile. "You should know better, Alfonzo."

"Ugh... I know." Alfonzo replied with a wry smile.

"Who do you mean?" Kagura asked curiously.

"Oh, you mean that one blonde knight, huh?" Mirajane said with a smile. "Yeah, her preferences are a bit... special. But she's not that bad. In fact, she's a really nice girl according to Lici."

Other than Bacchus, only the Fairy Tail wizards had met the knight Alfonzo mentioned. Still, they were curious to know what kind of person could make someone like Alfonzo put on such a reluctant expression at the thought of meeting her.

"*Sigh* I know she's not a bad person." Alfonzo replied. "But that level of masochism is a bit much for me, that's all. Plus, last time I saw her, I could tell she really wanted me to beat the shit out of her like I did to Laxus during the tournament last month."

A few minutes later, a group of thirty knights, led by an older gentleman, appearing to be in his sixties, with a head of black hair, a full, thick mustache, an eye patch over his left eye, a black right eye with a bluish tint to it, and an impressive, well-muscled physique, approached the group of wizards.

And unlike the rest of the knights, who were wearing full suits of armor, the older gentleman in the lead wore a blue military uniform with a pair of swords on his hip.

'Are you fucking shitting me?' Alfonzo exclaimed internally after seeing the man leading the knights. 'Is that King fucking Bradley? Why the fuck is he here? I mean, I kinda expected to see him at some point after I realized FMA was a part of this world... But seriously, what the fuck?'

"Greetings." The older gentleman said once the knights came close enough to converse comfortably. "I am King Bradley, commander of Fiore's knights. And I have brought a platoon of our finest, the Cherry Blossom Holy Knights, to escort the captured criminals and civilians to be processed."

"I see." Alfonzo replied, stepping forward to greet Bradley with his hand extended. "I'm glad you were able to come so soon. A lot of these people really need help. Although we've done what we can, there's only so much the seven of us could do."

Accepting Alfonzo's hand and shaking it firmly, Bradley nodded his head in understanding.

"In my capacity as the commander of the Cherry Blossom Holy Knights, allow me to thank you on behalf of the kingdom and royal family for bringing these fugitives to justice." Bradley said with a salute. Then, he turned to the man standing to his right. "Arcadios, take a squad of medical personnel to check the conditions of the rescued civilians before preparing them to be moved to the capital where we can get them the care they need."

"Yes, sir!" Arcadios, a tall, well-built man wearing full plate armor with black, wavy hair, prominent side burns that lead into a full, pointy beard, black eyes, and a scar running from his left temple to the edge of his thick eyebrows, replied with a salute.

In the next instant, Arcadios and a squad of knights made their way past the seven allied wizards and headed inside the shelter to check on the conditions of the surviving kidnapped civilians.

"As for the prisoners." Radley continued. "Dustiness, I'll leave them to you and your squad."

"Yes, sir!" Darkness replied from among the knights before she and her two subordinates made their way to the front of the group.

To the surprise of everyone who knew her, Darkness did not let her nature get the better of her in this situation. Though you could tell she was quite excited when Mirajane handed her the small box housing Orochimaru. And after noticing that the box was made completely out of metal, she glanced at Alfonzo with such fervor that Alfonzo had to make a conscious effort to not hide behind Mirajane and Marin.

"Oh, although they're not here with us, right now, there are quite a few of the grunts these guys hired in a certain room in the shelter." Bacchus said after taking a swig from his gourd. "But they didn't seem important enough to bring out here."

"I see." Bradley replied with a nod. "We'll make sure to secure them properly before taking them to face justice."

With that, Bradley discussed the detail of the quest for a bit longer before letting the allied wizards go.

"Before you go." Bardley said as the seven wizards made their way away from the shelter. "I have two questions."

Stopping in their tracks, the group turned around to hear what Bradley wanted to ask them.

"First, have any of you considered joining the knights or any other branch of the military?" Bradley asked, expecting the answer he received.

In response, each of the wizards from the allied forces could only smile wryly and shake their heads.

"As expected." Bradley replied with a nod. "The second question is for you specifically, Mr. Marcus."

Hearing that, Alfonzo nodded, gesturing for Bradley to continue.

"Is that permanent?" Bradley asked, pointing at the adamantite shelter behind him.

"No, it will only last for another hour or so." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Making something that big and made of adamantite into a permanent structure would have taken up too much magic power."

"I see." Bradley replied. "Then, you're free to go."

With that, the wizards of the alliance continued their trip back to Karakura Town, chatting as they walked.

"That guy, Commander Bradley, gives me a bad feeling." Mirajane said, a frown making its way onto her face as she spoke.

"So, you had the same feeling, huh?" Yoruichi said with a serious expression on her face. "Something about him didn't seem... natural. On top of that, his demeanor seemed fake, too."

"Huh, what are you talking about?" Marin asked curiously. "I mean, he seemed like a pretty responsible leader to me."

"That's exactly what he wanted you to think." Kagura replied. "But everything he did felt as though it were a controlled action."

"I agree with Kagura." Alfonzo added with a nod. "On top of that, he looked like he really didn't care about the civilians safety."

"he's a knight... a noble... so that's pretty much par for the course, isn't it?" Bacchus asked before taking a swig from his gourd.

"Well, I can't really disagree with that." Alfonzo replied with a wry smile. "But with him, it seemed even worse than usual. As if he didn't even see them worthy of his protection. As if they were on the same level as livestock."

"Indeed." Guy chimed in. "I couldn't feel any youth from his actions or words."

"Not sure how that applies to the situation, but sure." Yoruichi said with an unsure gaze.

'I doubt anyone else was paying close enough attention to notice, but the amount of wrath swirling around in his visible eye was incredible.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he thought back to his meeting with King Bradley. 'On top of that, I activated [MPD] as soon as I recognized him and...'

"I don't know if any of you noticed this, but he didn't have even a spec of magic power in his body." Alfonzo said, taking on a much more severe tone.

Hearing that, everyone turned their gazes towards him with shock in their eyes.

"But how is that possible?" Yoruichi asked incredulously. "Everyone has at least a little magic power in their body."

"Yeah, that shouldn't be possible." Mirajane added. "If that were true, there's no way he should even be alive."

"I know how crazy it sounds." Alfonzo replied. "But when I shook his hand, I couldn't feel any magic power circulating through his body."

Although physical contact is a valid way to gauge another person's magic power reserves and density if they aren't trying to hide it completely, Alfonzo only used it as an excuse to keep [Magic Power Detection] as a secret exclusive to Fairy Tail for as long as possible.

"But if he didn't have any magic power, how was he even alive?" Marin asked with skepticism. "I mean, Lucy's mother died when all her magic power leaked away, right?"

"I know." Alfonzo replied in a heavy tone. "And that's what's really making me wary of him. I mean, he can't be normal if he can still move so freely without any magic power."

'Well, the homunculus couldn't use alchemy in FMA.' Alfonzo thought to himself trying to make any connections he could between the two worlds. 'And since magic power is the source of alchemy in this world, maybe that explains it?'

"Anyway, we should probably keep this on the hush." Alfonzo said. "I mean, as fishy as it sounds, we don't have any proof that guy is up to or part of anything. And like Bacchus said, he could just be the usual noble who despises the commonfolk. Still, I don't think it's a bad idea to take this information to your guild masters. Just don't let it leak outside of them and the people present if possible."

'Damn, I'm quite the hypocrite for saying that.' Alfonzo muttered internally. 'I'll definitely be talking to Lici about this when we get back. If shit's as bad as I think it is, we're gonna have some shit to deal with in the next few years. ON top of that, I couldn't tell the others about what I picked up with [MPD], but there was another person with no magic power in the group of knights. And I'd bet all the money from my patent royalties that was Envy.'

Deciding to drop the topic of King Bradley, the group continued heading back towards Karakura. And after walking for another half an hour or so, they finally arrived at the town gates.

Earth land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Karakura.

By the time the group made it back to the hotel they were staying in, the sun had just dipped below the horizon. And after such a long day, they all decided that it was in their best interest to get some rest. And the wizards from Fairy Tail were no exception.

"Alright, you girls can go and take a bath first." Alfonzo said with a smile once he, Mirajane, and Marin entered the room.

"You're not joining us?" Mirajane asked with a seductive smile.

"Yeah, you should come in with us." Marin said bashfully. You've gotta be tired too, right?"

"Physically, I'm not." Alfonzo replied with a shake of his head. "But I am a bit mentally exhausted. Although seeing all those people being tortured got to me quite a bit, seeing what those sons of bitches did to those kids, really set me off."

"Isn't that even more of a reason for you to relax with us?" Mirajane asked.

"It is." Alfonzo replied. "But that's not possible. I mean, you've seen the bath, right? It's just way too small for all of us to fit. It would fit two of us just fine, but three would just be cramped."

"*Sigh* You're right." Marin replied. "Not that I was really all that interested in taking a bath..."

"Oh my, Marin." Mirajane said with a smile. "Now that you've confirmed your relationship with Alfonzo, you're quite eager, aren't you?"

Immediately, Marin's face flushed red at Mirajane's words.

"Huh? Wh-wh-what are you talking about, Mira?" Marin asked in a fluster. "I never said anything about sl-sl-sleeping with him so soon."

"Huh?" Mirajane exclaimed in mock confusion while tilting her head cutely. "But I never said anything about sleeping with him, Marin. I only meant that you were really eager to be a good girlfriend and help him relax in the bath. Marin, you're really quite the pervert, aren't you?"

Hearing that, Marin's face reddened even further while she opened and closed her mouth like a fish out of water.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, seeing the interaction between his girls, could only smile.

"Alright, Mira, stop teasing her." Alfonzo said with a smile while pulling Mirajane into a hug. "She's not used to your more mischievous side, yet."

"Well, she'd better get used to it soon." Mirajane replied, sinking into Alfonzo's embrace. "I only act like this with you and the girls. I don't even act like this with Elfman and Lisanna."

"Why?" Marin asked, her blush receding slightly. "They're your family too, right?"

"Because, I have an image to maintain." Mirajane replied seriously. "They have to see me as their reliable older sister. That way, they'll always feel like they can come to me when something is bothering them."

"Besides that, she's not the oldest member of our family." Alfonzo added. "So, she doesn't have to act like the big sister with us."

"Hmph!" Mirajane snorted while looking away. "I'll never acknowledge Red as my big sister."

"Now that you mention it, Erza really is the oldest out of all of us, isn't she?" Marin asked while remembering everyone's birthday. "Then, it would be me, Alfonzo and Lici, Mira, Ultear, Cana, and Sun's the youngest, right?"

"Yeah, that's it." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Anyway, you two should go and take your baths. I'll take mine after you're done."

"*Sigh* Fine." Mirajane replied, extricating herself from Alfonzo's embrace.

"Okay, we'll see you when we get out." Marin said while waving happily.

A few moments later, Mirajane and Marin had disappeared into the bathroom with their sleepwear. Shortly after that, the sound of running water could be heard through the bathroom door. Meanwhile, Alfonzo had taken a seat on his bed.

"Alright, now that I have all the information I need to make Zanpakuto on my own, I guess I'll get started making one." Alfonzo said as he formed a chunk of metal between his hands. "Before I do that, though, I

feel like I could make the alloy that formed the asauchi even better. I mean, there were a few, rather glaring, imperfections in that alloy."

Just like that, Alfonzo continued to mix the metals used for the asauchi alloy until he found the best possible ratio that would still accept enough magic power, intent, and soul energy, so that a sword spirit could be born.