

Fairy Tail 286

Chapter 286: Alfonzo's Ultimatum and Erza's First Shift

Alfonzo spent the next hour explaining what happened after Magnolia disappeared and answering any questions Lahar and Doranbolt might have. Although Lahar and Doranbolt found Alfonzo's story hard to believe, he proved his story by showing the Dorma Anim, which was hidden in the guild hall's underground garage.

'When did you even move this thing here?' Makarov, Gildarts, and Ur thought simultaneously after seeing the giant mechanical dragon.

Lahar and Doranbolt, on the other hand, only looked at the Dorma Anim in disbelief, at first. Then, after snapping out of their dazes, they went forth to inspect it. And after realizing that the alloy making up its armor was not something that could be found in Ishgar, they had no choice but to believe Alfonzo's explanation.

"Are there any more questions?" Alfonzo asked after the group returned to Makarov's office.

"No, I think you've answered all our questions." Lahar said, hiding his surprised expression by adjusting his glasses.

"Good." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Then, can I ask you a question?"

"Please, go ahead." Lahar replied.

"Why was it never reported in the media that there were members of Fairy Tail on that island off the coast of the Kingdom of Caelum?"

With Alfonzo's question, the atmosphere in the office froze. While Makarov, Gildarts, and Ur were wondering why Alfonzo asked this question, especially since a few months had passed since that incident, the Rune Knight's expressions changed into ones filled with anger under their helmets. Meanwhile, Lahar and Doranbolt could feel cold sweat forming on their backs.

"Or does that mean that the Magic Council doesn't see the fact that they could have killed five, promising, young wizards from Fiore's strongest guild as an issue?" Alfonzo continued, regardless of the fact that his first question had not been answered.

Shing! x 2

"Watch your tone, wizard!" One of the Rune Knights said in a threatening tone as he pulled his magic sword from its sheath.

By this point, Lahar's cold sweat had already soaked the back of the shirt he was wearing under his cloak. And when he heard the Rune Knights drawing their swords, his face paled immediately. Especially after seeing the smirk on Alfonzo's face.

"You dare question the Magic Council's decision?" The other Rune Knight added in his own threatening tone. "You ruffians from Fairy Tail should just be grateful you were able to keep that criminal, Jellal Fernandes busy long enough for the Council to act."

Immediately after the second Rune Knight spoke, Lahar and Doranbolt knew the situation just went from bad to worse. Unfortunately, when they decided who would follow them to Makarov's office, they only chose the strongest of the Rune Knights in their squad. They never expected things to escalate like this, after all.

In Lahar and Doranbolt's defense, most of the wizards in Ishgar were too afraid to question the Magic Council, as they were responsible for deeming guilds as Legal or Dark Guilds. Unfortunately, this young man, Alfonzo Marcus seemed completely unbothered by that possibility.

"Be silent!" Lahar shouted, startling the Rune Knights.

"I see." Alfonzo said with his eyes narrowed. "So, despite us being the ones that cleaned up the Magic Council's mess, they only see us as disposable pawns, huh? Even after Ur and I played integral roles in completing the quests that led to the Council's reestablishment."

'Damn it.' Lahar thought to himself. 'And this is why fanatical followers are double-edged swords. They follow orders to the letter, which is great. But if anyone questions their superiors, they are quick to say things they shouldn't.'

"Well, I'm sure this will be great for Sorcerer Weekly." Alfonzo continued. "I mean, I have an interview and photo shoot coming up. Things should get much more interesting with this story in their next issue."

Then, Alfonzo tapped his heel on the floor and the entire conversation, from the time Alfonzo asked his first question until the Rune Knights lost their tempers played in Makarov's office."

"Great, he's controlling my office like he owns the place." Makarov muttered.

Meanwhile, Lahar and Doranbolt's expressions had turned ugly.

"What do you want?" Lahar asked through gritted teeth.

"Something that should have happened already." Alfonzo replied in a cold tone. "I want the people who voted to have that Etherion fired prosecuted by the law."

"Are you insane?" Doranbolt asked. "that would destroy the newly built prestige of the Magic Council."

"And why should I, one of the wizards who helped build that prestige, give a shit?" Alfonzo asked.

"But if things were to be done the way you suggest, there would be no one left on the Magic Council other than the chairman." Lahar said, trying to convince Alfonzo to reconsider.

"And?" Alfonzo replied uncaringly. "Why can't you use retired guild masters or something? Why does it have to be people the Magic Council raised? Hell, there are ten wizards with much more prestige than anyone on that council that don't do anything all day long all over the continent."

"Hey, Alfonzo, are you saying I don't do anything all day long?" Makarov asked.

Just as Makarov's surmised, Alfonzo was referring to the Ten Wizard Saints. And all though they were considered the ten most powerful wizards on the continent, most of them did not do much, as they are supposed to be trump cards against threats to the continent.

Gildarts and Ur, though they were surprised by Alfonzo's sudden attack on the Magic Council, they were both in full support of his actions. Their daughters were present when the Etherion was fired on the Tower of Heaven as well, after all.

"We... We will need time to discuss this with our superiors." Lahar said, trying to forcefully calm himself down. "Please, allow us time to relay your request to the Magic Council."

"Fine." Alfonzo replied. "But I won't wait for too long. One way or another, this will come to light. And my guild mates and I will receive the justice we deserve."

With that, Lahar and Doranbolt stood from the couch shakily before glaring at the Rune Knights with anger blazing in their eyes. And at this point, the Rune Knights finally understood just how badly they messed up.

Then, Makarov took the initiative to escort the people from the Magic Council out of the guild. Once they were all in the elevator, Alfonzo went behind Makarov's desk and opened a drawer. Then, after pulling out a recording lacrima, he tossed it towards Lahar.

"You should probably take this." Alfonzo said as Lahar caught the lacrima. "You'll probably need evidence of what happened here today, right?"

Then, the elevator doors closed, leaving Alfonzo, Gildarts, and Ur in Makarov's office alone. And after a moment of silence, Gildarts could no longer hold back.

Smack!

"Hahahaha! Damn, Kid, you did a damn good job." Gildarts said. "I never thought I'd see the day when those pricks from the Magic Council would run away with their tails between their legs."

"Yeah, but was blackmailing them like that a good idea?" Ur asked, though she could not hide the excitement she was feeling, either.

"I wouldn't call it blackmail." Alfonzo said with a smile. "In fact, there was a chance that nothing would have come of my questions. But those two knights made everything a lot easier for me. Otherwise, I would have just had to talk about it in the interview with Sorcerer Weekly and hoped for the best."

"But now that you have evidence of how much the Council seems to despise Fairy Tail... at least how much the Rune Knights despise us, you're in a position of power during this little episode." Ur said.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Honestly, this should have happened a long time ago. But because of how quickly the Council dissolved, the people of the continent were satisfied and it would have just made us look like attention whores. Even if we were in genuine danger because of the Etherion."

"But since you all came out of it unscathed, no one would have taken the danger seriously." Gildarts said. "Yeah, I've seen people act like that far too many times to count."

"Anyway, now that all that is over, I'm gonna head out." Alfonzo said. "I've got a lot on my plate lately. Research, item creation, and planning for a date. So much to do, so little time."

With that, Alfonzo walked towards the elevator and pressed the call button. The, when the elevator doors opened, Alfonzo pressed the button for the basement before waving at the two older wizards.

December, x784.

After the incident with the Magic Council, not much happened for the next few days. However, when the calendar changed from November to December, activity in the guild picked up by quite a bit.

Instead of their leisurely attitudes and random brawls, everyone at A-Class was hustling to complete as many quests as they could. And this practice went on for a full week.

"Why has everyone been going so crazy to complete quests this week?" Lucy asked from the groups usual table in the guild hall.

"That's right, this is your first time being here at this time of the year, isn't it?" Ultear asked with a smile. "*Sigh* I remember doing this for the last few years, too."

Hearing that, Lucy, Wendy, and Carla all looked at each other with confused expressions, since Ultear had not answered Lucy's question.

"Yeah, but why are they doing all these quests, though?" Wendy asked curiously.

"It's because it's that time of the year again." Elicia said with a smile.

"What time of the year?" Carla asked with annoyance in her tone. "Will someone just answer the question strait forwardly?"

"The S-Class Promotion Exam is coming.' Mirajane said, putting down Elicia's order of coffee in front of her. "Here's your coffee, Lici."

"Thanks, Mira." Elicia said as she reached for her cup of coffee. "but Mira is right, at this time of year, everyone tries to complete as many quests as possible so they can become an S-Class wizard candidate."

Just at that moment, both Natsu and Gray rushed into the guild hall at the same time before stopping in front of the quest board.

"I was first, Ice Cube!" Natsu shouted.

"The hell you were!" Gray replied. "My tip toe clearly touched the ground before yours."

"Oh yeah?" Natsu asked, pressing his forehead against Gray's. "Why don't we settle this with a fight."

"Bring it on, Flame Brain!" Gray replied fiercely.

At that moment, Gajeel also rushed through the doors of the guild hall.

Bang!

"Out of the way, losers." Gajeel said while shoving both Gray and Natsu out of the way.

A moment later, Gajeel selected his quest and sprinted back out of the guild hall.

"Bastard!" Gray and Natsu shouted at the same time.

Then, when they noticed they spoke in unison, they glared at each other before rushing to the board again, taking their own quests, and sprinting out of the guild hall.

"Wow... Everyone's so intense." Wendy said in an amazed tone.

"Yeah, but I get the feeling Natsu might be doing all this for nothing." Mirajane said with a smile.

"What do you mean?" Lucy asked curiously.

"Well, do you remember when I had to come get you, Natsu, and Gray after Happy stole an S-Class quest from the second floor of the old guild hall?" Mirajane asked with a smile.

Immediately after seeing Mirajane's smile, Lucy began to shiver. That smile made her remember how scary Mirajane was when they came across her resting against a tree on the way to that Inferno Bear.

"Uh huh..." Lucy replied with a nod.

"Well, all I can say is that Master is much more strict with S-Class quests than he used to be." Mirajane said. "Especially after I broke the rules and took Elfman and Lisanna on one a couple of years ago."

"Huh?" Wendy exclaimed in confusion. "but I thought anyone was allowed to go on an S-Class quest as long as they had an S-Class wizard in their group and had the master's permission."

"Actually, that rule is pretty new." Ultear said. "It's only been like that since the war with Phantom Lord, right?"

"Yup." Elicia replied. "Before that, though, only S-Classes were allowed to go on S-class quests."

"Oh, I see." Wendy said.

Before the conversation could continue any further, however, the elevator door opened. And through those open doors, Erza walked into the main hall with a happy smile. On top of that, everyone noticed the new, sheathed longsword hanging on her hip, and the magical fluctuations that matched Erza's exactly.

"Erza, you did it!" Elicia shouted as she jumped up and dashed towards Erza.

"Yes, I did." Erza replied as she caught Elicia, who jumped towards her and wrapped her in a hug. "I completed my [Soul Weapon's] first shift.