

Fairy Tail 351

Chapter 351: Birthday Presents; Part 1

"Do mine first!" Marin shouted happily as she raised the two wrapped packages in her hands.

"Why not." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

Getting confirmation, Marin hopped up and walked towards Alfonzo and Elicia briskly. Then, she thrust the gifts in her hands into their chests.

"Here, open it! Open it!" Marin said energetically.

Wasting no time, Elicia immediately tore the wrapping paper around the soft gift in her hands.

"Oh, they're costume designs." Elicia said as she looked through the bundle of papers in her hands. "But, wouldn't these be pretty revealing?"

"Exactly, they're to spice up your night life." Marin replied with a proud smile on her face.

"You mean to spice up your night life, right?" Ultear said, answering in Elicia's place.

"What's the difference?" Marin asked with a confused expression. "We usually spend nights together, anyway."

"Still, I could use these." Elicia said with a glint in her eyes. "There are a lot of nobles in the capital with rather.... special preferences. And I'm sure they would buy clothes with these designs if I marketed them the right way."

"Huh? But it was supposed to..." Marin said in confusion after hearing Elicia.

"That's so like Lici." Mirajane said with a smile. "She and Alfonzo are always thinking about how they can make more money."

"Just let it go, Marin." Cana said before taking a swig from a bottle of ale. "You know they'll always be like that."

Hearing that, Marin slumped her shoulders in defeat. However, after hearing Elicia's next words, her expression brightened once again.

"What did you get, Fonzie?" Elicia asked curiously.

That question drew everyone's attention to Alfonzo, who had just been watching everyone with a smile on his face.

"Well, let's see." Alfonzo replied as he created a small knife with his [Metal Magic]. Then, with the knife in hand, he cleanly split the wrapping paper around his gift. "It's a cookbook. And the recipes are from the Alvarez Empire."

"Wow!" Everyone exclaimed in unison.

"Marin, how did you even get that?" Mirajane asked curiously. "After Alvarez tried to invade a few years ago, weren't all trades and diplomacy between the two continents stopped?"

"I have my ways." Marin replied with a smug smile.

"More like her dad has his ways." Ultear replied. "Even if he's not working for Heartfilia Kanzen anymore, he wouldn't have lost all his contacts."

"Tear! Why can't you just let me have my moment?" Marin shouted in an anguished tone.

Immediately, all the house's residents began laughing at Marin's expense. Even Yoruichi could not hold back a giggle while Sui-Feng's lips curled at their ends.

"Alright, alright, let's leave Marin alone." Sun said, pulling Marin into a hug. "Instead, you two should open mine next."

With that, Sun released Marin from her hug. Then, she picked up the two small boxes on her lap. After that, she walked over to Alfonzo and Elicia to hand over the boxes.

"I wonder what it is." Elicia said as she accepted the gift box.

"You should open them together." Sun said with a smile.

Hearing Sun's suggestion, Alfonzo and Elicia exchanged glances. Then, they looked down at the boxes in their hands with curiosity. Not only them, but the others in the room were curious to know what was in the boxes, as well.

So, they opened the boxes together. And what they saw were a pair of golden locket with rose gold accents in the shape of half a heart each. However, there were no necklaces to hold them included in the box.

"Ooh, they're so cute~~~~!" Elicia squealed excitedly.

"We can open the lockets, too." Alfonzo said while fiddling with the mechanism to open his locket.

Click!

A moment later, inside the locket Alfonzo saw a picture of Elicia, one that he recognized.

"Really?" Elicia asked as she two fiddled with the locket's mechanism.

Click!

Then, just like Alfonzo did, Elicia opened her locket and saw a familiar picture of Alfonzo.

Inside both lockets were a part of a picture Alfonzo and Elicia took together. In the picture, they were hugging while staring into each other's eyes. And Sun had cropped the picture so that they would each have the other's face in their locket.

{A/N: The picture is the cover image.}

"With those, no matter where you go, you'll always have a piece of the other's heart with you." Sun said with a sweet smile.

In response, Elicia jumped off the couch and pulled Sun into a tight hug.

"Sun, you're so sweet!" Elicia squealed excitedly while rocking Sun back and forth.

Meanwhile, Sun simply returned the hug with a gradually widening smile.

"Damn, now I don't wanna give them my gift." Mirajane, with her old, more competitive personality leaking, said under her breath.

"I'm glad I went first." Marin said while patting her chest in relief.

Meanwhile, Cana and Ultear could only agree with Mirajane's muttering while looking at Marn with envy.

Eventually, Elicia released Sun from the hug. Then, as she sat down next to Alfonzo again, she opened her mouth to speak again.

"Thanks, Sun." Elicia said with a smile. "I love it."

"Yeah, Thanks, Sun." Alfonzo added with a smile of his own. "It's a great gift. And I'll never take it off."

A moment later, Alfonzo created a pair of gold necklaces with rose gold accents to match the lockets. Then, he handed the larger of the two and his locket to Elicia. At the same time, Elicia handed her locket to Alfonzo. Then, they both strung the lockets on the necklaces before helping the other to wear them.

"I think I'm getting diabetes. Yoruichi muttered. "There's just too much sweetness in the air."

With that, the room fell silent. However, it was not because of what Yoruichi said. Instead, it was because Cana, Ultear, and Mirajane were glaring at each other and Erza to determine who would go next.

"Well, since no one else has moved, I'll offer my gift next." Erza said, after realizing that the other three were reluctant to go first.

Then, Erza stood up from her seat and reached down to pick up the large, heavy package.

"Erza, you don't have to move it." Alfonzo said, hastily stopping Erza. "I'll just come to you. Besides, it's too big to hold with Lici and Lucy next to me."

"Ah! That indeed makes sense." Erza replied as she stopped her movements. Then, she stood up with a nod. "Then, I'll give this one to Elicia while you open that one."

As Erza spoke, she picked up the other package. Then, she started walking towards the couch where Alfonzo, Elicia, and Lucy sat. Meanwhile, Alfonzo stood up and crossed paths with Erza to arrive at the side of the heavy object next to Erza's seat.

"Thanks, Erza." Elicia said with a smile. However, she was more curious about what Erza got for Alfonzo.

At the same time, Alfonzo, using the same knife as before, split the gift's wrapping paper. A moment later, the wrapping paper fell to the floor revealing a fang-shaped chunk of metal that was nearly as tall as Alfonzo.

"Hmm... Interesting." Alfonzo muttered as he placed his palm on the chunk of metal.

"What is that, Erza?" Lucy asked curiously.

"It's the fang of an S-Class magical beast." Erza replied. "I was tasked to slay it on a quest a couple of days ago. Apparently, it had been eating the contents of the mine near the village that posted the quest. And its fangs and claws took on some of the metal's properties. Though, I'm not familiar with the type of metal."

"You managed to get Fonzie and unknown metal?" Cana asked while waggling her eye brows suggestively. "Looks like someone's gonna get a big thank you tonight."

"Just because it's unknown to Erza doesn't mean it's unknown to Alfonzo, though." Mirajane pointed out.

"That's true." Cana replied with a nod. "Well then, why don't we ask the man in question? So, what's the verdict, Fonzie?"

"Well, I already know of the metal." Alfonzo replied. "Or rather, I know about the metal in the mines Erza went to protect. But this is something new."

Hearing that, all the girls' curiosity peaked.

"Well, don't just leave us hanging like that." Mirajane said excitedly. "Erza's the only one into that kinda thing."

"Mira, not in front of the guests." Marin scolded Mirajane playfully.

"Oh, oops." Erza replied as she glanced at Yoruichi and Sui-Feng. "I kinda forgot they were there."

While Yoruichi could only smile wryly, Sui-Feng clenched her fists in anger at the blatant disregard.

"Anyway, what can the metal fang do, Alfonzo?" Sun asked in a curious tone.

"From what I can tell by running my magic power through it, it has the ability to weaken the gravity in its surroundings." Alfonzo replied. "And despite being mostly organic, I can control and recreated it with my magic. Which is kind of weird."

"Weaken Gravity?" Erza asked while stroking her chin in contemplation. "If my memory serves me correctly, the beast did something like that to increase its speed during our fight. And it almost threw itself in to orbit accidentally when it tried to run away from me. Luckily, Astraia allows me to control the wind. So, I was able to chase it down and slay it."

"So, the fang has the magical beast's properties?" Marin asked in a confused tone. "What's the big deal about that?"

"Normally, that wouldn't be out of the ordinary." Yoruichi said from her seat on the recliner. "But that's usually a passive effect of a magical beast's materials. However, Alfonzo said he felt it only after he ran his magic power through it, right?"

Although most of the girls were not happy to hear Yoruichi insert her opinion into the conversation, they simply nodded without paying her much mind. The only exception being Cana, who glared at Yoruichi with blatant hostility.

"Keep looking at Lady Yoruichi like that, and you'll lose your eyes." Sui-Feng said while reaching for the wakizashi on her back.

"Oh, really?" Cana said, while reaching for the [Soul Armament] on her left hip. "I'd like to see you try."

After Alfonzo created the second round of [Soul Armament Embryos] back in March, Cana had evolved hers into the basic form of her [Soul Armament], a deck of blank magic cards. And with these magic cards, she did not have to shuffle through her existing magic cards to form combinations. Instead, she could insert her magic power to create the cards she desired. Then, once the spell was activated, they would automatically be sent to the discarded cards on her right hip before they rejoined the active deck a short while later.

And not only Cana, but Ultear, Mirajane, Marin, and Sun's [Soul Armament Embryos] had evolved into [Soul Armaments], as well. Though, none of them has been able to break their first seal, yet.

"Cana/Bumble Bee, stop." Elicia and Yoruichi said simultaneously.

"Tch!" Cana and Sui-Feng clicked their tongues simultaneously in response.

Immediately after taking the same action, at the same time, Cana and Sui-Feng glared at each other. Then, they both clicked their tongues once again and averted their gazes.

"Sorry about that." Yoruichi said while rubbing her temples.

"Me, too." Elicia replied while lowering her head.

"Anyway, Yoruichi is right." Alfonzo said, seemingly not bothered by the hostile atmosphere in the room. "This fang's ability to weaken gravity should be a passive ability of the beast. But after ingesting all that metal from the mine, it became an active ability."

"And that's because of the metal it ate?" Ultear asked, helping to dispel the previous atmosphere.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "In fact, I use the metal in a lot of my magic items that involve magical beast parts. It's actually got a pretty simple name, too. Activation Metal."

"Does that mean it lets the users of those magic items activate the magical beast's abilities at will?" Mirajane asked curiously.

"Exactly." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "That's why I suggested that someone take that quest. I didn't want to lose my supply of this metal to a magical beast. I just didn't think Erza would be the one to take it. We had just returned from the quest in Rosemary Village, after all."

"I took the quest because it seemed important to you." Erza replied with a smile. "And I knew you could not go because you were waiting for the shipment of materials for your work at Mermaid Heel's guild hall."

In response, Alfonzo smiled lovingly. Then, he shifted his gaze to Elicia, who was still holding her gift from Erza.

"Anyway, are you gonna open that, Lici?" Alfonzo asked.

"Huh? Oh, yeah.!" Elicia exclaimed in surprise after the focus of the conversation was shifted to her so abruptly.

Then, like she did with Marin's gift, Elicia ripped the wrapping paper haphazardly, scattering wrapping paper all over the couch and floor.

"Oh, wow!" Elicia exclaimed after seeing what was inside the wrapping paper. "I should be able to make a pretty cool cape for Fonzie with this."

"Hey, isn't that...?" Lucy asked in surprise, as well.

"Indeed." Erza replied with a nod. "It's the pelt of the mutated Lightning Mink we hunted during the time of the trial."

"So, that's why you insisted on keeping it." Lucy muttered. "I would have fought harder for it if I knew that's what you were gonna use it for. I was thinking the same thing back then, after all."

"Don't worry, Lucy." Elicia said with a smile. "I'll consider this a gift from you, too. The two of you took it down together with your team, after all."

"That was actually the plan from the start." Erza said while pointing at a piece of paper mixed in with the scattered pieces of wrapping paper on the floor.

Hearing that, Lici looked at Erza. Then, she followed the direction where her finger pointed. A moment later, she picked up the piece of paper and read its contents.

"Happy birthday from Team Natsu!" Elicia read aloud. "Natsu Dragneel, Gray Fullbuster, Erza Scarlet, Lucy Heartfilia, Wendy Marvel, Happy, and Carla."

In response, everyone in the room looked at Erza in shock, surprised that she would think that far ahead. Though, it was just like her to not tell anyone about it.

"Hehehe." Elicia giggled happily. Then, she lunged at Lucy and wrapped her in a hug. "Thanks, Lucy. *Muah* I'll make sure to give the others a hug and tell them thank you, too."

As Elicia spoke, she gave Lucy a big kiss on the cheek.

"And I bet they'll all be thoroughly confused by the sudden thank you." Mirajane said with a smile.
"Especially Natsu and Gray. They aren't the sharpest tools in the shed, after all."

Hearing Mirajane's words, everyone nodded in agreement. The exceptions being Yoruichi and Sui-Feng, who did not know Natsu or Gray well enough to comment.

"Anyway, who's next?" Alfonzo asked while glancing at Cana, Ultear, and Mirajane.

Chapter 352: Birthday Presents; Part 2

"Fine!" Cana shouted after the staring contest between her, Ultear, and Mirajane went on for a few minutes. "I'll go next."

As she spoke, Cana pulled out a card from her normal card pouch. Then, she injected her magic power into the card. As a result, two gift wrapped bottles appeared in her hands.

"Here." Cana said as she extended her hands towards Alfonzo and Elicia. "Happy birthday."

Simultaneously, Alfonzo and Elicia, with smiles on their faces, reached for the bottles. Then, they unwrapped them. And just like before, Elicia unwrapped hers messily, like a child, while Alfonzo used his small knife to open his carefully.

"Ooh!" Elicia exclaimed happily. "It's a five gallon bottle of Himbeere liqueur."

Himbeere, a liquor company that specializes in raspberry flavored alcohol, ranging from whiskey to vodka. And the bottle of liqueur in Elicia's hands is its best seller. And despite the fact that Elicia rarely drinks, she enjoys soaking raspberries in this liqueur, putting the soaked raspberries on top of vanilla ice cream, then setting the liqueur on fire. This causes the alcohol in the mixture to be burned away while leaving the flavor and slightly melting the ice cream as well, making for quite the delicious dessert.

"And this is a hundred thirty year old bottle of cognac." Alfonzo said shortly afterwards. "This must have cost a pretty Jewel, Cana."

"Yeah, it did." Cana replied with a smile. "But you're worth it."

"Look at Cana and all her smooth talk." Marin said in a teasing tone.

"I'm actually more surprised that she didn't drink it all herself." Lucy said before ducking her head because of Cana's subsequent glare.

"Based on Cana's reaction to Lucy's statement, she came really close to doing just that." Ultear analyzed.

"Probably more than once, too." Mirajane said.

"Still, she should be commended for her stead-fast determination." Erza said in a stern tone.

As she spoke, Erza moved towards Cana with her arms spread. And when Cana saw that, she paled slightly as she scooted backwards on the couch.

Unfortunately, because Sun was sitting next to her, she could only move back so far.

"Hey, Erza, there's no need for a hug." Cana said while waving her hands in front of her.

Unfortunately for Cana, Erza decided to ignore her protests. Then, she was pulled into a hug and her head was pressed into Erza's rather large bosom.

"Huh?" Cana exclaimed in confusion. "It didn't hurt?"

"You panicked for nothing, Cana." Elicia said while stifling a giggle. "She's not wearing her armor today."

"Oh.... Right..." Cana said in a relieved tone.

Naturally, Cana's fear of hugging Erza had a reason. And that reason was simple, When Erza praised someone, she often gave over enthusiastic hugs while wearing her armor. Meaning, she would slam whoever she hugged head first into her chest plate. And after Cana saw Erza do that to Natsu while he was feeling motion sickness during the mission to eliminate Eisenwald, she vowed to never let Erza hug her again.

"I guess I'll go next." Mirajane said as she reached into her cleavage.

A moment later, Mirajane pulled out what appeared to be a pair of tickets.

"Hold on, are those what I think they are?" Lucy asked with a horrified expression on her face.

"That's right." Mirajane replied with a smile. "These are tickets to see a play at the theater run by Rabian in Onibus. I thought you two would enjoy a little date. For just the two of you."

"Thanks, Mira." Alfonzo replied with a smile as he reached for the tickets.

"When is the play, Fonzie?" Elicia asked, leaning over to look at the date on the tickets in Alfonzo's hand.
"Oh, it's on the tenth."

"Two days before Crawford Seam and Org are executed." Alfonzo added quietly.

"The tenth you say?" Erza asked. "That's quite the coincidence."

"What do you mean?" Ultear asked curiously.

"Well, I believe I told you about the play we did when we took the quest to attract customers to the theater in Onibus, right?" Erza replied with a question of her own.

"Yeah, it was something like Freddy and the Yandere." Cana replied.

"It was Frederick and YandERICA." Ultear corrected. "But yea, I remember."

"Well, the play was so popular that Rabian requested that we come back to perform it for another week." Erza replied. "And I accepted his request on behalf of Team Natsu."

"You did what!?" Lucy shouted in a tone filled with disbelief and anger. "Are you serious? You're going to make me suffer through that disaster again?"

"Why would you say that, Lucy?" Erza asked in confusion. "The show was so popular last time. It's obvious the audience was in awe of our superb acting skills."

"Superb acting skills my butt!" Lucy shouted. "You froze up every time you got on stage, Gray somehow messed up his character's name despite the fact that I would say it before he came on stage, and Natsu... Where do I even start with that pyro-maniac and the damage he caused the theater during every show."

"Surely it wasn't as bad as you remember." Sun said while trying not to laugh.

"Oh, I'm sure it was worse." Lucy said in an exasperated tone. "And she signed us up for that again, without even asking if we wanted to."

"Well, Gramps and Mira said the play was great." Alfonzo said with a smile. "So, I'm looking forward to seeing the two of you perform."

In response, Erza nodded proudly. Meanwhile, Lucy glanced at Alfonzo's smile and could not help but look away with a slight flush on her face.

'That's, so, not fair.' Lucy thought to herself.

"Fine, I'll do it." Lucy muttered.

"Well, now that that's been settled, I guess it's my turn." Ultear said with a smile. Then, she picked up a box from the floor next to her.

On a side note, Ultear was sitting on the floor due to the lack of seats.

Standing up, Ultear stepped forward before handing over the box to Alfonzo.

"This is for both of you." Ultear said with a smile. "Though, I'm sure the rest of us will use it just as much as you do."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia looked down at the box in Alfonzo's hand with curiosity.

"Come on, Fonzie. Open it." Elicia said while shaking Alfonzo's arm. "Hurry, I wanna see what's inside."

Smiling at Elicia's eagerness, Alfonzo opened the box. And what he found inside was a pair of keys.

"Keys?" Elicia said, tilting her head in confusion as she did so.

"There's something underneath them." Alfonzo said as he reached into the box to pull out both the keys and a small piece of paper from the box. "An address? On Akane Beach?"

"That's right." Ultear replied. "I bought the two of you a beach side villa on the beach."

"Seriously?" Cana asked in a disbelieving tone. "But isn't the real estate in Akane Beach ridiculously expensive?"

"Yeah." Ultear replied with a nod. "But remember when we went there after the guild hall was built? And remember how I had hit a big payout before we got attacked by Erza's friends? Well, the casino saved it for me. Or rather, I coer... *Cough* convinced them to save it for me after we saved the hotel from Dark Wizards."

"And you used that money to buy Fonzie and Lici a house?" Marin asked with her eyes wide open.

"That's right." Utear replied smugly.

"Does that mean we'll be neighbors twice?" Sun asked while tilting her head cutely.

"I guess it does." Alfonzo replied with a smile. Then, he looked down at the details about the villa. "Oh, it even has a pier where I can dock Sixth sense. That's good. The dock fees in Hargeon are ridiculous."

"Say, that reminds me." Elicia said. "Sixth sense was docked at Hargeon's port when we took the quest on Galuna Island, wasn't it? So, why did we take Moka's little boat?"

"Because I didn't want those disgusting centipedes anywhere near my ship." Alfonzo replied with frosty resolve.

After that, the group, minus Yoruichi and Sui-Feng discussed taking a vacation to the new villa during the summer for the next few minutes before Alfonzo eventually remembered their guests, who had remained silent the whole time.

"Well, I guess that only leaves the gifts from Yoruichi." Alfonzo said.

Hearing that, the girls' enthusiasm cooled off immediately. As a result, both Alfonzo and Yoruichi could only smile wryly.

"Just get it over with." Cana spat. "Then, we can go back to planning our vacation."

Shrugging his shoulders, Alfonzo picked up the package at his feet while Elicia did the same. Though, her package was placed between her and the couch's armrest. Then, they both opened their gifts at the same time. Though, Elicia was a lot less enthusiastic about opening this one.

"Hmm... It's a metal ingot." Alfonzo said, not immediately recognizing the metal in his hand.

"And I got a roll of... silk thread?" Elicia asked curiously.

"Those are exclusive to the continent I came from originally." Yoruichi said as Alfonzo and Elicia inspected her gifts. "They come from a spider that lives in the forest near my clan's home. And this spider spins a special kind of web."

While Yoruichi spoke, Alfonzo was letting his magic power integrate with the metal in his hands so that he could add it to his arsenal. Meanwhile, Elicia glanced at Yoruichi to hear the rest of the explanation.

Even the other girls were interested to hear what made the metal and thread special.

"The threads that spider produces have a strange ability." Yoruichi continued. "When something slams into them, they store the kinetic energy and redirect it back at whatever ran into it. And that ingot you're holding, Alfonzo, is the result of melting down a large amount of the threads and letting them cool. Also, the metal retains the same ability."

'It's Vibranium.' Alfonzo and Elicia thought at the same time.

"Holy crap!" Marin exclaimed after hearing Yoruichi's explanation. "That's crazy."

"Yeah, armors and shields made of that stuff would be almost unbeatable." Mirajane added.

"Unfortunately, that's not the case." Yoruichi replied while shaking her head. "It works just fine against physical attacks. But purely magic based attacks would still affect it like any other slightly stronger and more durable metal."

"So, if I hit it with a lightning bolt, it would just be a conductor, huh?" Alfonzo asked.

"Exactly." Yoruichi replied. "But it would redirect the kinetic energy back at the source. Unfortunately, the heat and electricity would still be an issue."

"Still, this stuff is pretty amazing." Elicia said. "It's too bad there's only so much thread. Fonzie can recreate the metal with his magic, but I can only use what I have... I wonder if I can get a contract with the people from that continent."

Although Elicia started muttering towards the end, Yoruichi was able to hear her perfectly.

"That shouldn't be a problem." Yoruichi replied with a smile. "Since my clan is the one that sells it, I should be able to get you a pretty good deal."

At the same time, in Elicia's inner world, Scylla was also inspecting the thread Elicia was holding.

["Actually, I don't think you'll have to worry about that., Elicia"] Scylla said with a smile.

'What do you mean?' Elicia asked internally.

["Just release me and follow my instructions."] Scylla replied.

In response, Elicia glanced at Yoruichi and Sui-Feng for a moment. Then, she exhaled a sigh.

'Okay, I'll do it.' Elicia replied.

"[Mend the Seams of Reality, Scylla.]" Elicia chanted, surprising everyone in the room.

With that, the wristband full of golden dragon motif sewing needles began to glow. A moment later, the glow covered Elicia's hands. Then, when the glow retracted, Elicia's hands were covered in golden dragon scales.

After that, a single dragon scale was ejected from Elicia's right hand before it transformed into a needle. Then, Elicia used her [Thread Magic] to manipulate the silk thread and thread the needle.

"Lici, what are you---" Alfonzo began to ask.

Before he could finish his question, however, the golden needle, with the thread attached to it plunged into Elicia's chest, surprising all those watching. And as the group watched in horror, the entire roll of silk was drawn into Elicia's chest along with the needle.

"That felt weird." Elicia said while rubbing her chest where the needle pierced her.

"What the hell was that, Lici?" Cana asked in a slightly panicked tone.

"Yeah, sorry about that." Elicia said with a sheepish smile. "Scylla told me to do it. Apparently with her powers, I could add the properties of that thread to my magic power container. So, now I can produce that kind of thread."

With that, Elicia dispelled her [Soul Armament's] released state. Then, after her hands turned back to normal and her wristband was back on her left wrist, she produced a thread of the spider silk from her right index finger.

"And you didn't think to explain it first?" Alfonzo asked while glaring at Elicia. "Do you have any idea how fucking worried I was when I saw you stab that needle into your chest?"

"Sorry..." Elicia said while she lowered her head. "I was just listening to Scylla. I didn't think about the rest."

["Hey, don't blame this on me!"] Scylla shouted in Elicia's inner world. ["I told you to tell them first. In fact, that was the first thing I said before I told you what to do."]

'Oops.' Elicia replied in an embarrassed tone. 'I was just so excited. Now I can do with threads what Fonzie does with metals. We match even more now.'

["*Sigh* And I hate the fact that hearing that made me happy, too."] Scylla replied.

Meanwhile, Yoruichi and Sui-Feng were surprised to see Elicia do something that was the equivalent of a Shikai release.

'It hasn't even been a year since they got those weapons from Alfonzo.' Yoruichi mused as she stared at Elicia's wristband. 'She's definitely a genius to unlock that state so quickly. I wonder if Alfonzo and the redhead have unlocked theirs as well.'

At the same time, Sui-Feng clenched her fists in frustration. She had already lost to Elicia in the past. And back then, Elicia's [Soul Armament] was still sealed. Now, she was wondering just how big the gap between her and Elicia was after she released her first seal.

Chapter 353: Duel: Erza Vs. Yoruichi; Part 1

"Now that the gift giving is done..." Erza said while standing up from her seat on the couch. Then, she shifted her gaze towards Yoruichi. "Yoruichi Shihouin, I challenge you to a duel."

Sigh x 8

"And here I thought she had forgotten about that." Mirajane said while placing her right hand on her forehead.

"Did you really?" Ultear asked in a tone filled with disbelief.

"Seriously." Lucy said. "You know Erza has a one-track mind. There's no way she would have forgotten about that."

"*Sigh* I know." Mirajane replied while rubbing her temples. "I was just hoping that was the case."

Meanwhile, Sui-Feng clenched her fists and gritted her teeth after hearing Erza's challenge. However, just as she was about to step forward and challenge Erza in Yoruichi's stead, Yoruichi stood up.

"I accept your challenge." Yoruichi said in a determined tone. "And even though I know what I did was wrong, I won't make this easy for you. In fact, if you're not careful, you'll lose... and quite badly at that."

"I wouldn't have it any other way." Erza replied with a nod. Then, she turned around and started walking towards the door leading to the mansion's backyard. "Follow me."

Before Yoruichi could take a step forward, the rest of Alfonzo's girls stood up and followed Erza, looking forward to the show. Meanwhile, Alfonzo, who was still seated and just watching the ongoing situation, turned his head to Yoruichi.

"You'd better take this seriously, Yoruichi." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "If not, this really won't end well for you."

"I know." Yoruichi replied before following the others outside.

With that, Alfonzo and Sui-Feng, who was left behind with a gob smacked expression on her face, were left alone in the living room. A moment later, Sui-Feng shifted her attention to Alfonzo with an enraged expression on her face.

"How could you allow them to disrespect Lady Yoruichi like that?" Sui-Feng questioned angrily.

"Why are you complaining when Yoruichi didn't say anything?" Alfonzo asked in a bored tone. "Or are you saying what she did to me was okay?"

As soon as Alfonzo finished speaking, Sui-Feng was ready to let her anger answer his question. However, before she could speak, Alfonzo continued.

"Keep in mind, your answer will determine the way you leave this room." Alfonzo said in a much colder tone while exuding a bit of his killing intent.

Immediately, Sui-Feng's mouth snapped shut and she only stared at Alfonzo angrily.

"Look, I know you respect Yoruichi above all else." Alfonzo said in a significantly gentler tone. "But not everyone sees her the same way you do. The fact of the matter is that she did something wrong. And those girls are not happy about it. Still, they are trying to get to know her, despite what it looks like."

"But Lady Yoruichi doesn't deserve to be treated this way.!" Sui-Feng shouted.

"In your mind, she doesn't." Alfonzo replied as he stood from the couch. "But she did something unforgivable in the minds of those girls. So, the fact that they haven't attacked her on sight is something you should be grateful for. Because no matter how strong Yoruichi is, she's not strong enough to fight six S-Class wizards and two A-Class wizards who can put up a fight against an S-Class. And that's not including me."

"Do you really think I would allow Lady Yoruichi to fight alone in a situation like that?" Sui-Feng asked while clutching the hilt of her wakizashi.

In the next instant, Alfonzo's magic power pressure and killing intent flooded the living room

"That's not the real question here." Alfonzo said coldly. "The question is, is there anything you could do about it?"

After feeling Alfonzo's pressure and killing intent, Sui-Feng's grip on her wakizashi loosened subconsciously. ON top of that, she felt her knees getting weak, as if she would kneel at any moment. However, before her knees could give out, Alfonzo retracted his pressure.

"Look, there's something I learned when I was very young. Perhaps you should think about it." Alfonzo said as he started walking towards the back door. Then, just before walking through it, he continued. "Respect is earned, not given. And Yoruichi has done nothing to earn those girls' respect. In fact, she actively destroyed any budding respect her reputation might have earned her."

With that, Alfonzo walked through the back door. Then, he flared his magic power to activate the sigils surrounding the training ground he built in the backyard.

Meanwhile, as soon as Alfonzo left the house, Sui-Feng's legs finally gave out and she slumped to the floor.

"How can someone so young have so much magic power?" Sui-Feng asked to no one in particular. "He's only a little weaker than Master Tsunade. But I wouldn't doubt it if he one day caught up to Captain Unohana."

A moment later, like a whisper on the wind, Sui-Feng heard Alfonzo's voice in her ears.

"Respect. Learn it. Earn it. And return it. That's something my mother used to say all the time before she was killed."

Meanwhile, as Alfonzo and Sui-Feng spoke in the living room, Erza led Yoruichi and the other girls out to the training grounds past the sports courts and the pool.

Here we are." Erza said as she stopped next to a number of poles impaling the ground.

All the poles were of different heights and thicknesses. Which made sense, since they were used for balance and coordination training. As for the area around the poles, it had been flattened long ago. And the reason was simple, Erza and Mirajane used to get into fights all the time. So, whenever they were visiting Alfonzo and Elicia, they would fight around the poles whenever they got into it.

But ever since Mirajane's change in attitude three years ago, the place had not been used for much more than light sparring. But today, it will be used for its intended purpose, once again.

"I see." Yoruichi said as she took off the long-sleeved orange shirt she usually wore, revealing a sleeveless, backless kimono style blouse, a yellow sash tied around her waist, and tight black pants.

"Well then, shall we begin?" Erza asked as she [Requipped] into her [Heart Kreuz Armor] with her [Soul Armament] sheathed on her hip.

"Let's." Yoruichi replied simply as she vanished from where she stood with a [Flash Step].

"Holy crap, she's fast." Marin exclaimed, barely able to keep up with Yoruichi's speed even with her [Magic Power Detection] expanded.

"She really is." Sun replied with a solemn expression on her face.

"Well, that's not surprising." Elicia replied. "I wouldn't be surprised if she was the fastest wizard on Ishgar."

"Are you serious?" Cana asked, stopping her hand before the liquor bottle it was holding could reach her lips. "Will Erza be okay?"

As if to answer her question, Erza calmly unsheathed her [Soul Armament]. Then, she thrust it behind her at high-speed.

A moment later, Yoruichi appeared less than an inch away from the tip of the sword.

"I see, so you can keep up with my speed with that weird skill Alfonzo and Elicia use." Yoruichi said as she flicked the tip of Erza's sword. "So, he taught it to all of you, too?"

"Indeed." Erza replied as she stepped towards Yoruichi and thrust her sword once again.

"I see." Yoruichi replied while stepping out of the range of Erza's thrust.

"Well, it looks like she should be fine." Cana said in a relieved tone as she raised her bottle once again.

"If you think that's Yoruichi's top speed, you're wrong." Elicia said calmly. "She's just getting started."

Spurt!

"*Cough* *Cough* No way." Cana said while wiping her mouth with the back of her free hand. "You can't be serious."

A moment later, Yoruichi once again vanished from sight thanks to her speed, narrowly avoiding a slash from Erza's sword in the process, only to reappear on Erza's right with her right fist reeled back and her long ponytail trailing behind her.

Then, before the punch could land, a second Yoruichi appeared on Erza's right mirroring the first's posture.

"[Utsusemi]." Yoruichi chanted quietly as the two fists landed on Erza's abdomen simultaneously.

Bang!

"Gah!" Erza grunted as she was sent flying backwards. On top of that, she felt two impacts instead of one.

Bang!

A moment later, Erza slammed into the ground before rolling a short distance. Then, she pressed her left hand against the ground and forced herself up onto her feet. Still, she slid backwards for a few feet due to the momentum.

Meanwhile, all the other girls, other than Elicia, looked on with shocked expressions on their faces.

"What the hell was that?" Cana asked in a confused tone.

"Yeah, it was like he got hit by two Yoruichi's at the same time." Marin asked with her eyes opened wide.

"I guess that wasn't just hyperbole." Ultear muttered. "She really is that fast."

"She is." Elicia replied with a nod. "She's fast enough to leave tangible after-images. I'm not sure about her limit, though."

Hearing that, all the girls' expressions turned solemn as they continued to watch.

"*Cough* I guess it doesn't matter if I know where the attack is coming from if I'm too slow to do anything about it." Erza said with a cough.

"That's right." Yoruichi replied. Still, the fact that you were able to raised your left arm to block is impressive."

Hearing that, the girls looked at Erza's left arm instinctively. And what they saw were two fist shaped indents on her gauntlet near the wrist and elbow.

"Still, that won't be enough." Erza replied. "[Requip: Black Wing Armor]."

After the light of her magic shined for a moment, Erza was now seen donning her [Black Wing Armor]. Then, as soon as the light faded, her silhouette blurred as she dashed forward with the wings on her armor spread.

Swish! *Swish!* *Swish!* *Swish!* *Swish!*

Once in range, Erza unleashed a flurry of precise sword strikes. However, like before, Yoruichi was able to dodge them. Though, the margin for error had been reduced significantly. On top of that, Erza's movements were speeding up with every strike.

"When did Erza get so fast?" Mirajane asked while following Erza's movements with her eyes and [Magic Power Detection].

"It probably has something to do with Astraia." Ultear replied. "I mean, you remember when she released her power to stop the fight in the guild a few weeks ago? Then, she slammed face first into a wall? I bet she started training intensively to control that kind of speed since then."

"I see." Mirajane replied. "Makes sense."

At the same time, Mirajane clenched her fists.

'I won't fall behind her.' Mirajane thought. 'Just wait until my [Soul Armament] awakens, I'll finally surpass you, Erza.'

Meanwhile, Erza was getting closer and closer to landing a hit on Yoruichi. On top of that, she was able to evade, block, or parry any of the punches or kicks Yoruichi countered with.

Then, during one exchange, Yoruichi threw a front kick at Erza's abdomen, which Erza blocked with the flat of her sword. In response, Yoruichi added some extra force to her blocked kick to force herself away from the red-headed swordswoman. However, while Yoruichi's feet were off the ground, Erza's eyes glinted.

"[Black Wing: Moon Flash]." Erza chanted as the wings on her armor flapped strongly.

In the next instant, Erza's silhouette blurred once again. Then, she appeared behind Yoruichi having just slashed her sword. A moment later, a cross-shaped tear appeared on Yoruichi's blouse.

"Wow, she almost got her!" Marin exclaimed excitedly.

"Yeah, she made me use my top-speed to evade that one." Yoruichi said as she appeared in front of Erza with her left arm extended to the side. "[Taketonbo]."

Bang!

Then, before anyone understood what was going on, Erza slammed onto the ground, back first.

"*Cough*" Upon impact, Erza coughed as the wind was knocked out of her.

At the same time, the Yoruichi with damage clothing faded away. And when the girls saw that, they could not help but gawk in amazement. Meanwhile, the real Yoruichi, who had just thrown Erza, stood over her while twirling her left side bang around her finger.

'Damn, that was a lot closer than I thought.' Yoruichi said as she made a small blade of magic power on one of her fingers to discreetly cut a small amount of hair from her bang. 'It's a good thing no one noticed that my bangs were uneven.'

"Yeah, trimming your bangs is probably a good idea, Yoruichi." Alfonzo said as if he had been waiting just to prove Yoruichi's thoughts wrong. "It would have looked pretty awkward if your side bangs were uneven, after all."

With that, Alfonzo drew everyone's attention as he walked towards the group watching the duel.

"*Sigh* It wouldn't have killed you to keep that to yourself, would it?" Yoruichi asked with a wry smile on her face.

"Nope, it sure wouldn't have." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "but no one would have known how close to losing you were if I didn't say it."

Then, Alfonzo's expression became serious as he continued.

"Like I told you before, you better take this seriously or you'll lose." Alfonzo said sternly. Then, he pointed towards Erza, who was picking herself up from the ground. "On top of that, as a warrior, she deserves that much respect."

Hearing that, Yoruichi turned her attention to Erza, who was still staring at her with fire in her eyes.

"You're right." Yoruichi said with a nod as her expression became serious, as well. "I'll show you all I've got then."

With that, Yoruichi's magic power flared as her arms were covered in arcs of white lightning. On top of that, a pair of wings, also formed from white lightning, appeared on her back.

"Finally, you're taking this seriously." Erza said with a smile. "Then, I'll do the same. [Deliver Justice as Swiftly as the Wind, Astraia]."

In the next instant, Erza's magic power spiked to five times its normal amount. On top of that, the two pairs of folded fairy wings that served as Astraia's handguard spread, as well.

Chapter 354: Duel: Erza Vs. Yoruichi; Part 2

Once Erza's [Soul Armament] was released, Yoruichi vanished in a burst of speed like before. Then, in the next instant, she appeared in front of Erza with her right arm drawn back to throw a punch.

Calmly, Erza readjusted the position of her sword. All the while, she maintained eye contact with Yoruichi as she did so.

Zap! *Boom!*

In the next instant, Erza's hair fluttered as a bolt of white lightning shot past the side of her head and crashed into the property wall a distance behind her.

"She's even faster now." Mirajane muttered while narrowing her eyes.

"Yeah, and Erza was able to redirect an attack at that speed." Ultear added.

"Well, there's a reason why Erza is considered the second strongest woman n Fairy Tail after Ur, ya know." Alfonzo said. "She---"

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" Marin interrupted. "Second strongest woman in Fairy Tail? Erza? Not Lici?"

Not only was Marin confused by Alfonzo's declaration. Sun and Lucy looked at him with confusion written on their faces, too.

"*Sigh* It doesn't surprise me that Lucy doesn't know, she's only been part of the guild for less than a year." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "But Marin, Sun, how can the two of you not know this already?"

Marin and Sun still had metaphorical question marks floating above their heads.

"It's because of Lici's [Camouflage Magic]." Cana said. "Because of that, most people, other than the requester, never even know that Lici took a quest."

"Yeah, and since she fights more like an assassin in most cases, no one knows how strong she is, either." Mirajane added.

"Oh~~~! That makes sense." Marin replied with a nod of understanding.

"Uh huh." Sun added while nodding her head, as well. "Now, I get it."

Meanwhile, even though their conversation was not very long, Erza and Yoruichi, with their increased speed from tapping into the elements, had exchanged nearly a hundred blows by now. ON top of that, the sound of explosions rocked the mansion's backyard. Despite the sounds, however, the training ground had taken no damage what so ever.

"Activating the sigils around the area was a good idea." Alfonzo said while following the battle with not only his [Magic Power Detection], but his eyes, as well. Then, he reached out and flicked his left index finger in Marin's direction. "Otherwise, it would have been even worse than when Erza and Mira used to fight back in the day."

At the same time, a stray discharge of lightning was redirected upwards before it could hit Marin.

"We weren't that bad." Mirajane said in protest. However, when Elicia, Cana, and Ultear stared at her with blank expressions, she shrunk back slightly. "Were we really?"

Before anyone could answer, their attention was drawn into the sky, where Yoruichi was descending with lightning concentrated on her right fist. Meanwhile, standing on the top of the tallest pole on the training ground, Erza was looking up with her sword surrounded by the wind and ready to strike.

"[Lightning Magic: Raijin's Descent]." Yoruichi chanted as the lightning wings on her back pushed her speed even further.

"[Echo Step]." Erza also chanted as the wind swirled around her violently.

A moment later, Yoruichi's fist slammed into the pole Erza had been using as a foot hold. However, Erza was no longer standing in that location. Instead, she was hovering in the air an arm's length away from Yoruichi with her sword raised.

"[Hurricane]." Erza chanted as she slashed her sword downwards.

While Yoruichi was able to evade Erza's slash by slightly shifting her body, the wind surrounding the sword quickly created a twister of spinning wind blades around Yoruichi. Then, as soon as Erza withdrew her sword, the twister began to contract around its target.

"How did she even avoid that punch?" Lucy asked in a confused tone.

"I guess that was too fast for you, huh?" Elicia asked with a smile.

"It wasn't just her." Sun added. "I'm not sure what happened, either."

Surprisingly, Cana, Ultear, Mirajane, and Marin all nodded in agreement.

"It was that skill she chanted before Yoruichi's blow landed." Alfonzo said while

Before Alfonzo could continue his explanation, however, his words were forced to a stop when the wind blades started shredding Yoruichi's clothes. And although he would admit that he enjoyed the sight of Yoruichi's clothing disappearing slowly, that was not what stopped his explanation.

Instead, it was the fact that no matter what Yoruichi tried, she could not break the column of deadly wind blades.

"You should get ready to step in, Fonzie." Elicia, who had moved to Alfonzo's side during the battle, whispered so that only Alfonzo could hear her. "If Yoruichi uses one of those moves, Erza could be in real danger."

"I know." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

At that moment, Sui-Feng, who had been sitting alone in the living room, finally made her way out of the house.

"Is... Lady Yoruichi being pushed into a corner?" Sui-Feng asked in a disbelieving tone.

However, before anyone could respond, the situation on the battlefield changed. Before her magic power ran out and her defenses were breached, Yoruichi decided to break out of Erza's attack with brute force.

"[Lightning Magic: Shunkō: Raijū Senkei]." Yoruichi chanted as the lightning wings on her back formed a circle of electrical energy above her head.

In the next instant, a column of condensed lightning was fired towards Erza, ripping through the twister of wind blades and dispersing it in the process. Meanwhile, Erza had raise her sword with the wind swirling around its blade once again. On top of that, she was pushing her magic power to its limit.

"[Gale Cutter]." Erza chanted as she swung Astraia down at the incoming attack, intending to split it in half.

Screech~~~~~!

Although Erza's timing was perfect, Yoruichi's condensed lightning column was stronger than she expected. As a result, Erza's sword was halted while the collision of lightning and wind made a high-pitched grinding sound that echoed around the area.

"That sound is awful." Mirajane said while covering her ears with her hands.

'I can't stop it.' Erza thought to herself as she continued pushing against Yoruichi's attack.

["I told you to evade rather than face it head on."] Astraia replied. ["Although I'm certain you will get there, you are not at a level where you can destroy attacks of this caliber with your sword."]

'I understand that.' Erza said as she was slowly being force backwards by the column of lightning. 'But I wanted to see how far I had to go to reach her.'

["Your recklessness will get you killed someday."] Astraia said in an exasperated tone.

'You're wrong.' Erza replied while shaking her head internally. 'Had this been a battle to the death, I would have never tried something so reckless. Instead, I would have evaded as you suggested. But since it's not, I pushed myself to counterattack. Because I knew there was someone who could get me out of this situation.'

"Alright ladies, I think that's enough." Alfonzo said as he appeared next to Erza with his left hand touching Yoruichi's lightning column. "You're disturbing the neighbors."

With that, Alfonzo raised his left hand to the sky. And with that action, the column of lightning was redirected upwards, allowing Erza to disengage safely.

"Since I had to step in, I think we can all agree that Yoruichi is the winner of this duel." Alfonzo said as he slowly lowered himself to the ground.

"*Sigh* Indeed, I admit defeat." Erza added while lowering herself alongside Alfonzo.

"That was significantly more difficult than I expected." Yoruichi said as she dispersed the lightning of her [Shunkō] spell. Then, as she jumped down from the top of the pole she was standing on, she continued. "I guess I should go see Master Unohana and ask her to train me from the ground up. Underestimating one's opponent is not a habit I want to get into."

"Lady Yoruichi." Sui-Feng said as she approached Yoruichi with her discarded shirt. "Are you alright? Also, your hair seems to be a bit shorter. Did something happen?"

Hearing the last part of Sui-Feng's concerned questions, Yoruichi's left eyebrow began twitching involuntarily. However, when she heard the giggles from the other girls, the twitching became significantly more violent.

"Thanks, Bumble Bee." Yoruichi replied curtly as she took her shirt from Sui-Feng. Then, while putting it on, she continued. "I'm fine. But she was stronger than I expected."

"That's good to hear." Sui-Feng replied in a relieved tone. Then, she turned her attention to Erza. "Was she really that strong? Strong enough to make you use [Raijū Senkei]?"

"She is." Yoruichi replied.

At the same time, Erza was receiving the concern of the other girls.

"I think that's the first time I've ever seen you lose to anyone around our age other than Fonzie and Lici, Erza." Cana said in a slightly upset tone.

"That's not the first time she's lost to someone other than those two." Mirajane protested. However, she was completely ignored. "Seriously, I beat her once around five years ago... Hey, don't ignore me..."

"It's okay, Mira, I remember that fight." Alfonzo said with a wry smile as he started combing his fingers through Mirajane's hair.

Tch!

Several envious sounds of clicked tongues could be heard when Alfonzo consoled Mirajane. Still, the conversation continued.

"I must admit, it's quite humbling." Erza replied while [Requipping] back into her casual clothes. "I pushed myself as far as I could. Yet I was unable to overcome her."

"Speaking of that, and what were you thinking trying to cut through an attack like that/" Ultear asked in a strict tone. "If Alfonzo wasn't here, you could have gotten yourself killed."

"I know." Erza replied. "And had Alfonzo not been here, I would have never tried such a thing. But I knew I could rely on him if things did not go the way I hoped they would."

"*Sigh* I want to be angry at you for putting yourself at risk like that unnecessarily." Ultear said in an exasperated tone. "But I can understand what you were thinking. I'd trust my life to any of you here, too."

"Nope, I'm still mad at her." Marin said with her hands resting on her hips. "Just because you know someone can get you out of a sticky situation, there's no reason to jump into one on your own volition."

"Yeah, Marin's right!" Sun shouted, sounding significantly more angry than Marin. "What if something happened and Alfonzo was a little too late? What would you have done then?"

Hearing Marin and Sun's scolding, Erza lowered her head in apology.

"You're right, I shouldn't be so reckless." Erza said in a sincere tone. "I promise, it will never happen again. Now, please hit me as recompense for my foolish actions."

"Um.. I really don't think that's---" Marin started to say while waving her hands.

Bang!

Before she could finish, however, Erza was blown away after Sun punched her in the face.

"What the...?" Marin exclaimed in surprise.

Not only Marin, but everyone in the backyard was surprised by what just happened.

"If you make us worry like that again, it won't be just one punch, ya see!" Sun shouted as tears overflowed from her eyes.

Bang!

On top of that, with Sun's shout, [Howling Voice] was activated, as well, thanks to her emotions being out of control. As a result, Erza was hit by a shockwave as she was thrown into the wall surrounding the property.

"Holy shit..." Cana muttered in disbelief.

"Calm down, Sun." Elicia said as she pulled Sun into a hug.

In response, Sun wrapped her arms around Elicia, as well while she buried her head in Elicia's chest and cried quietly.

"Wow, I don't think I've ever seen Sun get so angry before." Marin said while she stared at Elicia and Sun blankly.

"Indeed." Erza replied as she strode back towards the rest of the group while rubbing the side of her face. "If I had to guess, she saw flashbacks of when Alfonzo lost his arm."

Hearing that, the other girls seemed to be enlightened. And although Sun had no deep feelings for Alfonzo back then, she certainly did now after more than four years. And she had developed similarly deep feelings with all those here, as well. So, the thought of Erza getting hurt made her lose it.

"Wait, what's this about Alfonzo losing an arm?" Yoruichi asked in surprise.

With that, Alfonzo and most of the girls turned In Yoruichi's direction to see her approaching with Sui-Feng in tow.

"*Sigh* Let's have this conversation inside." Alfonzo said. "There's no point standing out here to talk, after all."

IN response, everyone nodded in agreement with Alfonzo's suggestion.

"On top of that, I wanna crack open that bottle of cognac." Alfonzo said before licking his lips in anticipation.

Immediately afterward, Cana took out a card from her card pouch, stored the bottle of liquor she was holding inside the card, put the card back, ran up to Alfonzo and wrapped her arms and breasts around his left arm, and started pulling him towards the house.

"Yeah, let's talk over a drink." Cana said happily.

Meanwhile, the girls from Fairy Tail could only shake their heads while Yoruichi and Sui-Feng followed the rest of the group inside.

Chapter 355: Dinner with Darkness

After the duel, Alfonzo and the girls headed inside before making their way down into the game room to chat, drink, and play games. And during that time, Erza became the first of the girls to take the initiative

to speak with Yoruichi. And after their duel, Erza did not seem to hold nearly as much hostility as the others. In fact, it was practically non-existent.

Another thing to take note of was the fact that Elicia also had a one-on-one talk with Yoruichi after Erza finally let her go. Though no one heard their conversation, they did hear and/or see when Elicia slapped Yoruichi, which was swiftly followed by Elicia's tight hug and river of tears. And after all that, Elicia and Yoruichi, though not as close as before, seemed to be on good terms again.

On a side note, after Elicia slapped Yoruichi, Alfonzo had to physically restrain Sui-Feng with his magic. Otherwise, she would have attacked Elicia... And gotten her ass kicked... again.

Also, a lot of wizards from Fairy Tail stopped by to wish Alfonzo and Elicia Happy Birthday. And just as everyone expected, Natsu and Gray were thoroughly confused when Elicia pulled them into hugs and thanked them for the wonderful gift. However, Gray seemed to understand after Lucy explained everything to him. Meanwhile, Natsu remained clueless.

Despite the jovial atmosphere in the game room, there were a few genuinely tense moments. And it all happened when Ur showed up. At first, it was when she made eye contact with Yoruichi, and immediately flooded the room with her magic power pressure. The second was when Sui-Feng lost her temper and tried to attack Ur for her perceived disrespect, an action that made Alfonzo face-palm.

'We had a conversation about respect being earned and not given, like, three hours ago.' Alfonzo muttered internally after seeing Sui-Feng, who was still in an attacking posture, sprawled out on the floor and encased in ice.

["I'm not sure about this, but I think she was paying more attention to whether you were going to kill her or not, back then."] Bedlam replied mirthfully.

'I guess... I mean, there's a small, somewhat inconsequential chance that I overdid it with the killing intent and magic power pressure back then.' Alfonzo replied sheepishly.

Luckily, Ur did not deem it necessary to go any further after that. However, she did let Yoruichi know that she was on thin ice.... Pun intended... Before releasing Sui-Feng from the ice.

Then, after the party was over, everyone not living in the mansion, including Lucy, went home. The following day, Elicia bunkered down in her workstation to replace everyone's battle attire with new Vibranium ones. And although she was not able to finish them for Alfonzo and all the girls, she continued to work until it was time for her and Alfonzo to head to Onibus the next day.

The next day, Alfonzo and Elicia hopped into Alfonzo's new magic vehicle, a two-seater that resembled a black 67 Camaro with raised suspension, and headed to Onibus to see the play Team Natsu would be performing at the Onibus Theater.

Arriving about half an hour before the curtain was lifted, they had a chance to speak with their guild mates and wish them good luck before heading to the audience seats and getting seated in the front row. Then, the play went just as it did in canon.

At first, everything started well with Lucys Silver Celestial Spirit, Lyra, a girl with a young appearance with waist-length, strawberry-blonde hair, black eyes, and round blush marks on her cheeks wearing a long, blue dress with pink and yellow hearts printed on the waist, white, feathered shoes, and small wings and a harp on her back, sang the opening song while narrating the play.

However, as soon as Erza stepped on stage, everything went to hell, just as expected. With Erza immediately freezing up, Gray getting his character's name wrong when introducing himself, Natsu

trying to burn down everything in sight in his role as the dragon, and Lucy shouting at all of them through it all.

However, there was a difference in this performance and the canon version. And that was the fact that Wendy was part of the cast. And her role was to play a servant girl who brought the daily necessities to Princess Yanderica, played by Lucy, while she was in captivity. And although it was clear that Wendy was nervous, she played her part wonderfully.

Another difference was the fact that the theater was not destroyed after the performance. And that was thanks to the efforts of Alfonzo, Elicia, and to a lesser extent, Wendy, who used their magic to avoid as much damage as possible.

Then, after the show, Alfonzo and Elicia congratulated the members of Team Natsu, who were once again showered with applause after the show, before getting back in their car and making their way to Crocus, where they would stay until Crawford Seam and Org's executions.

And that brings us to the present. Currently, Alfonzo and Elicia were making their way through the streets of Fiore's capital while looking for a place to have dinner.

"*Sigh* Even though they have Gray on their team, who actually makes an effort to not destroy things for the guild points, I don't know how they make any money after their quests with Natsu and Erza in their team." Elicia said with a giggle. "It's amazing they actually have rent money at the rate they're going."

Actually, that only seems to apply to Natsu." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "I mean, I still have no idea where that guy even lives. As for rent, most of them don't need to worry about it, right? I mean, Lucy somehow scrapes by. Erza lives with us, and Gray keeps the damage down enough that he can afford his place. As for Wendy, I heard that Erza gives her a portion of her own earnings to make sure that she can afford the rent at Marin's old spot."

"I guess you're right." Elicia replied with a nod. "Now that you mention it, though, I've never seen Natsu's place, either. Do you think he just lives in the guild hall?"

"Who knows." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "As long as he's not destroying the town, it really doesn't matter where he lives."

"Yeah." Elicia replied with a smile. "By the way, Fonzie, what do you want to eat?"

"Hmm..." Alfonzo hummed in response while rubbing his chin contemplatively. "I'm kind of in the mood for Caribbean."

"But that's food from our old world." Elicia said with an eyebrow raised. "If you don't cook it, where do you expect to find food like that in this world?"

In response, Alfonzo smiled cheekily in Elicia's direction. However, before he could answer her question, he caught sight of a tall, stunningly beautiful, blonde woman with blue eyes walking in their direction. And his expression immediately changed to one filled with apprehension.

"Huh? Fonzie, what's wrong?" Elicia asked before turning her head in the direction of Alfonzo's gaze.

And as soon as Elicia caught sight of the blonde woman, her expression changed in the same way as Alfonzo's.

"Oh, if it isn't Alfonzo Marcus and Elicia Taylor." The blonde woman, Darkness, said while flushing slightly at the expressions Alfonzo and Elicia wore. "What brings you to the capital on this fine day?"

"Damn, we had to run into this degenerate, didn't we?" Alfonzo muttered under his breath.

Although Darkness should not have been close enough to hear Alfonzo's muttering, the blush on her face intensified while she began to fidget.

"Oh, its Darkness." Elicia said with a smile while nudging Alfonzo in the side with her elbow. "We came to Crocus to witness the execution tomorrow."

"I see." Darkness replied with a nod. "That is quite---

"Actually, since you seem to be off duty, should we call you Lady Lolatina, instead?" Elicia asked while tilting her head innocently.

Immediately, Darkness' words ground to a halt along with her movements. Then, with a cramped smile, she replied to Elicia's question.

"Please, I'd prefer if you continued to call me Darkness." Darkness replied.

"Oh, I see." Elicia replied with a smile. "Well, we were on our way to have dinner. Would you like to join us?"

As soon as that last question left Elicia's mouth, Alfonzo leaned down to whisper in her ear.

"Lici? What the hell are you doing?" Alfonzo asked quietly. "Although seeing her antics in KONOSUBA was hilarious, I'm not built to deal with them in person."

"Calm down, Fonzie." Elicia said with a reassuring smile. "I had an idea. And I wanted to test it out. Just follow my lead, okay?"

"*Sigh* If you say so." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head.

Meanwhile, Darkness had frozen on the spot. It was quite rare for those who knew of her... proclivities... to actively invite her to spend time together. So, she was on the verge of tears. But at the same time, she could feel the disgust Alfonzo had for her, so she was shivering in excitement while the blush on her face deepened. It was quite the jarring contrast to anyone who could see her at the moment.

"I would be honored." Darkness replied after getting herself together.

"Good, then you should follow us." Elicia replied cheerfully. "Fonzie wanted some rather unique cuisine. And we were just about to head to the restaurant that serves it."

"Unique cuisine?" Darkness asked, her curiosity peaked.

"Yeah, but it can be quite spicy." Alfonzo replied, taking on a polite tone like Elicia. "If you can't handle spicy food, I wouldn't recommend it."

"Oh, don't worry, I can handle spicy food!" Darkness exclaimed. "The feel of your mouth and throat burning from the inside. The expectations of those around you to finish, despite the fact that you feel as if you may pass out. The fear of... Ahh... being forced to finish everything on your plate even when you can't handle it. Oh~~~ I love spicy food."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia could only smile wryly while Alfonzo shot Elicia a skeptical glance.

"Trust me." Elicia mouthed while Darkness was lost in her delusions.

"Lady Lolatina, please, follow us." Alfonzo said after shaking his head.

Meanwhile, after being called by her real name once again, Darkness immediately snapped back to reality. Then, she put on a slight pout.

"Please, I insist you call me Darkness." Darkness replied.

"Oh, my apologies." Alfonzo said with a glint of amusement flashing in his eyes.

With that, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Darkness started walking once again. And during the walk, Elicia spoke with Darkness about fashion. More specifically, the white sundress and matching low heels Darkness was wearing on her day off.

Eventually, Alfonzo led the ladies to a certain restaurant a few streets off the main street.

"Here we are." Alfonzo said with a smile.

Hearing that, Elicia and Darkness looked up to read the shop sign.

"Ah, I get it." Elicia replied with a nod of understanding.

"Hmm... I can't say that I've ever dined here before." Darkness said while looking up at the sign. "Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge. Well, if it has the name Sixth Sense on it, it must be of incredible quality. Or so say the other businesses with the same name." {A/N: Shameless plug, I know...}

"Well, then, let's go in." Alfonzo said with a smile.

A moment later, Alfonzo opened the door to the restaurant and held it for Elicia and Darkness. And to his surprise, Darkness looked a bit uncomfortable to have Alfonzo being so gentlemanly with her. Still, she entered the restaurant.

"So, that's it." Alfonzo muttered. "Her switch shouldn't get flipped as long as we don't do anything insulting. Why did I never think of that?"

After thinking aloud for a moment, Alfonzo followed the ladies into the restaurant. Then, he got a table for three. And when they were led to their table, Alfonzo made a point of pulling out both Elicia and Darkness' chairs for them, making Darkness even more uncomfortable.

Then, after they were all seated, the hostess explained the specials for the day and took their drink orders before leaving them to browse the menu.

"So, what is this unique cuisine you mentioned, Mr. Marcus." Darkness asked in a slightly awkward tone.

"Oh, please, just call me Alfonzo." Alfonzo said with a friendly smile.

"And you can call me Elicia, or just Lici if you prefer." Elicia added energetically.

"Very well, if you insist." Darkness replied with a nod and a small smile. "Then, Alfonzo, which of these dishes is the one you were referring to?"

With that, Alfonzo flipped through the menu until he came across the page he was looking for. Then, he turned his menu towards Darkness while pointing at two entries in particular.

"I'm actually trying to decide on one of these." Alfonzo said.

In response, Darkness leaned forward slightly to read the dishes' descriptions.

"Let's see... Jerk Chicken or Roti with Goat... I must say, I've never heard of either of those dishes." Darkness said after reading the names of the two dishes. "But I must admit, they look quite delectable based on the images provided with the description. And they seem to be quite spicy, as well."

"Yeah, they're pretty spicy." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

"Well, how about this." Darkness said with an excited gleam in her eyes. "We can both order one. Then, we can split them. That way, we both get to try both dishes."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia were surprised. However, they went along with the idea. Even so, Elicia, who was not the biggest fan of spicy food, ordered something much milder from another region's cuisine.

Eventually, the waiter arrived with their drinks and took the table's orders. And while the trio waited for their food, they continued to chat. And all the while, Alfonzo and Elicia spoke as politely and cheerfully as possible, which made darkness a bit uncomfortable. Especially since she was looking forward to the disgusted gazes she usually received from the two.

'What's going on here?' Darkness asked herself. 'They're acting totally different then usual. AS if the way I usually act doesn't bother them at all. That should be a good thing, right? I mean, it's like they've accepted me for who I am. But why does it make me so uncomfortable?'

What Darkness did not know is that she could feel the underlying disgust that Alfonzo and Elicia felt for the way she usually acted. However, because they were both wearing such perfect masks, she could not tell.

Unfortunately, all of Alfonzo's and Elicia's hard work was ruined once the food arrived.

"Well, let's eat." Alfonzo said once he and Darkness had divided their orders between them.

"Yes, let's." Darkness said as she elegantly cut a piece of Jerk Chicken before putting it in her mouth.

Immediately afterwards, Darkness eyes lit up as her cheeks reddened.

"Oh~ my~ God~~~~!" Darkness exclaimed loudly. "It's so spicy! Mmm~~~! It feels like the inside of my mouth is being melted away! And I'm losing sensation in my tongue! Ahn~~~! Such torture! Oh, and when it slides down my throat... Mmm~~~~!"

As she shouted all her discomfort, Darkness continued to eat while moaning loudly and squirming in ecstasy.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Elicia stopped their movements completely with expressions of disbelief on their faces. Then, when Darkness eventually passed out from an overload of both pain and pleasure, they sighed in unison.

"*Sigh* I guess shutting down a Darkness-level pervert is impossible." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone while Darkness' unconscious body twitched at his words.

"She's like a natural disaster." Elicia added. "Stopping her is impossible, you can only hope to contain the damage."

Chapter 356: Execution Day

After Darkness passed out, Alfonzo and Elicia hurried to finish their dinner. Although they would have preferred to finish their food at a leisurely pace, Darkness' satisfied, yet sloppy, smile was quite unnerving. On top of that, the scent around their table, as well as the viscous liquid that was dripping from Darkness' chair to the floor was a bit... a lot more than they wanted to deal with for the evening.

Then, once they finished eating, Alfonzo and Elicia stood from their seats. After that, Elicia engulfed all three of them in her [Camouflage Magic] while Alfonzo slung Darkness unconscious body over his shoulder and dropped a rather sizeable amount of money on the table.

"God fucking damn it!" Alfonzo cursed as he and Elicia made their way through the streets of Crocus, while still under the effects of the [Hiding in Plain Sight] spell. "I knew bringing her with us was a bad idea."

"Yeah, but it proved that my plan of action when dealing with Darkness was viable." Elicia replied. "But no one could have expected spicy food to affect her like that."

"*Sigh* Anyway, we need to take her home." Alfonzo said in a tired tone while gesturing to Darkness.
"Any idea where she lives?"

"Nope, no idea." Elicia replied. "Let's just take her to the knights' barracks."

"*Sigh* Fine." Alfonzo replied. "And the worst thing is we can't just leave her tied up somewhere. Since I'm pretty sure she'd point us out as the culprits when she woke up."

"Probably." Elicia replied with a nod. A moment later, she opened her eyes wide in realization. "Why don't we just wake her up?"

"Come again?" Alfonzo asked as his footsteps came to a stop.

"We should just wake her up." Elicia repeated. "After that, we could just part ways and not have to worry about people seeing us with her... like this."

As she finished speaking, Elicia pointed at Darkness' face, which was still smiling in sloppy satisfaction.

"*Sigh* I guess you're right." Alfonzo replied, sounding even more tired than before.

A few moments later, Alfonzo and Elicia had taken Darkness to a deserted alley. Then, Alfonzo created a steel plate they could sit her down on so that her Dress would not get any more ruined than it already was.

After that, Elicia squatted down in front of Darkness and raised her hand to the woman's face. However, just before she tried waking her, she looked back at Alfonzo.

"Remember, you absolutely cannot look at her with disgust after she wakes up." Elicia warned.

"I know, I know." Alfonzo said while waving dismissively. "I got this."

With that, Elicia nodded before she turned back to Darkness.

Pat *Pat* *Pat*

"Darkness! Darkness! Are you okay? Wake up!" Elicia shouted, making her voice sound frantic intentionally.

At the same time, the longer she spoke and tried to wake Darkness, the harder her patting on Darkness' face became. However, just before Elicia could outright slap her, Alfonzo caught her arm.

"Huh? Fonzie, what's wrong?" Elicia asked as she looked back at Alfonzo with confusion.

"She's awake." Alfonzo said with his eyes narrowed. "We wouldn't want to do any unnecessary damage, would we?"

Hearing that, Elicia snapped her head back in Darkness' direction. And sure enough, she was awake, looking at the two in embarrassment.

"*Cough* Hi, Alfonzo, Elicia." Darkness said awkwardly with a slight blush. Though Alfonzo and Elicia were unsure if that came from embarrassment or excitement at the fact that she was almost slapped in the face. "Dinner was truly lovely. Perhaps we could do it again the next time you are in the capital. It would be my treat, next time, of course."

"If you were awake, why didn't you say anything?" Elicia asked in a concerned tone. "I was worried, you know."

Hearing that, Darkness lowered her head with a hint of guilt in her expression. However, as a knight, she was unable to lie.

"I... was waiting for you to slap me... for real." Darkness said as her breathing became more ragged with every word. "And the longer... I was able to... hold out... The harder... you would... slap.... Mmm~ me."

At that point, Darkness raised her head with an excited smile and flushed cheeks.

"Then, I would eventually start moaning and groaning from the pain of your slaps." Darkness continued with drool leaking from the corner of her lips. "When that happened, you would stop. Then, you would ask me if I had been awake for a while. And I would reply with a yes. After that, you would get angry and

start slapping me even harder while glaring at me with tangible disgust in your eyes. Then, with your hardest slap, you would say: 'Bitch! You're so fucking gross!' Ahn~~~~!"

Meanwhile, as Darkness masochistic fantasy spilled from between her lips, Alfonzo and Elicia looked on blankly. On top of that, they tried their best to keep the disgust they were feeling out of their gazes. Which was a herculean task at that moment.

Cough Anyway, since you're awake..." Alfonzo said awkwardly while scratching the back of his head. Then, he continued, forcing out the words he felt he would regret very soon. "Why don't you let us walk you home?"

With that, Darkness snapped out of her delusions. Then, she took a moment to wipe the drool from her mouth. After that, she looked at Alfonzo and Elicia with a sincere expression as she declined Alfonzo's offer.

"Although I appreciate the offer, I could not ask you to do so." Darkness said as she picked herself up from the steel plate.

Then, she reached back to pat any dust off the back of her dress. However, she paused for a moment when she felt the wet patch on her butt.

'Wait, what is this?' Darkness thought to herself. 'Did they parade me through the city with this wet patch on display while I was unconscious. Oh my God, the looks the people must have given me.'

At that point in her thoughts, Darkness began to shudder.

"Something tells me she's misunderstanding the situation." Alfonzo said with a deadpan.

"You're probably right." Elicia said while smiling wryly. "Um... Hey, Darkness..."

Once again, Darkness was snapped out of her delusions.

"Yes? What is it?" Darkness asked in a curious tone.

"Just to let you know, I put you under the effects of my [Camouflage Magic] before we brought you here. So, you don't have to worry about anyone seeing you like that. IN fact, that's why Fonzie offered to bring you home. We wouldn't want anyone to think you peed yourself, or something."

Hearing that, Darkness' breath hitched.

'This would be so humiliating.' Darkness thought to herself with her eyes shining. 'The people would look at me with such disgust when they saw my current appearance as I walked to my apartment in the city. Oh, how embarrassing would it be to hear them whispering about how I urinated on myself as I walked past them.'

"*Pant* Truly, you need not concern yourself." Darkness said, her expression turning resolute. Though, there was still an excited flush on her cheeks. "I've taken up enough of your time today. Not only did you invite me to dinner, but you brought me here to protect my reputation. I am truly grateful. But I can no longer take any of your time. So, I will bid you goodbye and head home on my own."

"If you say so." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. Then, after putting on a smile, he continued. "Well then, have a good night, Darkness."

In response, Darkness nodded as she walked past Alfonzo and Elicia.

"See you later, Darkness." Elicia said while waving at Darkness' retreating back.

To that, Darkness came to a stop. Then, she looked at Elicia from over her shoulder.

"Like I said, we should have dinner together again next time you're in the capital." Darkness said, her face even more flushed than before. "*Pant* And perhaps, *Pant* you could help me with my rope *Pant* escape techniques, as well. *Pant*"

"Uh... Yeah... We'll see." Elicia said, trying her hardest not to let her smile cramp up.

Meanwhile, Darkness nodded in response before she turned back around and left the alley.

Then, as soon as they could feel that Darkness was no longer nearby, Alfonzo and Elicia both dropped their smile and exchanged glances. A moment later, they both broke out into hardy laughter. And once their laughter died down, they decided that they had had enough excitement for the evening and returned to their hotel.

May 12, x785.

The next morning, after completing their morning routines and eating breakfast, Alfonzo and Elicia left the hotel and made their way to the execution grounds where Crawford Seam and Org would be hanged for their crimes.

"*Sigh* This is one of the things I'm not a fan of from the medieval setting." Elicia said as she and Alfonzo moved to the front of the gathered crowd. "Public execution is so... barbaric."

"I know." Alfonzo said, beginning to comb his fingers through Elicia's hair to comfort her. "But you gotta look at the silver lining."

Hearing that, Elicia turned her head in Alfonzo's direction with a curious expression.

"At least they aren't beheading them publicly." Alfonzo continued in response to Elicia's curious gaze.

"*Sigh* I guess you're right." Elicia said. "Small blessings, right?"

"Exactly." Alfonzo replied. "Besides, the only reason public executions are a thing is because there really isn't any other form of entertainment. I guess I should push my plans for creating the internet and TV forward..."

With that, Alfonzo's voice lowered to a mutter as he got lost in his thoughts. Meanwhile, Elicia could only smile wryly. However, things did not stay that way for long. Eventually, a procession approached from the direction of the prison, while another approached from the castle.

"I guess it's starting." Alfonzo muttered as he was brought back to the present.

"Uh huh." Elicia added.

Eventually, the three rulers who presided over the trial a little less than a month ago, Toma E. Fiore, the King of the Kingdom of Fiore, The King of the Kingdom of Caelum, and the Prime Minister of the Land of Ispan, arrived in front of the crowd. Meanwhile, the division of knights escorting the prisoners got Crawford Seam and Org situated on the execution platform.

"I'm sure you are all aware why we have gathered here today." Toma said as he stepped forward to address the crowd. "You shall all bear witness to the execution of former Magic Councilmen Crawford Seam and Org for the crimes they committed."

With that, Toma continued his speech by detailing the crimes for which the two were being executed. And by the time he was finished, the gathered crowd was cheering for the two of them to be put to death.

"*Sigh* This is mob mentality at its worst." Alfonzo said while keeping an eye on a certain man in the squadron of knights. "Bradley's here, too. I get the feeling that something is gonna go down."

"I know." Elicia replied with a nod.

Meanwhile, Bradley had been chosen as the executioner for today's event. And just as Alfonzo and Elicia thought, Father was planning something. However, he did not plan for Alfonzo and Elicia's presence.

'Those two are here.' Bradley thought to himself as he noticed Alfonzo and Elicia. "I'm almost certain they were the ones that got Hughes and his family out of the city. And Alfonzo Marcus was more than likely the one who saved him. Especially after learning about the metal that had been injected into Envy. On top of that, Elicia Taylor was able to seal the [False Gate of Truth] inside of Gluttony while simultaneously defeating Lust. Those two are too much of a threat to Father's plans to leave alive, much like their parents were.'

As Bradley, or rather Wrath's, thoughts came to an end, his subordinates had wrapped the nooses around Crawford Seam and Org's necks and were just waiting for Bradley to finish things. And when Bradley received the signal, he reached into the pocket of his uniform and secretly pulled out a small syringe with a red liquid inside.

Meanwhile, after seeing Bradley approach, Org, who had been wearing a depressed expression ever since he was brought out to the execution ground, had his eyes light up when he saw Bradley.

"I did everything I was asked to." Org mumbled in a pleading tone once Bradley was close enough. "I leaked the location of those retired Fairy Tail ruffians' village to that cult. It's not my fault they could not get the brats. I also kept the Council from interfering in Grimoire Heart's attack on Fairy Tail. So, you must be here to save me, right? He promised me immortality, after all."

Meanwhile, Crawford Seam could only look at Org and Bradley in confusion.

On top of that, although Alfonzo and Elicia were back in the crowd, they had heightened their senses ever since they noticed Bradley was with the knights. So, they heard all of Org's mumblings clearly. Because of that, their killing intents started to leak, frightening the people around them.

"You could say that." Bradley replied to Org's questions with the syringe in his hand. "You happen to be in luck. Father wants to know what would happen if a wizard were to be injected with a Philosopher's Stone. So, if you survive this, you will become immortal. Though, you may no longer be yourself."

"What are you---" Org started to question.

Before he could finish, however, Bradley injected the red liquid, which happened to be a liquified Philosopher's Stone, into Org's blood stream.

"No! Ahh~~~~~! Stop! Please! Make it stop!" Org Screamed at the top of his lungs.

Meanwhile, without paying attention to Org's pained screams, Bradley turned around and addressed the crowd.

"I've heard the last words of the two to be executed. And now---"

"Sorry, but I can't allow this one to die." A bestial male voice said, interrupting Bradley's address to the crowd, who thought that Org has lost his mind because of his impending death.

With the interruption, a hand landed on Bradey's shoulder. And when he turned his head, he saw a young man with shoulder-length blond hair that covered his left eye, a yellow right eye with a slitted pupil, what appeared to be animal ears on the top of his head, and a sadistic grin that showed off a mouthful of sharp, triangular teeth.

"He has information that we want." The young blond man continued. "So, I'll be taking him with me."

At that moment, Alfonzo and Elicia, who recognized the young blond man began to act. While Elicia pulled all the knights away from the execution platform with her threads, Alfonzo raised an adamantite barrier around the platform.

Boom~~~~~!

A moment later, the sound of a large explosion rocked the entire execution round. However, the force from the blast was sent directly upwards thanks to the cylindrical barrier Alfonzo made to protect the innocent bystanders.

Chapter 357: Etherious and Homunculi

Despite the fact that Alfonzo raised the adamantite barrier around the execution platform, everyone in the area felt the effect of the explosion. The sound alone was enough to leave most of the people present in pain. ON top of that, everyone felt the ground shaking beneath their feet, too.

Luckily, the barrier stopped the explosion from affecting the area even more. Otherwise, the shockwave would have heavily damaged many structures surrounding the execution grounds. Not to mention, most of the onlookers, who were only normal civilians, would have been killed, as well.

"What... just happened?" Toma asked in a tone mixed with shock and fear.

Before anyone could respond, however, everyone's attention was drawn to the figure that jumped out of the smoke cloud caused by the explosion and over the adamantine wall surrounding it.

Looking more closely, everyone saw that the figure belonged to the young blond man who interrupted Bradley's speech a few moments ago. On top of that, he was carrying Crawford Seam over his shoulder.

"Tch!" Not a single one of those insects died." The young blond man said while looking back at the gathered crowd. "If I didn't have orders to secure this meat bag, I would definitely remedy that."

"Not so fast!" Alfonzo shouted with his right arm covered in arcs of blue electricity.

Looking back, the young blond man only sneered. Thinking that he would be able to dodge whatever it was that Alfonzo threw at him. And at worst, he would just cause another explosion to block it.

"Go ahead. Give it a try." The young blond man said as his feet finally touched the ground. "Not that it will do you any good."

Instead of firing his electrical discharge immediately, Alfonzo smirked. Then, the young blond man's expression changed as Crawford Seam was yanked out of his grasp and thrown high up into the air.

"Huh? Ahh~~~~~!" Crawford Seam shouted in horror.

"Damn it!" The young blond man exclaimed angrily as he noticed Alfonzo aim his electrically charged right arm upwards at Crawford Seam. "I'll kill you!"

Ignoring the young blond man's shouting. As well as the fact that he was charging at him with fury, Alfonzo created an orichalcum bullet in front of his right hand with his [Metal Magic]. Then, he tapped it with his index finger.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Railgun]." Alfonzo chanted, his chant ending just as his finger met the orichalcum bullet.

In the next instant, a superheated streak of air connected Alfonzo's finger and Crawford Seam's chest. However, the streak did not stop there. Instead, after evaporating a large chunk of Crawford Seam's chest, it continued into the sky, past the clouds.

As a result, Crawford Seam's lifeless body flew a bit higher thanks to the force of the impact. Then, it was brought back down due to gravity. Meanwhile, the blond young man had finally arrived in front of Alfonzo.

"Die!" The blond young man shouted as he reached out to grab Alfonzo's face with his right hand covered in black markings.

"No Thanks." Alfonzo replied as he raised his left arm to block.

Seeing that, the young blond man sneered viciously. And that sneer did not change when a round metal shield with alternating blue and red circles, as well as a white star at its center appeared on Alfonzo's arm.

"Do you really think such a flimsy, little shield will protect you from my curse?" The blond man asked with a manic and sadistic smile on his face. [Explosive]."

Boom~~~~~!

As the young blond man chanted his curse, his hand came in contact with Alfonzo's shield. In the next instant, a second large explosion rocked the area. However, like before, an adamantine barrier popped up, surrounding the explosion.

"Arg! What the hell?" The young blond man's pain-filled shout could be heard from inside the barrier.

Bang!

"Gah!"

Following the shout of pain, the sound of something slamming into the adamantine barrier, followed by the sound of someone expelling all the air in their lungs could be heard. A moment later, both adamantine barriers were brought down.

"You said something about a curse, huh?" Alfonzo said, lowering the shield that had grown to cover his whole body. "I guess that makes you an Etherious. One of Zeref's artificial demons, huh? Does that mean you're part of his bookshelf, too? A member of Tartarus?"

By now, with the exception of the knights, who stayed to ensure the three ruler's escape, all the people present for the execution were gone. Naturally, the only exceptions were Alfonzo and Elicia.

"Aren't you well informed." The young blond man asked as he stood up from the ground with his right arm dangling limply. "That's right, I'm a member of Tartarus. More specifically, one of the Nine Demon Gates, Jackal. Not that knowing that will make a difference. You're going to die here, after all."

'This stuff really is Vibranium.' Alfonzo thought with glee as he dispelled his shield. 'He broke his own arm when the kinetic energy from his explosion was redirected back at him.'

["Yeah, we already confirmed that, didn't we?"] Bedlam asked while rolling his eyes.

["Stop complaining!"] Riot shouted. ["That was fucking bad ass."]

"So, you're one of those artificial demons, are you?" A voice said from the crater that was left behind by the first explosion. "It would seem that even you are getting in the way of our plans and must be eliminated."

With those words, Commander King Bradley stepped out of the crater. However, he was not alone. Walking next to him was a man with no hair on the top of his head, white hair around the sides and back of his head, narrow black eyes, and a long white beard and mustache. On top of that, his facial features were quite similar to Org's. However, he appeared to be much younger.

"I really don't understand how this old man could wear a beard like this" The man with similar facial features to Org said.

"He was a fool who thought himself more important than the other humans on this planet." Bradley replied without looking back. "But that's not really important, Greed. If you don't like it, just cut it off later."

"Yeah, I know." The Man who looked a lot like Org, or rather Greed, replied.

"So, you're one of them, too. A homunculus, that is." Alfonzo said as he glanced at Bradley and Greed. "And it looks like you turned Org into one as well."

"Now you definitely cannot be allowed to leave this place alive." Bradley replied. "You know entirely too much."

"Like any of you could stop me from leaving if I really wanted to." Alfonzo replied with a smirk.

"Indeed." Bradley replied. "Stopping you may be difficult, but what about if we have her as a hostage."

As soon as he finished speaking, Bradley removed the patch on his eye, revealing an eye with an ouroboros symbol replacing the pupil and iris. Then, he snapped his head in a certain direction while simultaneously throwing a dagger.

Clank!

However, before the dagger could get very far, it stopped in mid-air., before falling to the ground, harmlessly

"You didn't really think that would work with me here, did you?" Alfonzo asked while looking at Bradley like he was an idiot.

In response, Bradley could only grit his teeth in frustration.

"*Whistle* That was pretty cool." Greed commented with a whistle. "You can control metal or something like that, yeah? I bet that magic comes in pretty useful."

"Yeah, it's pretty good." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

Meanwhile, Jackal's anger was rising at the fact that he had been completely ignored.

"How dare you worthless humans ignore me!" Jackal shouted as the temperature around him began to rise sharply. "I'll let this whole city feel the effects of my [Bomb Curse]. Then, you'll know just how insignificant you are!"

Like most Etherious, Jackal does not use magic. Instead, he implements curses, which all Etherious claim are far superior to magic. In Jackal's case, he uses what is called a [Bomb Curse], giving him the ability to create heat based explosions at close range through physical contact or at long range with hand gestures.

"I've been waiting for this." Elicia's voice rang out, though she could not be seen. "[Thread Magic: Vibranium Thread Cocoon]."

In the next instant, a dome of Vibranium threads was constructed around Jackal just a moment before his explosion was triggered. AS a result, the city-sized explosion, with Jackal at its center, was trapped inside the dome. On top of that, Elicia was shrinking the dome as time went by.

"Damn, that's gotta hurt." Alfonzo muttered as he watched Elicia's [Thread Cocoon] turn red from the high temperature. "I couldn't imagine being trapped in there with all those shockwaves bouncing back and forth."

A moment later, All the threads contracted.

"[Thread Magic: Thread Slicer]." Elicia chanted.

Then, at the center of the dome, where the threads converged, blood, chunks of flesh, and minced bone fragments exploded outwards as the threads passed through Jackal's body.

"*Whistle* That was pretty brutal." Greed commented once again.

"Be silent, Greed." Bradley said sternly.

"Fine... Whatever you say." Greed replied with a shrug.

"So, what's the move, Bradley?" Alfonzo asked. "Though, letting you escape isn't an option. The question is are we doing this the easy way or the hard way?"

"Do you really think you can kill me before my reinforcements arrive?" Bradley asked as he drew a pair of swords from his waist.

"Actually, I do." Alfonzo replied with a smile.

A moment later, Alfonzo's entire body was covered by arcs of blue electricity. Then, he vanished from where he stood before reappearing right in front of Bradley, kneeling on one knee, with his tonfa slammed into the old man's abdomen.

"Gah!" Bradley grunted as he was forced to bend at the waist while coughing out a mouthful of blood.

Despite that, Bradley swung his swords down at Alfonzo's back. However, just as they were about to cut into Alfonzo's flesh, they came to a sudden stop.

"Like I said, that won't work." Alfonzo said.

"Then, what about this?" Greed asked as he clawed at Alfonzo while his arms and hands turned pitch black.

"Rearranging the carbon atoms in your body to make them both harder and more dense, huh?" Alfonzo commented while glancing towards Greed. "Impressive, but not something to worry about."

At that moment, Greed's attack was also stopped. Though, it was because his arms were wrapped with a large number of threads.

"Sneak attacks are not allowed." Elicia said as she showed herself with the threads wrapped around Greed's arms connected to her fingertips. "You should take a step back and wait your turn."

With that, Elicia turned around. And as she did, she whipped her arms over her head. As a result, Greed was lifted from the ground, flung through the air, and slammed into the ground with force.

"Thanks, Lici." Alfonzo said with a smile.

Then, with his tonfa still in contact with Bradley's abdomen, Alfonzo channeled high voltage electricity into Bradley's body, rendering him immobile.

"[Run Wild with Destruction on your Fingertips. Usher in Pandemonium with Creation in Your Hands. Riot, Bedlam]." Alfonzo chanted as his magic power surged and his tonfa melted down before covering his hands and forearms.

In the next instant, Alfonzo slammed his palms into Bradley's abdomen. Then, on contact, Bradley was encased in Adamantine. At the same time, Alfonzo lifted Bradley over his head with a large amount of electricity arcing on his arms.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Linear Cannon]." Alfonzo chanted as he launched Bradley straight upwards.

Boom~~~~~!

At the same time, the sound barrier was broken several times over as a line of superheated air connected Alfonzo's hands to the sky.

"*Phew* Hopefully that will be enough to get him into orbit." Alfonzo said as he stood and dispelled his [Soul Armament's] release. "I just hope the adamantine I encased him in was thick enough to endure the high temperatures."

["It should be fine."] Bedlam replied. "It was like four inches thick, after all."

'I hope so.' Alfonzo replied mentally.

"Umm... Fonzie... We have a problem." Elicia said in a nervous tone.

"Huh? What's wrong, Lici?" Alfonzo asked as he started walking towards Elicia.

When he arrived, he saw a hole in the ground. On top of that, Elicia was reeling in some recently ripped threads.

"Well, when I slammed him into the ground, I didn't expect him to raise the density of his body by so much that he went straight through it." Elicia said with a wry smile. "On top of that, since he was made from a wizard, he had the ability to use magic. And that's how this happened."

As Elicia spoke the last part, she showed Alfonzo the end of her threads.

In fact, Greed, after being slammed through the ground, ended up in Crocus' sewer system. Then, when he was no longer in sight, he activated the magic power he inherited from Org's body, using it to manipulate his carbon atoms even further and create sharp blades on his arms, which he used to cut through Elicia's threads.

"Yeah, I felt the magic fluctuations, too." Alfonzo said with a slight frown. "This one could be troublesome. Let's just hope he has the same traits as the Greed from the canon. And if he does, he'll break away from Father's control soon enough."

With that said, Alfonzo and Elicia looked around what used to be the execution grounds. Seeing the charred ground, the three crater's caused by Jackal's explosions, Crawford Seam's mangled corpse, the blood and gore that used to be jackal, and a hole in the ground that led to the sewers, Alfonzo could not help but smile wryly.

"I wonder if this counts as us causing damage to public property?" Alfonzo asked.

"Well, considering we only caused that hole..." Elicia replied.

"You caused that hole." Alfonzo interrupted.

"... over there, I think they'll let us off for this, right?" Elicia continued, unbothered by Alfonzo's interruption. "Either way, we need to report what happened to the kingdom, the council, and the guild."

"*Sigh* I know." Alfonzo replied in exasperation. "Well, let's go."

As he spoke, Alfonzo created a metal coffin around Crawford Seam's body before he and Elicia, while bringing the coffin along, made their way towards Mercurius, the Royal Castle, to report to the king of Fiore.

Chapter 358: Before Departure

A few days have passed since the attack at Crawford Seam and Org's execution. And during that time, Alfonzo and Elicia reported what happened to the three rulers who were present. However, after giving their reports, not much came of it. Not because the rulers did not believe them. Instead, it was because they wanted to discuss the incident with the new Magic Council.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Elicia, with nothing left to do in Crocus, decided they would return to Magnolia. While Elicia would return to normal wizarding work along with tending to her clothing business, Alfonzo prepared to make his way to Mermaid Heel to construct their new training facilities.

And today, the day before Alfonzo's departure, Alfonzo was seated in Ur's office and discussing the arrangements.

"Just to make sure, you'll be taking Wendy with you when you leave tomorrow, right?" Ur asked calmly. Though, the concern in her eyes could not be hidden.

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "But you don't have to worry. I'll keep my [Magic Power Detection] active at all times. And with my speed, I'll be able to show up before anything can happen to her."

"That's not what I'm worried about, actually." Ur said with a wry smile. "I'm just afraid that Wendy will pick up some of that Tsunade's bad habits."

"Oh..." Alfonzo replied with a wry smile. "I don't think my [MPD] can tell if she's drinking or gambling."

"*Sigh* And that's what I'm worried about." Ur replied while shaking her head.

"But I don't think you have anything to worry about." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "I mean, as much as you drink..."

Before Alfonzo could finish, Ur turned a sharp glare in his direction, causing his words to come to a halt.

"Are you trying to say I'm an alcoholic?" Ur asked in a menacing tone.

"Nope." Alfonzo replied quickly. "But you're quite the heavy drinker. Not on the same level as Cana or Master Tsunade, but still..."

"Anyway, just take care of her while she's with you." Ur said, cutting off Alfonzo once again.

"I will." Alfonzo replied solemnly. "Besides, there will always be at least one of the girls with us, too."

"Really? Why?" Ur asked in a confused tone.

In response, Alfonzo went on to tell Ur about the decision the girls came to regarding Yoruichi.

"*Sigh* Why are they trying so hard to accept her after what she did?" Ur asked while shaking her head.
"In my opinion, you should just let her be and move on."

"Yeah, you're probably right." Alfonzo replied. "But I don't know... They think I developed feelings for her before all that happened... And they haven't actually asked my opinion on the matter."

"Then, why don't you tell them?" Ur asked curiously.

"Because Lici really seems to still like her." Alfonzo replied with a wry smile. "And you know how hard it is for me to say no to her."

"*Sigh* You're too soft on her." Ur replied in exasperation.

"I'm fully aware." Alfonzo replied. "But I can't help it."

"*Sigh* You're just lucky that she would never hurt you... Intentionally, anyway." Ur replied.

"I know." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Anyway, I'm gonna go make sure that everything is ready for tomorrow."

"Alright, go." Er said while waving Alfonzo away. "Just make sure you don't bring shame to Fairy Tail."

"Just who do you think you're talking to, Ur?" Alfonzo said, sounding a bit offended.

In response, Ur only smiled as she watched Alfonzo stand from the sofa and make his way towards the elevator. Then, when Alfonzo eventually left, Ur's expression changed drastically.

"What are those girls thinking not talking to Alfonzo about what he thinks of Yoruichi?" Ur muttered.
"Even if Alfonzo left it to them, doesn't mean he's interested in a relationship with her. More than likely, he just wanted to squash any bad feelings they may be holding onto."

With that, Ur stood from behind her desk and walked over to her liquor cabinet. Then, after opening it, she reached for a bottle of wine. However, just before touching it with her fingertips, she stopped.

"Drinking alone like this really does make me look like an alcoholic." Ur muttered as she pulled her hand back and closed the cabinet. "Damn you, Alfonzo..."

A moment later, Ur was seated at her desk again with a frown on her face. Then, she spent the next fifteen minutes contemplating her drinking habits. Eventually, she shook her head and decided to move on.

"I'll think about that later." Ur muttered to herself. "For now, I should talk to those girls."

In the next instant, Ur spread her [Magic Power Detection] to see who was in the guild hall. Then, after feeling Cana, Mirajane, Marin, and Sun's aura's on the first floor, she pressed a button on the tablet like device that controlled the guild hall's functions and broadcast her voice into the main hall.

"Cana Alberona, Mirajane Strauss, Marin Kitagawa, and Sun Seto, please see me in my office." Ur announced over the guild hall's announcement system.

A few minutes later, Cana, Mirajane, Marin, and Sun arrived on the top floor. And when they did, they saw Ur sitting behind her desk with a solemn expression on her face. Exchanging glances, the four girls stepped forward before stopping in front of Ur's desk.

"What's up, Master?" Cana asked casually.

"I heard from Alfonzo that you and the other girls would be taking turns visiting him while he's working on the Mermaid Heel guild hall." Ur said after placing her elbows on the desk and interlocking her fingers.

"That's right." Marin replied.

"Is that a problem?" Mirajane asked cautiously.

"Not a problem, per se." Ur replied. "I just wanted to know... Why?"

In response, the girls fell silent. Then, they once again exchanged glances. However, the silence did not last long.

"To see if there's more to Yoruichi than just being a scheming bitch." Cana replied with wrath in her tone.

"What Cana meant to say is, to see if Yoruichi was suitable to join Alfonzo's harem." Mirajane corrected.

"I meant exactly what I said." Cana said defiantly.

"*Sigh* Cana..." Mirajane said while shaking his head.

"Is that a problem?" Sun asked Ur. "Alfonzo said he would leave it up to us, after all."

"And what makes you think that Alfonzo wants that?" Ur asked in return.

Once again, the girls fell silent. And once again, the silence was broken quickly.

"Because he let us decide?" Marin said. Though, it was more of a question than an answer.

"And did you ask him what he thought about it?" Ur asked.

In response, all four girls shook their heads.

"But since he left it to us instead of rejecting her outright, that should mean that he wants to be with her, right?" Sun asked while tilting her head in confusion.

"Do you really think so?" Ur asked in return. "Especially after she betrayed his trust?"

None of the girls knew how to answer that question. So, the office once again fell into silence.

"Then, why would he tell us to decide?" Mirajane asked in a tone filled with uncertainty.

"Yeah, and why didn't he say anything about our plan?" Marin added.

"If I had to guess..." Ur replied, pausing for a moment to structure her next sentence. "It was probably for you all to let go of your hostility."

"What do you mean?" Sun asked.

"It's painfully obvious." Ur said while shaking her head. "Other than Cana, all of you are holding in your anger over what she did. Well, Erza may be the exception. But that's only because of her duel."

To that, Mirajane, Marin, and Sun were unable to refute Ur's analysis.

"And here's another thing to think about." Ur added. "Despite the fact that he dotes on Elicia so much, why didn't he let her join you in the decision about Yoruichi, who she clearly likes a lot. Well... Probably not as much as she used to, though."

"Because Elicia helped her do what she did." Cana replied with her fists clenched.

"That's probably part of it." Ur replied with a nod. "But I doubt it's all of it."

"So that she wouldn't be able to sway our decisions." Mirajane said.

"I was thinking the same thing." Ur said with a nod. "From what I can see, Alfonzo still treats Yoruichi as a friend. Though, not a close one. But he still probably doesn't trust her all that much. But because he sees her as a friend, he doesn't want you all to be hostile with her. So, the reason he agreed with your plan is to let you bleed off some of that hostility. Mostly because he didn't think you would actually accept her among your ranks."

"Well, I never had any intention of accepting her, anyway." Cana said with a shrug. "I mean, anyone who would do something like that just because they didn't get their way isn't someone I'd want to call my sister."

While Cana voiced her opinion, the other three girls fell into contemplation, thinking about Ur's analysis of the situation.

At that moment, Ur sneezed. Then, she put on an annoyed expression.

A few moments earlier, Alfonzo was in the master bedroom of his mansion, checking through his luggage to make sure he had packed everything he would need for his month long trip to Mermaid Heel's headquarters.

"Alright, I have all my clothes... I have my toiletries... I have a way for the managers at all the Sixth Sense shops to contact me in case of emergency... Is there anything else I need?" Alfonzo asked himself as he closed all the bags he planned to bring with him. "Well, I guess I can buy anything I might have forgotten once I get out there."

With that, Alfonzo stood up before sitting on the edge of his bed.

"Anyway, it's kind of amazing how easily Ur saw through what was going on with the whole Yoruichi situation." Alfonzo said with a wry smile. "I hope I'm as perceptive as she is when I'm that old."

As soon as those words left his mouth, Alfonzo shuddered subtly.

"If Ur ever heard me say something like that, she would freeze my balls off." Alfonzo muttered while trying to shake off the cold feeling that just hit him.

"Hey, Fonzie! I'm home!" Elicia, who had taken a quest as soon as she and Alfonzo returned from Crocus, shouted as soon as she entered the house.

"Hey, Lici, welcome back!" Alfonzo shouted in return. "How did the quest go?"

As he asked his question, Alfonzo heard the sound of footsteps racing through the house. A moment later, the door to the master bedroom burst open and Elicia rushed through it. Then, she leapt at Alfonzo with a smile.

"Nothing special." Elicia replied as Alfonzo caught her in his arms. "Just a magical beast subjugation. And with the new threads, it was much easier than usual."

"Yeah, I saw how easily they dealt with Jackal." Alfonzo replied with a smile.

"Too bad he's not gone for good, though." Elicia said in a frustrated tone.

"We'll have to find and destroy Tartaros' base for that." Alfonzo said with a wry smile. "But don't worry, we will."

"I know." Elicia replied with a smile. "And with that airship you've been building, they'll have nowhere to run."

"*Sigh* That's still a work in progress." Alfonzo replied.

"Yeah, but I can't wait 'til it's done." Elicia said excitedly.

After that, the two fell into a comfortable silence. However, Elicia felt like something seemed off about Alfonzo.

"Fonzie." Elicia said tenderly while looking up, into Alfonzo's eyes as she spoke. "Is something bothering you?"

"I wouldn't say that something is bothering me, exactly." Alfonzo replied with a wry smile. "It's just Ur made me think of something... unsettling today."

"What was it?" Elicia asked curiously.

"Well, she asked me to keep an eye on Wendy while we're at Mermaid Heel's guild hall." Alfonzo replied.

"That's not weird, is it?" Elicia asked as she tilted her head in confusion.

"Nah, not at all." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "It's why she wanted me to look after her, though."

"What do you mean?" Elicia asked curiously.

"Well, she was afraid that while learning under Tsunade, Wendy would pick up her bad habits." Alfonzo said with a wry smile.

Hearing that, Elicia imagined Wendy with her hair in two ponytails wearing a hoari with the kanji for gamble on the back, smashing her way out of a gambling den with a bottle of sake in her hand and

shouting at the top of her lungs about how the games must have been rigged, after losing all her money, of course.

"Ahahahahahaha!" Elicia started laughing uproariously after that image appeared in her head. "Oh my God! Hahaha! I wanna see that!"

In response, Alfonzo could only shake his head with a smile on his face.

"But seriously... Ha... ha... I don't think you have to worry about that." Elicia said while getting her laughter under control. "I mean, look at Useless... *Cough* I mean Sakura. She never picked up any of Tsunade's bad habits, right?"

"I guess." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly at Elicia's distaste for Sakura in the Naruto series. "I just hope the same holds true for Wendy. Also, if Sakura actually exists in this world, please don't call her that."

"I know..." Elicia said while waving off Alfonzo's concerns. "I know better than that."

"Yeah, but your mouth has a tendency to move before your brain can process what its saying." Alfonzo replied with a chuckle.

"Whatever." Elicia said in a huff.

And like that, Alfonzo and Elicia continued their meaningless conversation until the other girls returned home. Then, Alfonzo made dinner for the last time before he left for at least a month to work on Mermaid Heel's new training facilities.

Chapter 359: Mermaid Heel's HQ

"Do you have everything you need?" Alfonzo asked as he loaded Wendy's luggage behind the back seat of the Escalade.

Unfortunately, due to the trailer carrying all the necessary materials for the job that Alfonzo had hitched behind the Escalade, he was unable to access the hatch on the back of the vehicle. So, he was forced to move the luggage through the back door.

"Yes." Wendy replied with a nod. Though, she seemed a bit nervous about the trip.

"And what about you, Carla?" Alfonzo asked.

"I do." Carla replied.

"Good." Alfonzo replied with a nod as he closed the trunk.

"Come on, you three." Marin said from the Escalade's front passenger seat with a smile. "We've got a long drive ahead of us. We don't wanna get there too late, do we?"

With that, Alfonzo smiled while Wendy nodded nervously. Meanwhile, Carla looked at Wendy with a concerned gaze. A moment later, with Alfonzo holding the door open, Wendy and Carla climbed into the Escalade's back seat. Then, once the two were seated, Alfonzo closed the door before making his way to the driver's seat.

"Alright everyone, get comfortable." Alfonzo said. "The drive is about eight hours long. So, we should arrive around dinner time. I packed lunch for us, so we won't be stopping until we get there. Well... Other than for bathroom breaks, anyway."

Hearing that, Marin smiled while Wendy blushed slightly. Meanwhile, Carla simply looked away.

"And away we go." Alfonzo said as he pulled away from Wendy's apartment building.

Meanwhile, back at the guild hall, Cana, Ultear, Mirajane, and Sun were seated at their usual table. However, none of their friends were present. And the reasons for that were simple. Elicia left early to do her monthly inspection of the Taylor Shop in Hargeon, Team Natsu, minus Wendy and Carla were on a quest, and the others were upstairs training. In fact, they would also join the training soon. However, since Alfonzo would be leaving today, they asked him to drop them off at the guild hall so they could spend a little more time with him.

"We really didn't think that through." Ultear said with a wry smile. "Stuffing all of us in the Escalade wasn't really the best idea."

"Then, you could have walked." Cana replied with a cheeky smile.

In response, Ultear only rolled her eyes.

"Do you think changing our minds like we did last night was a good idea?" Sun asked.

"I think so." Mirajane replied. "Like Ur said, we never really talked to Alfonzo about the whole situation with Yoruichi. But I'm glad we did."

As Mirajane said, after talking with Ur, Cana, Mirajane, Marin, and Sun waited for Ultear, who they knew would return from her quest yesterday, to get home. Then, they talked to her about their conversation with her mother. After that, the five young women asked to talk to Alfonzo alone, leaving Elicia to work on her clothing designs.

And that conversation led to the girls finally hearing Alfonzo's opinion on the matter. And in no uncertain terms, Alfonzo said that he probably would not be able to trust Yoruichi enough to love her. Hearing that, the girls were dumbfounded. Then, they asked why he left the decision up to them. And he replied with the same reason that Ur gave Cana, Mirajane, Marin and Sun earlier in the day. However, he admitted that he never expected them to try to accept her.

"*Sigh* That just proves that no matter how well you know someone, sometimes it's better to ask them how they feel about something." Ultear said.

"You three should speak for yourselves." Cana said with her chest puffed out proudly. "I never intended to accept her in the first place."

"Yeah, but that wasn't because you knew what Alfonzo was thinking." Ultear shot back. "You were just being more vocal about your dislike for her."

{"Citizens of Magnolia, we ask that you please vacate the streets."} A male voice said over the town's P.A. system. {"The Gildarts Shift will commence in three minutes. I repeat..."}

Though Cana wanted to retort to Ultear's comment, the sound of the announcement rang out before she could. Then, instead of retorting, she stood up and quickly made her way to the elevator.

"We'll talk about that later." Cana said without slowing down. "But we need to get started with today's training."

Then, without waiting for a response, Cana pressed the elevator's call button. And as soon as the doors opened, she stepped inside and pressed the button for her preferred training floor.

Meanwhile, the other girls, after hearing the announcement and seeing Cana's reaction, could not help but smile.

"I wonder what Gildarts will bring back for Cana this time?" Mirajane said with an amused smile.

"Who knows." Ultear replied with a shrug. "But it can't be any weirder than the last one."

"But I thought it was cool." Sun replied. "And the craftsmanship was great."

In response, Ultear and Mirajane could only shake their heads with wry smiles on their faces.

In fact, the reason for this whole series of reactions was because of the last two times Gildarts returned from quests. Both times he brought a gift back for Cana. And while the first was normal, a hip flask with Cana's name engraved on it. The second, a life sized statue of Cana with a mechanism that would pour alcohol, or whatever beverage it was filled with, from the statue's mouth, was too much for Cana to bear.

So, in an attempt to not have to deal with the issue, Cana ran away to lose herself in training before her father arrived.

"Either way, she won't be able to escape forever." Mirajane said with a smile as she stood from her seat to head upstairs, as well.

Smiling in response, both Ultear and Sun also stood up and followed Mirajane to the elevator.

And just as Mirajane said, Gildarts, with a beer mug in the shape of Cana's head was waiting for Cana when her training was over. Needless to say, Cana was not comfortable with this gift, either.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Mermaid Heel Headquarters.

Several miles outside of the Town of Cedar, one of Fiore's port towns, there was what appears to be a small castle town in the center of a valley. The castle in the center of this small town was constructed of polished white marble with golden accents. And around the castle were a number of buildings, which appeared to be houses of varying sizes. And surrounding all that was a thirty foot tall, white, stone wall.

Though the streams running through this little town and the gardens that decorated its streets and homes were beautiful, the things that stood out the most about this small town in the middle of nowhere were undoubtedly the emblems carved into the surrounding walls and the castle-like building at its center. And to those familiar with the guilds of Fiore's wizarding community, they would easily recognize those emblems as the guild mark of Fiore's only all-female guild, Mermaid Heel.

The interior of the castle-like building in the center of the town, the Mermaid Heel guild hall, was elegantly decorated with a combination of whites, pinks, and golds. And the main hall, where most guild members spent their time when they were not busy looked much like a ballroom with a large stair case opposite the doors that split in either direction, leading to a mezzanine with several tables and chairs in each corner, that could overlook the entire first floor. And just above the guild hall's main entrance was a door that led to the guild master's, Tsunade's office.

"They should be arriving soon, Tsunade." Ritsa, who was sitting in a chair in front of Tsunade's desk with a cup of tea, said in a gentle tone.

"*Sigh* I know." Tsunade said as she signed her name on a document in front of her. "I just hope there are no problems like the one when we went to visit Fairy Tail."

"I doubt there will be." Ritsa replied. "Although Yoruichi can be impulsive at times, she isn't stupid. And I know she would never allow herself to make the same mistake twice."

"I hope so." Tsunade replied.

"On another note, have you prepared our visitor's accommodations yet?" Ritsa asked.

Upon hearing Ritsu's question, Tsunade froze up completely.

"Shit!" Tsunade exclaimed as she stood up from behind her desk. "I completely forgot. Because we stayed in a hotel in Magnolia, I forgot that we don't have any hotels here."

In response, Ritsu shook her head.

"Well, since we don't receive many guests, I suppose I can let this slide." Ritsu replied. "But I hope something like this never happens again."

"Yeah, I'll be more careful next time." Tsunade said impatiently. "But more importantly, what are we going to do about this time?"

"Luckily, I half-expected something like this." Ritsu said with a smile. "So, I had a house relatively close to the guild hall prepared."

"*Sigh* That's a relief." Tsunade replied, her large breasts bouncing with the exhale. "It would have been rather embarrassing if we didn't have anywhere for them to stay. I mean, I doubt they would want to wait. They travelled a long way, after all."

"Indeed." Ritsu replied. "Though, I would think their trip was much shorter than ours. I doubt they used the train as their means of travel. That young man, Alfonzo did invent the new magic vehicles, after all."

"Yeah, you're probably right." Tsunade replied. "Maybe we should invest in a few of those for the guild. It would make travelling to and from quests much easier, after all."

"Perhaps we could if we weren't constantly paying off your gambling debts." Ritsu said with a gentle smile that somehow put Tsunade under immense pressure.

"*Cough* Anyway, like you said, they should arrive soon." Tsunade said while beads of cold sweat started forming on her forehead. "I think we should head down to greet them at the gates."

Instead of responding immediately, Ritsu made eye contact with Tsunade while continued to smile at her with that gentle, yet menacing, smile of hers, causing Tsunade to fidget nervously. Then, while still maintaining eye contact, she picked up her teacup and brought it to her lips.

"You're right." Ritsu said after finishing the tea in her cup. Then, after setting the cup on the desk, she continued while standing from her seat. "We should go greet our guests."

With that, Ritsu made her way to the door. And once Ritsu had left her office, Tsunade sighed in relief while simultaneously wiping the sweat from her forehead.

Left alone in her office, Tsunade took a few moments to calm her nerves. Then, she picked up a small bottle of sake from the corner of her desk and took a sip before setting it back down.

"*Sigh* She's still just as scary as she was when I was a kid." Tsunade said, her tone sounding rather tired. "At least she doesn't spend as much time at the guild now that she's a member of the Magic Council."

While speaking to herself, Tsunade walked around her desk before hurrying to catch up with Ritsu, who had started descending the stairs by now. And when she eventually caught up, Ritsu had just set foot in the main hall.

"I'll be going to meet our guests with the fourth master." Tsunade announced loudly, drawing the attention of all the ladies present in the guild hall. "They will be here for at least a month. So, I want all of you to be on your best behavior."

Then, Tsunade glared at a pair of young women sitting at the bar.

"And that goes double for you, Yoruichi and Sui-Feng." Tsunade continued in a warning tone.

In response, the two women in question, Yoruichi and Sui-Feng, nodded in understanding. Though, Tsunade was not sure exactly how much they understood. Shaking her head, Tsunade continued out of the guild hall with Ritsu at her side.

Meanwhile, after hearing Tsunade's announcement, the ladies of Mermaid Heel began to stir once Tsunade and Ritsu were no longer present.

"*Sigh* He's really here, huh?" Yoruichi said with her head lowered.

"Lady Yoruichi, why do you continue to put yourself through this?" Sui-Feng asked. "If they can't forgive you, why bother?"

"Bumble Bee..." Yoruichi muttered while glancing at her companion. "It's not so much that I'm hoping to be with him anymore. I'm pretty sure the chances of that are non-existent. Especially after meeting his girls on his birthday. But I would at least like the chance to rebuild the trust I destroyed with my stupid plan."

With her over the top loyalty to Yoruichi, Sui-Feng was incapable of understanding why someone would be unable to trust her. However, she still nodded her head in understanding.

"So, that guy you like is almost here, huh?" A female voice said from behind Yoruichi.

"*Sigh* Now's not the time, Anko." Yoruichi replied without looking back. "I've got a lot on my mind, right now. We can have a few drinks later, okay?"

Despite Yoruichi's attitude, Anko, or rather Anko Mitarashi, a slender, fair-skinned young woman standing around 5'5" tall with pupil-less brown eyes, violet-colored hair styled into a short, spiky, fanned-out ponytail with messy bangs that cover the headband tied around her forehead, which sported the same mark as the metal plate on the belt Might Guy wore on the joint quest, and frame her face wearing a tan trench coat, a mesh body suit that reached from her color to her knees, an orange mini-skirt, a pair of armored grieves, and a pair of sandals, sat down next to her with a grin on her face.

"Come on, Yoruichi, you talked about this guy and his fiancée so much before." Anko said, curious to know what was going on. "But ever since you came back from visiting Fairy Tail, you clam up every time he's mentioned. What's the deal? Did you confess and get shot down?"

"Can't you just let it go, Anko?" Yoruichi asked.

"I've been letting it go for months." Anko said, sounding a bit impatient. "I just wanna know what's going on. Hell, you've been all mooney since then, and I wanna get to the bottom of it."

"*Sigh* You're so damn stubborn, Anko." Yoruichi said in exasperation.

"If you just told me what was going on, I wouldn't bother you so much, you know?" Anko said with a cheeky smile.

Hearing that, Yoruichi glared at Anko, who continued to smile despite the glare. And after seeing that her glare could not deter her, Yoruichi sighed in resignation. However, before she could finally answer Anko's inquiry, the doors to the guild hall were opened, revealing the figures of three women, a man, a young girl, and a cat walking on two legs.

Chapter 360: Introductions

"Ladies, may I have your attention?" Tsunade asked loudly as she stepped through the doors of the Mermaid Heel guild hall. "Allow me to introduce you to our guests for the next month, Alfonzo Marcus, Wendy Marvell, and Marin Kitagawa of Fairy Tail."

Once Tsunade and the others entered the guild hall, all the wizards of Mermaid Heel turned their attention to the group of new arrivals. But when she started speaking of the guests, all eyes fell on Alfonzo, Marin, and Wendy. And most of those gazes were filled with curiosity. Especially since Mermaid Heel rarely had visitors, let alone male ones.

"So, that's the guy you were talking about, huh?" Anko said before licking her lips. "Not bad. Not bad at all."

"You'd better give up, Anko." Yoruichi said while shaking her head. "He's not like other guys. He's got a harem full of girls just as beautiful, if not more beautiful than you or me."

"That just means it will be a challenge." Anko replied while watching Alfonzo with a predatory gaze. "I wonder how long it will take to have him wrapped around my little finger."

"You'd better be careful." Yoruichi said. "Originally, all I wanted was to have a night of fun with him and his fiancée. Yet, I somehow ended up falling for him. Then, in my desperation, I did something stupid and messed up any chance I had with him."

Hearing that, Anko turned her gaze away from Alfonzo and snapped her head in Yoruichi's direction.

"So, that's why you've been down for the last few months." Anko asked, her tone filled with interest. "But seriously, what kind of stupid shit could you have done to mess everything up? I mean, you're so hot."

"*Sigh* I'll tell you about it later." Yoruichi replied while staring at Alfonzo with a guilty expression on her face.

Despite most of Yoruichi's attention being on Alfonzo, Yoruichi had a bad feeling about the stare Marin was sending her way.

"Huh?" Alfie? What are you doing here, meow?" A female voice asked from among the gathered Mermaid Heel wizards.

Hearing that familiar voice, verbal tick, and irritating nickname, Alfonzo's eyebrow twitched as he turned his head towards its source. And when he did, he saw a familiar young woman with cat-like features.

'So, Millianna's already joined Mermaid Heel, huh?' Alfonzo mused. 'It never says when she joined in the canon, but I wasn't expecting to see her here already. But since Erza didn't seem to know she joined Mermaid Heel either, I'm guessing she joined recently. Like, after the Tenrou Island Incident.'

"Alfie?" Marin asked while trying to stifle her laughter. "Oh, the girls are gonna get a kick out of this."

"Most of them already know about it." Alfonzo said flatly. Then, he raised his right hand and waved at Millianna. "Hey, Millianna, long time no see."

"Wow, you really are here." Millianna ran forward excitedly. "Too bad you didn't bring Erzie-Werzie with you, meow. I would have loved to see her again."

Hearing that the newest member of Mermaid Heel already knew one of the guests, the other wizards in the guild were surprised. However, not many of them knew about Millianna's past. If they had, they might not find it so surprising.

"I see." Tsunade said while rubbing her chin. "Since you and some of your girlfriends were the ones who dealt with that incident, I guess it makes sense you two know each other."

"I guess." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "Though, the one she's really familiar with is Erza. They grew up in the same circumstances, after all. Though, Erza was able to make it out a few years earlier."

"I see." Tsunade replied. Then, she turned her attention to Millianna. "You can have your reunion later, Millianna. For now, let me finish introducing our guests to the guild."

"Okay~~~, meow!" Millianna replied energetically.

"Like I was saying, Alfonzo is here to upgrade our training facilities." Tsunade continued. "I'm sure I've mentioned that before."

In response, the ladies nodded their heads.

"And for the duration of the renovations, Wendy will be here to learn the art of healing from me."

Hearing that, many of the ladies in the guild hall could not help but gasp in surprise. A lot of them had tried learning healing from Tsunade. However, none of them were willing to stick with it. While most of them were disqualified thanks to the harsh magic power control requirements, the rest dropped out thanks to Tsunade's way of making sure the healer doesn't go down before those she's trying to heal in battle. And because of that, they could not help but look at Wendy with pitiful gazes.

"Um... why are they all looking at me like that?" Wendy asked in a whisper.

"I don't know." Carla replied with her eyes narrowed. "But I have a bad feeling."

'I guess a lot of them have tried to become Tsunade's disciples, huh?' Alfonzo thought to himself as he scanned the gazes Wendy was receiving. Well, being forced to dodge attacks from a combatant as skilled as Tsunade during training would deter quite a few people.'

As Alfonzo thought, like in her original work, Tsunade still believed that the first thing any capable battlefield healer should know how to do is avoid taking damage. And the way she does that is by forcing her students to dodge attacks from her capable of shattering the ground.

"And lastly, Marin Kitagawa is here to help take care of Alfonzo and Wendy's needs." Tsunade continued. "Though, there's a good chance she won't be here for the entire month. Most likely being replaced by another member of Fairy Tail in a few days to a week."

"Hi, everybody!" Marin said happily while waving at the ladies of Mermaid heel. "It's nice to meet all of you and I hope we can get along while I'm here!"

"She's still as outgoing as ever, I see." kagura, sitting among a group of young woman said.

"Kagura, you know that girl?" A pale-skinned, beautiful young woman with pale green hair styled into thick dreadlocks at the back of her head, green eyes, and long eyelashes asked curiously.

"That's right, Araña." Kagura replied with a nod. "I met her when Yoruichi and I took that joint quest with Fairy Tail and Quatro Cerberus."

"I see." Araña replied with a nod while looking at the guests with curiosity.

Though Araña is actually two years younger than members like Kagura and Millianna, she's actually been an official member since she was twelve. In other words, she's been taking on quests as a wizard for almost three full years.

"Anyway." Tsunade said, her voice cutting through all the chatter in the guild hall. "I know you're curious about the new faces---"

"How rude." Carla said, interrupting Tsunade's speech. "It would seem only humans deserve introductions in this guild."

Hearing that, the entire guild hall fell silent while staring at Carla in surprise.

"That cat, did it just speak?" Anko asked in wonder.

Not only Anko, but many of the ladies present asked the same question. Meanwhile, Ritsu could only shake her head at her successor's blunder. Tsunade on the other hand, was blushing in shame for forgetting about Carla, who she had met and even spoken with during her trip to Magnolia two months ago.

"Sorry, Carla." Tsunade said while smiling sheepishly. "I wasn't trying to be rude, but I didn't know your exact purpose for being here, so I didn't remember to introduce you."

"Hmph!" Carla snorted while looking away from Tsunade. A moment later, she turned back while pointing at her. "My role is the most important of all four of us. I've been sent here to make sure that Wendy doesn't pick up any of your bad habits!"

"Carla~." Wendy said, feeling embarrassed that Carla actually said that out loud.

Meanwhile, Tsunade froze up completely after hearing Carla's words. At the same time, Ritsu raised her right arm, covering her smile with the sleeve of her kimono.

After a moment, the Mermaid Heel guild hall burst into loud, raucous laughter.

"She got you there, Lady Tsunade!" Anko shouted while laughing hardily and slapping her hand on the top of the bar.

Like that, the entirety of Mermaid Heel laughed at their guild master. Even Ritsu, who was the calmest of all the ladies present, had to eventually turn her back on Tsunade, as she was afraid that she would end up laughing out loud if she continued to look at her dumbfounded expression.

"That's enough!" Tsunade shouted as she glared at the members of her guild. "Alfonzo will start working on the training rooms tomorrow morning. So, you all can take all the time you want to ask him and the others as many questions as you have tonight."

Immediately after finishing what she had to say, with her cheeks slightly red, Tsunade started walking towards the staircase on the opposite side of the guild hall. And without another word, the whole guild watched her leave, staying silent until the sound of her office door slamming shut echoed through the building.

"I like that little cat." Anko said with a grin. "I doubt anyone from the Hidden Leaf Village has ever seen Tsunade left so utterly flabbergasted before."

"Yeah, I noticed she had quite the sharp tongue during our visit to Magnolia." Yoruichi said, allowing a small smile to creep onto her face, as well. "But that was pretty savage."

"Anyway, I think I'm gonna go say hi to our guests." Anko said as she stood from her seat next to Yoruichi. "I wanna see what you like so much about this guy."

"*Sigh* Whatever." Yoruichi said while shaking her head. "It's not like I can stop you once you've set your mind to something, anyway."

"Exactly." Anko said with a smile before walking away.

"Lady Yoruichi, are you okay?" Sui-Feng asked in a concerned tone.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Yoruichi replied. "I just hope I get to talk to him before his time here ends."

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Marin, Wendy, and Carla made their way to the nearest empty table. All the while, the curious gazes from the ladies of Mermaid Heel followed their movements.

"If they wanna ask us questions, they should just come over and ask." Marin said as she took a seat.

"Not everyone is as outgoing as you are, Marin." Alfonzo said with a smile as he sat down as well.

"Yeah, but just staring at us won't answer any of their questions, though." Marin replied.

"You're right about that." Anko, who had approached after the group sat down said, inserting herself into the conversation as she sat down in an open seat.

Hearing the unfamiliar voice, Alfonzo, Marin, Wendy, and Carla looked in its direction. While Wendy seemed a bit flustered by the extra person at the table, Carla looked at Anko wearily. Meanwhile, Marin looked at her with interest. She was the first person to come to talk to them, after all.

Then, there was Alfonzo, who, although he didn't show it, was somewhat surprised to see Anko. Especially with the abundant interest in her eyes while she looked at him.

'Since I've already met Guy, Orochimaru, and Tsunade, seeing Anko here doesn't surprise me all that much.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he examined the woman sitting across from him. 'But I wonder if the relationships between the characters are the same as they were in the canon. Was she one of the pedo-snake's old students? Actually, I think I already have an answer to that question. That magic power signature on her neck feels disgusting.'

"Who are you?" Carla asked, bringing Alfonzo out of his contemplations.

"Oh, I'm Anko Mitarashi." Anko said with a smile. "I'm one of Mermaid Heel's A-Class wizards."

"Nice to meet you, Anko!" Marin replied happily. "You don't mind if I call you that, right?"

"Nope." Anko replied. "And I'll call you Marin."

"Great!" Marin exclaimed. "So, what kind of magic do you use? I use [Transformation Magic]."

"I use the same kind of magic as everyone in my village." Anko replied. "But it's not like the conventional magic most wizards use. It's called [Ninjutsu]."

"Ooh! What's so different about it and regular magic?" Marin asked curiously.

Like that, the conversation between Marin and Anko continued. Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Wendy, and Carla could only marvel at the social butterfly that was Marin.