

Fairy Tail 43

Chapter 43: July 7, x777; Part 1

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Heartfilia Kanzen HQ.

July 7, x777.

More than a year had passed since Alfonzo and Elicia took on their first B-Class quest and Erza joined Fairy Tail. In these months, Alfonzo and Elicia continued taking B-Class quests, one or two every month, and completed them flawlessly with almost no collateral damage.

Although Makarov was happy to see how quickly the younger generation of his guild was growing, he was happier about Alfonzo and Elicia's track record than any other wizard in his guild. And the reason was simple, he did not have to pay much, if any, compensation after they handed in their quest completion letters.

That is not to say that Makarov was not pleased by the growth of the other youngsters in the guild. In fact, he was quite proud of his grandson, Laxus. At the age of sixteen, he had started taking on A-Class quests. On top of that, he had yet to fail one.

The rest of the Thunder God Tribe had also been growing splendidly. Like Alfonzo and Elicia, they were all taking on A-Class quests, as well. Unfortunately, they were quite a bit more destructive than the pair of childhood friends.

The other young members of the guild, namely, Cana, Laki, Alzack, Levy, Jet, Droy, Gray, and Ultear were also growing at an astonishing pace. By now, Cana and Ultear were taking on B-Class quests while Laki,

Alzack, Gray, and Erza were taking on C-Class quests as well. Levy, Jet, and Droy, on the other hand, were still taking on D-Class quests as a team.

Although Levy agreed with Alfonzo and Elicia's philosophy of taking on lower ranked quests solo, Jet and Droy refused to let Levy travel alone. So, even though the boys were eligible to take on C-Class quests, they continued to take on D-Class quests with Levy to keep her safe, or so they would have others believe.

The biggest surprise of this group of children, however, was naturally Erza. Although she had been a Fairy Tail wizard for only a little more than a year, she was rising through the ranks quite quickly, already taking on C-Class quests. But since she could keep up with Alfonzo in a spar, Makarov had little doubt about her skill as a combatant. And considering how harsh her upbringing was, Makarov had no doubt that she would not fall into complacency.

However, while the Fairy Tail guild's next generation was doing their best to protect their guild's reputation as the strongest guild in Fiore, something that would greatly change the current era was taking place in a secret chamber below the kingdom's most prosperous company.

"Miss Layla, the preparations are complete." A green-haired woman said respectfully.

"Thank you, Grammi." A blonde woman, Layla Heartfilia, replied in a gentle tone.

Layla Heartfilia, the wife of the Heartfilia Kanzen's owner, Jude Heartfilia, was a beautiful, blonde woman with soft, brown eyes, hair pulled into a bun with a lacy, baby pink hairband with frills on its edges resting on top of her hair, and a very voluptuous figure wearing a white dress, a small brown satchel, and brown flat heeled shoes.

The other woman in the room, Grammi, was Layla's most devoted servant. She had green hair pulled into a taut bun with purple cross-shaped hair accessories decorating her hair. She wore a blue, collared, long-sleeved blouse with white cuffs at the end of the sleeves and an ankle length white skirt.

"Although I have faith in you, Miss Layla, are you sure this is a good idea?" Grammi asked in a concerned tone. "We only have eleven of the twelve of the keys. Are you sure this will work?"

Turning her head toward her worried servant, Layla smiled gently to reassure her. Then, she turned her attention toward the massive golden gate that seemed out of place in the hidden chamber.

"Honestly, I'm not sure how things will turn out, Grammi." Layla said, still smiling gently. "But I know that this is the only chance we have to open it. And this is a duty that I must accomplish. So, even if I have to do the impossible, I will make sure the Eclipse Gate opens today."

Hearing Layla's words, Grammi saw fierce flames of determination flickering in Layla's eyes. And although she was still worried, she swallowed any other concerns she may have had. On top of knowing she would not be able to change her mistress's mind, she also felt as if she would be throwing dirt on Layla's determination.

"I understand." Grammi said with a bow. "I will be here to support, should you need my assistance."

"Thank you, Grammi." Layla said, her smile widening at Grammi's supportive words.

A moment later, Layla took a step forward. Then, she reached her right hand into the satchel she was carrying. When she pulled her hand out of the satchel, she was holding eleven golden keys that radiated quite a bit of magical power. Inscribed on each of the keys was the symbol of one of the twelve zodiac constellations. However, with only a glance, it was clear that the key representing Sagittarius was missing.

These eleven keys, known as Celestial Spirit Keys, were no ordinary keys. They were magical items used specifically to perform [Celestial Spirit Magic]. With each key connecting to a Celestial Spirit, the caster of this magic can summon said spirit, after signing a contract, to aid them in everything from battle to becoming a simple companion for conversation.

Each of the twelve Celestial Spirit Keys are unique. However, that does not mean that there would be a maximum of twelve Celestial Spirit wizards at any given time. Although there are only twelve golden keys, there are quite a few silver Celestial Spirit Keys. Though they are considered to be of a lower tier, they can be quite useful in the hands of a skilled practitioner of [Celestial Spirit Magic].

"This plan has been in the works for four hundred years." Layla muttered quietly as she held the eleven keys toward the Eclipse Gate. "Finally, it will be completed."

With that, Layla flared her magic power to its limit. Then, the eleven keys began to glow, floating out of her hands. A moment later, the eleven keys were suspended in the air between Layla and the Eclipse Gate. However, the Eclipse Gate did not react in the slightest.

"It really isn't enough." Layla said with a note of disappointment in her tone. A moment later, however, her expression turned resolute. "I'll have to supplement it with my own magic power, then."

Hearing that, Grammi began to visibly panic. As Layla's servant, she had the opportunity to see Layla's Celestial Spirits in action. So, she knew there was no way Layla could match any of them in magic power output.

Unfortunately, Layla's flaring of her immense magic power made it impossible for Grammi to approach.

"Miss Layla, you have to stop!" Grammi shouted, her worry evident in her tone and expression. "If you don't, there's a chance you'll die!"

Although she did not turn back, Layla smiled at Grammi's concern.

"In this life, I've had great luck having a friend like you, Grammi." Layla said as she did everything she could to output as much magic power as possible. "But I can't stop. If the Eclipse Gate does not open, this world will meet its end."

While Layla continued pushing herself to an absurdly unreasonable degree, Grammi's tears ran down her cheeks. Although the amount of power Layla was outputting was astonishing, she could feel Layla's lifeforce weakening as time passed.

Eventually, however, like the eleven keys, the Eclipse Gate also began to glow in a bright golden light. A moment later, the gate flung open, five streaks of light flying through it before the gate slammed shut.

In the next instant, the gate began to fade from the room. At the same time, eight of the eleven Celestial Spirit Keys shot off in random directions, fazing through the walls and ceiling of the room. Meanwhile, Layla and the three remaining keys collapsed to the floor.

"Miss Layla!" Grammi shouted frantically as she quickly approached her fallen mistress.

Kneeling next to Layla, Grammi carefully cradled her upper body. As she held Layla, she noticed how pale she had become. On top of that, she could no longer feel any of the vast magic power Layla possessed. Still, Layla wore a smile on her face. Though, this smile was a bit different from her usual, gentle smile. Instead, this smile was filled with a sense of achievement.

"Grammi, I did it." Layla said, exhaustion clear in her voice. "I was able to complete my ancestor's plan."

"But you're..." Grammi began to speak. However, she was unable to finish her sentence due to her tears and her words getting stuck in her throat.

"I know, Grammi." Layla said, raising her right hand and wiping Grammi's tears. "I expected an outcome like this when I was unable to retrieve the twelfth key."

"Then, why?" Grammi asked, trying her best not to cry anymore.

"For Lucy." Layla said with a fond smile on her face. "As long as she has the chance to grow up and live a happy life, I'm willing to do anything. I'm sure you can relate, right?"

Although she wanted to refuse, Grammi knew, just like Layla, she would do anything if it would lead to her daughter, Brandish, being safe. So, instead of speaking, she hugged Layla tightly, knowing their time together would be ending much sooner than she wanted or expected.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Hargeon.

At the same time the Eclipse Gate opened under the Heartfilia Kanzen's Headquarters, Alfonzo and Elicia, who had just arrived at the orphanage they briefly lived at in Hargeon, shuddered just before they could knock on the front door.

However, it was not only Alfonzo and Elicia who shuddered at the wave of magic power that spread around the world. Instead, every being with enough magic power was able to feel it. Naturally, this caused a great deal of confusion among the stronger members of the wizard community.

"I guess Layla opened the Eclipse Gate." Alfonzo said with a serious expression on his face. "Looks like the Dragon Slayers will be here soon."

"Yeah." Elicia said with a smile. "That means we'll get to meet Natsu soon."

"Ugh." Alfonzo groaned.

Though Alfonzo liked Natsu as a character in an anime, he had no illusion that he and Natsu would ever get along, let alone become friends. Natsu's loud and brash personality was something that Alfonzo knew he would be annoyed by quite quickly. On top of that, he knew that Natsu would challenge him to fights, daily, if not more.

"If he bothers me too much, I'll just stuff him into the back of the Escalade." Alfonzo muttered in a dark tone. "That should teach him not to bother me, right? Ah, what the fuck am I thinking? Of course it won't. He'll just get angry and want to fight me for revenge or some shit. Damn it!"

"Plus, he'd probably puke in there, too." Elicia said happily.

"Ugh." Alfonzo groaned once again. "There's no probably, he'd definitely puke."

"Back to the drawing board, then?" Elicia asked, clearly having fun at Alfonzo's expense.

"Whatever, I'll just cross that bridge when I come to it." Alfonzo said, turning away with a pout before swiftly knocking on the orphanage's door.

Earth Land, Alakitasia, Alvarez Empire, Vistarion.

At the same time, on the western continent, Alakitasia, in the capital city of one of its largest countries, a black-haired man sat on the throne of the emperor with his eyes closed. As the wave of magical power that was produced by the Eclipse Gate washed over him, he slowly opened his eyes.

"To think that four hundred years have already passed." The black-haired man said, no emotion visible on his face. "I wonder how long it will take for you to get strong enough to fulfill my greatest wish, Natsu."