

Fairy Tail 44

Chapter 44: July 7, x777; Part 2

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

July 7, x777.

Outside of Magnolia, in the forest east of the town, where Elicia took her first D-Class quest, a young boy with pink hair lay unconscious. A few moments later, the boy began to stir. Then, he slowly pushed himself off the ground until he was in a seated position.

Shaking his head, the boy looked at his surroundings. As he did, it became clear that he had no clue where he was.

"How did I get here?" The boy asked. "And where the heck am I?"

After asking those two questions, the boy picked himself up from the ground. Then, he began to slowly explore his surroundings. Unfortunately, he never found a landmark that would allow him to identify his location.

"Seriously, this isn't funny." The boy said, finally beginning to panic. "Where am I?"

At that moment, the boy realized that he should have someone that could help him nearby. After all, the one who raised him was never too far away at any given time.

"Igneel!" Natsu shouted, hoping to get his guardian's attention. "Where are you?"

Unfortunately, the Igneel the boy spoke of, did not respond. So, the boy grew more frantic as time passed. At first, he ran around the area shouting the name of his guardian. Eventually, however, he began to slow down, his shout beginning to mix with sobs.

Meanwhile, Makarov, who was also affected by the pulse of magic energy released by the Eclipse Gate, left the guild hall. Shortly after the wave of energy passed, he sensed another strong, yet much less so, magic power appear outside of the town. Curious to know what it was, he quickly left the town and walked in the direction where he felt the magic power.

Eventually reaching the forest to the east of the town, Makarov's steps grew more cautious.

"What could have landed in the forest?" Makarov asked himself with a serious expression on his face. "Although I can definitely take on whatever it is, the way its power is fluctuating is more than a little alarming."

As time passed, Makarov drew nearer to the source of the magic power. As he did, he felt as if he could feel an individual's feelings of despair, something that made Makarov quicken his pace. However, when he found the sources of magic power and despair, he was thoroughly confused.

As it turned out, the sources of the magic power and emotional distress were the same person, a pink-haired boy, who looked no older than eleven years old, pacing around with a lost expression on his face.

"A boy is the source of the magic power I felt?" Makarov asked himself as he carefully approached the unfamiliar boy. "But... What is he doing out here?"

"Igneel... Please come back..." The boy said weakly as he finally stopped pacing. Then, the boy fell to the ground as he continued. "Igneel, where are you?"

Seeing the distress in the boy's eyes, Makarov felt pity. So, he slowly, with his arms raised in a disarming fashion, drew near to the boy.

When Makarov was close enough, the boy finally noticed his presence. Looking up with tears in his eyes, the boy made eye contact with Makarov and adopted a defensive position.

"Who are you, old man?" The boy asked warily.

"My name is Makarov." Makarov said with a grandfatherly smile on his face. "I am the guild master of the Fairy Tail guild, who resides in the nearby town."

After introducing himself, Makarov could practically see the question marks floating over the boy's head.

'It seems he's never heard of Fairy Tail.' Makarov thought to himself as he stopped his approach in order not to frighten the boy any more than he already was. 'No, it seems he has no idea what a guild is, at all.'

As if to confirm Makarov's thoughts, the boy spoke.

"What is a guild?' The boy asked, confusion clearly written all over his face.

However, Makarov also noticed that the wariness in the boy's gaze had diminished significantly.

'Either this boy is naïve, letting his guard down like that,' Makarov thought to himself, 'or his instincts are rather good, and he can tell that I mean him no harm. I'll have to spend more time with him to determine which is the case.'

"A guild is a place where like-minded wizards gather to find work and comradery." Makarov explained patiently.

"Like-minded wizards..." The boy muttered to himself as he contemplated the meaning of Makarov's words.

"So, tell me, Child, how did you get here in this forest?" Makarov asked in a soothing tone.

Hearing that question, the boy was snapped out of his contemplations.

"I was taking a break after training." Natsu said, the despairing expression reappearing on his face.
"Then, Igneel told me he would help me relax. After that, everything went black. Then, I woke up here."

'It sounds like this Igneel person brought him here.' Makarov surmised. 'Then, he abandoned him in this forest.'

Although those thoughts ran through Makarov's head, he was experienced enough to know that it would be a bad idea to mention them to the boy. It was clear that not only did the boy trust this Igneel to an extremely high degree, but he cared for him just as much.

"Can you tell me what this Igneel looks like?" Makarov asked. "Although the name is not familiar to me, maybe I can help you find him."

Hearing that, the boy's eyes lit up. Then, with eagerness in his tone, he began to speak once again.

"Igneel is big... Really big." The boy said, spreading his arms in an attempt to emphasize his words. "And he's covered in dark red scales and has two really big wings... And..."

As the boy continued his description of Igneel, Makarov's expression did not change. However, his thoughts on the matter were completely different.

'That doesn't sound like a person.' Makarov thought skeptically 'It sounds like he's describing some kind of gigantic beast. Scales...? Horns...? Wings...? It sounds like he's describing a dragon, a creature of legend. But that's impossible, no one has seen a dragon in centuries.'

Although Makarov was skeptical about the boy's claims, he could sense no falsehood in his words. So, he chose to believe what the boy was saying. Unfortunately, although he could not detect any lies with his large amount of life experience, he was unable to tell if what the boy was saying was the actual truth. If the boy was delusional and believed his words to be true, there would be no way for Makarov to detect it.

But after looking into the boy's innocent eyes, he felt as if everything the boy said was true. So, he extended an arm toward the boy and smiled.

"Unfortunately, I have no idea where to find this Igneel." Makarov said in a grandfatherly tone. "But both I and the guild would be willing to help you find him."

At first, the boy's eyes dimmed when Makarov mentioned that he did not know where to find Igneel. However, some hope returned to them when Makarov offered to help him in his search. Then, he remembered what Makarov said about guilds.

"You said guilds are places where like-minded people join to find work and comrades, right?" The boy asked.

"That's right." Makarov said with a nod.

"Then, what do the members of Fairy... Um..." The boy began to ask, before getting caught on the guild's name.

"It's Fairy Tail, my boy." Makarov gently reminded the boy.

"That's right, Fairy Tail." The boy said before continuing. "Then, what do the wizards of Fairy Tail gather for? I mean what is their like-minded goal?"

Hearing that, Makarov could not help but smile widely as he answered the boy's question.

"The wizards of Fairy Tail wish to explore the mysteries of this world." Makarov said in a grand tone. "No one has ever seen a Fairy. So, no one even knows if they have tails. But Fairy Tail wizards are the type of people who would search the entire world to find out."

Seeming to forget his sadness after hearing Makarov's explanation, the boy's eyes lit up brighter than they had during the entire conversation.

"So, that is why I am certain that the members of my guild would be delighted to help you in your search for Igneel." Makarov said with a smile. "It's not every day someone would get the opportunity to see a dragon."

Although the boy had never directly mentioned that Igneel was a dragon, Makarov was able to verify his guess when the boy's eyes shined even brighter.

"That sounds amazing!" The boy exclaimed excitedly. "Old man, do you think I could join Fairy Tail?"

Pretending to contemplate the question, Makarov supported his left elbow with his right hand while his left hand stroked his mustache. Then, while maintaining the same position, he made eye contact with the boy.

"I'm not sure." Makarov said, a hint of mischief in his tone. "The requirements to join my guild are pretty strict."

Hearing that, the boy's eyes gained a tint of desperation. However, he became even more resolved to join.

"Just tell me what they are." The boy said while pounding his right fist on his chest. "I'll show you that I'm strong and can do anything you ask me to."

Chuckling quietly at the boy's enthusiasm, Makarov pretended to contemplate once again. Then, after a few moments, he continued.

"Well, first things first." Makarov said. "What is your name, Child."

"I'm Natsu! Natsu Dragneel." The boy, Natsu, said with pride.

"Very Well, Natsu." Makarov replied with a nod. "Then, the next question... Can you use magic?"

"Of course!" Natsu exclaimed once again as flames lit up on his clenched fist.

"And what kind of magic do you use?" Makarov asked, finding himself more interested in the boy as time went by.

"I'm a fire Dragon Slayer." Natsu said. "and I use [Fire Dragon Slayer Magic]."

'So, he's like Laxus.' Makarov thought to himself as Natsu stood in front of him with pride etched on his face. 'But since he said he was raised by a dragon; I doubt he has a lacrima inside of him.'

"I see." Makarov said, keeping his expression calm. "In that case..."

Hearing that, Natsu once again focused all his attention on Makarov. Leaning forward slightly, he waited for Makarov's next question and any tasks he might have to complete to join Fairy Tail.

"You pass." Makarov said with a smile. "Welcome to Fairy Tail."

Bang!

Immediately, Natsu fell forward, smashing face first into the forest floor. A moment later, he jumped up with anger on his face.

"That's all?" Natsu asked.

"Yup, that's all." Makarov said with a mischievous smile on his face.

"But you said the requirements were..." Natsu said, intending to question Makarov about what he said.

Growl!

However, before he could even get started, Natsu's stomach growled loudly. Then, he grabbed his stomach with both hands and fell to his knees.

"ugh... So hungry." Natsu whined, causing Makarov to laugh loudly.

"It seems you are." Makarov said. "well then, let's get back to the guild and get you something to eat."

Nodding his head frantically, Natsu slowly stood to his feet. When he was standing again, Makarov turned around and began walking back toward Magnolia.

"Then, when we get back, I'll introduce you to the rest of the guild." Makarov said as he walked. "There are quite a few kids around your age there. So, I'm sure you'll find some friends, too."

Several hours later, Alfonzo and Elicia, riding in Alfonzo's Vanquish, drove through the streets of Magnolia toward the Fairy Tail guild hall.

"Come on, hurry up, Fonzie!" Elicia said excitedly as she bounced in the passenger seat. "Natsu should already be at the guild hall."

"I know, that's why I'm going so slow." Alfonzo replied, clearly not looking forward to the meeting with the protagonist of this world.

"Don't be like that, Fonzie." Elicia said with a smile. "I'm sure things will be fun once he joins."

"Yeah, and destructive." Alfonzo added. "I can see Gramps losing the rest of his hair when the requests for compensation start rolling in."

To that, Elicia fell silent momentarily. Then, with an even wider smile, she continued to speak.

"He should be used to it by now." Elicia said with a shrug. "Other than us, everyone else in the guild destroys everything they lay their hands on."

"*Sigh* I couldn't even deny that if I wanted to." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone.

Eventually, no matter how slowly Alfonzo drove, they reached the guild hall. After getting out of the car and closing the doors, they approached the guild's front doors and could hear the usual ruckus coming from inside.

"Seems like everything is going on like normal." Elicia said with a smile.

"Yeah." Alfonzo said with a nod. "I wonder how many tables they broke this time."

As he finished speaking, Alfonzo pulled the doors open. When he did, the sounds from inside the guild hall could be heard clearly.

"You'll never be the strongest in the guild, fire breath!" Gray shouted.

"What did you say, you frozen streaker!?" Natsu shouted in reply. "I dare you to say it again!"

"I'll say it as many times as you want!" Gray shouted in return.

"Yup, Natsu is here." Alfonzo said. "And the guild is already much louder than usual."