

Fairy Tail 441

Chapter 441: The Semi-Finals Come to an End

Once Ur announced the match's outcome, Mirajane slowly lowered herself to the ring next to Ultear. Then, she let both her [Take Over] and Bael's release state dispel. After that, she staggered for a moment, her back still in pain from slamming into the ring.

Meanwhile, the crowd cheered wildly, with one particularly passionate spectator shouting "cool" over and over, as well. The Wizards from Fairy Tail, on the other hand... Or rather, the wizards looking forward to one day having their own [Soul Armament] took notice of the changes to Bael in its sealed state.

Actually, the difference before and after Mirajane learned the name of her [Soul Armament] was not particularly noticeable if one was not looking for it. Originally, the tiara was a silver color with a purple jewel in its center. However, after the seal was partially released, it had a much shinier appearance, as if the material was swapped out for something purer.

"Alright, Tear." Mirajane said, bending down to pick up Ultear as she spoke. "Let's get you to the medical station--- Ugh!"

Unfortunately, as she tried to lift her harem sister, Mirajane winced in pain.

"Big Sis, are you okay?" Elfman asked as he hopped into the ring.

"Yeah, Mirajane said as she slowly stood up. "But I'll need you to help me get Tear to the medical station. You can let Lisanna and Juvia fight in the next match."

"Sure thing." Elfman said as he bent down to pick up Ultear. "You should let them take a look at you, too."

Nodding in response, Mirajane gingerly followed Elfman towards the edge of the ring. Then, with her brother's assistance, she jumped down to the ground before they both made their way over to the medical station.

Meanwhile, Lisanna and Juvia from Team Strauss and Laki and Meredy from Team Ultear jumped into the ring once Ur called for the next fighters. And before long, the match started.

Although the two on two match lasted for a while, in the end, Laki, with her versatile [Wood-Make Magic], and Meredy with her ability to link the senses of her opponents and bypass Juvia's [Water Body] with [Maguilty Sense] took the victory after a long, hard-fought battle.

And with that victory, the match between Team Strauss and Team Ultear ended up being the first match in the tournament to go all the way to the tie breaker, greatly surprising the spectators.

"So, it all comes down to Cana and Elfman, huh?" Elicia said with an intrigued smile on her face. "They were both S-Class candidates last year. So, this should be a good fight."

"Are you sure about that?" Alfonzo asked. "I may be a little biased, but Cana has been training with us for as long as she's been a part of the guild. ON top of that, her dad is Gildarts. And he's put a lot of effort into her training. Though, there was a three-year gap when he had nothing to do with it."

"Yeah, but Elfman has that one [Take Over], Belcusas." Sun said. "And it's really hard to hurt that one, right?"

"Yeah, even Fried's [Darkness Form] couldn't hurt it." Marin said.

"That's only because Elfman didn't give Fried the chance to gather the magic power necessary to deal any damage. But remember, Mira beat it pretty easily when she fought the real thing."

"Yeah, now that you mention it..." Marin said as she and Sun slipped into contemplation.

"Well, we won't have to wait for long." Elicia said as she drew everyone's attention to the ring. "Ur is about to call the last fighters to the ring."

Hearing that, Marin and Sun once again joined Alfonzo and Elicia in watching the current round.

"This match will decide which of the two teams will go on to the finals." Ur said. "Elfman Strauss, Cana Alberona, please come to the ring."

With no hesitation, Cana and Elfman both jumped into the ring, gaining uproarious cheers from the crowd. Then, with the introductions already made, Ur gave the signal to begin.

"[Take Over Magic: Beast Soul: Belcusas]." Elfman chanted, knowing that even though the [Beast Take Over] was more powerful overall, Cana's offensive spells were more than enough to deal with it.

At the same time, Cana drew several cards from her [Soul Armament], a deck of cards she could use to create any cards she desired with her magic power. Then, after confirming she had the right combinations of cards in her hand, and while not paying attention to Elfman, who was charging at her at top speed, she nodded her head before slapping the three combinations onto her exposed skin.

"[Card Magic: Enhancement Cards: Power, Speed, Magic Power Density]." Cana chanted as Elfman swung his large, armored arm at her.

A moment later, the instant before Elfman's attack could land, Cana vanished from where she stood in a burst of speed.

Bang!

In the next instant, Elfman staggered forward. Meanwhile, Cana stood behind him with her right fist extended.

"Damn, that armor really is strong." Cana said while shaking her hand. "That hurt a little bit."

Despite the pain she was feeling in her hand, Cana continued to slam her right fist into Elfman's back, keeping him off balance. At the same time, she drew another set of cards from her [Soul Armament]. Then, while continuing to strike Elfman, she threw the cards in front of him.

["Oh, that's a pretty good idea."] Cana's [Armament Spirit] said in an impressed tone. ["But I would have like seeing you fight him head on. Your odds of winning would have been more of a gamble then."]

'I didn't enter this tournament to gamble.' Cana replied internally. 'I'm here to win. And if I can't win, I want someone to push me far enough that I can release your first seal.'

["Yeah, yeah, I know."] Cana's Armament spirit] replied in a bored tone. ["Seriously, you're no fun."]

'Whatever.' Cana shot back while mentally rolling her eyes.

Meanwhile, despite knowing that Cana was up to something after she threw her cards and continued pushing him towards them, Elfman was finding himself unable to do something about it.

'She's exploiting Belcusas' biggest weakness.' Elfman thought to himself. 'This [Take Over's] agility is entirely too low. I guess I'll have to switch to the [Beast]. I just hope I can survive one of these punches she keeps hitting me with.'

"[Take Over Magic: Beast Soul]." Elfman chanted right after stumbling forward from another one of Cana's punches.

In the next instant, Elfman was covered in the light of his magic. Then, his size decreased as he transformed into the [Beast]. And lucky for him, because of the [Beast's] smaller size, he was not forced into the cards lying on the ring. Unfortunately, because of the reduced defense from the change in form, Cana's next punch sent him flying out of the ring.

Boom!

Even more unfortunate, Elfman was unable to stop himself while airborne. As a result, he slammed face first into the wall separating the ring side area and the spectator stands.

"Oops..." Cana muttered with her right fist still extended as she watched Elfman slide down the wall.

"Elfman Strauss is out of the ring." Ur's voice sounded out. "Winner of the match, Cana Alberona. And with that victory, Team Ultear will move on to the final round."

With Ur's declaration, the crowd cheered loudly. Meanwhile, the members of Team Ultear, with the exception of Ultear, who was still in the medical tent, looked towards Team Steel Threads with the flames of determination burning in their eyes.

"It looks like they're all fired up." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"Hey, that's my line!" Natsu shouted from the distance.

Chuckling in response, Elicia noticed that there was a particularly fiery gaze focused on her. Looking around, she found Cana glaring at her, rather than looking at her challengingly. Tilting her head in confusion, Elicia had no idea why Cana would look at her like that.

Meanwhile, Marin and Sun, after seeing the look Cana was giving Elicia had an idea why Cana was looking at Elicia that way.

"Something tells me the finals are gonna be really intense." Marin said, whispering into Sun's ear.

"Yeah..." Sun replied with a nod. "But I wonder what the match ups will be."

"I get the feeling Lici will end up fighting Cana." Marin said. "I mean, look at the way Cana is looking at her."

"I know, right?" Sun replied. "Well, it's probably better this comes out now rather than further down the road."

"Yeah, you're right." Marin replied. "But I really don't know why Cana held it in for so long, though."

"Hey, what's up with all the whispering?" Alfonzo asked curiously.

"Don't worry about it, Fonzie." Marin replied with a smile. "Just a bit of girl talk."

Shrugging his shoulders, Alfonzo let the girls have their secrets. However, like Elicia, Marin, and Sun, he also noticed the look Cana was giving Elicia. And from what he could tell, there was a bit of grievance

hidden behind it. Though, he was not sure what she was unhappy about, exactly. He did have a guess though. And if he was right, then, he was at least partially responsible for how she was feeling.

"The final round of the tournament will commence in thirty minutes." Ur said loud enough for the entire stadium to hear her, despite all the cheering.

With that, Ur stood from her ice throne before making her way to the medical station to check on Ultear's condition. After a few moments, Ur entered the tent and found Ultear quickly. And when she did, Shizuka was standing over her. On top of that, Wendy was assisting with the treatment.

"How is she?" Ur asked, concerned about her daughter's well-being.

"She'll be fine, Master." Wendy said. "Luckily, there were no broken bones. She'll be sore for a while, though."

"*Sigh* If that's all, she should have no problem fighting in the final round."

"Yeah, she's really strong." Shizuka said with a smile. "I couldn't imagine getting hit that hard. it probably hurt a lot."

Smiling wryly at Shizuka, Ur could only nod in agreement.

"Ugh... Where am I?" Ultear asked in a groggy tone.

"Oh, you're already awake." Ur said as she stepped closer to the sick bed. "How are you feeling. You hit the ring pretty hard, after all."

"Like I got hit by Rika's Humvee." Ultear replied while shaking her head. Then, she looked around her surroundings, and when she noticed she was in the medical station, she smiled wryly. "I guess I lost, huh?"

"That's right." Ur replied.

"*Sigh* That's two years in a row I lost to Mira." Ultear said in a frustrated tone.

Hearing that, Ur and Wendy did not know how to console Ultear. Shizuka, on the other hand, also stepped closer to the sick bed.

"Can you teach me how to fly?" Shizuka asked with her eyes sparkling. "I wanna fly like you and Mira did."

At first, Ultear was taken aback by Shizuka's question.

"I'm not sure I can do that." Ultear replied.

Hearing that, Shizuka's mood dropped immediately.

["Did her boobs just shrink?"] Kinsi asked in an astonished tone.

Remembering the conversation she had with Alfonzo and Elicia about what their [Armament Spirits] said about the same topic, Ultear could not help but smile.

"You know, it's because of what Alfonzo made me that I was able to fly." Ultear said while gesturing to the claws lying on the table next to her sick bed. "And who knows, if Alfonzo made one for you, it might evolve into something that can fly, too."

Immediately, Shizuka's eyes lit up. Just the thought of flying was enough to improve her mood. And if it weren't for her duty as a healer, a duty she took quite seriously, she would have run off to ask Alfonzo to make a [Soul Armament] for her.

"Anyway, you should get as much rest as you can, Tear." Ur said with a slight smile. "You'll be facing Alfonzo and Lici's team in the finals."

"*Phew* I guess that means our team won." Ultear said in a relieved tone. "I really need to thank Cana, Meredy, and Laki. Without them, we would be sitting in the stands and watching with everyone else."

Nodding in response, Ur turned around.

"Yeah. Anyway, I'll let you get your rest." Ur said as she started walking towards the medical station's entrance. "I'm sure Shizuka and Wendy will make sure you're in shape to fight. In the meantime, I'm gonna grab a bite to eat. Smelling all that food has me famished."

Smiling at her mother's retreating back, Ultear relaxed as Wendy and Shizuka did all they could to get her ready for the final round.

Chapter 442: Elicia Vs. Cana

"Ladies and gentlemen." Ur said just as the thirty minute break ended. "The x785 Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament finals is about to begin! Are you ready!?"

In response, the crowd exploded into loud cheering with many of those in the audience shouting the name of their favorite wizard among the eight participating in the finals.

"The, without further ado..." Ur said, her voice cutting through the cacophony of cheering voices. "Team Ultear, and the reigning champions, Team Steel Threads, please make your way to the ring."

As the two teams approached the ring, the cheers grew in volume. And when Elicia and Cana jumped into the ring without waiting for Ur to ask, the crowd got even more pumped up.

"It looks like the first match of the finals will be between Elicia Marcus Taylor of Team Steel Threads and Cana Alberona of Team Ultear." Ur said, surprised that the two were so eager to get started. "Then, if both fighters are ready, you may begin!"

Despite Ur giving the signal to begin, Elicia and Cana did not immediately start to move. Instead, they stared at each other in silence. Though, Cana's stare was more of a glare than anything else.

"Cana, what's wrong?" Elicia asked with concern lacing her tone. "Why have you been looking at me like that?"

Instead of responding immediately, Cana continued to glare at Elicia. Though, because of the genuine concern in Elicia's tone, her glare grew a bit complicated.

"Cana...?" Elicia asked again.

"It's not fair." Cana said while gritting her teeth and clenching her fists. "Why were you first? Especially after everything that happened earlier this year?"

After hearing Cana's question, Elicia knew exactly what was on her mind. However, she did not know how to respond.

"I..." Elicia said, struggling to respond.

"I know..." Cana said, holding up a hand to stop Elicia. "I know how much he loves you. And we all knew you were his favorite. But still, it's not fair."

With a helpless expression on her face, Elicia subconsciously looked back at her team, who was looking at her and Cana with concern. Then, Marin and Sun turned their gazes to Alfonzo. And the concern in their gazes was evident.

"Cana, I..." Alfonzo said, wanting to explain himself.

Alfonzo knew some of the girls would not be happy with his decision to marry Elicia first after the debacle with Yoruichi. But he never thought it would manifest into something like this. Especially since no one said anything to him about it when he told them his plan to marry Elicia before their birthday.

"Don't say anything, Fonzie." Cana said, her gaze softening as she spoke. "I know I should have said something sooner. But I just couldn't... But after the deal the other girls and I made about the pageant, all these feelings bubble to the surface. And I just can't hold them back."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia, who were not made privy to the bet the other seven girls had riding on the pageant, wore confused expressions. Meanwhile, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy all understood where Cana was coming from.

"Anyway, we can talk about this later." Cana said, her gaze sharpening once again as she looked at Elicia. "It's definitely necessary after this. But for now, I need this fight. So, Lici, don't hold back."

As she spoke her last sentence, Cana pulled out several cards and slapped them onto her exposed skin.

"Because I won't." Cana said, almost growling out those words. "[Card Magic: Enhancement Cards: Power, Speed, Magic Power Density."

In the next instant, Cana vanished from where she stood. Then, when she reappeared, her right fist was headed towards Elicia's abdomen.

Reacting quickly while putting the issue to the back of her mind, for the time being, Elicia swept Cana's arm away with her left hand. Then, while riding the momentum of her parry, she dropped down and lashed her left leg at Cana's knees. In response, Cana lightly hopped over Elicia's leg sweep while simultaneously pulling another combination of cards from her [Soul Armament].

"Card Magic: Thunderbolt's Judgement]." Cana chanted as she brought the hand holding the cards down at Elicia's chest.

Before Cana's hand could make contact with her chest, Elicia shot threads from the fingertips of her right hand at the end of the ring behind her. At the same time, she kicked off the ring with her extended left leg, moving herself to a safe location.

Boom!

In the next instant, Cana's hand slammed into the ring. And when it did, two bolts of lightning fell from the sky on either side of her hand and struck the ring. And despite her proximity, the lightning bolts had no effect on Cana, at all.

A moment later, several threads wrapped around Cana's wrist. However, before Elicia could pull them, Cana once again reached into her [Soul Armament] to draw a few cards.

"[Random Throwing]." Cana chanted as she threw the cards in her free hand.

With little resistance, Elicia's threads were cut just as she retracted them. Meaning, Cana was completely unaffected by Elicia's attempt to ruin her balance.

"[Card Magic: Icicles]." Cana chanted after drawing another handful of cards, sending a volley of sharp icicles in Elicia's direction.

Instead of trying to dodge the incoming projectiles, however, Elicia ejected more threads from her fingertips. Then, with a masterful display of control, she wrapped them around the icicles before spinning her body.

"You can have these back." Elicia said as she uncoiled her threads from around Cana's spell.

In the next instant, all the icicles were sent flying back in Cana's direction, surprising her slightly. Still, Cana reacted quickly, punching each icicle as they neared and turning them into ice dust.

Meanwhile, Elicia, with her magic power saturating her legs, dashed forward. Then, just as the last icicle was destroyed, she lowered herself and slid towards Cana.

Raising her leg to avoid Elicia's outstretched left leg, Cana attempted to stomp down on Elicia's thigh. However, Elicia managed to get her left leg out of the way by using her hands to spin, once again trying to sweep Cana's legs out from under her.

And just like last time, Cana hopped over the leg sweep. However, Elicia quickly followed up by pushing herself up onto her hands as she continued spinning. As a result, Elicia's right leg clipped Cana in the side.

"Ugh!" Cana grunted in pain.

At the same time, Cana clamped her left arm down around Elicia's leg. Then, when she landed back on the ring, she spun on her heels, whipping Elicia's body along with her movement.

After a full rotation, Cana released Elicia, sending her flying towards the edge of the ring. Then, while Elicia was still airborne, Cana pulled a combination of cards from her [Soul Armament] and threw them in front of her. However, instead of falling to the ring or flying towards Elicia, the cards fanned out and hovered in front of her.

"[Card magic: Explosion]." Cana chanted as a wave of searing hot flames was fired in Elicia's direction.

In most cases, the fact that Elicia was airborne would mean that she had no way of dodging Cana's incoming spell. However, thanks to her threads, Elicia's mobility was barely hindered at all.

Shooting her threads into the ring, Elicia pushed herself straight upwards. Unfortunately, thanks to the momentum from Cana's throw, she was still flying towards the edge of the ring. So, once she was out of the range of Cana's spell, Elicia shot another volley of threads in Cana's direction, sinking their tips into the ring.

Reacting quickly, Cana used [Random Throwing] to once again cut Elicia's threads, hoping to stop her from changing her momentum. Unfortunately, she was just a little too late.

Now, Elicia was flying back towards the ring. Though, Cana had no intension of letting her land unimpeded.

"Card Magic: Sun's Strength]." Cana chanted as she threw several cards at Elicia.

As soon as the cards left Cana's hands, they were ignited in flames as they flew towards Elicia. Meanwhile, Elicia, knowing that those cards would explode on contact, shot her threads towards the ring, once again changing her direction to avoid the cards.

At the same time, before the cards could reach the audience, a slab of fire resistant metal appeared in front of most of them. And for those Alfonso did not stop, Natsu was there to devour the flames, stopping anyone in the audience from being harmed.

On a side note, Cana already knew that someone would stop her spell from hurting innocent bystanders. However, if she had not been sure about it, she would have never used that spell in the first place.

Continuing to maneuver between the cards Cana threw around, Elicia eventually made it back to the ring. Still, Cana continued to throw flaming cards at her. And while doing so, Cana drew another combination of cards from her [Soul Armament]. Then, after waiting for Elicia to draw near, she cast her spell.

"[Card Magic: Super Nova]." Cana chanted as she knelt to the ring and held the cards in her hand as close to the ring as possible.

"Oh... Crap..." Elicia muttered as the cards in Cana's hand began to glow brightly.

In the next moment, a bright white light exploded from the cards in Cana's hand, engulfing the entire ring in a blinding light.

"Kya~~~~~!" Cana screamed.

Though very few of those present could see what was going on in the blinding white dome of light produced from Cana's spell, they could all tell that she had been attacked. A moment later, Cana was seen flying backwards off the ring.

'No, I can't lose this!' Cana shouted internally. 'Not after making such a big deal before the fighting even began.'

In the next instant, Cana found herself sitting at a card table in a large casino. Standing on the other side of the card table was a beautiful young woman with bright red hair styled into twin tails and red eyes wearing black and white face paint and dealer's attire with red accents. However, instead of slacks, she wore a pleated black skirt.

"So, you pulled me in here for a shot at winning, huh?" Cana said after scanning her soundings.

"That's right, the red-haired woman, Cana's Armament Spirit replied while shuffling a deck of cards. "On top of that, I'm certain you've been ready to hear my name for a couple of weeks now."

"Seriously?" Cana asked in an incredulous tone. "Then, why haven't you told me yet?"

"What would be the fun in that?" the [Armament Spirit] asked while smiling brightly as she finished shuffling the cards in her hand. "Instead of making it so simple and boring. Why don't we play a little game?"

"Now's not the time for this!" Cana shouted in an agitated tone.

"Fine." The [Armament Spirit] said while shrugging her shoulders. "Then, you can go back and fall out of the ring, while you're unable to do anything about it."

"*Sigh* Fine." Cana said in a huff. "What kind of game do you want to play."

"Blackjack." The [Armament Spirit] replied, her smile widening as she did so. "One hand. If you win, I'll tell you my name. And if you lose, then you lose in the tournament. Fun, right?"

"Just get on with it." Cana said in an irritated tone. "Deal the cards."

Hearing that, the [Armament Spirit] raised an eyebrow in amusement. Then, she began dealing the cards.

A moment later, both Cana and the [Armament Spirit] had two cards in front of them. While both of Cana's cards, a five of hearts and a five of spades, were face up, only one of the [Armament Spirit's] cards, a king of clubs, was face up while the other was face down.

"So, what will it be?" the [Armament Spirit] asked.

Taking a moment to consider, Cana's expression turned resolute as she raised her hand above her head.

Bang!

"Double Down!" Cana shouted as she slammed her fist into the table.

Smiling in response, the [Armament Spirit] dealt another card, an ace of diamonds, to Cana.

"That's some pretty good luck." The [Armament Spirit] said jovially. "And because you doubled down, I'll even help you learn how to wield my power more actively if you end up winning."

"Just play the game." Cana said. Though, it was clear she was feeling pretty good about her chances of winning.

Following Cana's order, the [Armament Spirit] flipped her face down card. When she did, she revealed a queen of hearts.

"Hmm... I guess I have to hit." The [Armament Spirit] said with a smile.

Drawing another card, the [Armament Spirit] revealed a jack of spades.

"Looks like you win." The [Armament Spirit] said. Now, per our agreement, you may refer to me as..."

Back in the real world, Cana was still flying through the air while the dome caused by her [Super Nova] spell was dissipating.

"[Deal the Cards, Hoyle]." Cana chanted.

A moment later, the card pouch that acted as Hoyle's weapon form was now black and accented in red. And from the pouch, Cana drew two handfuls of cards. The first, her usual tarot cards while the second was a handful of poker cards.

"[Full House]." Cana changed as she dropped the poker cards to the ground below her.

In the next instant, a house of cards large enough for Cana to stand on was constructed below Cana, stopping her from falling to the ground and losing via ring out.

'Wow! Cana released her first seal!' Sun exclaimed, standing up in excitement as she did so.

'I had a feeling her [Armament Spirit] would have a name like that when I saw the form her [Soul Armament Embryo] took after its first shift. 'But how's Lici? I mean, she took that [Super Nova] to the face.'

"Kya!" Cana yelled in surprise, drawing Alfonzo's attention to her just as he was turning his head back to Elicia.

When Alfonzo focused on Cana again, who had just fallen to the ground with confusion written all over her face, he saw the cards making up the house she landed on had been cut through cleanly by threads extending from the ring.

Tracing the threads back to their source, Elicia was lying in the ring, covered in burns, with her right hand extended towards Cana. On top of that, Alfonzo could feel melted Vibranium on the ring surrounding her.

'I knew she made a Vibranium Thread cocoon when Cana triggered the [Super Nova].' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'So, I'm not surprised that Cana was sent flying by the reflected kinetic energy. But I never expected the [Super Nova] to be hot enough to melt the cocoon so quickly.'

"Cana Alberona is out of the ring." Ur announced while Alfonzo was thinking. "Winner of the match, Elicia Marcus Taylor of Team Steel Threads."

Chapter 443: The End of the Tournament and the Fantasia Parade

With Ur's announcement of the winner, Cana finally snapped out of her confused state. Then, with a frown on her face, she looked towards Elicia. However, when she saw Elicia's state, her frown disappeared immediately.

"Lici!" Cana said as she hopped into the ring with concern marring her expression.

A moment before Cana arrived next to Elicia, however, Alfonzo appeared next to her, as well.

"Lici, are you okay?" Alfonzo asked as he knelt next to his wife.

"Not really." Elicia replied with a pain-filled smile on her face. "This really hurts... a lot."

"Yeah, I guess it would." Alfonzo said. "You're covered in burns everywhere."

"Lici, I'm so sorry!" Cana shouted in a panic. "I didn't mean to hurt you so bad. The [Super Nova] was just supposed to blow you out of the ring with concussive force."

Though her smile still indicated she was in pain, Elicia smiled as gently as possible at Cana.

"I know." Elicia said soothingly. "You're my best friend. So, I never even considered that you did this on purpose. But stuff like this happens in battle, right? What's the old saying? Magic spells have no eyes, right?"

Hearing that, Cana was visibly relieved. However, she was still concerned about Elicia's well-being.

"And in most cases, it probably would have." Alfonzo said, cutting into the conversation. "But because Lici made that Vibranium Thread cocoon around herself, the kinetic energy that would have thrown her out of the ring was reflected at you. Meanwhile, the heat from the explosion was left behind. And well, this is the result."

As he finished speaking, Alfonzo gazed down at Elicia's body that was covered in burns and ruined clothing. Meanwhile, Cana was surprised. She didn't actually see what happened as she was blown away rather quickly. Elicia, on the other hand, looked away sheepishly. Especially since she was aware that she had done more damage to herself than Cana's spell would have.

"Anyway, let's get you to the medical station." Alfonzo said, changing the. "Hopefully, Ren, Shizuka, and Wendy will be able to get you right. Otherwise, we'll have to ask Porlyusica to help."

Immediately upon hearing that she might have to go see Porlyusica, Elicia's expression fell. Then, she began to shudder in fear. However, her shuddering did not last long, as the movement irritated her burned skin.

"Ow~~~!" Elicia cried in pain.

In the next instant, a slab of metal appeared underneath Elicia. Then, it levitated off the ring's surface.

At first, when the metal Alfonzo created came in contact with her wounds, Elicia painfully drew in a breath of air. However, after only a moment, her expression relaxed significantly.

"Ah~~!" Elicia exhaled in comfort. "This feels amazing."

"Yeah, that metal tends to stay cool as long as the temperature it is subjected to isn't too high." Alfonzo said with a smile. "And the temperature in the middle of October is nowhere near high enough to change that."

With that, Alfonzo turned towards the medical station as he led Elicia and Cana out of the ring. Meanwhile, the crowd had fallen silent after seeing the state Elicia was in. However, when it seemed like she would probably be okay, they cheered loudly.

A few minutes later, Alfonzo returned to ring side. Meanwhile, Cana stayed in the medical tent to accompany Elicia.

"How's Lici?" Marin asked with concern in her tone.

"I'm not sure yet, honestly." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. But since she can joke and talk freely, she should be fine. At worst, we'll just have to ask Porlyusica to look at her."

Hearing that, Marin and Sun breathed sighs of relief. Then, they smiled just thinking about the reaction Elicia would have because of the thought of going to see Porlyusica.

"Up next is the two on two match." Ur said, bringing everyone's attention away from Elicia's injury.
"Teams, send your fighters to the ring."

"So, who's going up?" Sun asked. "Should Marin and I go?"

"Nah, I'll go up with Marin this time." Alfonzo said. "I wanna finish this match quickly. The parade will start soon, and we need to get ready for it."

After receiving nods from his team mates, Alfonzo hopped into the ring, followed closely by Marin. At the same time, Ultear and Laki also hopped into the ring, too.

"Well, damn..." Ultear muttered as she looked at Alfonzo and Marin on the other side of the ring. "I didn't expect Alfonzo to come up in this round."

"Yeah, he looks determined." Laki said with a nod. "Do you think he needs to feed his stomach?"

Smiling despite herself, Ur could only shake her head at Laki's my pace attitude.

"No, I doubt it." Ultear replied. "It probably has something to do with the conversation Cana and Lici had before the last match."

As she was close enough to Alfonzo and Elicia, Laki was well aware of what happened between them and Yoruichi back in March. However, as Ultear seemed really nervous upon seeing Alfonzo jump into the ring for this match, she told a little joke to lighten the mood.

"Fighting in this two on two match will be Alfonzo Marcus and Marin Kitagawa of Team Steel Threads and Ultear Milkovich and Laki Olietta of Team Ultear." Ur said, introducing the competitors and gaining loud cheers from the audience. Then, to cut through all the cheering, she continued in a sonorous voice. "Should Alfonzo and Marin emerge victorious, Team Steel Threads will defend their title as Fairy Tail's strongest team. However, should Ultear and Laki come out on top, Meredy will face off against Sun to determine our champions. Now, are the fighters ready?"

After receiving nods from the four wizards in the ring, Ur nodded as well before raising her right hand high above her head.

"Begin!" Ur ordered as she lowered her hand swiftly.

"[Soar upon the---" Ultear began to chant her [Soul Armament's] release command.

"[Wood-Make]---" Laki said, beginning to cast her first spell, as well.

Before either of them could finish, however, Alfonzo appeared between them with his hands resting on both of their sides.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Spark Cannon]." Alfonzo chanted calmly.

In the next instant, both Ultear and Laki were electrocuted by the electricity that began to gather on Alfonzo's palms. Then, before either Laki or Ultear could scream in pain, they were sent flying by the balls of electricity that formed in Alfonzo's palms before landing outside of the ring on opposite sides.

In response, the entire stadium fell into an awkward silence.

"Uh... Um... Ultear and Laki are outside of the ring." Ur said in an awkward tone as her voice cut through the silence. "The winners of the match are Alfonzo Marcus and Marin Kitagawa. And the winners of the tournament, and defending their title, are Team Steel Threads."

Despite Ur's announcement, the stadium remained silent. On top of feeling that the end of the tournament was anti-climactic, the audience was thoroughly flabbergasted by the ease with which Alfonzo finished the match.

"Why did I even come up here?" Marin asked as she lowered Nova to her sides. "I could have stayed out of the ring and the outcome wouldn't have changed."

A moment later, Alfonzo appeared next to Ultear. Then, like he had done with Natsu, he sucked the electricity out of her body. Then, he picked her up in one arm after she stopped convulsing before appearing next to Laki and repeating the process.

"I'll take them to the medical station." Alfonzo said with Laki and Ultear in his arms. "I hit them a little harder than usual to end the match quickly. We still have a parade to put on, after all."

When Alfonzo mentioned the parade, the crowd finally snapped back to their senses. Although watching the wizards of Fairy Tail was a lot of fun, the real main event for the Harvest Festival was, and always will be, the Fantasia Parade.

Then, while the audience cheered loudly, Alfonzo made his way to the medical station, followed by Marin, Sun, and Meredy. Meanwhile, the rest of the Fairy Tail wizards exited the stadium to prepare for the aforementioned parade. With the exceptions of Erza, Mirajane, and Lucy, who were all concerned about Elicia's well-being after she was injured in her match with Cana.

However, since there were others around, Alfonzo was unable to have the talk he wanted to have with his girls right away. And after they made sure that Elicia would fully heal and that Laki and Ultear would be ready to go for the parade, everyone left the tent.

"Well, your guild is full of young, talented wizards, Maki." Goldmine said, having thoroughly enjoyed watching the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament. "I bet Bob and Ooba are gonna be envious that they missed it."

"Indeed." Ritsu, who was walking with the two old friends as they left the stadium, said in agreement. "Those youngsters are truly talented. An that boy, Alfonzo, will more than likely surpass Gildarts in the next few years."

"You think so, too?" Makarov asked as he looked towards Ritsu. "**Sigh* I can still remember when I picked them up from the orphanage in Hargeon. It feels like it happened just the other day. But to think it was more than fourteen years ago. *Sigh* Time sure does fly."

"Yeah, you really are getting old, Maki." Goldmine replied while wearing a teasing smile."

"Indeed." Ritsu concurred. "Unfortunately, it would seem that Age was unable to cure you of your delusions or perversions. And with that said, I will be taking my leave. I wouldn't want to be infected by your... idiosyncrasies."

Then, before Makarov could defend himself, Ritsu disappeared with the [flash Step] and returned to her hotel room, deciding to relax until the Fantasia Parade begins.

Meanwhile, Makarov could only look at the spot where Ritsu disappeared from with a blank gaze. A moment later, he was pulled out of his stupor when Goldmine patted him on the shoulder.

"Come on, Maki, let's go have a drink." Goldmine said with a smile. "And while we do, we can talk about all the women who shot you down over the years. And maybe, we can cure you of those delusions Master Unohana mentioned."

In response, Makarov turned his head towards Goldmine with a betrayed expression on his face, which caused Goldmine to begin laughing uproariously. Still, Makarov led Goldmine to the guild hall to have a drink just as his old friend suggested.

A few hours later, the people of Magnolia lined the main street that ran from the east to the west of the town in preparation for the Fantasia Parade. And like every year, they were not disappointed with what they saw. With all the available Fairy Tail wizards, other than Gildarts, who was liable to destroy everything without trying, taking part, the parade was a lot of fun to watch, like it was every year.

The first float to drive by carried Ur, Gray, Ultear, and Juvia. And while Juvia sprayed water into the air, the three ice wizards froze that water before transforming it into different forms that landed on the float as ice statues.

Then, there was a float that carried Fairy Tail's four Dragon Slayers, who used their various kinds of magic to produce many dazzling effects in the night sky. Gajeel and Laxus even worked together to make a number of street lights to illuminate the floats that came after theirs.

Then, there was a float carrying Levy and Lucy. While Lucy summoned one Celestial Spirit after another to perform, Levy used her [Solid Script Magic] to create various effects to enhance each Spirit's performance, the highlight of which was Lyra, a Silver Celestial Spirit, who sang a song Alfonzo taught her from his past life.

Naturally, there were many other floats and performances. However, the one that most people remembered was the one with Alfonzo and Erza acting as the Fairy King and Queen.

Unfortunately, due to Elicia's injuries, she was unable to play the role as the Fairy Queen. And while many people thought that they should have Cana play that position as this year's Miss Fairy Tail, Cana declined... rather fervently. And her reason was that she had been practicing for her own performance and did not want to waste the effort. So, the role fell to Erza, who had the epitaph of Titania, the Queen of the Fairies.

Like Cana, however, Erza was also reluctant to take that role, as she had also been practicing for her own performance, a sword dance. So, to not let her practice go to waste, Alfonzo decided that he would match Erza's sword dance atop the float, making their float a mock battleground as they drove through the town.

In the end, all the spectators loved it. And the parade finished without a hitch. Though, Alfonzo did have to stay on alert. Even though it would have been unintentional, he had the feeling that Erza would somehow damage the town if he was not careful. And he was right. There were a few times when Erza swung her sword too hard and would have damaged either the float or the buildings on either side of the street thanks to the wind pressure from her sword swings.

Despite all that, the Fantasia Parade ended without any mishaps, and everyone went home with great memories of the x785 Harvest Festival.

Chapter 444: Fishing with the Guys

Around two weeks have passed since Magnolia's Harvest festival. And in that time, not much of note has taken place. But there were a few things. First, Shizuka, after talking to Ultear, asked Alfonzo to help her fly. And when he looked at her quizzically, she mentioned Ultear's claws that turned into wings.

Understanding that Shizuka was asking for a [Soul Armament], Alfonzo had to turn her down... for now at least. Though, when he saw the tears welling up in Shizuka's eyes, he almost gave in on impulse.

Luckily, Riot and Bedlam were there to shout at him before he made a decision he could not take back. Not that he believed that Shizuka would immediately run away from the guild after getting her [Soul Armament Embryo]. However, he and Ur agreed that only S-Class candidates would be eligible for [Soul Armaments] not that long ago.

Though, because Shizuka was a noncombatant, things would be different for her. Still, being part of the guild for less than a month was not enough for her to have earned a [Soul Armament for herself.

Another thing worthy of mention for the last two weeks was the fact that Elicia was hospitalized ever since the Battle of Fairy Tail tournament ended. The burns she received from Cana's [Super Nova] spell were much more severe than she, Alfonzo, or Cana realized at the time. So, to Elicia's dismay, she had to

be taken to see Porlyusica for treatment. And just as she feared, Elicia was both reprimanded and hit with the dreaded broom on more than one occasion.

The last thing to take note of was the fact that Laxus seems to have fallen in love. Though, if one were to ask him about it, he would deny it with everything he had. However, he was caught staring at a certain pink-haired, bespectacled beauty on more than a few occasions.

And today, Alfonzo was determined to get to the bottom of it.

Currently, Alfonzo, Laxus, Alzack, Gray, Elfman, Natsu, and Gajeel were sitting on the shore of Alfonzo's artificial island in the middle of Lake Sciliora. And they were all holding fishing poles in their hands.

"Man, when was the last time I just sat down and relaxed like this?" Alfonzo asked as he cast his line into the lake.

"Yeah, even when we're not on quests, it feels like it's been at least five years since we just hung out like this." Alzack said as he took a swig from a bottle of ale.

"Even so, it always seems like we just hang out like this at your house, Alfonzo." Gray said as he reclined in the chair he was sitting in.

"It would be a lot more relaxing if we weren't hanging out with a stalker, though." Natsu pointed out.

"Damn it..." Gray said as he looked down at himself and realized his clothes were scattered all around his chair.

"I still wanna know how someone can take off their clothes without even noticing." Gajeel said in an annoyed tone. "I mean, seriously, I didn't come here to see a half-naked guy. I'm just here to fish."

"Yeah, if he wanted to see someone half naked, he would have gone to hang out with Levy to fulfill his hopes and dreams." Alfonzo said.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Gajeel asked while his face reddened.

"Aww, that's so cute." Natsu said in a mocking tone. "Gajee is blushing."

Bang!

Splash!

"Who the hell do you think you're calling Gajee?" Gajeel shouted angrily as he punched Natsu hard enough to send him flying into the lake.

Surfacing quickly, Natsu looked at Gajeel angrily.

"What the hell was that for, Metal Head?" Natsu asked just as angrily.

"It was to teach you a lesson about not saying whatever you want." Gajeel replied with a victorious smile on his face.

"Yeah, well it sounds like you're saying you wanna fight to me." Natsu said as he swam towards the artificial shore.

"Any time, Salamander." Gajeel said with a challenging smile.

"*Sigh* I don't even know why you invited those two morons." Laxus said while watching Natsu and Gajeel out of the corner of his eye. "I mean, this was supposed to be a time to relax. And I don't think either of those guys know anything about that."

In response, Alzack and Gray nodded in agreement.

"Well, I didn't wanna hear them wine about being left out." Alfonzo said with a shrug. "I mean, Natsu bitched at me for almost a month because he wasn't part of the bridal party, remember?"

"Yeah, and that sulky look Gajeel gave you was kinda disgusting, too." Alzack said as he chuckled at the memory.

"I didn't sulk!" Gajeel shouted.

"Oh, I think I got a big one!" Elfman shouted, breaking the conversation as he stood up and started pulling on his fishing rod. "I'm gonna reel it in like a real man!"

Naturally, that shout brought an end to the ongoing conversation. Also, it drew everyone's attention to Elfman, who seemed to be struggling with whatever his hook was caught on.

"So, how much you wanna bet it's just a piece of trash someone dumped into the lake?" Laxus asked with a smirk.

"Yeah, I bet it is." Gray replied.

"No way, I bet it's a giant fish." Natsu said as he climbed out of the water with sparkling eyes.

"Even if it is, it's not like you'll get any." Gajeel said, pouring cold water on Natsu's enthusiasm.

"No way... Elfman would share, right?" Natsu asked, not sounding so excited anymore.

While the others continued to discuss what it was that Elfman had hooked, Alfonzo simply smiled. With his [Magic Power Detection], he had already noticed that Elfman had actually hooked a really big fish. However, because of the way Elfman was handling his rod, he doubted that the line would last long enough for him to reel it in.

And just as Alfonzo thought, Elfman's line broke. As a result, he lost both his hook and the fish. Though, the hook was still lodged into the fish's mouth.

"Too bad." Natsu said as he watched Elfman pull back the broken line. "I bet that fish would have been really tasty."

"Not that you would have had any claim to it." Gray replied.

"Anyway, why don't we make this more interesting?" Alfonzo asked while watching Elfman put a new hook on the end of his line.

"Interesting? What do you have in mind?" Laxus asked with curiosity in his tone.

Not only Laxus, but the other guys also looked at Alfonzo with interested gazes.

"How 'bout this?" Alfonzo said as he shook his fishing rod. "Whenever someone catches a fish, they can ask a question. And everyone else has to answer, regardless of how embarrassed they are to do so."

"Oh, that means we can get embarrassing stories about everyone whenever we catch a fish, huh?" Gajeel said with a grin. "There's nothing like having blackmail material, right?"

"Dude, I don't think it's that serious." Alzack said, looking at Gajeel skeptically.

"Of course it's not." Gajeel replied. "I'm just having a little fun."

"Yeah, let's ignore the former member of a villain guild." Alfonzo said casually as he looked at everyone else. "So, what do you guys think?"

"I'm in." Laxus said. "It's not like I have anything to be embarrassed about."

And with that, Alfonzo's plan got underway. On top of that, the other young men also agreed to play this little game of his. And with the flames of determination burning in their eyes, the entire group put all their focus on fishing.

Eventually, after about twenty minutes, Natsu was the first one to hook a fish.

"Oh, I got one!" Natsu shouted as he stood from his chair. "And it feels like a big one."

To no one's surprise, Natsu handled his fishing rod much more skillfully than Elfman had earlier. He spent a lot of time fishing for his and Happy's meals, after all.

"By the way, where are Happy and Lily?" Alzack asked curiously. "I mean, I didn't expect you two to leave them behind."

"Well, when Alfonzo told me we would be fishing, I knew I couldn't bring Happy." Natsu said as he reeled in his catch. "Otherwise, he would have claimed every fish we caught belonged to him."

IN response, all the other young men nodded their heads. They had seen Happy act like that in the past, after all.

"And what about you, Gajeel?" Alzack asked, turning his attention to Gajeel as he did so.

"Lily wasn't interested." Gajeel said casually. "Even though the thought of having Alfonzo cook what he managed to catch was tempting, he wanted to spar with Erza. Something about improving his swordsmanship."

"Well, that's' a pretty good reason to not go fishing in my opinion." Laxus said. "I mean, getting stronger is always a good goal."

"As long as you balance it out with relaxation, anyway." Alfonzo added with a shrug. "If not, you end up like the little dictator Laxus was in the past."

Hearing that, the other guys, minus Natsu, who was struggling with his catch, nodded their heads.

"Are you ever gonna let that go?" Laxus asked in an annoyed tone.

"Nope." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Gotta make sure you never forget. Otherwise, you might relapse."

While the others laughed at Laxus' misfortune, Laxus grumbled under his breath.

Splash!

"Ha! I got it!" Natsu shouted as the sound of a fish breaking the water's surface could be heard.

Looking in the direction of Natsu's fishing rod, everyone noticed that a smaller than average fish was hanging from the hook.

"Hmph! All that effort for such a small fish." Gajeel said while snorting in disdain. "Nice job, Salamander."

"You don't know what you're talking about." Alfonzo said, amazed at Natsu's luck. "Those little fishes make some of the best dishes I've ever tasted."

"Really?" Natsu asked, the disappointed gaze he showed at the size of the fish disappearing in an instant after hearing Alfonzo's statement. "Can you cook it for me?"

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Just put it in the box next to your chair, that will keep it fresh."

Following Alfonzo's instructions, Natsu happily stored his fish away. Then, he quickly got back to fishing again.

"So, what kind of question are you gonna ask everyone, Natsu?" Alzack asked curiously.

Hearing that, Natsu scratched his head in confusion.

"Uh... I don't know." Natsu replied. "What do you guys think?"

"Well, there are a lot of questions you could ask." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Like... Who everyone has a crush on. Or when everyone had their first kiss. Or what was the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to them, etc."

While everyone found Alfonzo's line of questions embarrassing, they were all looking forward to the answers the others would give.

"Oh, okay..." Natsu said while continuing to scratch his head. "Then, what was the most damage you ever caused on a quest?"

Naturally, everyone gave their answers, not finding the topic particularly embarrassing. To no one's surprise, Alfonzo's answer was negligible, bringing down the Tower of Heaven being the feat that caused the most damage on any of his quests. Though, they also forgot that he was not on a quest when he did that. Meanwhile, everyone gritted their teeth when Gajeel mentioned destroying the old Fairy Tail guild hall.

After everyone gave their answers, Alfonzo was the next one to catch a fish. However, he would admit to cheating had anyone noticed what he did. Since he used his [Metal Magic] to control the hook in the fish's mouth to make catching it easier. But since he was on a mission to uncover the truth of Laxus' supposed crush, he was okay with playing outside the rules.

Then again, no one said that using magic was forbidden. Still, he knew they would be unhappy if they found out.

"Alright, since you proposed this little game, what's your question?" Laxus asked, unbothered by what Alfonzo could possibly ask.

Like Laxus, everyone else, other than Natsu, focused their attention on Alfonzo, who was smiling brightly.

"Oh, the first one is a simple one." Alfonzo said happily. "Who was your first crush?"

Immediately, the group fell silent.

"Crush, what do you mean?" Natsu asked in a confused tone.

"Who was the first girl you liked, Stupid." Gray replied while rolling his eyes.

"Huh? Elicia, I guess." Natsu said while scratching his head. "She was nice to me when I first met her. She didn't fight with me back then, though."

"Something tells me he doesn't get it." Gajeel said.

"I think you're right." Alfonzo said with a sigh. Then, he looked at Natsu. "It's a girl you like more than other girls, Natsu. Like, do you like Lisanna the same way you like everyone else?"

In response, Natsu blushed fiercely, causing the others to grin at him.

"Oh, I get it..." Natsu muttered. "Then, I guess it's Lisanna."

In response, all the others' grins widened.

"Well, for me it was---" Alzack, with his face even redder than Natsu's began to say.

"Bisca." X 5

Alzack was taken aback when he heard Alfonzo, Laxus, Gray, Elfman, and Gajeel speak in unison. However, he shook his head a moment later.

"No, that's not it." Alzack said with an embarrassed expression. "Although I really like Bisca now, Laki was actually my first crush. But between her being so weird and the fact that I noticed she like Alfonzo, I gave up."

This time, everyone was completely surprised. But no one would go as far as to say that Laki was a bad choice for a first crush. Other than her weird speech pattern and personality that was hard to read, there was nothing wrong with her. She was quite cute, after all.

"It was Juvia for me." Gajeel said without blushing at all. "I mean, she was the first person I ever let call me by a nickname. But she was too concerned with the rain that used to always follow her around to let me get too close."

"You should have tried harder!" Alfonzo and Gray shouted in unison.

"If you had pressed on, she might not always be trying to steal one of my girlfriends!" Alfonzo shouted.

"If you had stolen her heart, she wouldn't always be stalking me!" Gray shouted at the same time."

"Nothing I can do about it now." Gajeel said with a grin. "Besides, if you just accepted her, she wouldn't stalk you anymore, Frosty."

Gray only hung his head in response.

"And what about you, Gray?" Alfonzo asked. "Who was the first girl to ever catch your eye?"

"*Sigh* It was Master." Gray replied.

"Oh, I guess after seeing her half-naked so often it was natural, huh?" Laxus asked with a grin.

"No, that wasn't it." Gray muttered. "Though, it didn't hurt, either."

All the guys who were aware of the matters between men and women laughed.

"He admitted it just like a real man." Elfman said loudly.

"But she was the one who gave me a home after I lost mine to Deliora." Gray continued, ignoring the laughter and Elfman's shouting.

"Yeah, that makes sense." Alzack replied. Then, in a mischievous tone, he continued. "IF Master Makarov had been a hot chick and not an old man, I probably would have had a crush on him, too."

Once again, the whole group started to laugh.

"And what about you, Elfman?" Alfonzo asked curiously.

"Actually, it was Elicia." Elfman said while scratching his head. "The way she tried to make me, and my sisters, feel welcome is what did it. But by then, she was already your girlfriend, Alfonzo. So, I just kept it to myself."

"Well, that's better than picking a fight over her like Bickslow used to." Alfonzo said with a smile. "Still, I can see you have good taste in women. You even managed to bag Evergreen, mellowing her out in the process."

"Yeah, I honestly never saw that coming." Laxus said. "I mean, she was so... narcissistic."

"She still is." Elfman said while chuckling embarrassedly. "But... I really like her confidence. Besides, I never expected to end up with her, either. I mean, she was actually the one who asked me out."

Hearing that, everyone looked at Elfman with shock in their eyes.

"Well... damn..." Alfonzo replied. "I guess all that real man shit did it for someone, huh?"

Nodding in response to Alfonzo's utterance, everyone eventually turned their heads towards Laxus.

"So, who was your first crush, Laxus?" Gajeel asked, hoping to get something he could tease Laxus with.

"This was your real goal for suggesting this little game, wasn't it." Laxus asked while glaring at Alfonzo.
"You just wanted to know if the rumors were true, right?"

Alfonzo only smiled brightly in reply.

"*Sigh* I'm actually surprised myself." Laxus said while shaking his head. "In fact, it only happened recently. It's one of the new girls Alfonzo and Elicia brought back after that emergency quest."

Hearing that, everyone leaned a little closer to Laxus. Meanwhile, Natsu continued to focus on fishing, hoping to get more food that Alfonzo would cook for him.

"It's Saya." Laxus said. "Even though she's six or seven years younger than me, I can't help it. Her intelligence is really attractive."

'Ha! It's verified.' Alfonzo shouted while internally fist pumping. 'Now, how can I get them together, I wonder.'

At the same time, everyone could understand where Laxus was coming from. Although none of the women in the guild were dumb, they used their intelligence to improve their battle prowess before anything else. With Levy and Saya being the exceptions. However, unlike Levy, who was quite slender, Saya also had a bombastic figure. So, the others were able to figure out Laxus' type, so to speak.

'He like's smart girls with curvy bodies.' Alfonzo, Alzack, Gray, Elfman, and Gajeel thought simultaneously.

With that, the group continued to chat, fish, and laugh until the sun went down. And with each fish that was caught, everyone would be forced to answer a question from the one who caught the fish. Overall, the guys had a pretty good day while strengthening their bonds as guild mates.

Chapter 445: Let's Talk About It

Two days have passed since Alfonzo and the other young men of the guild had their fishing day. And today was the day that Elicia would be discharged from the hospital. Because of that, Alfonzo and Cana decided to skip training with everyone else to come get her.

"Ah~~~!" Elicia exclaimed while stretching just outside the hospital's front entrance. "It feels so good to be out of there."

"*Sigh* I'm really sorry that happened to you, Lici." Cana said with guilt in her expression.

IN response, Elicia turned towards Cana. Then, she pulled her into a hug and rested her head on her best friend's shoulder.

"How many times do I have to say this to you, Cana?" Elicia asked as she tightened her hug. "I know you didn't do it on purpose. Besides, we were in the middle of a match. Stuff like that happens from time to time."

"Yeah, but..." Cana stammered.

"No buts." Elicia said in a decisive tone. "It was an accident. Besides, I did most of that to myself."

"Lici's right, Cana." Alfonzo said as he stepped forward and wrapped his arms around both women. "There's no point beating yourself up over this."

Not knowing what to say, Cana simply lowered her head.

"Anyway, now that Lici is out..." Alfonzo continued.

"That's right, I'm out!" Elicia shouted happily. "And I ain't never going back!"

"Lici, you got out of the hospital, not prison." Cana said with a smile making it onto her face, despite herself.

Seeing Cana beginning to smile, Elicia smiled happily. Then, she tightened her hug once again.

"That's more like it." Elicia said. "You're much prettier when you're smiling."

Letting her smile fully bloom, Cana finally returned Elicia's hug.

"I'm glad you're okay, Lici." Cana said softly.

Letting the warm atmosphere persist for a little longer, Alfonzo finally began speaking again. And the topic he brought up was decidedly less happy.

"Anyway, like I was saying, we need to talk." Alfonzo said. "And I mean all of us. What Cana said before the match needs to be addressed."

Hearing that, Elicia nodded her head. Though, it was clear she did not know what to say. Meanwhile, Cana clenched her fists and gritted her teeth. Though, she was not angry. Even most of the jealousy and discontent she was feeling had disappeared when Elicia got hurt. Still, she knew she needed to talk about it. Letting it fester in the first place is what led to Elicia getting hurt, after all.

"*Sigh* I'll go to the guild and get the other girls." Elicia said as she unwrapped her arms from around Cana.

"Nope." Alfonzo replied swiftly. "We'll all go. Even though it will make the spectacle bigger, it will show how serious the situation is."

Though reluctantly, Elicia accepted Alfonzo's opinion. Then, she, Alfonzo, and Cana started walking towards the guild hall.

About twenty minutes later, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Cana arrived at the guild hall. Though, they arrived too early for the end of training. So, while most of the wizards in the guild were training, Alfonzo decided to use the kitchen to make breakfast for the three. He also made a little something for those who were not training, like Macao, Wakaba, Gozaburo, Ren, Masa, and Shizuka. And because he was so happy that Elicia had been released from the hospital this morning, he did not even charge them for it.

Eventually, the wizards who were training came down from the higher floors to use the showers. And when they did, they saw Elicia sitting at her usual table with Alfonzo, Cana, and Shizuka chatting happily.

"Lici, you're back." Laki, the first to arrive in the main hall, said with a smile. "How are you feeling. Did they fix you?"

"Yeah, I'm good as new." Elicia said while flexing her slender arms. "And I feel as strong as a bull. I can't wait to get back to training, though. I feel really rusty."

"I bet." Ultear said as she followed behind Laki. "It's been a little more than two weeks since you got hurt. You probably have a lot of rust to knock off."

"Yeah, I definitely can't take any quests like this." Elicia said with a nod. "But at least I was able to keep up to date with my clothing designs and custom orders while I was in the hospital. Otherwise, I wouldn't know what to do."

"They actually let you use your magic while you were in the hospital?" Meredy asked in a curious tone.

"Yeah, I know what you're thinking." Elicia replied. "I thought they would stop me, too. But as long as I didn't move... at all... I was allowed to use it. Luckily, I don't have to move my fingers, hands, or arms to use my [Thread Magic]. But the hand movements do help me focus."

"Then, I guess your control should be better than ever now, huh?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Yup!" Elicia exclaimed excitedly.

"Still, not that I don't trust the doctors in the hospital, I think you should let Shizuka or Ren give you another checkup to make sure." Ultear said, a bit of worry seeping into her tone.

"Yeah, you should come with me and let me give you a checkup." Shizuka said, her usually sleepy expression replaced by a quite serious one. "On top of that, if you have any scars from the burns, I can see about taking care of those, too."

"You can do that?" Mirajane, who approached with her siblings and Juvia, asked curiously when they were near the table.

"If they aren't too bad, it shouldn't be a problem." Shizuka replied with a smile. "Why? Do you have any scars you want taken care of?"

"Oh, she most definitely doesn't." Alfonzo said with a smile as he licked his lips. "You can trust me on that."

Hearing that, Shizuka tilted her head cutely. Meanwhile, Mirajane swatted Alfonzo on the shoulder with a slight blush.

"No, I don't have any scars." Mirajane said while glaring at Alfonzo. "But it's nice to know just in case."

Nodding in response, Shizuka turned her attention back to Elicia.

"*Sigh* I've had enough checkups over the last two weeks to last a life time." Elicia said while shaking her head. However, when she saw everyone looking at her, she eventually gave in. "but if it will make all of you stop worrying, I'll do it."

Hearing that, Alfonzo, Cana, Laki, Ultear, Mirajane, Elfman, Lisanna, Meredy, and Juvia smiled. Then, Shizuka stood up from her seat and gestured for Elicia to follow her.

"Come on, Lici." Shizuka said as she started walking. "It won't take long, I promise. Then, we can all go and play at your house. I wanna eat some more of Fonzie's cooking today."

At the same time, Team Natsu, minus Natsu, stepped out of the elevator just in time to hear what Shizuka said about Alfonzo's cooking. And while Erza and Lucy weren't too bothered, Gray and Wendy, along with everyone else who had come downstairs after training had their eyes open wide.

"God damn it, I told her not to tell anyone." Alfonzo muttered as he felt the gazes from the other wizards of the guild zeroing in on him. "And this is why."

Meanwhile, Alfonzo's girlfriends, fiancées, and wife could only smile wryly at Alfonzo's plight. However, before requests for Alfonzo's cooking could start flying, Alfonzo turned to Cana.

"Alright, Cana, let the others know what we talked about on the way here." Alfonzo said as he stood up from his seat. "I'll go home and get some snacks ready for our talk."

Then, as soon as he finished speaking, Alfonzo was covered in a flash of violet light. And in the next instant, he was gone.

"Damn it, he's getting away." Elfman said as he looked towards the guild hall's sliding doors. "I didn't even see or hear the doors open."

"I guess he finally learned how to do what he had always been jealous of Yoruichi about." Ultear muttered to herself. "But seriously, how do you leave a closed room without making a sound of any kind?"

With that, the rest of the Fairy Tail wizards trickled into the main hall after their training came to an end. Then, when everyone was finished cleaning up, and Shizuka finished examining Elicia, all those living in Alfonzo's mansion left the guild hall to talk about what was bothering them.

Fifteen minutes later, Elicia, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy entered the front door of the mansion.

"Fonzie, we're back!" Elicia shouted.

"Okay, come to the dining room, I just finished setting out the snacks." Alfonzo replied.

Following Alfonzo's instructions, the ladies made their way through the house to the dining room. And when they did, they found a table full of all kinds of cakes and cookies waiting for them while Alfonzo sat at the head of the table with a smile on his face.

"Welcome home, everyone." Alfonzo said, looking rather proud of himself. "And especially you, Lici. Welcome home after your extended stay in the hospital."

In response, the other girls also welcomed Elicia home. Unfortunately, they all knew the happy atmosphere would not last.

"*Sigh* As much as I'd like to celebrate, I know we have something important to talk about." Elicia said as she took a seat at the table on the end opposite Alfonzo. "So, let's talk."

Hearing Elicia's tone, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy exchanged glances. Then, with solemn expressions on their faces, they all took seats at the table, as well.

"*Sigh* I know Cana was not the only one who was unhappy with my decision to marry Lici first." Alfonzo said while looking around the table as the others took their seats. "But she was the first to say something. So, were there any other concerns or issues that need to be addressed?"

In response, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy all exchanged glances. Meanwhile, Elicia watched the others as calmly as she could.

Eventually, Mirajane was the first to open her mouth in response to Alfonzo's question.

"I didn't exactly have an issue with Lici going first." Mirajane said calmly. "But I am confused why you picked her to be the first one after everything that happened."

Nodding his head in response, Alfonzo then made eye contact with each of the other girls.

"And what about the rest of you?" Alfonzo asked.

"I feel the same way." Ultear replied. "Like Mira said, I wasn't upset. I was just... confused."

With that, Marin and Sun also mentioned their confusion at Alfonzo's choice as well.

"And what about you, Erza and Lucy?" Alfonzo asked after acknowledging the other's feelings with a nod.

"I trusted your judgement." Erza said sternly. "And because I know I will get my turn eventually as well; I was not concerned with who went first."

"It didn't really bother me, either." Lucy said. "I mean, I only became a couple with you earlier this year. So, I wasn't even ready for marriage. Though, if you asked me to, I wouldn't say no."

As she continued to speak, Lucy's face reddened more and more. As a result, everyone smiled at her sweetly, which caused her blush to intensify.

"And then we have Cana, who thought it was unfair that I married Lici first, which I can totally understand." Alfonzo said. "I mean, from the outside looking in, it looked like I was rewarding Lici for what she did, right?"

Although slight, Cana nodded her head in response. IN fact, ever since she accidentally hurt Elicia, a lot of her resentment had completely disappeared. Still, she could not understand why Alfonzo chose to marry Elicia first.

And with that, Alfonzo made eye contact with Elicia from the other side of the table. And they had a conversation via that eye contact. A moment later, the two broke eye contact. Then, Alfonzo opened his mouth to explain.

"I'm sure this should come as no surprise to any of you." Alfonzo said. "But I've loved Lici for as long as I can remember. Even before I could tell anyone what love meant to me. And from the moment I laid my eyes on her, I knew she would be my wife."

Hearing Alfonzo say something like that, the girls, other than Elicia, were taken aback. However, after seeing the look in Alfonzo's eyes, they felt that what he was saying was true. Elicia, on the other hand, while the other girls were focused on Alfonzo, could not help but roll her eyes. Even though she thought what Alfonzo said was probably true in their past life, he definitely was not aware of it from the beginning.

"In fact, as you all know, I didn't even want to have any other women other than her at the beginning." Alfonzo said. "But it was Lici who made me change my mind about that. And I'm grateful for that. Otherwise, I wouldn't have all of you in my life the way that I do now."

That caused the other girls to turn their heads in Elicia's direction. And when she smiled at all of them, those who were confused about Alfonzo's choice could somewhat understand why he chose her.

"Now, I'm not going to pretend that Lici didn't hurt me with that stunt she pulled with Yoruichi." Alfonzo said. "But I have forgiven her. On top of that, she's the reason I have all of you in my life, as well. So, in a way, I guess I was rewarding her. Though, not for what she did back in March. Instead, it was everything she's done for me over the years. She was there when we lost everything. She was there when we came to Fairy Tail. She was there when I met all of you. And she was there, pushing me to accept all of you into my heart. So, if it seems unfair that I married her first, I'm sorry you feel that way. I truly am. But I don't regret what I did. And if you can't accept that, then I don't know what to say."

When Alfonzo's words ended, the room fell into silence. No one knew how to retort to Alfonzo's heartfelt words. However, the silence was eventually broken.

"*Sigh* I guess I was being selfish again." Cana said. "I know without Lici, I would have never been able to be with you, Fonzie."

The other girls nodded in response.

"And when you put it like that, it kinda feels like we should all be marrying Lici instead of you in the end, doesn't it?" Ultear said, a bit of a teasing tone making it into her speech. "I mean, from the way Alfonzo put it, this is more like her harem than yours, isn't it?"

Despite themselves, the other girls could not help but chuckle.

"Anyway, I'm sorry for making such a big deal about this." Cana said as she bowed her head in apology.

"Don't apologize, Cana." Alfonzo said sternly. "The only way for this relationship, that we've all committed ourselves to, to work is for there to be proper communication. So, if anything is bothering you about it, and I mean anything at all, you should talk to us. Otherwise, it will just fester and eventually become a tumor."

Once again, everyone nodded in agreement with Alfonzo's words. Alfonzo, on the other hand, looked around the table at the expressions everyone was wearing.

'Well, that went much more smoothly than I thought it would.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he made eye contact with everyone, one by one. 'I just hope they remember this conversation whenever something bothers them in the future.'

"I have a question." Erza said, breaking Alfonzo out of his contemplations and drawing everyone's attention onto herself.

"Yeah, what's up, Erza?" Alfonzo asked in a curious tone.

"Can I have a slice of that strawberry shortcake now?" Erza asked, her eyes focused on the strawberry shortcake laid out with the rest of the snacks Alfonzo prepared for the conversation.

Smiling in return, Alfonzo could only shake his head at Erza's fervor. Then, he looked around at the others with the question, "Any other questions?" in his eyes. Then, after each of the ladies shook their heads, Alfonzo turned back to Erza.

"Sure." Alfonzo said as he materialized a knife in his hand. "Now, that the serious talks are over, let's celebrate Lici's return from the hospital."

With that, Alfonzo stood and cut a slice of the cake for Erza. Then, he served everyone else their favorite snacks, as well. Eventually, all their friends arrive to join in the festivities, too. And they all spent the rest of the day just having a good time.

Chapter 446: Alfonzo's Work Begins Again

After Elicia's release from the hospital, time flowed quickly. And during that time, the x785 S-Class Promotion Exam was held. And to the participants, Fried, Laki, Levy, Gray, Elfman, Natsu, Sun, and Juvia, there were two things they were excited about.

First, Ur, the new guild master made it clear that the rule where only one wizard would be promoted each year had been changed. Meaning, there could be up to eight new S-Class wizards at the end of each exam. Naturally, this excited everyone involved while motivating everyone else to put in more effort. On the other hand, the examiners, the S-Class wizards of the guild would be even more stringent when evaluating the candidates.

Second, each of the participants, that did not already have one, received a [Soul Armament Embryo] at the beginning of the exam, something that excited the participants and made those who did not make the cut even more determined to succeed.

In the end, there were two wizards who passed the exam and became S-Class wizards. The first, and the one who had taken the exam the most times, Fried finally reached S-Class after being eligible for six years. The second was Sun, who already had an unsealed [Soul Armament], giving her an advantage over the other competitors.

Then, after the S-Class wizards and candidates returned from Tenrou Island, Alfonzo began preparing to head to Lamia Scale's guild hall, which was located in Margaret Town. And for this trip, he decided to bring Ultear and Juvia with him.

The reason to bring Ultear was clear. On top of being one of Alfonzo's girlfriends, Ur's first disciple was a member of Lamia Scale. Alfonzo's decision to bring Juvia, however, baffled many of the wizards in the guild. But he did have a reason to do so.

Apparently, Mirajane had told Juvia about the fact that pure water does not conduct electricity. Which would, in turn, make it possible for Juvia to fight on par with, or even defeat, Laxus. Though, in Juvia's mind, she had extended that possibility to defeating Alfonzo, as well.

Currently, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia were aboard Sixth Sense and making their way to Margaret Town.

"Have you ever been to Margaret Town?" Ultear, sitting in Alfonzo's lap in the ship's wheel house, asked curiously while watching the river and the shore.

"Only once." Alfonzo replied with a smile while steering the ship. "Gramps brought me with him one time when he had something to discuss with Master Ooba."

"I see." Ultear replied with a nod. "I guess that makes sense. There's no reason for Margaret to post quests for other guilds, after all. Not with Lamia Scale's guild hall right there."

"Yeah. Alfonzo replied with a nod.

With that, the conversation fell into a somewhat comfortable silence. Well, silent if you ignored the sound of boiling water coming from the wheel house's entrance.

Hearing that sound, Ultear could not help but glance towards the entrance to the wheel house. And when she did, she saw exactly what she expected to see. Currently, Juvia was poking her head around the corner and glaring at Alfonzo in jealousy.

"Are you sure it was a good idea to bring her with us?" Ultear asked while whispering into Alfonzo's ear.

"*Sigh* Honestly, I'm not sure." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone. "But she did ask me to teach her about pure water not long before we left. And since she didn't wanna wait two months to learn about it, she asked me to bring her with me."

"And the fact that I was coming with you had nothing to do with that, right?" Ultear asked while smiling wryly.

"Oh, I'm sure it did." Alfonzo replied while also wearing a wry smile. "But I don't think it would have made a difference. According to Mira, Juvia felt really helpless that she would have not been able to put up a fight against Laxus in the last tournament, had Team Strauss' first round match went that far."

"Yeah, I guess I can see that." Ultear said as she glanced at Juvia once again. A moment later, Ultear turned back to Alfonzo while pouting. "Still, I would have liked this to be a trip for just the two of us."

"Sorry about that, Tear." Alfonzo said before planting a kiss on Ultear's cheek, which caused the sound of boiling water to intensify. "I'll make it up to you later, I promise."

"You better." Ultear said before returning the kiss. "And if you do a good job..."

Upon reaching that point, Ultear lowered her voice to a whisper.

"I'll allow you to pleasure me." Ultear said in a sadistic, yet seductive, tone.

Rolling his eyes in response, Alfonzo decided not to respond to Ultear's usual antics. He did, however, swat her on the butt as a form of punishment.

Smack!

"Kya!" Ultear yelped as her face reddened. Then, while burying her face in the crook of Alfonzo's neck, she whined. "Not in front of Juvia..."

However, to both Alfonzo and Utear's surprise, Juvia did not fly off the handle and attack Alfonzo. And when they both looked back to see what Juvia was doing, as the sound of boiling water had stopped, they saw Juvia staring at Utear's butt blankly with blood dripping from her nose.

"I guess she's fantasizing about slapping your ass." Alfonzo said with a teasing smile. "How does that make you feel, tear?"

"Hmph! Never gonna happen." Utear replied as she looked away. "Only I do the ass slapping. Never the other way around."

Smack!

"Mmm~." Utear moaned softly from the second slap on her butt.

A moment later, with her face red, Utear glared at Alfonzo. At the same time, Juvia slumped to the floor with a sloppy smile on her face after hearing Utear's moan.

"*Sigh* I get the feeling this is gonna be a long two months." Alfonzo muttered with a smile on his face. "Even so, it should be fun. And hopefully, I can get Juvia to stop hating me so much, while I'm at it."

Like that, the voyage lasted for another half an hour before they could see the town they were looking for in the distance.

"Is that Margaret Town?" Ultear asked as she pointed out the wheel house's front window.

"According to the map, that should be it." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Now would probably be a good time to wake up Juvia."

"*Sigh* Alright." Ultear said with a pout.

After Juvia passed out, Ultear had brought her to one of the cabins on the ship before returning to the wheel house and retaking her seat in Alfonzo's lap. And since then, she had been enjoying her alone time with him. However, with the trip coming to an end, she knew Alfonzo was right.

Standing up, Ultear quickly made her way out of the wheel house. Then, she made her way below deck and headed for the cabin where Juvia's luggage was. Naturally, she found Juvia still unconscious in the bed. On top of that, she was still smiling sloppily.

'*Sigh* I bet she would chill out significantly if Gray would just accept her.' Ultear muttered to herself while watching the younger girl sleep. 'Then, Mom and I wouldn't have to always have a stalker following us around. I don't even know why Gray is so against this. I mean, objectively speaking, Juvia is one of the cutest girls I've ever met. Hmm... Maybe he's gay?'

Shaking her head to rid herself of those thoughts, Ultear couldn't help but smile. She had no doubt that Gray was into women. However, like her, he just found Juvia's stalker behavior off putting.

Knock! *Knock!*

"Hey, Juvia." Ultear said loudly. "It's time to wake up. We'll be docking soon."

Immediately upon hearing Ultear's voice, Juvia's eyes shot open. A moment later, however, she closed them tightly once again.

"Juvia is unable to wake up on her own." Juvia said without looking in Ultear's direction. "But a kiss from Princess Ultear might be enough to wake her."

As soon as she finished speaking, Juvia puckered her lips in preparation for a kiss.

Rolling her eyes in response, Ultear turned around and got ready to go back to the wheel house.

"Fine, then I guess you'll be spending the rest of your life asleep in this cabin." Ultear said as she started walking away.

"Wait!" Juvia shouted as she sat up explosively. "It's a miracle! Juvia is awake! It must be divine intervention."

Rolling her eyes once again, Ultear could not help but smile, despite herself. Still, she did not stop her steps as she returned above deck with Juvia moving quickly to catch up.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Margaret.

Eventually, Ultear and Juvia returned to the wheel house. And when they did, they were just in time to see the ship enter Margaret Town.

"This town is huge." Ultear said as she gazed at the town and the people moving around on either side of the river.

"Well, it is one of the bigger town's in Fiore." Alfonzo replied as he navigated to their destination. "It's got one of the larger populations in the kingdom, too."

"Is the town really that big?" Juvia asked curiously. "Juvia has never been here before."

"Yeah, I wouldn't doubt that." Alfonzo replied. "I doubt your old guild master would have ever let you take any quests near this town. Especially since Master Ooba and Gramps were so close."

"That's right." Juvia replied with a nod. "Master Jose did not let any of the wizards of Phantom Lord near Fairy Tail, Lamia Scale, Quatro Cerberus, or Blue Pegasus."

As soon as her words ended, Juvia glared at Alfonzo, looking as if she was offended that she was conversing with him. In response to the glare, Alfonzo could only smile wryly.

"So, where are we gonna stay for this trip to Lamia Scale?" Ultear asked, trying to break the awkward atmosphere.

"There." Alfonzo replied as he pointed at a two-story building with an impressively sized dock. "But I don't remember the dock being that big the last time I came to the town with Gramps."

"You did tell Lamia Scale that you would be coming by ship, didn't you?" Ultear asked curiously.

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied with a nod as he brought Sixth Sense close to the dock.

"Well, after the Tenrou Island incident with Grimoire Heart, shouldn't the Magic Council know about Sixth Sense?" Ultear asked. "And since Jura is a member of the Council now, maybe he had it remodeled after finding out how we would be travelling."

"Oh, that makes sense." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "I just didn't think they would go so far for us. I mean, they're already paying me to install the training chambers. But then again, with a dock like this, they could have larger merchant vessels dock in the town, too."

As the trio continued to chat, Alfonzo eventually brought the ship up to the dock. Then, with the use of his [Metal Magic] he moored the ship to the dock, which after the renovations, was more like a wharf.

A few minutes later, with their luggage in hand, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia disembarked from Sixth Sense. At the same time, Alfonzo floated his newest magic vehicle, a royal blue vehicle resembling the

Mercedes-Benz S 600, onto the street in front of the hotel where the trio would stay for the next two months.

"This place is called the Viper Inn, huh?" Ultear asked. "Sounds like the name of a place where small time criminals hang out."

"Yeah, I thought the same thing when I stayed here with Gramps." Alfonzo said with a smile. "But it's seriously just a normal in. It's a lot bigger than it was back then, though."

"If you say so." Ultear replied while shrugging her shoulders. "Anyway, let's get checked in. Then, we can go to Lamia Scale. I wonder if Lyon is there. I wanna see how much he's improved since the last time I saw him. He probably can't compare to Gray now. Especially since Gray's been training in high gravity for the last year or so."

"Hmph!" Juvia snorted. "Of course, this Lyon cannot compare to one of Juvia's soul mates."

"Well, he's actually Mom's first disciple." Ultear said with a wry smile. "So, they were on par for a long time. IN fact, until recently, Lyon was stronger. At least, that's how it was back when we took down the Oración Seis, anyway."

"Even after all the time spent training with the rest of us, Gray was still weaker than that Lyon guy?" Alfonzo asked curiously.

"Well, in terms of the amount of magic power, he was." Ultear replied. "But he probably wouldn't have lost in a fight. It probably would have been close back then, though. But now, I don't even think it would be a competition."

"I see." Alfonzo replied as he and the girls entered the inn.

And just like that, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia continued to chat as they entered the Viper Inn. Then, after booking two rooms for the duration of their two month stay and putting their belongings in their rooms, the trio left the inn and jumped into the S 600 before making their way to the Lamia Scale guild hall.

Chapter 447: Welcome to Lamia Scale

Driving through the town of Margaret, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia engaged in conversation, talking about the sights of the town that were relatively unfamiliar to them. Then, after about twenty minutes, they approached a large building that was separated from the rest of the town.

The large building, with spires on each corner, a dark banner with the Lamia Scale guild symbol adorning its front, and a small port to the side of the building, was painted a forest green color. And near the large doors that served as the building's front entrance, there was a beautiful, man-made rock formation with a statue of a lamia, a creature with the upper body of an alluring, bikini-clad young woman with a long serpentine tail, sitting upon it.

"I was hoping they would have gotten rid of that tacky statue." Ultear said as she glanced at the lamia statue through the front passenger seat's window. "I mean, who wants to see that when they first arrive at the guild hall."

"Juvia thinks it's pretty." Juvia replied while looking at the statue as well.

"And what about you?" Ultear asked Alfonzo with narrowed eyes.

"It's not a bad piece of art." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "But you're definitely prettier."

Hearing that, Ultear smiled sweetly as she leaned over and kissed Alfonzo on the cheek. Meanwhile, Juvia glared at Alfonzo in annoyance. On top of that, she produced a notebook where she wrote down what Alfonzo said for future reference.

"Anyway, it looks like they were expecting us." Alfonzo said, not paying any attention to Juvia's glare as he pointed out the wind shield.

Standing in front of the guild hall's front doors was Jura Neekis, a member of the Ten Wizard Saints, the Magic Council, and Lamia Scale's ace, smiling at the approaching magic vehicle.

"It looks that way." Ultear replied with a nod. "And although I wasn't really paying attention to it back when you got married, it looks like he's gotten quite a bit stronger since the Oración Seis quest. I bet fighting him would be pretty fun."

"I was thinking the same thing." Alfonzo replied. "And since I'm not rushing this job like I did with Mermaid Heel, there should be some time to spar with him."

A few moments later, under Jura's instruction, Alfonzo parked the S 600 between the rock formation where the lamia statue sat and the guild hall's main entrance. Then, once the engine was turned off, he, Ultear, and Juvia climbed out of the magic vehicle.

"Welcome to Margaret, my friends." Jura said with a smile. "I hope your trip was peaceful."

"Hey, Jura." Alfonzo said with a smile. "It's good to see you again. And it was smooth sailing all the way from Akane Beach."

As previously mentioned, ever since Ultear bought the summer villa in Akane Beach for Alfonzo and Elicia as a birthday gift, Alfonzo had been docking Sixth Sense at the dock attached to the house. So, on top of having a private place to dock his ship, Alfonzo was also freed from the exorbitant docking fees at Hargeon.

"Excellent." Jura replied with a nod. Then, he turned his attention to Ultear as he continued. "And Miss Ultear, it's good to see you again, as well."

"You, too, Jura." Ultear replied with a smile. "Mom says hi, too."

"Ah, please send my greetings to Master Ur when you return, as well." Jura said. Then, he turned his attention to Juvia, someone he had never been formally introduced to. "And you must be Juvia Lockser. It's a pleasure to meet you. But um... why are you glaring at me like that?"

Just as Jura said, ever since he began speaking to Ultear, Juvia had been glaring at him. Something she does to all men, other than Gray, whenever they speak to Ur and Ultear.

"Don't mind her, Jura." Alfonzo said as he waved off Juvia's behavior. "She's got her own, significant, brand of crazy going on. And if you think about it too much, you'll end up with a headache."

Alfonzo's words naturally caused Juvia to shift her glare from Jura to himself. And when he made eye contact with Juvia after feeling her glare, he smiled brightly, causing Juvia to snort and look away."

"I see." Jura said, an expression of confusion making its way onto his face for a moment.

Shaking off the confusion he was feeling, Jura gestured towards the guild hall's main entrance.

"Well then, Master Ooba is waiting." Jura said. "And I'm sure you would like to know where you'll be installing the training chambers, correct. Then, let's head inside."

Receiving nods from all three visitors, Jura led the way as they entered the guild hall. Though, as they did so, Juvia scowled while Alfonzo and Ultear walked hand-in-hand.

Upon entering the guild hall, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia looked around. And they more or less expected what they saw. Like most guild halls, Lamia Scale's first floor was filled with tables, wizards sitting at those tables, a bar, and a quest board. There was also a second floor overlooking the first, as well. Though, they were not sure if it was restricted like the second floor in the old Fairy Tail guild hall was.

"Allow me to be the first to welcome you to Lamia Scale." Jura said as the three wizards took in the sights.

"Thanks." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "It's almost exactly like I remember from the last time I was here."

"Yeah, me, too." Ultear said. "By the way, is Lyon here? Mom asked me to assess his progress."

"Unfortunately, he is not." Jura replied while shaking his head lightly. "He's out on a quest with the members of his team. They should be back in the next few days, though."

"Oh, he's got a team now?" Ultear asked in apparent interest.

"Indeed." Jura replied with a nod. "He and Sherry have been teaming up with another pair of promising wizards for the last year."

"Now that's a surprise." Ultear muttered. "I would have thought that Sherry wouldn't want to team up with Lyon after the thing with Nirvana."

"I'll admit, things were awkward between the two for a while after that." Jura replied with a wry smile. "But they got over it quickly enough. And with Sherry being romantically involved with Ren of the Trimens, things stabilized quickly enough."

"*Sigh* Gray and Lyon are the same." Ultear said in an exasperated tone. "Neither of them could appreciate the girl who was head over heels for them. I wouldn't be surprised if they both end up alone."

"Juvia won't let that happen." Juvia said resolutely, cutting into the conversation. "Gray is one of Juvia's soul mates. So, he will never be alone."

Smiling wryly in response to Juvia's outburst, Ultear looked at Jura with a gaze that asked: "See what I mean?" Meanwhile, Jura could not help but smile wryly in understanding.

"Jura, what are you doing?" an aged, female voice shouted from the second floor. "Hurry up and bring the kid up here. I need to discuss the details with him. Or maybe you'd like to spin it for me?"

"Understood, Master Ooba." Jura replied as he turned towards the source of the voice while bowing his head politely. "We'll be there momentarily."

"At least she never changes." Alfonzo said with a wry smile spreading across his face. "If nothing else, she's consistent. Though, I didn't really appreciate her trying to use her [Spinning Magic] on me when I wouldn't agree to come here before the new year."

"*Sigh* I can only apologize on her behalf for that." Jura said in an exasperated tone. "As someone who's been a guild master for so long, I suppose she's gotten used to younger wizards following her orders without question."

"There's no need for you to apologize, Jura." Alfonzo said as he waved off Jura's apology. "Like I said, she tried to use her magic on me. But it didn't work."

"I see." Jura replied with a smile. "Anyway, shall we go? I'd rather not keep master Ooba waiting."

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

Before leading Alfonzo upstairs, Jura turned to Ultear and Juvia.

"You two can have a seat and make yourselves at home." Jura said with a smile. "After taking Alfonzo up to meet with Master Ooba, I'll return to keep you company."

"Okay." Ultear replied with a nod and a smile.

Juvia, on the other hand, only nodded in response while glaring at Jura, thinking he might try to take Ultear away, as well.

Feeling as though she could understand what Juvia was thinking, Ultear shook her head while smiling wryly as she made her way over to an unoccupied table, followed closely by Juvia. Meanwhile, Jura led Alfonzo up to the second floor to meet with Ooba.

Bang!

A few minutes later, while Ultear and Juvia were waiting for Alfonzo and Jura to return, the guild hall's front doors burst open, drawing everyone on the first floor of the guild hall's attention.

Standing in the open door way of the guild hall was a petite little girl, looking to be nine or ten years old with pink hair tied into short pigtails with orange bows and bright blue eyes, scanning the guildhall for someone. However, when she could not find the person she was looking for, she visibly deflated.

"Big Sis isn't back yet..." The pink-haired little girl muttered.

A moment later, the little girl stepped forward, entering the guild hall.

"Don't worry, Sherria, Sherry will be back soon." A male wizard said after seeing the disappointment on the little girl, Sherria Blendy's, face.

Meanwhile, Ultear and Juvia were also paying attention to the new arrival.

"That girl's magic feels familiar." Ultear muttered while scrutinizing Sherria. "It's like a combination of Romeo and Wendy's magic. How peculiar."

At that moment, Jura returned from the second floor. And just as he did, Sherria's eyes lit up before she rushed forward to greet him.

"Uncle Jura, hello!" Sherria shouted as she ran. "It's nice to---"

Bang!

Before she could even get halfway to her destination, however, Sherria tripped over her own feet and fell, face first, to the floor.

"*Sigh* Sherria, are you okay?" Jura asked as he approached Sherria, who was lying face down on the floor with arms and legs spread.

"Ow!" Sherria muttered as she pushed herself off the floor. A moment later, as she saw Jura's worried expression, she lowered her head. "Ah! I'm sorry to make you worry. I'm fine, so you don't need to worry about me, Uncle Jura."

"*Sigh* I'm just glad you're okay." Jura said with a wry smile. "Anyway, I assume you're here to find your cousin, correct?"

Nodding her head vigorously, Sherria eventually lowered her head once again.

"But she's not here." Sherria said in a somewhat depressed tone.

"That's right." Jura replied with a nod. "But she should be back in the next few days. But one of her friends is here. Would you like to meet her?"

Hearing that one of her cousin's, Sherry's, friends had come to visit, Sherria looked up shyly. Then, in an incredibly meek manner, she nodded her head.

"Very well." Jura said with a smile. "Then, follow me."

With that, Jura began walking towards the table where Ultear and Juvia were sitting. Naturally, Sherria followed him closely. Eventually, while poking her head out from Jura's side, Sherria noticed Ultear and Juvia.

"Wow... So pretty." Sherria muttered subconsciously after catching sight of Ultear and Juvia. A moment later, she covered her mouth with her hands in embarrassment.

Meanwhile, Ultear could not help but smile at the cute little girl's actions. Juvia, on the other hand, looked on in disinterest. Though, her eyebrows began to twitch after seeing Ultear smile at the little girl.

'Another one is trying to steal my Ultear away from me.' Juvia thought as her eyes began to gleam dangerously.

Feeling the hostility in Juvia's glare, Sherria quickly hid behind Jura while gripping his Wizard Saint cloak.

Smack!

"I have a pretty good idea what you're thinking." Ultear said after slapping Juvia upside the head. "And you need to stop."

Normally, Juvia wouldn't have even registered a slap like that. However, when she slapped her, Ultear had coated her hand in [Ice Magic]. So, Juvia felt the full force of Ultear's slap. AS a result, Juvia lowered her head while holding the spot where she was hit. Though, she did still steal glances at Sherria.

"*Cough* Anyway." Jura said, breaking up the awkward atmosphere. "This is Sherria Blendy, Sherry's younger cousin."

Hearing that, Ultear turned her attention back to Sherria, who was poking her head out from beside Jura. Then, she nodded in understanding.

"I thought you looked familiar." Ultear said with a smile. "You and Shery really do look a lot alike."

"You really know Big Sis?" Sherria asked, her eyes sparkling in interest.

"Yeah, I've known her for a few years." Ultear replied. "I met her when my mom and I came to visit her first disciple, Lyon."

Hearing Lyon's name, Sherria's eyes began to sparkle even brighter.

'Oh, she has a crush on Lyon, huh?' Ultear thought to herself as she saw Sherria's expression. 'What is that boy doing to attract the girls of the Blendy family? But if he were to accept this one's feelings, I might have to beat him up. She's way too young for him. He should be the same age as me, after all.'

At the same time, Lyon, who was completing a quest in the capital with the rest of his team, sneezed before shuddering violently. Though, he could not understand why.

Chapter 448: Since We Have Some Free Time...

While Ultear and Juvia were talking to Jura and Sherria, Alfonzo was on the second floor of the Lamia Scale guild hall in Ooba's office, discussing the finer details of the training room installations.

"So, you had a space dug out below the guild hall for the six training chambers?" Alfonzo asked while looking over the guild hall's floor plans.

"That's right." Ooba replied with a nod. "I was going to send a message asking you to install one of those elevators, too. But I decided against it in the end. The shaft necessary for the elevator would not have been finished by the time you arrived."

"Yeah, I guess that would have been an issue." Alfonzo said, finally looking up from the blueprints. "Other than that, everything looks to be in perfect order. So, I'll get started tomorrow morning. And I'll spend each morning installing the chambers. Then, once all the chambers are installed, I'll run the lines so that you can have control over them from your office."

Nodding in response, Ooba expected nothing less. That was what they discussed back when she visited Magnolia, after all.

"Good, all the materials are loaded onto my ship." Alfonzo said. "So, I'll bring them over tomorrow morning when I arrive."

"Do you need me to send someone to help transport the materials?" Ooba asked.

"Nah, that won't be necessary." Alfonzo replied while waving dismissively. "I'll bring it all over with my magic. Unfortunately, since the space for the chambers is underground, it will take a little while for me to move them through the guild hall."

"I figured as much." Ooba replied with a nod. "Why don't I show you the way to your work space. Then, you can use the rest of the day to rest before getting to work tomorrow morning."

"Sounds good to me." Alfonzo replied with a smile.

A moment later, Ooba picked up her cane before standing from her seat.

Following Ooba's lead, Alfonzo also stood up. Then, he followed Ooba out of her office as they both made their way towards the stairs.

A few moments later, Alfonzo and Ooba had just reached the first floor. When they did, Alfonzo looked towards the table where Ultear, Juvia, Jura, and Sherria were sitting and chatting happily.

"Hmm... That girl looks like someone I've met before." Alfonzo muttered while looking towards Sherria, knowing exactly who she was.

"Hmm..." Ooba hummed as she also turned her head in the same direction. "Oh, that's Sherria, Sherry's younger cousin. Sherry came along with me when I attended your wedding a few months ago."

"Right... Now that you mention it, I remember her." Alfonzo said while cupping his chin with his right hand. "She was talking with that one guy from Blue Pegasus the whole time, right? She talked about love a lot, too, didn't she?"

"That's right." Ooba replied. "She and her cousin are a lot alike in that regard. They're both very serious about... {Love}."

As she spoke the last word, Ooba mimicked the tone Sherry used whenever she spoke of love. Somehow, she managed to get her voice to reverberate the same way, too. However, when she said it, it was not nearly as heartfelt. On top of that, Alfonzo found it quite cringe.

"Not to be rude, Master Ooba." Alfonzo said while wearing a wry smile. "But I really don't think that... fits your style, ya know."

Instead of flaring up with an offended expression, Ooba simply shrugged her shoulders.

"I agree." Ooba replied. "It felt wrong to me when I did it, too."

Hearing that, Alfonzo smiled as he continued to follow Ooba towards the staircase leading to the guild hall's basement. And when they finally reached the stairs, Ooba gripped the railing with her free hand as she struggled to climb down.

"Ugh! Age is really catching up to me." Ooba said as she climbed down one step at a time. "Ten years ago, these stairs would have been nothing. But now, they feel so steep."

Instead of replying, Alfonzo hurried to Ooba's side. Then, he offered her his arm to help her climb down the stairs.

"Such a gentleman." Ooba said with a slight smile. "It's hard to believe that you were raised by that Makarov."

Hearing that, Alfonzo smiled as he carefully helped Ooba down the stairs.

"Despite his short comings... pun intended... Gramps is a good guy." Alfonzo said. "And he helped me and Lici a lot over the years."

"Ha! You probably wouldn't speak so highly of him if you had heard him talk about how alike you and he were." Ooba replied with a scoff. "He used to say how you were just like him. Your talent, your good looks, and your luck with women."

Hearing that, Alfonzo's breath caught in his throat while he almost fell down the stairs, something that would have been catastrophic. Since Ooba was still holding on to his arm, he would have undoubtedly pulled her down with him.

"*Cough* Okay, I can give him talent." Alfonzo said as he got himself back together. "But good looks and luck with women? Was he cursing me or something? Hell, I'm not saying he was ugly... But to call himself good looking is a bit of a stretch. And if I had his luck with women, I would have several women who either never wanted to mention my name because of something I did or want to turn me into a eunuch."

This time it was Ooba's turn to almost fall down the stairs. Luckily, Alfonzo was supporting her. So, like last time, nothing happened. Ooba did start laughing, though. And she laughed hard. Hard enough that everyone on the floor above could hear her.

"Is that Ooba Babasama?" Sherria, who was still sitting at the table with Ultear, Juvia, and Jura asked in a shocked tone as she heard the laughter echoing through the guild hall.

"It would seems so." Jura replied with a nod. "I wonder what could have tickled her so."

"It was probably Alfonzo." Ultear replied with a smile. "He has a knack for making people laugh like that."

"Hmph! He isn't that great." Juvia, while snorting disdainfully, said in a jealous tone.

"Maybe if you ever gave him a chance, your opinion of him might change." Ultear replied with a wry smile."

"Maybe I will when he gives Juvia back her soul mate." Juvia said as she turned her head away.

While Jura and Sherria wore confused expressions, Ultear could only smile wryly, having expected Juvia to reply like that. However, like Alfonzo, she was hoping to get Juvia to lose her hate for Alfonzo. And while she was at it, she was hoping to get Juvia to stop stalking her. Though, she felt like the latter was little more than wishful thinking.

About twenty minutes later, Alfonzo and Ooba returned from the basement. And when they did, they made their way over to where Ultear, Juvia, Jura, and Sherria were sitting.

"Alfonzo, how is it?" Ultear asked once she noticed Alfonzo and Ooba approaching. Will installing the training chambers be an issue?"

"Nah, no trouble at all." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "The only issue will be getting the materials down into the basement. But that's just an issue of time rather than difficulty."

As he spoke, Alfonzo and Ooba arrived at the table. Then, like a gentleman, Alfonzo pulled a chair out for Ooba before helping her to take a seat. After that, he took a seat next to Ultear.

"Just a playboy." Juvia muttered discontentedly in response to Alfonzo's kind gesture. "That's why Ultear should be with Juvia."

In response, Alfonzo and Ultear could only smile wryly while shaking their heads. Meanwhile, Ooba, Jura, and Sherria looked at Juvia as if she grew a second head.

"What do you mean?" Ultear asked curiously.

"Anyway... when I installed the training chambers at the Mermaid Heel guild hall, they wanted them attached to the exterior walls. So, I could just fly all the materials to where I needed to work." Alfonzo explained. "But since I'll be building underground this time, I won't be able to move as much material at one time as I did back then. And when I get to the final stages, I'll have very little space for the materials. So, I'll have to move them one at a time, more or less."

"Do you mean to say..." Jura said after taking a moment to process what Alfonzo said. "... that you need more space underground?"

"I wouldn't say I need it, but it would be nice." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

"Then, if you're willing to accompany me, I could expand the space." Jura suggested. "Since you're doing this for us, it's the least I could do."

"You are paying me for this, you know." Alfonzo said with a wry smile. "Don't make it sound like I'm doing you a favor. Otherwise, I'd feel a little bad."

"I think you're misunderstanding something." Jura replied calmly. "Originally, I was the one who dug out the space for the new training chambers. However, I did not consider the space needed to prepare the materials. Instead, I only dug out the space to the specifications Master decided on."

"Ah... That makes sense." Alfonzo replied, finally understanding what Jura was getting at. "In that case, if you wouldn't mind, it would make completing the work much easier. Also, if you could, raising a few support pillars would be good for the stability of the underground space and the guild hall, too."

"That won't be a problem." Jura replied with a nod.

Like that, Alfonzo and Jura spent a little more time talking about what would be best for the underground space where the training chambers would be built. Meanwhile, Sherria, who had only heard about Alfonzo from Ooba and through Sorcerer Weekly was impressed by the professional tone he spoke to Jura with.

"Ooba Babasama, do you know what they're talking about?" Sherria asked quietly.

"They're talking about construction." Ooba replied. "It's nothing you need to worry about, Girl."

"Oh, okay." Sherria replied as she completely stopped paying attention to Alfonzo's and Jura's conversation as Ooba said.

"So, Sherria, I can tell you have quite a bit of magic power." Ultear said in an interested tone. "What kind of magic do you use?"

When she heard Ultear call her name, Sherria's attention turned to her immediately. However, when Ultear asked what kind of magic she used, Sherria turned her head back towards Ooba, waiting for permission to answer the question.

"It's fine, you can tell her." Ooba said.

Nodding in response, Sherria turned back to Ultear.

"I use [Sky God Slayer Magic]." Sherria said as she puffed out her chest proudly.

"Hmm... That would explain the feeling I was having." Ultear replied while nodding her head.

"What do you mean?" Sherria asked curiously.

Not only Sherria, but Ooba was also looking at Ultear with curiosity.

"Oh, are you referring to young Miss Marvell?" Jura asked as his and Alfonzo's conversation came to an end. "She's a [Sky Dragon Slayer], if my memories are correct."

"A [Sky Dragon Slayer]?" Sherria asked in wonder.

"Well, that's partially correct." Ultear replied. "But not all of it."

"You thought she felt similar to both Romeo and Wendy, didn't you?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Exactly." Ultear said with a nod. "With Wendy practicing [Sky Dragon Slayer Magic] and Romeo practicing [Fire God Slayer Magic], I felt that your magic felt like a strange combination of the two. And what do you know, I was right."

"Fairy Tail has a [God Slayer] now, too?" Ooba asked with disbelief in her tone. "You already have four [Dragon Slayers], is that not enough?"

Alfonzo and Ultear only smiled in response while Juvia did not seem to be paying attention to the conversation.

"Anyway, Jura..." Alfonzo said, doing his best to change the subject. "Since we have some free time this afternoon, how about a little spar?"

Hearing that, Ultear looked at Alfonzo while wearing a pout.

"No fair, Alfonzo." Ultear said in a pitiful tone. "I wanted to spar with him, too."

"You snooze, you lose." Alfonzo replied with a shrug as he wrapped his arm around Ultear's waist. "But we'll be here for two months. I'm sure the opportunity will present itself again."

"Indeed." Jura replied. "Comparing notes with strong wizards is something I enjoy. I'm sure we'll have the opportunity to spar multiple times during your stay."

"Hmph! Fine." Ultear said with a snort as she snuggled into Alfonzo's arms.

Meanwhile, Sherria blushed at the display of affection while Juvia began to quite literally boil in anger. Jura, on the other hand, stood from his seat before gesturing towards the doors leading to the Lamia Scale training ground.

"As you said, since we have the afternoon free, what better time than the present to have our spar?" Jura asked with a smile.

"Looks like Fairy Tail wizards aren't the only ones who enjoy a good fight, huh?" Alfonzo asked as he, too, stood from his seat. "Man, Natsu is gonna be so jealous. I heard about how he asked you to spar back then. But time did not allow it. I'm definitely gonna rub this in his face when I get back."

Chapter 449: Alfonzo Vs. Jura

On the Lamia Scale training grounds, Alfonzo and Jura were standing opposite each other. Meanwhile, Ultear, Juvia, Ooba, Sherria, and most of the Lamia Scale wizards who were hanging out at the guild hall were standing nearby to witness the spar between the two S-Class wizards.

"I've heard stories about how strong Alfonzo is." Ooba said as she, along with all the other spectators, waited for the spar to begin. "But I've never seen his strength for myself."

After speaking her peace, Ooba turned her attention to Ultear and Juvia.

"What do the two of you think?" Ooba asked in apparent interest.

Meanwhile, Sherria and the other members of Lamia Scale who were standing nearby also turned their attention to the Fairy Tail wizards to hear their opinions. Though, as members of Lamia Scale, they believed Jura, a member of the Ten Wizard Saints, would emerge victorious.

"Honestly, I only know how strong Jura was back in November of x784." Ultear replied. "But I can tell he's gotten quite a bit stronger since then."

Nodding her head in agreement, Ooba waited for Ultear to continue.

"But in all the years I've been a member of Fairy Tail, I've never seen Alfonzo lose a fight." Ultear continued. "And the only fights I've heard of him not winning were one against Laxus when they were still children. And then there was the time he fought Jose Porla, which did not have a decisive outcome. But I heard he was running on fumes by the end. Well... Before Master Makarov interfered, anyway. Actually, now that I think about it, he did lose to Gildarts the year he became an S-Class wizard while teaming up with Lici... I mean, Elicia."

"That still doesn't answer my question, though." Ooba pointed out.

Nodding her head in response, Ultear stopped to think for a moment.

"How strong is Jura in comparison to Gildarts?" Ultear asked.

"He's not as strong." Ooba replied.

"Then, at the very least, it will end in a draw." Ultear said after another moment of contemplation. "But I think Alfonzo has a pretty high chance of winning."

"Hmph!" Juvia snorted after hearing Ultear speak positively about Alfonzo. Though, she did not say anything to the contrary.

"No way!" Sherria shouted. "Uncle Jura is really strong!"

"Well then, we'll just have to wait and see." Ultear replied with a smile. "But Alfonzo is pretty strong, too."

Meanwhile, in the middle of the training field, Alfonzo was stretching lightly while Jura stood calmly with his palms pressed together.

"Alright, I think it's about time to get started." Alfonzo said as he dropped into his fighting stance. "Are you ready, Jura?"

"I am." Jura replied calmly. "You may begin whenever you are ready."

"Then, let's go." Alfonzo said as he was covered in arcing, violet electricity. "[Electromagnetism Magic: Lightning Enhancement]."

In the next instant, Alfonzo vanished from where he stood in a flash of violet light. He then reappeared to Jura's left with his left hand swinging at Jura's abdomen.

Reacting quickly, Jura moved his left hand gracefully as he deflected Alfonzo's hand downwards.

Riding the momentum of Jura's parry, Alfonzo pivoted on his right leg and lashed his left heel at the back of Jura's head. Once again reacting quickly, Jura crouched down, lowering his head beneath Alfonzo's leg. Then he made a quarter turn and pressed his palms against the thigh of Alfonzo's kicking leg in an attempt to destabilize his balance.

In response, Alfonzo did not fight the force from Jura's push. Instead, he went with it, propelling himself into a cartwheel. At the same time, as he pulled his right hand away from the ground, Alfonzo's palm lit up with electricity.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Spark Cannon]." Alfonzo chanted as he fired the gathered electricity from his palm.

"[Earth Magic: Iron Rock Wall]." Jura also chanted while extending his right hand forward with its index and middle fingers extended.

In the next instant, a pillar of hardened and condensed stone shot up from the ground, dispersing Alfonzo's spell on contact.

"Although that boy is powerful, Jura trumps him in experience." Ooba said while watching the ongoing spar.

"That may be true, but Alfonzo defeated Hades, the master of Grimoire Heart on his own." Ultear replied. "So, he's overcome the gap in experience before."

Although what Ultear said was correct, Elicia did play a major part in Alfonzo defeating Hades. Though, that was only because he wanted to take custody of the Grimoire Heart airship. In actuality, Alfonzo could have simply crushed the entire airship with his magic, destroying the [Devil's Heart] in the process.

Meanwhile, as the conversation continued between Ooba and Ultear, Alfonzo continued to fire [Spark Cannons] from varying angles, looking for a gap in Jura's defense.

"If that's not gonna work, then how about this?" Alfonzo asked as he materialized chunks of adamantite all around Jura. "[Metal Magic: Kunai Barrage]."

Watching as the chunks of metal shaped themselves into kunai, Jura made his next move before they could be fired.

Clap!

"Earth Magic: Rock Mountain]." Jura chanted as the sound of his clap echoed around the training grounds.

A moment later, just as the many kunai shot in Jura's direction, a large, humanoid construct made of stone and wearing armor, which included a helmet, with glowing eyes grew from the ground behind Jura. Then, once the giant rock golem was completely formed, it swung its arm and deflected all the incoming kunai with ease.

Meanwhile, as the golem defended from the kunai, Jura did not remain still. Repeatedly striking each of the pillars he raised earlier in the fight, he sent pieces of each pillar flying in Alfonzo's direction at high speed, and with great force.

In response, Alfonzo showed off his agility and flexibility by dodging each projectile. However, as the number of stone projectiles increased, Alfonzo began defending himself with his magic.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Gravity Well]." Alfonzo chanted, causing the magnetic force in the area to skyrocket.

Boom! *Boom!* *Boom!*

As a result of Alfonzo's spell, all of Jura's projectiles came crashing to the ground, cratering and leaving ditches on the training ground on impact. Even Jura and the large golem standing behind Jura was affected. Though, with Jura pumping his magic power through his body and the golem, they recovered quickly enough.

However, by the time they recovered, Alfonzo was already pointing his right arm, which was sparking with electricity, at the golem's head.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Railgun]." Alfonzo chanted as a conical piece of metal was conjured in front of his outstretched right index finger.

Boom!

In the next instant, as the metal fragment made contact with Alfonzo's finger, the golem's head was shattered while a line of super-heated air was drawn from Alfonzo's finger into the sky for miles.

This time, not only the wizards of Lamia Scale opened their eyes wide. But even Juvia reacted in the same way. She had never seen Alfonzo use that spell before, after all.

The first to recover from their shock was Jura. However, it did not happen naturally. Instead, he was snapped back to his senses when a jab from Alfonzo, who had no intention of waiting for his opponent to start paying attention again, landed on his chin.

Reacting swiftly to the follow up attack, Jura batted Alfonzo's straight to the side as he and Alfonzo once again engaged in an exchange of martial arts.

"Juvia has never seen that spell before." Juvia said, finally snapping out of her stupor. "He never uses it during training or in the tournament."

"That's because it's too dangerous." Ultear replied. "Although a few of us could handle a projectile at that speed, the heat from the super-heated air isn't so easy to deal with."

Snapping back to her senses, as well, Ooba nodded in understanding.

"So, he only uses a spell like that against beasts and magical constructs, I would suspect." Ooba guessed.

"Not exactly." Ultear replied. "He uses it against particularly disgusting dark wizards, too."

Nodding in understanding, Ooba returned her sight back to the match between Jura and Alfonzo. Meanwhile, many of the less experienced wizards among the onlookers wore mortified expressions.

"Does that mean he's killed people before?" Sherria asked with a pale expression.

"*Sigh* Though it's unfortunate, he has." Ultear replied. "But most wizards have killed at least one or two dark wizards over their careers."

"She's right, Sherria." Ooba added. "Some dark wizards simply cannot be reasoned with. On top of that, they can be too strong to hold back against. As a result, some of them end up dying after a battle."

Although Sherria was still shaken by the thought of killing someone, she trusted Ooba. So, she calmed down significantly. However, she began scanning the crowd of wizards, wondering who else had taken a life before.

Meanwhile, Jura was once again able to create some distance between himself and Alfonzo. And when he did, instead of casting a spell immediately, he chose to speak.

"I'm surprised, Alfonzo." Jura said as he placed his palms together.

"About what?" Alfonzo asked curiously.

"I have heard of those tonfa strapped to your back." Jura continued. "What surprises me is the fact that you haven't drawn them yet."

"Oh, that's simple." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "This is just a friendly spar. There's nothing on the line here."

Nodding in understanding, Jura began flaring his magic power. Meanwhile, Alfonzo lowered himself into a fighting stance once again.

'Besides, I don't need the boosts they give me for you.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Although you're strong, Jura, you can't compare to Ur. And I can break even with er without Riot and Bedlam.'

["Still, you should let us out to play."] Bedlam said while smiling from Alfonzo's inner world.

["Hmph!" Riot snorted in response. ["You only want people to see you, you conceited ass."]

["What's wrong with that?"] Bedlam asked while smiling at Riot.

Ignoring his [Armament Spirits'] usual bickering, Alfonzo prepared himself to deal with whatever Jura was preparing.

"[Earth Magic: Supreme King Rock Crush]." Jura chanted as his surging magic power came in contact with all the stones present on the training ground.

In the next instant, despite the gravity in the surroundings, all the projectiles, as well as the body of the destroyed golem, levitated into the air before they all went careening towards Alfonzo, burying him in pieces of rubble.

Seeing that, the wizards from Lamia Scale, other than Ooba, began to cheer. Meanwhile, Ultear, Ooba, and Juvia watched the match calmly.

Eventually, the cheering quieted down. And when it did, everyone noticed that Jura was still exerting a large amount of magic power. On top of that, they could see sweat flowing down his bald head.

Then, just before anyone could question why Jura was still trying so hard, they heard a muffled voice coming from the pile of rubble.

"[Metal Magic: Giga Drill Break]."

A moment later, the stones facing Jura exploded outwards as Alfonzo, with a large metal drill rotating in front of his outstretched right fist, rushed forward towards Jura. Then, before Jura could react, the tip of the drill came to a stop less than an inch away from his chest.

With their eyes opened wide in surprise, all the wizards on the training grounds fell silent. The only source of sound being the drill mounted on Alfonzo's arm. Then, after several seconds, Jura was the one to break the silence.

"*Sigh* I yield." Jura said as he raised his hands in a sign of surrender.

With that, Alfonzo pulled his arm back, letting the drill dispel as he did so. Then, he smiled brightly while extending his right hand to Jura for a handshake.

"Good fight." Alfonzo said in a sincere tone. "That's the first time I've fought someone who uses [Earth Magic] the way you do."

"Indeed." Jura replied as he reached out to accept Alfonzo's handshake. Then, once he gripped Alfonzo's hand firmly, he continued. "You're actually the first practitioner of either [Metal Magic] or [Electromagnetism Magic] I've ever pitted my skills against. And I must say, I treasure the experience. Perhaps we can do this again once I've thought up a few counter measures."

"Sounds fun to me." Alfonzo replied while maintaining his smile as he and Jura released the handshake.

Hearing that short conversation and seeing the two shaking hands was enough to finally break the wizards of Lamia Scale out of their stunned silence.

"Jura... lost...?" A male wizard in his late teens stammered out.

That eventually led to all the other wizards from Lamia scale exclaiming in disbelief, as well. Naturally, the only exception was Ooba, who was far too experienced to panic over the outcome of a spar.

"That boy really is strong." Ooba muttered while the rest of her wizards lost their composure. "Makarov had been talking about how talented he was for years. For once, he wasn't exaggerating."

"Did you expect this to happen, Ooba Babasama?" Sherria asked in a confused tone.

"No... I can't say I expected it." Ooba replied while shaking her head gently. "But from what I've heard and the amount of magic power I can feel, it doesn't surprise me, either."

"What do you mean?" Sherria asked. "What have you heard about him?"

In response, Ooba went on to tell some of the stories Makarov used to tell while he was bragging about his children at the Annual guild Master's Meeting. However, she also mentioned that those stories should be taken with a grain of salt.

"Yeah, Master Makarov exaggerated quite a few of those stories." Ultear said while smiling wryly. "But Alfonzo was strong enough to subdue my mom without hurting her when she went on a rampage last year."

While Ooba was not surprised that Alfonzo had defeated Jura, hearing that he could subdue Ur without hurting her made her open her eyes wide in surprise.

"But from what I've heard, Ur should be on par with Makarov in terms of power, right?" Ooba asked, her disbelief seeping into her tone.

"Yeah, more or less." Ultear replied with a nod.

"Nothing less should be expected from one of Juvia's soul mates." Juvia said proudly.

Deciding to ignore the clearly delusional girl, Ooba turned her attention back to Jura.

"I see...I guess he's stronger than I thought." Ooba said calmly. A moment later, she turned her attention back to Ultear with a quizzical expression on her face. "But why would Ur have been rampaging in the first place?"

Though Ultear did not answer her question, the way she laughed made Ooba even more curious to know the answer.

Chapter 450: Two Proposals

At the Fairy Tail guild hall, around the same time Alfonzo and Jura shook hands after their spar, Shizuka, who had just finished her shift as a nurse, was sitting at the table where Alfonzo, Elicia, and their friends usually sat with her head hanging low while poking at the meal she just ordered with a fork.

"Hey, Shizuka, what's wrong?" Rika asked curiously while placing her left hand on Shizuka's back.

"*Sigh* I wanted to go with Fonzie to see the other guild." Shizuka replied as she finally speared a vegetable with her fork. "But I wasn't allowed because of my work in the infirmary."

"Yeah, it would have been fun to see how other guilds operate, wouldn't it?" Rika replied with a question of her own. "But since we've all been here for such a short time, it makes sense that we, as newcomers, couldn't go."

"Hmph!" Saya snorted, looking as though she was in a bad mood, as well. "I'm a genius, I already understand how the guild works. So, I should have been able to go. Instead, I'm stuck here learning about the guild with the rest of you."

"Come on, Saya." Kohta said with a wry smile. "Taking quests to get used to all the different kinds of quests isn't that weird, is it?"

"Hmph! Maybe for you, Fat Ass." Saya replied sharply while glaring at Kohta. "But I'm a freaking genius. I shouldn't be held to the same standards as the rest of you."

"Translation: I have a crush on Alfonzo, and I wanted to spend more time with him." Cana said, cutting into the conversation, with a grin.

Immediately, Saya's face reddened fiercely as she shot her glare in Cana's direction.

"What are you talking about, Cana. I don't have a crush on Alfonzo!" Saya shouted, hiding her embarrassment with anger.

Meanwhile, at a table not far from the table where Alfonzo and his friends sat, Laxus clenched his fist angrily.

'Why does she have to have a thing for that guy?' Laxus asked himself while staring at Saya. 'Doesn't he have enough girls already?'

However, Laxus was unaware of Alfonzo's thoughts on the matter. In fact, Alfonzo really had no romantic interest in Saya. Despite the fact that he had noticed her feelings. He already dealt with someone who was unable to be honest with their feelings before he got with Mirajane. And he really did not have the time or the energy to break through another shell like that one again.

And if Laxus had known that Alfonzo was thinking of ways to get him and Saya together, he would drop any jealousy he was feeling immediately. Instead, he would be looking to give Alfonzo a hug.

Meanwhile, back at the table where Alfonzo, Elicia, and their group of friends sat, Elicia was watching Cana and Saya bicker while Rika continued to try and console Shizuka. Then, she shifted her attention to Saeko, who was eating her meal silently while watching the dispute between Cana and Saya.

"What about you, Saeko?" Elicia asked curiously. "Didn't you wanna go see Lamia Scale, too?"

"I do." Saeko replied with a nod before taking a bite of her meal. She then continued after chewing and swallowing the food in her mouth. "I mean, I've lived in Takanosu for my entire life. And I've only left the town a handful of times. So, seeing the rest of the kingdom, and eventually the continent sounds wonderful."

Nodding in understanding, Elicia smiled as she waited for Saeko to continue. And she did not have to wait for long.

"On top of that, I would have liked to go with Alfonzo on this trip to have more time to get to know him, as well." Saeko said as she picked up more of her food.

Watching Saeko take another bite of her food, Elicia's smile widened.

'So, there are two who are confirmed to have feelings for Fonzie.' Elicia thought to herself as her gaze swept over Saeko and Saya. Then, she looked at Shizuka once again. 'And I'm fairly certain that Shizuka is starting to like him, too. But her emotions are harder to read. I wouldn't be surprised if she was unaware of how she felt at the moment. But since most of the things she gets excited or depressed about have something to do with Fonzie, I'm ninety percent sure of my guess.'

"Anyway, where is Alzack?" Rika said after Shizuka seemed to cheer up a little. "He's usually here by now, right? Ur asked him to go with me on my first A-Class quest. I'm not sure why, though. I mean, I've been doing stuff like this for years as a knight."

"It's to make sure you handle the quest like a wizard instead of a knight." Bisca replied while narrowing her eyes at Rika, wondering if she was trying to steal Alzack away from her.

"Yeah, I get that." Rika said in a huff. "But I thought I had shown that I can handle it when I completed those B-Class quests before."

As Rika said, Ur had been sending senior wizards along with Rika on her quests ever since she started taking quests for the guild. And although making sure that Rika did not start handling things like the knights do was the initial reason, that quickly changed.

In fact, the reason for that change was simple. Like Alfonzo and Elicia, Rika had yet to cause any property damage while out on a quest. So, she sent the more senior wizards with her to learn from her.

Even though most of the wizards of Fairy Tail had dialed back their destructive tendencies quite a bit since the point system was put in place, they were still prone to destroying things on quests. However, now, instead of destroying everything they touched, they had brought down their destruction of property to a level that matched the average guild in Fiore.

"Either way, Alfonzo said that if I could finish all my A-Class quests without causing any property damage by the time he gets back, he would make me a new sniper rifle. One that could change forms into a melee weapon." Rika said with a smile. Then, Rika grinned in Bisca's direction, having a good idea of what she was thinking. "Besides, Alzack would have to be a better shot than me before I even considered getting with him. So, you don't have to worry about me taking your man, Bisca."

Hearing that, Bisca, like Saya had done earlier, reddened fiercely. Then, to hide her embarrassment, she looked away. However, as soon as she turned her head, she found Alzack sitting next to her.

'Huh? When did he get there?' Bisca asked herself in surprise. 'And if he had been there for a while, why did Rika act like she didn't know where he was? And why is he smiling at me like that?'

While those thoughts were racing through Bisca's head, Alzack slipped out of his chair and dropped to one knee. Then, he reached into the pocket of his over coat and pulled out a small box... A ring case.

"Alzack, what are you...?" Bisca asked with surprise written all over her expression.

Bisca's exclamation naturally drew the attention of the rest of those sitting at the table, as well as the attention of those sitting at nearby tables.

"Bisca, we've known each other for almost seven years now.' Alzack said, interrupting Bisca's question. "And ever since you joined the guild, I've spent more time looking at you than I can remember. And no matter how much time I spend looking at you, I never get tired of what I see."

As Alzack began to speak, the guild hall fell silent with everyone paying attention to what looked and sounded like a proposal.

And with every word, Alzack's face reddened further and further from all the attention he was getting.

"And to be honest, there's only one thing I regret about the time I've known you." Alzack said as he lowered his head, continuing his speech, despite the number of eyes focused on him. "And that's the fact that you're not the first thing I see when I wake up or the last thing I see when I go to sleep. So, in the hopes of fixing that regret, I ask you, Bisca Mulan, will you marry me?"

With that, Bisca completely froze with her eyes opened wide in surprise.

"Holy shit... He actually did it." Macao muttered from a nearby table.

"Yeah, I didn't see that coming." Wakaba added in a whisper of his own.

"Doesn't it feel like he skipped a few steps?" Lisanna asked while her gaze switched between Alzack and Bisca.

"It does." Mirajane said with her usual pleasant smile on her face. "I mean, they haven't been on a first date or had a first kiss yet, have they?"

"Unless they've been hiding it, I don't think so." Levy replied as she looked at Gajeel intently.

In fact, ever since Alzack went fishing with the guys, he had been trying to drum up the courage to tell Bisca how he felt. Unfortunately, he was unable to do so. A few days before Alfonzo left for his job at Lamia Scale, however, Alfonzo told him that if he did not tell her before he got back, he would take matters into his own hands.

And as he said so, Alfonzo wore quite the sinister smile, scaring Alzack to no end. So, the day Alfonzo left with Ultear and Juvia for Akane Beach to pick up Sixth Sense, Alzack panicked. Then, while frantically thinking about how he could confess to Bisca, he ended up buying an engagement ring, completely skipping all the usual steps of courtship.

"Why do you even need to worry about it?" Elfman, the only one to not whisper in this situation, asked. "He handled it like a real man!"

Elfman's usual exclamation caused everyone in the guild hall, without exception to glare at him for destroying the mood. However, it was also enough to bring Bisca out of her daze.

"*Sigh* You know, Alzack, I was only hoping for dinner and flowers when you finally confessed to me." Bisca said in an exasperated tone. Though, the bright smile on her face let anyone who looked at her know how she really felt about Alzack's proposal.

Hearing Bisca's tone, Alzack could feel tears welling up in his eyes as he lowered his head even further, realizing that he had skipped quite a few steps in his panic. However, before the tears could fall, he felt a pair of hands on his cheeks. Then, his head was gently raised, forcing him to look up at Bisca.

And when Alzack saw Bisca's face, he was thoroughly surprised.

Currently, Bisca was smiling brightly with tears sliding down her cheeks. And if the smile was any indication, Alzack knew that those tears were happy tears.

"Although you've skipped a few steps..." Bisca said, maintaining her smile as the number of tears running down her face increased. "... I've been having the same regret as you for a long time now. So, to answer your question, I will."

Then, before giving Alzack time to properly register her answer to his proposal, Bisca leaned forward and pressed her lips against his.

Immediately after Bisca kissed Alzack, the entire guild burst into loud cheers. However, after two minutes of cheering, Alzack and Bisca were still kissing, seeming to have forgotten everything else around them.

Eventually, the atmosphere in the guild hall got quite awkward as no one knew what to do.

"Um... Should we stop them?" Lisanna asked while stealing glances at Natsu. "I mean, we can't congratulate them if they stay like that, right?"

"No, I think we should let them be." Marin said with a smile. "It looks like they're making up for lost time."

Hearing that, most of the people at the table giggled, despite how awkward it was to sit at a table with a couple making out like they were the only ones in the room.

"Yeah, but if they start undressing, I'm gonna freeze them." Gray said with an eyebrow twitching.

'If Juvia weren't so... intense... that could be us.' Gray thought as he glanced at Alzack and Bisca. 'Damn it... What am I thinking? I blame this on Master. She keeps trying to make me a couple with Juvia. And now I start thinking about it even when she's not here. It's just like when she made me strip to train in the cold. I do that involuntarily, too.'

"I can practically taste the irony in that statement." Cana said as she glanced at Gray. "You should probably put your own clothes on before saying stuff like that, Gray."

"Huh? Aww...Damn it!" Gray exclaimed as he frantically dressed himself.

Sneeze!

Meanwhile, up in her office, Ur was filling out paperwork for the Magic Council. However, she was forced to stop when she sneezed.

"Somehow I bet that brat Gray is thinking something rude about me." Ur said as she wiped her nose with a handkerchief. "Oh well, I can deal with him later. Instead, I need to vote for someone to fill the last of the seats on the Ten Wizard Saints. I'm actually surprised that it stayed vacant for this long. And I'm even more surprised that there are three candidates from Fairy Tail on the list."

As she reached that point, Ur read the list of names that were being considered in the proposal she received earlier today.

"... Fairy Tail: Ur Milkovich, Gildarts Clive, Alfonzo Marcus." Ur said with a smile on her face. "Well, I know I won't be voting for myself. And if I voted for Gildarts, the guild's reputation would end up falling lower than it was before the point system was implemented. Well... Sorry, Kid. It looks like you'll be the one."

With a sinister smile on her face, Ur finished filling out the voting form. Then, she placed it in an envelope before sealing it. A moment later, she stood up and stretched.

"Well, I guess I'll take this to the post office myself." Ur said with a smile. "I haven't really stretched my legs today. *Sigh* If he is chosen, I wonder what he'll think about becoming one of the Ten Wizard Saints. Hehehe. I wonder what he'll think about all the paperwork, too."