

Fairy Tail 451

Chapter 451: Alfonzo and Juvia

A few days have passed since Alfonzo and Jura had their spar. And in those few days, Alfonzo started on his job to install the new training chambers for Lamia Scale. Before he started, however, he and Jura made their way down below the guild hall. Then, under Alfonzo's instructions, Jura expanded the space while erecting pillars to help support the guild hall, as well.

On top of that, on the evening of the fourth night, Alfonzo began instructing Juvia on how to make her [Water Body] out of pure water. Though, he did not have many ideas how to do so. But he did have a guess.

Suggesting to Juvia that the reason her body was not pure water had something to do with her clothing, Alfonzo told Juvia to undress and try activating her [Water Body].

Naturally, because she had a bad impression of Alfonzo, Juvia thought he was trying to get her naked before having his way with her. As a result, she attacked him with her [Water Cane] spell. Unfortunately for her, Alfonzo only had to cover his body in arcs of electricity to put an end to that, leaving Juvia unconscious in the aftermath.

Then, after Juvia woke up a few hours later, Alfonzo tried explain to her what he meant when he made his suggestion.

"Seriously, Juvia." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone while sitting in a chair next to Juvia's bed in her hotel room. "You're a perfect example of a Fairy Tail wizard. You immediately attack first, ask questions later. Then again... Something tells me you wouldn't have even asked questions after your attack, had it succeeded, I mean."

"What did you do to Juvia?" Juvia questioned sharply as she struggled against the anti-magic restraints fastening her to the bed. "Juvia will never forgive you for defiling her."

"You really need to get the fuck over yourself, Sweetheart." Alfonzo said with his eyes narrowed. "Yeah, you're pretty good looking, but if you think all men are so taken by your looks, then you're even more delusional than I ever thought possible."

Instead of responding, Juvia glared at Alfonzo as hard as she could. On top of that, her pride was hurt when Alfonzo dismissed her beauty the way he did.

"Now, like I was trying to say before you flew off the handle..." Alfonzo said as his expression reverted back to normal. "You should try activating your [Water Body] without your clothes---"

"You're still trying to get Juvia naked for your perverted---" Juvia started to shout.

"Seriously, Shut the fuck up!" Alfonzo roared, drowning out Juvia's shouting, and startling her in the process. "I'm not fucking interested in you! So, chill the fuck out and miss me with that shit!"

Taken completely aback, Juvia could only stare at Alfonzo with her eyes and mouth opened wide.

"When I said without clothes on, I meant for you to do it in a bathroom or something." Alfonzo said while trying to calm himself. "Somewhere you could be alone, God fucking damn it."

This being the first time Juvia had ever seen Alfonzo so angry, Juvia was at a complete and utter loss. He had never even gotten so angry after all the time she told him to leave Ultear. Yet, because he was so massively misunderstood, he shouted and swore at her.

"*Sigh* Sorry about that..." Alfonzo said after taking another deep breath to calm himself down. "But suggesting that I'm some kind of creep like that really got to me... Much more than it probably should have. But look, even though we don't get along, I still look at you like family. Just like every other member of the guild. So, to have someone I see as family doubting my character like that really bothers me."

Lowering her head, Juvia broke eye contact with Alfonzo after he explained why he got so angry. On top of that, she could sort of relate to what he said. Like the way things were in the past, Juvia had been misunderstood because of the rain that followed her everywhere she went. As a result, everyone she knew treated her badly, despite the fact that she had not done anything to them.

And just like the people from her past, Juvia had also been treating Alfonzo badly, despite the fact that he had not done anything to her other than being close to Ultear. In fact, he had not even dissuaded her from trying to gain Ultear's affection. As long as she did it in an upright manner. Because like he said nearly a year and a half ago, Ultear could make her own decisions about who she wanted to be with.

"*Sigh* Juvia is sorry." Juvia said with her head still lowered. "Juvia knows you're not that kind of person. But Juvia is jealous that Ultear loves you so much. And Juvia let her jealousy get the better of her."

Knock! *Knock!* *Knock!*

"Hey, is everything okay in there?" Ultear asked from the outside of Juvia's room. "You two aren't gonna start fighting, are you?"

Taking a look at Juvia, who tensed after hearing Ultear's voice, Alfonzo shook his head before responding.

"No, everything is fine." Alfonzo replied. "We just had a conversation that should have happened a long time ago."

"Oh, okay." Ultear replied through the door in a relieved tone.

"In fact, you should have a serious talk with Juvia, too." Alfonzo continued. "We need to just get everything in the air so that we can put this whole thing behind us."

Knowing exactly what Alfonzo was talking about, Ultear had yet to have a serious conversation about Juvia's stalker behavior, hoping that just ignoring her would cause her to give up. However, she knew that Alfonzo was right. If she had sat Juvia down and talked to her, things might not have gotten so bad.

"Don't worry, I will." Ultear replied. "But that will have to wait until tomorrow, after my spar with Jura. I wanna get to bed early so that I can be at my best. I'm not strong enough to just overpower him like you, Alfonzo."

"I understand." Alfonzo replied with a nod. Then, he looked over to Juvia. "Are you okay with that, Juvia?"

"Yes." Juvia replied quietly, knowing she would not like the way that conversation would go.

"Well, there you have it." Alfonzo said with another nod. "I'll be back in the room a little later, Tear. I still need to finish telling Juvia about my theory."

"Okay." Ultear replied. "Then, if I'm asleep when you get back, good night. Good night to you, too, Juvia."

"Good night." Alfonzo replied with a smile.

"Good night..." Juvia replied, sounding slightly apprehensive.

Then, the sound of Ultear's footsteps retreating from the front of the room could be heard before the sound of a door closing followed shortly afterwards. A moment later, Alfonzo turned his attention back to Juvia.

"So, are you ready to hear my theory about making your [Water Body] pure, without blasting me for suggesting to take your clothes off, I mean?" Alfonzo asked while smiling cheekily.

Despite herself, Juvia also smiled. Though, her smile was quite wry. Then, she nodded her head meekly, signaling Alfonzo to continue.

"Alright." Alfonzo said. "Like I was saying, I think your clothes, which are integrated into your [Water Body] when you activate it, are what add the impurities."

"That's why you said Juvia should activate her [Water Body] without clothes on?" Juvia asked, finally understanding why Alfonzo made that suggestion.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Then, if you could give me a sample to analyze, I could tell you if it's pure, or not."

"Then, why didn't you say that from the beginning?" Juvia asked with a skeptical expression on her face.

"You never gave me a chance to get that far." Alfonzo replied with a wry smile.

In response, Juvia could only look away with a blush on her cheeks.

"Anyway, if my theory is correct, then you should see if Lici knows about material that would keep your body pure when you activate your [Water Body]." Alfonzo said. "And if she can, you should commission her to use those materials for all your battle attire from now on. In fact, it would probably be a good idea to get all your clothes made out of those materials. You never know when shit could pop off, after all."

After nodding in understanding, Juvia lowered her head once again.

"Thank you, Alfonzo." Juvia said quietly. "And Juvia is sorry."

"*Sigh* I'm sorry, too." Alfonzo replied. "If we had talked about this earlier, a lot of hostility could have been avoided."

With that, Alfonzo stood from his seat while dispelling the restraints around Juvia's limbs. Then, he turned towards the door.

"Oh, and just a tip for you." Alfonzo said without turning around. "If you tried approaching Gray like a regular person. Meaning, without stalking him or talking about all that soul mate shit, he would probably be much more receptive to your advances."

Hearing that, Juvia raised her head with a surprised expression on her face.

"As for Ur and Tear, I'm not saying you should give up..." Alfonzo said. "Well, I actually do wish you'd give up on Tear... But anyway, neither of them really seems to be into girls the way you want them to be. So, you're probably barking up the wrong trees in their cases."

Knowing that Alfonzo was right, Juvia lowered her head again. Though, she really was not willing to give up on Ur and Ultear.

"Anyway, I'm going to bed." Alfonzo said as he started moving towards the door. "I gotta get up early to work on those training chambers. So, I'll see you in the morning. Good night."

Then, without waiting for a reply, Alfonzo left the room before returning to his own room. Meanwhile, Juvia spent more time thinking about the way she had been acting since she joined Fairy Tail.

The next morning, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia had breakfast together in the Viper Inn's dining room. While Alfonzo and Ultear looked well rested, Juvia, on the other hand, looked as if she did not sleep very well last night.

"Juvia, are you okay?" Ultear asked in a concerned tone.

Hearing the concern in Ultear's tone, Juvia could not help but brighten up a little bit. However, before she started with her usual antics and calling Ultear her soul mate, she remembered what Alfonzo told her the previous night.

"Yes, Juvia is fine." Juvia replied while lowering her head. "Juvia didn't sleep well last night, that's all."

Hearing that, Ultear breathed a sigh of relief. Then, she looked at Alfonzo with a confused gaze while wondering what he could have said to her last night for Juvia's behavior to change so much, in such a short time.

"Anyway." Alfonzo said, deciding to keep his conversation with Juvia, from the night before, to himself. "We should really start thinking about buying groceries. Although the meals at the hotel aren't bad, they aren't exactly up to my standards, either."

Hearing that, both Ultear and Juvia's eyes lit up. They, too, were getting tired of the meals at the hotel, having been spoiled by Alfonzo's cooking at the guild.

On a side note, Juvia was one of the few Fairy Tail wizards who did not cause property damage on her quests. Something she more than likely brought along with her from her time in Phantom Lord. So, she often exchanged her guild points for Alfonzo's cooking, despite the fact that she could not stand him previously. However, she could not deny the fact that his cooking was delicious.

Then, with thoughts of having Alfonzo's cooking again, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia finished their breakfasts before leaving the inn and heading to the Lamia Scale guild hall in the S 600.

Meanwhile, at the Lamia Scale guild hall, Lyon, Ur's first disciple, finally returned from his quest with the rest of his team, Sherry, Yuka, and Toby.

"It's been more than a week since we left." Yuka, or Yuka Suzuki, a short young man with extremely bushy, rectangular eyebrows, black eyes, and vibrant blue hair styled into a braid wearing mostly green eastern style clothing, said as the quartet entered the guild hall.

"Yeah, I miss everyone." Toby, or Toby Horhorta, a tall lean, muscular young man with straight, shoulder length brown hair, tan skin, large, round black eyes, and features such as the lower half of his face and the ears on the top of his head resembling that of a dog's who wore only a pair of blue pants with frayed hems, replied with a smile. "*Sniff* I'm glad to be home."

"We were only gone for a week, Toby." Lyon said while smiling wryly. "There's no need to cry."

"*Sniff* I'm not crying..." Toby replied while wiping the tears from his face.

"It's okay to cry, Toby." Sherry said while extending her right arm in a theatrical manner and clenching her left fist against her chest. "Especially if it's for {love}."

Naturally, the quartet's usual antics drew the attention of all the wizards present as they entered the guild.

"Welcome back, Lyon, Sherry, Yuka, and Toby." Jura, who was waiting for the Fairy Tail wizards' arrival, said after Lyon's team entered the guild hall. "How was the quest? I assume you completed it."

"Yeah, everything went well, Jura." Lyon said as he led the rest of his team through the guild hall. "We finished it without an issue."

"That's good to hear." Jura replied with a smile. "Well done."

"Thanks." Lyon replied as he looked around the guild hall. Naturally, he noticed that a few of the tables were repositioned. "I guess the construction started while we were gone, huh?"

"I'm actually looking forward to it." Yuka replied. "We'll be able to get more out of our training when it's finished."

"Does that mean Alfonzo is here?" Sherry asked in a curious tone. "*Sigh* Seeing his {love} for his wife, Elicia, was so beautiful."

"No, he's not here right now. But he should be here soon." Jura replied. Then, he made eye contact with Lyon. "And Master Ur's daughter, Ultear came with him."

Hearing that, Lyon began to shudder. During his trip to Magnolia to attend Alfonzo and Elicia's wedding along with Ooba and Jura, he was forced to spar with Ur, to assess his progress. And although Ur said his progress was possible, she told him, just before the wizards from Lamia Scale left Magnolia, that Ultear would be there to test his progress again when Alfonzo arrived to install the training chambers.

"Would you look at the time, we really need to go report to Ooba Babasama on our quest." Lyon said quickly as he turned away from Jura and started walking towards the stairs. "Hopefully this won't take too long, I wouldn't wanna miss Ultear's visit."

"Oh, don't worry, I'll be here all day, Lyon." Ultear's voice sounded from the guild hall's entrance. "So, you can take your time."

Upon hearing Ultear's voice, Lyon froze. Then, after a few seconds, he slowly turned towards Ultear. However, when he caught sight of Juvia, who was standing on Ultear's right, he froze once again. This time, with a completely enamored expression on his face.

"Oh, he looks like he just saw his soul mate." Alfonzo said with a grin. Then, he glanced at Juvia. "And it looks like he's looking at you, Juvia."

In response, Juvia groaned, feeling uncomfortable with the way Lyon was staring at her. Then, she realized exactly how she had been looking at Ur, Gray, and Ultear, before vowing to be better going forward.

Chapter 452: Lyon's Determination

With his sights locked on Juvia, Lyon slowly made his way towards the guild hall's entrance. Meanwhile, feeling rather uncomfortable thanks to Lyon's stare, Juvia hid behind Ultear, who could only smile wryly at what was happening.

'I guess she knows how Mom, Gray, and I feel when she's stalking us, huh?' Ultear wondered as she looked over her shoulder at Juvia. 'At least Lyon is watching her up front. I mean, having to use [Magic Power Detection] to find the source of the creepy stare makes it even creepier.'

Despite her thoughts on the matter, Ultear decided to help Juvia out. So, she turned her attention back to Lyon.

"So, you're not gonna return my greeting, huh, Lyon?" Ultear asked as her wry smile vanished from her face.

"Huh?" Lyon exclaimed in surprise, pulled out of his daze by the sound of Ultear's voice. "OH, Ultear, it's nice to see you again... Haha... How long have you been there?"

Feeling the change in atmosphere around Ultear, Lyon immediately realized that was the wrong thing to ask.

"You should go and give your quest report to Master Ooba, Lyon." Ultear said with a sweet smile on her face, a smile that made Lyon shudder in terror. "When you get back, I'm gonna carry out that assessment Mom talked about."

Gulp!

Hearing Ultear's declaration, Lyon swallowed his saliva involuntarily.

"Oh, okay..." Lyon said in an apprehensive tone. "I guess I'll see you later, then."

With that, Lyon quickly spun on his heels and began walking towards the stairs at a brisk pace. Meanwhile, Juvia, after seeing Lyon turn away, breathed a sigh of relief. However, it would appear that she relaxed too soon.

"Oh, Ultear, when I get back, you should introduce me to the others who came with you." Lyon said as he stopped and looked back over his shoulder.

Although he asked to be introduced to the others, Lyon's eyes were set firmly on Juvia, barely registering Alfonzo's presence at all. Because if he had, he would have known that he met Alfonzo back in Magnolia when he attended the wedding.

"Sure, we can do that after I assess your progress." Ultear said, waving off Lyon's request. "Just get going."

Nodding in response, Lyon hurried up the stairs. A moment later, Sherry, Yuka, and Toby also followed him upstairs to give the report on their quest.

"I was ignored from the beginning to the end of that whole episode." Alfonzo said as he watched Team Lyon climb the stairs.

"Well, I'm glad he paid more attention to a pretty girl than to a sexy man with a god-like physique." Ultear replied with a smile.

At first, when Ultear called her pretty, Juvia smiled brightly. However, when she heaped even more praise onto Alfonzo, Juvia could not help but start to pout.

Ignoring Juvia's pout, Ultear took Alfonzo by the hand. Then, she pulled him into the guild hall. Eventually, she reached the table where Jura was sitting.

"Sorry, Jura." Ultear said with an apologetic smile. "We'll have to postpone our match for another day. Since Lyon came back, I have to test him like mom asked me to."

"I understand." Jura replied in a peaceful tone while nodding his head. "Unfortunately, it will be at least a week before we can have that spar. I have to return to Era, to discuss something of great importance, tomorrow."

As Jura spoke, he looked towards Alfonzo.

'For some reason, the way he's looking at me is giving me a bad feeling.' Alfonzo thought to himself while he made eye contact with Jura. 'But he's such a nice guy. So, I doubt he's plotting against me. Maybe he's just looking forward to our next spar? But if that were the case, I wouldn't be having this bad feeling. Damn it, I don't know what's going on.'

Unbeknownst to Alfonzo, the reason Jura was staring at him the way he was had something to do with the letter Ur received a few days ago. More specifically, the fact that Alfonzo's name was on the list of candidates for the open spot among the Ten Wizard Saints.

And because Jura had fought with Alfonzo not long ago, he was leaning towards voting for him when the meeting took place in Era. Though, it would be quite some time before Alfonzo ever found out about this.

With that, Ultear and Jura continued to chat. Meanwhile, Juvia was content to just stay near Ultear. At the same time, Alfonzo excused himself and made his way down to the guild hall's basement to continue his work.

About half an hour later, Lyon, Sherry, Yuka, and Toby made their way down the stairs. And when they did, Lyon's eyes zeroed in on Juvia once again. Then, as soon as his feet touched the floor, Lyon sped up his steps as he made a B line towards the table where Ultear, Juvia, and Jura sat, leaving the rest of his team behind.

"What's up with Lyon?" Toby asked while scratching the side of his head. "Aren't we gonna celebrate our successful quest?"

"It looks like Lyon has a thing for that blue-haired girl." Yuka replied while watching his leader walk across the guild hall.

"That's right." Sherry said, taking her usual pose. "I think he's in {love}."

Hearing that, Toby looked between Sherry and Yuka with confusion on his face. A moment later, he realized that the third of the visitors was not present.

"Hey, where is that other guy?" Toby asked while scanning the guild hall.

"He probably went to work on the new training chambers." Yuka said as he began approaching the table where Lyon was. "That was Alfonzo Marcus, the one Ooba Babasama hired to build them, after all."

"Oooooon" Toby exclaimed in excitement. A moment later, Toby's confused expression returned as he followed behind Yuka. "But what does that mean? Don't we already have a place to train?"

"*Sigh* You'll see the difference when they're done." Yuka replied, not wanting to waste the energy it would take to get Toby, who was not the smartest member of Lamia Scale, to understand.

Meanwhile, Lyon finally arrived in front of the table where Ultear, Juvia, and Jura were seated. Then, while ignoring Ultear and Jura, he reached for Juvia's hand.

"Hello, it's nice to meet you." Lyon said with what he thought was a charming smile. "My name is Lyon Vastia, an A-Class wizard of Lamia Scale. May I ask your name, beautiful lady?"

Recoiling at the fervor with which Lyon introduced himself, Juvia quickly pulled her hand away before Lyon could grab it.

"Juvia's name is Juvia." Juvia said while scooting away from Lyon. "And Juvia already has a soul mate. Three, in fact. So, Juvia is not interested in getting to know you."

Upon hearing Juvia's blunt refusal to talk to him, Lyon staggered back, feeling as if he had taken physical damage. However, the flames of determination burned brightly in his eyes.

"Ooh..." Yuka muttered as he heard Juvia's reply to Lyon's introduction. "That's gotta hurt."

"Yes, it must." Sherry added. "To have your {love} denied so bluntly... It's so sad."

"Oooooon!" Toby exclaimed angrily. "Don't be mean to Lyon!"

However, Toby's outburst was ignored.

Eventually, Lyon got himself back together and took a step towards Juvia once again.

"Please, at least give me a chance." Lyon said in a pleading tone. "I can show you that I'm better for you than any of the three you mentioned. And if they aren't willing to give you up, I will challenge them for your hand."

Hearing that, Juvia recoiled even further. Then, she glanced at Ultear, who was smiling at her with a sense of schadenfreude.

'Is this what Ultear feels like when Juvia asked her to leave Alfonzo?' Juvia asked herself while inching away from Lyon. 'Now, Juvia feels bad for the way she acted. Still, Juvia doesn't wanna give up on Ultear. But now Juvia can see why Ultear doesn't like it.'

'No, Juvia is fine with things the way they are.' Juvia replied.

"Besides, it sounds like you wanna challenge me, Lyon." Ultear said, finally deciding she had had enough of being ignored. "It sounds like you wanna challenge Mom and Gray, too."

"Huh?" Lyon exclaimed in confusion. "What do you mean, Ultear? When did I say I wanted to challenge you or Ur?"

Noticing that Lyon did not seem to mind challenging Gray, Ultear grinned. Seeing the two of them fight might be entertaining. Putting that thought to the back of her head, Ultear decided to answer Lyon's question.

"Do you remember when we took on the Oración Seis?" Ultear asked. "And we told you that someone called Mom, Gray, and I their soul mates?"

"Yeah, I got beat up pretty bad for making it seem like no one would ever fall in love with the three of you." Lyon replied as he winced at the memory of the beating he took. Then, his eyes opened wide in realization. "Don't tell me... It was her?"

As he asked his question, Lyon pointed a trembling finger at Juvia. Meanwhile, his expression was screaming: "Please tell me I'm wrong about this!"

"Exactly." Ultear replied with a nod, crushing Lyon's hopes in the process. "And although I don't agree with being her soul mate, challenging the ones she's deluded herself into believing are meant for her means that you've challenged not only me, but Mom and Gray, as well."

Hearing that, Lyon took a step back in fear. However, he quickly regained his determined expression.

"Even if I have to fight you and Master Ur, I won't back down." Lyon said resolutely. "I'll prove that I am better for Juvia than any of you."

"*Sigh* His {love} is so beautiful." Sherry said with stars in her eyes. "Now I wish I could see Ren. I really miss him right now."

"Although I agree that you're probably better for Juvia than Mom and I, I can't ignore the fact that you challenged me." Ultear said with a battle hungry grin.

"There's no way he's better for Juvia than you and Ur!" Juvia shouted in protest. Though, she was completely ignored.

"So, why don't we head out to the training grounds." Ultear continued. "Then, you can show me what makes you so great for Juvia."

Nodding in return, Lyon turned away from the table and made his way towards the training grounds. Meanwhile, Juvia looked at Ultear as if she had been betrayed.

"Why are you looking at me like that, Juvia?" Ultear asked as she stood from her seat. "I've been telling you for years that I'm not interested in you like that, right?"

"But you are Juvia's soul mate..." Juvia muttered.

"*Sigh* Alfonzo was right." Ultear said as she started following after Lyon. "We really do need to talk."

Hearing that, Juvia trembled as tears began pooling in her eyes. Still, she stood up as well, deciding to follow Ultear and watch the fight between Lyon and Ultear.

Ultear, on the other hand, was thinking something totally different.

'Good, with Lyon so fired up, I'll be able to see exactly what he's capable of.' Ultear said with a smile that no one noticed. 'Then, I'll be able to tell Mom exactly how much he's improved.'

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

At the same time, Gildarts had just arrived in Ur's office after completing a 10 Years Quest. And when he did, he noticed that Ur was in a pretty good mood. And when he saw her smile, he could not help but remember the fact that Ur had told him she was interested in him, should he be able to stop his womanizing ways.

Little did Ur know at the time, however, was the fact that Gildarts had not been up to his normal womanizing ways ever since he found out about Cana being his daughter. And the reason for that was simple, he did not want to end up with any more children that he did not know about.

Unfortunately, he had laid with too many women over the years to find out if there were any more unknown children of his running around Ishgar.

"Oh, welcome back, Gildarts." Ur said with a smile. "How as the quest? I would assume you completed it."

"Yeah, I finished it without a problem." Gildarts replied with a shrug.

Nodding in response, Ur wore an expression that said: "As expected." A moment later, however, her expression changed into a slight frown.

"And how much property damage did you cause?" Ur asked while glaring pointedly.

"None." Gildarts replied while puffing out his chest proudly.

Naturally, this caused Ultear to look at him skeptically.

"I highly doubt that." Ur replied.

"It's true, I promise." Gildarts replied while smiling wryly. "I might have collapsed an entire mountain, though. But that didn't belong to anyone, so..."

"*Sigh* I knew it..." Ur replied while rubbing her temples. "And where did that quest take place again?"

"Seven." Gildarts replied. "It was a request to find a certain magical ore that could only be found in the interior of a certain mountain. Unfortunately, those scholar types did not have the fire power to get past all the magic beasts inhabiting the mountain."

"*Sigh* I guess I should look out for a compensation request from Seven's government, then." Ur replied in a tired tone.

"Huh? What do you mean?" Gildarts asked in a confused tone. "That mountain wasn't anyone's property."

"*Sigh* For someone who's been a wizard for so long, it amazes me how little you know about the world." Ur said while shaking her head.

Ur then went on to explain that even if a person or a group did not own a piece of land, it falls under the ownership of the country.

In response, Gildarts wore an aghast expression.

"And to think, I've been taking quests outside of towns for the last year to avoid property damage." Gildarts muttered as he lowered his head in contemplation. "Now I understand why I haven't been getting any of those guild points."

Shaking off that thought, Gildarts raised his head and made eye contact with Ur. On top of that, he wore a serious expression on his face.

"Anyway, now that I'm done giving my report, there's something I need to say to you, Ur." Gildarts said in a solemn tone.

Chapter 453: Gildarts' Confession

"Anyway, now that I'm done giving my report, there's something I need to say to you, Ur." Gildarts said in a solemn tone.

Not expecting Gildarts to change the subject so abruptly, Ur wore a confused expression on her face. Even so, she was curious to know what Gildarts had to say.

"After Bianca and Orlando's kids got married, you told me that if I could stop all my womanizing, you would give me a chance, right?" Gildarts asked in the same tone.

"That's right." Ur replied with a nod.

"Well, to be honest, I haven't even touched a woman ever since I found out that Cana was my little girl." Gildarts said, a small smile making it onto his face at the thought of his daughter.

Hearing that, Ur was completely taken aback. Like everyone else in the guild, she thought that Gildarts was an irredeemable man-whore who didn't know how to keep it in his pants. A moment later, after letting Gildarts words sink in, Ur looked at him skeptically.

"*Sigh* I know it's hard to believe." Gildarts said while wearing a wry smile after seeing Ur's expression. "Hell, knowing my old behavior, I wouldn't believe me either if I were you. But I promise you, it's true."

"And what was it that caused you to change?" Ur asked with an eyebrow raised.

"It's because of Cana." Gildarts said. "Or rather, it's because of how Cana was when I found out she was my daughter. She was afraid... Afraid that I wouldn't accept her."

Reaching that point, Gildarts inhaled a deep breath. Then, after holding it for a few seconds, he exhaled slowly before making eye contact with Ur once again.

"And I didn't want to find any more children in the same situation later on." Gildarts continued. "I mean, I'm not even sure if Cana is the only one. But if I were to find out there were more, I would do all I could to take care of them."

Maintaining eye contact for a little while longer, Ur eventually sighed as she lowered her head. Then, she raised her head and smiled brightly at Gildarts.

Naturally, Gildarts was thoroughly confused by Ur's smile. However, before he could question her about it, Ur began to speak.

"It's good to see that becoming a father made you grow up." Ur said while still smiling. "It's just a shame that you took so long to do so."

In response, Gildarts lowered his head while smiling bashfully and scratching the back of his head.

"And I'm guessing you told me all of that because you have an answer for me, right?" Ur asked, her expression turning serious as she spoke.

"*Sigh* That's right." Gildarts replied as his expression also turned serious. "Honestly, I'm scared to accept your offer."

Once again, Ur was taken aback at the words that left Gildarts' mouth. However, Gildarts did not give her a chance to say anything.

"I'm sure you know I was married to Cana's mother, right?" Gildarts asked, receiving a nod in return. "And I was a terrible husband. I mean, I couldn't even make time for her. And because of that, she divorced me. She didn't even tell me about Cana. And I'm terrified that I would end up treating you the same way."

Hearing that, Ur opened her eyes wide in surprise.

"Now, I know you're not asking me to marry you." Gildarts said with his head lowered. "But I'm afraid that I wouldn't give you the time and attention you deserve, if we were to get together. So, I hesitated. *Sigh* Ur, over the years, I've come to really like you, despite the number of times you've beaten me up or slapped me upside the head. And because of that, I'm afraid to hurt you... Like I hurt Cornelia and Cana in the past."

With Gildarts pouring out his heart, Ur did not know what to say at first. As a result, Ur's office fell into a deafening silence. However, after getting her thoughts together, Ur finally replied to Gildarts.

"I know you won't be around as much as most men would." Ur said in a solemn tone. "But as long as you come back and don't forget about me, I think I could manage. I won't pretend like I wouldn't get lonely from time to time. But I doubt you could be as bad as my ex-husband, who abandoned me during pregnancy."

"Of course, I wouldn't!" Gildarts shouted as he quickly raised his head.

Seeing the expression on Gildarts' face, Ur smiled once again.

"Then, we shouldn't have anything to worry about." Ur said. "I know what kind of wizard you are. Always looking to push yourself on quests. Needing months to years to complete some particularly difficult ones. And I had accepted that you wouldn't always be here when I decided I would give you a chance."

"Yeah, but you deserve better." Gildarts said.

"I think that's up to me to decide, Gildarts." Ur said in a soothing tone. "And I'm prepared to deal with your absences. Like I said, as long as you come back. And as long as you don't pick up random women while you're out on quests. If you can promise me those two things, I can deal with just about anything else."

Taking a few seconds to process Ur's words, Gildarts eventually raised his head with a solemn expression on his face.

"*Sigh* If you're sure about this..." Gildarts said in a solemn tone. Then, his expression morphed into a smile. "Then, I'm willing to do all I can to make you happy. I'll even take more time between quests to spend as much time with you as I possibly can. As for cheating, that will never happen. And I will always come back to you. This is my home, after all."

Hearing that, Ur's smile widened. A moment later, she stood from behind her desk. Then, she walked around the desk before stopping next to Gildarts.

Meanwhile, Gildarts watched Ur's every move.

"As long as you keep those promises, we shouldn't have any problems." Ur said while continuing to smile brightly. Then, she leaned down and kissed Gildarts on the cheek. "Just don't let me down, okay?"

In response, Gildarts smiled just as brightly as Ur. Then, he stood up and wrapped his arms around her.

Smack!

"Slow down." Ur said as she slapped Gildarts' hands that immediately slid down her back towards her butt. "Just because I accepted you as my man doesn't mean that I'm ready to move that fast."

Pulling his hands back, Gildarts could not help but smile wryly.

"Sorry about that, my instincts took over." Gildarts said while scratching his head. "Back in the day, when the atmosphere was this good, that's when I would usually make my move."

"Oh, I'm well aware." Ur said while rolling her eyes. "You tried the same thing back when we first met, too."

"Ha ha ha..." Gildarts laughed awkwardly while looking away. Then, he cleared his throat before looking into Ur's eyes. "So, how would you like to have dinner together sometime? I know a pretty good place in Crocus. They have all kinds of really good food."

Smiling at Gildarts attempt to salvage the situation, Ur shook her head lightly, making Gildarts think that she was rejecting his invitation.

"That depends." Ur said. "After being a part of this guild for almost ten years, I have pretty high standards. If it's not at least eighty percent as good as Alfonzo's cooking, you'll have to try again."

Breathing a sigh of relief, Gildarts smiled.

"Don't worry, I would never take my lady to somewhere sub par." Gildarts replied. "I actually came across this place last year while I was on my way back from a quest. And trust me when I say, it's almost as good as Alfonzo's cooking."

Hearing that, Ur raised an eyebrow.

"And what's this place called?" Ur asked in a curious tone.

"Oh, it's called Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge." Gildarts said with a smile.

'That's what I thought.' Ur thought to herself without changing her expression. 'Actually, now that I think about it, I heard about Gildarts going there from Alfonzo, I think. Though, he didn't have any proof that it was Gildarts. He did show me a report of someone eating there, then, when the person left, the entrance was destroyed, and the culprit ran away without looking back.'

"Then again, I'm not sure if they'll welcome me back." Gildarts said while smiling sheepishly. "After having a meal there, I kinda destroyed the entrance. Then, before they could ask for compensation, I ran away. But since they never sent me a bill, it should be fine."

'*Sigh* And there's the proof.' Ur muttered internally. 'Unfortunately, Gildarts is definitely gonna get a bill in the next few days. Especially after I send this information to Alfonzo. He's probably even gonna tack on interest, too. The worst thing is that I can't even keep this information from him. Since,

according to the contract I signed when I bought those shares for the guild and myself, I have to report anything detrimental to business operations as soon as I hear about them. Oh well, sucks to be Gildarts, I guess.

"Sure, I'd love to have dinner with you." Ur said while smiling sweetly. "And going somewhere with food almost as good as Alfonzo's sounds like a great first date."

'And it would probably be for the best that I keep it a secret that Alfonzo is the owner of Sixth Sense Holdings.' Ur thought to herself as she watched Gildarts' face light up in happiness. 'Otherwise, he'll definitely want a piece of the pie. Or at the very least, want to get free stuff from all the Sixth Sense shops.'

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Margaret.

While Gildarts and Ur were discussing the details of their date, Ultear was beating Lyon one-sidedly. Despite that, it was clear to Ultear that Lyon had not been slacking in his training ever since he returned from Magnolia.

Still, the training Lyon had done was in no way comparable to the training routines the current generation of Fairy Tail wizards had been through, even when compared to the time before the training chambers. And when you add the training chambers into the equation, Lyon could not hold a candle to Ultear's strength and skill.

"Well, I guess that's enough." Ultear said as she looked down at Lyon, who was covered in bruises and lying spread eagle in the middle of the training ground. "But I guess you passed the assessment. So, you should be happy."

Hearing that, Lyon's eyes opened wide. In his bid to show Juvia how good he was for her; he had completely forgotten about the assessment Ultear mentioned when they first met. Then, despite the fact that he was already covered in sweat, Lyon could feel cold sweat forming on his back and forehead at the thought of what would have happened had he failed the assessment.

'Something tells me that Ur would have dropped everything and made a trip out here to oversee my training until I was up to her standards.' Lyon thought to himself in fear. 'No, that's impossible. Ur is the master of Fairy Tail, now. There's no way she could do something like that. Still, why do I feel like that's exactly what she would have done.'

Meanwhile, Ultear watched Lyon begin to shudder, having a good idea what he was thinking while she thought to herself as well.

'I guess Mira will be happy about this.' Ultear thought to herself while smiling wryly on the inside. 'Because I have no doubt that when I reported back to Mom, if Lyon had failed, she would have come out here to oversee his training. And she would have left Mira in charge of the guild while she was away, just like Master Makarov used to.'

"Hmph! Even though he is Ur's disciple, too." Juvia said with a snort, pulling Lyon and Ultear out of their thoughts. "Why is he so weak?"

"Well, what did you expect?" Ultear asked while wearing a derisive smile on her face. "He abandoned Mom for a stupid reason almost ten years ago. Despite that, she still sees him as a disciple. *Sigh* I don't even know why she still puts up with this ingrate."

Hearing that, Lyon's eyes widened in shock. Meanwhile, Juvia glared at Lyon as if he were trash. Ultear on the other hand, smiled deviously. She had been holding onto the resentment she felt when Lyon

acted as if he had been betrayed when he found out that Ur was not the world's strongest wizard. And now that she finally got to take revenge, she could put it behind her.

"Come on, Ultear, I was just a kid back then!" Lyon shouted while quickly sitting up. "I didn't understand the way the world worked back then."

"Yeah, and now that you do, you never even apologized to Mom." Ultear replied with narrowed eyes. "She took care of you for over a year, feeding you, housing you, and teaching you magic. And how did you repay her? You left her as soon as you found out she wasn't the strongest. Hmph! As far as I'm concerned, you're still a kid."

In response, Lyon could only lower his head in shame. Everything Ultear said was right, after all. And despite meeting Ur several times since they separated, he never apologized to her for the way he acted back then.

"*Sigh* You're right, Ultear." Lyon said in a downcast tone. "I really do need to apologize to Master for the way I acted."

"That's right. You really do." Ultear said before turning away from Lyon. "Anyway, let's go back inside, Juvia. We still need to talk."

"Okay..." Juvia replied, her tone sounding rather downcast, as well.

With that, Ultear and Juvia returned to the Lamia Scale guild hall while Lyon continued to sit on the training field in contemplation. Meanwhile, the rest of Team Lyon looked at their leader with concern, not knowing the best way to cheer him up.

Chapter 454: Maids? The Magic Council?

A month has passed since Gildarts and Ur confirmed their relationship. And the wizards of Fairy Tail were thoroughly flabbergasted when the news came out. At the same time, however, they all saw it as a somewhat expected outcome.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia were kept in the dark about it. And the reason for that was simple. No one knew how Juvia, who saw Ur as one of her soul mates, would react to the news. Luckily, spending time with Alfonzo and Ultear mellowed her out quite a bit.

Even though Juvia still saw Ur, Gray, and Ultear as her soul mates, she was no longer so insistent on having them all to herself. Instead, she had adopted the thought: "As long as they are happy, I can be happy, too." Or, at least, that's what she told herself, anyway.

"Damn, it feels like the last month just flew by." Alfonzo said while levitating the materials needed for the fourth of the six training chambers he was installing into place. "And Jura still isn't back yet."

["Yeah, didn't he say he would be gone for only a week? "] Bedlam asked, curiosity lacing his tone.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied. "And Ultear is getting impatient."

["Hahaha! And that's horrible news for Lyon. "] Riot said while laughing uproariously.

As Riot said, because Ultear has been getting impatient about her spar with Jura, Lyon has been her outlet. Ever since Jura left, Ultear has taken it upon herself to help Lyon, Sherry, Yuka, and Toby train. And she put most of her attention on Lyon.

"Yeah, I almost feel bad for the guy." Alfonzo said with a chuckle. "But when I think about the training Gildarts used to put me through when I was younger, I can't help but think he's getting off easy."

["He might wanna fight you if you ever told him that."] Bedlam said with a smile.

["You should tell him."] riot added while smiling deviously. ["Since we've been away from the guild, we haven't got the chance to beat any one up. And my hands are itchy."]

In response, Alfonzo only shook his head. A moment later, he turned his head towards the entrance of his work space.

At the end of his line of sight, Ultear had just finished descending the stairs from the guild hall's first floor.

"Hey, Tear, what's up?" Alfonzo asked as he got the walls of the training chamber in place.

"A letter from Magnolia came for you." Ultear replied with a smile.

"A letter, huh?" Alfonzo said as he used his magic to the floor in place. "I wonder what's going on. I hope it's nothing serious."

"Who knows." Ultear replied. "There's no sender on the envelope. So, it could be from anyone."

"a hundred thousand Jewels says it's from Lici." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "I don't know what makes me think that. But my instincts are telling me that it's from her."

'Letters are so outdated.' Alfonzo thought to himself as Ultear approached with the letter in hand. 'Before I make the trip to Blue Pegasus, I'm gonna read up on [Archive Magic]. Then, I'm definitely gonna pitch the idea of the internet to Hibiki. And when we get that ironed out, I'm gonna make phones that work on the basis of internet calling.'

As those thoughts ran through Alfonzo's head, Ultear made her way to Alfonzo's side. Then, she handed the envelope to him with a pout on her face.

"What's wrong, Tear?" Alfonzo asked while accepting the letter.

At the same time, Alfonzo began combing his fingers through Ultear's hair.

"I wanna have my spar with Jura." Ultear muttered as she wrapped her arms around Alfonzo. "Do you think he's avoiding me?"

"You know, if it wasn't because you wanted to fight him, I might be getting jealous right about now." Alfonzo said while wearing a smile. "I mean, you spend more time thinking about him than you spend thinking about me lately. But since you want to fight him so bad, I kinda feel sorry for the guy."

"Hahaha! Whatever!" Ultear replied while laughing hardily. Then, she playfully swatted Alfonzo on the shoulder as she continued. "You know you don't have to worry about that."

Then, Ultear stood on the tips of her toes as she whispered into Alfonzo's ear.

"But if you're unsure, I don't mind showing you just how much I love you, after we get back to our room, tonight." Ultear said in a seductive tone. "I'll even allow you to pleasure me however you like."

Rolling his eyes, Alfonzo raised his hand to swat Ultear on the butt. However, just before he could, he felt Juvia's presence approaching. Meanwhile, Ultear pouted as she did not feel the swat on her butt that she was expecting.

"I'd be happy to accept your offer tonight." Alfonzo said as he placed a kiss on Ultear's forehead. "But I really don't wanna have to clean up after Juvia's nosebleed if she were to see me smack your ass."

"*sigh* Fine..." Ultear replied as she looked back at the stairs. And as she did, she could hear the sound of approaching footsteps. "*Sigh* I think I've been too relaxed. I haven't even had my [magic Power Detection] spread out in the Lamia Scale guild hall. I mean, it's not like we're in our own guild hall, I should be more cautious."

"Don't worry about it, Tear." Alfonzo said, planting another kiss on Ultear's forehead after he spoke. "It's highly unlikely that we'd be in any danger while we're in the guild hall of an ally. Besides, I've had my [MPD] active since the moment we left Magnolia. So, things are alright."

As Alfonzo finished speaking, his left eyebrow twitched, something that Ultear did not notice. And the reason for that was the fact that he picked up Lahar and Doranbolt, along with a contingent of Rune Knights, entering the town on an air ship. And from what he could tell, the airship was headed to the Lamia Scale guild hall.

'I just raised a fucking flag.' Alfonzo muttered internally. 'And it got picked up really fucking fast.'

["Yup, sure did."] Bedlam replied in a tone filled with Schadenfreude.

["Well, look on the bright side."] Riot said. ["At least you can fuck with Doranbolt, right?"]

'Actually, now that I think about it, why the hell is that guy still working for the Magic Council?'

"*Sigh* I guess you're right." Ultear replied, stopping Alfonzo's internal conversation, while letting herself sink into Alfonzo's embrace even further. "Anyway, you should open that letter. It might be important."

"Yeah, you're right." Alfonzo replied as he unwrapped his arm from around Ultear.

Then, he opened the envelope before pulling the folded letter out.

At the same time, Juvia finally arrived in Alfonzo's workspace. And when she saw Ultear snuggling up to Alfonzo, her eyebrow twitched for a moment. But other than that, she had no reaction to the scene in front of her.

'Damn, I'm really curious to know what Ultear said to her to set her straight like that.' Alfonzo thought to himself after seeing Juvia's small reaction. 'But at the same time, I know Ultear well enough to know that it wasn't anything tame. In fact, I'd bet there were a few psychological threats involved. Still, I wish I could have been a fly on the wall.'

In fact, Ultear did not say much to Juvia when they had their talk a month ago. The only thing she told her was that she was on the verge of hating her because of the stalking and the way she treated Alfonzo. And that was more than enough to make her fall in line.

"Hmm... Let's see..." Alfonzo said as he began reading the letter. "Just like I thought, it's from Lici."

"What does it say?" Ultear asked curiously.

Even Juvia's ears perked up in curiosity.

"It looks like Ed and Al came by to hear my theory on how to fix their problems." Alfonzo replied as he glanced at Juvia from the corner of his eye.

Both Ultear and Juvia noticed Alfonzo's glance. And they had completely different reactions. While Ultear knew that Alphonse did not have a human body in the suit of armor he wore, Juvia had no interest in anyone other than Ur, Gray, and Ultear back then. Meaning, she had no idea what Alfonzo was talking about. So, while Ultear nodded her head in understanding, Juvia frowned.

"Oh, and it looks like Lici, and the other girls, want to hire a group of maids to take care of the house." Alfonzo continued. "Well, I guess I saw that coming. While I can cook, and Lici and I have no issue with cleaning, the rest of you are..."

"Yeah, you don't have to say it." Ultear interrupted. "We're not the best when it comes to housekeeping."

"That's putting it mildly." Alfonzo replied while smiling wryly. "At least Mira's getting better in the kitchen, though."

"Yeah, fine... We're terrible at it." Ultear said. "It wasn't so bad when the house was smaller. But now that the house is so much bigger, we tend to make things worse."

Alfonzo only smiled in response while combing his fingers through Ultear's hair.

"Still, how many maids did Lici want to hire?" Ultear asked curiously.

"Not sure." Alfonzo replied. "But she's already got a candidate for the first one."

"Really? Who is it?" Ultear asked instinctively. Then, she shook her head before continuing. "Never mind, it's not like I know any maids."

"You've met this one before, though." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly.

"Really?" Ultear asked.

Then, Ultear fell into contemplation, trying to remember all the maids she had ever met while meeting with clients.

"I can guess what you're thinking, Tear." Alfonzo said, cutting off Ultear's train of thought. "But she's not a maid... Not by profession, anyway. I wouldn't be surprised if she worked as a maid while on quests before, though."

"Huh? That means she's a wizard then, right? Ultear asked. "I mean, she's either a wizard or a mercenary if she's taken quests, right?"

"Right. Well... half-right." Alfonzo replied. "She was a dark wizard."

"A dark wizard?" Ultear asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Yeah, do you remember that chick from Trinity Raven?? Alfonzo asked. "The one Lici saved when we raided the Tower of Heaven?"

Immediately, the light of recognition flashed past Ultear's eyes.

"Well, I don't know how she got out so fast, but that chick, Ikaruga, came to Magnolia as soon as she got out of prison." Alfonzo continued. "Then, she went to the guild hall to find Lici. And when she did, she asked to serve her, to carry out the vow she made after Lici saved her life."

"Now that you mention it, it's all coming back to me." Ultear replied. "But is it really okay to accept her?"

"It should be fine, I think." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "I mean, she's not strong enough to hurt anyone in our family. Well... she could probably give Lucy some problems. But I don't think Lucy would lose. So..."

"Yeah, we're all a lot stronger than we were back then." Ultear replied with a nod. "And with our [Soul Armaments] there's no chance she could beat us."

"Thaht's right." Alfonzo said with a nod. "And when Lucy unseals hers, she'll be leagues ahead of Ikaruga, too."

"Anyway, does that mean we're gonna get some maids?" Ultear asked with a hopeful glint in her eyes.
"It would give us more time to train if we didn't need to worry about the housekeeping."

"We'll talk about it when we get back to Magnolia." Alfonzo replied. "I'd still like to have a little talk with that Ikaruga chick before agreeing to anything."

Nodding in understanding, Ultear separated from Alfonzo.

"Anyway, I think I'll go back upstairs and help Sherria with her training." Ultear said. "I bet the same training methods Mom uses with Wendy should work."

"Probably." Alfonzo replied. "You may have to modify them a little, though. If you've ever seen Romeo train, you should probably incorporate some of his training regimen into it, too."

"Yeah, that makes sense." Ultear replied with a nod as she continued towards the stairs with Juvia following closely behind her.

Before the two ladies could reach the stairs, however, Sherria came running down. Unfortunately, she missed the last step. AS a result, she tripped and fell face first onto the ground.

"Damn, that looked like it hurt." Alfonzo said while wincing at the fall.

In response, Ultear shot a glare at Alfonzo. Though, the hint of amusement in her gaze could not be hidden.

"Sherria, are you okay?" Ultear asked in a concerned tone as she reached down to help Sherria off the floor.

"Ow... That hurt." Sherria muttered while rubbing her nose as Ultear helped her up. "Uh... Yeah, I'm okay. And I'm sorry for making you worry."

"As long as you're okay, it's alright." Ultear replied with a smile, gaining a smile from Sherria in return.

"So, why were you in such a hurry?" Juvia asked curiously while looking at Sherria enviously because of the care Ultear showed while helping her up.

"Oh, that's right!" Sherria exclaimed as she remembered why she ran down the stairs. Then, she looked at Alfonzo as she continued. "Alfonzo, the people from the Magic Council are here. And they said they wanna talk to you. So, Ooba Babasama sent me down here to get you."

Hearing that the Magic Council wanted to talk to Alfonzo, he was confused. Not only him, but Ultear and Juvia were also confused, as well.

"What did you do?" Ultear asked in an uncertain tone. "Did you finally cause a bunch of collateral damage on your last quest?"

"Of course not." Alfonzo replied while rolling his eyes.

"Then, why would the Magic Council need to see you?" Ultear asked, her confusion growing even further.

"No clue." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. Then, after folding the letter and putting it back in the envelope, he continued while putting the letter in his pocket. "But there's an easy way to find out."

With that, Alfonzo began walking towards the stairs.

"Let's go and ask them." Alfonzo said as he walked past Ultear, Juvia, and Sherria.

After briefly making eye contact, Ultear, Juvia, and Sherria quickly hurried to catch up with Alfonzo with curiosity shining in their eyes.

Chapter 455: What's Going on in the Background

Returning to the first floor of the Lamia Scale guild hall, Alfonzo, Ultear, Juvia, and Sherria were greeted with the sight of Ooba Babasama standing with Lahar and Doranbolt while the Rune Knights stood in formation behind them.

"Good, you're finally here." Ooba said as she noticed Alfonzo's entrance. "These gentlemen have something to say to you."

Nodding in acknowledgement, Alfonzo continued walking towards the men from the Magic Council. Meanwhile, Ooba took some distance from them while Ultear, Juvia, and Sherria joined her.

"So, what's up?" Alfonzo asked with a casual smile on his face. "The last time I saw this many people from the Magic Council in the same place was during that trial last year. So, do I have to break out my lawyer attire again?"

Hearing that, many of the Rune Knights could be heard gritting their teeth. On top of that, the sound of their armor creaking as they clenched their fists was audible, as well.

'So, I guess they haven't weeded out all the Rune Knights who were loyal to the old Council yet, huh?' Alfonzo thought to himself while his smile widened. 'But it looks like Lahar and Doranbolt don't seem to mind what I have to say.'

As Alfonzo noticed, Lahar's expression did not change in the slightest, which was not all that surprising, especially since Lahar always seemed to act fairly. Doranbolt, on the other hand, wore a guilty expression while avoiding eye contact.

'I guess he realized how bad he was getting played by that old fucker, Org.' Alfonzo said to himself as he examined Doranbolt's facial expression. 'Well, he deserves all that guild he's feeling. He actually took the mission to kidnap a fucking twelve-year-old. Hell, that's some Dark Guild type shit if I've ever seen it.'

"Alfonzo Marcus..." Lahar said, cutting through the awkward atmosphere Alfonzo's words brought with it. "... we have come to inform you that you have been summoned by the Magic Council."

Hearing that, Ultear, Juvia, and all the Lamia Scale wizards were surprised. Meanwhile, Alfonzo, who was also surprised, raised an eyebrow without showing his surprise in his expression.

"Your presence is requested on the fifteenth of March in Era." Lahar continued. "And once you have arrived in front of the Council, they will make an announcement pertaining to you."

"And I guess you won't be telling me what this announcement is about, will you?" Alfonzo asked, his eyebrow still raised as he did so.

"Unfortunately, we were not made privy to the details of the announcement." Lahar replied. "We were only sent to give you the message."

When he finished speaking, Lahar gestured to Doranbolt, who reached into his cloak and pulled out a sealed envelope.

'Another letter, huh?' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'I guess something like this would continue even if I created the internet and cell phones, wouldn't it. The Council needs a way to show its presence to the public, after all.'

Meanwhile, Doranbolt stepped forward until he was standing directly in front of Alfonzo. Then, when he handed Alfonzo the letter, he spoke in a voice quiet enough that only Alfonzo could hear him.

"I'm truly sorry about what I did during the S-Class Exam." Doranbolt said quietly. "As a member of Fairy Tail, I feel sick every time I think about it. Unfortunately, as to not raise suspicion, I can't return to the guild yet."

This time, Alfonzo was unable to hide the shock he was feeling. Before he could say anything, however, Doranbolt turned around and returned to the rest of his entourage.

'Well, damn.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he watched Doranbolt... Or rather, Mest returned to the rest of the Magic Council group. 'I guess Gramps gave him his memories back. I wonder how long he'll remain a member of the Custody Enforcement Unit. And when will the rest of the guild get their memories of Mest back?'

"With that, we have delivered the message." Lahar said in a professional tone. "And now, we bid you all adieu."

Then, without giving anyone present the chance to reply, Lahar turned around and began leaving the guild hall with Mest and the squad of Rune Knights, leaving all the wizards in the guild hall to watch them blankly.

Eventually, Ultear was the first to snap out of her daze. And when she did, she immediately made her way over to Alfonzo's side.

"I wonder what that was about?" Ultear said as she reached Alfonzo's side.

"Who knows." Alfonzo replied while shrugging his shoulders. "But I'm sure Gramps knows what's going on."

"Yeah, he probably does." Ultear said. "But something tells me he won't tell you anything about it if you ask."

"I got the same feeling." Alfonzo replied. "And something is telling me he's up to something. And I have a feeling Jura is in on it, too."

In response, Ultear nodded her head. Meanwhile, Juvia also made her way over to Alfonzo's side, curious to know what all that was about, as well.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Era.

At the same time, Makarov, who was sitting in his office in the Magic Council's headquarters was talking with Ur via a magic projection.

"Lahar and Mest should have relayed the message to him by now." Makarov said with a foxlike grin on his face. "I wonder what he'll do when he finds out why he was summoned to Era next month."

Hearing the name Mest, Ur's expression did not change in the slightest. Makarov made her aware of Mest/Doranbolt's true identity after she was named the guild master, after all.

"Something tells me things won't go as smoothly as you think, Old Man." Ur replied with a smile of her own. "I mean, you did want him to be the guild master over me, right?"

As she asked her question, Ur narrowed her eyes, clearly discontented about being the second choice for Fairy Tail's fourth guild master.

"*cough* *Cough* Anyway, things won't be as bad as you think, Ur." Makarov said in a blatant attempt to change the subject. "I mean, unless it's for important matters like this, he won't be called on all that often. A perfect example is Jura, who spends most of his time in Margaret. Everyone understands that active wizards don't have as much time to oversee the matters of the Magic Council, after all."

"Uh huh~~~." Ur hummed, though she continued to stare at Makarov with narrowed eyes. "We'll see."

Feeling the sharpness of Ur's gaze, Makarov felt cold sweat beginning to form on the back of his neck.

"Anyway, you can't tell Elicia or the other ladies living with him about this." Makarov said. "We wouldn't want to ruin the surprise now, would we?"

In response, Ur wore an offended expression.

"Just who do you think I am, Old Man?" Ur asked. "Like I'll miss the chance to see the look on the kid's face when he hears the news."

With that, Ur's narrow eyed glare turned into a foxlike smile, similar to the one Makarov wore not too long ago.

"Anyway, I'm gonna get back to work." Ur said. "A few days ago, we got some visitors. And they're potential new members."

"Oh, who are they?" Makarov asked curiously. "And what kind of magic do they use?"

"One is a former member of the Kingdom's Alchemist Knights." Ur replied with a smile. "And the other is his younger brother. A young man who is just as skilled as his older brother when it comes to [Alchemy]. So, I need to work with Maes to convince them to join after their issues are solved."

"Hmm..." Makarov hummed while stroking his mustache. "What was the young man's title in the Alchemist Knights? If I'm not mistaken, they all receive a code name when they join, right?"

"That's right." Ur replied with a nod. "He went by the title of the Fullmetal Alchemist."

"Ah! You must be referring to the Elric Brothers." Makarov said while continuing to stroke his mustache. "They are both quite talented. Hopefully, everything goes well in your attempt to recruit them."

"Yeah, I hope so, too." Ur replied. "But something tells me I won't see any results until Alfonzo gets back."

"Really, why?" Makarov asked curiously.

"According to the Elrics, Alfonzo has an idea how to fix their problems." Ur replied.

"And what problems are they facing?" Makarov asked. "Perhaps I could offer some advice. Though I'm not well versed in [Alchemy] I do know a thing or two."

"If it were as simple enough problem that someone who only dabbles in [Alchemy] could solve, those boys would have figured it out a long time ago, Old Man." Ur replied.

"Then, why would they put faith in Alfonzo, who I've never seen practice [Alchemy] ever since he joined the guild?" Makarov asked, unable to comprehend the decision.

"It probably has something to do with his ability to think outside the box." Ur replied with a shrug. "I mean, you can just look at the guild hall to know that he thinks in a completely different way than anyone else on the continent."

"*Sigh* I can't deny that." Makarov replied. "Anyway, I wish you good luck."

"Thanks." Ur replied. "And I'll see you in March."

With that, Ur ended the projection. And as she did, she wore a mischievous smile, one that Makarov quickly mimicked as he thought about the look on Alfonzo's face when he received the news.

Earth land, Ishgar, kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

As soon as she ended the communication with Makarov, Ur's smile widened.

"Even though seeing the look on Alfonzo's face will be hilarious, I know that won't be the end of it." Ur thought aloud. "There's no doubt in my mind that he'll find a way to get Makarov back for this."

Reaching that point, Ur could not help but shudder.

"He'll want to take revenge on me, too." Ur said with an apprehensive expression on her face. Then, she forcefully shook her head to get rid of those thoughts. "No, he'll never know that I voted for him. But I'm certain that the old man will do everything in his power to bring me down with him, so he'll definitely tell Alfonzo about my vote."

Once again, Ur shook her head. Then, she put a smile back on her face.

"But the old man has no proof." Ur continued. "There were no names on the voting forms. So, as long as I deny everything, I should be fine."

Though she told herself everything would be fine, Ur could not shake the feeling that something would happen.

"Anyway, I should go find Wendy and little Elicia." Ur said as she stood from her desk. "I'm already quite late for their training because of this matter. I shouldn't keep them waiting any longer."

Meanwhile, Edward and Alphonse, who decided to wait for Alfonzo to return in Magnolia, were walking through the town.

"Sor, we're really doing this, huh, Brother?" Alphonse asked.

"Yeah, I can't think of any other way." Edward replied. "Any way without a Philosopher's Stone, anyway. And we both know how we feel about using those."

"Yeah, no matter how much I want my body back, I couldn't use a Philosopher's Stone." Alphonse replied. "Especially after finding out the main ingredient was human souls."

"That's right." Edward said with a nod. "And that's why, even if nothing comes of it, I want to know what that guy thinks. Hell, even if it doesn't work, it could point us in the right direction."

"Yeah." Alphonse replied.

"Oh, hey boys." A familiar male voice said from down the street.

Looking in the direction of the voice, Edward and Alphonse noticed that it was Maes Hughes who called out to them. And from what they could tell, he was heading towards the guild hall. On top of that, he had a bag from the bookstore in his hand.

"Mr. Hughes, didn't expect to see you out here." Alphonse said in a friendly tone.

"Yeah, aren't you usually at the guild hall at this time?" Edward asked.

"*Sigh* Yeah, I'm usually already neck deep in paperwork by now." Maes replied in an exhausted tone. A moment later, however, his exhausted expression turned into one of a doting father. "But my little Elicia asked me if she could have a new book about magical beasts this morning. So, I dropped everything to make a trip to the book store."

Hearing Maes response, the boys could only smile wryly.

"It's good to see that you haven't changed, Mr. Hughes." Edward said with a smile.

"Anyway, what are you boys up to?" Maes asked with curiosity.

"Not much." Edward replied with a shrug. "Basically, we're just killing time until that guy, Alfonzo gets back."

"I see.' Maes replied. "So, do you think he can help you with your... problem?"

While Maes asked his question, he looked around cautiously to make sure no one overheard him.

"Honestly, we have no idea." Alphonse replied.

With that, Alphonse explained the reason, that he just discussed with his brother, why they decided to trust Alfonzo with their secret.

"I see." Maes replied with a nod. "Well, I guess that makes sense. Plus, that guy usually thinks so far outside the box that you probably will have some inspiration, even if it doesn't work."

"Yeah." the Elric Brothers replied in unison.

"By the way, I'm surprised you didn't bring Winry with you." Maes said while wagging his eyebrows suggestively. "I mean, I saw the way you were dancing back at Alfonzo and Lici's wedding. You two looked pretty cozy."

Though Edward blushed bright red, he sighed heavily when Winry was brought up.

"We didn't wanna get her hopes up." Edward said quietly. "I mean, what if it didn't work? She would have probably been even more crushed than we were."

That caused the trio to fall into a tense silence. However, Maes did not allow it to last for very long.

"I guess I can see where you're coming from." Maes said. "Still, I think she would have liked to be here, regardless of the outcome. I mean, you know how much she hates being left out of the loop when it comes to you two. And since you're not doing anything dangerous this time, maybe you should think about telling her."

Once again, the trio fell into silence. This time, however, it was not an awkward silence. Instead, it was because Edward and Alphonse were contemplating Maes' suggestion.

"We'll think about it." Edward replied, breaking the silence.

"Yeah." Alphonse said in agreement. "Besides, if we told her ahead of time, it would ruin the surprise, right?"

"Well, it's your decision." Maes replied with a shrug. "Anyway, if the two of you aren't busy, why don't you come with me to the guild hall? I'll treat you to lunch."

"That would be a much more appealing offer if Alfonzo were the one cooking." Edward replied with a shrug. "But really, we don't have anything better to do."

"Yeah." Alphonse replied. "We would have just walked around for a while before going back to our hotel, otherwise."

"Great, then let's go." Maes said with a great, big smile. "You'll be able to see my little girl's happy smile when I give her the book, too. And that will definitely make your meal taste even better."

As he spoke, Maes wrapped his left arm around Edward's shoulders while he grabbed Alphonse with his right hand. Then, he dragged the brothers along with him while continuously gushing about his wife and daughter.

A few weeks have passed since the Magic Council delivered the summons to Alfonzo. And in that time, not much of note has taken place. Other than Alfonzo completing the structures of the training chambers, leaving all the wiring to be completed, and Ultear growing more and more impatient with Jura's absence, resulting in Lyon, as well as the rest of his team, getting much harsher training as an outlet for her annoyance.

Then, there was the fact that Juvia managed to make her [Water Body] completely out of pure water. As long as she was not wearing clothes, that is. Unfortunately, just as Alfonzo hypothesized, her clothing was the reason for most of the impurities. The rest came from imprecise magic power control, which she managed to rectify over the last six weeks or so.

Today, however, the uneventful days would finally come to an end.

"*Sigh* There are only two more rooms to run wires from." Alfonzo said as he took a seat at a table with Ultear, Juvia, Sherria, and Team Lyon. "Then, we can finally go home."

"Yes, Juvia is ready to go home." Juvia replied. "Juvia misses Ur and Gray."

Hearing that, Lyon put on a depressed expression.

"Are you sure you can't stay a little longer?" Lyon asked in a desperate tone. "I mean, this is good for the relationship between our guilds, right?"

In response, Juvia rolled her eyes while not even looking in Lyon's direction, causing Lyon's depressed expression to become more prominent. Meanwhile, Sherria, who was watching the exchange frowned in displeasure.

"What's wrong, Sherria?" Ultear asked in a teasing tone. "See something you don't like? Why don't you tell Big Sister Ultear all about it?"

Immediately, Sherria's face was dusted in pink, the color similar to her hair. Then, she began to stutter, completely unable to put her thoughts into words.

"Oh, Sherria." Sherry said with a smile. "Are you in--"

Before Sherry could say the last word of her sentence, a word that would undoubtedly reverberate through the surroundings, Sherria jumped out of her seat and pressed her hands to her older cousin's mouth while stealing glances at Lyon, who did not seem to notice.

Ignoring the little drama playing out between Ultear, Sherry, and Sherria, Alfonzo turned to Lyon with a smile.

"Even if Juvia wanted to stay, that wouldn't be possible." Alfonzo said. "Because as the leader of this little party, when I go home, I have to take her with me. Plus, I really miss my wife, fiancées, and girlfriends. And since I have to do this all over again with Quattro Cerberus at the beginning of April, I wanna spend some time with them."

"*Sigh* I get it." Lyon replied while hanging his head.

"You'll stay long enough to show us how these new training chambers work though, right?" Yuka asked in a curious tone. "I mean, they've been hyped up so much, I'm really looking forward to seeing them in action."

"Of course." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

'And with these, whenever the Grand Magic Games start, hopefully we won't just steam roll the rest of the guilds.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Having some competition would be nice. And fighting Jura after he's had a chance to train under increased gravity should be pretty good, too.'

Like that, the group continued to chat, their conversation blending in with the conversations of the other wizards in the guild hall. However, this harmonious atmosphere was paused when the guild hall's doors opened.

When the doors to the guild hall opened, most of the wizards present turned their heads in their direction. And when they did, their eyes landed on a pair of young people, a young man with black hair and a young woman with brown hair, both looking to be about eighteen or nineteen years old.

"*sigh* We're finally here." The black-haired young man, Takashi, said in a tired tone. "It feels like we were on the train forever."

"Yeah, and how many times did we have to change trains before we finally got here?" The brown-haired young woman, Rei asked. "There were a few times I thought we were gonna miss out train when we almost got lost in those stations."

"Yeah, and that would have made the trip even longer." Takashi said in a relieved tone. "It's a good thing Alfonzo taught us how to circulate our magic power. Without the extra speed it provided, we really would have missed a few trains."

"Well, it's good to know you're still using what I taught you." Alfonzo said, his voice audible due to the silence that fell over the guild hall. "But I honestly didn't think you two would join a guild after declining my offer last year."

Hearing that familiar voice, Takashi and Rei's conversation immediately came to a stop. Then, they looked in the direction of the voice. And after seeing Alfonzo, who was smiling at them, they exchanged glances.

A moment later, they stepped back from the doors and looked up at the banner hanging above the guild hall's entrance. Then, after making sure that the banner was of the Lamia Scale guild mark, they stepped through the doors once again.

"I thought we accidentally came to the wrong guild." Takashi said while patting himself on the chest in relief. "I mean, I wasn't expecting to see you here, Alfonzo."

"Hahaha!" Alfonzo laughed uproariously at the reactions of his acquaintances.

"You didn't switch guilds, did you, Alfonzo?" Rei asked curiously. "I mean, we saw you fighting in the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament less than six months ago."

"Nah." Alfonzo replied while waving dismissively. "I'm only here to do some work. Lamia Scale hired me for a construction project."

"Oh, that makes sense." Rei replied with a nod and a smile. "Either way, it's good to see you again."

"You, too." Alfonzo replied with a smile of his own. "And I see the two of you are still using the weapons I made for you back then."

"Hey, Alfonzo." Ultear said, cutting in on the conversation. "Are those the two that you helped when you went to take care of that zombie outbreak? The ones that you mentioned who decided not to follow you back?"

"That's right." Alfonzo replied. "They're Takashi Komuro and Rei Miyamoto. They went to the same school as Saeko, Saya, and Kohta."

Nodding in reply, Ultear returned her attention to the new arrivals.

"Anyway, I'm sure you didn't come here to talk to me." Alfonzo said, also turning his attention back to Takashi and Rei. "You're here to join Lamia Scale, right?"

"Yeah, that's right." Takashi replied.

Nodding his head, Alfonzo then turned his attention towards Sherria, who was listening to his conversation with the newcomers with interest.

"Sherria, you should probably go tell Ooba Babasama that you have a couple of people who want to join the guild." Alfonzo said.

In response, Sherria nodded her head vigorously. However, before she could stand up, the sound a footsteps and a walking stick could be heard from the top of the stairs.

"No need." Ooba said as she slowly descended the stairs. "I heard everything."

For the next few moments, the wizards of Lamia Scaled watched Ooba climb down the stairs. Meanwhile, Takashi and Rei took a few more steps into the guild hall.

Eventually, Ooba and the two aspiring wizards from Takanosu were standing face to face. And while Takashi and Rei looked at the Lamia Scale guild master with nervous expressions, Ooba let her discerning gaze roam over the two young people in front of her.

"It looks like the two of you started training pretty late." Ooba said after she finished her inspections.

"Yes, Ma'am." Takashi replied with a nod. "In fact, we didn't even know we had any magic power until October of last year."

Hearing that, Ooba nodded her head, Takashi's reply matching up with her initial assessment.

"And why did you decide to join Lamia Scale?" Ooba asked. "From what I heard, Alfonzo both saved your lives and taught you how to harness your magic power. Wouldn't joining Fairy Tail make more sense?"

"Honestly, we considered it." This time, Rei was the one to reply.

"And we were torn between Fairy Tail and Lamia Scale." Takashi continued. "But since Jura Neekis is a member of Lamia Scale, that is what clenched it for us in the end."

"Jura fans, huh?" Ooba asked while stroking her chin with her free hand.

"Well, that's part of it." Takashi replied. "I actually wanted to learn [Earth Magic]. And as a member of the Ten Wizard Saints who specializes in [Earth Magic], I thought there would be no one better to guide me if I needed it."

Nodding in response, Ooba turned her attention to Rei.

"And what about you, Girl?" Ooba asked.

"Wherever Takashi goes, I go." Rei said as she reached out and grasped Takashi's hand with a smile on her face.

"Looks like he finally grew a pair and confessed, huh?" Alfonzo said, breaking the atmosphere. "Saya complained about that part of you a lot ever since she joined Fairy Tail."

Immediately, all the Lamia Scale wizards turned incredulous expressions towards Alfonzo. Meanwhile, Takashi and Rei's expressions reddened quickly.

"Just ignore him." Ooba said, waving off Alfonzo's interruption. "His opinion doesn't matter. He's an outsider, anyway."

Immediately upon hearing Ooba's comeback, Alfonzo threw himself into Ultear's arms, causing Juvia's eyebrow to twitch.

"Tear, Ooba Babasama is bullying me!" Alfonzo whined.

In response, Ultear could only smile wryly as she ran her fingers through Alfonzo's dreads.

"If you'd stop causing trouble, she wouldn't bully you." Ultear said.

Smiling brightly in response, Alfonzo stayed silent as he continued to snuggle with Ultear while watching Ooba, Takashi, and Rei. And the rest of the conversation did not last very long. In conclusion, Ooba did not mind accepting Takashi and Rei into the guild. So, in front of the rest of the wizards present, she placed the guild mark on each of them, with Takashi's on his left shoulder and Rei's on the back of her right hand.

"Now, let us celebrate the joining of two new members to our family." Ooba said as she put the guild stamp into her pocket.

"Yeah~~~~~!" The wizards of Lamia Scale cheered happily.

Meanwhile, Takashi and Rei were slightly overwhelmed with the fervor the rest of the guild showed them. However, when they registered that there would be a celebration, their eyes turned to Alfonzo.

"Oh, shit..." Alfonzo muttered, knowing exactly what the glint in Takashi and Rei's eyes meant. "Don't do it, please."

Hearing Alfonzo's muttering, Juvia and Ultear looked at him with confusion. A moment later, however, they also realized what he was talking about.

"Alfonzo, since we're having a celebration, do you think you could cook?" Takashi asked, drool leaking out of his mouth as he spoke.

"Yeah, we've been craving your cooking ever since you left Takanosu." Rei added. "It was a shame that we couldn't have some of your cooking when we came to Magnolia for the Harvest Festival."

As soon as Rei's words ended, the guild hall fell silent. Most of the Lamia Scale wizards only looked at Alfonzo with skepticism, not believing that he could cook. At the same time, they were thinking, if he

could cook so well that the new members had been thinking about his cooking for months, then why didn't he cook at all while he was here for almost two months.

"Now that I think about it..." Ooba said while, once again, rubbing her chin with her free hand. "I remember Makarov saying something like that. He bragged about you being 'a real wizard in the kitchen'."

With that, all the skeptical gazes turned into ones filled with blame.

"Well... Shit." Alfonzo muttered as he slowly separated himself from Ultear. "If you all will excuse me, I just remembered something back in my hotel room. So, I'll see you all later."

With that, Alfonzo started walking towards the guild hall's entrance. And while he did, he glared at Takashi and Rei for speaking too much.

Just before Alfonzo reached the doors, however, the entire doorway was frozen over.

"[Ice-Make: Wal]." Lyon chanted while making his casting gesture. "After hearing Ooba Babasama, I just remembered hearing Master, Gray, and Ultear bragging about your cooking during the Oración Seis subjugation quest."

Immediately, Alfonzo spun on his heels. And when he did, his glare landed on Ultear, who looked away awkwardly.

"Don't look at me like that." Ultear said while smiling wryly. "I had no idea you would be spending so much time at Lamia Scale when I bragged about that back then."

Knowing what Ultear said was true, Alfonzo could only let his shoulders slump.

"Fine, I'll cook." Alfonzo said in a resigned tone. "But it's gonna cost you."

Expecting a response like that, Ooba nodded her head. At the same time, Takashi and Rei's expressions lit up. Meanwhile, the rest of the guild looked forward to Alfonzo's cooking. And if it was as good as Ooba, Lyon, Takashi, and Rei said, they would be happy. On the other hand, if it were terrible, they would spread the rumor as far, and as fast as they could.

Chapter 457: He Didn't Come Back

The next couple days after Takashi and Rei joined Lamia Scale flew by. And in those days, Alfonzo finished running the wires from the training chambers to Ooba's office. Then, once the entire set of training chambers was up and running, Alfonzo took another day to explain all the functions of the new training facilities.

After the members of Lamia Scale were comfortable with the new training facilities, Ooba commissioned Alfonzo to cook once more to celebrate. Unfortunately, Jura never did return to Lamia Scale before the trio of Fairy Tail wizards had to leave. As a result, Ultear was quite annoyed by the time it was time to leave. However, since there was nothing that she could do about it, she asked Alfonzo to help her work off all her negative feelings the night before they left.

The following day, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia said their farewells to the members of Lamia Scale from the entrance of the Viper Inn. After that, they boarded Sixth Sense, with Alfonzo returning the S 600 to the cargo hold before setting sail.

A day later, Sixth Sense was sailing along the coast of Akane Beach, heading for the villa Ultear gifted Alfonzo and Elicia for their birthday last year.

"Finally, the trip is almost over." Ultear, standing on the deck near the ship's bow, said as she stretched. "I really miss home. I miss Mom, too."

"Juvia agrees." Juvia replied from nearby. "Juvia really missed Ur, too. She missed Gray, as well."

"Well, I wish you luck in gaining Gray's attention, Juvia." Ultear said with a smile as she glanced at Juvia. "Just so long as you don't forget what we talked about; you should have better luck than before."

"Yes, Juvia understands." Juvia replied while shuddering lightly after remembering the way Lyon looked at her. "Juvia will do her best."

Smiling at Juvia's response, Ultear could only hope that the lesson she learned while visiting Lamia Scale would stick. And if it did, that would mean that she and her mother would gain peace from Juvia's stalking.

"We're almost there!" Alfonzo shouted from the wheel house, drawing the attention of the ladies to himself. "It'll only be a few minutes. So, you two should get your luggage together."

"Okay!" Ultear shouted back. "We'll be ready by the time we dock!"

Nodding in reply, Alfonzo went back to concentrating on steering the ship.

Meanwhile, Ultear and Juvia made their way below deck to grab their luggage.

"*Sigh* Only another eight, or so, hours until we're back home." Ultear said with a smile as she walked across the deck. "I really can't wait to see everyone again."

About ten minutes later, Sixth Sense was moored to the dock outside the villa. Currently, Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia were walking along the dock towards the villa. At the same time, the S 600 was floating behind them. Alfonzo would set it down in the villa's driveway when they arrived.

"So, should we have something to eat before we head back to Magnolia?" Ultear asked while the trio stood in front of the villa.

"I don't mind making you two something to eat." Alfonzo replied in a tired tone. "*Sigh* But the two of you are gonna have to go back to Magnolia on your own."

While Juvia's eyes lit up at the thought of spending time alone with Ultear, Ultear's eyebrows furrowed in irritation.

"Why?" Ultear asked in an annoyed tone.

"Because I have to go to Era to answer the Magic council's summons." Alfonzo said in just as annoyed a tone as Ultear. "And it would take too long to get there by land. So, I'm gonna sail Sixth Sense over there."

"Damned Magic Council." Ultear grumbled. "Even after being completely overhauled, they still cause us trouble."

Hearing Ultear's grumbling, Alfonzo could not help but smile wryly as he reached out and began combing his fingers through her hair, causing the annoyed pout she was wearing to melt away from her face.

What Alfonzo found most surprising about that whole exchange, however, was the fact that Juvia did not react at all to the intimacy between the two. Instead, she continued to smile with her eyes shining brightly.

'I guess getting to spend eight hours alone with Tear really has Juvia in her happy place.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he continued combing his fingers through Ultear's hair. 'I mean, even though she's chilled out a lot since she had that talk with Tear, she still, at the very least, twitches whenever Tear and I get all lovey dovey.'

"Anyway, what do you two want to eat?" Alfonzo asked as he pulled his hand away from Ultear's head.

"Juvia is fine with anything." Juvia replied energetically.

"*Sigh* Me, too, I guess." Ultear replied listlessly. "We'll get going after that."

Nodding in understanding, Alfonzo reached into his pocket, retrieving the key to the S 600. Then, he handed it to Ultear.

"Here, you'll need this." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"Thanks." Ultear replied as she took the key. "Once our luggage is in the trunk, we'll come inside."

Nodding once again, Alfonzo turned around and started walking towards the villa's front door with his luggage in hand.

On a side note, before setting sail for Margaret, Alfonzo overhauled the villa, lining all the walls with orichalcum and setting up a security system similar to the one around his and Elicia's first mansion. So, they no longer needed keys to enter the house.

"Wait!" Ultear shouted in a tone that suggested she just remembered something.

Stopping in his tracks, Alfonzo turned around while wearing a confused expression.

"If we take the car, how are you gonna get back to Magnolia after seeing the Council?" Ultear asked curiously.

Shrugging his shoulders, Alfonzo turned back around and continued walking towards the villa's front door.

"Worst case scenario, I'll just take the train back." Alfonzo replied while he walked away. "But more than likely, I'll just build another magic vehicle. And although I don't have a rechargeable lacrima on hand, I'm sure I can get one before I have to set sail for Era."

Nodding in understanding, Ultear led Juvia to the back of the S 600 where they loaded their luggage into the trunk. After that, they quickly entered the villa, anticipating the meal that Alfonzo would prepare before they left.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

On the same day, shortly after the sun set, around the table where Alfonzo and Elicia usually sat in the Fairy Tail guild hall, the usual group of people were seated, waiting for Alfonzo, Ultear, and Juvia to return from their two month long trip to Lamia Scale's guild hall.

"They should be here soon." Alzack said as he picked at the food on the plate in front of him. "Man, I don't remember the last time Alfonzo was away from the guild for this long."

"I don't think he has ever been away for this long, has he?" Bisca, who was basically glued to Alzack, said with a smile before turning to Elicia for an answer. "Right, Lici?"

"That's right." Elicia replied with a nod and a smile. A moment later, however, her expression morphed into a frown.

"Stil, I can't wait until he gets back." Alzack said while smiling lovingly at Bisca. "Although I'm sure he wasn't expecting us to get engaged, I did what he said and took a step forward in my relationship with Bisca."

"A step?" Cana asked with a mischievous smile on her face. "That must have been one big ass step that allowed you to skip most of the steps that came before it."

In response to Cana's teasing, Alzack could only lower his head in embarrassment. Meanwhile, Bisca, with an amused smile on her face, hugged her fiancé.

"Unfortunately, I don't think you'll get to tell him about that today, Alzack." Elicia said, the frown on her face still present.

"What do you mean?" Bisca asked in Alzack's place.

"Yeah, you make it sound like they won't be back today." Lucy said in a confused tone.

"That's because I don't think he will be." Elicia replied.

"Huh?" Mirajane exclaimed in confusion. "But why?"

"I don't know." Elicia said while shaking her head. "But my Fonzie Sense is telling me that I won't see him today."

With that, the entire table fell silent. However, no one knew what to say. Although they all thought Elicia's "Fonzie Sense" sounded completely nonsensical, they have seen Elicia's strange instincts when it came to Alfonzo far too many times over the years to simply right it off.

Meanwhile, the new comers from Takanosu, namely, Saeko, Saya, Kohta, and Rika, were thoroughly confused.

"What the hell is 'Fonzie Sense'?" Saya asked in a thoroughly flabbergasted tone. "That sounds so illogical."

In response, the more senior members of the guild snapped back to their senses.

"Well, I don't blame you for thinking that way." Lucy said while wearing a wry smile. "Because..."

"It's just as illogical as it sounds." Mirajane added, finishing Lucy's sentence.

"But we've learned not to question it over the years." Lisanna said, picking up after her sister.

"Yup!" Sun said enthusiastically. "And her instincts are never wrong when it comes to Alfonzo."

"Well, except for that one time." Cana said.

"Cana!" Elicia squeaked.

"Seriously, Cana, I thought we were already done with that after we talked about it with Fonzie." Marin said in a somewhat reprimanding tone.

"Oh, don't look at me like that." Cana said with a smile. "Like you said, we're past that already. But did you see the look on Lici's face? She's so adorable when she panics."

Although Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy, the rest of Alfonzo's girlfriends and fiancées, thought Cana's method to get a rise out of Elicia was in poor taste, they could not help but agree with Cana's assessment of Elicia's panicked expression.

"Cana! You're so mean!" Elicia exclaimed in an embarrassed tone, causing the rest of the people at the table to laugh at her expense.

A few moments later, while the young wizards laughed and enjoyed themselves, the guild's doors slid open revealing Ultear and Juvia.

"Hey! Ultear and Juvia are back." Natsu said, the first to notice the new arrivals thanks to his sense of smell. "And it looks like Lici was right again. Alfonzo's not with them."

Hearing Natsu, the rest of the group turned their attention towards the doors, as well. And while Alfonzo's girls were disappointed that Alfonzo was not with them, they did not let it show in their expressions.

"Welcome back, Tear, Juvia." Elicia said energetically. "How was the trip."

"*sigh* It was alright." Ultear replied with a shrug as she and Juvia approached the table where the other sat. "Alfonzo finished his work with no issue. He got to have a spar with Jura, too."

When Ultear mentioned Alfonzo's spar with Jura, her mood visibly soured.

"Why does that seem to bother you so much, Tear?" Mirajane asked curiously.

"*Sigh* Because I was supposed to have a spar with Jura, too." Ultear replied as she took a seat at the table. "But the day we were supposed to have our spar, Lyon came back from a quest with his team. So, I had to carry out the assessment for Mom."

As everyone was able to follow the story, they all nodded in understanding.

"And when I asked Jura if we could postpone our spar, he agreed." Ultear continued. "He said it would have to wait for a week, though. Something about having to go to Era for Magic Council business."

Once again, everyone nodded in understanding.

"But after that day, I never saw him again!" Ultear shouted in frustration.

With that, the light of realization shined in everyone's eyes.

"Understandable." Erza, who was sitting to Ultear's left, said as she patted Ultear on the shoulder. "Finding a worthy opponent is enough to make anyone excited. However, having the chance to clash with the opponent taken away is truly something worth being frustrated over."

In response, Ultear turned to Erza with a gaze that shouted: "She gets it!"

"Ah! Jura was supposed to spar with me after the quest with those six dark wizard guys, too!" Natsu shouted, his memory of the deal he made with Jura jumping to the forefront of his mind.

"It looks like Jura is good for breaking agreements to spar, huh?" Gray asked with an amused expression on his face.

At the same time, Gray was feeling kind of weirded out. And the reason for that was the way Juvia looked at him. Although he's quite used to Juvia staring at him, it's usually from a distance. On top of that, it usually feels much more... uncomfortable.

"So, what else happened?" Sun asked curiously.

"Oh, right." Ultear replied with a nod after squashing her annoyance. "Let's see... We met another God slayer... And Lamia Scale got a couple new members right before we left."

As Ultear mentioned Lamia Scale's new members, she let her gaze land on Saeko, Saya, and Kohta.

"And the three of you know them." Ultear continued.

"We do?" Saeko asked curiously.

"I guess that means they came from Takanosu, right?" Kohta asked.

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

"It was probably Takashi and Miyamoto." Saya said. "I mean, no one else really fits. Especially since almost no one in Takanosu had magic power. And even if they did, they didn't know about it. So, Takashi and Miyamoto are the only ones that fit. Since Alfonzo helped them awaken their magic power, like he did with us."

Hearing Saya's analysis, Saeko and Kohta nodded in agreement. Meanwhile, Rika, who did not really associate with Takashi and Rei, remained silent. She did turn her attention towards Ultear and Juvia after the others from Takanosu finished, though.

"So, why isn't Alfonzo with you two?" Rika asked curiously. "I mean, he was supposed to make me a new weapon. One that could transform between melee and ranged. I think he called it a [Mechashift Weapon]."

Before Ultear or Juvia could answer Rika's question, however, Shizuka, who just finished her shift in the guild's infirmary, stepped into the main hall. A moment later, after looking around the guild hall, she noticed Ultear and Juvia sitting at the group's normal table. Then, she excitedly ran over to the table, causing her assets to bounce vigorously with every step.

"Welcome back, Ultear, Juvia!" Shizuka shouted while on the way to the table. "How was your trip? Where is Alfonzo? I want him to cook for me. And comb his fingers through my hair. I wanna try sitting in his lap, too. And..."

"Sorry, Shizuka." Ultear said while wearing a wry smile. "He didn't come back with us."

Immediately, Shizuka's expression froze on her face. A moment later, she deflated. With that term being more literal in the case of her breasts.

At the same time, all the [Armament Spirits] present commented about her breasts being like a mood ring. Unfortunately, because of Shizuka's depressed aura, it would take a while before Ultear or Juvia would be able to tell everyone why Alfonzo did not come back with them.

Chapter 458: Shizuka's Request

It took a few minutes to cheer up Shizuka after she found out that Alfonzo had not come back with Ultear and Juvia. During which time, a brawl started in the guild hall. However, the more levelheaded members of the group continued cheering up Shizuka.

"So, where is Fonzie?" Elicia asked curiously once Shizuka's smile was back on her face.

"*Sigh* We'll have to wait until Ultear and Juvia are done fighting to get an answer to that question.

At that moment, the elevator opened. And when it did, Gildarts and Ur, walking hand-in-hand exited the elevator. And upon seeing the ongoing brawl, Ur sighed audibly. Then, she let go of Gildarts' hand before making her casting gesture.

"[Ice-Make: Rose Garden]." Ur chanted in an exasperated tone.

In the next instant, a number of ice roses grew from beneath all the brawling wizards. Then, before any of the wizards could react, their stems coiled around them, stopping them from moving.

As soon as everyone was immobilized, they all looked in Ur's direction, knowing that she would only stop one of the commonly occurring brawls if something important was happening. Or... If the fight resulted in her spilling her wine.

"It looks like Alfonzo, Juvia, and my daughter have returned..." Ur said as she scanned the faces of those taking part in the brawl.

"Uh... Hey, Mom." Ultear said while smiling sheepishly.

"But the thing I wanna know is..." Ur continued, ignoring Ultear's greeting. "Why hasn't anyone come to report to me yet?"

With that, Ultear and Juvia looked away guiltily. However, neither had anything to say on the matter.

"Um... Actually." Elicia said, raising her hand so that Ur could see her.

"What's wrong, Elicia?" Ur asked in a stern tone.

"The thing is..." Elicia said hesitantly. "Well... Fonzie didn't come back with Tear and Juvia."

Hearing that, Ur froze momentarily. Then, she remembered the fact that the Magic Council had summoned Alfonzo.

"Oh, that's right." Ur replied casually. "Alfonzo won't be back until sometime after the fifteenth."

Hearing that, everyone in the guild hall opened their eyes wide in surprise.

"How did you know about that, Mom?" Ultear asked in a shocked tone.

"I received a message about it from the old man." Ur replied. "The Magic Council summoned him for some reason. In fact, I'll be meeting up with him in Era in about two weeks."

"Seriously?" Lucy asked in a dumbfounded tone. "But why would he have to see the Magic Council? Did something happen?"

Not only Lucy, but most of those present, other than Ultear and Juvia, wore similar worried expressions. And for the wizards of Fairy Tail to panic in a situation like this was not out of the ordinary. Despite the fact that the Magic Council had been completely rebuilt, most of the wizards of Fairy Tail still remembered how much the Council hated them. So, they began to think the worst.

Before the panic could fester for too long, however, a gloomy aura washed over the guild hall, drawing all eyes to its point of origin.

"How long have you known that Fonzie wasn't coming back to day, Ur?" Elicia asked in an eerily calm tone.

'Oh, shit, I forgot about Lici when I decided to keep this a secret from the guild.' Ur said to herself as her eyes opened wide. 'She can get kinda out of hand when it comes to her Fonzie.'

"For about three weeks, or so." Ur replied with cold sweat dripping down her back.

"And you didn't think to let us know?" Elicia asked, her eyes narrowing as she asked her question.

At the same time, in a burst of speed, a beautiful woman with a curvaceous figure, long, bright pink hair tied into a pair of buns on her head, green eyes, and a beauty mark under each eye wearing a flowing white and pink kimono with an oversized katana strapped horizontally across her lower back appeared behind Elicia with her right hand gripping the katana's hilt. On top of that, she was glaring at Ur with hostility.

"There's no need for that, Ikaruga." Elicia said as she waved her hand at the woman, Ikaruga, the former leader of Trinity Raven of Death's Head Caucus. "Besides, you're no match for her."

"Yes, Mistress Elicia." Ikaruga replied as she released the hilt of her katana. However, she did not stop glaring at Ur. And she would continue to do so for as long as Elicia was unhappy.

As previously mentioned, after Ikaruga was released from prison. Mostly due to her good behavior and the fact that she repeatedly mentioned that she wanted to serve Elicia. The Magic Council, under Makarov's insistence, released her on probation, hoping that Elicia would be able to reform her. And if that did not work, they knew that Elicia was more than strong enough to subdue her, should she revert to her old mentality.

"*Sigh* Because Alfonzo was supposed to appear in front of the Magic Council alone." Ur replied. "And I knew if I told you about it, you would want to follow him to Era."

In good conscience, Elicia could not deny Ur's statement. In fact, ever since Ur said something about Alfonzo being summoned before the Council, Elicia was thinking about going back to the mansion, hopping in her Z3, and driving to Era to meet up with Alfonzo.

"Does that mean no one can go with you?" Shizuka, who was also looking forward to seeing Alfonzo, asked Ur while looking at her with puppy dog eyes.

'Damn it.' Ur thought as she made eye contact with Shizuka. 'Why can a twenty-eight year old woman look so cute while making puppy dog eyes? It's not fair.'

"No, I'm allowed to bring one person with me to witness the proceedings." Ur replied while trying, and failing, to break eye contact with Shizuka. "And I was planning to bring---"

"Then, can I come with you?" Shizuka asked excitedly as she appeared in front of Ur in a burst of speed.

'What the hell?' Everyone in the guild hall exclaimed internally after seeing Shizuka's burst of speed.

At the same time, Shizuka grasped Ur's hands while looking at her with the light of hope shining in her eyes. Meanwhile, Ur, after seeing the look in Shizuka's eyes, felt her resistance start to crumble immediately.

Originally, Ur wanted to bring Gildarts with her. Using the trip as an excuse to spend some uninterrupted time with her new man. But that notion almost flew out of the window after meeting eyes with Shizuka.

"But what about your shifts in the infirmary?" Ultear asked softly as she finally broke eye contact with the ditzy nurse.

"Oh, you don't need to worry about that, Ur." Ren, with a mischievous grin on her face, replied before Shizuka could. "I'll pick up her shifts."

Immediately, Ur's head snapped in her friend's direction with a scowl on her face. Meanwhile, Shizuka looked at Ren with gratitude. A moment later, Ur sighed in defeat.

"Fine, you can come with me." Ur said in a resigned tone.

"Yay!" Shizuka cheered as she started jumping up and down with Ur's hands still grasped in her own.
"Thank you, Master! Thank you very much."

'*Sigh* Why is it so hard to say no to her?' Ur thought to herself while shaking her head with a wry smile on her face. 'It's even worse than when Meredy and Wendy look at me with puppy dog eyes. She's on par with little Elicia.'

While those thoughts were running through Ur's head, the men in the guild were staring at Shizuka. More specifically, the way her breasts bounced as she jumped around in excitement.

"*Sigh* All the men in this guild are perverts." Chico said in a tone filled with envy. "Do they ever think about anything other than breasts."

"Why don't you say that when you can tear your eyes away from those things." Macao, who was still wrapped up in one of Ur's [Ice Roses] shot back while his eyes followed the bounce of Shizuka's breasts.

And just like Macao said, many of the women in the guild were also staring at Shizuka's chest. And while some of them were jealous like Chico, most of them were just mesmerized by the violently bouncing breasts.

At the same time, Ur, who noticed that Gildarts was among the men staring at Shizuka's breasts, freed one of her hands from Shizuka's grasp. Then, after making a one-handed casting gestured, caused a fist made of ice to form above Gildarts head.

Bang!

In response to getting hit by Ur's [Ice Fist], Gildarts did not even try to defend himself. Instead, he only looked at Ur apologetically.

Meanwhile, Ultear and Juvia, after seeing the display between Ur and Gildarts opened their eyes wide in surprise. And while Ultear smiled at her mother happily, Juvia looked mortified. Though, to Ur, Gray, and everyone else's surprise, she did not start boiling in anger.

Naturally, this caused Ur to look at Ultear questioningly. And Ultear mouthed: "I'll tell you later," in response.

"Anyway, Tear, Juvia, come to my office and tell me about your trip to Lamia Scale." Ur ordered after shaking off her confusion. "I'll get Alfonzo's version of the report when I meet with him in era."

As she spoke, Ur released all the wizards from her [Rose Garden] spell. Then, she turned around and returned to the elevator, leaving Gildarts on the first floor to interact with the rest of the guild.

As soon as Ur, Ultear, and Juvia disappeared into the elevator, everyone went back to what they were doing before the brawl started. At the same time, Shizuka, with a wide smile on her face, skipped back to the table where the others were sitting.

"I'm actually surprised that you didn't ask to go with Ur, Lici." Cana said after ordering a drink.

"*Sigh* I wanted to." Elicia replied. "I mean, I really wanted to. But I'm already pushing the deadline for the summer collection. And if I were to take a few days to go to Era, I wouldn't be able to finish in time."

Hearing that, everyone sitting at the table nodded their heads in understanding.

"Still, I wonder what the Magic Council wants Alfonzo for." Levy said in a curious tone. "I mean, we all know it's not because he destroyed anything. So, what else could it be?"

"Maybe it's to give him an award for everything his inventions have done for the people of Ishgar?" Meredy suggested.

"I doubt it." Mirajane replied. "They would have done that a long time ago if they were gonna do that."

"Actually, that's not so far outside the realm of possibility." Saya chipped in. "Don't forget, before the Magic Council was rebuilt, they really hated Fairy Tail. So, they weren't against withholding the praise members of the guild were owed."

Saya's analysis caused everyone to stop and think for a few moments. Then, she received nods from everyone at the table.

"Saya's right." Elicia said with a smile. "But I don't think that's it. Otherwise, Ur would have told us when she stopped the fight."

"If that's not it, then what could it be?" Rika asked curiously.

"Wizard Saint." Laki said with a smile.

Hearing Laki's suggestion, everyone looked towards her. And judging by the smile she was wearing, they all could tell that she was joking, which caused everyone to chuckle. However, if they only knew how true Laki's joke was, they would all be left with their eyes and mouths hanging wide open.

Meanwhile, at the best hotel in Magnolia, Edward and Alphonse were relaxing in their room.

"Winry will be here tomorrow." Alphonse said while sitting on one of the beds in the hotel room.

"Yeah." Edward replied absent-mindedly. "We'll pick her up from the train station in the morning. Then, we'll head to see Alfonzo at the guild hall."

"We'll have to wait until they finish training, though." Alphonse replied. "According to Winry's letter, her train will arrive in the middle of the morning."

"*Sigh* I know." Edward replied. "But since he got back from that job he was working on, there's a chance he might skip training, though."

"That's true." Alphonse replied with a nod.

"Al, I'm still not sure telling Winry about this before we've seen any results was such a good idea." Edward said, changing the subject. "I mean, what if Alfonzo's idea doesn't work?"

"I think she'll understand." Alphonse said. "Winry knows we've been looking for a solution to our problems for almost ten years. I don't think she'll take it as hard as you think she will, Brother."

"*Sigh* I hope you're right, Al." Edward said as he rolled over in bed. "I already promised that the next time I made her cry, they would be tears of happiness. And I really don't wanna break my promise."

Though Alphonse did not reply verbally, if he had a face, it would be split from ear to ear with a smile after hearing Edward's last statement. Unfortunately, Winry, Edward, and Alphonse would all be disappointed when they found out that Alfonzo had not returned to Magnolia.

Chapter 459: Road Trip!

The next morning, Alfonzo, staying alone at the beachside villa on Akane Beach, woke up early. Then, after getting washed up and having a quick breakfast, he made his way out to the villa's backyard to train.

A few hours later, around noon, Alfonzo ended his training and returned inside to make himself lunch. Then, after filling his stomach, he sat down at the dining room table to plan out his new magic vehicle.

"Alright, I've made cars, trucks, S.U.V.s, and military transports." Alfonzo said as he drummed his fingers on the top of the table. "On top of that, I've got the designs for my airship in my workshop back at home. So, the only thing I haven't made yet is a motorcycle of some kind. Even so, I bet that would be fun to ride back to Magnolia."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo could not help but smile. A moment later, however, his eyebrows furrowed slightly.

"I've never driven a motorcycle, though." Alfonzo muttered to himself. "I never even considered getting one in my past life. Hell, if I had, Moms would have nagged me about how dangerous they are. She probably wouldn't have stopped until I sold it... If I ever had one, that is."

Once again, Alfonzo could not help but smile at the thought of his mother from his past life.

"Still, that doesn't change the fact that I've never ridden one." Alfonzo continued. "So, I'll have to be able to drive the damn thing without crashing it. Then again, with my magic, I can make sure that it never falls over. But that would take some of the excitement out of riding one, though."

Alfonzo then spent the next few minutes going back and forth about having a motorcycle. Eventually, he just shrugged his shoulders.

"Fuck it." Alfonzo said energetically. "I'll just use my magic until I get used to riding one. Then, I'll have all the fun I want. It's not like falling off a speeding motorcycle could hurt me at this point, anyway. I just don't wanna see the motorcycle get damaged."

With that, Alfonzo reached to the side for a sheet of paper to start sketching the design for his new motorcycle. However, there was nothing there for him to grab.

"Damn, that's right." Alfonzo said while snapping his fingers. "I didn't bring any drafting paper with me on this trip. Since I just planned to spend time with Tear whenever I wasn't working. *Sigh* I guess I'll have to go to the town to buy some supplies."

And just like that, Alfonzo stood up and made his way to the master bathroom to take a shower before heading out.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

"I guess Winry's train is behind schedule." Alphonse said while glancing up at a wall clock.

Currently, Edward and Alphonse were waiting for Winry's train to arrive at the magnolia train station.

"Yeah, right." Edward replied in a huff. "I bet she ended up oversleeping and had to catch a later train. She was probably up late working on an order and lost track of time."

Hearing his brother, Alphonse began radiating the aura of someone smiling wryly. Especially since things like what Edward described had happened several times in the past.

"Edward! Alphonse! Sorry I'm late!" Winry, who just disembarked from the latest train to arrive in Magnolia, shouted as she quickly approached the Elric Brothers. "I lost track of time while trying to finish up a few orders and I overslept. So, I missed the train I wanted to catch."

Immediately, Edward looked in Alphonse's direction with a gaze that shouted: "I told you so." Meanwhile, Alphonse could only shake his head.

A moment later, Winry arrived in front of Edward and Alphonse. Then, the trio made their way out of the train station.

"So, is what you said in your letter true?" Winry asked excitedly while the trio walked the streets of Magnolia. "Did Alfonzo really say that he had an idea about how you could get your bodies back?"

"Yeah, but he said he would need to know the whole story, first." Alphonse replied.

"You shouldn't get your hopes up, though." Edward added. "I mean, he's not an alchemist. So, there's a pretty good chance that his idea wouldn't work at all."

Hearing that, Winry deflated slightly.

"But there is a chance his idea could point us in the right direction." Edward continued. "Still, I don't want you to get too disappointed if nothing comes of it."

Sigh Yeah, you're probably right." Winry said while shaking her head to rid herself of the negative thoughts. "Still, I hope he can help."

"Yeah, so do we." Alphonse replied, his tone laced with optimism.

"Anyway, how was the trip from Resenbool?" Edward asked.

Like that, the trio continued to chat until they reached the Fairy Tail guild hall. And when they entered, to no one's surprise, there was a brawl going on.

"Oh, hey boys." Maes shouted from the bar, trying to be heard over all the noise. "Oh, and Winry came with you, too."

"Mr. Hughes, hi!" Winry shouted back while waving at Maes. "How are you?"

"I'm great." Maes replied with a smile. "And I'm sure Elicia will be happy to see you, too."

"What are you talking about, Hughes?" Gildarts, who had been drinking for most of the morning, asked in a confused tone. "Lici went home right after training ended. She mentioned something about completing the summer collection for her shop, right?"

"And this is why you should cut down on the alcohol, Gildarts." Maes said in an exasperated tone. A moment later, he reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. Then, he pulled out a picture of his daughter, Elicia, and shoved it in Gildarts' face. "It's obvious I was talking about the perfect little angel that is my daughter, Elicia."

For the next few minutes, Gildarts could only smile wryly while Maes gushed over his daughter, telling him that she was the cutest thing this world had ever seen and using what he called scientific facts to prove his theory.

Meanwhile, Winry, Edward, and Alphonse were left standing by the entrance and smiling wryly.

"Do you think he forgot we were here?" Edward asked.

"Probably." Alphonse replied.

"That's not important." Winry said. "We need to find Alfonzo."

"Yeah." Edward and Alphonse replied in unison.

With that, the trio moved towards the table that Alfonzo, Elicia, and their friends usually occupied. And when they did, Winry caught sight of a familiar face.

"Sun!" Winry shouted excitedly.

In response, Sun, who was watching the ongoing brawl, quickly turned her head in the direction from which she heard her name. And when she caught sight of Winry, she smiled brightly.

"Winry!" Sun shouted back in return as she stood up from her seat at the table. "What are you doing here? I didn't think I'd see you so soon. I thought the next time I'd see you was when Alfonzo and I came to visit in June."

While speaking, Sun sprinted over towards Winry, Edward, and Alphonse with that bright smile still plastered all over her face.

"Huh? You were planning to visit in June?" Winry asked in a confused tone.

Immediately, Sun slapped her hands over her mouth after realizing she let the surprise slip.

"Uh... Um... Anyway, what brings you to Magnolia?" Sun asked while her eyes swam around the room, avoiding eye contact with Winry.

Seeing Sun's adorable reaction, Winry smiled brightly. Then, she pulled the younger girl into a hug.

"I'm actually only here to see Ed and Al." Winry replied. "But they came to see Alfonzo. They said something about him knowing how to fix their problems."

With that, Sun's eyes lit up with the light of understanding. Then, she looked at Edward and Alphonse with an apologetic expression on her face. And the Elric Brothers did not miss it.

"Sun, is something wrong?" Alphonse asked apprehensively.

"Don't tell me he was just pulling our legs." Edward said in an agitated tone.

"Although Fonzie can be a little... very playful," Marin, who followed Sun to meet the visitors at a much more leisurely pace, said in a solemn tone, "he doesn't joke around about things like that."

Hearing the discontent in Marin's tone, Edward looked in her direction. And when he made eye contact with her, who was clearly upset at Edward's insinuation, he almost took a step back out of reflex.

"Seriously, Ed." Winry said in a reprimanding tone. "Stop jumping to conclusions."

"Yeah, yeah, I'm sorry." Edward replied in a dismissive tone. Though, it was clear that Marin's glare was bothering him.

"So, why did you look at us like that, Sun?" Alphonse asked curiously. "It looked like you wanted to apologize to us for something."

"Well... yeah..." Sun replied while still wearing her apologetic expression. "Alfonzo isn't here right now. He got called to Era by the Magic Council. He's supposed to meet with them on the fifteenth."

Sun's explanation caused Winry and Edward to open their eyes wide in surprise. And had Alphonse had any eyes, Marin and Sun had no doubt that he would have done the same, as well. A moment later, however, Edward furrowed his eyebrows after fully processing what Sun just said.

"Wait a minute." Edward said in a tone of slight confusion. "If he's supposed to meet with the Magic Council on the fifteenth, why isn't he here now? I mean, it only takes a few days to get from Magnolia to Era, right?"

"That's right." Marin replied with a nod. "That's if you go by land. But Fonzie decided he didn't want to go by land. Especially since he was already in Akane Beach. So, instead of coming back home, he decided he would leave from there on his ship."

While Edward and Alphonse nodded their heads in understanding, Winry's eyes lit up when she heard the term Akane Beach. Then, she turned her glowing eyes in Edward and Alphonse's direction.

"Hey, Ed, Al." Winry said energetically. "If you really wanna talk to Alfonzo as soon as possible, I wouldn't mind taking a trip to Akane Beach."

Hearing Winry's suggestion, Marin and Sun's eyes lit up as well. Although they knew that Alfonzo would be back after his meeting with the Magic Council, they planned to just wait until he came back.

"Oh, and if you're okay with it, we can drive you out there." Marin said with a smile. "And if Lucy is either willing to go or let us use her magic vehicle, Even Al will be comfortable on the trip."

"Yeah, Lucy's car is really big!" Sun said excitedly while spreading her arms for added emphasis.

A moment later, the eyes of all three ladies were focused on Edward and Alphonse, who could only smile wryly.

"I get the feeling we don't have a choice in the matter." Alphonse said.

"Me, too, Al." Edward added while smiling wryly. "But it's not so bad. I mean, we'll get to talk to Alfonzo a little sooner."

"Great!" Sun said while clapping her hands happily. "Then, Winry, let's go back to the mansion. I'm sure you didn't bring a swimsuit, right?"

"Ah! Now that you mention it..." Winry muttered.

"We'll just get Lici to make you one." Marin said with a smile. "You brought some money, right?"

"Uh... Yeah, I did." Winry replied.

"Good, then let's go." Sun said as she grabbed Winry and pulled her towards the sliding doors. A moment later, she looked over her shoulder at the Elric Brothers as she continued. "You guys should pack up, too. Then, we'll pick you up from your hotel."

With that, Marin and Sun dragged Winry to the mansion on the lake. Meanwhile, Edward and Alphonse exchanged glances for a moment. Then, after shrugging their shoulders, they also left the guild hall to pack their belongings and check out of their hotel.

Meanwhile, at the mansion on the lake, Lucy was in her bedroom, lying spread-eagle on her bed with her eyes closed and her [Soul Armament] coiled on her stomach. However, something about her [Soul Armament] which took the form of a whip, was changing.

For one, the tip of the whip was morphing into what appeared to be a white, four-pointed star. On top of that, it was changing in color, from black to midnight blue with the handle turning midnight purple. And last, but certainly not least, a key hole opened up on the base of the handle.

Then, as soon as the changes to her [Soul Armament] were complete, Lucy opened her eyes excitedly with a brilliant smile on her face.

"I finally did it!" Lucy shouted excitedly. Then, she sat up and held her [Soul Armament] happily. "I can't wait to show you off to Alfonzo, Zodiac."

Meanwhile, in Lucy's inner world, which appeared to be the void of space with stars shining in all directions, a beautiful young woman with long, silver hair that appeared to be sprinkled with starlight, glowing orange eyes, fair skin, and a slim curvaceous figure with large breasts wearing a two-toned black and white t-shirt, a black skirt with silver trim, and a pair of silver high heels smiled at Lucy's exclamation while floating in the void.

"Of course you need to show me to Alfonzo." Lucy's [Armament Spirit], Zodiac, said proudly. "And let him heap praise on my name and ability. It's just too bad he can't set his eyes upon the beauty that is me."

"And I bet it won't surprise anyone that you came from the vain side of my personality." Lucy muttered, though she did not lose her smile.

Knock! *Knock!* *Knock!*

"Hey, Lucy!" Marin's voice sounded from the outside of Lucy's room. "Sun and I were gonna take Ed and Al to see Fonzie in Akane Beach. And we were hoping you'd wanna come with us. I mean, your 1500 would make transporting Al a lot easier. But even if you don't wanna go, can we use your truck?"

Hearing Marin's question, Lucy's smile widened even further. She had just been thinking about showing Zodiac to Alfonzo. And just like that, the opportunity presented itself in front of her.

"Sure, I don't mind driving." Lucy said, her tone making it clear to Marin that she was smiling. "Just let me pack a few things and I'll be ready soon."

"Okay, but you don't have to rush." Marin replied as she turned away from Lucy's door. "Winry commissioned a swimsuit from Lici. So, we won't be leaving for at least an hour."

"Got it!" Lucy shouted in response.

Then, wasting no time, Lucy sprinted into her closet and started picking out what she wanted to bring with her on the trip to Akane Beach.

Chapter 460: Unexpected, but not Unwelcomed

About an hour after the sun set, Alfonzo was currently outside of the villa in Akane Beach. More specifically, he was standing on the driveway with Riot and Bedlam covering his hands in their unsealed state. And the reason for that was simple, he was creating the materials necessary to build the motorcycle he spent most of the afternoon designing.

'I can't believe the only stationery shop in Akane Beach was in the resort.' Alfonzo thought to himself while creating the parts needed for the motorcycle's engine. 'I mean, don't the people living here write at any other time than when they go to the resort?'

["Yeah, that seems kinda weird, doesn't it? "] Bedlam asked rhetorically. ["Maybe it's just a ploy to get people to spend more money at the resort? I mean, as long as most people are there, they'll explore and more than likely spend a little. "]

'When you put it that way, it makes a lot more sense.' Alfonzo replied internally. 'Still, it's fucking stupid.'

What actually bothered Alfonzo the most about having to go to the resort was the fact that he ended up getting sucked into the atmosphere while he was there. As it turned out, the stationery shop was located right outside the casino. And in the end, he played a round of roulette before he bought what he needed.

["Quit your bitchin'."] Riot said in an irritated tone. ["Even if you did end up gambling unintentionally, you ended up winning 1.5 billion jewels. So, is there really any reason to complain?"]

Just as Riot said, despite the fact that Alfonzo had no intention of gambling when he arrived at the resort, he bet correctly on a single roulette spin. And his bet was similar to Ultear's when they came here for the "vacation" that was ruined by the Tower of Heaven incident. So, after betting a million jewels on a single number, 0001, he ended up receiving a 1,500 times payout.

'Well, if I look on the bright side, I have more than enough money on hand to buy that rechargeable lacrima I ordered.' Alfonzo replied internally after he and Bedlam fell silent for a few moments.

Vroom!

Before the conversation could continue any further, however, the loud sound of an engine echoed through the night.

"Hmm? That sounds like Lucy's truck." Alfonzo said as he finished creating the last of the components for the engine. "But why is it here?"

[“She probably came to visit you.”] Bedlam replied. [“I bet a lot of the girls were disappointed that you didn’t go back with Tear and Juvia, you know.”]

Nodding in understanding, Alfonzo turned towards the villa’s gates.

“Well, I better go open the gate.” Alfonzo said as he started walking down the driveway. “Right now, only Tear, Juvia, and I can open it.”

With that, Alfonzo continued to walk in silence. Meanwhile, just as Alfonzo thought, Lucy’s 1500, with Lucy in the driver’s seat, Marin in the passenger seat, Sun, Winry, and Edward in the back seat, and Alphonse resting in the flat bed, had just pulled up in front of the villa’s gate.

“We’re finally here.” Lucy said as she looked at the gate.

“Yeah, that was a long drive.” Winry said, sounding a bit sleepy.

“It would have been even longer if we had come here by train.” Marin said while smiling wryly.

“On top of that, we would have had to walk from the station.” Lucy said, glad she learned how to drive last year.

"I don't think we would have had to walk, actually." Sun said while looking up at the vehicle's ceiling. "I could have just called the people at my mansion to pick us up."

Immediately, Marin and Lucy's eyes lit up in realization. Meanwhile, Winry looked at Sun in surprise. However, after a moment of contemplation, she remembered that Sun was the heiress of the Seto Group. And when she did, Sun's statement did not sound so surprising anymore.

"Hey, Al, are you okay back there?" Edward, who was not paying any attention to the conversation going on in the truck's cab, asked in concern while looking back at the cab's back window.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Alphonse replied. "In fact, riding like this was much nicer than the ride we took that one time with Col. Mustang."

"Yeah, it was probably more comfortable for everyone inside, too." Edward replied with a smile.

"Anyway, let's go inside." Lucy said as she reached up to press the device used to open the gate at Alfonzo and Elicia's old mansion. However, when she did not feel the device, she was looking for her expression fell.

"Lucy, what's wrong?" Marin asked in a curious and concerned tone.

"I don't know what happened, but the device to open the gate is missing." Lucy said in a slightly panicked tone.

"Fonzie gave you a device for the gate at the villa?" Marin asked in an astonished tone. "I guess he does like you more than the rest of us. He didn't give me one. Then again, you're the only one of us he tried to pursue."

Hearing Marin's reply, Lucy froze. Then, she slowly lowered her head with an embarrassed flush on her face.

"Oh, that's right." Lucy muttered. "I forgot, I don't have one for here, either."

With that, the 1500's cab fell into silence.

"Lucy, you're so cute." Marin said with a giggle, breaking the awkward atmosphere and causing Lucy's blush to increase.

"Although Lucy is cute when she blushes, how are we gonna get in?" Winry asked with a smile. "I'm sure he won't hear us if we knock on the gate."

"Yeah, and jumping the gate is out of the question, too." Marin said with a smile. Though, she was also trying to stifle laughter as well."

"Why?" Edward asked curiously. "I mean, that seems like a pretty good idea to me."

"Well, if this place is anything like Alfonzo and Elicia's old mansion, the one Ur lives in now, then that's a really bad idea." Sun said with a smile while also trying to stifle her laughter.

"Yeah, we don't want anyone to end up like Gildarts or Gozaburo." Marin added.

As soon as Marin's words left her mouth, she could no longer hold back her laughter, as she remembered the sight of Gildarts and Gozaburo being flung over a hundred fifty feet away on the day she joined Fairy Tail.

While Sun smiled wryly, sure she could guess what Marin was laughing at, Winry, Lucy, Edward, and Alphonse looked at her curiously. Then, while Marin continued to laugh, Sun explained the barrier that was set up around the old mansion.

"Seriously?" Edward, who had started laughing uproariously by the time Sun was done with her story, said through his laughter. "I kinda wish I had been around to see that."

"You lived in that mansion for a while, too, didn't you, Lucy?" Winry asked while giggling. "How did you not know about that?"

"Well, I didn't live in that mansion for long before Alfonzo built the new one." Lucy replied with a smile. "But I did know about the security system. I just didn't know all the details, nor had I seen it in action. I mean, when I joined Fairy Tail, Gildarts had left on a quest for over three years. Plus, Gozaburo had mellowed out significantly, too."

Before the conversation could continue, however, the gates slowly opened. Though, the people in the cab were too busy laughing at Marin and Sun's story to notice. Luckily, there was one other person present who did notice.

"Hey, the gate is opening." Alphonse said from the flat bed.

Immediately, though the laughter did not stop, Marin, Sun, Winry, Lucy, and Edward all turned their attention to the gate. And when they did, they were just in time to see Alfonzo's figure appear after the gates swung inward.

"Fonzie!/Alfonzo!" Marin, Sun, and Lucy shouted happily in unison.

Then, Marin and Sun flung their doors open and jumped out of the 1500. And after pushing the doors closed again, they flung themselves at Alfonzo, who was looking at the truck with his arms crossed and a smile on his face.

"Hey, you two." Alfonzo said as he opened his arms. "I missed you."

In the next instant, Marin and Sun both slammed into Alfonzo's chest before he wrapped his arms around them in a tight hug.

"I missed you, too." Marin said as she snuggled into Alfonzo's embrace.

"Yeah, we all did." Sun added as she did the same. "We were all really sad that you didn't come back with Tear and Juvia."

"Yeah, sorry about that." Alfonzo replied with a frown. "But that damned Magic Council called me. And I didn't wanna do the trip from Magnolia to Akane Beach two more times in such a brief period. So, I decided to just stay here."

Marin and Sun nodded in understanding.

"Anyway, let's head inside." Alfonzo added with a smile. "This is no place to talk. Besides, I'm sure you're all tired. It's, like, an eight hour drive from Magnolia to here. So, I'm sure all six of you would like to get some rest."

"Yeah," Marin replied with a nod.

"We're hungry, too." Sun added while looking at Alfonzo with upturned eyes.

Smiling wryly, Alfonzo knew Sun wanted him to cook. And since he hadn't seen Marin, Sun, and Lucy in two months, he was happy to do so. Plus, since he could feel Winry, Edward, and Alphonse, as well, he would welcome his guests properly, too."

So, Alfonzo walked Marin and Sun to the side of the gate, making room for Lucy's 1500. Then, once the truck was inside the gate, he had everyone get out of the truck to register with the security system. After that, with Lucy driving her truck, they all headed towards the house. When they arrived near the house, however, everyone noticed all the materials lying on the drive way. On top of that, they all noticed the state of Alfonzo's arms, which were still coated in Riot and Bedlam, as well.

"Alfonzo, what's wrong with your arms?" Winry asked in a concerned tone. "Is that some kind of Automail? Did you lose them in another accident?"

"Huh?" Alfonzo exclaimed in confusion. Then, he looked down and remembered that Riot and Bedlam were still partially unsealed. "Oh, I forgot about them."

A moment later, Winry, Edward, and Alphonse looked on in disbelief as Riot and Bedlam peeled away from Alfonzo's arms before taking the shape of a pair of tonfa.

"What the hell was that?" Edward asked as he dashed forward to get a closer look at Riot and Bedlam. "Even if you use [Metal Magic], that should be scientifically impossible. And just what are these things made of?"

As he spoke, Edward reached out to touch Bedlam. However, before his fingers could reach its surface, a spark of violet electricity stopped him in his tracks.

"The hell?" Edward asked as he quickly pulled his hand back.

"Well, remember when I told you about my research into the soul?" Alfonzo asked as he placed Riot and Bedlam in the strap on his lower back. "These are the results of my research."

"Yeah, I have one, too." Sun said as she patted the shirasaya, Kanade, that she carries with her everywhere she goes.

"So do I." Marin said as she [Transformed] the multicolored bracelets she always wore into a pair of double-edged kodachi.

"Me, too." Lucy added as she reached down under her skirt and pulled a midnight purple and midnight blue whip with a white, four-pointed star at its tip from around her right thigh.

As soon as Lucy revealed her [Soul Armament], however, the atmosphere around Alfonzo, Marin, and Sun changed. Then, before anyone could speak, Alfonzo vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed. Then, when he reappeared, Lucy had been swept off her feet and was being held in a princess carry while Alfonzo spun her around.

"Congratulations, Lucy." Alfonzo said happily. "You finally unlocked the first part of the seal."

"Yeah, why didn't you tell us?" Marin asked with happiness radiating from her eyes. "We would have congratulated you, too."

"Yeah, why didn't you tell us, Lucy?" Sun asked, as well. "And what's your [Soul Armament's] name?"

"Her name is Zodiac." Lucy replied while smiling brightly from Alfonzo's arms. "And the reason I didn't tell you is because it only happened today."

'Lucy looks so happy in Alfonzo's arms.' Winry thought with a smile. Then, she looked at Edward before shaking her head. 'Nah, Ed is too short, my legs would almost be touching the ground if he held me like that.'

Although Edward was incapable of reading minds or hearing thoughts like Cobra of the Oración Seis, he felt himself growing irritated. Though, he had no idea why.

"Then, not even ten minutes later, Marin knocked on my door and asked me to come with them to Akane Beach." Lucy continued, completely unaware of Winry's thoughts and Edward's feelings. "So, I decided not to say anything until we met Alfonzo."

While Alfonzo, Marin, and Sun nodded in understanding, Winry, Edward, and Alphonse were still confused.

"That still doesn't tell us what they are." Edward said.

"We can talk about that while we eat." Alfonzo replied. "That's not a conversation you have out in the driveway, you know."

In response, Winry, Edward, and Alphonse nodded in understanding.

"That sounds great." Alphonse said while radiating excitement from his whole metallic body. "I've been missing the taste of your cooking."

Hearing that, Winry and Edward smiled. Ever since Alfonzo modified Alphonse's armor, he has been much more cheerful. Especially when it came to meal time. Although he still had to hide away his face before shoveling his food into his open face plate, the lonely feeling he gave off whenever it was time to eat was completely gone.

"But I'm actually curious to know what all these materials are for." Alphonse continued while pointing at a particular set of materials. "If I had to guess, it looks like you were going to build a magic vehicle. Since those look like the parts for an engine. But they're so small..."

"That's what she said." Alfonzo said casually.

"... that I'm not sure." Alphonse continued while casually ignoring Alfonzo's comment.

"Yeah, now that you mention it." Edward said while also taking a look at the parts on the driveway.

"Oh, it's a magic vehicle engine, alright." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "But this one is much smaller than any engine I've ever built before."

"Oh, is it for one of those two-wheelers that have been getting popular recently?" Winry asked with her eyes sparkling.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

"When it's done, do you mind if I take it for a spin?" Winry asked excitedly.

Immediately, Alfonzo and Sun's faces paled. They had both just remembered when Winry drove them back from the mine in Resenbool

"Absolutely not!" Alfonzo shouted.

"No way!" Sun shouted at the same time.

While Marin, Lucy, Edward, and Alphonse were thoroughly confused by Alfonzo and Sun's explosive denials, Winry pouted. However, she did not stop pestering Alfonzo about it as he made a shed to store the materials before the group made their way into the house. But when Alfonzo served everyone dinner, she forgot all about it... For a while, at least.