

Fairy Tail 481

Chapter 481: Lucy, Brandish, and Aquarius

"What... the hell..." Lucy muttered in confusion, her brain unable to keep up with what was going on.

Naturally, the other ladies of Fairy Tail were having similar thoughts about the situation, as well. One minute, Brandish was rampaging, ready to murder Lucy for revenge. In the next instant, Brandish had lowered her head politely to one of Lucy's Celestial Spirits.

Even Irene, who had been watching the show from a distance, made her way over to Brandish's side, curious to know why she would stop the way she did.

"So, I'm guessing you know this Celestial Spirit, right, Brandish?" Irene asked in a curious tone.

"Yes, that's right." Brandish said, not raising her head as she replied.

At the same time, Aquarius raised an eyebrow when Irene appeared.

'That woman, she's not human.' Aquarius thought as she focused on the new arrival. 'And she's dangerous... Really dangerous.'

With her eyes narrowing, Aquarius scanned her surroundings. Finally, when her eyes fell on Alfonzo and Elicia, they widened slightly. Then, after a moment, her eyes opened completely as she pointed a finger at Elicia.

"You! You're the one that made clothes for me and the rest of Lucy's Celestial Spirits, aren't you?" Aquarius asked in a shocked tone.

"That's right." Elicia replied with a nod and a smile. "Lucy asked me to make them for you all. She wanted to thank you for always being there when she needed them."

Immediately, Aquarius snapped her head back in Lucy's direction with an astonished expression on her face. Meanwhile, Lucy turned her face away with an embarrassed blush.

"Geez, Lici, it would have been fine if you told anyone else..." Lucy muttered quietly. "But why did you have to tell Aquarius?"

Lucy's mutter was enough to snap Aquarius out of her stupor. Unfortunately for Lucy, because she had turned her head away, she missed the loving smile Aquarius put on. However, her loving smile turned back to her usual, irritated expression before she addressed Lucy again.

"Well, at least you have some tact." Aquarius said haughtily. "How many times have I pulled your ass out of the fire over the years."

"*Sigh* And this is why I didn't want her to know." Lucy said exasperatedly.

While Lucy missed Aquarius' change in expression, the other Fairy Tail wizards did not. So, they simply smiled sweetly at Lucy and Aquarius, causing Lucy to be confused.

"Don't worry about it, Lucy." Alfonzo said as he approached the confused Celestial wizard. Then, he pulled her into a hug and kissed her on the forehead before continuing. "Instead, we should try to fix this problem."

"Okay." Lucy replied in an embarrassed tone as she buried her face in Alfonzo's chest.

Once again, Aquarius eyes widened in chock. Then, she pointed a trembling finger in Alfonzo and Lucy's direction.

"Im-Im-Impossible!" Aquarius exclaimed with a shudder. "You... You... You have a b-b-boyfriend?"

"Huh?" Lucy replied in confusion. "Yeah, I told you that more than a year ago, didn't I?"

"I thought you just said that to get me to stop making fun of you about it." Aquarius replied while backing away from Lucy. "I thought you were just jealous that I had one and you didn't."

Hearing that, Lucy could only look on with a dumbfounded expression. Then, she eventually gritted her teeth before putting on a sneer.

"Well, I do have a boyfriend..." Lucy said in an agitated tone. Then, she wrapped her arms around Alfonzo's neck, pulled herself upwards, and kissed him on the lips before she continued. "... and he's hot."

Having the words she usually used to mock Lucy thrown back in her face, Aquarius, despite the fact that she was floating in the air, staggered back. Meanwhile, the Fairy Tail wizards who were familiar with the relationship between Lucy and Aquarius could only shake their heads. At the same time, Irene watched in interest.

"Anyway, how bout we go somewhere so we can settle this little conflict." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly and combing his fingers through Lucy's hair. "You two are welcome to come have breakfast at my house. Then, we can hopefully squash this beef between you."

Hearing that, Irene's eyes lit up, though it was quite subtle. However, neither Alfonzo nor Elicia missed it.

'So, they really are after Fonzie, huh?' Elicia thought to herself. 'I guess Zeref wants to know more about him. What makes him tick, and how someone so young was able to beat up Serena.'

'*Sigh* This is gonna be a pain in the ass.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'I wanted to get those two to change sides before the invasion. But I don't know how to get Irene to jump ship. Convincing Brandish shouldn't be too hard after the truth about Layla, Grammi, and Zoldeo comes out, though.'

"That sounds lovely." Irene replied, drawing the attention of the other ladies onto herself.

"Wow! She really does look a lot like you, Erza." Marin exclaimed in disbelief.

Naturally, the others had similar thoughts. And although they felt that before, Erza was not in Magnolia to compare them directly. But now, the similarities were so uncanny that no one could think of them as anything other than relatives.

Even Brandish, who has had her head lowered ever since she made eye contact with Aquarius, could not help but glance back and forth between Erza and Irene.

"Old Man!" Alfonzo shouted, bringing everyone out of their thoughts. "You can come over, too. But if you break anything in my house, I swear to God, I'll drown you in the lake!"

Hearing that, everyone turned their heads in a certain direction. And at the end of their lines of sight, Gildarts, who had been watching the altercation from a distance, could be seen approaching the group.

"Come on, Kid." Gildarts said while scratching the back of his head. "Don't embarrass me in front of the guests. You make it sound like I break everything I lay my hands on."

In response, Alfonzo only rolled his eyes as he turned back to the mansion with Lucy still in his arms. At the same time, Elicia glared at Gildarts with everything she had, sending him a warning that she would get involved as well if he broke anything. Meanwhile, the other Fairy Tail wizards could only shake their heads as they followed Alfonzo back to the mansion.

"Well, come on, Little Brandish." Aquarius said in an annoyed tone. "I wanna know what all this was about, too. *Sigh* I'm gonna be late for my date at this rate. I hope Scorpio won't be mad."

With that, Aquarius floated along to the mansion as well. Gildarts on the other hand, only shrugged his shoulders as he followed behind the rest, leaving Irene and Brandish behind.

Then, when the rest of the group were far enough to be out of earshot, Irene glared at Brandish.

"I don't know why you flew off the handle like that, Brandish." Irene said in a menacing tone. "But I guess I'll find out shortly. Either way, you almost ruined our plans. And you will be punished for that when we return to the hotel."

In response, Brandish only nodded her head minutely. Then, after getting the nod, Irene strode after the Fairy Tail wizards.

"Either way, this incident got us access to one of those restricted areas our magic power could not penetrate." Irene said. "So, let's go. We can't miss this opportunity."

Once again, Brandish nodded her head before following Irene towards the mansion on the lake.

A few minutes later, the entire group, minus Alfonzo, who was cooking breakfast, and Aquarius, who was floating, had taken seats at the kitchen table, waiting to find out why Brandish said that Lucy's mother killed her mother.

"So, are you gonna tell me why you were spouting that nonsense about Layla killing Grammi?" Aquarius asked impatiently, as Brandish had only sat with her head lowered since the group sat down.

Hearing that, Brandish raised her head and looked at Aquarius for a second. Then, her gaze fell on Lucy, and her expression was filled with wrath in an instant.

Brandish then began her story. Stating that she could vaguely remember living in the Heartfilia Kanzen HQ when she was a young child. Then, one day, her mother, Grammi, took her away from there. And while they traveled, that was when she got to know Aquarius, who was contracted to Grammi at the time.

She also mentioned how Grammi would summon Aquarius to play with Brandish whenever she was busy, hoping to stop Brandish from feeling lonely when she could not be around.

At the same time, everyone else wondered what Aquarius could have done to such a young child that she was so afraid of her.

"Eventually, when we reached our destination, my mother left me with a friend so that she could return to the Heartfilia Kanzen HQ one more time." Brandish said, tears pooling in her eyes as she spoke. "However, that was the last time I ever saw her. She was killed while visiting that woman!"

"No, that's impossible!" Lucy shouted back. "I remember when Grammi came back. She stayed with us until Mom passed away from Magic Deficiency syndrome. Then, before she left, she gave me Aquarius' Key."

"Lies!" Brandish shouted angrily. "Your mother just wanted my mother's key. So, when she came by, she killed her."

With that, Lucy and Brandish continued to argue their version of the way events unfolded.

"Enough!" Aquarius shouted. She then continued in a stern tone. "Lucy's right, Brandish. Layla was too weak to have even considered doing anything to Grammi back then. She only lived another week after Grammi returned to be with her at the end. I'm not sure what happened to her after that, though, as my key had been given to Lucy."

Hearing that, Brandish opened her eyes wide. However, it was clear that she still did not believe her... at least not fully.

"Then... how did my mother die?" Brandish asked skeptically. "If it wasn't Layla wanting her Celestial key, then who was it?"

"*Sigh* It was Mom's disciple, Zoldeo." Lucy replied. "When Mom fell ill, she gave her three keys to Grammi, the butler, Sebastian, and her disciple, Zoldeo."

"Oh, I remember that guy." Aquarius said in a tone filled with disgust. "He always gave me a really bad feeling. And after what he did to Capricorn, that bad feeling was confirmed."

"Yeah, he enslaved his body for years." Lucy replied with a nod. Then, she returned her attention back to Brandish. "Anyway, he had fallen to the dark side of magic. As a result, he wanted all of Mom's keys. So, when Grammi left our house, he killed her, thinking she still had Aquarius' key."

"And where is this Zoldeo now?" Irene asked calmly. Though, everyone could tell she was furious.

"He's dead." Lucy replied with her head lowered. "When I freed Capricorn from his influence, his soul completely dispersed.

Hearing that, Irene nodded in satisfaction. Due to an incident in her past, she really hated treacherous men. So, she was happy that this Zoldeo got what he deserved. But if he had not, she would have taken the time to find him while she was on Ishgar and make him regret betraying those he should have been close to.

Meanwhile, Brandish only lowered her head in response to Lucy's story, causing the room to fall into a few seconds of tense silence. However, the silence was broken when Brandish raised her head with her eyes bloodshot and filled with tears.

"You're lying!" Brandish shouted in agitation. "You're just trying to protect your mother!"

"That's enough, Brandish." Aquarius said sternly. "Everything Lucy said is true."

With that, Aquarius snapped her fingers. Then, a torrent of water shot out of the urn she carried, encircling all those at the kitchen table.

"You better not cause any water damage, Aquarius." Alfonzo shouted from the kitchen. "If you do, your contract with Lucy won't save you. And if that boyfriend of yours, Scorpio steps up, he'll get slapped down, too."

Hearing Alfonzo's threat, Aquarius glared in his direction. However, when she made eye contact with him, all her irritation disappeared immediately. The promise of pain swirling in the depths of his eyes let her know that it was not an idle threat.

"Hmph!" Aquarius snorted as she looked away.

Despite the way she acted, Aquarius made sure to be extra careful while controlling her water. Eventually, all the ladies, and Gildarts, were enclosed in a bubble of water. And while inside, they saw everything that happened after Layla fell sick to the time Grammi gave her key to Lucy.

Then after showing everyone the past, Aquarius returned to the Celestial Spirit World. However, as soon as she was gone, another Celestial Spirit, Capricorn, summoned himself to continue the explanation. Then, once his explanation was complete, he, too, returned to the Celestial Spirit World.

A moment later, Brandish slumped lifelessly in her seat.

"What am I supposed to do now..." Brandish asked lifelessly. "I've been getting stronger all for the chance to take my revenge. What reason do I have to keep going now? The real target for my revenge is already dead..."

No one knew how to comfort Brandish, whose reason for living had just been taken away from her. So, they could only stare in silence. The silence was eventually broken, however, when Alfonzo arrived with breakfast.

On a large platter floating behind Alfonzo, there were freshly baked breads and rolls, thinly sliced meats, cheeses, and Liverwurst. Basically, a classic German breakfast.

"I'm not gonna say something hypocritical like it's not good to live for revenge." Alfonzo said as he lowered the platter onto the table. Then, as he made a plate for Brandish, he continued. "Hell, for thirteen years, that was the only reason I trained, too. You see, I lost my parents when I was a kid, too. So did Lici."

Hearing Alfonzo speaking from so close by, Brandish could not help but raise her head. Everyone else at the table focused on his words, as well.

"Unfortunately, because of a rebellion started by a certain redhead, the ones who killed our parents died before we could meet them and take revenge for ourselves." Alfonzo continued while smiling sweetly at Erza, who smiled back in return. "Still, that didn't stop us from living. We found other reasons to do so, after all."

As he reached that point, Alfonzo placed the plate in front of Brandish. Then, he began making another.

"Over the years we were preparing for our revenge, we found friends, love, hobbies, careers." Alfonzo said as he made the second plate. "So, although it left a void when we found out we were unable to get our revenge, we had other things to live for. And I wouldn't be surprised if you were the same. Unless you only spent the last few years training and doing nothing else."

Brandish did not respond to Alfonzo's words. Instead, she only stared at him blankly. Meanwhile, Alfonzo finished making the second plate. Then, he placed it in front of Irene, who watched him with interest. Once the plate was in front of her, she looked down at it.

'Although it smells amazing, it's a shame that I won't be able to taste it.' Irene thought to herself with lament. 'Still, I have to eat this or else, I'll look suspicious.'

"Anyway, instead of dwelling on the lost opportunity for revenge, why not relax your mind with a good meal?" Alfonzo continued with a smile as he took a seat at the head of the table. "Now, everybody, dig in."

However, all the Fairy Tail wizards remained still, other than Gildarts, who started making himself a plate, it had been years since he had Alfonzo's cooking, after all. The others, on the other hand, watched Irene and Brandish intently. It had become a form of entertainment for all of them to see people's first reactions to Alfonzo's cooking.

"Mmm~~~~~!" x 2

And just as expected, both Irene and Brandish moaned quite sensually, causing Alfonzo to cross his legs and Gildarts to stuff a napkin into his nostrils. Despite all that, Alfonzo wore a proud smile on his face.

'If you think losing your sense of taste is enough to keep you from falling victim to my cooking, you've underestimated me way too much.' Alfonzo thought as he finally started making a plate for himself.

Chapter 482: Irene's New Plan

"Mmm~~~~~!" x 2

While everyone else at the table wore an as expected expression, Irene and Brandish were surprised by their reactions to Alfonzo's cooking.

'What did I just do?' brandish thought to herself. 'That was so embarrassing. Even if the food was the best I've ever tasted, that was too much.'

As that thought passed through her mind, Brandish, with her cheeks as red as Erza and Irene's hair, slightly raised her head to peak at the reactions of the people sharing the table with her. And what she saw were amused smiles.

'They look like they were expecting this.' Brandish thought to herself. 'Like this has happened to all of them before. Does that mean that this is a common occurrence.'

While Brandish continued to think about what just happened, Irene was also completely dumbfounded by her reaction.

'I can taste the food...' Irene muttered internally. 'How is this possible? Ever since that day, I've lost the ability to taste anything I've eaten. It's been over four hundred years since the last time I had the pleasure of enjoying food.'

With that thought in her head, Irene's eyes flashed dangerously.

'It looks like I will be taking him back with me to Alvarez, after all.' Irene thought to herself. 'That way, I can kill two birds with one stone. Not only will I have a chef capable of making food that I can taste, but the emperor will also be able to pump him for as much information as he wants. I'll just have to make sure that he leaves him with enough energy to cook for me.'

Reaching that point, Irene glanced at Erza, who was happily eating her own breakfast. Then, her expression turned complicated for a moment. However, before anyone realized it, her expression turned back to normal as she continued to eat.

Meanwhile, Elicia's gaze shifted between Alfonzo and Irene repeatedly. So, she naturally noticed the dangerous glint in Irene's eyes. She was also the only one who noticed the complicated expression when she looked at Erza. However, that was not what concerned her at the moment.

'How did he do that?' Elicia asked herself. 'Irene was supposed to have lost her sense of taste when she turned into a dragon over four hundred years ago. But she just had a food-gasm. What in the world did Fonzie do?'

["I would have thought you would have given up on understanding some of the things he does by now."] Scylla said while rubbing her temples at the absurdity of Alfonzo's latest feat that should be impossible. ["You should be more concerned with the fact that Irene is probably thinking about kidnapping him."]

'Nah, you don't need to worry About that.' Elicia said while mentally waving off Scylla's concerns. 'I'm sure he'll have a countermeasure for that.'

["so, you believe in him enough to not worry about him getting kidnapped by one of the strongest people alive."] Scylla replied in an exasperated tone. ["But when he makes it so someone who can't taste food is able to taste food... For the second time, I might add... that bothers you?"]

'Hmm... Now that you mention it, this is the second time, isn't it.' Elicia thought to herself while continuing to eat. 'The first time was Al, right? I guess this isn't so incredible, then. Especially since Al didn't even have a body.'

["*Sigh* Once again, you didn't think, huh?"] Scylla replied. ["After you hid your [Camouflage Magic], I thought you were making progress. But I guess I was getting ahead of myself."]

Rolling her eyes, Elicia decided she was done conversing with Scylla, opting to focus solely on her breakfast. And while ignoring Scylla, who was constantly making fun of her, the meal ended.

"That was delightful." Irene said calmly with a smile on her face. "I can't remember the last time I had a meal that delicious."

"I'm glad you liked it." Alfonzo replied with a smile of his own. "By the way, I don't think I caught your name, Miss."

"Oh my, how rude of me." Irene said as her smile widened. "My name is Irene... Irene Belserion. It's a pleasure to meet you all."

Since everyone knew Brandish's name after the episode from earlier, the wizards from Fairy Tail went around and introduced themselves.

"To think, someone not of the nobility has so many women, it's truly unexpected." Irene said while wearing a mock expression of surprise.

Brandish, on the other hand, wore a genuine expression of surprise while she stared at Alfonzo as if he were a different species.

'I wanna call him a playboy.' Brandish thought to herself. 'And that makes me wanna beat him up. But calling him a playboy would be wrong. Especially since all his women know about each other and have such a good relationship. Instead, he's more like some kind of harem king.'

While Brandish was having those thoughts, Alfonzo and his girls could only smile wryly. They had seen that expression far too many times to not know what it meant.

"More amazing, however, is this home." Irene said, this time with genuine praise. "It's quite impressive."

"Thanks again." Alfonzo replied.

"Yeah, from what I heard, Fonzie designed and built it himself." Shizuka said with a smile.

"Oh, that is impressive." Irene said, the interest in her eyes growing thanks to Shizuka's statement.

'Does that mean he's the one who came up with the barrier around the artificial island?' Irene asked herself. 'On top of that, now that I'm inside the barrier, there's another surrounding the mansion, as well. Unfortunately, I can't see through the essence of either of these barriers.'

"Yeah, he built it to serve as the venue for our wedding last year." Elicia added happily.

"Oh, that sounds rather romantic." Irene replied with a smile.

"Yes, it really was." Mirajane said while smiling pleasantly. "And the ceremony and reception were quite beautiful, as well."

"Yeah, I can't wait 'til it's my turn." Sun said with a smile.

As the women continued to talk about last year's wedding, Gildarts could only look at them with disbelief. Though, he was experienced enough to not let his emotions show up on his face.

'They didn't forget that these two women alone could probably destroy our entire guild by themselves, right?' Gildarts asked himself incredulously.

Before he could sink too far into his thoughts, Alfonzo approached his seat before patting him on the shoulder.

"Hey, Gildarts, mind coming to have a spar with me?" Alfonzo asked. "I've been training while I've been away, but I haven't been able to see how much I've improved."

"Uh... Sure." Gildarts replied. "But is now the time for that with your guests?"

"Hahaha..." Alfonzo chuckled. "Look at them, Old Man. They're slipping into the territory of girl talk. And I know better than to try and get in the middle of that."

Looking back at the others, Gildarts noticed that they were all chatting animatedly about Alfonzo and Elicia's wedding. Then, he shook his head and stood up.

"Fine, I'll come with you." Gildarts said while smiling wryly. "I'm interested in finding out how much you've grown, too."

"Good." Alfonzo replied with a nod. Then, he turned his attention towards the group of women as he continued. "Alright, I'm gonna go train with Gildarts. So, you girls have fun."

"Okay, see you later, Fonzie." Marin replied with a smile. Then, she continued as if she just remembered something. "Oh, before you go, can you set up the projector in the living room? I wanna show the wedding recording to Saeko, Saya, Shizuka, Rika, Brandish, and Irene."

"Yeah, Please, Fonzie?" Shizuka asked with puppy dog eyes.

'*Sigh* Even if I had any idea of refusing, I wouldn't be able to with Shizuka looking at me like that.' Alfonzo muttered internally.

["Yeah, it's like her puppy dog eyes get more powerful every day."] Bedlam added while looking away from Shizuka.

["Seriously, she's gonna surpass Little Elicia in a few months."] Riot said.

'And the worst thing is... Little Elicia's puppy dog eyes will lose effectiveness as she gets older.' Alfonzo continued. 'But somehow, Shizuka's are getting more potent with age.'

"Sure." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "Just give me a few minutes."

With that, Alfonzo and Gildarts walked away from the kitchen table. Then, they headed upstairs to Alfonzo's room, where Alfonzo opened a safe. A safe where he kept his most precious possessions. Then, he took a lacrima out of the safe.

"No key or combination, huh?" Gildarts asked while examining the block of adamantite that served as Alfonzo's safe. "I guess the only way to get in is by using [Metal Magic], right?"

"Not just [Metal Magic]." Alfonzo said. Then, he pointed at the safe as he continued. "It has to be my [Metal Magic]. Otherwise, all the sigils etched into the safe's surface will reject it."

Hearing that, Gildarts examined the safe more closely. Yet, he was unable to see any of the sigils Alfonzo mentioned.

"*Sigh* Even when focusing my magic power into my eyes, I can't see any of the sigils you're talking about." Gildarts said while shaking his head. "You really have grown by a lot since I first met you back then. If only Bianca was here to see how much you've grown, I bet she'd be bragging to everyone she knew about you, every day."

In response, Alfonzo only smiled. Then, after receiving a pat on his back, he closed the safe. To Gildarts' surprise, however, Alfonzo did not immediately leave his bedroom. Instead, he made his way to his workshop.

"What's up, Kid?" Gildarts asked in a curious tone. "What else do you need to get for the projection?"

"Nah, this isn't for the projection." Alfonzo said from his workshop. A moment later, he re-emerged while carrying a pair of pendants. "I've got something for you and Ur. Think of it as a congratulation gift for the start of your relationship. In fact, I wanted to give these to you earlier... But I didn't have time with the Magic Council shit going on. And when I finally got back to Magnolia, I forgot."

As Alfonzo approached Gildarts, he raised his hands. Seeing that, Gildarts' attention was drawn to Alfonzo's hands.

In Alfonzo's right hand was a pendant in the shape of a cube while he held a second pendant, in the shape of a snow flake, in his left.

"As two of the strongest members of the guild, you two should have had one of these a long time ago." Alfonzo said with a smile. "But I got kinda busy. So..."

"Well, better late than never." Gildarts said while reaching for the pendant in Alfonzo's right hand, knowing that the cube was meant for him. "At least you didn't forget about us. But with this, the chances that you'll ever beat me just got lower."

In actuality, Alfonzo had completely forgotten about Gildarts and Ur when it came to making [Soul Armaments]. But they did not need to know about that.

"Well, I did technically beat you last year at the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament." Alfonzo said while smiling cheekily.

"That doesn't count." Gildarts said, quickly dismissing that fight. "Anyway, let's get going. I still wanna see how much you've improved."

"Yeah, yeah..." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "I won't be using Riot and Bedlam in this fight, though. Don't want those two to know exactly how strong I am, after all."

"That's probably a good idea." Gildarts replied with a nod. "Still, I should be able to get a pretty good feel of how much you've grown even if you don't go all out."

With that, Gildarts put his and Ur's [Soul Armament Embryos] into his cloak while the two made their way down to the living room. And when they arrived, all the ladies were sitting on couches, waiting to see the recording of the wedding. So, after exchanging a few words, Alfonzo and Gildarts headed down to the training room after Alfonzo set up the projection.

Meanwhile, Elicia and the other ladies watched the recording of the wedding. And those who were not present were blown away by what they saw.

"That battle for the bouquet was pretty intense." Rika said with a smile.

"It was." Saeko added. "And Bisca looked so determined."

"I guess that's why Alzack jumped straight to proposal instead of dating, huh?" Rika said.

"Lici, your dress was so pretty." Shizuka said excitedly. "And Fonzie looked so handsome in his tuxedo."

"Thanks." Elicia replied. "I spent a lot of time making all the outfits for the bridal party."

"You made those all by yourself?" Brandish asked curiously.

"Well, she is the Magic Seamstress, Ishgar's most popular fashion designer, you know." Ultear said, sounding extremely proud of Elicia's accomplishments.

"But to think he was such a good singer." Saya said, still spell bound by Alfonzo's voice.

It should be noted that Elicia skipped through the less interesting parts of the ceremony and reception. Otherwise, it would have taken almost twelve hours to watch the whole recording. However, it took them a little less than two hours to watch everything.

"Anyway, would you mind if I asked for a tour of such a magnificent home?" Irene asked with a smile.

'She's probably looking to dig up our secrets.' Elicia thought to herself without changing her expression. 'But I know Fonzie's got countermeasures against that.'

["Yeah, I remember the first time you tried to scan the house from the inside."] Scylla replied. ["Before you were registered with the security system, you couldn't sense anything outside of the room you were in."]

'Yup, an all though it's small, I can see her eyebrows twitching every time she tries and comes back with nothing.'

Just as Elicia said, Irene has been trying to use subtle magic spells to scan the entire mansion ever since she entered. Unfortunately for her, each room was isolated to everyone not registered with the mansion's security system. So Irene's irritation was mounting.

["And if she were to end up losing it, I'd feel really sorry for her."] Scylla continued. ["I mean, if the security system is fully activated, Fonzie said it could subdue someone with five times Gildarts' magic power reserves with no issue."]

'Well, for her sake, I hope she doesn't try anything stupid.' Elicia said internally.

"Of course not." Elicia replied.

"Yeah, I like giving the tour." Sun added.

Just like Elicia, everyone else knew how meticulous Alfonzo could be. So, they did not worry about Irene and Brandish doing anything. However, just as they were all ready to leave the living room, the mansion's residents felt someone enter the barrier around the house.

"Hey everyone, I'm home!" Cana shouted from the mansion's front door. "I can't believe none of you were at the guild at this time of day. *Sigh* I wish Fonzie was home, too, though."

"I guess Ur didn't tell her that we were back early, huh?" Elicia said as she sprinted towards the front door with a smile on her face. "I hope she told her about our guests, though."

Chapter 483: I Think It's Time, Cana

"Hey everyone, I'm home!" Cana shouted while closing the mansion's front door. "I can't believe none of you were at the guild at this time of day. *Sigh* I wish Fonzie was home, too, though."

As she finished shouting, Cana heard the sound of footsteps rushing through the house. Tilting her head in confusion, she closed the front door. Then, she took a step towards the stairs, intending to put her luggage in the bedroom before getting cleaned up.

Before she could get too far from the front door, however, Cana saw the source of all the noise. And when she did, she opened her eyes wide in surprise. Then, she smiled brightly as she opened her arms for a hug.

"Lici, you're back!" Cana shouted as Elicia rushed into her open arms.

"Cana, I missed you!" Elicia said as she sank into her best friend's hug. "You have no idea how sad I was when I found out you were on a quest when we got back yesterday."

"Well, I'm back now." Cana replied as she took one of her arms from around Elicia. Then, she reached into her card pouch and pulled out her storage card as she continued. "And I'm happy to see you, too."

"Come on, let's go put your luggage away." Elicia said with a smile as she let go of Cana and started pulling her towards the stairs. "I'll tell you all about our trip."

Smiling just as widely, Cana allowed herself to be pulled along. After a few minutes, the two arrived in Cana's room. Then, while Cana put her luggage away, Elicia sat on Cana's bed and told Cana about everything that happened while she, Alfonzo, Marin, and Ikaruga visited Quatro Cerberus.

"Finally, you put that drunk idiot in his place." Cana said before chugging down nearly a quarter of the bottle of gin she took out of her storage card.

"Pot, methinks thy name is Cana." Elicia said while deadpanning.

"Whatever." Cana replied while rolling her eyes. "At least I've never mistaken someone for being in love with me and threatened to kill their wife so they could be free."

"Fair enough." Elicia said with a shoulder shrug. "Anyway, your dad is here, too."

"Really?" Cana asked skeptically. "Why?"

"Your stepmom didn't tell you when you went to the guild hall to report on your quest?" Elicia asked while smiling cheekily.

"Um.... I haven't reported yet." Cana replied while smiling sheepishly.

"What? Then, how did you know no one was at the guild?" Elicia asked curiously.

"Well, after the doors opened, I noticed that no one was inside." Cana said while scratching her cheek.

"So, I left. It's not like giving my report a day later is gonna kill me, right?"

Instead of responding immediately, Elicia stared at Cana blankly. And as the amount of time that Elicia stared increased, Cana felt more and more uncomfortable.

"*Sigh* Fine~." Cana whined. "I'll go give my report after I get cleaned up."

"Good." Elicia replied while nodding her head. "Anyway, some potential enemies are in our house right now, too."

"What?" Cana asked in a confused tone. "What do you mean?"

Elicia then went on to tell Cana about Irene and Brandish. When she eventually finished her explanation, Cana tipped her head back and chugged down another half of her bottle of gin.

"Seriously, I thought my dad was a freak." Cana said after she finished drinking. "But where do people with more magic power than him come from? Wait... Did you call Ur my stepmom?"

"Wow! That was a really late reaction, Cana." Elicia replied in a dumbfounded tone.

"Yeah, I know." Cana replied. "But I'm really tired. Like, Really, really, tired."

"Was the quest that hard?" Elicia asked curiously with a hint of concern in her tone.

"No, not really." Cana replied while shaking her head. "But doing the quest without causing any collateral damage is really tiring."

Immediately, Elicia opened her eyes wide. Then, she quickly stood up and placed her hand on Cana's forehead.

"Hmm... No fever..." Elicia muttered.

"Of course, I don't have a fever." Cana replied sharply while sweeping Elicia's hand away. "I'm tired, not sick."

"Yeah, but you just said you didn't cause any collateral damage." Elicia said in a confused tone. "So, I thought..."

"Why does that have to mean I'm sick?" Cana asked in an offended tone. "I just wanted Fonzie to be proud of me when I told him about it. Besides, it's not like this is the first time I've..."

The more she spoke, the quieter Cana's voice became.

"Cana, you're so cute!" Elicia squealed as she lunged towards Cana for a hug.

"Anyway, I can put my luggage away and get cleaned up later." Cana said, clearly trying to change the subject. "I miss Fonzie. I wanna go see him. Oh, and I guess I'll go see my dad, too."

Rolling her eyes at her best friend's antics, Elicia eventually shrugged her shoulders and released Cana from her hug, before turning towards the door. A moment later, Elicia and Cana were in the elevator, heading down to the training room.

"What are Alfonzo and my dad doing in the training room?" Cana asked curiously.

"Well, Fonzie asked Gildarts to spar with him." Elicia replied. "He said he wanted to check his progress."

Cana's eyes opened wide when she heard what Elicia had to say. Then, she could not help but wish that the elevator would move faster, hoping not to miss the rest of the spar.

A few moments later, the elevator doors opened. Immediately, Cana ran towards the training room, hoping that the spar was not over.

Bang!

As soon as she opened the door, Cana was met with the sight of Alfonzo being sent flying backwards before heavily impacting one of the walls. However, before he could even fall to the ground, Alfonzo pressed his feet against the wall behind him before bounding forward.

"I see you can take more of a beating than before, eh, Kid?" Gildarts said with a battle thirsty smile. "We've been at this for at least an hour and a half, yet you don't seem hurt at all."

"That's right." Alfonzo replied while wearing a similar smile. "I can do this all day. But you look like you're about to pass out, Old Man. You sure you're not ready to quit? Wouldn't want you to throw out your hip!"

"Damn brat!" Gildarts shouted as he blocked a punch from Alfonzo with his forearm. "I'm getting tired of all these old man jokes. I'm not even fifty yet!"

Throwing a punch of his own, Gildarts was forced to take a step back when Alfonzo slipped it and kicked at his left knee. Gildarts then lunged forward with [Crash Magic] coating his fist.

Once again ducking under Gildarts punch, Alfonzo turned his body as he gripped Gildarts' outstretched arm and performed a shoulder throw, slamming Gildarts' back into the mat covering the training room's floor.

"Gah!" Gildarts grunted as the air was forced out of his lungs.

Not giving Gildarts a chance to recover, Alfonzo immediately moved to put him in a triangle choke. Unfortunately, Gildarts recovered faster than he expected. AS a result, Alfonzo ended up putting him in an arm bar due to Gildarts moving his head.

"This isn't good." Alfonzo muttered.

"No, it's great." Gildarts replied as he hopped up to his feet with Alfonzo still clinging to his arm.

In the next instant, Gildarts tried to slam Alfonzo into the floor. However, as he was expecting Gildarts to take this action, Alfonzo quickly released his submission hold. Then, before he could be slammed onto the mat, Alfonzo managed to get his feet down. Then, with Gildarts' arm still in his grasp, Alfonzo forcefully spun before letting him go.

"Shit!" Gildarts exclaimed as he flew through the air towards one of the walls.

Bang!

A moment later, Gildarts slammed into the wall, back first.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Thunderclap]." Alfonzo chanted as he dashed forward like a bolt of lightning.

Recovering quickly, though not quick enough to get out of the way of Alfonzo's attack, Gildarts raised his guard. However, when Alfonzo appeared right in front of him with a devious smile on his face, Gildarts knew he made the wrong move.

Clap!

Alfonzo, instead of attacking Gildarts' body, raised his hands and brought them together right next to Gildarts' left ear. As a result, a clap, as loud as thunder, echoed through the training room. On top of that, there was a blinding flash accompanying the loud sound.

Completely caught off guard by this unorthodox tactic, Gildarts ended up completely disoriented by the improvised flash bang. So, he put up very little resistance when he was slammed into the mat once again.

Not only Gildarts suffered from Alfonzo's spell, either. Elicia and Cana, who were watching from the room's entrance, were also affected as collateral damage. On top of that, the loud sound could be heard from every corner of the mansion.

A few moments later, Elicia, Cana, and Gildarts regained their sight and hearing. And when they did, they found Alfonzo kneeling next to Gildarts with his right index finger less than an inch away from Gildarts' forehead. On top of that, Alfonzo's outstretched arm was sparking with violet electricity while a small chunk of metal hovered between Alfonzo's finger and Gildarts' head.

"Damn, where do you come up with all these tricks, Kid?" Gildarts muttered while shaking his head.

"Well, when you fight people who are that much stronger than you, you have to think outside the box." Alfonzo replied.

"Even so, how did you get past the [Crash Magic] I coated myself in before you clapped your hands?"

"Because my magic never came in contact with yours." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Instead, you were only hit with the light and sound my spell produced. Physics for the win, baby!"

"*Sigh* I guess that means I lose." Gildarts replied. "Now, you can get that electricity away from me. You're making my hair curl up. Dispel that piece of metal, too. Were you trying to kill me, or something?"

"Tch! It's not like anyone would be able to tell." Alfonzo replied disdainfully as he pulled his arm back and dispelled his magic. "It's just like Ur said, you look like a hobo, anyway."

"Fonzie!"

Immediately upon hearing that voice, Alfonzo smiled while Gildarts frowned. At the same time, Alfonzo spun on his heels while opening his arms welcomingly.

"Cana, I missed you." Alfonzo said.

In the next instant, Alfonzo closed his arms as Cana sealed his lips with her own. Then, without any hesitation because of her father's presence, Cana snaked her tongue into Alfonzo's mouth, deepening the kiss.

With a frown on his face, Gildarts picked himself up from the ground. Then, his frown turned into sadness.

"Cana, Daddy's here, too." Gildarts said in a pitiful tone.

"I know, I'm kissing him right now." Cana said absent-mindedly after breaking the kiss. A moment later, however, she registered the voice that just spoke to her. "Oops..."

Cough! *Cough!*

Splatter!

After realizing who she had just spoken to, Cana slowly turned her head towards her father. When she did, she was just in time to see him cough up a mouthful of blood.

"Uh... Hey Dad, I'm back..." Cana said in a tone mixed with guilt and embarrassment.

Instead of responding, Gildarts glared at Alfonzo in an attempt to set him ablaze.

"Hey, don't look at me like that, Old Man." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "I never told her to call me that."

Without a word, Gildarts continued to glare at Alfonzo, clearly not believing what he said.

"Seriously, Gildarts, it's not Fonzie's fault." Elicia said while smiling sheepishly. "Cana... Um... kinda picked up that habit from... Uh... me."

Hearing that, Gildarts could only look at Elicia blankly. He eventually turned his attention back to his daughter, though. But when he did, he almost coughed up another mouthful of blood after hearing Alfonzo's next words.

"Cana, I think it's time that we got married, too." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I proposed to you and Lici on the same day. So, I think you've waited long enough."

Cana's eyes lit up like a pair of high-powered torch lights. Then, she pulled Alfonzo into a deeper, more passionate kiss. Meanwhile, Elicia and Gildarts could only watch. However, as time passed, the atmosphere for those two became quite awkward.

"Cana..." Gildarts whispered in a tone filled with a mixture of unwillingness and anticipation.

"Well, I guess that's a yes..." Elicia muttered while smiling awkwardly.

"Hey, what was that loud noise?" Utear, leading the rest of the ladies to the training room asked after exiting the elevator. Her expression changed, however, when she saw Cana tugging down Alfonzo.
"And what's got Cana so excited?"

"Oh, Fonzie asked her to get married." Elicia replied with a smile.

Hearing that, Utear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy's eyes lit up. Meanwhile, Saeko and Saya narrowed their eyes in contemplation. Rika, on the other hand could only smile wryly as she overheard Shizuka muttering to herself.

"I wanna get married, too." Shizuka said quietly. "Lici looked so pretty in her wedding dress."

Lastly, Irene and Brandish exchanged glances, thinking how they could take advantage of the event to complete their mission.

Chapter 484: Gildarts' Breakdown

In the suite on the top floor of the most luxurious hotel in Magnolia, Irene and Brandish were discussing their run in with Alfonzo, Gildarts, and the ladies of Fairy Tail from earlier in the day.

After the tour of the mansion finished and everyone heard about the wedding between Alfonzo and Cana, Gildarts, Irene, and Brandish decided they had spent enough time at the mansion. Meanwhile, Elicia, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, Lucy, Saeko, Saya, and Shizuka gathered in Cana's bedroom to discuss the wedding and its preparations. Alfonzo and Rika, on the other hand, made their way to the guild hall.

"That mansion was quite impressive." Brandish said as she sank into the couch. "It was nicer than my place back in Vistarion."

"Yes, and to think that young man, Alfonzo, designed it alone." Irene replied while pouring herself a glass of wine. "And if I were to venture a guess, he set up the security, as well."

"What makes you say that?" Brandish asked in a curious tone.

"Because all the walls, floors, and ceilings were lined with metal." Irene said. "Combining that with the fact that his epitaph is the Master of Metal and his title as Ishgar's best magic item craftsman, I can't think of any other who could have done so."

"But someone else could have created it while he only implemented it with his magic." Brandish countered.

"That's a possibility." Irene replied with a nod. Then, she took a sip from her glass of wine before continuing. "But my instincts are telling me there was more to it than that. They're telling me that he was the one who created the security systems in that mansion, the one on the shore of the lake, and the guild hall."

"When you mention the guild hall, I can't really argue." Brandish said while shaking her head gently. "Although I've never been inside, based on the exterior, I wouldn't be surprised if the whole thing was made of metal."

"Precisely." Irene said. "And that means His Majesty's plan will be much more difficult to complete than we expected."

"What should we do about it, then?" Brandish asked.

"The most straight forward way would be to infiltrate the guild and become one of its members." Irene replied. A moment later, however, she shook her head. "*Sigh* But that's probably impossible."

"Is that my fault?" Brandish asked curiously. "Yeah, it probably is. But I didn't expect to run into that woman's daughter."

"No, that's not what I meant." Irene replied with a small smile. "If anything, that altercation and the subsequent correction of the misunderstanding would make it easier for you to infiltrate."

"Then, what's the problem?" Brandish asked, this time sounding rather confused as she did so.

"They are wary of us because of our power." Irene explained. "Perhaps waiting a year or two to carry out this mission might have been a better idea. That fool Serena's disappearance doesn't help, either."

"I see." Brandish replied with a nod. "So, they most likely think we're here to get revenge for that guy, huh?"

"More than likely." Irene replied. "*sigh* My repeated attempts to probe their home didn't help, either."

As she said that, Irene could not help but remember the amused smile Alfonzo wore as he sent them off.

'To think such a young man could be so impressive.' Irene thought to herself while shaking her head. 'I'm certain he felt every one of my attempts to examine that house while I was there. Yet, I never once felt his or his wife's magic power from the moment they arrived in Magnolia last night. It looks like I was too confident. Still, that young man will be coming back to the empire with us, whether he likes it or not.'

As her thoughts reached that point, Irene smiled sinisterly, causing Brandish to shrink back instinctively. After a few moments, Brandish spoke once again, dispelling the sinister atmosphere and pulling Irene out of her thoughts.

"Actually, there may be a way to, at least, integrate into his inner circle." Brandish said. "Even if exploring the guild hall is impossible."

Hearing that, Irene turned a curious gaze in Brandish's direction.

"At the very least, I can take the time to get to know Lucy." Brandish continued. "I mean, we did spend a few years living in the same house. We were even playmates for a short time."

"I see." Irene replied. "That's a good entry point."

"Also, from the way those two, the one that looked a lot like you and the one with the blonde hair with pink ends, I think their names were Erza and Marin." Brandish said, not noticing the slight change of expression Irene had at the mention of Erza. "They seemed interested in me. But I'm not a hundred percent sure. Either way, they could be a viable entry point, as well."

If Brandish knew the reason Erza and Marin were interested in her was because of the book she was reading, she would want to give up on that route, immediately. Also, she would be thoroughly confused how they knew what she was reading with the book cover wrapped around her copy of Saint Slippery's Academy for Girls.

"That's also a possibility." Irene replied with a nod. "Unfortunately, I won't be able to help you with this. However, you should try to include me as often as possible. For example, if you are invited to have dinner with them. I may be able to get them to slip up in conversation over dinner."

Nodding her head, Brandish agreed with Irene's plan. However, if she knew Irene cared more about tasting Alfonzo's cooking more often, she would look at her with shock. But if she knew that Alfonzo's cooking was the first meal she could properly taste in centuries, she would understand. Though, that knowledge would lead to more questions.

At the same time, Alfonzo just took a seat at his usual table after finishing a brawl that was going on when he and Rika arrived at the guild hall.

"Rika told you us you decided to marry Cana." Bisca, who returned from a quest with Alzack earlier in the day asked in an excited tone.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a smile. Then, he noticed how close Alzack and Bisca sat to each other. And with that realization, he narrowed his eyes as he continued. "But we can talk about that later. It looks like the relationship between the two of you has taken a step forward."

Immediately, Alzack and Bisca both blushed fiercely. Alzack even looked away in embarrassment with a sheepish smile on his face. Naturally, Alfonzo was taken off guard by their reactions.

"Ha! That's right, Alzack asked--- Urgh!" Elfman shouted, undoubtedly, about to use his catch phrase in his answer.

Before Elfman could finish, however, his younger sister, Lisanna, sharply elbowed him in the side.

"Big Brother Elf, that's not your story to tell." Lisanna said sharply, causing Elfman's complaints to be stuck in his throat.

And when Elfman saw the look in Lisanna's eyes, he quickly nodded his head obediently.

"Oh, so what did you ask, Alzack?" Alfonzo asked after vanishing from his seat and reappearing next to Alzack with his arm slung over his best friend's shoulders.

"Uh... I... Um... kinda... asked her to marry me." Alzack replied, his volume lowering with every word.

By the time Alzack was finished, Alfonzo would have missed it had he not been circulating his magic power through his body when he heard Alzack's volume dropping. Luckily, he did hear him. However, as a result, Alfonzo was completely dumbfounded, shifting his gaze between Alzack and Bisca with his eyes and mouth wide open.

"I think he broke." Laki said while poking Alfonzo's cheek with her index finger.

"Well, can you blame him?" Rika asked in a playful tone. "I mean, it's been almost five months since the last time he saw them, right? And back then, they couldn't even make eye contact without blushing up to the tips of their ears. And now they're engaged. I think I'd have trouble coping, too."

With Rika's explanation, everyone, other than Alfonzo, Alzack, and Bisca, nodded in understanding. Coincidentally, that also gave Alfonzo enough time to reboot.

As soon as Alfonzo came back to his senses, he sprung up to his feet. Then, he wrapped his arms around Alzack and Bisca before picking them up from their seats.

"What the...?" Alzack exclaimed in confusion.

"Kya!" Bisca yelped in surprise.

"Congratulations, you two!" Alfonzo exclaimed happily. "I'm glad Alzack finally grew a pair. I gotta admit, though, I was only expecting to hear that the two of you were dating. But since you've been dancing around each other for the last six years or so, I guess this is fine, too."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo put Alzack and Bisca, who were smiling brightly at his congratulations, back down on the floor. Then, with a happy smile on his face, Alfonzo continued.

"It's a good thing you got the courage to do it yourself, Alzack." Alfonzo said while maintaining his happy smile. "If I had found out you hadn't made any progress, I would have taken the task of getting you two together into my own hands."

Although Alfonzo's smile was extremely jovial, Alzack shuddered in terror. He could only imagine what Alfonzo would have done if he had not made any progress in the almost five months since they last saw each other.

Not only Alzack, but even Bisca showed an uneasy expression at the thought of the ordeal Alfonzo would have put them through if Alzack had not manned up. The other Fairy Tail wizards, on the other hand, were curious to know what Alfonzo had in mind. However, since it did not come to that, they knew that they would never find out.

"Anyway, to celebrate the good news, I'll be taking a shift in the kitchen!" Alfonzo shouted, his good mood evident in his tone. "And Alzack and Bisca's meals are on me!"

Immediately, the entire guild burst into an uproar.

"As soon as I finish talking to Ur, I'll head straight to the kitchen." Alfonzo added as he turned towards the elevator.

The whole time, the guild continued to cheer. They even bought rounds of drinks for Alzack and Bisca, as they were the reason for Alfonzo's good mood.

At the same time, in Irene and Brandish's suite, Irene felt her eyebrows twitching in irritation. Although she had no idea what was bothering her so much, she knew that it was something she really wanted. Meanwhile, Brandish decided to return to her bedroom to finish reading her book and start the sequel because of the irritated aura Irene was giving off.

A few moments later, Alfonzo arrived in the guild master's office. And when he did, he could not help but smile wryly.

Currently, Gildarts and Ur were sitting on one of the couches in the office. And had that been all, Alfonzo would have thought nothing of it. However, Gildarts was currently hugging Ur tightly with his head buried in her chest while crying loudly.

"Ur, he's taking my little girl away!" Gildarts shouted in a heartbroken tone.

"*sigh* She was going to get married sooner or later, right?" Ur said while smiling awkwardly and combing her fingers through Gildarts' hair. "At least it's to someone you've known for years and approve of, right?"

"Just because I've known him for years, doesn't mean he's good enough for my princess!" Gildarts shouted, sounding even more heart broken than before. "He's nothing but a damn thief! She even calls him Daddy! *Cough*"

As soon as he said something about Cana calling Alfonzo "Daddy," Gildarts turned away from Ur and coughed up a mouthful of blood onto the coffee table.

"Uh... Did I come at a bad time?" Alfonzo asked while smiling in amusement. "I can come back later if I did."

Hearing Alfonzo's voice, Gildarts and Ur finally realized they weren't alone. Then, while crying tears of blood, Gildarts flung himself at Alfonzo and grabbed him by his collar.

"You! Give me back my Princess!" Gildarts cried. Then, he turned back to Ur as he continued. "Ur, kick him out of the guild! He's---"

Bang!

"That's enough." Ur said in an exasperated tone after slamming an ice fist into the top of Gildarts' head. "You can be sad all you want. But don't be unreasonable."

"But... My princess..." Gildarts said as he collapsed onto the floor and continued to cry in the most sorrowful way either Alfonzo or Ur had ever heard.

"*Sigh* Sometimes I wonder why I fell for this idiot." Ur said while massaging his temples.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo stepped past Gildarts, making sure not to step on any of the snot that had fallen to the floor, before taking a seat on the couch opposite Ur.

"So, I'm guessing he didn't tell you anything about our meeting with those two, huh?" Alfonzo asked as he glanced back at Gildarts once again.

"*Sigh* Of course not." Ur replied while shaking her head. "So, I'm counting on you to fill me in on what happened. Even though I could keep track of them with [Magic Power Detection], I had no way of knowing exactly what happened."

"Right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "And that's exactly why I'm here. Though, I thought I'd only be filling in some blanks that Gildarts missed."

With that said, Alfonzo began telling Ur what happened when he and the girls ran into Irene and Brandish.

Chapter 485: More Visitors

A few weeks have passed since the wizards of Fairy Tail had their first run in with Irene and Brandish. And ever since then, they've encountered Brandish many more times. Usually, she could be found sitting where they first met her while reading a book. And naturally, that drew Erza and Marin to talk to her about her reading material more than a few times.

Then, there were the times that Brandish tried to apologize to Lucy for the misunderstanding. And although their interactions are still awkward, which is completely understandable. Since it generally takes some time to warm up to someone who wanted to kill you, things were going in a positive direction.

Irene, on the other hand, spent most of her time in the hotel suite. However, she did make it a point to visit some of the other places Alfonzo usually frequented around the town. Because of that, she was able to run into him a few times, as well.

Irene even made a few trips to Hargeon to visit the Taylor Shop, thinking that knowing where Elicia spent her time might be useful if she ever needed a hostage to make Alfonzo agree to follow her back to Alvarez.

However, whenever she had thoughts like those, she would feel an inexplicable coldness. Something she never found the source of. But considering her strength, she never dismissed it. Seeing as a strong wizard's intuition was often correct.

On top of that, Irene ended up asking Elicia to create a few custom pieces for her, as well. Especially since her proportions made it very difficult to find any clothes that could fit her.

Today, however, Alfonzo was not worried about the two spies from Alvarez. Instead, he was relaxing in his home's grotto while reading an [Archive Magic] book. His trip to Blue Pegasus was less than three weeks away, after all. And he wanted to know as much as possible about [Archive Magic] before he pitched his idea about internet and lacrima phones to Hibiki of the Trimens.

Just then, Alfonzo placed the magic book down on his lap. Then, he flared his magic power. A moment later, a transparent screen appeared in front of him.

"Finally..." Alfonzo said with a gratified smile on his face. "Although I can only use one magic screen right now, that's more than enough to become the administrator of this project."

Now, after studying [Archive Magic] for a little over four months, Alfonzo could finally use it. Though, he was nowhere near as proficient as someone like Hibiki, who could deploy at least six screens simultaneously, he could be considered a qualified user of [Archive Magic].

"This probably would have taken much longer if I wasn't used to using computers in my past life." Alfonzo muttered as he scrolled through a table of contents containing all his knowledge. "I don't even remember reading books about all this shit. But this magic pulled everything I've ever learned and forgotten from my subconscious... or something like that."

In fact, Alfonzo was even happier that with a few tweaks and a few specialized magic items, he would be able to create the database for the phones he wanted to introduce to the world with little issue. Unfortunately, making the internet would probably take a bit more preparation.

"Either way, now I don't have to have a piece of paper and a pencil whenever I get the urge to create something." Alfonzo said with a smile as he stood up from his seat. "Now, I can just save the ideas and any mental sketches with [Archive Magic]. And as an added bonus, I can use [Telepathy] now, too. My range is pretty short, though. But I can probably fix that with training."

As he reached that point, Alfonzo stretched his body. Then, he took off the short sleeved shirt he was wearing and draped it over the back of his chair, leaving him wearing nothing but a pair of swimming trunks.

"Fonzie! Let's play!"

Before Alfonzo could start moving towards the water, Alfonzo heard a very familiar voice. Then again, he had noticed the few magic power signatures that had entered the house about forty minutes ago, so he was not all that surprised.

What did surprise him, however, was the sight of Saeko, Shizuka, and Rika in swimsuits. While Saeko wore a deep blue bikini, Rika wore a sporty white bikini and a pair of sunglasses. Shizuka, on the other hand, wore a purple one-piece with a cut out that showed off a large portion of her breasts and the top of her abdomen.

Naturally, because he was not expecting the visitors, Alfonzo found himself dumbfounded as he scanned all three ladies with his eyes.

"I think he likes what he sees." Rika said playfully as she slid her sunglasses up to her forehead.

"It would seem so." Saeko replied as she swept her bangs out of her face.

"Of course he does." Elicia, wearing a frilly pink bikini, said proudly. "Just who do you think designed your suits?"

"Come on, Fonzie." Shizuka said excitedly as she ran towards Alfonzo. Then, once she was close enough, she wrapped her arms around his left arm as she continued. "Let's swim and play."

With Shizuka hugging his arm to her chest, Alfonzo naturally found his arm wrapped in soft flesh. And when he looked down, he could see that a good part of his arm was now hidden between Shizuka's breasts.

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "I was just about to go for a swim, too."

With that, the group of five jumped into the pool that served as the basin for the grotto's waterfall and played to their heart's content.

About an hour later, Sun was walking back to the mansion from the guild hall. However, she was not alone. With her was a group of eight visitors. And while she was familiar with five of them, the other two were new faces.

"I can't believe you decided to take a break from work, Roy." Maes said while walking towards Alfonso's mansion.

"Well, this is a pretty big deal." Roy, or rather, Col. Roy Mustang, one of the kingdom's Alchemist Knights said as he walked with the rest of the group.

Roy Mustang, a high ranking member of Fiore's military was a man of average height with unkempt black hair and black eyes wearing a white, button-down shirt, tan slacks, and black leather shoes.

"Mr. Hughes was right, though." Edward said with a cheeky grin on his face. "All we had to do is look him in the eye and ask him to take a request with Lt. Hawkeye nearby."

"Yeah, he denied it at first." Alphonse added. "But when the Lt. Gave him that look, he gave in pretty fast."

Immediately upon hearing that, Roy snapped his head in Maes direction with a scowl.

"Why did you tell them that, Hughes?" Roy asked in an annoyed tone.

"Oh, come on, Roy." Maes said, not bothered by Roy's glare in the slightest. "A little time off is good for you every now and then. Besides, Gracia will be delighted to see you and the Lt."

"He's right, Colonel." A woman with broader than average shoulders, a muscular, yet curvaceous build, pale skin, mid-back-length blonde hair styled into something resembling a bird's tail and held fastened with a black burette, bangs swept to the left that look like a hawk's wing, and dark brown eyes wearing a white blouse, black slacks, and black leather flats, said with very little inflection or changes to her facial expression. "A week or so is more than you deserve."

"Come on, Hawkeye." Roy grumbled as he turned his head towards the woman, Lt. Riza Hawkeye. "Whose side are you on, anyway."

"Yours, of course." Riza replied with the same expression. "And I always do what I deem to be in your best interest."

In response, Roy could only look away.

"By the way, Ed." Pinako, the last of the human visitors to Magnolia said calmly after exhaling a puff of smoke from her pipe. "How many footstools did you have to stack up to look the colonel in his eyes?"

"What did you say, you subatomic hag?" Edward shouted angrily.

"*Sigh* There at it again." Winry said while walking alongside Sun. Though, her smile made it clear she was happy to be with the people she cared about the most. "Anyway, I really hope Alfonzo was right about how Ed and Al could get their bodies back to normal."

"*Bark* *Bark*" Den, the last visitor, barked as if she were agreeing with Winry.

"Of course it will work." Sun said confidently. "Alfonzo always keeps his promises."

Then, she reached down and patted Den on the head.

"So, you don't have to worry." Sun continued with a smile.

"I must admit, I'm looking forward to meeting this young genius." Roy said after overhearing Sun and Winry's conversation. "To think he could give Alphonse the ability to taste food, despite the fact that he no longer has a body."

"Yeah, that was crazy." Maes replied with a smile. "When Alphonse shoveled that food into his suit before standing up and exclaiming how good it was, is something I'll never forget for the rest of my life."

"I know what you mean." Roy said while shaking his head. "When he did the same thing in my office, I thought he was just going to make a mess. But when he was done, there was a faint smell of his meal for a few minutes. But after that, there was no trace."

"He hurt our chef's pride, too, when he said the food wasn't as good as this Alfonzo's." Riza added.

"He wasn't wrong, though." Edward said in his brother's defense. "Other than mom's cooking, I've never tasted anything better."

"I hate to say this, Ed." Winry said. "But that's probably nostalgia talking. I mean, before meeting Alfonzo, Granny's cooking was the best I've ever had. But now, there's no comparison."

After she finished, Winry quickly looked back to Pinako.

"No offense, Granny." Winry said apologetically.

"None taken, Winry." Pinako replied. "I know I can't compare to that young man. I can't even compare to the young woman who cooked at his wedding."

"Now that you mention it, she was a really good cook, too." Edward said, though he frowned at Winry's comment about nostalgia.

"Yeah, her name is Erina Nakiri." Sun said cheerfully. "She's the head chef at the Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge in Crocus."

"Well, that explains it." Roy said with a nod. "I've eaten there a couple of times. And it's the best food I've ever tasted."

"Yes, the cuisine they serve really is quite good." Riza added.

In response, Winry, Maes, Edward, and Alphonse nodded in agreement. Pinako, on the other hand, maintained a neutral expression, since she had never eaten at any of those establishments.

Meanwhile, Sun could only smile awkwardly. As one of Alfonzo's lovers, she knew that he was the owner of Sixth Sense Holdings. However, Alfonzo had no intention of spreading this information to too many people.

"What's wrong, sun?" Winry asked after seeing Sun's awkward smile.

"Nothing." Sun replied while shaking her head vigorously.

Unfortunately, Sun's reaction only drew more attention to herself. And after a moment, she realized that she had reacted too strongly. So, she started racking her brain to get herself out of this awkward situation.

"It's just that Alfonzo's food is still better." Sun said while her eyes darted around.

"That's rather hard to believe." Roy said skeptically.

However, Winry, Maes, Edward, and Alphonse nodded in agreement, stunning Roy into silence while Riza only raised an eyebrow.

"Well, I've never eaten at whatever restaurant it is you're talking about." Pinako said while tapping the ashes out of her pipe. "But that boy's cooking really is incredible."

"I guess I'll have to see for myself." Roy replied.

"Well, I'm sure you'll get the chance to compare them." Edward said. "I'm sure he'll cook for his guests."

"Uh huh, that's right." Sun replied while nodding her head.

Like that, the group continued to chat while they made their way towards the mansion on the lake. When they eventually arrived, Roy and Riza were gob smacked by what they saw. However, no one waited for them to regain their senses. So, they had to hasten their pace to catch up with the rest of the group.

"Welcome to our home." Sun said as she opened the front door of the mansion.

"How unsafe, the door was left unlocked." Roy muttered.

"No, it's just that anyone living here doesn't need a key." sun replied.

"*Bark* *Bark*" Den barked happily before Roy could retort to Sun's words.

Immediately after barking, Den ran off.

"Den, where are you going?" Winry shouted as she ran after Den.

"What's with the dog?" Roy asked curiously.

"Well, she became quite fond of Alfonzo when he completed that quest a few years ago." Pinako replied as she put her pipe away. "And she probably went to see him."

"Well then, we should follow Den." Edward said as he started walking after Winry. "he's the reason we're here, after all."

Nodding in response, Pinako, Maes, Alphonse, Roy, and Riza followed Edward. Eventually, the group reached the grotto. And when they did, they were dumbfounded. Meanwhile, Roy wore an envious expression after seeing Elicia, Saeko, Shizuka, and Rika surrounding Alfonzo, who was standing over Den, who was laying on her back, and rubbing the good girl's belly.

"Damn, lucky bastard." Roy muttered quietly at the sight in front of him.

Smack!

"Ow, damn it, what was that for, Hawkeye?" Roy asked in an annoyed tone while rubbing the back of his head.

Chapter 486: Regaining What Had Been Lost

"I expected to see you two as soon as I got back from Era, Ed, Al." Alfonzo said as the entire group got seated in the mansion's living room. "I'm really surprised you could wait so long."

After the group reached the grotto, Alfonzo, Elicia, Saeko, Shizuka, and Rika decided it was time to get out of the pool. So, they all went to get changed. Meanwhile, Sun led the group of new arrivals to the living room where they chatted while waiting for the other five.

"*Sigh* We wanted to come see you as soon as possible." Edward replied. "But we thought we should bring Granny to see this, too."

"Understandable." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Even though it's not by blood, she's still family."

"That's right." Alphonse replied.

"*Sigh* I almost don't wanna see you do this, Ed." Pinako said in a downtrodden tone.

"If you're worried, Granny." Alphonse said consolingly. "We'll be fine. We're not doing anything as dangerous as what we did back then."

"Oh, no, you misunderstood me, Al." Pinako said, her tone sounding even more downcast. "It's just that our biggest source of revenue is going to disappear. I mean, do you know how often your brother breaks his arm?"

Hearing that, most of the people had to hold back laughter. Meanwhile, Alphonse shook his head. Edward, on the other hand, clenched his fists while gritting his teeth.

"I love you, too, Granny." Edward said through gritted teeth.

"By the way, are you gonna introduce us to the new faces" Elicia asked curiously while gazing at Roy and Riza.

"Oh, that's right." Alphonse said, in a tone that suggested he completely forgot about Roy and Riza.

"I'm Roy Mustang of the Alchemist Knights." Roy said, speaking before Alphonse could introduce him. "You can call me Colonel Mustang, or just colonel, or if you prefer, you can call me the Flame Alchemist."

"And I'm his adjutant, Lt. Riza Hawkeye." Riza said sternly.

"Nice to meet you, Roy and Riza." Alfonzo said with a smile, his smile widening after he noticed Roy's eyebrow twitch at the casual greeting. "And I'm Alfonzo Marcus, also known as the Master of Metal, an S-Class wizard from Fairy Tail."

"I'm Elicia Marcus Taylor, Fonzie's wife, an S-Class wizard from Fairy Tail, and the Magic Seamstress." Elicia said, continuing the introductions. "It's nice to meet you, Roy and Riza."

Once again, Roy's eyebrow twitched. However, he realized that there was nothing he could do about it.

"Well, I've actually met the two of you before." Rika said with a smile. "But you probably don't remember me. Anyway, I'm Rika Minami."

"Oh, I remember you." Roy replied. "Until the day you retired, I tried to get you under my command."

"As do I." Riza added. "You were the only knight in the kingdom who could compete with me when it comes to marksmanship."

"I guess I left an impression." Rika replied with a smile. "At least my talents were appreciated."

"They definitely were." Roy said. "And were you to come back to the military, I can promise you a promotion and a spot in my squad."

"Hey, Roy, could you not try and poach our guild mates right in front of us, please?" Alfonzo said with a smile. "Otherwise, I'll have to bring this up to Ur. And I'm sure she'd like to find out which is stronger, your flames or her ice."

While Roy wanted to scoff at Alfonzo's threat, he ended up shuddering when he recalled the frozen part of the Worth Woodsea Ur left behind when she destroyed Nirvana.

'Yeah, right!' Roy exclaimed internally. 'I couldn't even melt that ice with all the power at my disposal. There's no way I'm crossing that crazy woman. And that was two years ago. I can only imagine what she can do now.'

With Roy falling silent, Saeko and Shizuka also introduced themselves. A moment later, the atmosphere in the room became much more solemn.

"So, are you ready to do this?" Alfonzo asked.

"Yeah, let's go." Edward said with a solemn nod.

"Yeah." Alphonse added.

"Alright." Alfonzo said. Then, he turned to Elicia and Sun. "You two take them down to the training room. I'll go get the Philosopher's Stone."

Nodding in reply, Elicia and Sun stood up before ushering everyone towards the elevator. Meanwhile, Alfonzo made his way up to his bedroom. Then, he opened his safe and retrieved the Philosopher's Stone Elicia brought back from Lust and Gluttony's trap.

After closing the safe, Alfonzo made his way into his workshop.

"I don't know if these will work, but I want to try analyzing Ankhseram's divine energy." Alfonzo thought aloud as he picked up two magic items. "If I can, I might be able to make a counter measure for Zeref's [Death Wave]."

With that, Alfonzo made his way to the elevator before pressing the button for the floor with the training room. A few moments later, he joined the rest of the group. On top of that, the [Human Transmutation Circle] was already drawn on the floor with chalk.

"Looks like you're ready." Alfonzo said as he entered the room. "Well then, let's get started."

With that, Alfonzo handed the Philosopher's Stone to Edward.

"Oh, and take these, too." Alfonzo continued after retrieving the two magic items from his pocket.

"What are these?" Edward asked as he reached out for the two magic items.

"Something to collect some of Ankhseram's divine energy." Alfonzo replied casually. "Honestly, I'm not expecting them to work. But if they do, I might be able to use it."

Nodding in response, Edward turned away from Alfonzo. Then, with the Philosopher's Stoen and the magic items in hand, Edward exchanged glances with his brother before the Elrics stepped into the [Transmutation Circle].

"Ed... Al... Be careful." Winry said with her hands placed together in a praying gesture.

"Don't worry, Winry, we will." Alphonse said resolutely while putting Alfonzo's magic item inside of his armor.

"Yeah, and soon, we'll be whole again." Edward added with a confident smile as he pinned the magic item to his shirt.

In reply, Winry smiled weakly. It was clear to anyone who saw her that she could not get rid of her worry so easily.

"You just have to have faith, Winry." Pinako said in a soothing tone. "You have to believe they'll come back to us."

"I know, Granny." Winry said before taking a deep breath. Then, she looked at Edward and Alphonse with a smile. "We're gonna celebrate when you guys get your bodies back, okay?"

"Of course." Edward replied, returning Winry's smile.

"Yeah, and we even have the perfect chef for our celebration party." Alphonse said while turning in Alfonzo's direction.

Not only Alphonse, but everyone who had tasted Alfonzo's cooking looked at him hopefully. Meanwhile, those who had not tasted his cooking, namely, Roy and Riza, looked at him skeptically.

Seeing Roy and Riza's gazes, Alfonzo felt challenged. So, with a confident smile on his face, he thumped his fist on his chest as he responded to Alphonse.

"Don't worry, Al." Alfonzo said while smiling brightly. "This is definitely something worth celebrating. So, I'll go all out for the celebration."

Hearing that, most of those present smiled. Meanwhile, Elicia looked at Roy and Riza with pity.

'Fonzie is gonna go all out with this meal.' Elicia said to herself. 'Then, he'll more than likely never cook for the two of them again. All because they looked at him like that. *Sigh* They're gonna be like crack heads after today.'

["As long as they don't start offering to suck his dick for a little taste, it's fine with me."] Scylla replied with a shrug from Elicia's inner world.

'You know, I doubt he'll mind it if it's Riza.' Elicia said while giggling internally. 'But Roy would probably get thrown out of the house if that ever happened.'

["Yeah, probably."] Scylla replied.

While Elicia discussed the consequences of Roy and Riza's doubts with Scylla, Edward placed the Philosopher's Stone in the middle of the [Transmutation Circle]. Then, he and Alphonse took positions on either side of the Stone. A moment later, after preparing themselves, they both pressed their palms on the floor and channeled their magic power into the [Transmutation Circle].

In the next instant, the [Transmutation Circle] started glowing blue. Then, it started crackling with arcs of electricity. After a few moments of that, the color turned darker while the atmosphere got heavy. Then, a large eye opened up in the middle of the [Circle]. And finally, both Edward and Alphonse disappeared into that eye.

As soon as Edward and Alphonse disappeared, Winry could no longer maintain her strong front. So, she threw herself into her grandmother's arms. A moment later, Sun hugged Pinako and Winry.

"Come on, Fullmetal." Roy said with his fists clenched.

"Like Mrs. Rockbell said, you have to believe in them, Colonel." Riza said as she rested a hand on Roy's shoulder.

"*Sigh* I know." Roy replied. "Still, I don't like this feeling. I feel useless."

"You shouldn't think like that, Roy." Maes said, placing his hand on Roy's other shoulder. "Those two have been preparing for this for years. They'll be fine."

"I hope so." Roy replied.

Meanwhile, the other five Fairy Tail wizards only waited patiently. They knew Edward and Alphonse had discussed this with Alfonzo. And they all believed Alfonzo would be able to help them.

Gate of Truth.

Meanwhile, Edward and Alphonse found themselves in a vast, white space.

"We're back, huh?" Edward said as he looked around. "My gate looks different, too."

"So does mine." Alphonse replied. "Why is that?"

"It's because you have changed." An androgynous voice replied. "So, why would the gate that represents your Alchemical knowledge remain the same?"

Hearing that somewhat familiar, yet utterly unsettling, voice speak to them from out of nowhere, Edward and Alphonse went on guard. A moment later, an indistinct humanoid figure, formed of black and white energy, appeared in front of the two of them.

However, unbeknownst to the brothers, Edward and Alphonse each saw something different when they looked at this figure. To Edward, the figure's left arm and right leg, from below the knee, were the ones he lost years ago. Meanwhile, Alphonse saw an emaciated, older version of the body he lost back then.

"Why have you come here again?" The figure, Ankhseram asked in an emotionless tone. "You should have already realized that returning those who have passed on to the world of the living is impossible.

"You're right." Edward replied solemnly. "We know that the dead do not return to life."

"Then why?" Ankhseram asked curiously.

"We want our bodies back." Alphonse said resolutely. "And we've come to make an equivalent exchange with you for that purpose."

"I see." Ankhseram replied, the slight interest he showed before now gone. "Well, that is rather simple. Present your items for exchange and I will return what you have lost. But only if they are truly equal."

Instead of replying, Edward held up his left hand, revealing the glowing red Philosopher's Stone Alphonse handed him.

"What if we use this?" Edward asked. "Returning souls to the cycle of life and death should be more than enough to get our bodies back, shouldn't it?"

As soon as Edward revealed the Philosopher's Stone, Ankhseram's figure began to shiver. Though, neither of the brothers could tell if it was from excitement or any other emotion. Either way, they had the feeling that Alfonzo was right, and they would be getting their bodies back without losing anything of their own.

A moment later, Ankhseram's shivering ended. Then, in a very human way, he released a sigh.

"I will accept this deal." Ankhseram said in his usual emotionless tone.

In the next instant, the Philosopher's Stone in Edwards hand began breaking down into motes of light. And from each of those motes of light, the brothers heard words of thanks before they vanished into the white space.

To Edward and Alphonse's Surprise, the entire Philosopher's Stone was not consumed in their transaction. Instead, it had shrunk to roughly a third of its original size. Before either Edward or Alphonse could comment on that, however, the next part of the transaction started.

First, in Alphonse's sight, the emaciated form of his body disappeared, leaving only Ankhseram's humanoid energy form. Next, the seal bonding his soul to the armor vanished. Then, the entire suit of armor fell apart.

When the armor pieces began hitting the ground, Edward quickly turned his head towards his brother. However, before he could ask if Alphonse was alright, his eyes opened wide in surprise.

What Edward saw to elicit such a reaction was the sight of an emaciated, nude, young man with long, unkempt, golden blond hair lying among all the pieces of armor. And at first glance, he knew that young man was Alphonse.

However, before Edward could start exclaiming happily, his Automail left arm fell out of his sleeve. Then, he lost balance when his Automail right leg disconnected from its stump.

Then, just as he fell onto his backside, Edward felt unbearable pain from his left shoulder and right knee.

As it turned out, Edward's missing limbs were regenerating at high-speed. Unfortunately, such high-speed regeneration came with a level of pain that most people would not be able to handle.

"Damn it..." Edward groaned as he dealt with the pain. "Just hurry the hell up. I need to check on Al."

After only a few more moments, Edward's limbs finished regenerating. Though, it was obvious they were less muscular than his other limbs, even covered by clothes. However, Edward did not let that fact slow him down as he scurried over to his brother.

"Al, are you okay?" Edward asked in a concerned tone.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Alphonse said while smiling brightly with tears forming in his eyes. "We finally did it, Brother. We finally got our bodies back."

"Yeah, we really did." Edward replied, his tone and expression mirroring his brother's. "And there's still some of the Philosopher's Stone left. With it, we could help Teacher, too."

"Unfortunately, that Philosopher's Stone belongs to Alfonzo." Alphonse replied.

"*Sigh* I know." Edward said in a disappointed tone. "Still, it won't hurt to ask, right?"

"That's right." Alphonse replied.

"The equivalent exchange is complete." Ankhseram, now looking the same to both brothers, said emotionlessly. "Now, return from whence you came."

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

In the next instant, Edward and Alphonse found themselves back in the training room of Alfonzo's mansion. Naturally, this completely surprised everyone who was waiting for their return. However, it did not take long for the first one, Den, to react to the change in situation.

"*Bark* *Bark*" Den barked happily as she approached Edward and Alphonse.

A moment later, after seeing Den rush over to the Elric brothers, Winry was the next to act, dashing forward before diving at her two childhood friends.

"Ed, Al, welcome back!" Winry said while smiling happily as tears streamed down her face.

Chapter 487: Sun Loves Hot Springs

In the training room inside the mansion on the lake, Winry hugged Edward and Alphonse, whose bodies were complete flesh and blood bodies with tears streaming down her face. Meanwhile, Den ran around the trio while barking happily.

At the same time, Alfonzo, Elicia, Sun, Saeko, Shizuka, and Rika smiled at the happy atmosphere surrounding the childhood friends while Maes, Roy, and Riza looked on with expressions of shock and disbelief. Pinako, on the other hand, was not stunned for long. However, due to her age, she was unable to run forward like Winry had.

Eventually, with tears in her eyes like her granddaughter, Pinako reached Winry, Edward, and Alphonse before joining the group hug.

"I'm glad to see everything went well." Pinako said, her voice trembling in excitement. "I'm sure Trish is smiling down at you from heaven."

Hearing the name, Trish, Edward and Alphonse could not help but see an image of a beautiful young woman with chest-length chestnut-brown hair tied into a low, side ponytail with bright green eyes and a kind smile wearing a lavender dress and a white apron.

"Yeah, she would definitely be smiling at us if she were here." Edward said with a nostalgic smile on his face.

"That's right." Alphonse nodded weakly. As he continued, tears began to well up in his eyes, as well. "At the same time, she would have been scolding us for doing something so reckless all those years ago."

As the group of four continued to laugh, cry, and chat, Maes, Roy, and Riza eventually snapped out of their dazes. Then, they too made their way over to the group.

"Congratulations, Fullmetal." Roy said in an even tone. "You finally accomplished the goal you had when you joined the military."

"Yeah..." Edward replied while wiping the tears out of his eyes with his sleeve.

"So, what are you boys gonna do now?" Maes asked curiously while smiling at the Elrics.

Hearing that, Edward and Alphonse exchanged glances.

"Well, I don't think there is a reason to stay in the military anymore." Alphonse replied. Then, he turned towards his brother, searching for confirmation. "Right, Brother?"

"That's right." Edward replied. "We only joined to find a way to get our bodies back. And since that's complete, I guess I'll retire like Mr. Hughes."

As it turned out, only Edward had joined the military as an Alchemist Knight. Alphonse, on the other hand, only accompanied his brother on his journey. And the reason Alphonse never joined the military was simple, the state of his body. No one knew how others would react if they found out he was only a suit of armor. So, they decided not to chance it. It would have been horrible if he ended up as some kind of test subject, after all.

"Well then, I wish you good luck on your new life, boys." Riza said with a small smile.

"Eventually, after watching the group of seven chat for a while, Alfonzo decided that now was a good time to cut in on the conversation.

"Congratulations, you two." Alfonzo said while leading the ladies from Fairy Tail over to the group. "But I think there are some important things to take care of before you guys get too comfortable."

"Huh?" Edward exclaimed in confusion. "Like what?"

"Well, your bodies weren't your own for a long time." Alfonzo replied. "So, I think it would be a good idea to have them checked out. Plus, you'll probably need to go through some rehab, too. Especially Alphonse."

Hearing that, Winry, Pinako, Maes, Roy, and Riza turned their gazes towards the Elric Brothers. When they did, although they did not notice anything wrong with Edward, they could tell that Alphonse was pretty much skin and bones. So, they agreed with Alfonzo's suggestion.

"And as it turns out, we have some of the best healers in Fiore." Elicia said excitedly. A moment later, however, she grimaced before continuing. "I'm sure Miss Porlyusica will be able to diagnose you properly. And then there's Shizuka, too."

As she spoke the last part, Elicia gestured towards Shizuka, who tilted her head cutely when all eyes fell on her.

"Plus, we should probably get Al some clothes." Rika said playfully. "I mean, unless spending all that time in the armor made you one of those nudists I've heard about."

Immediately, Alphonse blushed in embarrassment after realizing that he had been naked while in the middle of all these people. On top of that, Winry had been hugging him the whole time.

Like Alphonse, Winry also blushed in embarrassment while quickly letting go of Alphonse.

"Hey, Granny, aren't you gonna let go, too?" Edward asked in bewilderment.

"What's there to be embarrassed about?" Pinako asked while continuing to hug the boys. "It's not like I haven't seen it all before. I used to change your diapers, after all."

"Yeah, but I'm not a baby anymore." Alphonse replied in a flustered tone while trying to cover his crotch with his thin arms.

"You're still a baby to me, Al." Pinako said in a teasing tone. "At least you grew up, unlike your forever six year old brother."

"Shut it, Hag." Edward replied in an annoyed tone. "At least I'm not getting shorter by the year. I've seen pictures of you when you were younger, after all. And you were almost as tall as Winry."

Hearing that, everyone shifted their gazes between Winry, standing at 5'3", and Pinako, who was barely 3' tall, with disbelief in their expressions.

"Anyway, I'll make something for Al to put on." Elicia said with a smile. "Shizuka, can you check the condition of Ed and Al's bodies before we take them to Miss Porlyusica for the best recovery plans?"

"Uh huh." Shizuka replied with a nod, which made her breasts bounce with her movement. "Leave it to me."

With that, Shizuka skipped over to the Elrics before starting to examine them with her [Healing Magic]. Meanwhile, Riza could only look at the voluptuous blonde with envy.

"What do you have to eat to get breasts like those." Riza asked herself at a volume that only she could hear.

June 30, x786.

A couple of weeks have passed since Edward and Alphonse got their bodies back. And in that time, not much of note has taken place. There were a few things, however.

First, Edward and Alphonse decided to stay in Magnolia to undergo rehabilitation under Porlyusica's guidance. Though, they quickly came to regret that decision. Porlyusica's broom was no joke, after all. And with Edward's tendency to talk back, he received its love quite a bit in the time he spent with Porlyusica.

The other visitors, namely, Pinako, Winry, Roy, and Riza decided to leave after a few days. And while Pinako, Roy, and Riza went back to Resenbool and Crocus, respectively, Winry headed to Dublith to give Izumi, Edward and Alphonse's teacher, the good news.

Also, Edward and Alphonse decided that they would join Fairy Tail after they were done with their rehabilitation. Because despite leaving the military, they were both young men with kind hearts who liked to help people. And joining a guild would make that easier. And since they were familiar with quite a few members of Fairy Tail, the decision was easy.

Second, Alzack and Bisca decided on the date of their wedding, which was October 15, the same day as the the Harvest Festival. They both thought that getting married on such a festive day would make their special day even happier.

They also decided on their bridal party, too. Naturally, Alfonzo became Alzack's best man. Meanwhile, Bisca chose Erza, who invited her to join the guild, as her Maid of Honor. As for groomsman and bridesmaids, they chose Gray, Max, Lisanna, and Levy. Also, they decided to use the guild hall as the venue.

On another note, as soon as the ceremony was completed, the guild would jump right into the Miss Fairy Tail Pageant, and the rest of the day's festivities.

The second thing to take note of was Alfonzo and Cana's wedding. The date of their wedding had been decided, as well. And it would be December 31. The couple thought it would be a great way to close out the year. On top of that, the reception could also double as a New Year celebration.

Alfonzo and Cana had not decided on their bridal party as of yet, however. They did know that Alzack would be Alfonzo's best man once again while Elicia would be Cana's Matron of Honor, though.

However, none of the residents of the mansion on the lake were thinking about the wedding right now. Instead, they were all gathered in the living room and discussing who would accompany Alfonzo on his trip to the Blue Pegasus guild hall.

"Seriously, none of you want to go?" Alfonzo asked with an amused smile on his face.

"*Sigh* It's not that none of us want to go..." Elicia said while wearing a wry smile.

"Yeah, it's just Ichiya and the Trimens that are too much to deal with." Marin said while shivering minutely.

"Yeah, I don't know if I could keep from putting one of them in the hospital if they get too handsy." Ultair added.

"You mean for the second time, right?" Cana asked with a mischievous smile.

"That was an accident." Ultear said while looking away with a slight blush on her face.

"I think that would have been true if you had stopped after the first time you hit him." Mirajane said with her usual smile on her face.

"Yeah, but after chasing him the twenty feet that you kicked him away, and continuing to beat him up, the excuse of an accident is no longer valid." Lucy added while trying to stifle a laugh.

"How do you even know about that?" Ultear asked, her blush deepening as she did so.

"Ur told us." Elicia, Cana, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Lucy replied in unison.

Immediately, Ultear's expression morphed into one of shock. Then, after a moment, she gritted her teeth and clenched her fists.

"Damn it, Mom, that was supposed to be a secret." Ultear hissed.

Meanwhile, Ur, who was cuddling with Gildarts in her office at the guild hall sneezed.

"Getting sick?" Gildarts asked with a smile.

"No, but I think my daughter is talking bad about me again." Ur replied with a shrug. "Anyway, how are things going with paying off your debt to the Sixth Sense Restaurant?"

In response, Gildarts looked away while smiling sheepishly.

Meanwhile, back in the mansion on the lake, the girls were laughing at Ultar.

"But seriously, am I gonna go on this trip alone?" Alfonzo asked.

In response, the eight girls exchanged glances before all their sights landed on Cana.

"Really, me?" Cana asked, looking quite betrayed.

"Well, we thought you'd wanna spend more time with Fonzie since your wedding is coming up." Elicia replied with a smile.

"Well... You're not wrong." Cana said before taking a swig from her flask. "But Blue Pegasus is even a bit too much for me."

No one could blame Cana, or any of the other girls for their reluctance.

"*Sigh* Fine, I'll go alone." Alfonzo said with a shrug. "At least there will be some eye candy to look at."

"What are you talking about?" Ultear asked with a frown "Are you thinking about getting another one? You haven't even settled things with the girls from Takanosu, yet."

By now, everyone knew that Alfonzo was interested in Saeko, Shizuka, and Rika. However, they were wondering what was taking him so long to make a move. But hearing about another girl, and this time from another guild, they could not help but think back to the mess Yoruichi caused.

"You're talking about Jenny Realight, right?" Elicia asked with a smile. "That up and coming model in Sorcerer weekly. The one who is giving Mira and Karen a run for the most popular model."

As it turned out, after Mirajane surpassed Karen as the most popular model in Sorcerer Weekly, she went to Elicia in tears. Then, she pestered Elicia to make all the outfits and swimsuits she would wear when she did a photo shoot for the magazine.

Naturally, Elicia agreed. Especially since Karen was not against paying top dollar for clothing. On top of that, Elicia's Taylor Shop received even more business due to the free publicity.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a smile and a nod. "Even though I've heard she's just as fanatical about Ichiya as the Trimens, at least there's something good to look at."

Immediately, the flames of jealousy and competition began to burn in Mirajane's eyes. On top of her boyfriend looking for another model to gawk at, she saw Jenny as a real threat to her place at the top of Ishgar's modeling scene.

"I'll come with you." Mirajane said in a resolute tone.

Hearing Mirajane's tone, most of the girls were surprised. At the same time, they expected such an outcome. Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Elicia exchanged smiles secretly. They already knew how Mirajane would react if Alfonzo mentioned wanting to see Jenny. What they did not expect, however, is how Jenny would react to Alfonzo's presence after he showed up the next day.

"Are you sure?" Alfonzo asked, feigning concern. "You were so against it only a minute ago."

"Yes, I realized how lonely you would feel if you went alone for two months." Mirajane replied with a smile. "And I could never do that to you."

Immediately, all the girls rolled their eyes at Mirajane's shameless reply. Alfonzo, on the other hand, stood up from his seat on the couch, walked over to Mirajane, picked her up from her seat, and sat where Mirajane once sat while sitting her on his lap.

"Thanks, Mira." Alfonzo said as he wrapped his arms around Mirajane's waist and kissed her on the cheek. "I'll have someone to take a bath with in Blue Pegasus' hot spring, too."

"What?" Sun shouted in surprise. "Blue Pegasus has a hot spring? I love hot springs! I wanna go, too!"

With Sun's exclamation, the living room fell into silence while everyone looked at Sun with bewilderment.

"You didn't know?" Marin asked Sun. "But Pegasus Village was all over Sorcerer Weekly when they had it built a couple years ago."

"Was it?" Sun asked while tilting her head cutely. "I never read stuff about Blue Pegasus, though. I mean, it almost always involves Ichiya. And he makes me really uncomfortable."

The other ladies nodded in understanding.

"Not enough to keep you away from a hot spring, though." Marin said while nudging Sun with her elbow.

"Uh huh!" Sun replied with a nod. "I really like hot springs. I think it would even be able to keep me from beating up the Trimens if I get to soak in it every day."

"Perhaps I will go, as well." Erza said with a contemplative expression on her face. "I've never had the opportunity to soak in a hot spring. And if they are really as nice as Sun says, perhaps I won't have so much anxiety from meeting Ichiya."

"Yeah, you'll love it." Sun said with a smile. "Hot springs are the best!"

With that, the three who would follow Alfonzo while he worked at the Blue Pegasus guild hall were decided. And not long later, they all left to pack their luggage. They would be leaving the next day, after all.

Chapter 488: More Movements in the Background

While Erza, Mirajane, and Sun were packing for the two month long trip to Blue Pegasus, Alfonzo and the other girls decided to make a trip to the guild hall to hang out. While Elicia and the other girls were just going to spend time with their friends, Alfonzo was going to say goodbye to everyone for the third time this year.

"*Sigh* I can't wait until all this shit with building stuff for other guilds is over." Alfonzo said while shaking his head as he walked towards the guild hall with Elicia, Cana, Ultear, Marin, and Lucy. "I'm tired of being away from home for so long at a time."

"Yeah, at least this is the last one though, right?" Lucy said with a smile. "Then, you can get back to doing what a wizard is supposed to do."

"If only it were that simple." Alfonzo replied.

"Who else do you have to build for?" Cana asked curiously while pulling a bottle of vodka out of her storage card.

"The Village Hidden in the Leaves." Alfonzo replied, sounding tired as he spoke.

"You sound tired just thinking about it." Ultear said as she wrapped her arms around Alfonzo's right arm. "Is the job really going to be that bad?"

"From what Master Tsunade said, it probably will." Alfonzo replied. "Not only do they want me to build training chambers, but they want me to modify all their existing training grounds, too."

Hearing that, Elicia opened her eyes wide. Luckily no one was paying attention to her when that happened. Otherwise, she would have given away that she knew more than she was supposed to.

Meanwhile, the other girls looked at Alfonzo in confusion.

"I know what you're thinking." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "That doesn't seem so bad, right?"

In response, all the girls nodded.

"But from what Master Tsunade said, these training grounds are massive." Alfonzo continued. "They're supposed to mimic any kind of terrain the shinobi of the village might come across while on a mission."

Hearing that, like Elicia, the other girls also opened their eyes wide.

"And there are more than forty five of them, too." Alfonzo said, concluding his explanation.

With that, the group fell into silence. The silence did not last too long, however, as it was broken by a question.

"Just how long will something like that take?" Lucy asked curiously. "I mean, you'll basically be changing the entire landscape, right?"

"More or less." Alfonzo replied. "And to be honest, I'm not sure how long it will take. But I'll have to work out the details with their Hokage.. Oh, that's the title for their leader."

"That sounds weird." Cana said while rolling the title around in her head.

"That's what I said, too." Alfonzo said with a smile. "But different cultures and all that."

"I guess." Cana replied before taking a swig from her bottle of vodka.

Like that, the group kept chatting as they made their way to the guild hall. Eventually, they came across Brandish, who once again was reading a book with a book cover surrounding it.

Seeing Brandish, Marin's eyes lit up, as she felt she was reading something she might be interested in. So, she jogged over to greet the green-haired young woman.

"Hey, Brandish." Marin said excitedly while approaching Brandish. "Whatcha readin'?"

"Oh, hi, Marin." Brandish replied as she looked up from her book. "I'm reading this."

With a slight blush, Brandish waited for Marin to get closer. Then, she put a book mark on her current page before flipping to the title page. Clearly, she was too embarrassed to verbally answer Marin's question in public.

After seeing the title of Brandish's book, Marin quickly sat down next to her. Then, she began animatedly discussing the book. Meanwhile, Brandish looked around cautiously to make sure that no one could overhear their conversation.

At the same time, Alfonzo, Elicia, Cana, Ultear, and Lucy only watched in amusement.

"I wanna call Marin the source of corruption." Ultear said while elegantly covering her smile with her right hand. "But Brandish was reading books like that the first time we saw her. So, if anything Marin is only speeding the process along."

"I'd rather she just let herself be corrupted than trying to kill me like she did back then." Lucy replied awkwardly.

"At least the misunderstanding was settled, right?" Elicia asked as she held Lucy's hand with a smile. "She won't try to kill you any more, either."

"Yeah, I guess." Lucy replied, maintaining her awkward smile. "But I can tell that she wants to fight me. Probably to beat the person that beat the person that killed her mother."

"Well, if it ever comes to that, just fight her." Cana said with a shrug. "As long as she doesn't go too far, it will only be a spar."

"Yeah, but I really don't wanna fight someone I know I can't beat." Lucy said, her awkward smile turning wry in an instant. "I mean, I'm not like Darkness. I don't like getting beat up."

At the same time, a certain blonde-haired, blue-eyed knight sneezed before she started blushing and shuddering in pleasure.

"If you're so afraid, just release Zodiac." Alfonzo replied. "If you do, you'd be more or less on par with her, right?"

"Yeah, but you told us not to release the [Soul Armaments] in front of them, right?" Lucy asked in confusion.

"That's true, but I'd rather you not get beat up for no reason." Alfonzo replied as he started combing his fingers through Lucy's hair. "But that should only be a last resort. Like if she challenges you and won't take no for an answer."

"Kay~~~." Lucy replied while melting under the feeling of Alfonzo's fingertips brushing against her scalp.

With that, Alfonzo and the girls continued to walk, leaving Marin and Brandish behind to talk about the book Brandish was reading.

"Hey, they left you behind." Brandish said as she noticed the others leave. "Don't you need to catch up with them?"

Brandish's question was more to get Marin to stop talking about the book in a public place. But it also gauged how important their trip away from home was. If it really was important, Brandish would report it to Irene when she returned to the hotel.

"Oh, don't worry about it." Marin replied with a smile. "They're only heading to the guild hall. Fonzie wanted to say bye before he left for a job."

Judging that Irene and Brandish would know when Alfonzo left, Marin felt no harm in telling Brandish that little bit of information.

At the same time, Brandish became a bit more attentive. And had Marin not been on guard against Irene and Brandish from the beginning, she would have never noticed. However, now that she had, she would definitely tell Alfonzo about it when they got home.

Until then, however, Marin continued to chat with Brandish, who got more uncomfortable with the conversation topic as time passed.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Village Hidden in the Leaves.

At the same time, in a large village hidden in a forest near Karakura Town, Hidden Leaf Ravine, and the Valley of the End, three elderly men and an elderly woman were meeting in the office of the highest ranking man in the village to discuss the potential deal to have their training grounds overhauled.

"Hiruzen, are you really planning to allow an outsider into the village to change our training grounds?" An elderly man with shaggy black hair, black eyes, an X-shaped scar on his chin, and his left eye and right arm covered in bandages wearing a black robe that covered everything from his ankles to his left shoulder, asked angrily.

"We've been over this before, Danzō." Hiruzen, or rather, Hiruzen Sarutobi, replied in an exasperated tone as he took a toke from his pipe. "Tsunade told me about this. And from what she has seen, they could increase the strength of our shinobi several fold in the years to come."

Hiruzen Sarutobi, the current Hokage of the Village Hidden in the leaves was a man of below average stature with wrinkles and liver spots befitting his age, a bald head with grey hair on the sides and back of his head, and a beard of matching color wearing a red and white robe with the word "Third" stitched on its back and a large brimmed red and white hat with the word "Fire" stitched on its front.

Bang!

"And what if he's a spy?" the elderly black-haired man, Danzō, or rather Danzō Shimura, asked while slamming his right fist onto Hiruzen's desk. "Giving an outsider that much access to the village could spell the end of the Hidden Leaf."

"*Sigh* I understand your concerns, Danzō." Hiruzen said in an annoyed tone after exhaling a cloud of smoke. "But I trust Tsunade. And I will not change my decision."

Instead of responding, Danzō only shot a dirty look at Hiruzen. Then, he stood from his seat, turned around, and left the office.

Meanwhile, the other two people in the office, a grey-haired elderly woman and a bespectacled elderly man with spiky grey hair and beard exchanged glances. However, they could tell that Hiruzen had gotten fed up with their old team mate.

"Calm down, Hiruzen." The elderly woman, Koharu Utatane, said in a soothing tone. "You know he only wants what's best for the village."

"Besides, once he sees the utility of the new training equipment, I'm sure he'll come around." The elderly man, Homura Mitokado, added.

"Yes, I know that." Hiruzen replied after taking a deep breath to calm down. "But he doesn't have to act like he can't trust the words of my disciple like that."

Once again, Koharu and Homura exchanged glances. And from the look in the other's eyes, they could tell they were both thinking the same thing.

'Well, one of your three disciples is Orochimaru, the village's worst traitor in history.' The two elders thought simultaneously. 'Then, there's Jiraiya, a notorious pervert. And lastly, the one who gave us the information about this young man, Alfonzo Marcus, is a terrible gambling addict and alcoholic. So, your disciples don't exactly have the best track records.'

Naturally, the two elders were intelligent enough to not say that out loud. Especially since they had the same concerns as Danzō. Though, they could understand the utility of having such training spaces, as well.

"Anyway, now that this is done, you two can go back." Hiruzen replied. "I still have work to do."

Nodding in response, Koharu and Homura stood up and left the room.

As soon as Hiruzen was alone in his office, he took another toke from his pipe as he leaned back in his chair.

"I just hope you don't try to do anything to that boy, Danzō." Hiruzen said in a tired tone. "He's one of the strongest members of Fairy Tail, the strongest of the Legal Guilds in the kingdom. We're not ready to face an enemy like that. Not after the rampage of the Nine-Tailed Fox. On top of that, we hadn't even fully recovered from the Third Great Ninja War when that happened."

Hiruzen then took another toke from his pipe. Then, after exhaling, he continued talking to himself.

"Anyway, I guess I'll have Kakashi be his guide and keep an eye on him while he's in the village." Hiruzen murmured to himself as he reached under his desk for a button that would summon a messenger.

At the same time, Danzō, who had just exited the Hokage Tower, the central administrative building in the Village Hidden in the Leaves, could not help but twitch the corner of his lips.

'Good, once that outsider finishes doing all the upgrades, I think I'll bring him into my Root.' Danzō thought to himself while covering the left side of his face with his left hand. 'Then, my rise to Hokage will be unstoppable. The only thing in the way will be you, my old friend, Hiruzen.'

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Outskirts of Crocus.

"Who are you and why did you break us out of prison?" A pale-skinned man with yellow eyes and snake like features asked warily.

"Because I've heard a little about the two of you, Orochimaru and Mayuri Kurotsuchi." A young blonde woman with an exaggerated hourglass figure replied in a cheerful tone. "It's because the two of you bring despair to those around you. And I like that."

As she spoke of despair, the blonde woman, Junko Enoshima began writhing in pleasure. Meanwhile, the two men she just broke out of prison, Orochimaru and Mayuri Kurotsuchi, only looked at her in bewilderment.

"Anyway, my friend will be here with your subordinates soon." Junko replied after she got herself under control.

"And what do you want from us after breaking us out?" Mayuri asked skeptically.

"Nothing." Junko replied. "I just want you to bring despair to the world like you've always done. Experiment on the so called innocent. Make whole villages disappear in the name of science. Genocide an entire race to find out their secrets. I don't care. Just keep doing whatever you have been doing."

By the end of her speech, Junko had her arms raised and spread in a grand fashion as she looked at Orochimaru and Mayuri as if they were her idols. A moment later, however, her expression turned into one filled with disdain.

"But please don't tell me going to prison once was enough to make you turn over a new leaf." Junko continued, her tone making her sound like she was totally disgusted by the thought. "Otherwise, I'll kill you myself."

Feeling the aura Junko released, Orochimaru and Mayuri both took some distance while raising their guard. Luckily, it did not come to a fight. Instead, Junko put on a smile as she looked in a certain direction.

Following Junko's gaze, Orochimaru and Mayuri saw a young, blonde woman with cat like features leading a bespectacled, grey-haired young man and a black-haired young woman towards their position from a different side of the capital.

"Himiko, welcome back!" Junko shouted as she vigorously waved her arm in the three newcomers' direction.

"Junko, I did like you asked." The blonde with cat-like features, Himiko Toga, replied as she ran towards Junko. A few moments later, she stopped next to Junko with a smile on her face. "So, can we go and cover that sexy Alfonso Marcus in his own blood now?"

"It's not quite the time yet." Junko replied with a smile as she started patting Himiko on the head. "But it will be soon, I promise."

"*Sigh* Okay." Himiko replied in a disappointed tone. "I'll believe in you, Junko."

Meanwhile, the other two, Kabuto Yakushi and Nemu Kurotsuchi, approached the men they served.

"Good, now that we're out, let's go, Kabuto." Orochimaru said. "We won't be working with Kurotsuchi any more, it's too conspicuous."

"Then what's our next move, Lord Orochimaru?" Kabuto asked.

"Well, since no one knows we've escaped prison, let's plan to destroy the old village." Orochimaru replied as he licked his lips with his abnormally long tongue. "After that, we can plot our revenge on the one responsible for us spending almost two years in prison."

"As you command, Lord Orochimaru." Kabuto replied while bowing his head politely.

Meanwhile, Mayuri had already walked away.

"Let us return home, Nemu." Mayuri said without looking back. "I believe we've collected enough data to finish the Captain Commander's assignment."

"Yes, Master." Nemu replied as she and Mayuri disappeared into the darkness.

Chapter 489: To Blue Pegasus

"They just left the town." Irene muttered while watching the Escalade leave Magnolia's town gate through her [Magic Power Detection]. "Looks like the intel was correct."

"Yeah, but I couldn't get their destination out of her." Brandish replied. "Only that they were leaving."

Currently, Irene and Brandish were discussing how to handle Alfonzo's departure from Magnolia. However, because they had no idea where he was going, they did not know if it was a good idea to follow. And the fact that all of Fairy Tail was suspicious of them made the decision even more difficult.

"That's not important." Irene replied casually. "The issue is raising their suspicion any further if they realize one, or both, of us are following them."

Brandish nodded in agreement.

"Then, what do you suggest we do?" Brandish asked in a solemn tone.

"*Sigh* Honestly, I'm not sure." Irene replied. "If it weren't for this detection method, I would just follow them while staying hidden. But things are more complicated than that."

Once again, Brandish nodded her head in agreement. Unfortunately, neither woman had a good idea of what they should do about the current situation.

"Well, you should just keep doing what you've been doing." Irene said after thinking for a while. "Even though the one called Erza is not here, you can still continue to interact with Marin and Lucy."

"*Sigh* I really hope she invites me over to their house more often." Brandish muttered as she thought about her interactions with Marin. "She talks way too animatedly about her hobbies in public."

In response, Irene grinned sadistically.

"Yes, I can understand why you'd rather not talk about those books in public." Irene said as she made a copy of Saint Slipperry's Academy for Girls 2 appear in her hand. "These books are rather... risqué."

Irene then opened the book to a dog eared page. Then, she began to read the page allowed.

Immediately, Brandish's face turned as red as her companion's hair. A moment later, she realized that Irene was reading her favorite part of the book. After that, Brandish's face paled rapidly as she ran into her bedroom to find her copy of the book.

"Ahh~~~~~!" Brandish screamed after she realized her copy of the book was missing. Then, she ran out of the bedroom, only to see Irene smirking at her.

"I would have never expected that you would be into books like this one, Brandish." Irene said while waving the book back and forth. "I wonder what Dimaria would think of this information."

Immediately, Brandish paled even further. Then, she dashed towards Irene with desperation in her eyes before dropping to her knees and pressing her forehead to the floor.

"Please, Irene, don't tell anyone back home about this." Brandish said in a pleading tone. "If they ever found out, my reputation would be ruined."

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Open Road.

"No one's following us." Alfonzo muttered while steering the Escalade. "I was almost certain that Irene would be following us from a distance."

"She still might." Erza said in a serious tone. "You mentioned that woman's [Magic Power Detection] range being quite vast, correct?"

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "But since I doubt she has any idea how big my range is, she's probably wary."

In actuality, Irene's range was much larger than Alfonzo's. Unfortunately, she had no way to judge that. Also, she was well aware that Alfonzo was able to feel her surveillance. So, even if she kept him at the very edge of her detection range, he would still be able to feel her tracking his location.

"It's still hard to believe that she's that much stronger than Gildarts, though." Mirajane said as she reached over from the passenger seat and gripped Alfonzo's hand nervously. "And we still have no idea what she wants."

"We don't even know if she's really here because of God Serena." Sun added.

"Please, don't call him God." Alfonzo said while squeezing Mirajane's hand reassuringly. "He's just a dickhead with an over inflated ego. Sure, finding that many Dragon Slayer Lacrima is impressive, but he didn't have to work nearly as hard as Gildarts to get as strong as he is. Hell, Even Brandish has probably worked a lot harder than he did. Especially when you consider that she's about the same age as Lucy."

"*Sigh* And what does that say about us?" Mirajane said while shaking her head. "Me, you, Lici, Tear, and Erza are all two years older than her. But she's got more magic power than any of us."

"There's probably a reason for that, though." Erza said. "We focus more on magic power control than just recklessly increasing our magic power."

"I guess you're right." Mirajane replied. "If we were only focused on increasing our magic power, especially with the training chambers making strengthening our bodies so much easier, we would probably have crazy amounts of magic power."

"On top of that, we focus on compressing our magic power, too." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Not to say Brandish doesn't. But all of us have much denser magic power than she does. It's just that she's got enough to over compensate."

Hearing that, the three ladies nodded their heads.

"But we've also got the [Soul Armaments]." Alfonzo continued. "And those give us a huge advantage over wizards at a similar level."

Once again, the ladies nodded.

"Well, as long as they don't attack, we don't have anything to worry about." Sun said while smiling happily. "And if they do, we'll show them why it's a bad idea, ya see."

"Damn right, we will." Alfonzo said with a strong nod. "For now, let's just focus on getting stronger. Hopefully, they'll give us enough time to catch up."

"Yeah." x 3

With that, the group of four decided to drop the subject. Instead, they talked about the things they could do in Onibus, the town closest to Blue Pegasus guild hall.

"Oh, I almost forgot." Mirajane said as she placed a finger on her lower lip. "What are we gonna do about gravity training while we're away from the guild. No one ever mentioned that after your other two trips."

"Oh, that's simple." Alfonzo replied. "I can increase the gravity in an area with my [Electromagnetism Magic]. Unfortunately, I can't exclude the oxygen from the effect without the accompanying sigils. So, we can do gravity training, but you'll have to be careful like we used to before my trip to Mermaid Heel."

"Okay." Mirajane replied.

"Got it." Sun replied.

"Understood." Erza replied with a nod.

With that, the rest of the trip went on without issue. And when Alfonzo felt that they had finally left Irene's detection range, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Onibus.

A few hours after Alfonzo, Erza, Mirajane, and Sun left Magnolia, the members of Blue Pegasus, who were not out on quests, were sitting around the guild hall. And while most of them were just chatting with the people they usually hung out with, there was one green-haired woman who was grumbling.

Sitting at the same table as the green-haired woman, Karen Lilica, was a light blue-haired woman who just received a drink order. With the drink in her hand, the light blue-haired woman, Sorano Agria, found Karen's antics rather amusing.

"I swear, if he didn't bring her with him, I'm going to kick his ass." Karen said in a disgruntled tone.

"You really need to give up, Karen." Sorano said with a smile while swirling a cocktail. "It's clear Elicia isn't interested in you like that."

"Shut up, Bitch." Karen replied harshly. "You have no idea what you're talking about. It's clear she wants me as her pet. Didn't you see the way she tied me up and threw me in that room before forgetting me?"

Shaking her head, Sorano could not help but remember the night before Alfonzo and Elicia's wedding when Elicia did exactly as Karen said. However, it was clearly not because Elicia was interested in having Karen as a pet.

Instead, it was because Karen was causing a ruckus over the fact that Elicia would not cancel the wedding. Then, when Elicia was tired of hearing her repeat the same thing, she used her threads to gag and tie up Karen before throwing her in the only remaining guest room.

"Whatever you say." Sorano said before taking a sip from her drink.

"Now, now, now, ladies." Ichiya, who had overheard Karen and Sorano's conversation, made his way over to the table they were sharing while wearing his best smile. "There's no reason for such lovely flowers like the two of you to fight. Instead, we should have a cup of---"

"[Ring Magic: Twister]." Karen chanted while pointing her right hand at Ichiya.

In the next instant, a column of swirling winds was fired from the ring on Karen's right index finger. Then, Ichiya, without enough time to resist, was blown away before slamming towards the wall behind him.

"Men~~~~~!" Ichiya shouted as he flew through the air.

Bang!

"Ichiya~~~!" Ren, Hibiki, and Eve shouted as they ran towards their mentor.

"Even if I wanted a cup of tea, I damn sure wouldn't be drinking it with you!" Karen said disdainfully.

"*Sigh* If nothing else, he sticks to his guns." Sorano said while shaking her head. A moment later, she looked in a particular direction. "Still, I hope Alfonzo gets here soon. Master Bob is freaking me out."

Hearing Sorano's words, Karen could not help but look in the same direction. At the end of their lines of sight, Bob, the master of the Blue Pegasus guild, was constantly checking himself out in a hand mirror while touching up his make-up.

"Yeah, I don't even like the guy, but I wouldn't subject him to whatever Master Bob has got planned for him." Karen said as she looked away from her guild master.

"Seriously." Sorano added as she, too, looked away from Master Bob. "Making himself up like that is not gonna make him switch guilds."

At that moment, the sound of high heels clicking against the floor could be heard approaching the table where Karen and Sorano were seated. Naturally, those clicks drew the two ladies' attention.

However, Karen and Sorano's reactions were completely different after seeing who was approaching. While Sorano nodded at the new arrival with a smile, Karen snorted and turned away.

"What's up, Jenny?" Sorano asked. "Need something?"

"I was just curious to know about Alfonzo Marcus." Jenny replied cheerfully.

Jenny, or Jenny Realight, was a beautiful young woman with big blue eyes and wavy blonde hair tied into a ponytail that reached the middle of her back, bangs that frame her face, full lips, and a slim-yet very curvaceous, figure.

Accentuating her beauty and highlighting her figure, Jenny wore a light pink, calf-length, strapless dress with a slit on the left side that started above her hip, matching high heels, a cream colored sash wrapped around her waist, and a flower with large petals in her hair on the right side of her head.

Jenny also wore quite a few pieces of jewelry, as well. Namely, a pair of earrings, a necklace with a number of rectangular plates, three bracelets on her wrists, one on the left and two on the right, and a ring on her left pinky finger.

"Oh, does our little Jenny have a crush?" Sorano asked in a teasing tone.

"Maybe." Jenny replied with a smile. "He's really quite handsome."

"Tch!" Karen clicked her tongue disdainfully. "He really is just a playboy. Lici is too good for him."

"How is this even his fault?" Sorano asked while looking at Karen incredulously.

"Tch!" Karen once again clicked her tongue.

"Anyway, that's not why I'm asking, though." Jenny replied. "It's more for my magic."

"Ah~~~, that makes sense." Sorano replied. "Yeah, all the stuff he creates would go well with your [Take Over: Machina Soul], which allows you to take on the abilities of different kinds of machinery. So, getting him to build stuff for you could seriously increase your firepower."

"That's right." Jenny replied with a nod. "And from what everyone says, he's the best magic item craftsman on the continent. So, I wanted to know what the chances of him making something for me would be while he's here."

"Honestly, I don't know him well enough to answer that question." Sorano replied with a shrug. "But all you have to do is ask when he gets here, right?"

"You're right." Jenny said with a nod.

"Tch!" Karen clicked her tongue for a third time. "He's nothing but a dog in heat. I would say just flash a little leg and he'll be putty in your hands. But you've already got that taken care of."

"Don't mind her." Sorano said while waving off Karen's scathing words. "Alfonzo's not that bad. Just be careful, he doesn't play around when it comes to money. So, you might end up paying a lot more than you expect for anything he makes for you. Then again, with his skill, it will definitely be worth it."

Nodding her head once again, Jenny continued chatting with Sorano about what would be the best way to get Alfonzo to agree to make something for her, while ignoring Karen's disgruntled mumblings. Their conversation eventually came to an end, however, when the doors to the guild hall opened, revealing the silhouettes of four people, one man and three women.

Chapter 490: Blue Pegasus' Welcome

As Alfonzo, Erza, Mirajane, and Sun entered the Blue Pegasus guild hall, the entire guild hall fell silent. A moment later, however, a red carpet rolled from the back of the guild hall to its main entrance. Then, Ichiya, who had miraculously recovered from Karen's attack, appeared at the end of the red carpet opposite the entrance.

"Here he goes again." Sorano said in an exasperated tone. "Karen, couldn't you have hit him harder?"

"You know it wouldn't have made a difference." Karen replied in just as exasperated a tone as Sorano.

At the same time, Karen and Sorano noticed that Jenny had disappeared from where she stood in front of their table.

"Friends from Fairy Tail, welcome." Ichiya, with a red rose in his hand, said as he started walking down the red carpet.

At the same time, Eve, Hibiki, Ren, and Jenny appeared on either side of the red carpet, each with a basket in their hands. Then, in unison, the four reached into the basket and began throwing flower petals into the air.

"*Sigh* No matter how many times I've seen it, this never gets any less cringe." Alfonzo muttered while rubbing his temples.

In response, Erza, Mirajane, and Sun nodded their heads vigorously while hiding behind Alfonzo.

"Hey, Alfonzo..." Mirajane said in a tone filled with trepidation.

"What's up, Mira?" Alfonzo asked, having an idea what she was about to ask for.

"Can you make me a new car?" Mirajane asked. "I just remembered that I forgot something back at the mansion."

"Me, too." Sun added. "It's really important, too."

"Indeed, a new car sounds like a necessity." Erza said while shuddering. "And I think a four seater would be for the best."

Alfonzo could only shake his head in response. AT the same time, Ichiya, the Trimens, and Jenny were drawing nearer. Everyone also knew that Ichiya was speaking. However, they all tuned him out shortly after he started. Unfortunately for the four Fairy Tail wizards, after a certain point, it was impossible to tune him out any longer.

"Now, please allow us to entertain you properly, friends from afar." Ichiya said from directly in front of Alfonzo while smiling brightly.

As soon as he finished speaking, Ichiya reached past Alfonzo, intending to take Erza's hand. Before he could do so, however, Alfonzo's hand shot out and clamped around the shorter man's wrist.

"We talked about this the last time you tried to put your hands on my fiancée, didn't we, Ichiya?" Alfonzo asked with a friendly smile.

Despite the fact that Alfonzo's smile was so friendly, no one was under the illusion that he was happy. Even Ichiya, despite his my-pace attitude, could feel cold sweat forming on his back.

"You're right, Alfonzo." Ichiya said with a smile that was only a moment away from crying. "I only wanted to greet our allies."

"I see." Alfonzo replied, not losing his friendly smile.

In the next instant, Alfonzo released Ichiya's wrist. Then, he extended his hand for a handshake.

"Well then, it's good to see you again, my friend." Alfonzo said.

Smiling brightly, Ichiya thought that Alfonzo had finally understood his gentlemanly spirit. That notion changed rather quickly after he grasped Alfonzo's hand, however.

"My, what a firm handshake." Ichiya said, cold sweat dripping down his forehead thanks to the pain in his right hand. "A firm handshake is the mark of a gentleman."

"You think so, too?" Alfonzo asked. "Although I didn't get to spend much time with him, my father always said the same thing."

With that, Alfonzo released Ichiya's hand. Ichiya, on the other hand, grasped his right hand with his left. Then, with the ugliest smile anyone present had ever seen, he replied.

"I see. He must have been a truly great man, then." Ichiya said. Then, he turned around and quickly walked away. "Well then, I'll leave the rest of the welcome to the Trimens and Jenny. If you'll excuse me."

Though Ichiya covered his hand quickly, everyone on the guild hall saw that it was rather swollen. On top of that, it had turned almost completely purple. And while the Trimens were concerned about their mentor, since Ichiya left the welcome to them, they would welcome the guests with the best of their ability.

Jenny, on the other hand, was thoroughly surprised by Ichiya's exit. Like the others, she knew what had happened. However, instead of being wary of Alfonzo, who hurt one of her guild mates, she looked at him with sparkling eyes.

A moment later, just as Ichiya had instructed, Jenny was the first to approach the Fairy Tail wizards. Then, she hugged Alfonzo's right arm and looked up with stars in her eyes.

"Wow! You're so strong." Jenny said coquettishly.

Looking down, Alfonzo made eye contact with Jenny.

'Damn, she really is pretty.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'It's no wonder she's giving Mira a run for her money as Sorcerer Weekly's top model.'

["Yeah, but Mira is definitely prettier."] Bedlam said. ["But you're right. It's no surprise she became Miss Fiore and the top model in Sorcerer Weekly after the canon Fairy Tail disappeared in x784."]

["Hmph! Lici is prettier."] Riot said after snorting in disdain. ["If she wanted to be a model, she would definitely be the most popular."]

In unison, Alfonzo and Bedlam rolled their eyes at Riot's simping for Elicia.

"You must be Jenny Realight, right?" Alfonzo asked with a smile. "It's nice to meet you."

In reply, Jenny's smile widened. Meanwhile, Mirajane felt her eyebrows twitching in irritation. Unfortunately, before she could intervene, Eve, Hibiki, and Ren made their way over and began their usual act.

Though, it could be seen that Ren was not as passionate about entertaining the female guests as usual.

'I guess it's not the same for Ren now that he's got Sherry, huh?' Alfonzo thought to himself as he allowed himself to be led to a table by Jenny.

Not only Alfonzo, Erza, led by Eve, Mirajane, led by Ren, and Sun, led by Hibiki, were also ushered to the same table. Then, once everyone was seated, the four Blue Pegasus wizards engaged them in conversation.

It should be noted, however, that none of the Trimens had the courage to touch any of the ladies from Fairy Tail. Especially since Ichiya's state after trying to touch Erza still fresh in their minds.

Jenny, on the other hand, was practically glued to Alfonzo. And Alfonzo could only smile wryly for the duration. Even though he was enjoying the feeling of Jenny's body pressed against him, he was unsure

how much longer Mirajane, whose teeth he could hear grinding together, could hold back from beating her up.

After a few minutes, and just before Mirajane reached her boiling point, Bob, who was tired of being ignored, stood up from his seat at the bar. Then, with his hips swaying back and forth, he made his way over to the table where the Fairy Tail wizards had been seated.

"So, how was the trip from Magnolia?" Bob asked in a coquettish tone while batting his eye lashes at Alfonzo.

"Master Bob." Alfonzo said as he stood from his seat while separating himself from Jenny. "The trip was good. Thanks for asking."

"That's good." Bob replied as he got even closer to Alfonzo. "We still need to discuss the arrangements for the training chambers. Why don't you follow me to my office?"

Hesitantly, Alfonzo nodded his head.

"Sure, why not?" Alfonzo said.

"Great!" bob exclaimed happily. "Then, let's go."

With that, Bob hugged Alfonzo's arm and started pulling him towards a door to the side of the bar. Meanwhile, Erza, Mirajane, and Sun had to stifle their giggles after seeing Alfonzo's expression.

"Master really seems to like Alfonzo, huh?" Jenny asked while watching Alfonzo and Bob walk away.

"He doesn't seem to be the only one." Mirajane said sharply.

Immediately, Jenny's attention was drawn towards Mirajane. And as soon as she made eye contact, her eyes lit up.

"Wow! It's Mirajane!" Jenny exclaimed as she stood up from her seat. A moment later, after circling around the table, she had Mirajane's hands grasped in her own. "You and Karen are my idols. The two of you are the reason I got into modeling."

"Uh... Thanks..." Mirajane, taken off guard, replied awkwardly. "I'm glad I had such an impact on an aspiring model."

"That's right." Jenny said with a smile. "And like you and Karen, I wanna be the top model in Sorcerer Weekly one day."

Hearing that, Mirajane's awkward expression changed in an instant, replaced by a sharp, competitive one. Jenny, however, did not seem to notice this change. Instead, she continued to gush about how much of an inspiration Mirajane had been for her.

"Uh oh..." Sun murmured. "It looks like the Old Mira's coming out."

"Indeed." Erza replied. "We haven't seen this side of her since we made that deal about the Miss Fairy Tail Pageant last year."

"Yup." Sun said while nodding vigorously. "And after talking so big, she didn't even win."

Immediately, Sun shrunk back while smiling sheepishly when Mirajane's intense glare landed on her. A moment later, however, Mirajane returned her gaze to Jenny.

"Anyway, I look forward to the challenge." Mirajane said while smiling challengingly. "Unfortunately, you're at a severe disadvantage in this competition. All my clothes are made by my sister, Elicia Marcus Taylor."

Once again, Jenny's eyes lit up.

"That's amazing!" Jenny exclaimed excitedly. "Do you think you could introduce me to her? Even though I've bought some clothes from the Taylor Shop, I've never been there when she's there. So, I've never been able to get a custom dress. Instead, all my outfits are made by Eri Hirano."

"Eri Hirano... isn't that Kohta's mom?" Sun asked while tilting her head cutely.

"That's right." Erza replied with a nod. "Elicia has been trying to reach an agreement with her to either cooperate or buy out her company."

"Wow! Really?" Jenny asked, turning her attention from Mirajane to Erza and Sun.

"Yeah." Sun replied with a nod. "Lici said she really likes the clothes Mrs. Hirano makes and wanted to work with her."

By now, Jenny's eyes were as bright as torch lights as she continued to discuss with the three Fairy Tail ladies. Meanwhile, Eve, Hibiki, and Ren could only look on awkwardly. They were being completely ignored by the ladies they were trying to entertain, for a woman, no less.

"I get the feeling we're not needed here." Eve said while scratching the back of his head.

"Well, it's not like I was here for them, anyway." Ren replied as he turned his head away. "I was only doing it because Ichiya said so."

"We can't be discouraged." Hibiki said. "Even if we can't engage them in conversation, there are other things we can do."

With that, Hibiki stood up before making his way over to the bar. Meanwhile, Eve and Ren watched their teammate's actions.

A few minutes later, Hibiki returned while carrying a platter with four teacups and a pot of steaming hot tea. Then, in an elegant manner, he placed a cup of tea in front of each of the ladies.

"My lovely ladies, something to quench your thirst." Hibiki said with a smile.

Acknowledging Hibiki with nods, the four ladies continued to chat while occasionally taking sips from their teacups. Meanwhile, Hibiki stood nearby, refilling the cups whenever they were emptied.

Seeing that, Eve and Ren were enlightened. Standing up, they also rushed back to the bar. Then, they ordered snacks and finger foods to go along with the tea. A few minutes later, Eve and Ren were standing nearby with Hibiki, acting as butlers.

On a side note, after taking care of his swollen hand, Ichiya decided now that Alfonzo was not around, he would try to talk with Erza. And for the first few minutes, though Erza was clearly recoiling due to his fervor, nothing happened. So, Ichiya got bolder in his actions. Eventually, he tried to take Erza's armored hand to plant a kiss on its back.

Bang!

Before he could even touch Erza's hand, however, the sugar spoon floated out of the sugar bowl. Then, at high speed, it slammed into the side of Ichiya's head, knocking him out on impact.

"Ichiya!" The Trimens exclaimed in shock and concern after seeing Ichiya's fate.

At the same time, they vowed to themselves that they would never try to touch Alfonzo's lovers ever again, especially if he was nearby.

Meanwhile, Sorano could only shake her head while drinking her cocktail.

"*Sigh* He'll never learn." Sorano said. "What makes it even worse is the fact that he's trying this with someone's fiancée. Where did all that talk about being a gentleman go?"

"All is fair in love and war, as they say." Karen replied. "Still, it does bring down his self-proclaimed image of a gentleman."

"Yeah." Sorano replied with a nod. "Anyway, I'm gonna go over there to greet our guests. You coming?"

"Hmph!" Karen snorted disdainfully.

Despite that, Karen stood up and started walking towards the table where the Fairy Tail wizards sat.

Once again, Sorano could not help but shake her head.

"She's such a tsundere." Sorano said with a smile. A moment later, she finished her cocktail before standing up, as well. "She's even worse than Ren."