

Fairy Tail 511

Chapter 511: Kai Mikawa

After returning from the sea, their magical beast subjugation completed, Alfonzo, Cana, and Sun first went to the Akane resort to show proof of their successful subjugation. Then, after buying a few things to go along with the crab they caught, they returned to the villa.

"*Sigh* I kinda feel bad that I didn't do anything during the subjugation." Cana, wearing a teal bikini and lounging on a beach chair, said after taking a sip of a cocktail Alfonzo made for her. "What makes it even worse, is the fact that I asked the two of you to help me on this quest. Hell, you two would have been just fine without me."

"Don't say that, Cana." Sun, wearing a yellow bikini while also lounging on a beach chair, said in an optimistic tone. "If you hadn't told us about it, that crab might have hurt even more people. You might have gotten hurt, too."

"Yeah, I know..." Cana said before taking another swig. "But I don't think I would have gotten hurt. Instead, I would not have gotten any points for this quest. Because I would have probably used my [Super Nova] spell. And that would have caused a huge tidal wave that would have probably damaged a lot of the properties on the shore."

"I'm actually surprised to hear that, Cana." Alfonzo, who was busy grilling a portion of the Emperor Guillotine Crab's meat, said with a smile. "I didn't think you were aware of the damage you caused on quests."

In response, Cana waved off Alfonzo's comment.

"No, I'm always aware." Cana said. "I just get impatient. I mean, I usually have a plan that would end without any collateral damage. But it usually takes too long. So, I end up just bulldozing through it all, without hurting civilians, of course."

Hearing that, both Alfonzo and Sun sighed in unison. Before they could continue the conversation, however, they were all drawn to a killer whale leaping out of the sea in the distance.

"Hmm...?" Sun hummed in confusion. "I lived on Akane Beach for a long time. But I've never seen killer whales here."

"Really?" Cana asked as she sat up to get a better look at the killer whale. "Then, we should be seeing something truly rare. I'll run in and get my photo lacrima. I bet the others back at the guild would love to see this."

'That isn't just a simple killer whale.' Alfonzo thought as he continued to tend to the grill. 'I mean, neither of the girls have noticed yet, but that thing is gonna beach itself if it keeps going the way it is.'

["On top of that, it's staring at Sun."] Bedlam added.

["It's definitely that Kai dick again."] Riot added. ["How dare he look at her like that." Let's kick his ass.]

Meanwhile, Alfonzo continued to cook. At the same time, Cana ran into the villa to grab her photo lacrima. Sun, on the other hand, continued to watch the killer whale. And as the sea mammal got closer, her eye brow started to furrow.

"That killer whale seems familiar for some reason." Sun said to herself. "But I don't know why."

As Sun continued to rifle through her memories, Cana eventually returned with her photo lacrima in hand. Then, the brown-haired woman took as many pictures from as many angles as she could. However, like Alfonzo and his [Armament Spirits], she, too, noticed that the whale would eventually end up beached if it continued on its course. On top of that, it was staring at Sun with... obsession in its eyes.

Eventually when the killer whale reached a point close to the shore, it jumped out of the water. This time, its jump was much more powerful, leaving Alfonzo, Cana, and Sun certain that it would land on the beach.

"Sun, my Darling!" the killer whale, Kai Mikawa, a member of the merfolk race, shouted excitedly as he crossed the tide line. "WE can finally fulfill our destinies together."

As he finished shouting, Kai, in his merfolk form, was covered in light. Then, once the light faded, a young man, looking to be about nineteen, with well styled, ear-length, dark grey hair and eyes wearing a white naval uniform, appeared in place of the killer whale. In the next instant, when Kai landed on the beach, his actions took Alfonzo, Cana, and Sun by surprise.

First, Kai posed like a gymnast at the end of his routine. In the next instant, however, his face began to pale. Then, he began to sweat profusely. After that, it was clear to see that he was starting to panic.

"Ahh~~~~~!" Kai screamed at the top of his lungs as he fell to his knees. "Somebody, please save me! It's too bright out here. And the space is too open~~~~~! Please, someone help me!"

Naturally, this caused Cana and Sun to drop their jaws in surprise. Alfonzo on the other hand, nodded in understanding.

"Well, if I had to guess, that guy is agoraphobic." Alfonzo said in an amused tone. "And if I had to venture another guess, he was so excited to see Sun that he completely forgot about it."

"Agoraphobic? What's that?" Cana asked curiously.

"And why would he be excited to see me?" Sun asked while tilting her head cutely.

"Well, agoraphobia is a behavioral disorder." Alfonzo replied. "Basically, it causes anxiety when someone suffering from it perceives themselves to be in a place that is hard to escape. Like when they find themselves in a crowd or queuing up for something. In this guy's case, it seems to manifest when he's in a wide open space."

"Damn, that's gotta suck." Cana said before taking a swig from her cocktail.

"Yeah, it must make it hard to get things done." Sun added with a nod. "It kinda makes me feel bad for him."

After commenting about agoraphobia, Sun then tilted her head in confusion.

"But why did he seem so excited to see me?" Sun asked curiously. "He even knew my name. How is that possible."

Sun's last question made Alfonzo and Cana look at her with incredulous gazes.

"Obviously, he knows you from the past, Sun.": Cana replied after a few seconds of dumbfounded silence.

"Really?" Sun asked in a confused tone. Then, she looked at Kai, who was still panicking, trying to remember who he was. Eventually, when Kai's anxiety caused him to pass out, Sun spoke once again. "I can't remember him at all. Maybe he's confusing me with someone else?"

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Cana could only continue staring at Sun incredulously. Eventually, they decided to just let it go.

"We should probably call Ren and Gozaburo about this." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "I'm sure at least Gozaburo is at the Akane Beach residence. You know... Since Sun is here and all."

"Oh, I have no doubt that he followed his little girl here." Cana replied with a giggle. "I mean, he might have gotten better when it comes to dealing with you, Fonzie. But he's still completely nuts when it comes to Sun."

"*Sigh* I know." Alfonzo and Sun replied simultaneously.

In the next instant, Alfonzo went back to grilling the crab. At the same time, Cana and Sun went over the Kai, picked him up, and brought him into the house.

And just as they expected, when Gozaburo found out that Sun would be taking a quest on Akane Beach, he and Masa quickly returned to the Seto Group HQ. And Ren, in order to make sure that her husband did not do something stupid, went with them. So, when they got the call from Sun about a merfolk showing up on the beach, they arrived at Alfonzo's villa in less than twenty minutes.

Then, about ten minutes after the Setos arrived, Kai woke up. And as soon as he did, he started to panic once again. However, when he realized he was in a living room, lying on a couch, he calmed down quickly. Then, he noticed the aroma of seafood.

"Where am I?" Kai asked himself as he sat up from the couch he had been sleeping on. "And what is that delectable smell?"

With that, Kai stood up from the couch. Then, he began sniffing the air. A moment later, once his nose told him where the scent of food was coming from, he let the scent lead him towards the food.

When he eventually arrived, Kai found six people sitting around a table, enjoying a meal.

"Alfonzo, you outdo yourself every time." A woman Kai recognized to be Ren Seto said with a smile on her face.

"Indeed." A man Kai recognized to be Masa said with a nod while eating elegantly. "I've never tasted such consistently high-quality food from the same person in all my life."

"Hmph! It's passable." A man Kai recognized to be Gozaburo Seto, the head of the Seto Group, said in an irritated tone.

"If you're not gonna be honest about it, then you don't need to eat." Ren said as she snatched Gozaburo's plate from in front of him.

"Wait! Give that back!" Gozaburo shouted. "I wasn't done yet."

"Well, if it was only passable, you shouldn't mind, right?" Ren asked. "You can just head back to our house and get the chefs to make you something better."

"Geez, Dad." The fed-up voice of the woman of Kai's dreams, Sun Seto, said, while reprimanding her father. "You're not being very nice."

"Now that he doesn't go into a violent rage anymore, this is fun to watch." The first unfamiliar voice, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, said.

"Yeah, and it would have been much more fun if we had the time to keep watching." Another unfamiliar voice to Kai, a brown-skinned man with dreadlocks, said as he looked in Kai's direction. "Our guest is awake, after all."

Hearing that, the other five also turned their gazes in Kai's direction. While Masa simply nodded at the new arrival, Ren smiled at him and Gozaburo scowled. Meanwhile, Cana looked at him with curiosity.

She had never met someone with agoraphobia, after all. Then, there was Sun, who clearly had no idea who Kai was.

"So, it's the brat from the Mikawa Group." Gozaburo said while frowning. "Why the hell are you even here, Kid?"

"Ah, Mister Seto." Kai said while smiling charmingly. "It's nice to see you again. You, too, Mrs. Seto and Masa, as well. And to answer your question, I've come to ask for Miss Sun's hand in marriage, just as I promised I would over ten years ago."

With that, the dining room fell silent. Meanwhile, the confusion in Sun's expression increased to a whole new level.

"Mom, what is he talking about?" Sun asked, breaking the awkward silence. "And who is he?"

Hearing Sun's questions, Kai almost coughed up a mouthful of blood. Luckily, he was able to hold back and not ruin his image.

"*Sigh* It doesn't surprise me that you don't remember him, Sun." Ren replied. "You only met him once when you were... seven, I think."

"It was six, actually, Mrs. Seto." Kai said while wearing a fond, nostalgic smile. "That day, when my grandfather brought me with him to discuss business, I knew I had found my soul mate."

"Just my fucking luck, more soul mate bullshit to deal with." Alfonzo muttered in an irritated tone.

While Sun's confusion grew even further after hearing that. Cana stifled a giggle after hearing Alfonzo's muttering. At the same time, Ren smiled wryly, clearly, she remembered that little play date. Gozaburo, on the other hand, deepened his scowl. Clearly, he, too, remembered the meeting Kai was talking about, as well.

"I clearly remember telling you to give up on my perfect, beautiful, precious angel." Gozaburo said in an annoyed tone. "You're not good enough for her."

Although Kai flinched initially, he regained his bearing quickly.

"Yes, I'll admit, I wasn't good enough for one such as Miss Sun." Kai replied. In fact, I doubt that anyone was back then."

Kai then paused momentarily to take in the expressions of everyone sitting at the table. Then, he opened his mouth to continue. At the same time, however, he caught sight of Cana. More specifically, Cana's bikini-clad breasts. And when he did, his eyes widened as blood began to leak from one of his nostrils.

"Wow... He comes here claiming Sun to be his soul mate." Cana said in a derisive tone. Then, she squeezed her arms in front of her, emphasizing her breasts even more as she continued. "But as soon as he sees a pair of nice tits, he forgets everything."

Hearing Cana's statement, Kai quickly wiped his nose and fixed his expression. Then, as if nothing happened, he continued.

"*Cough* Anyway, now, after inheriting the Mikawa Group from my grandfather, I've become the second most wealthy person on the continent." Kai said proudly. "And with my standing, I think a I should be good enough to ask for Miss Sun's hand in marriage."

In response, the dining room fell into silence. At the same time, Ren, Masa, and Cana looked at Kai awkwardly. Sun, on the other hand, looked at him with a frown, much like her father. Meanwhile, Alfonzo glared at Kai with his eyes narrowed. Eventually, the awkward silence was broken by none other than Sun.

"No way, I'm not marrying you." Sun said with a frown. Then, she reached over and grabbed Alfonzo's arm. "I'm already engaged. And if everything works out, I'll be getting married next year."

Hearing that, Kai's mouth fell open while disbelief swirled in his eyes. Then, he gripped his chest as if he were about to have a heart attack. A moment later, Kai shifted his gaze from Sun to Alfonzo with wrath burning in his eyes.

"How dare a lowly human covet the fairest of the merfolk!" Kai shouted angrily. "Then, he reached into the pocket of his naval uniform and pulled out a white glove before tossing it onto the center of the dining room table. "I challenge you to a duel for Miss Sun's hand! And while I'm at it, I'll teach you your place for coveting something beyond a lowly human's reach!"

Chapter 512: Natsu-Level Dumb... Or Maybe Even Worse

"How dare a lowly human covet the fairest of the merfolk!" Kai shouted angrily. "Then, he reached into the pocket of his naval uniform and pulled out a white glove before tossing it onto the center of the dining room table. "I challenge you to a duel for Miss Sun's hand! And while I'm at it, I'll teach you your place for coveting something beyond a lowly human's reach!"

Hearing what Kai had to say, combined with the white glove laying in the middle of the dining room table, everyone fell into a momentary daze. A moment later, however, they all felt the atmosphere changing.

'Oh shit, this is bad.' Cana thought to herself. 'Alfonzo doesn't take too kindly to people treating us as prizes to be won. This guy's really gonna be in trouble.'

[{"Yeah, Wanna bet how many bones Fonzie's gonna break by the time he's done with him?"}] Hoyle asked while grinning manically from Cana's inner world.

Hearing her [Armament Spirit]'s words and tone, Cana could only sigh internally. She already knew that Hoyle would never miss the chance to start a wager. However, Cana wished that she would take situations like this more seriously.

And just like Cana and Hoyle were thinking, Alfonzo was well and truly about to lose his shit. However, just as he opened his mouth to let Kai know what he thought about his challenge, he was forced to stop with a surprised expression.

"Just who do you think you are!" Sun shouted angrily.

In the next instant, Sun appeared in front of Kai with her right hand cocked back, ready to throw a punch.

"Huh?" Kai exclaimed in confusion.

Bang!

Before Kai could understand the situation, Sun threw her fist forward, landing a powerful right hook on his left jaw. Then, thanks to the force behind Sun's punch, Kai flew backwards. At the same time, Alfonzo created strategically placed chunks of metal in Kai's flight path. IN the end, Kai ended up on the same couch where he woke up with is eyes rolled back, a bruise forming on his left cheek, and unconscious once again.

"Well, damn..." Alfonzo said while blinking in dumbfounded amazement.

"Damn girl, you got one hell of a right hook!" Cana shouted happily as she sprung up from her seat and rushed over to Sun.

In response, Sun only huffed and puffed while trying to get her emotions under control. Then, when Cana eventually arrived at her side, she could only smile wryly when she was pulled into a hug.

Sniff! *Sniff!*

Before Cana could continue gushing over Son's punch, everyone turned their head towards the sniffling sound they could hear from the dining room table. And when they did, they saw Gozaburo quietly wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Gozaburo, are you okay?" Ren asked in a concerned tone.

"Oh, I'm great." Gozaburo said through his tears. "I'm just... so... proud of my little girl."

"I guess I should have expected that." Ren replied while shaking her head. Then, she turned her attention towards Alfonzo. "Anyway, when he comes to challenge you to another duel, at the very least, please don't kill him."

"*Sigh* He's one of those types, isn't he?" Alfonzo asked in an exasperated tone. "Next time, he'll come at me asking if I'm okay hiding behind a woman, right?"

"If what the reports have to say are true, then yes." Ren said with a nod.

"But there's something I don't understand, Ren." Cana said in a curious tone. Then, when Ren turned towards her, Cana continued. "It wasn't a secret that Sun was engaged to a human among merfolk, was it?"

"Of course it was." Ren replied in an exasperated tone. "My husband, didn't want anyone to know that Sun was no longer his little girl, after all."

"Hey, after the brat saved my precious sun from Acnologia, I retracted the gag order." Gozaburo replied, trying to defend himself.

"And do you really think two years was enough to get the news to every part of the seas?" Ren asked with her eyes narrowed. "Do you have any idea how much water there is to cover on Earth Land?"

Hearing that, instead of commenting on the bickering between the husband and wife, Alfonzo lowered his head in contemplation.

'I guess I'll have to find a way to put signal receivers in the sea, too.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'I'll have to find a way to make the phones pressure resistant, too.'

"I think we've gotten off topic." Masa said in a poised tone. "What do you all plan to do with young Kai Mikawa."

"*Sigh* I'll just have to kick his ass." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "Hopefully he'll give up after that."

"Do you really think that's possible??" Cana asked while deadpanning.

"Not in the slightest." Alfonzo replied. "But a man can dream, right?"

Like that, for the next hour, the group of six chatted and continued to eat. Then, just as they finished dessert, Kai, with bloodshot eyes, stumbled into the dining room once again while covering the giant bruise on his face.

"What kind of man are you?" Kai shouted angrily while pointing at Alfonzo. "You would hide behind a woman instead of facing me yourself?"

Sigh! x 6

In the next instant, Alfonzo appeared in front of Kai in a flash of violet light. And when he did, Kai's feet were no longer on the floor. Instead, they were dangling nearly a foot above it. And the reason for that was simple, Alfonzo's right hand was clasped around his neck while holding him off the floor.

"You've got some nerve, Kid." Alfonzo said while looking into Kai's eyes. "First, you act like an asshole after we brought your sorry ass inside after your little panic attack. Then, you have the nerve to leer at one of my woman's breasts like some common pervert. And when it's pointed out, you don't even have the decency to apologize."

"One of your... women?" Kai struggled to say. "Scoundrel!"

Smack!

"Oh, don't give me that shit." Alfonzo said angrily after slapping Kai across the face. "Especially after you treated your so-called 'soul mate' like a commodity than can be placed as a wager. You're nothing more than an entitled little prick."

At first, Kai was taken aback by the slap he received. A moment later, however, he was over taken by rage. Then, with all his might, he wrapped his hands around Alfonzo's wrist while staring at him with bloodshot eyes.

"How dare you, a lowly human, talk to me like that!" Kai roared angrily. "On top of that, for seeing me in my true form, you and that other human woman should be put to death!"

Smack!

Once again, Alfonzo's open palm found its way across Kai's face. And once again, Kai was completely taken aback. However, when he snapped back to his senses, he was ready to threaten Alfonzo once again.

However, when Kai looked into Alfonzo's eyes, his words got caught in his throat. After seeing the anger and annoyance in his eyes, Kai did not know what to say.

"Are you fucking stupid?" Alfonzo asked as he tightened his grip around Kai's neck. "I'm engaged to Sun you fucking dumb ass. And according to your people's laws, that means I'm eligible to know the merfolk's' secrets. On top of that, do you really think it's a good idea to threaten one of my fiancées like that when you're in this situation?"

Hearing that, Kai froze. On top of that, he realized that despite how strongly he was squeezing Alfonzo's wrist, Alfonzo seemed to be completely unbothered. Kai did not stay stunned for long, though.

"Even if what you say is true." Kai said through gritted teeth while staring into Alfonzo's eyes. "That doesn't change the fact that you're not worthy of Miss Sun. So, you should cancel your engagement. Then, let yourself be executed while I, one of the two people who are worthy of her, marries her."

Hearing what Kai had to say, Sun's angry aura washed over the room. And while everyone else was thinking that things would not end well for Kai, Cana tilted her head and asked a question about Kai's last declaration.

"You said you were one of the two people who were worthy of Sun, right?" Cana asked curiously. "Then, who is the second."

Glancing at Cana for a moment, more specifically her breasts and cleavage, Kai quickly turned his attention back to Alfonzo. Still, he felt it would not hurt if he answered her question.

"Naturally, the first is me." Kai said proudly. "As the owner of Ishgar's second most powerful business empire, I am eligible to take Miss Sun's hand in marriage."

"Yeah, you said that already." Cana said in an annoyed tone. "And unlike you, we're not interested in hearing the sound of your voice. So, just get to the damn point."

Looking around the room, Kai was able to see that everyone else, other than Masa, was starting to get annoyed with him. So, he decided to directly answer Cana's question.

"The second person, though he's only a human, is Alfonzo Marcus of Fairy Tail." Kai replied in a tone filled with respect. "Not only did he build his own business empire from scratch, he's also one of the strongest people on the continent. And I have no doubt that he would be able to keep Miss Sun safe from any harm that might come her way."

Hearing that, Cana, Gozaburo, Ren, Sun, and Masa looked at Kai as if he were the world's biggest idiot. Then, they all lost interest and began chatting amongst themselves.

"Hey, what's with that reaction?" Kai asked in an irritated tone. Before he could question the group any further, however, the grip around his neck loosened and he fell to the floor. "Ow... What's going on?"

"*Sigh* You really are just a spoiled, little, rich prick." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone. "I'm guessing you just heard about my feats without doing any research. And now you look dumb as a mother fucker.
Sigh This was a complete waste of time."

"Huh?" Kai exclaimed in confusion while rubbing his neck. "What are you talking about? Your feats?"

While Alfonzo walked away from Kai, who was sitting on the floor, Kai could not understand what was going on. A few moments later, as Alfonzo retook his seat at the dining room table, Kai finally understood what Alfonzo was talking about.

"Wait, are you saying you're Alfonzo Marcus?" Kai asked in an incredulous tone. "But how is that possible? He's supposed to live in Magnolia. Why are you on Akane Beach?"

"Oh, yeah, because it's not common for someone as wealthy as Fonzie to have more than one house." Cana replied sarcastically. "I mean, I'm sure your grandfather had more than one home, too, right?"

"Hmm... Now that you mention it..." Kai said, stopping to stroke his chin while the thought about it. "Even so, just because you're Alfonzo Marcus, that doesn't make you more worthy of Miss Sun's hand than me. You're only human, after all. Whereas I, a proud member of the merfolk race, have the strength to protect her."

"Did this idiot forget how Fonzie just manhandled him a moment ago?" Cana asked as she whispered her question into Sun's ear. Though, she was loud enough that Kai would be able to hear her as well.

"He probably did." Sun replied disdainfully without lowering her voice. "But who does he think he is to decide who is worthy of my love and affection."

"Don't worry about it, Sun." Cana said as she pulled Sun into a hug. "It looks like he's Natsu-level dumb, and even more self-centered. So, he'd never understand the concept, anyway."

Nodding in response, Sun turned her attention back to Alfonzo, who looked like he had something to say.

"Thinking like that is the reason you'll never be worthy of Sun." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "I mean, she's stronger than you, by quite a bit. So, why the hell would she need you to protect her?"

After hearing Alfonzo's question, it was obvious that Kai did not know what to say. But Alfonzo was not finished.

"On top of that, it's clear you're not good at looking after your own people." Alfonzo continued. "I mean, what about the crew of your submarine? Instead of worrying about their well-being after you clearly just left them to follow Sun, you continue this shit even after Sun made it clear she wasn't interested in you. Hell, she doesn't even remember you after your one meeting over ten years ago."

Immediately after Alfonzo finished speaking, Kai froze.

"*Sigh* It's too bad old man Mikawa only had one heir to pass his legacy onto." Gozaburo said after taking a swig from his sake glass. "With this brat in charge, the Mikawa group will probably cease to exist in a year or two."

Gozaburo's statement was enough to snap Kai back to his senses. Then, he frantically started running around the villa before he finally found an exit. After finding the exit, Kai ran out of the door. However, before he could get too far, he fainted after another agoraphobic panic attack.

"*Sigh* Cana was right." Ren said. "He really is Natsu-level dumb."

"No, I think he might be worse." Alfonzo replied as he stood from his seat. "Natsu never forgets his motion-sickness, ever. But it's happened to this guy twice in a little more than an hour. Anyway, I'll go bring him back inside. Masa, if it's not too much trouble, could you go and inform his crew of where he is? Then, they could hopefully get him the hell outta here."

"Sure thing." Masa said as he, too, stood from his seat.

Chapter 513: To the Village Hidden in the Leaves

After the incident with the merfolk, Kai Mikawa, the rest of x786 went on without a hitch, with Irene and Brandish integrating into Fairy Tail without issue. On top of that, Irene took it upon herself to join Team Natsu. Brandish, on the other hand, only took quests as a solo wizard.

On top of that, the x786 S-Class Promotion Exam took place as well. And like the previous year, there was more than one wizard who passed the exam and was promoted to S-Class. Unsurprisingly, Irene and Brandish were not among those who were promoted. And the reason was self-evident. In fact, they were not even among the eight participants.

From the eight participants, Bickslow, Evergreen, Laki, Levy, Gray, Natsu, Elfman, and Marin, the only ones who did not pass were Bickslow and Evergreen. And the reason was that they had just received their [Soul Armament Embryos] a week before the exam. The others, on the other hand, already had [soul Armaments] with their first seals released. So, Bickslow and Evergreen found themselves at a severe disadvantage, despite their strengths.

After the S-Class Promotion Exam, Alfonzo finally had the time to present his Lacrima Phone idea in front of the Magic Council. And with part of the signal receivers having been placed between Fiore and Era, they were able to demonstrate all the iPhone's features during a video call between Alfonzo and Hibiki.

Then, after explaining and demonstrating the system that would pick up key words and phrases to alert the Council to activity between dark wizards and the like, Alfonzo and Hibiki gained permission to launch their new business.

Unfortunately, before either Alfonzo or Hibiki could start making the kind of money they were anticipating, they would have to install the rest of the signal receivers around Ishgar. Luckily, that would be taken care of soon enough, if the current Hokage of the Village Hidden in the Leaves accepted Alfonzo's mission when he went to upgrade their training facilities.

After presenting the iPhones to the Magic Council, the next thing of note that took place was Alfonzo and Cana's wedding. Unlike Alfonzo's wedding with Elicia, Cana's wedding took place in the evening. That way, the reception, which would be another long affair, would still be going on when the calendar changed from x786 to x787.

And just like during his wedding with Elicia, Gildarts walked Cana down the aisle. Also, like when he married Elicia, Alfonzo sang to Cana during their first dance. And the song he chose was "All My Life" by K-Ci & Jo-Jo, which Cana, and the rest of the guests loved. They also wondered where he gained the inspiration to write songs like the ones he wrote for the two weddings.

Naturally, Alfonzo only smiled in a mysterious manner when anyone asked him about it. Still, having their wedding on the last day of the year was a great way to close out x786.

The last thing to take note of since then was Elicia announcing her pregnancy only a day later. And according to the news she received from Porlyusica, she would be due to give birth in August. Naturally, this brought a wave of excitement to the wizards of Fairy Tail. On top of that, it made Bisca put Alzack through his paces, so as to not be left behind.

Other than that, nothing else of notice happened. As for the current time, Alfonzo, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene were waiting in the Valley of the End for the representatives from the Village Hidden in the Leaves, to arrive.

"*Sigh* We talked about hiring more maids months ago." Alfonzo said while leaning against the side of the Escalade. "I'm surprised no one has applied for the position yet."

"Well, the fact that they need to have a certain amount of magic power has been cutting the numbers quite severely, too." Elicia, who was leaning against Alfonzo, replied.

"*Sigh* I know." Alfonzo replied while rubbing his right hand over Elicia's still flat belly. "I was even thinking about lowering the criteria. Until you told me you were pregnant, that is. Unfortunately, the vetting process is gonna have to be even more strict with the little one coming into our lives."

"*Sigh* If only my husband in the past had been so loving." Irene said while she glanced at Alfonzo and Elicia. "Unfortunately, he was just an opportunistic waste of life."

In the months since Irene decided to change sides, she has spent a lot of her time either taking quests with Team Natsu or talking magic theory with Alfonzo or Levy, the two most interested in the subject in the guild.

And during that time, she has come to understand something about the current generation of Fairy Tail. And that was the fact that they were extremely hard workers. In fact, the only reason they were weaker than the Spriggan 12 of the Alvarez Empire is because of the environment on Ishgar.

For example, those meant to be wizards on Alakitasia started off with a higher amount of magic power at birth. On top of that, the ambient ethernano in the air was much denser in Alakitasia. Those two facts naturally led to the wizards of Ishgar being weaker on average.

"If you'll excuse me, Miss Irene." Ikaruga said politely. "I'm actually surprised you insisted on coming with Master Alfonzo and Madam Elicia on this trip. I would have thought you would want to spend more time with your daughter, Erza."

"I actually came because I was curious." Irene said, answering Ikaruga's query before she finished speaking. "I've heard of the shinobi of old. They usually only stuck to members of their own---"

Irene's explanation came to a complete and sudden halt, however, when she registered the rest of what Ikaruga had to say. Then, she turned her eyes, which were open to a comical degree, towards Ikaruga with shock and panic swirling in their depths.

"Wh-Wha-What are you talking about?" Irene asked in a stuttering mess. "I-I-I-I have no d-dau-daughter. I haven't laid with a man in over four hundred years. There's no way I could have an offspring."

Hearing that, Ikaruga looked at Irene awkwardly while tilting her head in confusion. Then, she turned her head towards Alfonzo and Elicia.

"*Sigh* We told you that was supposed to be a secret, Ikaruga." Elicia said in an exasperated tone.
"Everyone knew that Irene didn't wanna talk about it. That's why it was never brought up in the past."

"Ah... Now that you mention it." Ikaruga said in a tone of realization. "I forgot you said that some time ago."

On a side note, now that Elicia was confirmed to be pregnant, Ikaruga came along on this trip to make sure that Elicia did not push herself too far.

After hearing that short interaction, Irene also turned her incredulous gaze towards Alfonzo and Elicia once again.

"Don't look at us like that, Irene." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "You've made it way too easy to tell that you and Erza were related since you came to Magnolia."

Irene opened her eyes wide in response.

"If it wasn't because of the 'discreet glances' you shot at her every time you were in the same room." Alfonzo said while raising air-quotes as he spoke the word "discreet". "The similarities between your features were a dead giveaway, too."

"Then, there was that time you almost crushed magnolia with your magical pressure when we talked about our childhoods." Elicia added. "Or rather, when Erza talked about her childhood as a slave in the Tower of Heaven."

Hearing that, Irene slumped her shoulders.

"Does that mean Erza knows, as well." Irene asked in a dejected tone.

"Yup." Elicia replied with a smile. "But I think she knew way before that. She said something about feeling a connection to you not long after she first met you."

"*Sigh* I see." Irene replied while shaking her head. "I guess I've been trying to keep it a secret for nothing then, huh?"

"Well, if it makes you feel any better, I don't think Brandish knows." Alfonzo said with a smile. "But I think she was suspicious until she found out you were a dragon."

"*Sigh* I'm sure she'd be able to figure it out, too." Irene said while shaking her head with a wry smile on her face. "If she didn't feel like it was too troublesome to think about, anyway."

With that, the area around the Escalade fell into an awkward silence. Not long later, the awkward silence was eventually broken when a trio of young men appeared near the quartet from Magnolia.

"Oh, it's Genma." Elicia said after recognizing one of the three young men. "Long time, no see. How have you been?"

"Yeah, it's been almost a year since the last time we saw each other, Elicia, Alfonzo, and Ikaruga." Genma replied while adjusting the Senbon in his mouth. "And I see an unfamiliar face with you, as well. Mind introducing us?"

"Yo, what's up, Genma." Alfonzo said while nodding his head in greeting. As for the new face, she's a new member of Fairy Tail..."

"Irene Belserion." Irene said as she changed her expression back to her confident, yet sadistic, smile. "It's nice to meet you. But I'd appreciate it if you stopped staring at my breasts."

"Maybe if you didn't put them on full display, they wouldn't." Alfonzo muttered.

In response, Irene shot a glare in Alfonzo's direction. However, because she was still trying to figure out if the [Soul Armament Embryo] she had been given could reverse her [Dragonization], she chose not to say anything.

"Anyway, why don't you introduce us to your friends, Genma." Elicia said, deciding to move the conversation forward.

"Right." Genma replied with cold sweat sliding down his back after feeling Irene's glare. "These are the members of my squad, Raidō Namiashi and Iwashi Tatami."

Like Genma, Raidō and Iwashi also wore the standard Hidden Leaf uniform consisting of a dark blue body suit, a green flak jacket, and black ninja sandals. On top of that, Iwashi wore his forehead protector as a bandana that covered most of his brown hair. He also wore a small goatee on his chin. Raidō, on the other hand, had spiky brown hair and scars on his face that covered the majority of the left side of his face and the bridge of his nose.

Another thing everyone noticed was the fact that Raidō and Iwashi were both glaring at Ikaruga with hostility.

"Oh, that's right." Elicia said while bringing her right fist down into her left palm. "Maybe bringing Ikaruga wasn't such a good idea. She's the one that left those scars on that guys face."

"Yeah, but you're pregnant." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "And she's only here to take care of you. She won't do anything to bring harm to the village, right?"

As he asked his question, Alfonzo turned his attention to Ikaruga. In response, Ikaruga lowered her head as she replied.

"I swear that I will not cause any trouble for you on your trip to the Village Hidden in the Leaves, Master Alfonzo." Ikaruga said in a solemn tone.

"Well, there you have it." Alfonzo replied, shifting his attention back to the trio of Hidden Leaf Shinobi. "And if she causes any trouble, Lici and I will take responsibility. Especially since she's been our responsibility since she was released from prison."

"*Sigh* All three of us know that." Genma said in an exasperated tone. "But letting go of a grudge isn't so easy."

"Yeah, I get it." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "As long as she isn't attacked unprovoked, we won't have any problems."

"Got it." Genma replied with a nod. Then, he looked in his teammates' direction. "That won't be a problem, will it?"

"No." Raidō replied in a begrudging tone.

"I'll have my eye on her, though." Iwashi said while continuing to glare at Ikaruga."

"Alright, I guess that's good enough." Alfonzo replied. "Anyway, should we get going?"

"Yes, but we'll need to blindfold your companions." Genma replied.

"Yeah, Master Tsunade already explained that to us." Alfonzo replied. "So, go ahead. Just don't let your hands wander anywhere they shouldn't. You're only B-Class wizards... Or rather, Special Jonin if we go by your village's ranking system."

"You don't need to worry about that." Genma replied while smiling wryly. "None of us are suicidal."

With that, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi each blindfolded Ikaruga, Elicia, and Irene respectively. Once they were done, they quickly stepped away to show they had no bad intentions.

"Alright, this will probably take a while since we have to lead them to the village." Genma said. "I hope you understand."

"Nah, you don't need to worry about that." Alfonzo replied while waving dismissively. "Ladies, why don't you climb into the Escalade. Then, you can enjoy the ride. Oh, but don't take off the blindfolds while you're inside. That would just cause unnecessary problems."

After Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene nodded in response, Alfonzo helped each of them into the Escalade. Then, once they were all settled, Alfonzo levitated the vehicle as he turned towards his guides.

"Alright now, let's get going." Alfonzo said with a smile.

In response, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi only stared at the floating magic vehicle in a daze. A few moments later, they broke out of their dazes. Then, they started running towards the Village Hidden in the Leaves at high speed. Meanwhile, Alfonzo, while dragging the Escalade through the air with his [Metal Magic], sprinted after the shinobi, keeping up with little effort.

Chapter 514: Meeting the Hokage

The trip from the Valley of the End to the Village Hidden in the Leaves was not a long one. Despite that, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi were surprised just how easily Alfonzo kept pace with them on the trip.

Not to say that they thought Alfonzo would be slow or weak. However, they thought they would have had an advantage when it comes to forest travel. By the time they stopped in front of the village gates, however, that notion had been completely turned on its head.

"There's no way anyone in their right mind would call this a village." Alfonzo said while looking at the village from the sky. "It's almost as big as Shiratsume."

Alfonzo's comment was enough to bring the three Leaf shinobi back to their senses. Then, they looked up at Alfonzo who was lowering his altitude.

"Why did you even run through the forest with us if you could fly?" Iwashi asked curiously. "Hell, I would have rather flown than run, myself."

"Oh, I just wanted to see how fast you guys were." Alfonzo replied with a shrug after landing next to Raidō.

"I see." Iwashi replied.

"Anyway, let's get you all registered at the gate." Genma said. "After that, we'll escort you to the Hokage Tower."

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "What should I do with the Escalade, though?"

As he asked his question, Alfonzo lowered the Escalade to the ground. Then, he helped Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene climb out. After that, the three ladies tried to remove their blindfolds. Unfortunately, no matter how hard they tried, the blindfolds would not budge.

"Please, don't force it." Raidō said after watching the ladies attempts to remove the blindfolds. "Those blindfolds have [Seals] on them that require a certain process to deactivate."

With that, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi stepped forward. Then, they removed the blindfolds, allowing the ladies to take in the sight of the village gate.

"Now, if you would follow us." Genma said while gesturing towards the gates.

After that, the new comers were registered. All the while, Alfonzo floated the Escalade above the group. At the same time, Elicia turned it invisible with her [camouflage Magic] Then, once the registration was complete, the group of seven made their way through the village towards the tallest building in the village, the Hokage Tower.

While walking, the group drew a lot of attention. And that was naturally because of the outsiders that were visiting the village. And the most conspicuous of all the onlookers was a young boy with spiky blond hair and bright blue eyes wearing an orange jumpsuit and a pair of goggles on his head.

'Hmm... That's definitely Naruto.' Alfonzo thought to himself after seeing the blond kid. 'And since he's still wearing goggles, that means he hasn't graduated from the academy yet. Maybe Lici and I can take him under our wings. That way, he'll be at a better starting point than the anime.'

Like Alfonzo, Elicia also noticed the young Naruto in the crowd of onlookers.

'O.M.G. Those whiskers are so cute~.' Elicia squealed internally. 'I wonder if he'll let me pinch his cheeks.'

Unfortunately, Elicia was not thinking the same thing when she first saw the blond boy, Naruto. Instead, she was only considering how cute he was. Eventually, the group of seven reached the Hokage Tower.

The Hokage Tower was a large, mostly cylindrical building with the Kanji for Fire adorning one side at the top. On top of that, it towered over every other building in the village. Also, during their walk through the village, the three Leaf shinobi explained that it was not only the place where the Hokage worked, but it was also his official residence.

"What are those faces carved into the mountain over there?" Irene asked in a curious tone while pointing at the mountain behind the Hokage Tower.

"Those are the faces of the former and present Hokage." Raidō replied solemnly. "From right to left, they are the first to fourth Hokage."

"I suppose we'll be meeting with the one on the right, then." Ikaruga said quietly.

Hearing that, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi all lowered their heads.

"Unfortunately, no." Iwashi replied. "You'll be meeting with the third. Unfortunately, we lost the fourth in an accident several years ago."

Hearing that, Ikaruga put on an apologetic expression as she said words of apology to the three ninja. Alfonzo and Elicia, on the other hand, briefly exchanged glances as they put a few things together in their minds. Meanwhile, Irene, who had been scanning nearly everything and everyone in her [Magic Power Detection] range frowned at the news.

'The strongest person in the village is nearly on par with Gildarts in power.' Irene thought to herself as she looked up at the top of the Hokage Tower. 'Then, there is that mysterious magic power that was seal inside of that young boy from earlier. Something tells me there is a much deeper story behind the loss of the fourth.'

"Anyway, let's head up." Raidō said. "Lord Third is waiting."

Nodding in response, Alfonzo, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene followed the three shinobi into the building. Then, after a few minutes, they reached the door to an office on the top floor.

Knock! *Knock!* *Knock!*

"Lord Third, we have escorted our guests." Genma said in a professional tone.

"Good." The voice of an elderly man replied from the other side of the door. "You may enter."

Nodding at the permission he received to enter, Genma then opened the door to the office. And when he did, five people could be seen. While four of them were standing, the last was sitting behind a desk opposite the door.

Wasting no time, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi ushered the quartet into the room. Then, once they were all inside, Genma closed the door, and the three shinobi stood respectfully near the door.

"Welcome, my friends." Hiruzen, the elderly man sitting behind the desk said in a friendly tone while wearing a grandfatherly smile. "I am Hiruzen Sarutobi, the Hokage of the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And these are my advisors, Danzo Shimura, Koharu Utatane, and Homura Mitokado."

Each of Hiruzen's advisors nodded their heads in greeting. Though, Danzo was staring at Alfonzo rather intensely. Needless to say, Danzo's glare made the Fairy Tail wizards uncomfortable. Especially when one considered all the different magic power signatures in his right eye and arm. Despite that, none of them showed any discomfort in their expressions.

"It's a pleasure, Lord Hokage." Alfonzo replied as he stepped forward and bowed politely. Then, he continued after raising his head while reaching for Elicia's hand. "I'm Alfonzo Marcus. And this is my wife, Elicia Marcus Taylor."

Hearing that, Hiruzen and his advisors turned their attention to the other two visitors.

"And this, is Irene Belserion." Alfonzo continued while gesturing towards Irene with a smile on his face. "She's one of the strongest wizards in Fairy Tail. And last, but certainly not least, this is Ikaruga."

Hearing the name Ikaruga, Hiruzen and his advisors, along with the last person in the room who had yet to be introduced, narrowed their eyes at Ikaruga. Everyone in the room was aware that she had ruined a mission Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi took years ago.

"She's our maid and will be taking care of Lici during her pregnancy." Alfonzo said as he pulled his lovely wife into a hug. "And should Ikaruga do anything unbecoming, the two of us will take responsibility."

Hearing that, all eyes shifted back to Alfonzo. And when they did, they saw steel-like determination burning in the depths of his eyes. And after hearing that declaration, everyone in the room looked at Alfonzo as if he had grown a second head. However, Hiruzen was the first to snap back to his senses.

"Very well, we'll trust your words... for now." Hiruzen said in a skeptical tone. For now, however, allow me to finish the introductions."

With that, Hiruzen gestured towards the last of the people in the room, a tall, lean man with spiky, silver hair that is styled slightly to the left and a dark grey right eye. As for his attire, he wore the standard Hidden Leaf attire consisting of a dark blue jumpsuit, a dark green flak jacket, black shinobi sandals, and a Hidden Leaf forehead protector. Though, his protector was slanted, covering his left eye. He also wore a mask that covered the lower half of his face.

"This is Kakashi Hatake." Hiruzen said. "And he will be in charge of guiding you around the village."

"You mean monitoring our movements." Irene said as she crossed her arms, emphasizing her breasts even more.

As soon as Irene's breasts were pressed together, both Hiruzen and Kakashi zeroed in on them. However, they both broke out of their trances just as quickly.

"Perverts." Irene muttered as she glared at Hiruzen and Kakashi.

"It's only natural to keep unknown elements under surveillance, is it not." Danzo, the man with an X-shaped scar on his chin, said in an emotionless tone.

"Oh, I have no issue with that." Irene said dismissively. "But you should just call it what it is. Otherwise, it feels as though you're insulting our intelligence."

"I see." Hiruzen said calmly. "Believe me, that was not my intention. However, I also did now want it to seem as though we were suspicious of any of you."

"It's fine." Alfonzo said while waving off Hiruzen's concerns. "None of us are wet behind the ears. So, we understand the reason for all of it. But I have to ask, does that mean you'll have someone accompanying Lici, Irene, and Ikaruga. Because I'm certain they won't be spending all their time around me while I'm working."

"Yes, and they will be introduced once you start your work on the training grounds." Hiruzen replied. "For now, let's talk about the mission you wanted to put forth for our village. Before that, please take a seat."

With that, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Irene took seats on a nearby couch. Meanwhile, Ikaruga stood behind them, ready to protect or receive any instructions that may come her way.

Then, once everyone was seated, Alfonzo pulled out a rolled up map of Ishgar, that he handed to Raidō. A moment later, after checking for traps of any kind, Raidō handed the map to Hiruzen, who unrolled and spread it out over his desk.

Alfonzo then went on to pull out a magic item and explained that he needed these magic items buried in the places that were indicated on the map. However, he did not tell the shinobi what the devices were used for. The only thing he said was that this mission was authorized by the Magic Council.

Hearing that this was authorized by the Magic Council, was enough to let Hiruzen accept the mission, which he classified as an A-Rank mission. No one would lie about getting permission from the Magic Council, after all. Something like that was too easy to verify.

At the same time, Danzo's eyes glinted after he heard about the Magic Council's authorization. Something that none of the wizards from Fairy Tail missed.

'I really hope he decides to steal one of my magic items and tries to figure out what it does.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'The process of getting rid of Danzo will start much earlier than it did in the canon, if he does. And his "friendship" with Hiruzen won't be able to stop it, either.'

"We'll collect the rest of the magic items once you've been settled at your lodgings." Hiruzen said with a smile. "For now, I'm sure you're tired after your journey. So, we'll lead you there so you can get some rest, if that's okay with you."

"Sounds good." Alfonzo said as he stood from the couch. Then, with his hand extended forward, Alfonzo took a step towards Hiruzen's desk. "And please allow us to thank you for your hospitality."

Standing up as well, Hiruzen accepted Alfonzo's handshake.

"Don't mention it." Hiruzen replied diplomatically. "And please, let us meet tomorrow to discuss the renovations to our training grounds."

"Of course." Alfonzo said as he released the handshake.

Hiruzen then gestured for Kakashi to lead the visitors to their accommodations. And once the group of five had left his office, he also dismissed Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi. Once only his advisors were in the room, he turned towards Danzo.

"Danzo, this time we can't afford for you to get up to your usual tricks." Hiruzen said sternly.

"Just who do you think I am." Danzo replied with a scoff. "I know what I can and can't do."

'Or rather, what I can and can't get caught doing.' Danzo thought to himself. 'That young man will be under my control sooner or later, though. Then, I'll be able to make the Village Hidden in the Leaves even more prosperous with his talent for invention.'

Although Hiruzen felt as though he knew what his longtime friend was thinking, there was nothing he could do about it until Danzo was caught in the act.

Chapter 515: Ramen Ichiraku

After leaving the Hokage Tower, Alfonzo once again began levitating the Escalade. Meanwhile, he, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene engaged Kakashi in conversation while they walked through the village.

"So, how long have you been active as a shinobi?" Elicia asked curiously.

On a side note, Kakashi, as soon as he left the Hokage Tower, pulled a small book with an orange cover from his ninja backpack, a small pouch worn on his lower back that usually holds throwable weapons such as kunai and shuriken. In Kakashi's case, however, he added another pouch specifically for the book he was reading.

"Hmm... For about nineteen years, I think." Kakashi replied in a lazy tone.

"And just how old are you?" Irene asked curiously. "From the little bit of your face I can see, I would guess you are in your early to mid-twenties. So, nineteen years would mean you started taking missions as a shinobi before you were even ten years old."

"That sounds about right." Kakashi replied in the same tone. "I graduated from the ninja academy pretty early due to my talent and the fact that there was a war going on at the time."

"If I had to guess, that was the Third Great Ninja War, right?" Alfonzo asked. "I heard a little bit about that from Anko and Guy."

To that, Kakashi finally looked up from his book.

"So, you've met Guy, huh?" Kakashi asked curiously. "I hope he wasn't too hard for you to get along with. He's quite..."

"Youthful." Alfonzo and Elicia replied simultaneously.

"Yeah, that's one way to put it." Kakashi replied. Though, the smile in his visible eye made it clear that he was fonder of the Green Beast of the Hidden Leaf than his tone let on.

"Yeah, He was on my team when the Magic Council ordered us to find those two rogue scientists." Alfonzo replied.

"Oh, that's right." Kakashi replied with a nod. "I forgot about that. I haven't talked to him since he got back from his time with Quatro Cerberus. So, I haven't heard the details."

"Does that mean that all Shinobi spend some time with the Legal Guilds of Fiore?" Elicia asked curiously.

"Not all." Kakashi replied while shaking his head as he returned to reading his book. "I never spent any time in a guild."

"I see." Irene replied. "What did you do instead?"

"I can't go into detail, but I worked as a part of a certain division in the village."

'He's definitely talking about the Anbu.' Alfonzo and Elicia thought to themselves. 'Probably to keep his mind free of the thoughts of his teacher, best friend, and other team mates' deaths.'

Like that, the group of five continued to chat while they walked through the village. All the while, the Fairy Tail wizards, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Irene, made sure not to ask any questions that would dig too deeply into the village's secrets.

Ikaruga, on the other hand, simply followed the group at a respectful distance without saying a word.

Eventually, the group walked through what seemed to be one of the busier districts in the village. As they did, they happened to see the blond-haired, blue-eyed boy from before. And when they did, they noticed he was walking into a shop.

"Ramen Ichiraku." Elicia said while looking up at the sign on the shop the blond boy just entered.

Elicia's words drew the rest of the group's attention to the store she was looking at.

"Hey, Fonzie, can we stop here?" Elicia asked as she grabbed Alfonzo's arm with a smile on her face.
"After smelling the scent coming from this shop, I'm feeling a little hungry."

Instead of answering Elicia's question directly, Alfonzo glanced at Kakashi, who shrugged his shoulders care-freeley. Then, Alfonzo smiled at Elicia as he replied.

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a smile. Then, he turned to the rest of his companions. "What do you think, Irene, Ikaruga?"

"I don't mind." Ikaruga replied politely.

"What kind of food do they serve?" Irene asked curiously.

"Judging by the name, I would guess it's ramen." Alfonzo replied. "A type of noodle soup with toppings."

"I see." Irene said while bringing her hand to her chin. "I guess I don't mind trying it. I doubt it will be better than your cooking, though."

Hearing that, Kakashi looked at Irene skeptically. However, he kept his thoughts to himself.

"We'll just have to see about that." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "There's always someone better, after all."

Shrugging her shoulders, Irene took the lead as the group walked into the ramen shop. As they did, they saw the same blond boy waiting for his order. And as they noticed the kid, Kakashi seemed to flinch for a

moment. Though, no one other than Alfonzo and Elicia noticed, as they were paying attention to his reaction.

"*Sigh* So, he's being neglected just like in the canon, huh?" Elicia asked herself as she watched Kakashi's reaction to seeing the blond boy. 'I wonder if Fonzie would be against us taking care of him for a while, while we're here. At least until he graduates and joins a team of Genin.'

"Welcome to Ramen Ichiraku." A middle-aged man with nearly closed eyes and wearing a white bandana said in greeting after noticing the new arrivals. He then continued when he noticed Kakashi. "Oh, Kakashi, it's been a while since you've come to visit. Howe have you been?"

"I've been well, Teuchi." Kakashi said as he put away his book.

"And it looks like you've brought some new faces." The middle-aged man, Teuchi said as he scanned the faces of the four people Kakashi brought with him.

However, when Teuchi made eye contact with Alfonzo, he froze. Alfonzo froze as well while maintaining eye contact. After a few moments, Teuchi snapped back to his senses. Then, he took a deep breath and his entire aura changed.

"It looks like I have a chef of quite the amazing caliber gracing my shop." Teuchi said as he tightened his bandana. "I'd better get serious so as to not embarrass myself. May I take your orders?"

Like Teuchi, Alfonzo could also feel Teuchi's culinary level. Because of that, he was looking forward to trying the ramen even more than before.

"Spicy Tonkotsu Ramen with two boiled eggs and Char siu." Alfonzo said confidently.

"I'll have Miso Ramen with pork." Elicia added.

When Elicia gave her order, the blond boy looked at her as if she had good taste.

Meanwhile, Ikaruga, Iren, and Kakashi also gave their orders. Then, they waited for their orders to arrive while chatting casually.

Eventually, the blond boy's order was the first to arrive. And when it did, he began eating as if he hadn't eaten for days. While Elicia, Irene, and Ikaruga looked on in curiosity, Kakashi continued to chat with Alfonzo while occasionally stealing glances at the boy.

A few minutes later, Naruto finished his bowl of ramen. And when he did, he stared into the bottom of the bowl as if he had lost his greatest treasure. At the same time, Elicia's motherly instincts kicked in. So, she glanced at Alfonzo with puppy dog eyes.

Luckily, Alfonzo did not have to even think about resisting the puppy dog eyes Elicia shot in his direction, as he was also thinking of helping the boy, as well.

"Hey, Kid." Alfonzo said in a casual tone. "You look like you haven't had enough."

Growl!

Instead of responding directly, the boy's stomach took care of that for him, causing him to cover his stomach with his hands while wearing an embarrassed expression.

"Hey, Mr. Teuchi, mind whipping up another serving for the kid?" Alfonzo asked without giving him a chance to reject. "It'll be on me."

Seeing that someone was showing kindness to the boy, Teuchi smiled while he worked.

"Sure thing." Teuchi replied.

Meanwhile, Kakashi looked at Alfonzo skeptically. In the village, the young man Alfonzo was being kind to was basically ignored. And in some cases, bullied. Helping him like that might bring Alfonzo some trouble.

"I don't know if that's such a good idea." Kakashi said.

"What are you talking about?" Alfonzo asked, seemingly not understanding what Kakashi was talking about.

In response, Kakashi explained the kid's situation and how it might bring Alfonzo trouble.

"And?" Alfonzo asked while looking at Kakashi as if he were an idiot. "I don't know why the kid is mistreated. And to be honest, I don't give a damn. But I do know that the only reason he plays all those pranks is because he needs attention. And I'll be damned if I'll let a child suffer just because I'm afraid of what people think of me."

Not only Kakashi, but even the blond boy was shocked by Alfonzo's declaration. Even Teuchi, who was still cooking, threw a thumbs up in Alfonzo's direction.

"*Sigh* I know you're right." Kakashi said while his impression of Alfonzo improved as he did so. "But this could cause you some issues. People who are either afraid or have bad intentions for Naruto might try to make things harder for you."

"Hmph! I wish a nig--- *Cough* I mean I'd like to see them try." Alfonzo said, correcting himself along the way after receiving a glare from Elicia. "And if they do, I'll show them why it's a bad idea to mess with an S-Class wizard from Fairy Tail."

'*Sigh* If I wasn't a member of the shinobi forces of the village, I would be so bold, too.' Kakashi said to himself with some melancholy. 'Still, at least Naruto will have someone who will show him some kindness for his last year at the academy. Sensei, I'm sorry I couldn't do more for your son.'

"Hey, Kid." Alfonzo said, not paying attention to Kakashi, who was internally monologuing. "Kakashi here said your name was Naruto."

"That's right, I'm Naruto Uzumaki." The blond boy, Naruto said. "I'm gonna be Hokage someday, you know! Then, everyone in this village will have to respect me. And they won't bully me or ignore me anymore."

"Damn if you don't aim high." Alfonzo said with a bright smile on his face. "But I like it. So, I tell you what, any time you find yourself hungry and don't have enough money, you can come to me. I promise, with me around, you'll never find yourself hungry again."

Hearing that, Naruto's eyes and mouth opened wide in surprise. A moment later, he lowered his head to hide the tears that were forming in his eyes. Then, he replied in a small, shaky voice.

"Thank you..."

In the next instant, Naruto found himself wrapped in a warm embrace, something he had never experienced before. And when he looked up, he made eye contact with a smiling Elicia.

"And since you're aiming to be the Hokage, we'll take care of training you, too." Elicia said. "Although we're not shinobi, I bet we can at the very least make you physically stronger. WE could probably help you with your chakra control, too. OH, and I'll make some new clothes for you, too. A bright orange track suit isn't exactly what I'd call stealthy, you know."

"Huh? But orange is my favorite color." Naruto said in a whiny tone.

"Oh, we can tell." Irene said while rolling her eyes. "You should just trust er, though. Her fashion sense is off the charts. I'm sure you'll have all the little ninja girls fighting over your attention when she's done with you."

"Really, does that mean Sakura will like me, too?" Naruto asked excitedly.

"I'm not sure who this Sakura girl is, but there's a chance." Elicia said awkwardly, even though she knew there was no chance of that happening.

"Orders up!" Teuchi said as he began placing the different orders in front of his customers.

"We can talk about that later." Alfonzo said with a smile. "For now, let's eat."

With that, everyone, other than Naruto, used their chop sticks to dig into their ramen. And while Kakashi did not react much, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene wore thoroughly flabbergasted expressions.

'It's just as good as Fonzie/Alfonzo/ Master Alfonzo's cooking.' Elicia, Irene, and Ikaruga thought simultaneously.

'If this [Soul Armament] Experiment doesn't work, then I'll kidnap this Teuchi, as well.' Irene thought to herself with a dangerous glint in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo was wearing a solemn expression while he ate. Then, when he eventually swallowed his first bite, he nodded at Teuchi.

"Teuchi, you really are amazing." Alfonzo said in a sincere tone. "If I could hire you, I would do so in a heartbeat. But my instincts are telling me that you'd never leave this place."

"*Sigh* And your instincts would be right." Teuchi replied in a proud tone. "This shop is my life's work. And I would never be willing to give it up. Still, I'm curious to know... just where would you like to hire me to?"

Instead of replying verbally, Alfonzo reached into his pocket and pulled out a business card before handing it to Teuchi. And when Teuchi saw what it said, his perpetually closed eyes opened wide. Then he looked at Alfonzo in surprise.

"Anyway, I would love the opportunity to talk shop with you in the future, Teuchi." Alfonzo said with a smile. "We might be able to push each other to new heights."

"Yes, I think I'd like to take you up on that offer." Teuchi replied as he stored away the business card.

With that, the conversation came to an end. Then, Alfonzo and the others continued to eat. Naruto eventually received his second bowl of ramen, as well. Then, after everyone was done eating, the group, including Naruto, left the shop and started travelling towards the Fairy Tail wizards' lodgings.

Chapter 516: Team Guy

After their trip to Ramen Ichiraku, Kakashi led Alfonzo, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene through the village to their residence for their stay in the Hidden Leaf Village. And that residence turned out to be a luxurious two-story Japanese Style mansion in the heart of the village.

On top of that, Naruto followed the group, as well. They even stopped at a few shops to buy ingredients for dinner.

When the group eventually arrived at the mansion, Alfonzo lowered the Escalade to the ground just outside the mansion's front door. And when Elicia released her [Hiding in Plain Sight] spell, both Kakashi and Naruto widened their eyes.

After that, the group of six entered the house. While Kakashi continued to chat with Elicia and Irene, Alfonzo explored the mansion and quickly found the kitchen. And although he was not intending on cooking immediately, familiarizing himself with the kitchen was quite necessary for when he decided to cook.

Ikaruga, on the other hand, took it upon herself to take the luggage from the Escalade and moved it to the rooms she thought Alfonzo, Elicia, and Irene would like the most. Meanwhile, Naruto, who was still overwhelmed by the kindness he had received, helped Ikaruga, despite her telling him that it was not necessary.

Eventually, Kakashi left the mansion, stating that he had something to take care of. However, thanks to the group deploying [Magic Power Detection], they all knew that he headed back to the Hokage Tower. And they were all sure that he was reporting on everything he saw and heard while leading the group to their accommodations.

Despite the report Kakashi was giving to the Hokage, no one paid it any mind. As outsiders, they were expecting as much, after all. Instead, the group decided to make themselves at home, seeing as they would be spending a few months in the village.

Then, over the next few hours, the group did what they enjoyed to relax. For example, Alfonzo spent his time creating a magic item. Something he thought would come in handy when the next time he or the

ladies had to deal with Danzo. At the same time, Iren was reading a book about magic. Meanwhile, Elicia took Naruto's measurements before starting to create some clothes for him. And once Elicia finished taking measurements, Ikaruga took Naruto outside to start training his body.

Eventually, Kakashi, who had been invited to have dinner with the wizards from Fairy Tail, returned. And to his surprise, when he entered the living room, Naruto was lying on the floor, completely exhausted. Despite his state, he was smiling happily while chatting with Alfonzo.

"Oh, you're back, Kakashi." Alfonzo said when Kakashi entered the room with Ikaruga. "I actually expected you a bit later. I haven't even started cooking yet."

Growl~~~~!

Before Kakashi could reply, the sound of a stomach growling echoed through the room. And when they looked for the source of the sound, they saw Naruto blushing in embarrassment while holding his stomach.

"Well, I guess Ikaruga's work out left you hungry, huh?" Alfonzo asked with a chuckle. "In that case, I'll get dinner started. It'll be pretty simple, though."

"As long as I can eat, I don't care what it is." Naruto said in a tired tone.

"I'm okay with anything, as well." Kakashi added.

Nodding in reply, Alfonzo wasted no time heading to the kitchen. And when Alfonzo was done cooking, everyone in the house gathered to have dinner together. Then, once the meal was finished, Naruto left to return home. He had school the next day, after all. Kakashi, on the other hand, waited at the mansion for the group who would take the magic items from Alfonzo's trunk.

Once all the magic items were taken, Kakashi also left with a promise that he would bring Alfonzo back to the Hokage Tower to discuss the upgrades to the training grounds with Hiruzen.

After sending Kakashi off, Alfonzo returned to the mansion's living room. Then, before he could even sit down, Irene spoke to him.

"One of your magic items has been separated from the others." Irene said without even looking up from the book she was reading.

"I know." Alfonzo replied nonchalantly. "I just hope they don't try to take it apart. That's gonna piss off a lot of people."

"Just what kind of boobie trap did you set, Fonzie?" Elicia asked in a curious tone.

"A city-wide sound grenade that only I can disarm." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

While Elicia grimaced at the trap, Ikaruga and Irene looked at Alfonzo with confusion in their gazes. Naturally, Alfonzo did not miss the confused gazes. So, he smiled as he tried to explain what a sound grenade was.

April, x787

A little more than three months have passed since Alfonzo, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene entered the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And to Alfonzo's surprise, the sound grenade hidden in the signal receiver that was stolen has yet to be set off.

'I guess he's weary of traps, huh?' Alfonzo muttered internally while putting the finishing touches on the last of the indoor training chambers. 'Well, I guess that's a good thing. I'm not looking forward to that sound explosion, either.'

In fact, the day after the magic item was stolen, Alfonzo was expecting to be called to fix the issue. However, nothing like that has happened. Instead, he was taken to discuss the training upgrades with Hiruzen. Then, once everything was settled, Kakashi took him to his first work site.

Since then, Alfonzo's day has fallen into a pattern. First, he would start working on the training facilities shortly after breakfast. And during that time, Kakashi would accompany and chat with him about all sorts of things.

Then, when lunch time came around, Alfonzo and Kakashi would have lunch at various places around the village. And as it turned out, there was only one other place in the village that could compare to Ramen Ichiraku. And the name was Yakiniku Q.

Yakiniku Q was a Yakiniku style restaurant with wide windows, green-seated booths, and round tables that allowed guests to sit on the floor to eat. Each eating area also had menus plastered to the walls. Each table also had its own charcoal brazier so that the guests could cook their meat to their liking.

As a matter of fact, if Alfonzo were unable to cook his own meat, he would more than likely rate Yakiniku Q lower than Ramen Ichiraku. However, they did, in his opinion, a damn good job of seasoning their cuts of beef.

"I'm surprised how fast you work, Alfonzo." Kakashi said as he stood from a chair Alfonzo created for him when the day's work started. "I mean, you've only been working half a day for three months, and you're already done with the indoor portion of the job."

"*Sigh* That's thanks to a combination of things." Alfonzo replied. "First, this is the fifth job I've done like this in the last two years. Second, there aren't as many restrictions when it comes to space, and third, I'm making all the materials with my own magic power."

Like Alfonzo said, this time around, he did not bring any materials with him. And the reason for that was simple. The amount of material he would need to build in so many places was too much to put in a trailer and drag it across the kingdom.

As for the restrictions on space, Alfonzo could build as high as he wanted. Well, as high as the stakes he dug into the ground would allow. Unfortunately, he was forbidden from digging too deep, and he knew why.

'How the hell is Danzo able to hide his Root base under the village?' Alfonzo thought to himself as he towed off. 'I mean, While I was discussing the details with Hiruzen, Danzo just cuts in and says that the stakes can't go past a certain point. And when Hiruzen questioned him about it, he just walked away while saying something about the betterment of the Leaf. I mean, seriously, what the fuck? Hiruzen didn't even try to question him anymore after that.'

"Anyway, let's grab a bite to eat." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "I'm starving."

"Sure." Kakashi replied with a shrug.

With that, Alfonzo and Kakashi made their way to Yakiniku Q. When they arrived, however, they ran into a familiar face.

"Kakashi! My eternal rival!" A man with a bowl cut, bushy eyebrows, and a winning smile shouted from across the restaurant once Alfonzo and Kakashi entered. "Oh, and you're with my friend, Alfonzo. Why don't you come and eat with us."

Smiling in return, Alfonzo glanced at Kakashi, who sighed as if he could not be more exasperated.

"*Sigh* Let's go, if we don't, he'll chase us down to our own table." Kakashi said in a tired tone.

"OH, cut the shit, Kakashi." Alfonzo said as he patted Kakashi on the back. "This isn't the first time we've run into Guy. And we both know you love the guy."

"*Sigh*" Kakashi sighed once again in reply.

A few moments later, Alfonzo and Kakashi were seated with Might Guy and three youngsters who appeared to be eleven or twelve.

"So, who are the kids, Guy?" Alfonzo asked after he and Kakashi put in their orders.

"Oh, these are my three youthful students." Guy replied in his usual tone. "Why don't you three introduce yourselves?"

"Yes, Guy-Sensei." X 3

Immediately afterwards, a boy with a bowl-cut and bushy eyebrows wearing a green jumpsuit, orange leg warms, and bandages wrapped around his forearms and hands stood up with vigor.

"MY name is Rock Lee." The boy, Rock Lee, said energetically. "My dream is to become a splendid Shinobi, despite the fact that I'm unable to use Ninjutsu or Genjutsu."

"So, he's a lot like you, huh, Guy?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Yes, he is." Guy replied in his usual tone. "Because of that, I'll make sure that his dream comes true."

"I can see that." Alfonzo replied. "He sure as hell has a lot of weight strapped to his legs."

Hearing that, Lee seemed to be surprised. At the same time, the other two children, a young man with long black hair tied int a ponytail and white featureless eyes, and a young woman with black hair tied

into a pair of Chinese-style buns and black eyes, wore dumbfounded expressions. Meanwhile, Guy wore an expression that said: "As expected of you."

"How--- How did you know that?" Lee asked in an incredulous tone.

"Wait, it was true?" The young woman asked.

Meanwhile, the other young man remained silent. He already knew about the weights. However, he was curious to know how this new comer could know, too.

"Yes, Alfonzo is telling the truth. As for how he knew, it's because he uses magic from the outside world. [Metal Magic] to be exact." Guy explained.

"Yeah, and my magic allows me to, among other things, detect any metals in my surroundings." Alfonzo said, continuing the explanation.

"Oh, that makes perfect sense." The young man said with a nod. "Well then, I'll introduce myself, as well. My name is Neji Hyuga."

"And I'm Tenten." The young woman, Tenten, added, concluding the introductions.

"It's nice to meet the three of you." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I'm Alfonzo Marcus. And I bet my wife would love to get a hold of you three."

"What do you mean?" Neji asked in a skeptical tone.

"My wife is a fashion designer. A pretty famous one, actually." Alfonzo said with his smile widening.

"Wait, are you talking about Elicia Taylor?" Tenten asked excitedly. "I read that she had gotten married to a man named Alfonzo Marcus a couple of years ago. And that must be you, right? *Sigh* It's too bad we're not allowed to leave the village without a good reason. Otherwise, I would have bought something from the Taylor Shop."

"What point is there in thinking about such mundane things?" Neji asked in a dismissive tone. "The only thing worth thinking about is getting stronger."

'Oh, damn, we got a little Laxus on our hands.' Alfonzo thought to himself.

"Well, as it happens, Lici is actually in the village, too." Alfonzo said. "So, if you want to get her to make something for you, you can stop by our accommodations any time."

"Really?" Tenten asked excitedly.

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "It won't be for free, though. She's running a business, after all."

"To think Elicia came with you." Guy said with his usual smile before Tenten could say anything. "I knew you would be here to work on the training grounds, but I didn't think she would be coming with you."

"Yeah... She wasn't going to originally." Alfonzo replied, his smile widening as he did so. "But we found out she was pregnant just before I was scheduled to make the trip. So, I brought her and our maid with me. Oh, and another member of our guild, as well."

"Really, you're going to be a father?" Guy shouted happily. Then, he jumped up and pulled Alfonzo into a hug as he continued. "Congratulations, my friend. I'll have to come and visit to extend my congratulations to Elicia, as well. I can't wait to see the product of your youthful passion."

"Sure, why don't you stop by after we finish eating?" Alfonzo replied while smiling awkwardly as he patted Guy on his back. "I'm sure she'd love to meet your students, too."

With that, it was decided that Team Guy would visit Alfonzo's temporary residence. So, the group of six chatted casually as they ate before heading to Alfonzo's home.

Chapter 517: Meeting Naruto's Friends

While Alfonzo, Guy, Kakashi, Rock Lee, Neji, and Tenten were on their way to Alfonzo's temporary residence, a group of four academy students were discussing Naruto's improvements since the school year started.

"*Scratch!*

"Seriously, Naruto, just tell us what's going on." A boy with messy, dark brown hair, sharp, black eyes, vertically slitted pupils, red fang marks on his cheeks said as he scratched his abnormally sharp nail against a tree.

"*Bark*" A small white puppy added from atop the boy's head.

"Kiba's right, Naruto." Added a boy with eyes that showed boredom and black hair pulled back into a ponytail that resembled a pineapple in shape. "It's clear that you've gotten better with your Taijutsu. You've even gotten better marks on the tests, too."

"It's really not that big a deal." Naruto replied. "But since you guys have been nagging me so much, I already asked if I could bring you guys to visit. So, after classes end, you should rush home and ask your parents. And if they agree, we'll meet up outside Ramen Ichiraku before heading over there for dinner, and maybe a little training, too."

Hearing the last sentence, the three boys opened their eyes wide. None of them had ever seen Naruto pass up a meal at Ramen Ichiraku if he was nearby. Despite that, they all nodded their heads.

"Well, I wouldn't mind dinner." The last of the boys, a young man with a rotund build and short, spiky, light brown hair said as he finished off the last of his boxed lunch. "I mean, if Naruto would skip Ichiraku for it, it's gotta be good, right?"

Once again, the other two boys nodded in agreement. Then, they put their lunches away and headed back into the ninja academy.

At the same time, there were two others watching Naruto and his three companions. One was a young man with black hair and black eyes who did all he could to isolate himself from the other students. And the second was a young girl with long black hair with a purple tint and featureless white eyes.

'Naruto has changed so much in the last few months.' The girl with the featureless eyes said to herself while watching Naruto and the others head inside. 'I hope he's not doing anything dangerous.'

'Hmph! That loser is getting stronger quickly.' The black-haired boy said with a snort. 'I need to figure out what he's been doing. Then, if I can incorporate it into my training, getting my revenge will be easier.'

As those thoughts ran through the black-haired boy's head, he decided that he would follow the others to meet up with Naruto. Then, he would steal whatever technique Naruto was using to get stronger so quickly.

A few hours later, after the classes at the ninja academy finally let out, Naruto was waiting outside Ramen Ichiraku for the other three boys in his class to arrive.

"Hey, Naruto, you not coming in for a bite?" Teuchi asked from inside the ramen shop. "Alfonzo already left some money for you, ya know."

"Not this time, Boss Teuchi." Naruto replied energetically. "There are some guys in class that don't believe someone has been helping me out for the last few months. So, I'm gonna show them."

"Did you already get permission to bring them over?" Teuchi asked in a concerned tone.

"Don't worry, Boss Teuchi." Naruto replied casually. "Big Bro Alfonzo and Big Sis Elicia have done too much for me to be so disrespectful."

"Ha! Good." Teuchi replied with a smile. "I always knew there was more to you than those rumors."

Hearing that, Naruto could not help but smile. For as long as he could remember, almost everyone called him a demon. Even his teachers at school treated him badly because of the rumors. Yet, Teuchi was never one of them. Instead, he treated Naruto as a mischievous child, which he was.

"Anyway, I'll hold on to this money until the next time you come here to eat, okay?" Teuchi said.

"Sure, thanks, Boss Teuchi." Naruto replied with a smile. "Besides, it's time for me to go. There all here."

"Alright, see you next time." Teuchi replied.

And just as Naruto said, the three boys he spoke to during lunch arrived outside Ramen Ichiraku. Then, he led the three towards the temporary Marcus residence. Unbeknownst to the four boys, however, there were four people following them stealthily.

"Ino-Pig, are you sure this is a good idea?" A pink-haired girl with green eyes asked as she and her blonde companion followed the girl that had been paying attention to Naruto during lunch.

"Of course it is, Billboard Brow." Ino, a girl with platinum blonde hair and blue eyes said while poking her head around a corner. "She's been following Sasuke ever since we left the academy. And I refuse to let another girl get close to him without my knowledge."

Hearing that, the pink-haired girl could not help but grit her teeth and clench her fists in response.

"And to think, I always thought she had a thing for Naruto." The pink-haired girl hissed out. "Hinata really hid her feelings quite deep. She's even more dangerous than I expected."

"Quit muttering to yourself, Sakura." Ino said sharply. "She's moving.***"

"Oh, right." Sakura replied as she followed behind Ino.

Not long later, Naruto and his friends arrived at the residence Alfonzo and the others were borrowing. And when they did, they found Elicia, with her belly protruding because of her pregnancy, sitting on the veranda enjoying the sun.

"Hey, Big Sis Elicia, I brought them.!" Naruto shouted while waving at Elicia.

"I see." Elicia replied with a smile. "It seems a few more people followed you, too."

Hearing that, Naruto and his friends were confused and surprised. The whole way, they never noticed anyone else following them.

"Anyway, let's see who our uninvited guests are." Elicia added with a smile.

Despite saying that, Elicia did not move from where she was sitting. Even so, the four boys heard four surprised exclamations a short distance away. Then, only a few moments later, four familiar faces were dragged into the yard while bundled in threads.

"Huh?" the boy with the pineapple shaped ponytail exclaimed in confusion. "Ino, Sakura, Sasuke, and Hinata, why are you here?"

In response, the black-haired boy, Sasuke snorted while turning his head away. Meanwhile, the girl with purple tinted hair tuned beat red as soon as she made eye contact with Naruto. As a result, she was unable to answer the question due to embarrassment.

"Hey, let me go!" Ino shouted in a fluster while trying to struggle out of Elicia's threads.

"We weren't here to cause trouble, you know." Sakura said. "We just wanted to know where Sasuke was going."

Hearing that, Naruto's shoulder slumped slightly. However, by now, he knew that Sakura, the object of his affection, had no feelings for him. So, he was not all that affected.

"When I saw Sasuke, I expected to hear that from Ino and Sakura." Naruto said while shaking his head.
"But the real surprise is seeing Sasuke and Hinata."

"I-I-I-I..." Hinata stuttered after hearing Naruto use her name.

"Hmph! I wanna see how you could be getting so strong." Sasuke replied.

"Geez, Sasuke." Naruto said in an annoyed tone. "If you wanted to know, you should have just asked instead of following me around like a creep."

"Hey, don't talk bad about Sasuke!" Ino and Sakura shouted in banshee-like voices.

Those statements lead to the group starting to bicker. Meanwhile, Elicia smiled at the children as she released those she had captured from her bindings.. Then, she simply mused to herself while watching them.

"Right now, I have almost all of the Konoha 12 at our house." Elicia thought to herself. 'If Shino wasn't so anti-social, we'd have all of them here.'

While Elicia simply watched the ongoing bickering, Ikaruga eventually brought Elicia a cup of tea.

"Thanks, Ikaruga." Elicia said with a smile.

"May I ask, Madam Elicia." Ikaruga replied. "Who are our guests?"

"Oh, they're just Naruto's friends." Elicia replied with a smile. "Even though we picked up some more ingredients for tonight, there are a few more here than we expected. Could you run to the market and pick up some more?"

"Of course." Ikaruga replied with a bow.

At that moment, Ikaruga vanished from where she stood. At the same time, Elicia could feel part of the surveillance detail following Ikaruga to the shops she would be buying ingredients from.

A few moments later, Alfonzo, Kakashi, Guy, and Guy's Genin team made their way to the front yard. And when they did, they saw the eight academy students either arguing, making themselves as small as possible, eating a multitude of snacks, or looking at the whole situation in exasperation. And when they did, he could not help but smile.

"Yo, Naruto!" Alfonzo shouted over all the noise, drawing attention onto himself. "I know I said you could bring your friends over today, but this is more than expected."

In response, Naruto smiled brightly. However, before he could reply, someone else replied first.

"Yeah, right." Sakura said disdainfully. "Like Naruto has any friends."

Immediately, the whole yard fell into silence. Naruto even lowered his head and clenched his fists. However, before the awkward mood could last too long, Elicia broke it.

"*Sigh* I've noticed how badly a lot of people treat Naruto over the months we've been here, and I don't get it." Elicia said. "So many people call him a demon and avoid him. But why?"

Once again, the yard fell into silence.

"But all that negativity only comes from the civilians in the village. However, those who grew up in shinobi families don't act like that." Elicia continued. "Either way, since you clearly don't see Naruto as a friend, you can leave. The rest of you are welcome to join us for dinner after our maid gets back."

"Hey, Big Sis Elicia..." Naruto said weakly.

"No, Naruto." Elicia said sternly. "This is the girl you said you had a crush on, right?"

With out Naruto having to answer the question, it was obvious.

"Since you're unwilling to put your foot down, I'll do it for you." Elicia continued. "Just from the way she spoke to you, she clearly doesn't deserve your care or affection. Trust me, just let it go."

Hearing that, Naruto could only lower his head. He knew what Elicia said was true. But his feelings for Sakura made it hard to accept. Meanwhile, Sakura was looking at Elicia with her eyes and mouth hanging open. Never did she expect that she would be sent away for bad mouthing Naruto. More than that, no one defended her, at all.

Eventually, when Sakura snapped back to her senses, she left the residence. At about the same time, Ikaruga returned. And as she did, she watched Sakura leave with a confused expression on her face. However, she did not dwell on it for long.

"Master Alfonzo, I've returned with more ingredients." Ikaruga said respectfully. "Would you like my assistance in the kitchen?"

"No, that won't be necessary." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "Instead, can you get those who wanna get a little training in before dinner started? By the time you're done, I'll have finished cooking."

"Yes, Master Alfonzo." Ikaruga replied with a bow. Then, she turned to all the kids who might want to train. "Those who wish to start training, please follow me to the backyard."

Naruto was the first to start moving towards Ikaruga. After him, the three he brought with him followed along. That was one of the reasons why they showed up, after all. Following them was Sasuke, Rock Lee, and Neji, who were also interested in getting stronger. The last few, namely Tenten, Ino, and Hinata decided to sit with Elicia until dinner was ready.

Though, that was more because they recognized Elicia and wanted to talk to her about fashion and how they could attract the boys in which they were interested.

“*Sigh* As shinobi, the first thing you should concern yourselves with is getting stronger.” Elicia said sternly. “I don’t think anyone wants a trophy wife like the men in the outside world do. Instead, they want to be able to leave a strong, long-lasting legacy behind.”

Like that, the three girls continued to ask Elicia questions about how they could get their love interests to notice them. However, before she could give too much information, Alfonzo’s voice rang out over the residence, letting everyone know it was time to eat.

Chapter 518: A Little Chat with Sakura

At the same time Alfonzo, Elicia, and their guests sat down for dinner in the Village Hidden in the Leaves...

Bang!

“Ugh, when is Fonzie coming back?” Cana asked in an exasperated tone as she slammed her mug of ale down on the table she and her friends usually sat at. “I don’t think I’ve ever been away from him for this long.”

“It’s only been three months, Cana.” Mirajane replied. “Stop being so melodramatic.”

“Well, excuse me for missing my husband so much, Mira~!”Cana whined.

In fact, everyone felt a little bad for Cana. A few weeks after she got married to Alfonzo, he had to take the job in the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And normally, Cana would have been one of those who accompanied him.

Unfortunately, Someone needed to keep an eye on Irene and the progress of her [De-Dragonization]. And there was naturally no better candidate than Alfonzo. So, that meant Irene was given one of the three spots to accompany Alfonzo. And Ikaruga was needed to keep an eye on Elicia. So, Cana had to stay at home on this trip.

"Um... So, which of you is getting married next?" Levy asked curiously, though it was obvious she was trying to change the subject.

"Oh, Me and Erza are gonna get married together." Sun said as she raised her hand excitedly. "And Alfonzo told me about the song we would be singing during our first dance."

Hearing that, everyone was surprised. However, the biggest reaction came from Cana.

"Seriously? How is that fair?" Cana asked discontentedly. "I begged him for months. Yet, he wouldn't tell me anything.

"Well, it's because I'll be singing with him." Sun replied while tilting her head.

That statement drew another round of surprised explanations. Meanwhile, Cana could only flop her mouth open and closed like a fish out of water.

Before anyone could ask Sun about the song, however, the sliding doors opened. And when everyone looked to see who entered, they found a person wearing a space suit. A moment later, after the doors closed, the person, who turned out to be Kai Mikawa, took off the helmet to his suit.

"Good evening, fine wizards of Fairy Tail." Kai said in a friendly, yet arrogant tone. "I've come to join such prestigious guild."

"Ugh... It's this guy again." Cana and Gozaburo said in a tone filled with annoyance.

Sun, on the other hand, looked like she was ready to punch Kai through the doors.

"Hey, Cana, who is this guy?" Lisanna asked curiously.

"*Sigh* He's the second richest man on the continent." Cana replied. "And..."

"Ah, Sun, there you are!" Kai shouted, drowning out Cana's words. "Where is Alfonzo Marcus, the man you plan to marry?"

"Why, do you still plan on challenging him to a duel for my hand?" Sun asked as she stood from her seat with Kanade gripped tightly in her hand.

"No, no, no!" Kai replied quickly while frantically waving his hands. "I actually wanted the opportunity to apologize to him. And maybe start over. I think we could be great friends."

That last statement thoroughly confused everyone who knew about Alfonzo and Kai's first encounter.

"I mean, I think he's one of the few people on this continent that could truly be my friend." Kai continued. "Since he's richer than I am, there's no chance he would be getting close to me because of my wealth. Like so many have as I've grown up."

Hearing that was enough to almost make everyone feel sorry for Kai. Before it could get to that point, however, Ren stood up and started walking towards him.

"Mom, is there something wrong?" Sun asked curiously as her mother walked towards Kai.

"Nothing, Dear." Ren replied with a smile. "But I think I should have a talk with Kai for a little while."

Though everyone in the guild hall was confused, they did not say anything when Ren escorted Kai to the guild's infirmary. And when Shizuka exited a few minutes later with confusion written all over her face, they were even more curious to know what Ren was talking about with Kai.

About half an hour later, both Ren and Kai returned to the main hall. And when they did, they were surprised to see Kai smiling radiantly as he strode towards the guild hall's front doors.

"Well, good people of Fairy Tail, I'll see you later." Kai said energetically as he turned around in front of the guild hall's entrance. Then, just as he started putting on the helmet to his space suit, he continued. "I

can't wait until we meet again. And someone please tell Alfonzo that I'm looking forward to meeting him again."

With that, Kai put on his helmet. Then, without giving anyone the chance to respond, he walked through the sliding doors into the sunset.

"What... was that all about?" Ultear asked in a confused tone. Based on the story Cana and Sun told, I thought getting him to leave wouldn't be so easy."

Although Ultear was the one to voice her doubts everyone at the table was just as confused. So, they turned their attention to Cana and Sun for an explanation.

Naturally, Cana and Sun had no idea what was going on either. So, they turned their attention to Sun's mother.

"Mom, what did you say to him?" Sun asked in an incredulous tone.

"Nothing special." Ren replied with a shrug and a smile. "I only told him that if he wanted to become friends with Alfonzo, the best place to start would be to become his rival. And that Blue Pegasus would be the perfect jumping off point."

"Well, I guess he'd fit in with that group of pretty boys." Gajeel said, sounding rather relieved. "At least we won't have to put up with such a spoiled rich kid."

Gajeel's statement received a nod from everyone.

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

May, x787

A few weeks have passed since Naruto invited his friends to Alfonzo and Elicia's house. And since then, everyone from his class, with the exception of Sakura and a boy named Shino, has been coming to the house to get in some extra training. Though, they were a little disappointed that Alfonzo had not taken the time to train them yet. Instead, all their training has been conducted by Ikaruga.

Still, the kids could not deny that their physical states have been improving by a lot ever since their training started with the outsiders. Of course, this left two of their classmates feeling left out. And while one was too anti-social to ask about the others' improvements, the other was wondering what she did wrong to be kicked out.

"I just don't get it." Sakura muttered to herself as she walked through the village towards her home. "What did I do wrong? I mean, it's not like I said anything any different than anyone else in the village. So, Why was I the only one who was excluded? Even worse, Ino-Pig is getting the chance to spend more time with Sasuke. And although nothing has changed between them, she's getting ahead of me."

Ever since Elicia asked Sakura to leave their temporary home, Sakura had been having the same thoughts play on repeat inside her head. And because of that, even her grades at school had been slipping, as she had been unable to concentrate.

She did understand, however, that her attitude towards Naruto was the reason she was asked to leave. She just could not understand why that was a problem. And that was not her fault.

Because of rumors that had been floating around the village for years, rumors that only affected the lower-ranked shinobi and civilian population, Naruto had been labeled a demon by most of the village. And since Sakura came from one of those civilian families, she had also been calling him a demon and mistreating him for as long as she had known him.

Though, that was not Sakura's only reason for her dislike of Naruto. As previously mentioned, Naruto has had a crush on Sakura for a long time. Unfortunately, Naruto's attempts to get Sakura's attention usually resulted in him getting in the way of Sakura's, perceived, bonding time with Sasuke, which led her to disliking him even more.

With negative thoughts flooding her mind, Sakura walked back to her house on auto-pilot with her head lowered. So, when she bumped into someone, she was completely unprepared for the impact.

"Huh?" Sakura exclaimed in surprise before she realized she had lost her balance. "Kya~!"

However, before she could completely lose her footing and tumble backwards, a gentle hand gripped her by the arm and helped her regain her balance.

"Are you okay?" A vaguely familiar voice asked Sakura.

Reacting quickly to the voice, Sakura looked up to give her thanks and apology. However, when she saw the face of the person who helped her, the words were stuck in her throat. On top of that, her eyes

opened wide, to a comical degree. Especially since she was certain that she was not at all liked by the person that helped her.

Standing in front of Elicia were a pair of women. The first, like her, had pink hair and green eyes. While the second had short, straight black hair, brown skin, and an obviously pregnant physique.

"It's you..." Sakura whispered absent-mindedly.

"Oh, you're the girl from that one night, your name is Sakura, right?" The brown-skinned woman, Elicia, said with a smile on her face. "Well, you really should be more careful. You could hurt yourself or someone else if you're not."

Taken aback by the bright smile Elicia was wearing, Sakura did not know how to respond. Still, she did manage to nod her head in acknowledgement of Elicia's words.

As it turned out, Elicia, having gotten bored with her time at the temporary residence the village lent to the wizards of Fairy Tail, decided to take a little stroll around the village with Ikaruga. Along the way, she tried some of the local snacks, and picked out some fabrics from the shops around the village, as well.

On a side note, Elicia had also invited Irene to join them on their little walk around the village. However, Irene was too engrossed in awakening her [Soul Armament Spirit] in the hopes that her [Dragonization] could be reversed.

And just as Elicia and Ikaruga left the dango shop they had recently entered, Sakura bumped into Elicia. And just as previously mentioned, Elicia caught Sakura before she could stumble to the ground.

"*Sigh* I can see it in your eyes." Elicia said after seeing Sakura nod her head blankly. "What I said to you before asking you to leave, it's still bothering you, isn't it."

Immediately, Sakura began gritting her teeth and clenching her fists. At the same time, she lowered her head to hide her irritation. Yet, she still managed to nod her head at Elicia's question.

"*Sigh* Well, why don't you take a walk with us." Elicia said while shaking her head with an exasperated smile on her face. "I guess I can tell you why what you said bothered me so much."

Then, without waiting for a reply, Elicia started walking away from the shop she had just left and headed towards her temporary residence with Ikaruga following her at a respectful distance. A moment later, though skeptical, Sakura also followed, falling in line with Ikaruga as the trio walked.

"By now, I'm sure you've figured out who Fonzie and I are, right?" Elicia asked after walking in silence for a short while.

"Yes, you two are Elicia Taylor and Alfonzo Marcus." Sakura replied. "I've read about the two of you in some of the newspapers that make it into the village from the outside world."

"Good." Elicia replied with a nod. "That cuts down the time needed for introductions. Then, what do you know about our pasts?"

"Not much, just that you're wizards of Fairy Tail." Sakura replied. "And that you're two of its most renowned members."

"You should also know, we're orphans... like Naruto and Sasuke." Elicia added.

At that moment, something clicked into place for Sakura. She finally understood why she so quickly found herself unwelcomed that evening. Before she could think about it for too long, however, what she thought she figured out was denied.

"That's not the reason why I asked you to leave that night, though." Elicia said. "That's only why we connect so well with them."

Hearing that, Sakura could only look at Elicia with confusion in her gaze.

"Tell me something, Sakura." Elicia said calmly. "Why don't you like Naruto? Or rather, what has he ever done to you to make you treat him like you did?"

Sakura could not actually answer that question. In reality, Naruto had never done anything to Sakura. Sure, she thought it was annoying how hard he tried to get her attention when she was already focused on Sasuke. But other than that, he had done absolutely nothing. He had never even played a prank on her like he had done to so many others.

"I... I don't know." Sakura replied with her head lowered after several moments to seriously think about the answer to Elicia's question.

"Well, if I had to guess..." Elicia said after hearing Sakura's answer. "... it's probably because you had been told to for as long as you can remember. 'Stay away from that boy, Sakura.' 'That kid is bad news, Sakura.' 'He's nothing but trouble, Sakura.' Does any of that sound familiar?"

Vividly, Sakura could remember hearing things like that about Naruto every time she saw him until the present. But she never understood by the adults around her said things like that. However, as a child, she eventually adopted the same mindset as the adults.

"Honestly, I've been hearing things like that ever since I came to this village, too." Elicia continued. "And instead of just accepting it, I asked people why they were saying that about Naruto. And do you know how they answered?"

Immediately, Sakura focused all her attention on Elicia's following words.

"They answered the same way as you did." Elicia replied with a shrug. "I don't' know."

Sakura was dumbfounded to hear such an unexpected answer.

"In fact, most of the people I asked about it had never even interacted with Naruto before." Elicia continued. "Yet, for some reason, they all hate him. Does that make any sense to you?"

At that moment, Sakura finally understood why she had been asked to leave that day. Like most people, Sakura had never properly interacted with Naruto. Instead, she just listened to the adults around her, shunning Naruto for no reason.

"I mean, it's one thing to not like the kid after trying to get to know him, or even just talking to him properly..." Elicia said as she shook her head. Then, she stopped walking and looked back at Sakura. "At least try to see what kind of person he is for yourself before you decide to hate him, okay?"

When Elicia stopped walking, Ikaruga and Sakura also stopped. And when Sakura made eye contact with Elicia, Elicia continued to speak. Then, after hearing what Elicia had to say, Sakura could only lower her head in shame.

With her head lowered, Sakura started to remember all the interactions she witnessed between her classmates and Naruto. And she noticed that only those from civilian families, like her, ever showed hatred towards Naruto. Meanwhile, those from shinobi families would show clear annoyance with Naruto. Though, that was most because of something he would do. Otherwise, they treated him normally.

"Well, I'm sure I've given you quite a bit to think about." Elicia said. "You should head on home before your parents start to worry about where you are. Hopefully the next time we run into each other, all that irrational hatred for Naruto will be gone. But if you still don't like him after getting to see what kind of person he is, that's fine. Just, at least, give him a chance. The same way you do with everyone else."

With that, Elicia turned around once again and started walking, Ikaruga following behind her. Meanwhile, Sakura was left to think about everything she just heard. And by the time she got back home, she decided she would do exactly what Elicia said. In the process, she would come to see that Naruto was not actually all that bad. Though, she still did not reciprocate his feelings.

Chapter 519: Human Again

Nearly six months have passed since Alfonzo, Elicia, Ikaruga, and Irene came to the Village Hidden in the Leaves. In that time, Not much of note took place. One thing to mention, however, was the fact that the Kingdom of Fiore held its first annual Miss Fiore Pageant.

Gathering the most beautiful women from all over the kingdom to compete for the title of the kingdom's most beautiful woman, the citizens of the kingdom found themselves drawn to the spectacle as well.

Unsurprisingly, a number of wizards were among the front runners for the newly created title of Miss Fiore. And there were a certain three who stood among the top of that pyramid. Namely, Mirajane Strauss of Fairy Tail, Karen Lilica of Blue Pegasus, and Jenny Realign, also of Blue Pegasus.

In the end, Mirajane, the most popular model in the continent wide publication, Sorcerer Weekly, ended up taking the title of Miss Fiore x787. However, although the outcome was expected, the result of Mirajane's victory did little more than light a fire under the other competitors, who vowed to surpass her in the coming year.

"*Sigh* I fucking hate this job." Alfonzo grumbled from his seat at the dining room table in his temporary residence in the Village Hidden in the Leaves as he lay a copy of Sorcerer Weekly on the table. "If it wasn't for this god damn job, I would have been there to see Mira win."

"I know what you mean, Fonzie." Elicia, sitting next to Alfonzo at the table, said with a smile as she leaned over and rested her head on Alfonzo's shoulder. "I would have loved to be there, too. But duty calls, as they say."

"*Sigh* I know." Alfonzo replied as he gently closed his eyes and enjoyed the time before he had to leave for work on the training grounds in the village. "Still, I would have liked to be there for her."

"I'm sure Mira understands." Elicia said in a soothing tone. "She'll definitely make sure you make it up to her when we get back, though."

Smiling in response, Alfonzo wrapped an arm around Elicia's waist. At the same time, he placed his free hand on her belly. Then, he began to rub his pregnant wife's belly gently.

"I know." Alfonzo replied. "And I'd be happy to make it up to her."

Smiling in return, Elicia placed her right hand on Alfonzo's. Then, the couple fell into a comfortable silence as they simply enjoyed each other's company.

Meanwhile, as the Marcus couple enjoyed their time, Irene, who had spent very little time with the group was currently seated in her bedroom in the residence. With her eyes closed and a magic staff resting across her lap, she was currently delving into her inner world to speak with the [Spirit] of her [Soul Armament].

At the center of Irene's inner world, Irene sat on a stone throne in the throne room of a large castle at the center of an old city. To those who knew her past, they would recognize the city as capital city of Dragnof, the country Irene ruled before her [Dragonization].

However, unlike the Dragnof of the past, this city and castle were in ruins. The ruined city, nothing more than a memory of a painful past. However, Irene was not alone. Well, not physically, anyway. Because as crazy as it sounded, Irene was carrying on a conversation with an unseen individual.

["I think it is about time you allowed yourself to accept the truth, My Queen."] A deep, masculine voice sounded throughout Irene's inner world. ["I am certain my voice, my presence has allowed you to know my true name months ago."]

"As true as that may be, it doesn't change the fact that accepting you is difficult." Irene replied calmly. Though, if anyone could see her expression, they would know that she was struggling with herself. "Accepting the truth of the matter would mean accepting that my closest and most loyal advisor had been with me all this time. A fact that I was unaware of."

["Tis not your fault, My Queen."] The masculine voice said consolingly. ["Back then, not even I knew of a place so deep within one's mind. Not to mention, I was completely unaware of the small part of myself that had mixed with your soul when you began training [Sage Dragon Slayer Magic]."]

As it turned out, All dragons who taught humans [Dragon Slayer Magic] unknowingly implanted a small portion of their souls into their students. And that part of the dragon's soul is what later became the [Dragon Seed].

At first, this portion of the dragon's soul only facilitated the use of [Dragon Slayer Magic]. However, as the potency of the magic grew, it became obvious that the body of a human was not strong enough to contain the power the magic could output. So, it began slowly mutating the Dragon Slayer into the form most suitable to wield its power.

In the end, the wizard would go through [Dragonization] when their power reached a certain threshold. At the same time, the two souls would assimilate, which was the process that facilitated the transformation into a dragon.

In response to the voice's statement, Irene could only close her eyes. She knew what the voice said was the truth. However, the scars from her past made it hard for her to accept it.

[“Another thing you should take note of, My Queen.”] The masculine voice continued. [“Should you not find it in yourself to accept my identity, you will never be able to confront the princess and tell her the truth.”]

“*Sigh* Yet another troublesome matter.” Irene muttered in response. “But all this is moot if the boy’s claims are untrue.”

That statement was where all of Irene’s insecurities were concentrated. In her long life, she had been disappointed far too many times. And should Alfonzo’s [Soul Armament] not perform as advertised, she would face yet another disappointment. One that she may never recover from.

Meanwhile, the owner of the masculine voice, after seeing Irene’s expression, decided that more drastic measures were in order.

“*Sigh* Perhaps my loyalty was misplaced all those years ago.”] The masculine voice said in a tone filled with lament. [“The woman I pledged myself to all those years ago is no longer the woman from the past.”]

“Of course I’m not.” Irene replied, not even realizing how easily she acknowledged the voice’s vow of loyalty from the past. “Everything has changed over the last four hundred years.”

[“Even so, the woman I pledged my loyalty to was not such a coward.”] The voice replied. [“Nor was she so indecisive. How could I have ever pledged myself to a queen like this.”]

With every word the voice spoke, Irene could feel her irritation growing. And the fact that it was insinuating that she had become a coward over the centuries was turning her irritation into fury. And by the time the voice's words ended, Irene's magic power had begun to leak, not only in her inner world, but in the physical world, as well.

"Be silent, Belserion." Irene ordered in a cold tone.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, the staff laying across Irene's lap, which was originally a plain staff with a metallic hue, began to shift in form. Now, taking on a beige color as it elongated. Then, one end of the staff split into five protrusions, making the end of the staff resemble a dragon's claw. And finally, the entire staff gained a dragon scale-like pattern.

At the same time, Alfonzo and Elicia's heads snapped in the direction of Irene's bedroom. While Elicia could only feel the swelling magic power, Alfonzo could also feel the change in Irene's [Soul Armament]. Not to mention, they could both feel the change in Irene's magic power signature.

And the change in Iren's magic power signature was not subtle. From a deep, overwhelming feeling that was similar to, yet not as potent as, Acnologia's to one more similar to Natsu's, Gajeel's, and Wendy's, though on a larger scale.

"She finally did it." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"Yeah, she doesn't feel like a dragon anymore." Elicia said with a happy smile on her face. A moment later, tears began to well up in her eyes. "I'm really happy for her."

As she spoke, Elicia began moving the hand that was resting on Alfonzo's, causing him to rub her belly.

"Even if it's late..." Elicia continued while maintaining her smile as tears began to drip down her face. "... now she can be the mother she never got to be in the past."

Smiling lovingly at his wife, Alfonzo gently removed his hand from Elicia's belly. Then, he tenderly wipe the tears from her face.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied. Then, Alfonzo turned his attention towards the residence's front door. "Before we go and congratulate her, though, I should probably go and tell our landlords there's nothing to worry about."

Meanwhile, back in Irene's inner world, Irene wore a shocked expression. For as long as she had been able to hear her [Armament Spirit's] voice, she had been denying its true identity, unwilling to speak its name. So, after speaking its name, Belserion, the dragon who taught her [Dragon slayer Magic], when she lost control of her emotions after being called a coward, she could not believe what happened when she regained control.

At the same time, Irene's inner world began to shudder. As it did, the ruins of Dragnof began to levitate, ascending into the sky. Upon levitating, it all moved to a specific point above Irene. Eventually, the ruins, landscape, and even the throne Irene sat upon were all suspended in the sky, leaving Irene to look up in awe.

At the end of Irene's line of site, the entire floating city began to form itself into the shape of a quadrupedal creature with a large pair of wings. Then, the pieces of Irene's past began smoothing themselves out into a form that she could not be more familiar with. And as they did, the colossal creature started to descend in front of her.

Eventually, the creature, a dragon with beige-colored scales, landed in front of her. And on its large, draconic face, Irene could see it... no, him... smiling at her. And while staring into his eyes, Irene could see the plethora of emotions she wore on her face.

Relief. Nostalgia. Happiness. Longing. Uncertainty. Those were only a few of the emotions she could gleam in her reflection. Before she could identify anymore, however, the dragon, her [Armament Spirit], Belserion, spoke.

"It is good to see you well, My Queen." Belserion said in a respectful tone.

"Belserion, I..." Irene stuttered, unsure of how she should respond.

"And please, allow me to apologize." Belserion continued while bowing his head. "I truly meant no disrespect with my words. However, I felt that you needed a... 'kick in the rear'... so to speak. Still, I ask for your forgiveness. I will accept any punishment you deem worthy for my transgressions."

Once again, Irene was rendered speechless. However, that speechlessness did not last long. Instead, it was broken by Irene's chuckle. A chuckle that quickly morphed into full-blown laughter. Full-blown laughter that sounded much freer than any laugh she had produced over the last four hundred years.

"You owe me no apologies, my old friend." Irene said, sounding like a totally different person. "It is true that I, indeed, needed that 'kick in the rear.' And as my most loyal retainer... no, friend... I thank you."

Hearing that, Belserion raised his head while his smile widened. However, when he made eye contact with Irene once again, the smile on his face could not help but stiffen.

"Despite the fact that you were in the right with what you did and said, that will not help you escape the punishment you deserve for your disrespect." Irene said while smiling sadistically. "To think you would ever consider implying that I, Irene Belserion, am a coward. Such an act truly deserves a fitting punishment."

Surprised, and a bit frightened, by Irene's demeanor, Belserion took an unconscious step back. Although he knew of Irene's current sadistic personality, he had yet to experience it. And his first experience was leaving him unsure of how to handle the situation.

Meanwhile, Irene's inner world, which had been stripped bare as it formed Belserion's body, was reforming from the blank space it had become. Forming around the two, there was now a large plain. And as time went by, a truly enormous castle was being built, brick by brick. On top of that, the sky was that of night time while a scarlet red full moon hung among the stars as it bathed the plain and rapidly building castle in an eerie, scarlet red hue.

When the castle was finally built, Irene and Belserion found themselves standing in an absurdly large throne room. A throne room whose walls were lined with all sorts of torture instruments, some of which were large enough for use on a dragon.

"My Queen, surely this is too---" Belserion began to say as he took a step back.

"Oh, come now, Belserion." Irene said, her smile morphing into something pleasant as she spoke. "There's no longer any need for such formalities. Please, just call me Irene. Dragnof no longer exists, after all."

With that, Irene took a step forward. And as she did, one of the torture devices on the wall flew from its place before landing in Irene's outstretched hand.

"However, I do believe that you said you would accept any punishment I deemed worthy, did you not?" Irene asked as she continued to walk forward. "You wouldn't be going back on your word, would you?"

"No, of course not, My Queen." Belserion replied while taking another step backwards. "I just---"

"Didn't I already tell you to call me Irene?" Irene asked while tilting her head in a cutesy manner, something she picked up from spending time around Sun.

"Yes, you're right, Irene." Belserion said as he took yet another step back. "I only ask that you show mercy."

"I see." Irene replied with a nod. "I understand. Well then, let's get to the punishment."

It should be known that Irene's inner world was filled with the shouts of a dragon begging for mercy until Alfonzo and Elicia arrived at Irene's bedroom to congratulate her on her newly returned humanity. Unfortunately, that took longer than expected as the shinobi of the Village Hidden in the Leaves were quite worried about the extreme spike in magic power that had just occurred.

Chapter 520: Two Attacks

After sending away the Anbu who came to investigate the spike in magic power after Irene released her [Soul Armament's] first seal, Alfonzo and Elicia quickly made their way towards Irene's room to

congratulate her. With the use of [Magic Power detection], both Alfonzo and Elicia were aware that Irene had regained her humanity based on the changes in her magic power signature.

Unfortunately, they could not celebrate Irene's achievement for long. Or rather, Alfonzo could not, as he was supposed to leave the house to continue his work on the village's training grounds. He did, however, promise to prepare a feast for Irene once he returned for the evening. Naturally, all those living in the house were ecstatic to hear the news.

Meanwhile, reports about Irene's spike in power reached the desks of Hiruzen and his advisors quite quickly. While Koharu and Homura were relatively unbothered by the news, Hiruzen raised the danger level of the group of visitors. However, he had no intention of poking a sleeping lion.

The only one among the Hokage and his advisors who had a different thought on the matter was Danzo. His thoughts were along the lines of either controlling such power or destroying it completely so that an enemy could not get their hands on it. Luckily for Danzo, though, he was able to determine that he was thoroughly outclassed by the explosion of magic power. So, instead of doing something that would have undoubtedly doomed the village, he focused his plans on getting Alfonzo under his control.

Unfortunately, as Alfonzo had yet to show off his power while in the village, Danzo had no idea about the extent of his power. The only thing he had to go by was the report Guy had submitted nearly three years ago. Still, with such incomplete information, Danzo was ready to put his plans in motion.

"Yeah, this shit is natural." Alfonzo said to himself while working on the upgrades for the Village Hidden in the Leaves' Seventh Training Ground. "Suddenly Kakashi is called away for something important. Then, as soon as he leaves, all the Anbu who have been watching me suddenly disappear, too."

As Alfonzo muttered to himself, currently, he was on the Seventh Training Ground, with Riot and Bedlam released, without anyone monitoring him. However, thanks to his work ethic, he was diligently completing his job.

A few moments later, a shinobi wearing a featureless white mask appeared next to Alfonzo.

"Come with me, Alfonzo Marcus." The shinobi ordered in an emotionless tone. "Your presence has been requested."

"By who?" Alfonzo asked without looking in the shinobi's direction.

"You shall find out when we arrive." The shinobi replied. "Now, no more questions."

"Yeah, no thanks." Alfonzo said, still not looking in the shinobi's direction. "That's not how this works. No one in this village has the right to order me to do a god damn thing."

Hearing that, the shinobi did not respond. Instead, another nine shinobi, each wearing a similar, featureless mask, appeared to surround Alfonzo. At the same time, a barrier popped up around the area, cutting off a three hundred fifty square foot area from the rest of the village.

"Oh, a barrier, huh?" Alfonzo mused as he lowered his hands and stopped creating the metal he had been burying under the surface for the training grounds upgrades. "Hmm... from what I can feel, it should block off magic power leakage to the outside. So, you guys plan to knock me out and drag me away after I refused, huh?"

With that said, Alfonzo glanced at the ten shinobi who surrounded him. Then, he shook his head in disappointment.

"*Sigh* It looks like whoever is pulling your strings really under estimated me, huh?" Alfonzo asked in an exasperated tone. "If they think ten A-Class wizards, or Jonin as you're called in the village, is enough to take me down, then they're really not very well informed."

Without responding to Alfonzo's words, the first shinobi to approach Alfonzo lunged at him with a short sword drawn. Then, in a blur of speed, the shinobi swung the sword to injure Alfonzo non-fatally.

"*Sigh* This is pointless." Alfonzo muttered as the shinobi's sword stopped only an eighth of an inch away from his skin.

Bang!

Then, before the shinobi could react, Alfonzo whipped his right arm towards the shinobi's head. And with the sound of impact, the shinobi was sent flying before hitting the ground and rolling to a stop.

["Hey, Alfonzo, maybe you should reseal us."] Bedlam said after checking the state of the downed shinobi. ["You don't wanna kill any of them by accident, right? I mean, we all know these are Danzo's guys. Don't wanna give him any ammunition."]

"That's probably a good idea." Alfonzo muttered under his breath.

At the same time, the liquid metal covering Alfonzo's hands and forearms cascaded downwards before taking the form of Riot and bedlam in their tonfa forms.

["Fuck that guy! "] Riot shouted angrily. ["If he's sending his people to die, we should give him what he wants! "]

Ignoring Riot's angry outburst, Alfonzo sidestepped an incoming wind blade. Then, he rushed towards the rest of the surrounding shinobi.

"Not this time, Riot." Alfonzo replied. "That guy can twist black into white. And I really don't wanna have to fight my way outta the village. Especially with Lici pregnant."

Meanwhile, back at the residence, Elicia raised an eyebrow at the same time the barrier on the Seventh training Ground went up.

Currently, Elicia was sitting in the residence's living room with Irene and both women were enjoying a cup of tea that Ikaruga had prepared.

"Looks like someone is doing something stupid." Irene said after taking a sip of tea. Then, she turned her attention towards Ikaruga. *"*Sigh** I never realized just how good your tea is, Ikaruga. To think I would have missed out had I not taken Alfonzo's offer."

"Thank you for your praise, Miss Irene.' Ikaruga replied with a polite bow.

"Anyway, should we go to help the kid?" Irene asked after setting her teacup on the table

"No, Fonzie will be fine." Elicia replied casually. "We should probably let Kakashi know what just happened, though. We can let him know about our group of intruders, too."

"*Sigh* It's too bad we won't be able to get any information out of them, though." Irene said while shaking her head gently. "As soon as they were wrapped up in your threads, they all bit down on some kind of suicide pill."

"I know." Elicia said, mimicking Irene's action of shaking her head. "Still, we need an explanation for this from the village."

"Would you like me to find Mr. Hatake?" Ikaruga asked politely.

"Yes, please." Elicia replied.

With that, Ikaruga bowed her head politely. Then, in a burst of speed, she disappeared from where she stood.

"This village's leader really can't be so stupid that they would attack us in broad daylight, can they?" Irene asked curiously.

"I doubt it's their leader." Elicia replied. "It's probably someone in the village who wants to make use of Fonzie and all his inventions for whatever reason."

'This has Danzo's fingerprints all over it.' Elicia thought to herself as she continued to reel in her bound attackers.

["Yeah, and once we get to see them, I'll bet they'll all be wearing plain white masks."] Scylla replied.

'Oh, I have no doubt about that.' Elicia replied internally. 'I'm just curious to know what Hiruzen will say to talk his "best friend" out of this situation.'

["Well, I don't think it will be that easy for him, this time."] Scylla replied. ["It looks like Fonzie is managing to keep all his attackers alive."]

'We'll just have to wait and see.' Elicia said while shrugging internally. '*Sigh* If I were at my peak, there would be even more evidence of Danzo's actions. Because they would have never been able to kill themselves if I were. But I wouldn't trade this little one for the world.'

As she had that last thought, Elicia smiled lovingly as she began rubbing her abdomen. And when she felt the gentle kick coming from the inside, her smile widened. Meanwhile, after hearing what Elicia had to say, Irene simply nodded. Then, she picked up her teacup and took another sip, seemingly without a care in the world.

Meanwhile, about fifteen minutes later on the Seventh Training Ground, Alfonzo had gotten back to his work. At the same time, a total of ten shinobi, each with a featureless white mask were piled up next to

him. And while each one was unconscious, they were all restrained with metal, anti-magic restraint harnesses and matching metal mouthguards to keep them from biting down on suicide capsules.

"Well, it looks like Lici was able to take care of the ones attacking the house." Alfonzo said with Riot and Bedlam once again coating his arms while he worked. "It's too bad she was unable to stop them from committing suicide. If she weren't pregnant, they would have never stood a chance though."

["If Irene had helped, there would have been nothing to worry about, though."] Riot added in a disgruntled tone.

["Yeah, but if she had helped, there's a good chance that part of the village might have disappeared."] Bedlam said with a chuckle. ["Ever since joining Fairy Tail, when she feels like it, she takes the concept of collateral damage to a whole new level.']

As Bedlam said, Irene, ever since she started taking quests as a Fairy Tail wizard, has caused as much collateral damage as Cana, Gray, Erza, and Natsu combined, despite the fact that she only causes property damage on every fifth quest she takes.

["Anyway, I'm surprised it took so long for that guy to send his goons after you."] Bedlam said after shaking the thoughts of Irene's property damage out of his head.

"It's probably because he got to the end of his rope about opening up the signal receiver." Alfonzo replied while continuing to work. "I actually thought he'd set off the alarm before this happened, though. I guess the old mother fucker is smarter than I gave him credit for."

"Well, what do you expect from someone who orchestrated the genocide of an entire prominent clan?"] Riot asked with a scoff.

"*Sigh* I guess you're right." Alfonzo replied while once again dispelling Riot and Bedlam's release states. "Anyway, I guess we need to make a trip to the Hokage tower to let Hiruzen know what happened. And it looks like our guide has finally arrived, too."

At that moment, Kakashi, accompanied by a squad of Anbu, the same Anbu who usually kept watch on Alfonzo while he worked, appeared in a swirl of leaves.

"Hey, Kakashi, can you teach me how to do that?" Alfonzo asked nonchalantly once Kakashi and the Anbu appeared.

"*Sigh* This is gonna cause a lot of work for me, you know." Kakashi said in a disgruntled tone while ignoring Alfonzo's question. "I know you were only defending yourself, but there's gonna be a lot to investigate, what with two groups of unidentified shinobi showing up, attacking our guests, and committing suicide when their attacks failed."

"Yeah, I can imagine." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "But's probably gonna really fucking suck."

"Sigh* You have no idea." Kakashi replied while shaking his head.

"I guess it's a good thing that I kept my attackers from committing suicide, then." Alfonzo added with a smile. "In fact, if Lici wasn't pregnant, she could have done the same. But she's gotta take it easy, you know. Her due date is less than two months away."

Hearing that, Kakashi's visible eye widened in surprise. At the same time, the squad of Anbu visibly tensed at the news, as well.

"Well then, I guess thanks are in order." Kakashi replied. "Thanks to you, we'll be able to find out where these ninja came from. Now, if you'll just hand them over to the Anbu, they'll make sure they get to the T&I Department."

"Torture and Interrogation, huh? That's the department Anko works for when she's in the village, right?" Alfonzo asked with a smile. "Yeah, I heard about that place vaguely. Sounded like somewhere I wouldn't wanna end up. As for handing over the prisoners, I'd rather not. I'd rather take them there myself. Never can be too careful, right?"

Although all the shinobi present were wearing masks, Alfonzo could tell that they were all frowning at what he said.

"Look, it's not like I don't trust you guys, but they got all of you to leave before attacking me." Alfonzo said, shrugging once again as he did so. "And that sounds like an inside job to me. One ordered by someone pretty high up, too. So, I'd really like to make sure that the prisoners get to their intended destination."

Hearing that, Kakashi and the Anbu were all surprised. They were supposed to be a form of hidden surveillance. However, Alfonzo made it clear that he was aware of their presences. And that was something that hurt their pride, as they were some of the best the village had to offer. However, they knew they could think about that later. They would just have to mention it during their debriefing with the Hokage. Then, they were sure Hiruzen would be able to come up with a countermeasure.

"*Sigh* I guess I can see your point." Kakashi replied. "Well then, if you would follow me, we can drop off the prisoners at the T&I Department. Then, we'll head over to see Lord Hokage. I'm sure he'll want to talk to you about this incident."

"Sure." Alfonzo said as he made the metal restraining his attackers levitate. "Lead the way, I'm sure I can keep up while making sure that the civilians don't see these guys."

As he spoke, Alfonzo gestured over his shoulder towards the retrained shinobi. Then, under the gazes of Kakashi and the Anbu, they all slowly faded from sight while Alfonzo used his [Electromagnetism Magic] to bed the light around them. Then, after Kakashi nodded, the entire group vanished from the Seventh Training Ground in a burst of speed.

Meanwhile, the mastermind of the two attacks, Danzo Shimura, was in his base waiting for news from his two squads of Root Ninja on the tasks to abduct Alfonzo and Elicia. However, before he could hear back from either team, another shinobi wearing a featureless white mask appeared in front of him on one knee with his head lowered respectfully.

"Lord Danzo, a summons from the Hokage has arrived." The masked shinobi said in an emotionless tone.

"What in the world could Hiruzen want at a time like this?" Danzo asked in an irritated tone. Then, he continued as he stood from his seat. "Very well, when the teams I sent out return, put their captives in separate cells. And make sure that their magic power is sealed. I don't want them causing any trouble while I'm away."

"As you command, Lord Danzo." The masked shinobi replied, still in that emotionless tone.

At the same time, Danzo slowly made his way out of the Root's underground base and headed for the Hokage Tower to see what Hiruzen could possibly want to meet him for.