

## Fairy Tail 541

### Chapter 541: New Teachers

The next morning, after waking up, training, eating breakfast, and finishing his preparations to go work on the training grounds, Alfonzo opened the door to his residence. And when he did, he found a familiar face standing in front of him. However, this time it was not Kakashi.

"Hey, long time no see." said a fair skinned young woman with purple hair tied into a spiky, fanned-out ponytail and brown, pupilless eyes. "Haven't seen you since you married Lici, yeah? Too Bad I couldn't make it to Cana's wedding, though."

"Oh, hey, Anko." Alfonzo said in a totally dry tone.

"I don't think you could seem any less excited to see me if you tried." Anko said, placing her hands on her hips as she leaned forward towards Alfonzo with a grin.

"Oh, I could, trust me." Alfonzo replied with a straight face. "Wanna see?"

"Oh, come on, Alfonzo. Don't tell me you're still mad about that." Anko said as she straightened back up. "It was only one bottle of liquor. Plus, me and Cana apologized like a hundred times for it."

"No, it was not just a bottle of liquor." Alfonzo replied calmly. "That was supposed to be the bottle I popped when my first son was old enough to drink. And now, I gotta hope I can find another one."

Hearing that, Anko looked away and started whistling a little jingle.

As it turned out, there was a point during Alfonzo and Elicia's reception where both Cana and Anko disappeared for a while. And when they returned, they were both tipsy. On top of that, neither of them could look Alfonzo in the eye. However, Cana was always, at least, a little tipsy and Anko had let herself go because of the reception, so no one really paid them any mind.

However, the next day, after finishing the negotiations about the training facilities with the guild masters, Alfonzo returned to the old mansion to help move everyone's belongings into the mansion on the lake. And that was when he saw it.

In the center of his liquor collection, where his most expensive bottle of liquor, a three-hundred-year-old bottle of cognac stood, was an empty bottle. For nearly five minutes, Alfonzo stood in front of his liquor cabinet with astonishment and disbelief written all over his face.

Then, after that five minutes passed, an anguished roar sounded over the entirety of Magnolia. And because he was sure that Cana was the main culprit in this case, she was thoroughly punished later that night. And for the second time, all her harem sisters watched her get a spanking.

"Anyway, you're here to escort Wendy to the hospital, right?" Alfonzo asked, deciding that not thinking about that day was better for his health, specifically his blood pressure.

"That's right." Anko replied while smiling widely. "So, is she ready to go yet?"

Instead of replying, Alfonzo turned back towards the inside of the house. Then, he shouted.

"Hey, Wendy!" Alfonzo shouted loud enough to be heard from anywhere in the house. "Anko's here to pick you up! You ready to go yet?"

"I-I'll be there in a second!" Wendy shouted back, sounding a bit panicked.

With that, Alfonzo turned back around. And when he did, he saw Anko pouting at him.

"What's the matter?" Alfonzo asked, pretending he had no idea what was bothering Anko.

"You know damn well what is bothering me." Anko replied snappily. "You took the surprise out of it."

Instead of replying immediately, Alfonzo grabbed Anko by the waist, lifted her off the veranda, and put her down to the side of the door a moment later. Then, he started walking past her, Kakashi falling in line with him not long later. Then, after stepping off the veranda, Alfonzo looked over his shoulder to reply to Anko, who was still glaring and pouting at him.

"Well, if it makes you feel any better, she already knew you were here." Alfonzo said nonchalantly. "As long as she wasn't slacking off, that is. But Wendy doesn't do that. So, she definitely knew you were standing outside of the door for five minutes and seventeen seconds."

\*Bang!\*

In response, Anko stomped her foot in frustration. Unfortunately, thanks to her frustration, she did not control her strength properly. So, her foot went straight through the wooden planks making up the veranda.

"I'm not paying for that." Alfonzo said while smiling in a cheeky manner. "I'll make sure that the village sends you the invoice for the repairs, okay?"

\*Bang!\*

"Fuck off!" Anko shouted in annoyance after stomping another hole in the veranda. "And I'm gonna get you to tell me how you always know where I am one of these days. Just wait."

"Good luck." Alfonzo said while walking off into the distance and waving his hand without turning back.

With that, Anko continued to glare at Alfonzo while he and Kakashi walked away. And she continued to glare until Wendy and Carla stepped onto the veranda and asked what was up with the holes. Then, after taking a few minutes to get the two to drop the subject, she led them to the village hospital.

Like that, the day passed peacefully. While Alfonzo worked to the point of exhausting almost all of his magic power, Wendy got used to working in a hospital. And she was overwhelmed by how much more work there was to do than the work she did whenever she helped in the guild's infirmary.

Despite the extra work load, Wendy felt the work was fulfilling. She enjoyed helping people, after all. And healing the injured and curing the ill was the epitome of helping others in her opinion.

Eventually, the afternoon came. First, Alfonzo ended his work for the day. Then, after he spent a couple of hours at home, the academy let out for the day. Not long after that, Wendy's shift at the hospital ended. Then, Wendy and the kids from the academy showed up at the house around the same time.

And that would be how most days would go for the foreseeable future. However, there was something different today. And that was the fact that Naruto was not with the kids from the academy.

"Huh?" Anko, who was accompanying Wendy back to the house, exclaimed in surprise after seeing so many academy students after she, Wendy, and Carla arrived in the living room. "What's up with all the brats?"

When Wendy, Carla, and Anko entered the house, Shikamaru, Choji, Kiba, Sasuke, Ino, Sakura, Hinata, and Shino were already present. So, after hearing Anko, they all turned towards her and frowned at being called brats.

"Oh, the heirs of the Nara, Akimichi, Yamanaka, Hyuga, Aburame, and Inuzuka. \*Whistle\* This is a gathering of future big shots." Anko continued, not minding the glares from most of the children. "Oh, the last Uchiha is here, too. Man, it looks like I'm crashing a party, doesn't it."

"\*Sigh\* Hey, Anko." Alfonzo said after sighing exasperatedly. "Anyway, if you stay quiet, you can stay for dinner."

Hearing that, Anko's eyes lit up and her mouth slammed shut. Then, she skipped over to one of the couches and sat down. After that, she simply watched the interactions between Alfonzo and the academy kids.

Having grown to expect behavior like that from Anko, Wendy simply shook her head before also taking a seat with Carla following behind her. Meanwhile, Saeko and Rika watched the whole thing in interest.

"He really is good at handling women, isn't he?" Rika asked, whispering into Saeko's ear.

"He is." Saeko replied while her eyes focused on Alfonzo. "But with a harem of nine women, he should be. Otherwise, there would be a bunch of in fighting. Not to mention, he would get stepped all over."

"You're probably right." Rika replied with a nod. Then, she turned her attention to Anko. "That's the girl that Cana seems to be close to, right? From what I heard, she's a lot of fun."

"She's mischievous, too." Saeko added. "And a bit sadistic."

"Like you're one to talk." Rika said, rolling her eyes at Saeko's last statement.

Over the years since the group from Takanosu joined Fairy Tail, Saeko's overly violent and sadistic trait became known to the entire guild. However, no one really seemed to care, which surprised Saeko greatly. But the Fairy Tail wizards only thought: "We already have Laki, adding another one won't make a difference."

"Anyway, you guys don't need to worry about Naruto." Alfonzo said with a smile after Anko sat down, drawing the academy kids attention back to himself. "It's not like the Hokage will do anything bad to him, right?"

"Yeah, but why would he be called to the Hokage's office in the first place?" Shikamaru asked with a slight frown. "I mean, if he got called there, it must be important, right? I just can't think of what it could be. \*Sigh\* What a drag..."

"It's probably because he did something stupid." Sakura said in an exasperated tone. "I bet he took one of his pranks too far and now the Hokage is scolding him for it."

"Well, that wouldn't be the first time." Ino said while shaking her head. "But this time, it seemed different. Like, Iruka-Sensei didn't seem angry or upset when he told Naruto to go to the Hokage's office."

"Maybe he did something good." Choji said as he reached into a bag of snacks.

"There's no point in thinking about it." Sasuke spat out in an annoyed tone. "We can just ask him the next time we see him."

With that, all the academy kids, other than Sasuke opened their eyes wide in surprise as they stared at Sasuke. Meanwhile, Sasuke maintained his normal grumpy and aloof expression. However, the longer his classmates stared at him, the more annoyed he became.

"What are you all looking at?" Sasuke asked sharply.

"I didn't know you could speak so many words at a time." Kiba said in an amazed tone.

"\*Bark" Akamaru barked in agreement while nodding his head.

"It's weird to see you so curious about someone else's affairs, Sasuke." Shikamaru said in a bored tone.  
"I didn't know you cared so much about Naruto."

"I don't." Sasuke replied. "But I was tired of hearing all of you talk about it. All I was saying is if you want to know, you should just ask."

"You know, tsundere boys are kinda gross, Sasuke." Alfonzo said, cutting into the conversation.

Alfonzo's statement caused the group of youngsters to look at him with dumbfounded expressions. A moment later, however, all their expressions changed into various new ones.

While Shino's expression did not change much, the corners of his lips, which were hidden behind the collar of his jacket, curled up slightly. At the same time, Shikamaru, Choji, and Kiba all had to hold themselves back from bursting into laughter. Meanwhile, Ino and Sakura looked as if they wanted to say that Sasuke looked cool no matter how he's acting. And finally, Hinata looked as if she did not know what to do or say.

Sasuke, on the other hand, was glaring at Alfonzo with all his might. In fact, Alfonzo was curious to know if Sasuke's Sharingan would activate and gain more tomoe thanks to the anger he could see on the boy's face.

Unfortunately, that did not happen, which disappointed Alfonzo a little. However, he did not let that disappointment show on his face.

"Anyway, why don't we head outside and start you all's training?" Alfonzo asked, not letting Sasuke's glare disrupt his pace. "And I've got a surprise for you, Sasuke and Sakura."

Hearing that, Sasuke and Sakura looked at Alfonzo quizzically. Though, Sasuke did so while still maintaining his glare. However, Alfonzo did not elaborate. He would wait until they were outside for that.

So, Alfonzo stood from the couch under the curious gazes of the ninja academy students then walked out of the room at an unhurried pace. Naturally, that led the rest of the people in the living room to follow him in curiosity, even Anko, who was not actually a part of this whole situation.

Eventually, the group reached the backyard of the mansion where Alfonzo had set up a temporary training ground for his nine frequent visitors. But don't let the word temporary fool you. Everything in the backyard was created with Alfonzo's magic. So, he could make and remove it all at will. On top of that, it was ridiculously sturdy.

"Will you tell us what you were talking about already?" Sasuke asked impatiently.

"You really need to chill out, Sasuke." Alfonzo said with a smile. A moment later, however, he changed his expression to a serious one. "Remember what I told you, you have to hold the reins on your emotions. Otherwise, you're liable to make mistakes."

Knowing what Alfonzo said was right, Sasuke took a deep breath to calm down. He was still a little upset over Alfonzo making fun of him. So, he was letting his emotions speak for him.

After Sasuke calmed down, Alfonzo looked towards Sakura.

"Sakura, I know you you're not gonna like hearing this." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "But you are objectively the weakest of all those gathered here."

Hearing that, Sakura frowned. However, she did not refute Alfonzo's words.

"But that's not your fault." Alfonzo continued. "Because of your background, you have less magic power than the others. And there really isn't anything you can do about that other than putting in more effort than others."

With that, Sakura lowered her head and clenched her fists in frustration.

"But you do have an advantage that the others don't." Alfonzo said, causing Sakura to raise her head. "Because of your low magic power reserves, you have an easier time controlling your magic power. And you far surpass everyone else in magic power control."

This time, all the other children frowned at Alfonzo's words. However, none of them could refute them. So, they all waited to see where he was going with his speech.

"And that superb magic power control makes you quite suitable for a certain skillset." Alfonzo said, his speech coming to its final stage. "And that's a medical ninja."

Hearing that, Sakura's eyes lit up. Then, she glanced at Sasuke with determination.

'Cha! If I become a medical ninja, I'll always be able to make sure Sasuke is healthy.' Sakura thought to herself while fist pumping internally. 'There's no way he won't become mine after that.'

"And as it just so happens, I have a great teacher for you." Alfonzo said with a smile. Then, he turned his attention to Wendy, who took a step forward with her own smile on her face. "I know we already did the introductions the other day, but allow me to reintroduce Wendy Marvell, a student of Tsunade, the best Medical Ninja on the continent."

That new information completely flabbergasted the eight academy students. Tsunade was a living legend in the village, after all. Without her, the Village Hidden in the Leaves would have more than likely lost the Second Great Ninja War. But thanks to Tsunade coming up with counters to the Village Hidden in the Sand's various poisons, the Leaf was able to come out on top.

"I'd be happy to teach you for as long as I'm here, if you're willing to learn, that is." Wendy said gently.

"Of course I am!" Sakura shouted enthusiastically as she bowed at the waist.

"Wendy, will you be teaching her the same way that crazy woman taught you?" Carla asked in a curious tone.

"\*Sigh\* Unfortunately, Master Tsunade's teaching methods are the most efficient way to teach a battle field medic that I can think of." Wendy replied in a sad tone. "I really hope she doesn't give up half way."

After hearing Wendy and Carla's short conversation, Sakura started having second thoughts. And Anko's gaze filled with pity was not helping. But her desire to make sure Sasuke was safe made her resolve strong. So, she did not back out in the end.

Nodding in satisfaction, Alfonzo then turned his attention towards Sasuke.

"As for you, Sasuke." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "Your speed and flexibility in combat make you a powerful hand to hand fighter. However, I think it would aid you even more if you trained with a sword."

Hearing that, Sasuke stopped to think for a moment. The Uchiha Clan had a fairly famous sword technique. And there were more than a few accomplished swordsmen in the clan in the past. So, he could understand where Alfonzo was coming from. However, he had no experience wielding a sword. Nor did he have anyone to teach him. So, he felt it would take too long to master.

"And as it just so happens, one of the continents best pure swordsmen... Or rather, swordswomen is currently visiting the village right now."

With that, Saeko stepped forward while [Requipping] her sword onto her left hip and resting her left hand on its hilt.

"This is Saeko Busujima, daughter of the reigning champion of Ishgar's highest-level swordsmanship competition." Alfonzo continued. "And she's been training under him for as long as she could hold a sword. On top of that, after awakening her magic power, she's even developed her own sword style, one that heavily relies on speed and precision."

As Alfonzo said, after awakening her magic power and joining Fairy Tail, Saeko began modifying her father's sword style to suit a wizard. However, after realizing just how much she could do with magic power, she decided to create her own sword style.

Unfortunately, as a result of focusing mostly on creating this sword style, her magic power reserves have not risen as quickly as the others from Takanosu. So, her magic power reserves were only on the verge of reaching A-Class. Whereas Saya and Kohta had already attained the reserves of A-Class wizards.

Even so, thanks to her swordsmanship, Ur had already declared Saeko an A-Class wizard. So, she had not fallen too far behind her old school mates.

Also, Saeko was not alone in creating her sword style. Alfonzo and Elicia, with their "creativity," also gave her quite a few ideas. And thanks to help from Alfonzo, Elicia, Erza, and Sun, the Hiten Mitsurugiryū, or Flying Heavens Sword Style was born in this world.

Hearing that, Sasuke began to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of fighting with a sword. However, when he thought that it might catch his brother off guard when she finally went to get his revenge, Sasuke's decision was made in an instant.

"As long as it can make me stronger, I'm willing to learn anything." Sasuke said in a strong tone. "Please teach me how to use a sword."

Instead of replying immediately, Saeko looked Sasuke up and down. Then, she [Requipped a second katana into her right hand before tossing it at Sasuke. This katana was only a training sword, but it would serve its purpose.

"Before I accept teaching you, I need to see if Alfonzo was right." Saeko said in a serious tone just as Sasuke caught the sword she threw at him. "I need to determine if you are truly suited to the way of the sword. Now, follow me. I'll test you right away."

With that, Saeko turned around and started walking away from the rest of the group without even waiting for Sasuke to reply. However, Sasuke did not waste any time following her, either.

"I guess we should start, too." Wendy said after seeing Saeko and Sasuke off. "come on, Sakura, let's get started."

Instead of walking to another part of the backyard, Wendy headed towards the house with Carla following her. She would start Sakura off the same way Tsunade did with her. And she had bought extra copies of all the books she was made to study, just for this occasion.

Naturally, Sakura was confused. Still, she followed Wendy and Carla inside. After the training started, however, Sakura would think that Wendy was some kind of demon. Little would she know, however, everything she would learn from Wendy over the next six months, or so,, Wendy had to learn in only one month from Tsunade.

After Wendy, Carla, Saeko, Sasuke, and Sakura left, Alfonzo began training the other kids, who were more than a bit envious that Sasuke and Sakura would be learning something unique. Well, everyone other than Shikamaru, who was okay with things the way they are now.

Meanwhile, Anko and Rika sat on the veranda watching the kids train while chatting animatedly as Miyuki served them tea and snacks. So, they were the first ones to see Naruto approaching. However, the normally energetic boy looked lost, confused, and sad. And when he finally arrived, he walked up to Alfonzo with his head lowered.

Unfortunately, thanks to the swirl of emotions in Naruto's heart, he was unable to start the conversation.

"Come on, Naruto." Alfonzo said in a soothing tone as he patted Naruto on the head. "Let's go inside and talk. I bet you got a lot of shit to get off your chest."

With that, Alfonzo turned to Rika and asked her to take over training the other six kids. Then, he led Naruto into the house so they could talk in private.

Chapter 542: What Happened Back Then

A few moments later, Alfonzo had led Naruto into his makeshift workshop. Then, he offered the young shinobi a seat. Meanwhile, he leaned on the workshop's workbench.

Naruto, on the other hand, accepted the seat he was offered while his head was still lowered. However, he did not begin speaking immediately. Alfonzo did not press him, though. He was pretty sure he knew what was bothering him, so he let Naruto go at his own pace.

Eventually, Naruto raised his head and looked at Alfonzo with uncertainty in his eyes.

"Old Man Hokage called me to his office after the academy let out." Naruto said in a shaky tone. "And when I heard about it, I thought I was in trouble. But I hadn't played any pranks since you first came to the village. So, I didn't know what I had done wrong."

Instead of replying, Alfonzo only continued to look at Naruto solemnly while urging him to continue with his gaze.

"And that made me kind of nervous. I was wondering if someone had blamed something on me... again." Naruto continued. "I mean, things like that have happened a lot. Whenever something happens that no one wants to take responsibility for, they just blame me."

Although things like that were never mentioned in Naruto's source material, Alfonzo could imagine such a scenario. And the thought was making him rather irritated. Though, he managed to hold it in.

"And when I got there, the Old Man looked really serious. So, I thought that was it." Naruto said, lowering his head again as he spoke. "But I was wrong... Really wrong..."

===Flashback===

"Naruto, my boy, please, take a seat." Hiruzen said in a grandfatherly tone after Naruto entered his office. "We have many things to discuss."

Hearing Hiruzen's tone, Naruto hesitantly took a seat in front of his desk. Then, before Hiruzen could speak again, he spoke to defend himself.

"Old Man, I don't know what anyone told you, but I didn't do it." Naruto said, beginning to defend himself. "Ever since Big Bro Alfonzo and Big Sis Elicia started helping me with my training, I haven't played any pranks on anyone. I have to be the strongest in the village if I wanna be the Hokage someday."

With that, Naruto continued to explain how much he had changed over the last ten, or so, months. Meanwhile, Hiruzen could not help feeling grateful to Alfonzo and Elicia for influencing some of the village's young talents so positively. Still, he needed to correct Naruto's misconception.

"Calm down, Naruto." Hiruzen said, interrupting Naruto's rant. "I did not call you here because you were in trouble. Like I said, we have a number of things to discuss."

Hearing that, Naruto looked at Hiruzen in confusion.

"\*Sigh\* I'm sure you've been wondering this for as long as you can remember." Hiruzen said in a disappointed tone. "The question of who your parents were... before they lost their lives defending the village."

Naruto's confused expression immediately turned into a sad one after hearing Hiruzen mentioned the loss of his parents. However, when he heard that they lost their lives defending the village, his expression turned to shock. He had never been told how his parents died in the past, after all.

"On the day of your birth, your mother was set to give birth to you in a secret, secure location outside of the village." Hiruzen said in a solemn tone. "And my late wife, Biwako was acting as her midwife. However, shortly after---"

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" Naruto shouted, interrupting Hiruzen's story. "Why was my m-mom having me outside of the village? Why wasn't she at the hospital?"

With Naruto's question, Hiruzen fell silent for a moment before replying.

"\*Sigh\* It's because she was the village's previous Jinchuriki." Hiruzen replied. "And for her, giving birth brought a certain level of danger. So, we had to move her outside the village at that time."

"Huh? A Jinchuriki? What's that?" Naruto asked. "And why was having a baby dangerous for my mom?"

"\*Sigh\* You've heard of the Tailed Beasts in your academy classes, yes?" Hiruzen replied with a sigh. "Well, a Jinchuriki is a shinobi who has one of the Tailed-Beasts [Sealed] inside them. And to answer---"

"Which one did she have [Sealed] inside of her?" Naruto asked in an interested tone. However, before Hiruzen could respond, his expression turned serious. "It was the Nine-Tailed Fox, wasn't it? And it must have gotten free. That's when it attacked the village, right?"

Hearing Naruto piece together the facts without needing an explanation, Hiruzen was surprised. AS previously mentioned, Naruto was not the smartest child in the village. Then again, Naruto was aware that he was born on the day the Nine-Tailed Fox attacked the village twelve years ago, so it made more sense than he originally thought.

"\*Sigh\* That's right." Hiruzen replied. "Your mother was the Jinchuriki of the Nine-Tailed Fox. And yes, it managed to get free shortly after you were born."

Naruto's expression fell immediately. And based on his expression, Hiruzen could tell exactly what he was thinking.

"Don't overthink things, Naruto." Hiruzen said before Naruto could fall into self-loathing. "The Nine-Tailed Fox did not get free because you were born. In fact, the village took precautions to make sure that did not happen. And the precautions worked."

"Then, how?" Naruto asked in a desperate tone.

"To answer your second question from before... During child birth, the [Seal] holding the Nine-Tailed Fox inside your mother would weaken. And an outsider to the village took advantage of that fact, extracting the beast before the [Seal] could be restabilized."

Hearing that, Naruto's anger spiked. On top of that, his blue eyes turned red and his pupils turned from round to slitted. At the same time, an ominous magic power began to leak from his body.

"Calm down, Naruto." Hiruzen said, hoping to calm Naruto before the Anbu hiding in the room determined that he was a threat. "You need to remain calm."

Hearing that, Naruto took a deep breath before calming down significantly. Though, it was obvious to see that he was still aggravated.

"Now, I'll get back to my explanation." Hiruzen said after Naruto calmed down. "During the intruder's attack, my wife was killed and you were taken hostage while he tried to extract the Nine-Tailed Fox from your exhausted mother."

Though Naruto was still aggravated, he was focused on Hiruzen's story.

"Before he could, however, your father arrived on the scene and tried to stop him." Hiruzen continued. "Unfortunately, with you in the intruder's hands, your father could not use his full force."

That caused Naruto's expression to change once again, his mood falling very quickly.

"And the intruder used that to his advantage." Hiruzen said, continuing his story. "He threw you away, forcing your father to move to catch you. And that was enough of an opening for the intruder to finish extracting the Nine-Tailed Fox."

By this point, it was obvious that Naruto was blaming himself for what happened, despite the fact that there was nothing he could do as a newborn.

"\*Sigh\* You can't blame yourself, Naruto." Hiruzen said in a consoling tone. "As a newborn, there was nothing you could do about it."

"I know... But it's still because of me..." Naruto replied in an irritated tone. "\*Sigh\* Anyway, what happened next?"

Hiruzen could not help but pity Naruto after seeing his expression. Still, he followed Naruto's request and continued the story.

"After your father recovered you, he immediately moved you to somewhere safe." Hiruzen said.

"Meanwhile, the intruder left your mother to die. And not long afterwards, the Nine-Tailed Fox appeared in the middle of the village and started destroying everything in sight. We can only guess how that happened. But we suspect that it was summoned by the intruder."

"So, that's how my mother died?" Naruto asked in a downcast tone.

"no, that's not it, actually." Hiruzen replied, surprising Naruto. "But I'll get to that later. For now, let me continue my story."

Refocusing on Hiruzen, Naruto nodded his head to acknowledge his words.

"While the forces of the village tried to stop the Nine-Tailed Fox, your father went to check on your mother." Hiruzen said. "And he found that she was still alive. Though, it was clear she would not last much longer. AS you may know, once a Tailed Beast is extracted from a host, they lose their lives. But since your mother was from the Uzumaki Clan, a clan known for their immense vitality, among other things, she was able to hold on for a while."

"Wait! I've never heard of the Uzumaki Clan." Naruto interrupted loudly in a confused tone.

"\*Sigh\* That's because the Uzumaki Clan did not reside in the village." Hiruzen said in a downcast tone.

"They were wiped out during the last war. Something Danzo planned without my knowledge."

"Danzo, the one who was arrested and executed a couple months ago?" Naruto asked. "But how, how could he plan something like that."

"it's because he was afraid that your mother would return to the Uzumaki Clan while she was hosting the Nine-Tailed Fox. And he convinced the King of Fiore that it was a good idea to keep the Nine-Tailed Fox under our control."

"Does that mean the village destroyed my mother's clan?" Naruto asked, his eyes turning red once again because of his anger.

"No, not directly." Hiruzen replied. "Before the war, we received information that the Hidden Mist, Hidden Cloud, and Hidden Stone were joining forces to attack the Village Hidden by Whirling Tides, an independant shinobi village located on an island off the coast of Fiore. And the village's greatest ally in the past. And Danzo convinced the king to stop the village from aiding them in crisis."

"Why?" Why would they want to attack them?" Naruto asked angrily. "And why would Danzo convince the king not to help them?"

"\*Sigh\* Because of fear." Hiruzen replied. "The Uzumaki Clan was also known for their unequivocal talent in the [Sealing Arts]. And they provided the Leaf many amazing [Seals] for a very affordable price. And as for Danzo, I already explained that. He wanted the Nine-Tailed Fox to stay in the Leaf."

By this point, Naruto was once again leaking that ominous magic power. And it took Hiruzen a while to calm him down. But when he did, he could finally continue his story.

"Back to the story... While the village's forces continued to try and contain the Nine-Tailed Fox, your father confronted the intruder, after getting you and your mother to safety, and was able to defeat him. Unfortunately, the intruder was able to escape."

Seeing that Naruto was once again invested in his story, Hiruzen continued.

"After that, your father confronted the Nine-Tailed Fox in the village." Hiruzen said. "And after a short confrontation, he teleported it away, where he tried to [Seal] it inside of your mother again, which would save her life. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned."

Hearing that, Naruto clenched his fists. However, he stayed focused on Hiruzen's following words.

"After the [Sealing] process started, the Nine-Tailed Fox attacked you, who was nearby, to try and stop it." Hiruzen said, his tone turning downcast as he spoke. "To save you, both your parents jumped in front of the attack, gaining fatal wounds in the process. But they were able to keep you safe. And because your mother was no longer a suitable host because of her injury, they decided to [Seal] the beast inside of you... Sacrificing their lives and saving the village in the process."

Hearing that the Nine-Tailed Fox was [Sealed] inside of him, Naruto did not know how to react. The only thing he could do was open his eyes and mouth wide in dumbfounded amazement.

"Is that why everyone calls me a demon?" Naruto asked in a shaky voice.

"\*Sigh\* Yes and no." Hiruzen replied, a bit of self-loathing leaking into his tone. "At first, I didn't know how it started, but there was a rumor floating around the village that you were the reincarnation of the Nine-Tailed Fox. And no matter how hard I tried, I could not stop it. Nor could I find its source. But no one knew you were the Nine-Tailed Fox's Jinchuriki. That was an S-Class secret. But after Danzo was brought in by Alfonzo, it all came to light that it was all Danzo's doing. He wanted you to feel despair so that he could bring you under his command with promises of making everything better. Luckily, you were a strong willed boy. And because you did not give into the despair, his plan failed."

Naruto only fell silent after that. He did not know how to process everything he heard. And Hiruzen gave him some time to think. Eventually, with his eyes red and the whisker marks on his cheeks having expanded slightly, Naruto made eye contact with Hiruzen before asking another question.

"And who were my mother and father?" Naruto asked in an eerily calm tone. "You've mentioned them a lot. But you haven't said their names even once."

Hearing that, Hiruzen looked down with a guilty expression on his face.

"Your mother's name was Kushina Uzumaki." Hiruzen replied, unable to make eye contact with Naruto. "And your father was Minato Namikaze... The Fourth Hokage of the Hidden Leaf..."

Instead of flaring up in anger like Hiruzen expected him to, Naruto was so caught off guard by the identities of his parents, more specifically, his father, that he could only look on in disbelief. In fact, his confusion and disbelief were so great that his anger disappeared completely, resulting in his eyes turning back to their usual blue color while the whisker markings on his face returned to normal, as well.

Then, surprising Hiruzen even more, without another word, Naruto stood up from his chair and left his office with a lost look on his face.

===Flashback End===

"And then I came here." Naruto said, concluding his story. "I'm not even really sure how I got here, though. The last thing I remember before running into you was hearing that my father was the Fourth Hokage."

With that, Naruto clenched his fists in frustration and anger.

"Why? Why was I treated like that for all my life?" Naruto asked, his volume rising with every word while that ominous magic power began to leak again as his eyes turned red. "I'm the son of the Fourth Hokage... The village's hero... The Yellow Flash. The man who single handedly stopped the Stone from invading Fiore in the last war. So, why!?"

As Naruto's anger rose, the ominous magic power he was emitting began forming a red magic power cloak around him. On top of that, the whisker marks on his face began to expand while his fingernails and canine teeth grew in length.

At the same time, Alfonzo tapped his right foot on the floor of his makeshift workshop, coating the entire room in metal. Then, at blinding speed, the metal was inscribed with sigils that contained magic power. As a result, the ominous magic power Naruto was releasing could not affect anything outside of the room.

In the next instant, Alfonzo's fingertips on his right hand lit up with magic power. Then, in a burst of speed, he appeared in front of Naruto before placing his fingers on Naruto's abdomen. After that, the rampaging ominous magic power began to recede inside of Naruto. At the same time, Naruto's heightened state of emotion calmed.

"Chill out, Naruto." Alfonzo said in a soothing tone. "Even though the [Seal] holding it inside of you is really strong, the Nine-Tailed Fox inside of you can influence you if you let your darker emotions get out of control. So, you have to try and keep your cool at all times. Otherwise, you might end up hurting yourself or the people around you."

Hearing that, Naruto finally looked up and made eye contact with Alfonzo.

"Does that mean you knew about all of this, too?" Naruto asked in a somewhat betrayed tone.

"\*Sigh\* I did." Alfonzo replied. "But not until I raided Danzo's base after he tried to kidnap Lici. I found records about it back then."

"Then, why didn't you tell me?" Naruto shouted, sounding even more betrayed.

"Because I'm not a member of this village." Alfonzo replied calmly. "And without permission from the Hokage, I didn't have the right to."

Hearing that, Naruto knew Alfonzo was right. However, he still felt betrayed that this information was kept from him.

"But I was the one who told the Hokage that you deserved to know all of this." Alfonzo continued, causing Naruto to raise his head once again. "And if he had refused, I would have told you myself, the

village rules be damned. Everyone has the right to know who their parents are and what kind of situation they are in."

Hearing that, Naruto relaxed a little. The feeling of betrayal had disappeared, at least.

"And when I brought it up to him, he asked me to let him tell you everything." Alfonzo continued. "So that he could apologize for all the ways the village had wronged you."

This time, Naruto put on a sheepish expression while looking away. Meanwhile, Alfonzo, after seeing Naruto's expression, could not help but grin.

"You were in so much shock that you left before he could finish talking, huh?" Alfonzo asked in a mischievous tone.

In response, Naruto only nodded his head.

"Well, don't worry about that old man." Alfonzo said dismissively. "For letting all that happen to you, let him sweat a bit. Let him be unsure if you're gonna flip shit and go on a rampage in the village. For now, you can stay here for a few days until you get your head on straight. It's probably better if you're not alone for now. Don't want that Nine-Tailed Fox taking advantage of you while you're at your lowest."

Once again, Naruto nodded, feeling grateful for Alfonzo's offer.

"And when you get your thoughts in order, I'll help you control that power." Alfonzo added. "I know quite a bit about these Tailed Beasts. Probably more than anyone in your village, or any other village, knows. So, I should be able to help you a whole lot."

"Really?" Naruto asked, his eyes shining at the proposal.

"Yeah, don't want you losing it if you get too angry or depressed, after all." Alfonzo said with a smile.

With that, Naruto lunged forward and wrapped his arms around Alfonzo's waist while thanking him repeatedly. Meanwhile, Alfonzo patted the young boy on his head while thinking to himself.

'\*Sigh\* I guess I need to try and talk to Kurama.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Hopefully those [Seals] I've been researching will work the way I want them to. But they worked when I tried them on Lici. So, this shouldn't be a problem.. I hope.'

Chapter 543: It Needed to Be Said

After Naruto started staying in Alfonzo's residence, things did not change much. Though, the other academy kids were curious to know why he was staying there. On top of that, they wanted to know why Naruto looked so lost when he arrived after seeing the Hokage. However, none of them knew how to start the conversation.

Still, not much changed for the academy kids during the time following that day. However, their training schedule did change a bit.

Since that day, when the kids arrived, Alfonzo would start their training with basic training. Meaning, he would help them strengthen their bodies and work on their magic power control. After that, he, Wendy,

and Saeko would take Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke to different locations to continue their specialized training. Meanwhile, Rika would take over the other's training.

While the group was separated, Wendy would teach Sakura everything she knew about [Medical Ninjutsu]. Though, the pace at which she taught was much slower than her training under Tsunade. Still, Sakura improved a good pace.

Saeko, on the other hand, only taught Sasuke about the basics of swordsmanship. Neither his mind nor his body was ready for her more advanced techniques. However, Sasuke's Sharingan cut down the time needed to learn significantly. Though, it could not make up for the lack of experience.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo had not started training Naruto as a Jinchuriki. Instead, he tested Naruto in the use of the [Sealing Arts]. Naruto was an Uzumaki, after all. So, [Sealing] ran in his blood. And the results were quite positive. Though, he did have to help Naruto work on his penmanship.

Lastly, because of Rika's training, the other kids all improved immensely in the use of throwing weapons. Although Rika was a magic gunner, for the most part, her aim was superb, regardless of what kind of weapon she used. And with her guidance, the six kids learned everything needed to hit a target from a distance.

Other than those small changes, however, not much changed for the academy kids and the visitors from Magnolia. Until today, that is.

Today, while Wendy was working at the hospital, she walked into a patient room to see a patient who had injured their self during training. But she, and Carla, who was following her while she made her rounds, were surprised to see a familiar face.

"Ah! Miss Wendy!" A young man with bushy eyebrows and a bowl cut who wore a green spandex body suit said energetically after seeing Wendy enter the room. "Oh, and Miss Carla is with you , as well. What a pleasant surprise to see you."

This young man was Rock Lee, a member of Team Guy. Immediately, after recognizing him, Wendy could not help but blush, having remembered Lee's declaration the day they met in the Valley of the End. Meanwhile, Carla could not help but scowl, not liking the love struck look in Lee's eyes.

"Uh... Good afternoon, Lee." Wendy said in a flustered tone as she tried to regain control of her facial expression. Um... What seems to be the problem?"

"Ah! Yes! I'm sure you want to know why I'm in the hospital." Lee said while smiling brightly. "Well, during training this morning, while letting my youth explode with my teammates and Guy-Sensei, I believe I tore a muscle in my leg. And although I'm sure my youth would carry me through, Guy-Sensei told me that knowing when to rest and recover is crucial to becoming stronger."

"Well, he's not wrong." Wendy replied while shaking her head as she approached Lee's sick bed. "Allowing the body to recover properly is quite important."

By the time Wendy reached Lee's bedside, she was once again in control of her facial expression. Though, there was still a slight dusting of red on her cheeks due to Lee's fond smile. However, she put those thoughts to the back of her mind. Instead, she channeled her magic power into her hands, causing them to light up in a teal color.

"So, which leg is bothering you?" Wendy asked calmly.

"My right." Lee replied.

With that, Wendy placed her hands on Lee's right leg. Then, she let the diagnostic spell she learned from Tsunade do its work.

Meanwhile, Carla, who had only been watching the interaction between the two, could not help but deepen her scowl. The slight blush on Wendy's face was making her uncomfortable.

'No! Absolutely not!' Carla thought to herself. 'Wendy is too young for romance. I won't let her fall into this boy's clutches. Even if he seems genuine, I know he's up to something. He probably wants to get to either Ur or Master Tsunade through her. I just know it!'

While Carla was fooling herself into thinking that Lee was up to something nefarious, Wendy continued examining Lee's leg.

"Yes, it looks like you really did tear your quadricep." Wendy said in as serious tone while wearing an equally serious expression. "It looks like there is quite a bit of strain on your hamstring, as well."

Meanwhile, Lee watched Wendy's face with fascination, drawn in by her serious expression. However, when she gave her diagnosis, he snapped back to reality.

"So, it was as I expected." Lee said, sounding a bit downcast while he lowered his gaze to his lap and clenched his fists in frustration. "I guess that means I'll have to put my training on hold for a while, yes?"

"That's right." Wendy replied with a nod as she raised her head.

However, when she saw the sad expression on Lee's face, she did not know why, but she began to panic.

In fact, the reason she started to panic was simple. Ever since Lee made his declaration of love, though it did not contain the word love at all, Wendy had found herself thinking about it over and over.

As previously mentioned, Wendy had been confessed to many times in the past. She was quite cute, so that was natural. However, thanks to her instincts as a Dragon Slayer, she, like Carla, could tell that those men had ulterior motives when they declared their love for her. But her instincts did not alert her at all when Lee did the same. And that led to her thinking about him much more than she intended to.

"D-D-Don't worry." Wendy stammered out as she subconsciously grabbed Lee's hand to comfort him. Then, at a much louder volume than intended, she continued. "I'll do my best to heal you. So, you won't have to miss too much training time. Only a day or two at most."

Immediately after her words ended, Wendy noticed that Lee's gaze was no longer focused on his lap. And when she followed Lee's line of sight, she saw that he was staring at his left hand, that she was holding tightly.

In the next instant, Wendy reddened up to her ears while her mouth opened and closed like a fish out of water. Lee, on the other hand, was staring at his and Wendy's hands with shock written all over his face. And all though he was happy that Wendy took the initiative to hold his hand, the more surprising thing was the care she showed for him.

Because of his low amount of magic power and inability to use Ninjutsu or Genjutsu, Lee had been mocked as a failure. In fact, no one ever showed so much care when he hurt himself in the past. Until he met Guy, that is. Even his teammates, Neji and Tenten, had told him that he should give up on becoming a shinobi during their time in the academy. Though, Tenten was much more tactful about it than Neji, who said it as bluntly as could be. In fact, even after becoming a Genin, Neji had told him the same thing on several occasions.

But Wendy, despite having known him for less than a month, showed him such concern. And he could not understand why.

The reason for Wendy's concern was simple, however. For the last three years, she has been a member of Fairy Tail. Meaning, she has seen just how hard her guildmates work during training. Especially those in Alfonzo's inner circle. So, she could appreciate someone who worked hard to achieve their goals.

And after using her diagnosis spell on Lee's leg, despite having not seen the rest of his body. She could tell that he worked extremely hard to improve. Perhaps even as hard as Alfonzo, Elicia, and the others. And she could definitely appreciate that.

Meanwhile, Carla was getting even more irritated seeing the position Wendy and Lee were in.

"Wendy, you don't have time for this." Carla said sharply. "You have a lot of other patients to see after this, remember?"

Hearing Carla's voice was enough to snap Wendy back to her senses. However, the blush on her face and ears crept down her neck, as well.

"A-A-Anyway, I can heal the torn muscle." Wendy said, beginning to stammer again. "I'll take care of all the strains, too. But you maybe should let me see the rest of your body, too. No! Wait! I didn't mean I wanted to see your body... No, wait, that sounds wrong, too! I mean, you should let me observe.--- No, check! Yes, you should let me check the rest of your body for any unknown injuries, too."

Seeing Wendy's flustered state, Lee could not help but smile warmly, which made Wendy even more embarrassed. Meanwhile, Carla's scowl deepened even further.

"A-Anyway, I'll heal the tear first." Wendy said as she looked away from Lee's eyes and focused on his leg. "After that, it will take a day or two before you can train. But at least you won't be stuck in the hospital. Then, when you're discharged, you can set up an appointment for me to see what I can do with the strain I'm sure the rest of your body has been put through."

After her initial stammering, Wendy eventually started talking so fast that Lee had to concentrate to understand everything she said. However, after she finished, he nodded his head with a smile.

"I understand, I'll make sure to schedule the appointment promptly." Lee said while his gaze was focused on Wendy's lowered face.

Although Wendy could feel Lee's gaze, she tried to put it out of her mind. Instead, she focused on healing the tear in his quadricep. And it only took a few minutes for Wendy, with her blend of the [Healing Magic] allotted to her by her [Sky Dragon Slayer Magic] and Tsunade's [Medical Ninjutsu], to heal Lee's torn muscle.

"Okay, I'm all done." Wendy said, the blush on her face having receded by quite a bit by now. "Remember, take it easy for a day or two. Otherwise, you could reinjure it again."

"Yes, I'll follow your instructions." Lee said with a nod. "And I'll make sure to schedule an appointment to see you again."

Seeing Lee's smile, Wendy's blush try to make a reappearance. However, she was able to hold it back with her will. Then, she nodded to Lee and turned around to leave. Though, she did not realize that she was walking a little faster than usual while her movements were quite stiff.

"Have a good day, Miss Wendy." Lee said energetically. "I'll see you soon."

Raising her right arm, Wendy gave a little wave. Though, she did not turn around. Meanwhile, Carla glared at Lee as hard as she could before hurrying to follow Wendy.

Eventually, when Lee could no longer hear Wendy's footsteps, he clenched his fists before thrusting them both up above his head.

"Yosh! I knew my youth would prevail!" Lee shouted happily. "Alfonzo was right. I just had to be calmer when dealing with her. I need to find a way to thank him."

"My youthful disciple!" Lee heard a familiar shout from down the hall while he was congratulating himself. "I've come to visit you! I even brought my special protein drink to help your muscle heal faster!"

"I don't know how many times we've asked you this, Guy." A stern female voice said shortly afterwards. "But please keep your voice down in the hospital."

Knowing exactly who the first shout belonged to, Lee could not help but smile.

"I can't wait to tell Guy-Sensei about what just happened." Lee said excitedly. "Maybe he'll do some laps around the village with me to help me celebrate. Oh but wait, I'm not supposed to train. I could hurt my leg again. Oh, I know! We could do those laps on our hands. That's brilliant!"

Meanwhile, Wendy, after meeting Lee, continued her work at the hospital. And although her quality of work was not affected, she could not stop thinking about their little encounter. And eventually, her shift ended and she and Carla, accompanied by Anko, went back to the residence she shared with the others from magnolia.

When Wendy, Carla, and Anko eventually arrived at the mansion, Anko excused herself as she had work to do at the T&I Department. Meanwhile, Wendy and Carla entered the house after bidding her goodbye. And when they did, they noticed that the house was empty. Realizing that the academy kids must be here already. So, Wendy and Carla quickly made their way to Wendy's room to get ready for Sakura's training in [Medical Ninjutsu].

As soon as they entered the room, Wendy was surprised when Carla closed the door behind them and looked at her with a stern expression while resting her paws on her hips.

"Carla, is something wrong?" Wendy asked in a confused tone.

"I forbid you from seeing that boy again." Carla said sharply.

"Huh? What are you talking about?" Wendy asked, her confusion growing. Though, she could not help but think about Lee when Carla mentioned "that boy."

"I already told you, you're too young to start thinking about dating." Carla replied, still in that same sharp tone.

Immediately, Wendy's expression changed from confusion to anger.

"And I already told you, I'm not a kid, Carla." Wendy said, her tone turning sharp, as well. "I'm old enough to make my own decisions."

Taken aback by Wendy's tone, Carla's expression showed confusion for a moment. A moment later, however, her stern expression returned. But just as she opened her mouth to retort, Wendy spoke once again.

"Don't say anything, Carla." Wendy said, still speaking sharply. "Enough is enough. I know you want what's best for me, and I appreciate that, I really do. But enough is enough. You're not my guardian. In fact, I should be yours. You're only nine years old, after all."

Once again, Carla was taken aback, causing her expression to change. However, this time, Wendy did not even allow her the time to get her expression under control.

"Besides, you're being a real hypocrite right now." Wendy added. "You tell me I'm too young to be dating, but you're seeing Happy. And don't try to deny it, you all but said so yourself when we first got here. So, you don't have the right to tell me if I can date or not."

This time, Carla looked away sheepishly, feeling the tiniest bit of guilt for acting that way. Still, she wanted to say something. But once again, Wendy spoke before she could.

"You're supposed to be my partner, Carla." Wendy said. "but the way you're acting only shows that you don't trust my judgement. And, honestly, I'm getting tired of it. This isn't how partners are supposed to treat each other."

"And ignoring my advice is showing that you trust me?" Carla, finally finding the opportunity to speak, said angrily.

"You're not giving me advice, Carla." Wendy said, calming down significantly after hearing Carla's tone. "You're trying to dictate how I live my life. Not even Master Ur treats me like that. I mean, you just forbade me from seeing Lee again. Seriously, what even gives you the right?"

Hearing that, Carla opened her eyes wide in surprise. For as long as she could remember, the only thing she ever tried to do was make sure that Wendy was okay. However, she never realized how the way she acted could be seen from Wendy's perspective. On top of that, other than whining and showing some token resistance, Wendy never made her feelings on the matter known.

But when Carla took a moment to think about it, she realized that Wendy had told her how she felt numerous times. She was unable to count how many times Wendy told her that she was not a child or that she could make her own decisions. But all those times, Carla merely dismissed her complaints as a child's whining.

"And although it hurts to say this." Wendy said as she lowered her head. A moment later, however, she raised her head with a firm expression on her face. "I can't be friends with someone who wants to control all my actions."

Immediately, tears began to well up in Carla's eyes. Wendy's words had seriously hurt her. That said, because of her own hurt, Carla did not see the tears that were welling up in Wendy's eyes, as well. Instead, without a word, she turned around, opened the door, and ran away.

"Carla, wait!" Wendy said while raising her right hand in Carla's direction. trying to stop her, to no avail.

A moment later, Wendy dropped both her arm and her head as a wave of sadness washed over her. However, she decided that she would not apologize for what she said the next time she spoke to her best friend. The words she said, needed to be said, after all.

#### Chapter 544: Admitting She Was Wrong

After running away from Wendy's room, Carla quickly left the house. Then, with her [Aera Magic], she flew away from the house at high speed. All the while, tears fell from her eyes. Eventually, she reached the top of the Hokage Rock, where she sat down and lowered her head to cry.

"How could she say that?" Carla asked herself as she bent her knees and hugged her legs to her chest. "Does she really not want to be my friend anymore?"

For the next few minutes, Carla continued asking herself the same two questions, over and over. However, those thoughts were forced to a stop when a catchy little jingle sounded from one of the pockets of her dress.

Reaching into her pocket, Carla pulled out a small iPhone. And when she looked at the screen, she saw the name, "Happy," displayed on it..

Not wanting Happy to see or hear her in this state, Carla ignored the call. However, not even a second after the jingle ended, it started once again. And this went on for nearly ten minutes.

On a side note, after Alfonzo released the iPhones to the public, he was approached by Happy, Carla, and Panther Lily. And all of them were wearing aggrieved expressions. Not understanding why, he asked them what was wrong. And to his surprise, they all said that he was being unfair by not making Exceed-sized iPhones.

Then, while smiling wryly, he agreed to make iPhones for them. However, he did not do it for free. But because they all participated in quests, they all got some share of the rewards. So, they had enough money to buy them. Though, Carla and Panther Lily's iPhones cost more as they requested that they would change size when they took on their larger forms.

Luckily, Alfonzo had already done something similar with Panther Lily's sword. So, it was not that difficult to achieve.

"He just doesn't know when to give up." Carla muttered in an exasperated tone as she wiped the tears from her eyes with her free arm.

Then, Carla finally accepted the call. Luckily, it was only a voice call. Had it been a video call, she would have more than likely not answered, no matter how long it rang.

"What is it, Happy?" Carla asked in an annoyed tone. "I ignored the call for so long, couldn't you get the hint?"

{"Hi, Carla. I just wanted to see how you were doing."} Happy replied in an uncertain tone. {"I missed you and wanted to see if you were okay. But it doesn't sound like you are."}

"\*Sniff\* I'm fine." Carla said, trying to cover the sound of her sniffle, though she was unsuccessful.

{"Come on, Carla, I know you better than that."} Happy said, taking on a much more serious tone. {"I know something is bothering you. Just talk to me about it. It will make you feel better getting it off your chest."}

Hesitating for a few seconds, Carla eventually decided to tell Happy about the spat she was having with Wendy. And while Carla told her story, Happy showed a surprising amount of maturity by not interrupting.

By the time Carla finished her story, she found out that Happy was right. She did feel better after telling someone about it. On top of that, while talking about what she had done, she could truly understand Wendy's part of the argument. Because had Wendy treated her like that, she, too, would have contemplated ending their friendship.

Unfortunately, this realization made her feel even worse. And once again, her tears started falling.

{"\*Sigh\* Carla, even if you want to protect her, that doesn't mean controlling her."} Happy said, sounding much wiser than he usually does. {"And nobody likes always being told what to do and how to live their life."}

"\*Sniff\* Yeah, I know..." Carla replied while once again wiping away her tears. "but I don't know how else to protect her. That's how I've always done it."

{"See, that's the thing, Carla."} Happy said in a solemn tone. {"People change. Time does that to everyone. So, what worked in the past may not always work in the present."}

"Yeah, I know. \*Sniff\*" But I don't know what to do." Carla replied.

{"You don't have to do much, you know.?"} Happy said, the fact that he was smiling evident in his tone. {"All you have to do is support her. And only give her advice when she asks for it or truly needs it. Like Wendy said, she's old enough to make her own decisions and live with the consequences. And when it comes to romantic matters, just be there to support her when things are bad and make the person that made her cry regret it."}

As Happy finished speaking, Carla could imagine a scene of him shadow boxing to show her what he meant. And that image made her smile for the first time since Wendy ran into Lee in the hospital.

{"But for now, you really need to apologize to her."} Happy said, bringing his advice session to a close. {"And you need to promise her that you'll try to do better."}

"Yeah..." Carla replied, a resolute expression making its way onto her face. "You're right. I'll find her and apologize right now."

{"Good, I know you can do it."} Happy said happily. {"Anyway, other than that, how is the--- Hey! Natsu! That's my fishy! You can't cook it!"}

{"What are you talking about, Happy?"} Natsu's voice sounded confused from the other side of the call. {"This is the one I caught, the one you caught is still in the bucket."}

{"Nuh uh! That one's mine!"} Happy shouted. {"Yours is the one in the bucket!"}

{"You're only saying that because this one is bigger, Happy."} Natsu replied. {"On top of that, I never even put it in the bucket after I caught it. I started grilling it immediately."}

{"No, it's mine!"} Happy shouted once again. Then, he remembered that he was on a call. So, he spoke quickly into the iPhone. {"Sorry, Carla. Something important just came up, I'll talk to you later. Hey, Stop, Natsu!"}

\*Beep!\* \*Beep!\* \*Beep!\*

With that, the call ended, leaving Carla to simply stare at her phone in blank amazement.

"What he told me earlier was so mature." Carla said while continuing to smile blankly at her iPhone. "But as soon as a fish is involved, he turns back into the immature tom cat I know."

Though her words were a bit harsh, Carla smiled very warmly as she spoke about Happy and his flaws. Then, after a few moments, she put her iPhone back in her pocket before standing up and dusting off her dress.

"\*Sigh\* I guess I should go and apologize to Wendy." Carla said in a tone mixed with determination and a bit of fear.

After that, she once again spread her wings with her [Aera magic] before flying off the top of the Hokage Rock.

Meanwhile, from the top floor of the Hokage Tower, Hiruzen had just taken a toke from his pipe. He was currently taking a break from all the paperwork. And as he exhaled a cloud of smoke, he happened to look out the window, just as Carla flew away from the Hokage Rock.

And after seeing a cat with wings, Hiruzen wiped at his eyes. However, he could still see Carla flying off into the distance. Then, he looked down at his pipe for a few moments. After that, he placed it on his desk and started rubbing his temples.

"I really should stop smoking this stuff." Hiruzen muttered to himself. "I mean, it' has always helped me relax. But now it's even making me hallucinate. I guess that's why it's illegal in Fiore without a prescription from a doctor."

A few minutes later, Carla arrived at the mansion. When she did, she did not go inside directly. Instead, she landed on the roof and waited. At this time, she knew Wendy should be instructing Sakura, and she was right. Wendy was currently in her bedroom answering any questions Sakura had about the reading material she was assigned.

Over the years, although she was still polite and timid like she had always been, Wendy had grown. She could now compartmentalize her problems, pushing them to the back of her mind for when she had time to think about them. That did not mean she did not confront her problems, however. Instead, she had figured out how to put them aside until the time was right.

About an hour and a half later, from her seat on the roof, Carla watched as the academy kids all left the house and headed home. Then, once they were all gone, she flew down from the roof. And before Miyuki could shut the door, she landed on the veranda.

"Oh, Miss Carla, you've returned." Miyuki said politely. "Have you eaten dinner? If not, Master Alfonzo instructed me to save a portion for you."

"No, I haven't." Carla said softly. "I'll eat it later. For now, I need to talk to Wendy."

"Ah, I see." Miyuki said as she stepped back and made room for Carla to enter. "Miss Wendy is in her bedroom."

"I understand." Carla replied with a nod as she stepped past the door.

"If you apologize sincerely, I'm sure Miss Wendy will forgive you." Miyuki said as she closed the door.

That sentence caused Carla to spin around and look at Miyuki. However, when she did, Miyuki did not even look back in her direction. Instead, she walked away towards the kitchen to wash the dishes and have her own dinner.

Meanwhile, Carla watched Miyuki leave until she was no longer in her field of view. Then, after a moment, Carla shook her head and started walking towards Wendy's room. When Carla eventually reached Wendy's bedroom door, instead of knocking immediately, she took a deep breath. Then, she circulated her magic power.

In the next instant, Carla began to grow in height, from 1'2" tall to 5' in a matter of seconds. Besides her height, other things changed about her appearance, as well. For one, her fur was gone. Instead, she had fair skin with a healthy pink glow. On top of that, she took on more human proportions with an appearance of a girl at fourteen or fifteen years old with brown eyes and white hair that flowed down to the middle of her back. However, instead of her ears being on the side of her head, she had a pair of cat ears on top with green on the inside.

Not only her form, but Carla's clothes also changed. Instead of the usual mustard dress she usually wore, she was now wearing a light green blouse with a dark green blazer with white accents and a matching necktie with a white cat paw stitched onto it. She also wore a maroon skirt and black pantyhose. She would also usually wear brown loafers to complete her ensemble. However, because they were in a Japanese style house, she was not wearing her shoes.

After her [Transformation], Carla took another deep breath. Then, when she finally felt that she was ready, she raised her hand.

\*Knock!\* \*Knock!\* \*Knock!\*

\*Bang!\*

As soon as Carla pulled her knuckles away from the door, the door was flung open and slammed against the adjoining wall. Standing in the doorway was Wendy, who looked relieved to see that Carla had returned. Then, before Carla could speak, Wendy lunged forward and wrapped her arms around the cat in human form.

"I'm glad you came back, Carla." Wendy said quietly while hugging Carla tightly.

Taken aback by Wendy's hug, Carla took a moment to react. When she did, however, she returned Wendy's hug.

"I'm sorry, Wendy." Carla said just as quietly.

"You know I never wanted to hurt your feelings." Wendy said after a moment. "but I needed to say that. Otherwise, you would have never understood how I felt."

"Yes, I know." Carla replied. "You've been telling me the same thing for a long time. But I never listened. I always thought I knew what was best for you. And... I realized I was wrong. Everything you said earlier was right. And I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

While they spoke, neither of the two realized that they had started crying. But even if they had, it would not have mattered. To them, making up was much more important than that.

Eventually, the two pulled away from each other so they could look into each other's eyes. They did not release each other from their hugs, though. And they finally realized the other was crying.

"Look at you, Carla." Wendy said with a smile as she reached up to wipe the tears from Carla's face. "You're crying."

"So are you." Carla replied while she also smiled. Though, she did not move to wipe Wendy's tears.

"You know, when I felt you sitting on the roof, I didn't think you were going to talk to me again." Wendy said while continuing to wipe away Carla's tears. "But I'm so glad you came back."

At that moment, Carla froze. In her grief, she had forgotten about [Magic Power Detection]. And now, she felt extremely embarrassed that she did not just come inside and wait for Wendy to finish instructing Sakura.

"I didn't want to interrupt your lesson." Carla said as she looked away shyly with her face bright red from embarrassment.

Seeing Carla's expression, Wendy could not help but giggle. Then, she wiped away her own tears with her sleeve before pulling Carla into her bedroom to continue their conversation.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki were standing around a corner. And when Wendy and Carla entered Carla's room, they sighed in relief.

"I'm glad they were able to make up." Saeko said with a smile. "They're such good friends, it would have been a tragedy if that friendship had ended."

"Yeah, I couldn't imagine seeing those two not be friends anymore." Rika added. "That would be like me and Shizuka ending our friendship. It just seems unreal."

"Master Alfonzo, why do you look so much more relieved than everyone else?" Miyuki asked curiously.

Hearing that, Saeko and Rika turned their attention to Alfonzo. And when they did, they saw him wiping away beads of cold sweat from his forehead.

"That's actually quite simple." Alfonzo replied while smiling wryly. "Ur asked me to look after those two while we were here. And if they hadn't made up, they both would have come back crushed. And if that happened, I'm sure that Ur would have made life hell for me, even though I had nothing to do with this. On top of that, she probably... No, definitely would have tried to make sure that Amar'e was my only child."

With that, the three ladies subconsciously looked down at Alfonzo's crotch. However, when they realized what they were doing, they all looked away quickly.

"Yeah, but couldn't you just fix that with the Techno Organic Metal?" Rika asked curiously. "I mean, I heard about how you used it to reattach your arm after it got ripped off by that Leviathan."

Alfonzo could not help but shudder at the mere thought of repairing whatever Ur would have done to his little buddy with the Techno Organic Metal.

"I think she would have been counting on that." Alfonzo said while starting to drip cold sweat again. "The pain of repairing that damage with the Techno Organic Metal would have been worse than anything Ur could have done to me. And if I know her as well as I think I do, she would have tried to do it again after I was healed."

While Miyuki looked at Alfonzo with her mouth agape, having never heard about Alfonzo losing an arm, Saeko and Rika looked at him dumbfoundedly. Although they had heard about him reattaching his arm, they had not heard about the pain he went through at that time.

"Anyway, now that they're okay again, let's go." Alfonzo said with a smile. "There's no reason for all of us to be standing in the hallway anymore."

Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki nodded in agreement. Then, the group dispersed for the night to do their own things before heading to bed.

Chapter 545: Alfonzo and Amar'e

"Hey, I'm home!" Alfonzo shouted after entering his mansion floating on Lake Sciliora.

Immediately after his shout, a silver-haired woman wearing a blue French maid dress stepped into the entrance hall of the mansion before bowing politely.

"Welcome home, Master Alfonzo." The maid, Grayfia said with her head lowered.

Shortly after Grayfia gave her greeting, three more maids, Maria, Mey-Rin, and Ai, entered the entrance hall before bowing, as well.

"Welcome home, Master Alfonzo." Maria, Mey-Rin, and Ai greeted in unison.

"Hey, Ladies, how have things been while I was gone." Alfonzo asked as he handed his small travel bag to Grayfia.

"Everything has gone smoothly, as always." Grayfia replied after taking the bag from Alfonzo. "The mistresses have been training and taking quests diligently.

"Even Lici?" Alfonzo asked curiously as he began walking through the mansion.

"Yes, Mistress Elicia has also started taking quests again." Grayfia replied while gesturing for Maria, Mey-Rin, and Ai to return to their duties. "When she does, either I or Maria are tasked to watch over Young Master Amar'e."

"I see." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "And how is my little man?"

"He's currently taking his afternoon nap." Grayfia replied.

Nodding in response, Alfonzo began making his way to Elicia's bedroom. He knew that's where Amar'e would be at this time. And he could not wait to see his son again, in person.

Meanwhile, Grayfia, after noticing where Alfonzo was headed, decided that she would put Alfonzo's belongings away in his room before packing a bag for his return trip.

Although Alfonzo told Hiruzen that he would be coming back on weekends to visit Amar'e and the ladies in his harem, this was the first time he left, despite the fact that this was the third weekend since he arrived. And the reason for that was simple, he wanted to make sure that Naruto's mental state was alright before he left him in the mansion with the other ladies.

After a few minutes, Alfonzo reached Elicia's bedroom door. When he did, he did not knock, as Elicia was currently not home. Though, he figured she was not on a quest since she knew he would be coming home today.

Like always, Alfonzo had not spread out his [Magic Power Detection] while in Magnolia, as the barrier set up around the town would let him know if anyone over a certain power level had entered. Whereas, he did not pay much attention to anyone below that threshold, deeming them a non-threat.

After entering Elicia's bedroom, Alfonzo saw exactly what he was looking forward to seeing. Currently, Amar'e was lying in a crib that was set up near Elicia's bed. And the infant was sleeping peacefully

"Hey, Little Man." Alfonzo said softly, not wanting to wake up his sleeping son. "Daddy missed you."

With that, Alfonzo pulled the chair away from Elicia's desk before taking a seat next to the crib and watching Amar'e sleep.

Like that, Alfonzo spent the next hour or so simply watching Amar'e sleep with a content smile on his face. And after that peaceful time passed, Amar'e's eyelashes began to flutter. Then, the infant woke up

and looked around. And when he caught sight of Alfonzo, the smile on his face made Alfonzo's heart melt.

"Hey Little Man." Alfonzo said as he stood up and drew nearer to the crib. "Did you sleep well?"

While making happy gurgling sounds, Amar'e began to fidget, clearly doing all he could to reach for Alfonzo. And Alfonzo, with a smile on his face, reached into the crib before picking up his excited son.

"Looks like someone missed me." Alfonzo said with a smile.

Meanwhile, while in Alfonzo's arms, Amar'e latched on to two of Alfonzo's dreadlocks and began playing with them happily.

Allowing his son to have his fun, Alfonzo started walking towards the bedroom door. And just as he stepped through it, Maria was standing there with a bottle in hand.

"Master Alfonzo, Amar'e usually eats as soon as he wakes up from his afternoon nap." Maria said with a smile while presenting the bottle to Alfonzo.

Nodding in response, Alfonzo accepted the bottle with one hand. Meanwhile, Amar'e stared at the bottle intently while starting to fuss, letting Alfonzo know that Maria was right about his eating habits.

"Thanks, Maria." Alfonzo said while rocking his, clearly, hungry son. "I'll feed him in the living room."

"Understood." Maria said while bowing her head politely. "And when you're done, I'll check his diapers."

"No need." Alfonzo said gently while continuing to rock Amar'e as he once again started walking. "I'll take care of it myself."

Hearing that, Maria was slightly taken aback. Though, she did not let it show on her face. From her experience, men with statures like Alfonzo generally did not take care of their children so attentively.

"As you wish." Maria replied. "But should you need my assistance, simply call for me."

With that, Maria bowed once again. Then, she turned around to prepare everything Alfonzo would need to change Amar'e's diaper, along with a towel for when Alfonzo placed Amar'e against his shoulder to burp him.

When Alfonzo eventually reached the living room, Ai was already in there dusting and making sure everything was in its proper place. And considering the fact that all the residents of this mansion, minus the maids, were members of Fairy Tail, that was a task that never seemed to end.

"Hey, Ai." Alfonzo said after noticing the blonde maid. "How are things going? Have any problems or concerns about the job so far?"

"Master Alfonzo." Ai said as she stopped to greet the master of the house. "And Young Master Amar'e. No, everything is great. Working here has been quite relaxing. Though, I find myself having to clean up much more than at my previous place of employment. Especially the empty alcohol bottles."

"Yeah, Cana really likes to drink... " Alfonzo said while smiling awkwardly as he took a seat on the couch. Then, he guided the nipple of the bottle into Amar'e's mouth as he continued. "I'll ask her to put her empties in a [Storage Card] when she's done with them. Then, she can throw them all away when the card is full."

"Oh, please don't trouble yourself on my account." Ai replied with a smile. "Compared to my last mistress, this is child's play. I mean, I don't have to give anyone advice about boy trouble... Or correct them about common sense... Or teach them how to use technology..."

As Ai continued to list the things that bothered her about her last employer, Alfonzo could not help but think to himself while continuing to feed Amar'e.

'It sounds like she's talking about Kaguya.' Alfonzo said to himself. 'Well, I guess it's not all that surprising if she's in this world. Hell, just about anyone else I can think of has shown up at some point. So, why not her? But that makes me think, I wonder if the Shinomiya family is a clan of nobles or a business family in this world. Well, I guess I'll have to do some research when I get the chance.'

"Anyway, while I'm here, I plan on making something new." Alfonzo said, interrupting Ai's rant. "You wanna be my assistant while I work?"

Hearing that, Ai's rant immediately came to an end. Then, with her eyes shining, she nodded vigorously.

"Yes, I would love the chance to work with you, Master Alfonzo." Ai replied happily.

"Good." Alfonzo said with a smile. "Then, after the Little Man gets tired again, we'll head up to my workshop to get started."

"Understood." Ai replied eagerly before returning to her duties.

Like that, the room fell into a comfortable silence, that was broken when Ai began humming as she worked. Meanwhile, Amar'e continued to drink from the bottle as if nothing else in this world matter. And Alfonzo simply watched his son lovingly.

Eventually, Maria walked into the living room carrying a fresh diaper, wipes, and a towel. Then, after placing them on the coffee table in front of Alfonzo and acknowledging Ai, she left the room to return to her duties.

Around the same time, Amar'e pulled himself away from the bottle. Then, he smiled up at Alfonzo and reached out for his hair again.

Smiling in return, Alfonzo picked up the towel Maria left on the coffee table, draped it over his shoulder, put Amar'e, who immediately grabbed his hair again, against it, and gently began patting the infant's back. Unfortunately, instead of a small burp, he heard the sound of Amar'e vomiting. And as it just so happened, it all ended up in his hair.

Meanwhile, Amar'e after seeing Alfonzo's hair change color, began to laugh happily. However, before he could start playing with the vomit covered hair, Alfonzo pulled him away from his shoulder.

"I guess Daddy's gonna need a bath." Alfonzo said while smiling at his son, who was still reaching for his hair. "but before that, let's get you changed."

"Master Alfonzo, I could change him, if you'd like." Ai said while approaching the couch where Alfonzo and Amar'e sat. "And you could go wash your hair while I do so."

"No, that's alright." Alfonzo replied with a gentle smile. "I really don't mind. I've been covered in much worse sh--- stuff on quests. I mean, a little baby throw up can't compare to giant centipede guts."

Ai shuddered just imagining being covered in centipede guts.

At that moment, Mey-Rin, carrying a tray with a teapot and a teacup atop it entered the room.

"Master Alfonzo, would you care for a spot of tea?" Mey-Rin asked with a smile.

Though she was smiling brightly, Mey-Rin was actually quite nervous at the moment. She was afraid that she would misjudge the distance and end up making a mess and breaking the teapot and/or teacup. Despite her fears, she did not show it on her face. Grayfia's training had made sure of that.

Actually, for the last few weeks, Mey-Rin had not had any accidents, due in large part to Grayfia's training. Unfortunately, thanks to her past full of mistakes, she could not so easily banish her insecurities.

"I'd love a cup, Mey-Rin." Alfonzo replied. "unfortunately, that will have to wait. The Little Man just threw up in my hair. So, I need to change him and take a shower."

Mey-Rin visibly deflated. She had struggled quite a bit to bring the tea into the living room without making a mess. And now, she found out that Alfonzo won't be drinking it right away. In fact, she took such a mental hit that she almost... No, she dropped the tray holding the teapot and teacup. And when she realized that her hands were empty, she panicked even more.

Luckily, the tray was one made of metal. So, Alfonzo was able to catch it with his magic before it could hit the floor. At the same time, Ai, using her magic power to flood her body, had lunged towards the tray to catch it, as well. Unfortunately, that had become wasted effort, in the end. Still, Amar'e's happy laughter managed to lighten the mood after all was said and done, though.

"\*Sigh\* Mey-Rin, you have to be more careful." Ai said after she realized the tray was floating. Then, after grabbing it out of the air, she continued. "A crash like that could have scared Young Master Amar'e."

"Yes! You're right!" Mey-Rin said in a depressed tone as she bowed at the waist. "I'm terribly sorry. Please, I deserve to be punished for my blunder!"

"\*Sigh\* No harm, no foul." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "But Ai is right, Mey-Rin. You need to be more careful. More importantly than that, you need to calm down and be more confident in yourself."

"Yes. I know you're right, Master Alfonzo." Mey-Rin replied, still bowing ninety degrees at the waist. "But with my poor vision up close I can't help being nervous."

"\*Sigh\* Then I guess you should go see Porlyusica." Alfonzo said, once again shaking his head as he spoke. "I'm sure she could do something about it."

"I understand." Mey-Rin said.

"Anyway, do either of you know if Little Man has had a bath yet" Alfonzo asked. "Because if he hasn't, I'll just give him a bath while I get cleaned up."

"No, he shouldn't have." Ai replied. "Either Mistress Elicia or Maria usually give him one before bed."

"Cool." Alfonzo said as he took a step towards the living room's exit. Then, he looked down at Amar'e as he continued with a smile. "Well then, looks like you get to take a bath with Daddy today, Little Man."

In response, Amar'e began to laugh happily. A moment later, however, his face scrunched up as if he were struggling. Then, after a few more moments, his expression changed to a relaxed one while a pungent scent spread around the room.

"Throw up and poop in less than ten minutes." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "Nice! I really hit the jackpot today."

Despite the words he said, Alfonzo's bright smile, that had been present on his face since the moment he saw his son, widened just a little bit more. Even though changing diapers and cleaning up vomit were

some of the less enjoyable parts of parenthood, Alfonzo was loving it all. Any time spent with his son was time well spent in his opinion.

#### Chapter 546: Lucy's Progress

After Alfonzo and Amar'e finished their bath, they arrived in the living room only to find all the girls sitting together and chatting animatedly. Immediately after seeing his mother, Amar'e began to struggle, clearly wanting to be in Elicia's arms.

"Well, I guess he likes you better." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"Fonzie! Welcome home!" Elicia said excitedly as she shot up from her seat on the couch and dashed towards Alfonzo and Amar'e.

Then, once she was in front of her two favorite people in the world, Elicia took Amar'e from Alfonzo, showered him with kisses, and wrapped Alfonzo in a hug with her free arm. Meanwhile, the other eight women approached at a much more leisurely pace.

"Welcome back, Fonzie." Cana said with a smile, leaning in for a kiss after Elicia pulled away. "I missed you."

"I missed you, too." Alfonzo replied while pulling Cana into a hug.

"It's good to see you, Alfonzo." Erza said as she was next to get a hug.

"You, too." Alfonzo said before pecking Erza on the lips.

Like that, the greetings, hugs, and kisses continued. Then, once he hugged the last of his lovers, Sun, Alfonzo and the ladies took seats on the couches in the living room..

"So, what were you girls up to?" Alfonzo asked curiously. "I was expecting to see, at least, some of you when I got home."

"Oh, we went grocery shopping." Marin replied with a smile while leaning against Alfonzo's right side.

"Grocery shopping?" Alfonzo asked in a tone of mock confusion. "You guys can do that?"

"Oh, stop it." Ultear said, playfully swatting Alfonzo's right shoulder as she spoke. "We're not completely hopeless, you know."

Hearing that, Alfonzo stared pointedly at Ultear. And after a few moments of receiving Alfonzos stare, Ultear looked around the room for support. However, whenever she made eye contact with the other women, they all looked away. The only exception being Shizuka. However, instead of giving Ultear the support she was looking for, Shizuka smiled while clenching her fists in front of her large chest.

'That's not the kind of support I was looking for, Shizuka.' Ultear thought to herself.

Seeing the reactions of his lovers, Alfonzo chuckled good-naturedly.

"Anyway, what took you all so long?" Alfonzo asked curiously. "I was here for at least an hour and a half before you guys got back."

In response, all the ladies exchanged glances. Then, after a few moments of silent conversation, Mirajane was the one to answer Alfonzo's question.

"We couldn't agree on what to get." Mirajane said in a bashful tone.

"Yeah, we all wanted you to cook something different for dinner." Sun added. "And well..."

"They ended up arguing in the grocery store." Lucy said with a deadpan.

That caused all the other women, except for Shizuka, to look away in embarrassment.

"So, what did you end up getting?" Alfonzo asked curiously.

"Oh! We got Seering Bull ribeye!" Shizuka said excitedly while raising her hand energetically, causing her breasts to shake gloriously.

"So, it'll be just like the first day in the old mansion, huh?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Yup." Elicia said, nodding her head vigorously and causing Amar'e to giggle at the abrupt shaking.

"And what about sides?" Alfonzo asked.

That question made all the women freeze. They had completely forgotten to buy anything to go along with the main course.

"\*Sigh\* I should have known." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone. Then, he raised his head and looked at the Ceiling before speaking one word. "Grayfia."

In the next instant, Grayfia appeared behind Alfonzo with a burst of speed.

"What can I do for you, Master Alfonzo." Grayfia asked politely.

"She's even faster than I am." Mirajane said while narrowing her eyes slightly.

"She's faster than most of us." Cana added. "And to think, she's only a maid. I bet she would have made one hell of a wizard."

Ignoring the other ladies' chatter, Alfonzo turned his head and looked up at Grayfia.

"Could you please take a trip to the market and pick up some things that would pair well with Seering Bull ribeye?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Of course." Grayfia replied with a polite bow.

Then, once she straightened her back, Grayfia strode towards the living room's exit with a purpose.

"\*Sigh\* Hiring those maids was such a good idea." Marin said. "We really can't do anything other than fight and break stuff on our own."

Though most of the ladies agreed with Marin, they were too embarrassed to say so.

After that, a few hours past. In that time, Grayfia returned with the necessary ingredients. Then, Alfonzo, Grayfia, and Maria began cooking dinner. Meanwhile, the other maids attended to the ladies of the house while they chatted and played with Amar'e. Then, after some time, Alfonzo, Grayfia, and Maria served dinner and the ten residents of the mansion ate and chatted happily.

After dinner, Elicia put Amar'e to bed, leaving Grayfia and Maria to take care of him for the night. Then, Alfonzo and the ladies, except Shizuka, who was not yet ready for a sexual relationship, went to Alfonzo's room. And they spent the next few hours helping Alfonzo work off his excess energy from not having sex for several weeks.

The next morning, Alfonzo woke up covered in female bodies.

"\*Sigh\* I've missed this." Alfonzo said while releasing a content sigh as he looked at all the women sharing the bed with him. "But without Miyuki staring at me when I wake up, I kinda feel like something is missing."

Shaking off that thought, Alfonzo carefully climbed out of bed, doing his best to not wake up any of the ladies. Unfortunately, as they were all quite strong by now, the attempt failed miserably.

"Hmm... good morning." Lucy said groggily. "What time is it?"

"It should be just after six." Alfonzo replied. Then, after looking at the clock hanging over his workshop's door, he continued. "Yup, just after six like I said."

"\*Yawn\* It's so early." Sun said, sounding extremely tired. "Why are you getting up so early."

Leaning over, Alfonzo kissed Sun on the forehead, making her smile sweetly.

"Because I need to train." Alfonzo replied. "After that, I need to head back to the Hidden Leaf."

"Then, I shall join you." Erza said, sitting up as she spoke, causing the blanket to slip down and reveal her body.

"Sure." Alfonzo said. "I'm gonna go wash my face and put on my training clothes. I'll meet you in the training room."

"Huh? You're not going to the guild hall?" Cana asked in a confused tone.

"Nah." Alfonzo said as he strode towards his bathroom. "If I go to the guild hall, I can think of at least two people who will challenge me to a fight, for sure. And there's a third with a strong possibility of doing so, too."

As he spoke, Alfonzo could not help but think of Natsu, Gajeel, and Laxus, in that order. And he really did not want to deal with their challenges today.

"Well, that's good." Mirajane said. "We'll be able to get the most out of the little bit of our remaining time together."

Hearing that, the other girls smiled.. Then, they all got out of bed, as well, before heading to their own rooms to change into their training clothes and wash their faces.

By the time everyone had gotten out of bed, there was only one person who did not move from beginning to end. And that was naturally Elicia. However, after a few minutes without the warmth of the others, she began to stir. Then, she started patting the mattress around her. Finally, after not finding anyone, she opened her eyes with a pout on her face.

"Why do they all have to get up so early?" Elicia asked in a discontent tone. "Doesn't anyone appreciate a good night's sleep anymore?"

"Of course we do." Alfonzo said while walking out of his bathroom. "But when you have the title of the strongest guild in the kingdom, sleeping in is a luxury."

In response, Elicia whined before hiding her head under her pillow.

Smiling at his first wife's antics, Alfonzo walked over to his closet and pulled out a set of training clothes before getting dressed. Then, he made his way back to the bed, pulled the pillow off Elicia's head, and kissed her on the forehead.

"so, are you gonna train with us, Lici?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Ugh... Fine~~~." Elicia replied discontentedly. "I need to check on Mar'e, anyway. So, I'll do that while I get ready."

Smiling even wider, Alfonzo wrapped Elicia in the sheets. Then, he picked her up and carried her towards the door.

"Good, let's go see how my Little Man slept." Alfonzo said happily as he walked.

Hearing that, Elicia smiled as she snuggled into Alfonzo's arms to make herself more comfortable.

Fifteen minutes later, after leaving Amar'e in the care of the maids, Alfonzo and the ladies met up in the training room on the lowest basement level. Before they could start their training, however, Lucy drew near to Alfonzo.

"Hey, Alfonzo, mind sparring with me for a bit." Lucy asked with a smile.

In response, Alfonzo raised an eyebrow. It was rare for Lucy to ask him to spar. But she seemed so confident that he could not help but be curious.

"Sure." Alfonzo replied. "So, how do you wanna do this?"

"No magic. No weapons." Lucy replied quickly. "And since you're so much stronger than me, I can empower my body with magic power. But you can't."

Alfonzo raised his other eyebrow in response. Still, he nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile, the other ladies were looking forward to this sparring match. For a while now, Lucy had been practicing Savate. And she had sparred with quite a few members of the guild. And today, she was ready to show her progress to Alfonzo.

With the sparring match decided, the center of the training room was cleared. While Elicia, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, and Shizuka took up positions to observe from the edges of the room, Alfonzo and Lucy stood opposite each other at its center.

Both fighters took what appeared to be boxing stances, while Alfonzo's was orthodox and Lucy's was south paw. However, as the one who taught Lucy the basics of Savate, Alfonzo knew she was in an orthodox Savate stance.

"Come at me whenever you're ready." Alfonzo said with a serious expression on his face.

IN response, Lucy nodded as she took small steps towards Alfonzo. Then,, as soon as she was in range, Lucy's front leg, her right leg, lashed out at Alfonzo's knee.

Taking a step back, Alfonzo avoided the kick, making Lucy's leg sweep past. However, Lucy quickly arrested her right leg's momentum. Then, she threw a crescent kick at Alfonzo's righ shoulder.

This time, instead of dodging, Alfonzo swatted Lucy's kick away with his right hand. However, as soon as Lucy's kick flew past Alfonzo, she quickly drew her leg towards her body. Then, after shifting forward on the ball of her left foot, she shot a powerful side kick towards Alfonzo's abdomen.

And just as she said, Lucy had empowered her kick with her magic power. As a result, the kick was fired off at a speed that Alfonzo was unable to avoid without the use of his magic power. So, he did the only thing he could, he lowered his left arm into the kick's path.

\*Bang!\*

And when Lucy's foot collided with Alfonzo's arm, the sound was much louder than the sound of flesh meeting flesh had any right to be. On top of that, Alfonzo was forced two steps back to bleed off the momentum of the kick.

"Holy shit!" Cana exclaimed in surprise. "She actually managed to push him back."

"Yes, there was a lot of power behind that kick." Erza added with a nod. "Without the use of magic power to strengthen my body, that would have hurt, even me, quite a bit."

"Yeah, I guess those thick thighs are good for something, huh?" Elicia said with a smile.

In response, Lucy momentarily glanced at Elicia with an annoyed gaze.

"Don't look away." Alfonzo said as soon as Lucy's head turned.

In the next instant, after Lucy turned back to face Alfonzo, she saw an overhead right aimed at her left shoulder.

Reacting quickly, Lucy leaned her body to the right. Then, she parried Alfonzo's punch with her forearm. However, she was thoroughly surprised by how heavy Alfonzo's punch was.

'He's so strong.' Lucy thought to herself as she had to use much more force than expected to parry Alfonzo's blow. What would have happened to me if he had been adding magic power to that punch?'

Despite the thoughts running through her head, Lucy was able to lash her left leg at Alfonzo's torso. Then, when he blocked it with his elbow, she reloaded by drawing her left leg back and throwing a kick towards Alfonzo's chin.

Tilting his head back to barely avoid the kick, Alfonzo was forced to take a step back when Lucy twisted her leg before bringing it down in an axe kick.

**\*Bang!\***

The force of Lucy's axe kick was enough to make everyone feel the floor vibrate. However, Lucy did not slow down at all as she pivoted on her left foot and lashed her right foot at Alfonzo's head.

Once again, Alfonzo was forced to block. However, before Lucy's foot made contact with his left arm, she pulled her foot back to reload. Then, before Alfonzo could react, she threw another side kick at his torso.

**\*Bang!\***

This time, Lucy's kick landed properly. As a result, Alfonzo was lifted off the floor, flying back a few feet. Still, the kick did not seem as if it damaged him very much, the proof being how he landed stably on his two feet.

"Not bad." Alfonzo said with a smile while rubbing the spot on his abdomen where Lucy's kick connected. "That would have really hurt if I hadn't been strengthening my body with the Techno Organic Metal for so many years."

Hearing that, Lucy could only smile wryly as she retook her stance.

"but now, let's see how you do if I get a little more aggressive." Alfonzo said as he pushed off the floor and sped towards Lucy.

In the next instant, as soon as Alfonzo was in range, Lucy lashed her right foot towards Alfonzo's abdomen. However, Alfonzo did not slow his charge. Instead, all he did was lower his left elbow into the kick's path.

And just like she did before the kick that landed, Lucy abandoned that strike to load up for her follow up. However, before she could unleash another powerful kick, Alfonzo was pressing his abdomen against the sole of her foot.

"You can't let your opponent get in so close, Sweetheart." Alfonzo said with a grin.

Then, Alfonzo wrapped his left arm under Lucy's bent right knee and swung his right arm upwards, hooking it under Lucy's left armpit.

"Oh, crap!" Lucy exclaimed in panic.

"Up we go." Alfonzo said as he twisted his body and lifted Lucy off the floor.

\*Bang!\*

Then, in one motion, Alfonzo twisted his body and slammed Lucy onto the floor behind him, causing the floor of the training room to shake once again.

"\*Cough!\* \*Cough!\* Ow!" Lucy groaned as the wind was knocked out of her.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo lay on top of Lucy watching her catch her breath from closeup. Then, once she stop coughing and her breathing evened out, he stole a quick kiss.

"You've improved a lot, Lucy." Alfonzo said with a smile. "You just need more experience."

"Thanks." Lucy said while smiling through the pain. "but did you have to slam me into the floor so hard?"

In response, Alfonzo chuckled. Then, he climbed off of Lucy. A moment later, he reached a hand down towards her, which she quickly grabbed, before pulling her up to her feet.

"Oh, that wasn't all that hard." Alfonzo said with a wink. "I'm pretty sure I've slammed you harder than that in the bedroom."

Immediately, Lucy's face reddened as she started pounding her fists on Alfonzo's chest while he laughed uproariously at her reaction.

Meanwhile, the rest of the ladies approached with Shizuka arriving first to check Lucy for injuries.

"Don't worry, Shizuka." Lucy said with a smile while Shizuka's hands lit up with her magic power. "I'm alright. I'll probably just have a bruise on my back."

"Don't argue, Lucy." Shizuka said in a serious tone. "I'm gonna check to see if you're okay, and that's that."

After a couple of years being with Shizuka, everyone knew not to mess with the usually ditzy nurse when she was doing her job seriously. So, Lucy remained silent until Shizuka was finished.

"Fonzie's right, though." Elicia said after she arrived by Alfonzo and Lucy. "If Fonzie was really going hard, he could have dented the floor with that takedown."

"Seriously?" Lucy asked as her eyes opened wide in disbelief. "But aren't these training rooms made of some kind of Adamantite and Orichalcum alloy?"

"Yeah, I need to find a way to make them more durable." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

Lucy's mouth opened wide to match her eyes while she tried to internalize that information. Meanwhile, Shizuka continued to [Heal] Lucy's back while the other ladies discussed the spar. Then, once Shizuka said that Lucy was fine, everyone other than Shizuka began their training. Shizuka, on the other hand, only worked on magic power control while keeping watch for any injuries.

After the training ended, Alfonzo and the ladies changed into their normal clothes. Then, after giving his wives and fiancées hugs and kisses, and holding Amar'e for a while, which made him contemplate staying for another day, Alfonzo eventually left through the front door before being covered in violet electricity and shooting off into the sky in the direction of the Village Hidden in the Leaves.

"Now that I think about it, I still haven't seen Lucy's [Soul Armament], Zodiac, after it's been released." Alfonzo muttered to himself while flying through the air at high speed. "Oh well, I'll have to see it next time, I guess."

After flying for a few more minutes, Alfonzo realized something else.

"She didn't say [Lucy Kick] even once during that spar." Alfonzo said to himself with a chuckle.

#### Chapter 547: Meeting the Nine-Tailed Fox

A few days have passed since Alfonzo returned from his trip home. And in that time, nothing of note happened. Though, today would change that.

"Hey Alfonzo, Mizuki-Sensei praised me for how much I've grown physically during today's training at the academy." Naruto said excitedly as he ran into the living room of the residence.

Hearing the name, Mizuki, Alfonzo narrowed his eyes.

In the Naruto canon, Mizuki was one of Naruto's teachers' at the academy. And for the last six months, or so, of Naruto's final year at the academy, he was in charge of the physical training for the students in Naruto's class.

Outwardly, Mizuki was a friendly, encouraging Chunin teacher that the students seemed to love. But in reality, he was a traitor to the village and an Orochimaru fanatic. On top of that, he hated Naruto because he was the Nine-Tailed Fox's Jinchuriki.

'That guy was so forgettable, I would have completely forgotten about him if Naruto did not mention him just now.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Well, I guess that means it's time for me to start getting Naruto and Kurama to get along. Kurama's emotion sensing will keep Naruto from being fooled by douche bags like this one episode villain character in the future.'

"Mizuki-Sensei?" Alfonzo asked in a feigned tone of confusion. "I thought your teacher's name was Iruka. I mean, you talk about him all the time, right? You've even talked about introducing us some day."

\*Smack!\*

"Oh, right." Naruto said in a tone of realization as he punched his right fist into his left palm. "He started teaching our class after you went home last time. And when you came back, I forgot to tell you about him."

"I see." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "So, since he praised you, you must be doing pretty well, right?"

"That's right." Naruto said proudly. "Not only me, but Shikamaru, Choji, Kiba, Hinata, Sakura, Ino, and Shino, too. He doesn't really say much to Sasuke, though. All he ever says is keep up the good work. Like it's expected for Sasuke to be better than everyone else, or something."

Based on Naruto's expression when he talked about Sasuke, it was clear to see that he had made Sasuke his rival. Which was in line with the canon. On top of that, Alfonzo did not think it was a bad idea for Naruto to set Sasuke as his goal. Especially since Sasuke was at the top of his class.

"But his training is nothing compared to the training you and Ikaruga put us through." Naruto continued after finishing his rant about Sasuke. "So, his training is super easy."

As Naruto was so engrossed in telling Alfonzo about his day, he never noticed the moment when Alfonzo narrowed his eyes at the mention of Mizuki. However, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki, who were also sitting in the living room while waiting for the other academy kids to arrive, certainly did. And they were curious why he would do that.

However, they knew now was not the time. So, they just continued doing whatever it was they were doing. And not long later, the other kids arrived, as well. So, the conversation came to an end and they all went outside to train.

A few hours later, most of the academy kids had returned home after their training. Meanwhile, Alfonzo had once again taken Naruto into his workshop to speak with him.

"Alright, Naruto." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "I know you're aware that you're a Jinchuriki, right?"

Hearing that, Naruto lowered his head in frustration while clenching his fists before nodding in agreement.

"Well, I think it's time we had a little talk with that Nine-Tailed Fox inhabiting your body." Alfonzo continued with a grin. "I mean, don't you think it's about time he started paying rent?"

In response, Naruto's head snapped up to meet eyes with Alfonzo. And Alfonzo's grin widened into a full-blown smile when he saw the confusion on Naruto's face.

"What are you talking about, Big Bro?" Naruto asked, the confusion in his expression making its way into his tone.

"Well, you're not the only Jinchuriki among all the ninja villages." Alfonzo said. Then, he continued with a statement that would surprise Naruto even more. "Well, I've heard that one of the Jinchuriki in the Village Hidden in the Clouds, located in the Kingdom of Pergrande, has perfect control of his Tailed Beast's powers."

That last statement completely dumbfounded Naruto. From the stories he had heard, all the Tailed Beasts were mindless demons whose only purpose was to destroy. So, the thought of a human gaining full control of that power was unbelievable.

"I can tell what you're thinking from that goofy look on your face, Kid." Alfonzo said as he lay a hand on Naruto's shoulder. "But you of all people should know better than to accept rumors at face value, Mr. reincarnation of the Nine-Tailed Fox."

Immediately, Naruto shut his mouth that had fallen agape after hearing about someone with perfect control of a Tailed-Beast's power. Then, he looked away with a small embarrassed blush on his face. However, a moment later, he put on a resolute expression as he once again made eye contact with Alfonzo.

"You're right." Naruto said with a nod. "There might be more to the Nine-Tailed Fox than anyone knows."

Naruto then gritted his teeth in anger.

"Still, it's the one who killed my parents." Naruto added. "And I'm not sure if I can forgive him for that."

"Well, that's up to you, Naruto." Alfonzo said with a shrug. "But give him a chance to explain himself, at least. After that, you can pass judgement."

Naruto nodded in response. Though, he did not think he would be able to see past the death of his parents. At the same time, when Alfonzo saw Naruto's reaction, he nodded in satisfaction.

"Good." Alfonzo said while once again patting Naruto's shoulder. "Now, why don't we go and have a little chat with that Nine-Tailed Fox?"

"Huh? How are we gonna do that?" Naruto asked. "I mean, he's inside of me... Are you gonna cut me open?"

"Just leave that to me." Alfonzo replied with a reassuring smile. "All you have to do is take off your shirt. And no, we're not gonna cut you open."

As Alfonzo said the last sentence, he began taking off his own shirt. Though, he could not help but chuckle after seeing Naruto's expression when he told him to take off his shirt. And while Naruto did not understand what Alfonzo was thinking of doing, he followed suit shortly afterwards.

Then, when both Alfonzo and Naruto had their shirts off, Alfonzo approached his workbench before picking up a brush and a bottle of special ink that he had mixed. Then, he began drawing a combination of sigils and the characters used in the [Sealing Arts] onto his abdomen. And after about three minutes, he was finished.

Then, with the brush and bottle of ink in hand, Alfonzo approached Naruto.

"Alright now, don't move." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "This is something really precise. And if you move and I make a mistake, you could explode."

Hearing that, Naruto's eyes widen in horror. Then, he started stepping backwards. But when he saw the mischievous grin that appeared on Alfonzo's face, he pouted in annoyance.

"Alright, don't look at me like that." Alfonzo said with a smile. "but seriously, stay still. This ink is a bitch to erase. So, if you move and I make a mistake, it will take a while before we can try again."

"You should have just said that in the first place!" Naruto shouted angrily, which only made Alfonzo laugh uproariously.

After a few more minutes eventually the two calmed down enough for Alfonzo to start drawing the [Seal]. Before he did so, however, Alfonzo focused a bit of magic power onto his right fingertip before tapping Naruto's belly. And when he did, the [Seal] that was holding the Nine-Tailed Fox inside of him was made visible.

'Good, it's the same [Seal] that I found among Danzo's records.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'It would have sucked if it were something different. Then, I would have had to start creating the [Seal] again from scratch. And I would have had to bear Naruto looking at me like I was an idiot.'

With those thoughts running through his head, Alfonzo began drawing the [Seal] onto Naruto's abdomen. However, unlike the one he drew on himself, there were no sigils involved. And the reason for that was simple, Alfonzo needed those sigils to make it so that Riot and Bedlam could accompany him to meet the Nine-Tailed Fox in Naruto's mindscape.

After around six minutes of carefully drawing the [Seal], Alfonzo took a step back and looked over his work. Then, he nodded in satisfaction.

"Alright, there were no issues." Alfonzo said.

"\*Sigh\* Good. I'm glad it's over." Naruto said, visibly relaxing as he spoke. "That brush tickled a lot. I was afraid I was gonna start laughing and make you mess up."

In response, Alfonzo only smiled before returning to the workbench to put down the brush and the bottle of ink. Then, he gestured for Naruto to take a seat on the floor. After that, he returned to in front of Naruto and did the same.

"Are you ready?" Alfonzo asked solemnly.

Naruto nodded his head in response with a resolute expression on his face. Nodding in return, Alfonzo circulated his magic power, activating the sigils and [Seal] he drew on himself. Then, he once again extended his right index finger towards Naruto's [Seal] and activated it was well.

\*Flash!\*

In the next instant, both Alfonzo and Naruto felt as if they were covered in bright white light. A moment later, they found themselves standing at the entrance to a sewer system.

"Huh? Where are we?" Naruto asked in confusion while looking around. Then, he saw the door that led out of the sewers. However, he was surprised by what he saw on the other side.

On the other side of the door, there was a vast plain. Though, it looked like it was made of metal. On top of that, there were several large plates of metal floating in the sky. Even stranger than that, there were a number of electromagnetic phenomena dancing atop those plates.

"Oh, that door leads to my inner world." Alfonzo replied. "There are a couple of people that live there, and they wanted to meet the fox, too."

"Huh?" Naruto hummed in confusion. "They live inside your inner world? What does that even mean? No, never mind that for now. What is this sewer?"

"This sewer is a representation of your mindscape." Alfonzo replied. "It's basically the same as an inner world. Anyway, the Nine-Tailed Fox is in here somewhere. So, that's why we're here."

"What? Mindscape? Does that mean we're inside my head?" Naruto asked, his confusion seeming to grow with every new revelation. "Then, why does it look like this?"

"Who knows." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

"Not that it really matters." A male voice said in a proud tone. "If this is just how it is, there's nothing you can do about it. And if there is a way to change it, then you train until you can change it into whatever you like."

"In other words, quit your bitchin' and let's get moving." A second, younger sounding male voice said in an angry tone.

When Naruto heard those voices, his head snapped towards the entrance to Alfonzo's inner world. And when it did, he caught sight of two men, the first was tall, even a little taller than Alfonzo, with brown skin and slicked back purple hair and eyes wearing a white suit with a purple tie. And the second was a comparatively shorter and younger looking man with pale skin, red eyes, and silver hair pulled into a messy ponytail wearing a black suit, black shirt, and a red tie.

"Good, you're finally here." Alfonzo said with a smile. Then, he turned to Naruto and continued. "Let me introduce you, Naruto. "These two are my [Soul Armament Spirits], Riot and Bedlam."

"[Soul Armament]? Spirits?" Naruto asked, sounding even more confused than before.

In response, Alfonzo gave Naruto a quick rundown of what an [Soul Armament] was. Though, he did not go into much detail.

"So, you're saying that those two are the tonfa you usually carry on your back?" Naruto asked in a disbelieving tone.

"That's right." Alfonzo replied. "The taller one is Bedlam. He's the spirit of the black and purple tonfa."

As Alfonzo spoke, he pointed at Bedlam while introducing him. Then, he pointed at Riot.

"And that's Riot." Alfonzo continued. "He's the silver and red one."

"Yeah, can we just get going already?" Riot asked impatiently. ""I just wanna see the big fox. I'm not interested in getting to know the kid."

Naruto was dumbfounded by Riot's response. Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Bedlam could only shake their heads. Then, Alfonzo placed a hand on Naruto's shoulder to snap him out of it.

"Don't worry about him." Alfonzo said. "he's always angry. Anyway, let's get going. We've got a fox to meet."

"Yeah, but how will we know where to go?" Naruto asked. "This place is huge."

"OH, don't worry about that, either." Alfonzo replied as he took his hand off Naruto's shoulder. I got this."

With that, Alfonzo started walking deeper into the sewer with Riot and Bedlam following shortly afterwards. And although Naruto was confused as to how Alfonzo could possibly know where to go, he followed soon after, as well.

The reason why Alfonzo knew where to go was simple. [Magic Power Detection]. However, he had no intention of teaching it to Naruto. And there were two reasons for that. First, Naruto's magic power control was nowhere near good enough to master the technique. And second, Naruto was not a member of Fairy Tail. Though, that may change in the future.

After walking for a few minutes, Alfonzo, Riot, Bedlam, and Naruto arrived in a large room filled with water that reached their ankles. And in the middle of the room was a large cage with a [Seal Tag] covering the cage's key hole.

From the entrance of the room, the quartet could see a pair of large, red eyes peering at them between the bars of the cage. And as they approached the cage, more of the being those eyes were connected to could be seen.

Lying in the middle of the cage with its large head resting on its front paws was a fox, it would probably be, at least, ten stories tall when standing up, with covered in bright orange fur with its nine tails menacingly waving behind it.

"\*Whistle\* That's a big bastard." Bedlam said in an impressed tone, no fear could be heard in his tone as he continued.. "It's strong, too."

Hearing Bedlam's words, the Nine-Tailed Fox furrowed his eye brows. Then, he unleashed a potent killing intent that washed over the room. In fact, the killing intent was so potent that it changed the color of the water flooding the floor from a murky green color to bright red.

"Humans!" The Nine-Tailed Fox shouted, speaking the human tongue fluently in a deep, male voice. "Why have you come here?"

As the killing intent washed over the quartet, Alfonzo, Riot, and Bedlam seemed to be completely unaffected. Naruto, on the other hand, froze in terror with his eyes dilating.

Noticing Naruto's state, Alfonzo quickly stepped in front of him. Then, he raised his hands disarmingly.

"Take it easy, Big Guy." Alfonzo said solemnly. "We don't want any problems. We just came to talk."

"To talk?" The Nine-Tailed Fox's killing intent grew in potency as he replied. "You think I don't know how you humans operate? You're only here so that that cub standing behind you can use my power for whatever it is that humans like to do. More than likely kill other humans and hurt the others of my kind!"

Honestly, Alfonzo had no way to refute the fox's words. It was true that they wanted to help Naruto gain access to the fox's power, after all. Though Naruto would probably only want to use his power to protect what he held dear, that would definitely lead to him fighting other humans in the process.

"Look man, I can understand why you don't trust humans." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "Hell, I don't really trust them either. As a species, we kinda suck. We're willing to do just about anything to achieve our goals. Murder, betrayal, enslavement you name it. But that's a pretty big generalization."

Though the Nine-Tailed Fox did not show it on his face, he was thoroughly surprised to hear a human talk about other humans in that way.

"But like with any other species, there are good ones and bad ones among us." Alfonzo continued. "and Naruto here is one of the good ones."

"Hmph! Do you really think I'd believe that?" The Nine-Tailed Fox asked with a scoff. "Someone who is hated by the majority of the village he grew up in can't be one of the so-called 'good ones,' as you put it."

"I guess that means you can perceive the world around Naruto then, huh?" Bedlam asked with a cocky grin on his face. "in that case, you're no better than all the humans in the village that hate him for no reason."

Being compared to the humans he despised so fervently; the Nine-Tailed Fox stood up in the cage while glaring at Bedlam angrily. What was even worse, is that he could not refute those words. He had seen

everything Naruto had been through since the moment he was [Sealed] inside of the infant. So, he knew the villagers hatred was unjustified.

"Oh, I guess I hit a nerve.' Bedlam said without losing his cocky grin.

"\*Growl!\*" The Nine-Tailed Fox growled in anger. Though, he did not try to defend himself.

"Look, dude, I get it." Alfonzo said in a placating tone. "You were created by a mad man who wanted to create life in an attempt to bring back his dead little brother. Then, when you were deemed too powerful to control, he cast you aside. And after that, you were hunted down for centuries, even though you had done nothing wrong. And eventually, that never ending hunt finally comes to an end. But it was for no good reason. Instead, it was because some guy who only thought from the human perspective captured you and your siblings to give them away like presents in an attempt to bring peace."

"Hashirama! Senju!" The Nine-Tailed Fox shouted angrily while putting extra emphasis on both the First Hokage's first and last name.

"Yeah, him." Alfonzo continued. "Anyway, after he hunted you down, he forced you to be [Sealed] in his wife. Then, just before she died, you were [Sealed] into Kushina, without getting a say in it at all. And finally, you were [Sealed] into Naruto. On top of that, you were split in two because your power was too much to [Seal] into an infant. And all the while, you probably hadn't spoken to anyone in years because they all thought you were just a mindless beast designed for the purpose of destruction."

Hearing his whole life story in a nutshell was enough to surprise The Nine-Tailed Fox. From as far back as he could remember, no one seemed to know anything about him other than the fact he was dangerous. But this human, who could not be any older than twenty-five, knew everything about him.

Alfonzo, on the other hand, despite his confident tone while speaking, was thinking something totally different.

'I knew that the Tailed-Beasts were created by Zeref.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'But I could only guess about the rest. I mean, since there was no Sage of the Six Paths to try and make them more human, I had no idea what their personalities were like. But judging from Kurama's reaction, I hit the nail on the head.'

Meanwhile, Naruto, who had come back to his senses after Alfonzo blocked the killing intent from slamming into him, was dumbfounded to hear the Tailed Beasts' story. Like all the other people who were familiar with them, he thought they were just mindless, destructive beasts. But his whole outlook had changed after hearing Alfonzo's speech.

"I don't know how you know what I've been through, Human." The Nine-Tailed Fox, or rather Kurama, said in an even tone. "But that doesn't matter. Why should I trust a human?"

"Oh, stop acting like a little pussy!" Riot shouted, finally reaching the limits of his patience. "You know good and damn well that Naruto hasn't done anything to fuck with you. He wasn't even given a choice to be your host like his mother was. And because of that, he was forced into isolation from the day he was born. Something that I'm sure you can fucking relate to. So, why don't you shut the fuck up with that woe is me bullshit and try using your god damn eyes for a god damn minute."

Hearing Riot's angry outburst, Naruto was terrified. He was the one housing the giant, powerful, demon fox, after all. And he had no idea what the fox would do to him if he was angered.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Bedlam could only smile wryly. Both of them had asked Riot to let them do the talking, knowing his explosive temper. And to their surprise, Riot had agreed. However, neither of them

were naïve enough to think that was not a temporary agreement. They were only hoping that they could come to an agreement with Kurama before Riot lost it.

Kurama, on the other hand, was immediately angered by Riot's first sentence. However, before he could flare up in anger, Riot had already continued. And he could not help but agree with what the silver-haired young man, who looked like a human but gave off a different feeling altogether, said.

In fact, Kurama felt the same thing about the tall, purple-haired young man, as well. But he did not have the time to give it much thought.

And after Riot finished his little rant, Kurama still did not flare up in anger. Instead, he started contemplating what Riot said.

It was true that Naruto had not perpetrated any of the wrongs he faced over his long life. And it was also true that Naruto did not decide to become his host. He was only a newborn, after all. Nor did he have anything to do with the other half of him being [Sealed] away somewhere else. And finally, he had, indeed, witnessed how Naruto was isolated because of his own presence. And he felt even more that Bedlam was right. He had been hating Naruto for no good reason, just like the villagers of the Leaf.

"Look, I'm not saying that you should trust Naruto on our words alone." Alfonzo said as he finally lowered his hands while watching Kurama think. "Like I said, I don't really trust humans either. But I don't usually write them off without giving them a chance. Because if I did, I would miss the few good ones among their numbers. So, all I'm saying is... Just give the kid a chance. Get to know him. And if he's as bad as all the other humans, then treat him like all the other humans. Simple, right?"

Alfonzo's words were enough to snap Kurama out of his contemplative state. Then, he turned his gaze to Naruto, who was still standing behind Alfonzo before nodding his head minutely.

"I suppose I can do at least that much." Kurama replied. "Though, I don't have high expectations."

With that, Kurama finally retracted his killing intent. And as soon as he did, Naruto, who was no longer completely suppressed, stepped past Alfonzo with an angry expression on his face.

"Hey, I have a question for you." Naruto said.

"Hmph! I don't like your tone, little human.?" Kurama said with a scoff. "But since I agreed to give you a chance and because I can guess what you want to know, I'll tolerate it... for now. Now, ask your question, little human."

"Why did you destroy the village twelve years ago?" Naruto asked. Then, he clenched his fists and gritted his teeth as he continued. "And why did you kill my mom and dad?"

"\*Sigh\* That old man already answered the first question. Though, not in detail." Kurama replied. "It was because of the man who extracted me from your mother. With that disgusting Sharingan of the Uchiha, he put me under a [Genjutsu] and controlled me to do so."

Hearing that, Naruto was thoroughly surprised. Then, his expression began to turn wrathful. And once again, Alfonzo could tell exactly what he was thinking.

"Chill out, Naruto." Alfonzo said in a soothing tone. "Although it's true that a Sharingan user was the reason for the fox's rampage back then, don't start hating Sasuke because of it. In fact, when the fox attacked the village, all the Uchiha were ordered to stay in their clan compound. So, it couldn't be any of

them. On top of that, Sasuke is only a couple of months older than you. So, he definitely had nothing to do with it."

Hearing that, Naruto took a deep breath to calm himself down. He had heard about the man who attacked his mother right after he was born. So, he knew that man was the reason why his parents died and the village was attacked. And he vowed that he would find out why he did it. And if necessary, he would make him pay for it.

"And to answer your second question." Kurama said, completely unconcerned with Naruto's internal conflict. "When I was eventually freed from that man's [Genjutsu], I realized that I was no longer [Sealed]. However, I was in the process of being [Sealed] again. So, I attacked you to distract them, your parents, I mean. But they jumped between me and you, getting themselves killed in the process. I actually had no intention of killing either you or them. I just wanted to get away. But my plan failed on all fronts."

And that explanation completely took the wind out of Naruto's sails. He can't say that he would have done the same thing in the fox's situation. But he could understand why he did it. And if the fox was to be believed, it was an accident that his parents died. Still, he did not know what to do with all the anger he was feeling.

Noticing Naruto's state of mind, Alfonzo decided that they had stayed long enough.

"Anyway, We'll give Naruto some time to process everything he heard." Alfonzo said as he grabbed Naruto and started walking him away from the cage. "But I'll teach him how to come here and talk to you. And you two can spend some time getting to know each other every day. And maybe, you'll even deem him worthy enough to tell him your name."

While Naruto was not in the right state of mind to pay attention to what Alfonzo was saying, Kurama was flabbergasted. Most human's did not even know he had a name. In fact, only one human should know that, and that is Zeref, his creator and the one who named him.

However, Kurama was even more surprised when Alfonzo looked back and mouthed the word, Kurama, to him. However, he was brought out of his state of shock when Riot spoke.

"Oh, and if you start to get out of pocket, just know..." Riot said in a threatening tone. "... I'll find a way to drag Alfonzo to kick your ass and make you act like a good little puppy again."

Once again, Kurama washed the room with his killing intent in anger. As a result, Naruto fainted because he was not ready for it. Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Bedlam looked at Riot with deadpan expressions.

"Seriously, he had agreed to play nice." Bedlam said while shaking his head and wearing a grin. "And you had to go and piss him off again. This is only gonna make things harder for the kid, you know."

"So what?" Riot shot back. "He needs to know where he stands."

In fact, Alfonzo, with Riot and Bedlam's first seal released, was more or less on par with Kurama. And with Kurama having such a big body, meaning such a large area to attack, Alfonzo was fairly certain that he could win against the Nine-Tailed Fox. However, the collateral damage a battle between them would cause would be catastrophic.

"\*Sigh\* Don't pay him any mind, Kurama." Alfonzo said, using the fox's name now that Naruto was unconscious. "If I ever come here again, I'll leave him in my inner world."

"Hmph!" Riot snorted in disdain.

That caused Kurama to calm his anger and once again retract his killing intent. However, his expression was now filled with confusion.

"Human, how do you know my name?" Kurama asked. "I've never told a human my name before. And as my siblings and I were deemed failures, I'm sure Zeref never passed it down. So, how?"

In response, Alfonzo and Bedlam only smiled mysteriously. Riot, on the other hand, walked out of the room without even looking back. Then, Alfonzo, while carrying Naruto over his shoulder, spoke. Though, he did not answer Kurama's question.

"I know a lot of things I'm not supposed to know." Alfonzo said in a mysterious tone. "Unfortunately, the reason why is a secret I'll take to my grave. If people found out, it would cause a lot of trouble for me, my family, and my guild. And I don't want that. Oh, and if you could stop leaking your magic power and messing with the flow of Naruto's that would be great."

With that said, Alfonzo, Bedlam, Naruto, and even Riot, who was still walking towards the entrance to Alfonzo's inner world, vanished from Naruto's mindscape, leaving Kurama to contemplate what Alfonzo last said. He also decided to grant Alfonzo's request and stop disrupting Naruto's magic power flow. Until he determined whether or not Naruto was worth trusting, at least.

Chapter 548: Suspicions About Irene and Brandish

A few more weeks have passed since Alfonzo introduced Naruto and Kurama to each other. And in that time, Alfonzo taught Naruto how to enter his mindscape. And every time Naruto came out, he complained about how gloomy the sewer system was.

Unfortunately, Alfonzo was unable to explain to Naruto how to manipulate his mindscape. Even though he had done extensive research into the soul ever since he started working on the [Soul Armaments], an inner world and a mindscape were different. The mindscape was more of a representation of the mind than the soul, after all.

Luckily, there was someone Naruto could ask. And that was Ino's father, Inoichi Yamanaka. Though, Naruto and Ino did have to spend a while convincing Inoichi that they were not dating... or thinking about dating... or secretly dating before Inoichi would help. But in the end, he was able to get Inoichi's help. And in the future, what it ended up turning into was a huge, multi-story version of Ramen Ichiraku... To absolutely no one's surprise.

As for the other kids, they continued to make good progress. However, it was obvious that Sasuke was starting to get impatient with Saeko's sword training. Because she refused to teach him any advanced techniques until he made the basics second nature. However, Sasuke felt that with his Sharingan, all that training in the basics was useless.

But other than that little hiccup, things went on as usual.

On another note, Lee was also pushing himself harder during training. That way, he would have more excuses to see Wendy at the hospital. And because of the little falling out Wendy and Carla had not too long ago, Carla was not interfering in Lee's courting of the blue-haired Dragon Slayer, and Wendy seemed to be responding positively, as well.

But today, Alfonzo was once again meeting with Hiruzen in his office.

"So, you have to return to prepare for the S-Class promotion Exam, huh?" Hiruzen asked before taking a token from his pipe. "I suppose there's nothing that can be done about that."

"Yeah, but don't worry, we'll be back in about two weeks." Alfonzo replied casually.

"We?" Hiruzen asked in a confused tone. "Are any of those other girls S-Class like you?"

"No." Alfonzo said while shaking his head gently. "But two of them will probably be participants this year."

"I see." Hiruzen replied as he opened a drawer of his desk. "\*\*Sigh\* I'll have to write up another two missions to have you escorted in and out of the village then, won't I?"

"Sorry for the extra work." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

"It's not your fault." Hiruzen replied. "It's just a village thing."

"As allies, I don't even know why you're making this such a big deal." Alfonzo said in a genuinely confused tone. "I mean, no one from Fairy Tail would ever betray an ally."

"It's a law from the First Hokage's era." Hiruzen said in a tired tone. "And getting it changed would be more trouble than it's worth at this point. So, I just leave it how it is."

'I bet Tsunade would have that law changed immediately.' Alfonzo mused. 'As someone who's led a guild, she knows how important it is to have people coming and going from the HQ. Otherwise, the economy gets stagnant. And this village has been like that for a long time. Probably since the last war.'

"So, how is Naruto's training going?" Hiruzen asked while writing out the escort mission.

"As of right now, he's handling Nine-Tailed Fox's influence pretty well, I guess." Alfonzo replied, once again shrugging his shoulders as he did so. "I mean, his magic power flow is much more stable. So, he's gaining control of it much faster than before."

'Hiruzen will probably have a heart attack if I tell him that Naruto is trying to be friends with Kurama.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'And he'll definitely try to put a stop to that if he finds out. I should probably make sure that Naruto knows not to say anything about that to anyone, too. At least not for now, anyway.'

"That's good." Hiruzen said while continuing to write. "I was afraid he would not be able to graduate if that wasn't taken care of. With his Uzumaki bloodline, his magic power naturally grows at an astonishing rate, making getting adequate control a constant struggle."

'And you just let that shit fester because of Danzo.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'I wonder if you even really care for the kid. I mean, he's your grand disciple's son for God's sake. You could have at least tried to get some better conditions for him.'

"I've been teaching him the [Sealing Arts], too." Alfonzo continued while not letting his thoughts show on his face. "And he's been taking to it like a fish to water. And thanks to his creativity, no doubt honed

through all the pranks he's committed, he's probably gonna be some kind of trailblazer in the field of [Sealing]."

That was enough to make Hiruzen look up and stop writing for a moment. Just the thought of another grand master in the [Art of Sealing] coming from his village made him happy beyond belief. However, when he thought about the possibility of those [Seals] being used in Naruto's pranks, he could not help but start dripping cold sweat from his forehead.

"\*Sigh\* I can only pray for the citizens of the village." Hiruzen said in a wistful tone as he looked back down to his scroll and started writing again. "I'm sure he's gonna get some payback on all the people who bullied him in the past. Even worse, there will probably be no evidence that it was him."

"I wouldn't put it past him." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "But at least they won't be too malicious... Probably."

Hiruzen could only sigh once again. However, he did not stop writing.

"So, is there anything else?" Hiruzen asked.

"No, that's it." Alfonzo replied. "So, I'll get going. I need to pack. Then, I'll train the kids before getting a good night's sleep. We'll be leaving around dawn."

"Understood." Hiruzen replied. "I'll include the departure time in the mission details. I assume you'll be returning around the same time that you have for the past two times."

"Yeah, that's right." Alfonzo replied. "And we should be back on the twenty-second."

"Understood." Hiruzen replied. "Oh, and the mission you commissioned for us to spread those devices all over Ishgar should be completed before you get back."

Hearing that, Alfonzo could not help but smile as he stood from his seat in front of Hiruzen's desk.

"Alright, I'll have the rest of the payment for you when I get back." Alfonzo said before turning around to leave.

Though it was not previously mentioned, when Hiruzen accepted Alfonzo's mission request, it was agreed upon that half the payment would be made up front while the rest would be paid once the mission was completed. In total, the Hidden Leaf Village would be receiving one billion Jewels (equivalent to 10 million USD) for this long and tedious mission.

With that, Alfonzo took his leave while Hiruzen continued to write the scrolls for the two escort missions. And while Alfonzo was on his way out of the Hokage Tower, he could not help but smile. Though, this smile would be rather scary for anyone who saw it.

'Finally, the iPhone's coverage network will cover all of the land on Ishgar.' Alfonzo thought to himself while smiling maliciously. 'And after the Seto Group finishes installing the ones in Ishgar's territorial waters, there will be nowhere for you to hide, Junko Enoshima. I don't know what your plans for the future are, but as long as you're anywhere controlled by Ishgar, I'll be able to track your magic power signature. And then, you'll pay for all the shit you've pulled over the years.'

Eventually, Alfonzo left the Hokage Tower. Then, accompanied by Kakashi, he returned to his borrowed residence where he would train the kids from the academy, prepare dinner, and get ready to return to Magnolia so he could join Fairy Tales wizards to set up Tenrou Island for this year's S-Class Promotion Exam.

Earth Land, Alakitasia, Alvarez Empire, Vistarion

In the throne room of the Alvarez Empire's imperial castle, Zeref sat upon his throne silently with his eyes closed. However, that silence was soon broken by the sound of the throne room's heavy wooden doors being pushed open.

"Invel, do you have something to report?" Zeref asked without even opening his eyes.

"I do, Your Majesty." Invel replied after approaching the throne and bowing reverently.

"I would assume it is not good news." Zeref said, finally opening his eyes as he spoke.

"I'm afraid it is not." Invel replied as he straightened his back while keeping his head lowered.

"Well, let me hear it." Zeref said, seeming not to be bothered by the apparent bad news that was coming.

"Yes, Your Majesty." Invel replied before adjusting his glasses. "It has been some time since the last report we received from Irene and Brandish arrived. Over a year, in fact."

Hearing that, Zeref raised an eyebrow.

"Normally, that would not be cause for concern." Invel continued. "Both of them have been on missions that required them to break contact for long periods of time in the past. However, when this mission started, they contacted us, at least, once every three months. However, they have missed their schedule four times since the last report. And in another month, it will make that total five times if we do not receive a report in the coming month."

While Zeref found that unusual for Irene, Brandish was often found it too troublesome to send regular reports when she was out on long-term missions. So, he did not think much of it in her case.

"Another thing that caught my attention was the fact that Heine Lunasea and Juliet Sun, Irene's sentient swords, received a message from Irene almost three months ago." Invel continued. "And a little over a month ago, they both boarded a ship headed away to Caracole Island."

"Hmm..." Zeref hummed in interest. "Going through Caracole Island is the only way to reach Ishgar without raising much suspicion."

Caracole Island is an independent resort island situated between Ishgar and Alakitasia. As a popular tourist destination, neither continent has been able to lay claim to it, without causing a war. So, it is common for those trying to reach the two continents to stop there first when trying to move without having to deal with either continent's navy.

"Though the implications could be rather concerning, I doubt Irene would betray the empire at this point." Zeref continued while wearing a contemplative expression. "Still, just to be safe, send Jacob to ascertain Irene and Brandish's situation. However, he is under no circumstances to engage in combat. Only have him collect information on Irene's situation and return."

"As you command, Your Majesty." Invel replied as he once again bowed in reverence. "Then, if you'll excuse me, I shall relay your orders."

"You may go." Zeref said nonchalantly.

With that, Invel backed a few steps away from the throne, all with his head lowered. Then, he turned on his heels, not raising his head until he was facing away from Zeref. After that, he strode towards the throne room's doors, closing them behind him as he left.

Meanwhile, Zeref was left contemplating the information he just received.

"Is it possible that Irene could have betrayed me" Zeref asked himself. "The only way I could see her doing that was if someone on Ishgar was able to reverse her [Dragonization]. But that should be impossible, right? She's been trying to do that for centuries with no results, after all. And she is one of the most brilliant people I've ever had the pleasure of meeting when it comes to magical theory."

Shaking off that line of thought, Zeref once again closed his eyes and returned to thoughts of other things... Things he truly deemed to be important. Because even if Irene and Brandish were to become his enemies, that would only mean there were two more strong wizards to deal with when he finally invaded Ishar. However, even with their help, no one would be able to stop him from reaching his goal.

"I will have the [Lumen Histoire]." Zeref said quietly. "And when it is mine, with its unlimited magic power, I will finally be rid of this curse. I will also be able to regain everything I've lost during these long centuries."

With that said, the throne room once again fell silent.

Chapter 549: Irene, the New Home Owner

The following day, Alfonzo, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki piled into the S 600 to leave the Village Hidden in the Leaves accompanied by Team Guy. Naturally, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki were blindfolded until the group reached the Vally of the End. Then, after arriving at the valley, and after the blindfolds were removed, the group chatted for a short while. This time was mostly used by Lee to talk with Wendy. He even managed to get her to agree to have dinner with him one day after she came back with Alfonzo.

Then, after bidding each other farewell, Alfonzo's group once again piled into the S 600 before making the trip back to Magnolia. Meanwhile, the people of Magnolia were discussing some news that had been spreading around the town for the last couple of days.

"Hey, did you hear?" The woman who ran the shop, Snitches Get Stitches, asked the owner of the shop next door to hers. "Someone finally bought the land where the Fairy Tail guild master's house used to be."

"OH, you mean that place with the frozen pile of scrap is?" A middle-aged man asked as he flipped the sign on his shop door from "Closed" to "Open." "But I thought it was too cold there for anyone to live on that land."

"Yeah, that's the place." The owner of Snitches Get Stitches replied as she also flipped the sign on her shop door. "Apparently, it was one of the new members of the guild. You know the one with red hair that looks like that one girl who always wears armor... Titania?"

"Oh, her..." The middle-aged man drawled. "I guess she must be pretty strong, then. I mean, that place has basically been uninhabitable since Alfonzo and Elicia got married two years ago, right?"

"That's right." The woman replied, once again nodding her head. "I'm not sure what happened, exactly. But I remember it getting really cold in the town the day after their wedding. Then, news of the whole house collapsing into ice shards spread throughout the town. And no one has lived there since. No one was even willing to buy the land because the place was frozen over completely."

Similar conversations could be heard taking place all over the town. News of someone buying the frozen wasteland of a property was big news to the common civilians of Magnolia, after all. Meanwhile, the woman in question, Irene, was looking over her newly purchased property. And standing at her side were a pair of young women.

The first was a slim, black-haired young woman of average height with shoulder-length hair and bangs that covered her forehead, swept slightly to the left, and frame her face and sharp black eyes. This young woman wore a bandana on her head with gold trim and a crescent-moon patterned hair ornament on the back of her head, a navy blue cloak with a crescent moon stitched on its back, and a full black body suit with net patterns stitched into its sides and forearms.

On the opposite side of Irene was a young woman with a child-like figure with brown eyes and orange hair tied into twin tails, secured with brown bows, and straight-cut bangs that covered her forehead. Her attire consisted of a long-sleeved white coat with golden bands around the cuffs of the coat, the biceps, and two bands around the torso with a pair of golden lines running down the chest, a white skirt with golden frills, and a pair of white pants tucked into a pair of white, fur-lined snow boots.

These two women were Heine Lunasea and Juliet Sun. However, despite their appearances, the two were not actually human. Instead, they were a pair of swords Irene [Enchanted] to take on a human appearance and gave personalities with her magic.

"Irene, are we really going to live here?" The orange-haired young woman, Juliet, asked while looking at the pile of ice shards curiously. "Well, I guess it's a good thing I didn't change clothes yet. Otherwise, it would be really cold here."

"Juliet, mind your words." The black-haired young woman, Heine, said sharply in a reprimanding tone. "It is not our place to question Lady Irene's decisions."

Hearing the sound of her two subordinates back and forth, Irene could not help but smile lightly. She had missed them during the time she was on Ishgar after all. And just last night, they had finally arrived after she sent for them months ago.

As Invel revealed to Zeref, Irene had contacted Heine and Juliet months ago. However, as they were both members of Alvarez' standing army, they were unable to leave until they had time off. And that time did not come until about a month ago.

However, as soon as it did, without letting anyone know, they booked the first ship to Caracole Island. And after spending a day or two on the island, they booked a ship to Ishgar before traveling from Hargeon to Magnolia and arriving the previous night.

Irene, on the other hand, after getting back her humanity, commissioned Alfonzo to design a house for her while she, Elicia, and Ikaruga were accompanying him in the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And she had already decided that she would buy the land where Ur's old house once stood.

So, as soon as the group returned in July,, she started devising the [Enchantments] needed to make that property livable again. And once she got confirmation that Heine and Juliet had left the Alvarez Empire, she started the process of buying the land.

On a side note, Irene and Brandish had been living in the same hotel they first booked when they came to investigate Alfonso. However, after Irene regained her humanity, they both decided to move out in the near future.

And while Brandish was able to find a great little apartment on Strawberry Street for only 70,000 Jewels a month, something that made Lucy almost cry when she heard about it, Irene decided she would become a home owner.

"Not to worry, Juliet." Irene replied to her cheerful sword-girl's question. "I've been preparing for this for quite some time. [Enchant: Growth]."

With that said, Irene materialized her staff, her [Soul Armament], Belserion, before tapping its end on the ground. A moment later, the entire frozen over property was covered in light. And when the light dimmed, all the ice was gone. On top of that, the lot was covered in lush grass. There was even an apple tree that grew in that short time.

Though the name of Irene's [Enchantment] was simple, it did quite a few things in that short time. First, it melted all the ice that used to be Ur's house. Next, it forced all the water produced from the melting ice into the ground before forcing any vegetation to grow with the help of the water. After that, it somehow even killed all the weeds that grew along with the grass and the tree, leaving a beautifully maintained yard to cover the entire lot.

"Wow! That was amazing!" Juliet exclaimed, clapping her hands happily as she did so. "You think so, too, right, Black Angel?"

Hearing the way Juliet addressed her, a tick mark formed on Heine's forehead as she slowly turned towards her partner.

"I believe I've asked you to not call me that, Juliet." Heine said in a cold tone as she stepped towards Juliet. "And I hope you remember what I said I'd do if you ever did it again."

"Oh, come on, Heine." Juliet said with a smile while casually waving away Heine's anger. "It's just a nickname, a term of endearment. Don't get so angry."

"\*Sigh\* Please don't call me that again." Heine said, giving up on doing anything to Juliet, as she knew it would not make a difference. Then, she looked back at the transformed lot of land as she spoke once again. "But Juliet is right, Lady Irene. Your magic is as incredible as always."

In response, Irene only smiled.

"But without a house, where are we going to live?" Juliet asked curiously. "Are we gonna set up tents? It would be just like all those missions we took back in the empire."

"No, that won't be necessary." Irene replied. "We'll be building a house on this land. The building materials should arrive shortly."

Hearing that, both Heine and Juliet looked at Irene with wonder in their gazes. They had never built a house before. So, they were uncertain as to how things would go. And Irene noticed that uncertainty from their gazes.

"I guess saying that we would be building the house is a bit inaccurate." Irene said, trying to clear her subordinates' doubts. "Rather, I'll be building the house with the use of magic."

Hearing that, Juliet's eyes widened to a comical degree. Then, she once again began clapping her hands.

"Wow! I didn't know you could do that, Irene." Juliet said in a tone of genuine amazement.

"Of course she can." Heine shot back. "Lady Irene is capable of anything."

Before the argument could continue for much longer, a caravan of carts could be seen approaching the plot of land where the three stood. And it was clear to see that building materials were loaded into all the approaching carts.

"Good, you've finally arrived." Irene said once a middle-aged man climbed down from the leading cart. "Had you been late, I would have had to book a hotel room for another night."

Hearing that, even though Irene was smiling pleasantly, the middle-aged man in charge of the material supply shop where Irene bought these materials from could feel cold sweat forming on his back.

'Something tells me that had I been late, I would not have like the consequences.' The man thought to himself while wearing a, well-practiced, professional smile. 'I'm not sure why I feel that way, but I don't wanna take any chances.'

"There was no need to worry, Miss Belserion." The man said in the calmest tone he could muster. "We of Timber Works always keep our schedule. And since you were recommended to us by Mr. Marcus, making sure that you were satisfied with our service was even more important."

"Good." Irene said with a nod as her smile widened slightly. "Your work ethic is commendable. You'll have a good life because of it."

"I hope so." The man replied. "My father always said that hard work and dedication were the way to live a fulfilling life."

"I see." Irene replied nonchalantly before turning her attention to the row of carts holding the building materials.

"But are you sure you really wanted to order this much material?" The man asked as he followed Irene's line of sight to the materials in the carts. "I mean, there is much more than necessary to build on a plot of land this size."

"You need not worry about that." Irene said as she raised her staff and pointed it at the line of carts. "That's for me to deal with, not you."

Understanding that Irene was telling him to mind his own business, the man wisely chose to shut his mouth. However, he quickly opened it again when all the materials he and his employees were

transporting began to float out of the carts. Though, his open mouth was incapable of making any sound, this time.

After about four minutes, all the materials were piled up neatly on the lawn Irene had grown with her magic. Meanwhile, all the employees of Timber Works could only look on in dumbfounded amazement. At the same time, Heine and Juliet looked at the people from Timber Works disdainfully.

"Hmph! They look like they've never seen anyone use magic before." Juliet said in a derisive tone.

"Well, they're only normal people, after all." Heine replied in an equally disdainful tone. "But if they're going to act like this, they won't go very far in this life."

Those comments were enough to snap the owner of Timber Works out of his daze.

"Well then, I suppose that concludes the material delivery." The man said in a tone that suggested he was forcing himself to sound calm. Then, he reached into the pouch on his waist and pulled out a document. "So, if you could sign here, we'll get out of your hair."

Taking the document for the man, Irene quickly read over the list of materials. And since she had checked all the delivered materials while moving them, she quickly signed the document, acknowledging that she had received the whole shipment.

"Now, you may leave." Irene said while smiling pleasantly. "I've much work to do. And you'll be in the way if you linger."

Nodding his head frantically, the man urged his subordinates to get back on to the carts before they pulled away from the lot and headed back to their shop. Meanwhile, Irene simply watched them go. Heine and Juliet, on the other hand, looked over the stacked up building materials.

"But he was right, though." Juliet said once all the carts could no longer be seen from where the trio stood. "This really does look like too much material for this little piece of land."

Though Heine agreed with Juliet, she still glared at her. She had already said that Irene's decisions were not to be questioned... Many times since they were created. But her partner never seemed to listen to her. Still, she also glanced at Irene in curiosity, wondering what her plans were.

"No, these materials are perfect for what I want built on this land." Irene said as she reached into her cleavage. "They are exactly to the specifications of the structure I commissioned Alfonzo to design."

"Alfonzo? Wasn't he the one you were ordered to investigate by his Majesty?" Juliet asked in confusion. "Why are you saying his name so affectionately?"

Though she remained silent, it was clear that Heine was also curious to know the answer to that question.

"Because he was able to do something that not even Emperor Spriggan was able to do." Irene said with a smile as she pulled several folded pieces of paper from between her breasts.

Hearing that, both Heine and Juliet leaned forward so they wouldn't miss any of Irene's following words. At the same time, Irene unfolded the sheets of paper she just produced from her cleavage. Then, she began reading over them at high speed. Naturally, those pieces of paper were the blueprints for the home Alfonso designed for her. And she was just refamiliarizing herself with them before she started the building process.

"But I think I'll leave that to you two to figure out on your own." Irene said as her smile turned slightly sadistic. And that smile widened when she saw the disappointed expressions on Heine's and Juliet's faces. "For now, let's just worry about building our new home. [Spread the Sage's Knowledge, Belserion]."

When Irene released the first seal of her [Soul Armament], it did not change much in appearance. In fact, it did not really change at all. The only thing that was different was a translucent orb that floated in the center of the claw-shaped protrusions at the top of the staff.

"[High Enchant: Domum Aedificatoris]." Irene chanted as she once again tapped her staff on the ground.

In the next instant, All the building materials were briefly covered in a bright light, the same color as the orb floating atop Irene's [Soul Armament]. Then, without any further input from Irene, they began to move and mold themselves into the shapes and sizes necessary for Irene's new home.

Now, it should be mentioned that Irene was capable of performing [High Enchantments] without releasing Belserion's seal. However, the extra magic power was necessary for the long process of building a home. Especially when you consider all the sigils that would be carved into the home's surfaces. By the time Irene's home was complete, it would be nearly as fortified as the guild hall.

"Well, now all we have to do is wait." Irene said as she watched the building materials start building her new home on their own. Then, she glanced at Heine and Juliet, who were dumbfounded by everything

that just happened, as she continued. "I only hope that it's done before Ur announces this year's S-Class candidates."

Chapter 550: How Many Is too Many?

"Alfonzo, we're not gonna be late, are we?" Wendy asked from the back seat of the S 600.

Currently, Alfonzo, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki were driving towards Magnolia's east gate in the S 600. And already, the sun had set and the time for Ur's announcement of this year's S-Class candidates was fast approaching.

"I told you we should have left yesterday." Carla said with her arms crossed from her seat on Wendy's lap. "If you had only listened, we wouldn't even be having this conversation."

While Carla's "I told you so" tone was rather annoying, Alfonzo was mostly unbothered by it. He could tell that she was only worried for Wendy's sake, after all. And ever since the little episode the two had in the Village Hidden in the Leaves, Carla had toned down her overbearing nature by quite a bit when talking to everyone else, as well.

At the same time, Alfonzo knew exactly why Carla was worried. As previously mentioned, Ur would be announcing this year's S-Class candidates before too long. And there was a good chance that Wendy would be among them. Not only Wendy, though. But Rika would probably be among them, as well. Unfortunately, Saeko, who had only been promoted to A-Class earlier this year, would most likely not be participating in this year's promotion exam.

"You two really don't need to worry." Alfonzo said from the driver's seat. "We've still got about an hour to get there. And it should only take us about thirty-five minutes from where we are. So, we'll be there with time to spare."

"And in the worst case scenario..." Rika said with her head resting against her hands while leaning back in the front passenger seat. "Alfonzo can just fly us there with his magic."

That was enough to calm Wendy by a considerable amount. Carla, on the other hand, only pouted, hoping that they would get there fast for Wendy's sake. Meanwhile, Saeko was taking this opportunity to train herself in [Magic Power Detection] as she spread her magic power as thinly as she could.

"Oh, you're getting better, Saeko." Alfonzo said with a smile after feeling Saeko's magic power. "The feeling of your magic power spread around us is getting harder to detect."

In response, Saeko smiled up at Alfonzo, briefly making eye contact with him through the rear-view mirror.

As the five Fairy Tail wizards continued to chat, Miyuki sat quietly in the back seat while she was prepared to carry out any orders she might receive from Alfonzo. However, the conversation in the magic vehicle came to an abrupt stop when Alfonzo, who had picked up something with his own [Magic Power Detection], raised an eyebrow.

"Is something wrong?" Rika asked after noticing Alfonzo's change in expression.

"No, nothing's wrong." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head lightly. "But it looks like Irene's new house is almost done."

"Huh? Irene's new house?" Wendy asked curiously. "Is she having a house built? Is it near the lake like Master Ur's and the Seto family's? Other than there, I can't think of anywhere with enough land to build a house that would suit her."

"Nah, she chose another plot of land to build on." Alfonzo replied. "And it's inside of the city proper. On top of that, it's somewhere you and Carla should be pretty familiar with."

"Me and Carla?" Wendy asked while tilting her head in confusion.

Carla, on the other hand, opened her eyes wide in surprise after thinking about what Alfonzo said for a moment.

"You mean where Ur's old house was, don't you?" Carla asked in a surprised tone. "But how is that possible? That place is still frozen over because of Ur's rampage, isn't it?"

Hearing that, Alfonzo could not help but chuckle when he remembered the episode between Gildarts and Ur the day after his and Elicia's wedding back in September of x785. Wendy, on the other hand, teared up a little remembering how her second home had been destroyed. Meanwhile, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki looked at the three with curiosity, since they were not living in Magnolia back when Ur destroyed her old house.

"And it looks like we might have two more guild mates in the near future, too." Alfonzo added with a smile.

'Then again, I'm not sure what the rules are for sentient swords joining guilds.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'But we've already got three talking cats in the guild, so, why the hell not?'

"I feel like you're thinking something rude, Alfonzo." Carla said sharply as she narrowed her eyes towards Alfonzo.

"It's just your imagination." Alfonzo said as he casually waved off Carla's glare. "Anyway, do you guys wanna stop and take a look at the progress of Irene's new house on our way back?"

"Absolutely not." Carla said strongly. "Are you intent on making us late?"

"\*Sigh\* Fine." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "It's not like we would have been late, though. I just wanted to drive by and see how my design looked in 3D."

Despite his desire to see Irene's new house, Alfonzo decided he could see it later. It was dark, anyway. So, checking it out in the morning would probably be better. So, without any delays, Alfonzo drove directly to the guild hall after entering the town. And when he parked the S 600 outside the front doors, the occupants caught sight of a few people they had not seen in a while.

"Oh, what's up, Ed, Al, and Meredy is with you, too." Alfonzo said after turning off the S 600's engine and stepping out. Then, he turned his attention towards Meredy with a grin. "So, have you started aiming for the reverse harem route, or something?"

Hearing that, Meredy started to giggle. Meanwhile, Edward frowned in annoyance. Alphonse, on the other hand, looked away sheepishly. At the same time, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki also climbed out of the S 600. And when they saw the expressions on the trio's faces, they all raised an eyebrow.

"No, that's not it, Alfonzo." Meredy said with a smile. "Winry isn't willing to share, so I finally gave up on Ed."

"So, since you couldn't have the older brother, you went after the younger one, huh?" Rika asked with a cheeky grin on her face.

"Well... Kinda." Meredy replied while a small, bashful smile crept onto her face. "But to be honest, I tried to get Winry to agree to share both of them between the two of us. But she said no even harder than my proposal to share just Ed."

"Can we not talk about this?" Edward asked in an annoyed tone.

"So, you had to explain to Winry that none of this was your idea, huh?" Alfonzo asked while glancing at Edward sympathetically.

"You have no idea..." Edward replied in an exasperated tone. "And no matter how hard I tried to explain that I was happy with just her, I still had to dodge her wrench for nearly an hour."

In response, Alfonzo patted Edward on the shoulder consolingly. However, when he was standing right next to him, he noticed something was different.

"Hmm... You've grown, Ed." Alfonzo said as he placed his right hand on top of Edward's head. Then, he used it to measure their relative heights. "About 5'6", I'd say. Not bad. I guess having your whole body back caused a late growth spurt."

At first, Edward wanted to swat Alfonzo's hand away from his head. But when Alfonzo mentioned his growth, he could not help but puff out his chest in pride. In the next instant, however, Edward was once again ready to get angry.

"You're still pretty short, though." Alfonzo said with a grin. Then, he pointed at Alphonse. "I mean, look, you're still shorter than your little brother. I guess you'll always be the little-big brother, huh?"

Hearing that, Edward was ready to explode in anger. Despite growing in height, he still had a complex about it. Before he could, though, Carla's voice put an end to that, along with the other conversation going on outside the guild hall.

"Do we really have time for this?" Carla asked with her paws resting on her hips. "Ur's announcement is gonna start any minute. I'm going inside. But if you wanna stay out here and gossip, be my guest."

With that, Carla turned away from the rest of the group and walked into the guild hall. And as she walked away, the rest of the wizards exchanged glances. Then, Edward was the first to move. After snorting at Alfonzo, he quickly entered the guild hall, as well.

Shaking his head at his brother's antics, Alphonse was the next to enter the guild hall. And he was quickly followed by Meredy, who waved at the others as she caught up to Alphonse.

"Hey, Meredy never said if they were actually dating or not." Rika said with a pout. "couldn't Carla have waited like two more minutes? I mean, we still have about fifteen minutes left. What's the rush?"

"I think she just misses Master Ur." Wendy replied with a smile. "Besides, we can just ask Meredy about her and Alphonse later. It's not like she's gonna run away, right?"

"I guess you're right." Rika replied while maintaining her pout. A moment later, however, she put on a mischievous smile. "Still, I wonder what Ur's gonna think."

"Huh?" Wendy exclaimed in confusion. "Think about what?"

"I know what you mean, Rika." Saeko said with a nod. "Next year, her daughter is gonna get married. On top of that, the two girls she all but adopted have boyfriends. I wonder if she'll feel like her girls are being stolen away."

Immediately, Wendy's face reddened furiously.

"Wh-Wha-What are you talking about?" Wendy asked, basically squeaking out her question. "M-M-Me and Lee aren't dating yet! We still have to go on our first date!"

Though no one present thought it was possible, Wendy's blush intensified after her little outburst. Then, before anyone could tease her about it, she turned away and walked into the guild hall as fast as she could without running.

"She's so cute." Rika said with a smile.

"She really is." Saeko added.

"\*Sigh\* It's too bad she's never gonna live this down, though." Alfonzo said in a feigned tone of sadness. "Ur's gonna be even more relentless in her teasing than any of us could hope to be."

Seeing Alfonzo's expression, Saeko, Rika, and Miyuki could only shake their heads. Then, after Alfonzo finally started moving towards the guild hall's doors, they followed him quickly while continuing to chat. However, when they eventually entered the guild hall, Alfonzo quickly separated from the ladies to head back stage to join the other S-Class wizards. Meanwhile, Rika and Saeko had to stop Miyuki, who tried to follow him. Then, after explaining what would happen, they all took seats to await the announcement.

About a minute later, Alfonzo arrived backstage. And when he did, he could not help but smile helplessly.

"Maybe there was a reason why Gramps only allowed one wizard to pass the exam each year." Alfonzo muttered to himself as he glanced around the room. "I mean, at this rate, we're gonna have more wizards at S-Class than wizards below it."

As he muttered to himself, Alfonzo glanced over all of Fairy Tail's S-Class wizards. Namely, Gildarts, Laxus, Elicia, Erza, Mirajane, Ultear, Cana, Fried, Sun, Gray, Natsu, Bickslow, Evergreen, Elfman, Marin, Levy, Laki, and Juvia. If he added himself and Ur, that would make a total of twenty active S-Class wizards for Fairy Tail, a number that put them above the other guilds of Fiore by a large margin.

"You're finally here." Ur, who had been paying attention to the entrance to the backstage area, said shortly after Alfonzo entered the room. "I'm actually surprised that I was the first to greet you after you came in, though. I wonder if Lici is losing her touch."

However, As she reached that point, Ur noticed that Alfonzo's expression seemed a little strange, almost as if he were kissing the air. And after noticing that, Ur narrowed her eyes. Then, she glanced in the direction where Elicia should have been chatting with Alfonzo's other wives, wives-to-be, and Laki. And when she did, she narrowed her eyes even further. Then, she sighed in exasperation a moment later.

"I missed you, too, Lici." Alfonzo said with a smile after ending his seemingly one-sided kiss with the air, not even paying attention to Ur's greeting.

"Hehehe. Welcome back, Fonzie." Elicia said, though her figure was not visible.

In the next instant, Elicia, with er arms and legs wrapped around Alfonzo's neck and torso, respectively, blurred into existence. At the same time, the Elicia who was sitting with Cana, Laki, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Sun, and Marin faded away, shocking the other six women. Then, they all glared in Alfonzo's direction. More specifically at Elicia, who was clinging to Alfonzo happily.

"Seriously, Lici?" Cana asked in a dumbfounded tone. "Did you just use [False Appearance] to make sure you were the first one to hug Fonzie and welcome him home?"

"Sure did." Elicia replied while nodding without shame. "No one is gonna beat me to being the first one to give Fonzie a hug when he gets home."

"But do you seriously have to resort to trickery?" Mirajane asked while smiling pleasantly.

"For real." Ultear added. "You should just train harder so that you're faster than us."

"Hmph!" Elicia snorted. "You all can say that when you have a baby. I couldn't train seriously for almost a year. Otherwise, none of you would be fast enough to give Fonzie a hug before me."

While most of those in the waiting room did not pay any attention to the back and forth between Alfonzo's wives and wives-to-be, Ur could feel her eyebrows starting to twitch in irritation. She had already spoken to Alfonzo shortly after he entered the room. Yet, she had still not been acknowledged.

"You all can argue about that later." Ur said in a low, menacing tone. "For now, it's time to announce this year's S-Class candidates. Now, let's go."

Hearing that, the argument stopped immediately. Then, everyone in the backstage area nodded in agreement as they all stood up and started to make their way to the stage.

"Uh... Ur, can I say something first?" Alfonzo asked while smiling sheepishly.

"What is it?" Ur asked in a tone that made it clear she was still upset about being ignored.

"Well, maybe we should go back to only passing one wizard a year." Alfonzo said while scratching the side of his head. "I mean, we've already got twenty S-Classes in this room, and that number doesn't include Mystogan. On top of that, you plan on promoting both Irene and Brandish without the exam, right? At this rate, we're gonna have more S-Classes than wizards who aren't S-Class, you know."

That statement caused all the wizards present to stop in their tracks. Then, they all looked around at the other nineteen people in the room.

"Wow, being S-Class doesn't feel so prestigious when there are this many, does it?" Evergreen asked.

"Yeah... It feels kinda common, doesn't it?" Marin asked.

"The Kid might be right, Ur." Gildarts said as he scratched his head. "I never really thought about why the Old Man only allowed one wizard to pass until now. But it kinda makes sense, doesn't it."

"\*Sigh\* I guess you're right." Ur said while shaking her head. "I just always felt it was a pity that only one person could pass each year. But I guess there was a reason for it. On top of not overcrowding the ranks of S-Class, it also kept the wizards striving for improvement in a competitive atmosphere. \*Sigh\* I guess we'll be going back to only one pass per year. On top of that, we'll have to make the grading criteria stricter, too. Oh, and we can't give [Soul Armaments] to every candidate anymore, either..."

With that, Ur continued to mutter to herself about what should and should not be changed about the S-Class Promotion Exam. Meanwhile, all the S-Class wizards had no idea if they should sit back down or make their way out onto the stage.

In the end, Ur's announcement of the S-class candidates was an hour behind schedule. Needless to say, the A-Class and below members of the guild were not happy to be left waiting like that, with Irene, Heine, and Juliet the most irritated of the bunch, despite the fact that they were half an hour late for the scheduled time.