

## Fairy Tail 561

Chapter 561: x787 S-Class Promotion Exam; Part 1

Not long after docking the ship, Ur led the wizards from Fairy Tail onto the island. Then, about half an hour later, the group reached the temporary arena that was set up for the S-Class Promotion Exam.

On one side of the stage that would be used for the fights, there was a viewing stand set up, where all the S-Class wizards who were already on the island were sitting. Upon seeing it Alfonzo, Irene, and Brandish immediately made their way there. Meanwhile, Ur led the eight S-Class candidates onto the ring.

"Didn't expect to see you two today." Gildarts said after noticing Irene and Brandish approaching with Alfonzo. "I thought newly promoted wizards who were promoted without an exam weren't eligible to be examiners."

"Ah, I guess Ur didn't tell anyone." Irene said with a smirk. "Apparently, that was the last master's rule. But Ur decided to do away with it."

"I see." Gildarts said as he turned his attention back to the ring.

'She bullied Ur into letting them participate, didn't she?' All the other S-Class wizards thought simultaneously.

While Alfonzo, Irene, and Brandish were getting seated, Ur was once again explaining the rules to the S-Class candidates. And since none of the rules had changed since last week, it did not take long.

"Alright, you all know how this works." Ur said as she made her casting gesture. "[Ice-Make: Lottery]. There are eight numbered balls of ice in here. Each of you will take one. Then, the bracket for the tournament will be set up based on the numbers each of you receive. So, who's first?"

As soon as Ur made her casting gesture, she cast the spell while continuing to speak. Then, a box made of ice was materialized in her hands. And just as she said, there were eight ice balls, number one to eight, inside the box. And once she finished speaking, the eight participants exchanged glances, as if they were trying to decide who would go first.

"Fine, if you are all too scared, I'll go first." Gajeel said condescendingly as he took a step forward.

A moment later, Gajeel thrust his hand into the ice box. Then after swirling it around for a moment, he pulled his hand back out.

"Two." Gajeel said after looking at the ball in his hand. "I guess that means I'll be in the first match. I feel sorry for whoever pulls the ball with one on it."

After that, Gajeel tossed the ball off the ring. Then, he stepped away from Ur, crossed his arms in front of his chest, and smirked at the remaining candidates.

Thanks to Gajeel's provocation, the others were no longer concerned with who went next. So, they each stepped up and pulled a ball out of the box. In the end, the first round of the tournament looked like this.

Alphonse Elric Vs. Gajeel Redfox

Masa Vs. Edward Elric

Wendy Marvell Vs. Alzack Connell

Lucy Heartfilia Vs. Rika Minami

"With that, the bracket is set." Ur said once Lucy, the last one to pull a ball from the box reported her number. "The rules are simple. You fight until someone is unconscious, stays down for ten counts, or is unable to return to the ring after ten counts. Got it? Good. Now, the rest of you, get out of the ring. Alphonse, Gajeel, you stay and prepare for battle."

With that said, Ur turned around and started walking towards the viewing stands. Then, once she took a seat in the front row at the center of the stands, she glanced at the fighters in the ring.

"Fight!" Ur ordered without introducing the fighters.

With that, the fight began. While Gajeel used his [Dragon Slayer Magic] to pressure Alphonse, Alphonse was able to counter smoothly with his [Alchemy]. And for a while, the fight was a stalemate. However, when Gajeel used [Iron Dragon Incarnation], things turned in Gajeel's favor. In the end, due to fatigue, Alphonse was unable to avoid a powerful punch and was knocked out.

The next match was between Masa and Edward. And this match was much shorter than the previous match. Although Izumi had trained Edward well, Masa was not human. So, he was physically much stronger than Edward. And when Masa was able to bring the match into close quarters, Edward had no chance, making Masa the winner by ten count after Edward had taken too many hits to continue.

The third match was between Wendy and Alzack. And it was the longest match of the first round of the tournament. While Wendy's use of [Sky Dragon Slayer Magic] was able to counter most of Alzack's [Guns Magic] by altering the bullets' trajectories, and her use of Tsunade's [Magic Power Strengthening Technique] made it dangerous for Alzack to fight at close range, she lacked patience when compared to Alzack. So, after nearly forty minutes of back and forth, Wendy made a risky move. Unfortunately, that risk did not pan out for her. As a result, Alzack managed to land several [glue Shots] that adhered her to the ring long enough for Ur to count to ten.

"She's quite skilled for her age." Irene said after Alzack was declared the winner. "Unfortunately, her experience and battle awareness are lacking. But I'll make sure to rectify that shortcoming during our training to come.

"You know, I kinda feel sorry for Wendy." Ultear muttered, though it was loud enough for everyone to hear.

In response, all the S-Class wizards nodded their heads in agreement. All of them except for Alfonzo, anyway.

"I don't know why you'd say that, Tear." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I mean, Wendy has had two of the most powerful women on Ishgar train her in the past. And now, she's about to be taught by the most powerful of them. Is there really any reason to feel sorry for her? Sure, I'm sure she's gonna go through some shit, but... No pain, no gain, you know?"

With that, everyone stopped to think about Alfonzo's words. Then, they all realized he was right. A moment later, most of them were looking at Wendy with envy. Meanwhile, Irene was looking at Alfonzo with appreciation in her gaze.

'He's probably the smartest person in this guild full of muscle heads.' Irene thought to herself. 'Now, I can understand why Erza is so in love with him. \*Sigh\* If he wasn't married to my daughter, perhaps I would try my luck with him.'

With that thought passing through her head, Irene glanced at Erza, who was paying attention to the ring, where Lucy and Rika were climbing into it. Then, she shook her head with an unreadable expression on her face.

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

'If I didn't say what I did, I can only imagine the shit Irene would have put the others through.' Alfonzo thought to himself while quickly glancing at Irene. 'I mean, with her personality, she would have, at the very least, made Tear pay for saying that about her. And the rest would have probably been punished a little for agreeing with her. \*Sigh\* The things I do to keep my guild mates safe.'

"Anyway, this match probably isn't gonna go well for Lucy." Alfonzo said.

"What do you mean?" Cana asked curiously. "Lucy can summon like three of her Celestial Spirits at the same time now, right? So, there will be like four of them coming at Rika all at once. And if you add Lucy's [Star Dress], she's a freakin' powerhouse."

"In most cases, you would be right, Cana." Elicia said while shaking her head. "but Rika's [Multiscope] spell makes numbers useless. On top of that, she's probably one of the better trained candidates in the tournament. I mean, she was basically the ace of the Knights' Special Forces Unit, remember?"

At that moment, Ur gave the signal for Lucy and Rika to begin. And just like Cana said, Lucy quickly summoned three Celestial Spirits, Leo, Gemini, and Aries. A moment later, Gemini transformed into Lucy and summoned another Spirit, Scorpio, while Lucy used Taurus' [Star Dress], which transformed her outfit into a white, cow-patterned bra with white tassels hanging over her ribs, a black sleeve on her left arm, a pair of fingerless, cow-hide gloves, a pair of pants with no left pant leg, and a pair of cow-hide cowboy boots. On top of that, thanks to using Taurus' [Star Dress] Lucy's physical strength increased by a considerable margin.

Despite the fact that the fight had turned from a one on one to a five on one, Rika remained calm. While Lucy was summoning her Spirits and wearing her [Star Dress], Rika backed off to the edge of the ring. Then, she pulled a rifle, not her favorite sniper rifle, though, off her back and loaded a cartridge filled with [Magic Bullets].

"[Target Magic: Multiscope]." Rika chanted as she raised her rifle. "[Guns Magic: Stun Shot]."

\*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\*

In the next instant, just before Lucy's [Star Dress] transformation was completed, Rika pulled the trigger five times in quick succession, firing once at each target on the other side of the ring. While Leo and Scorpio were able to dodge the incoming bullets and Aries was able to get up a [Wool Wall] just in time to protect herself, Lucy, whose transformation had ended only an instant before, and Gemini were hit. And as the [Stun Shots] made contact, they released a current of Electricity that immobilized Gemini and rendered Lucy unconscious.

"Wow..." Marin muttered after seeing how quickly Lucy was taken out. She then continued after Ur declared Rika the winner and announced a fifteen minute break. "What... just happened?"

"More than likely, because Lucy considered this a duel between guild mates, she probably thought that Rika would wait until she was prepared." Alfonzo said. "So, she had yet to raise her guard. But this is not just a duel between guild mates. This is an exam to see if the wizards are ready to be promoted to S-Class."

"That's how it looked to me, too." Laxus added. "She needs to work on her situational awareness."

"Well, in her defense, this is her first exam, you know." Cana pointed out. "and most of us didn't pass on your first time, either."

"I did!" Alfonzo said with a smile while raising his hand. "I beat an S-Class wizard in that exam, too."

"Dick..." Laxus muttered in response. Then, he raised his volume to a normal speaking volume. "I passed on my first time, too."

"As did I." Erza added.

"Ooh! Me, too. Me, too." Marin exclaimed excitedly.

Everyone else, however, could only remain silent. Because of the nineteen S-Class wizards present who passed a promotion exam, those four were the only ones who passed on their first try.

Even Gildarts, the longtime ace of the guild, only passed on his third try, courtesy of Bianca, who scored higher than him in their first promotion exam. As for the second, Gildarts managed to piss Bianca off only three days before the exam. So, she vowed that she would make sure he did not pass, allowing Orlando to become the second member of their old team to make S-class.

"Fonzie's right, though." Elicia said, circling back to the previous topic of conversation. "If we had been allowed to train with her for the exam, we could have gotten Lucy out of that mindset. In fact, we could have done it a lot sooner. But with Fonzie working outside of the town, taking care of Mar'e, and all the other stuff going on, we kinda forgot."

"Well, if she qualifies again, she can try again next year." Ur said. "There's no doubt in my mind, she'll be an S-Class wizard in the next five years."

"Either way, this is where the tournament starts to get fun." Alfonzo said with a smile. "The four most experienced wizards are left in the tournament. And I still say Masa is going to win."

With that, a new discussion about who would come out victorious in the tournament started. And it continued until the fifteen minute break was over. Then, everyone once again focused on the matches to come.

Chapter 562: x787 S-Class Promotion Exam; Part 2

The fifteen minute intermission passed quickly. As soon as it did, Gajeel and Masa both jumped into the ring. Not even a second later, seeing that they were staring each other down, Ur announced the beginning of the fight.

"Fight!" Ur ordered in an authoritative tone.

Immediately, Gajeel dashed forward with his right fist reeled back for a punch.

"[Iron Dragon's Club]." Gajeel chanted as he threw his fist forward.

Reacting quickly, Masa evaded with minimal movements by tilting his upper body to the right. However, by the time he straightened up, Gajeel was already in his face. Still, Masa was able to chant a spell before Gajeel began his onslaught.

"[Enhancement Magic: Full body Enhancement]." Masa chanted as he tilted his head to the left, avoiding a jab from Gajeel.

Following his jab, Gajeel threw a series of punches and kicks. However, Masa was able to avoid them easily. Then, after about a minute, Masa once again tilted his head to the left, avoiding a right cross that Gajeel overextended on. And with his years of fighting experience, Masa capitalized on the mistake, immediately.

Masa then, while riding the little bit of momentum tilting his head produced, whipped his right elbow into Gajeel's left jaw. Then he followed up by kicking Gajeel's leading leg, causing him to lose his balance for a moment. After that, he gripped Gajeel's shirt with both hands before throwing him over his shoulder.

\*Bang!\*

In the next instant, Gajeel, without being able to break his fall, slammed back first into the ring. However, that did not even seem to slow him down, as he flipped up kicking both feet, which had blades extending from their soles at Masa's chest.

Dodging quickly, Masa hopped backwards, though there were a pair of tears in his suit jacket.

"Now that I think about it, how is he just fine while wearing a suit like that in this heat?" Marin asked in a curious tone.

'It's because he's Masa~.' Alfonzo and Elicia simultaneously replied internally.

At the same time, back in the ring, Gajeel was standing across from Masa while rubbing his jaw.

"Not bad, old man." Gajeel said with a battle thirsty grin. "If I knew you could hit like that, I would have challenged you to a fight much earlier. But now, I think it's time to kick it up a notch. [Iron Dragon's Scales]. [Iron Dragon's Sword]."

Chanting two spells in quick succession, Gajeel was covered in silvery, metallic dragon scales. On top of that, his right hand elongated, growing into a double-edged blade. Only a moment later, he reached to his back with his left hand and unsheathed the bastard sword that was his [Soul Armament] in its sealed form.

At the same time, Masa spread his legs, dropping into a fighting stance. Then, as he spread his arms to either sides, he flicked his wrists, causing three small knives to fall out of each of his sleeves before catching them between the fingers of each hand.

"You think those knives will be able to do anything to me?" Gajeel asked as he dashed forward. "I'm an Iron Dragon Slayer. Metal weapons can't hurt me."

"Oh, I'm quite aware." Masa said in a tone filled with poise. "but I'd rather not have you damage my suit any more than you already have."

By that point, Gajeel was in striking range once again. Then, he immediately swung his right arm, the blade transformed from his hand cutting towards Masa's right shoulder.

In response, Masa turned his body by a quarter, narrowly avoiding the slash. Then, he raised his right hand, intercepting the horizontal slash from Gajeel's [soul Armament], Metalicana, with the knives he held between his fingers. A moment later, Masa threw a high kick that landed on Gajeel's chin, sending the Iron Dragon slayer into the air.

"Hahaha! This just keeps getting better and better!" Gajeel cried excitedly while rising into the air. "Even with my [Iron Dragon Scales], I felt that one."

Not paying Gajeel any mind, Masa quickly threw two of his knives up into the air. However, it was obvious they would miss Gajeel, not that it would make a difference even if they hit him.

"I gotta say, old man, you should stick to fighting in close quarters." Gajeel said as he righted his posture in the air. "Your aim sucks."

"[Knife Magic: Knife Substitution]." Masa chanted calmly, completely unbothered by Gajeel's taunt.

In the next instant, at the moment Masa's knives were positioned over Gajeel's head, Masa vanished from where he stood. At the same time, the knives he threw dropped onto the ring harmlessly in the spot where he once stood.

"Oh, sh---" Gajeel muttered as Masa appeared above him positioned upside down in the air.

"[Enhancement Magic: Right Leg Enhancement, Full Power]." Masa chanted.

With Masa's chant, the magic power that was enhancing his whole body was all transferred into his right leg. Then, with great force, he kicked the air above him, creating a shockwave and shooting himself downwards. At the same time, using the momentum from his kick, Masa flipped himself around, bringing down an axe kick on the top of Gajeel's head.

\*Bang!\*

\*Boom!\*

With the force behind Masa's kick, Gajeel was sent hurdling down towards the ring. Then, on impact, the ring exploded, kicking up a cloud of dust. At the same time, Masa once again kicked the air, changing his falling direction before eventually landing outside of the dust cloud and picking up his previously discarded knives.

It took a few seconds for the dust cloud to settle. However, thanks to [Magic Power Detection], everyone knew that Gajeel was standing up. Naturally, that included Masa, who simply waited for the cloud to settle, while retaking his fighting stance and spreading his [Enhancement Magic] to his whole body again.

"Ugh... That really hurt." Gajeel's voice sounded out from the dust cloud. "But that's not enough to take me down. Now, it's really time to get serious. [Iron Dragon Incarnation]."

In the next instant, the dust cloud was blown away by a swipe of the tail Gajeel gained whenever he used [Iron Dragon Incarnation]. In its place, Gajeel covered in a thick, metallic armor that made him look like a humanoid version of Metalicana, stood with the [Iron Dragon Sword] dispelled and his [Soul Armament] still in his left hand. However, this time, Masa did not give him the chance to attack first, dashing forward as soon as the dust cloud was cleared.

"I don't think so." Gajeel said as he raised his hands in front of his mouth. "[Iron Dragon's Roar]!"

Gajeel then blew a swirling metallic breath between his hands at Masa. At the same time that Gajeel raised his hands, Masa once again threw his knives. However, instead of only two of his knives, he threw all six of them. Then, at a speed that was barely perceivable, he swept his arm forward once again.

"[Knife Magic: Four Corner Cut]." Masa chanted as he lowered his posture.

In response, Gajeel stopped supplying magic power to his breath attack. Then, he swung his sword in an arc, deflecting five of the six knives, with the sixth knife having been sent flying by the [Iron Dragon's Roar]..

"Knife Magic: Knife Substitution]." Masa once again chanted his teleportation magic, causing a single knife to appear where he once stood.

At the same time, Masa appeared right in front of Gajeel with his posture lowered.

"What, where did you come from? My [Iron dragon's Roar sent that knife flying. I saw it sail out of the ring."

In reality, although it was true that one of Masa's knives went flying, that was by design. Because the second time he swept his arm, he threw a seventh knife that collided with the one that was hit by the breath attack, at the exact same time. As a result, only one sound was produced while the last knife Masa threw ricocheted towards Gajeel's feet as the other one was sent flying out of the ring.

"Not that it matters, you'll never be able to break through the scales of an Iron Dragon." Gajeel said as he raised his [Soul Armament].

"Why do I have to break through them if I can attack what's inside directly?" Masa asked as he threw a palm strike that landed on Gajeel's chest.

\*Clang!\*

Instead of flesh meeting an iron object, the sound of Masa's strike echoed around as if his hand were made of metal. Meanwhile, Masa and Gajeel remained in their positions, with Masa's hand resting against Gajeel's chest and Gajeel with his sword raised in the air, ready to swing it down.

A moment later, Gajeel dropped his [Iron Dragon Incarnation] then, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, that Masa stepped back to avoid.

"Damn... You hit me in a way that caused a vibration to go right through my scales, huh?" Gajeel asked in a pained tone.

As soon as he asked his question, however, Gajeel fainted and fell to the ring.

"The winner is Masa!" Ur announced as soon as Gajeel hit the ring.

With the declaration of his victory, Masa immediately stepped forward and picked up Gajeel. Then, he rushed over to Wendy.

"I had to be pretty heavy handed, Miss Wendy." Masa said after arriving in front of Wendy. "So, I'm afraid he's probably pretty injured. I do hope you could heal him before it's too late."

"Oh, of course." Wendy said as Masa laid Gajeel on the ground in front of her. Then, she knelt in front of Gajeel, as well, and used the diagnostic spell she learned from Tsunade. After assessing Gajeel's injuries, Wendy lay her palms on his chest. "[Sky Dragon's Mystical Healing Palm Jutsu]."

The spell Wendy just cast combined the [Heal] spell of her [Sky Dragon Slayer Magic] and the [Mystical Palm Jutsu] from the [Medical Ninjutsu] she learned from Tsunade.

"Wendy really has come a long way as a healer." Ur said with a proud smile on her face. "Last time I saw her heal someone, she used those two spell sequentially. But now, she's found a way to fuse them perfectly."

"Yeah, I guess that time in the Leaf Village's hospital really helped her advance her techniques." Alfonzo added with a smile of his own. "I wonder what Master Tsunade would say if she saw this."

"It's too bad Ur changed the rule back to only one wizard passing each year, huh?" Elicia said while smiling mischievously. "Otherwise, she would have probably been promoted for her prowess as a healer alone."

"Yeah, but unfortunately, Mom said in the rules that only the winner of the tournament has a chance to be promoted this year." Ultear added while shaking her head in a disappointed fashion. "\*Sigh\* It's too bad for Wendy, huh?"

Immediately, Ur's eyebrow started twitching. Then, she glared at Alfonzo fiercely. He was the one who put the idea that there were too many S-Class wizards in the guild into her head, after all. After seeing her glare, Alfonzo felt like he knew exactly what Ur was thinking. However, Alfonzo paid her no mind. She was the guild master, and she made the decision without discussing it with the S-Classes. So, it was her responsibility to bear.

While the S-Class wizards continued discussing Wendy's improvements and ridiculing Ur's decision to lower the number of wizards to be promoted again, Alzack and Rika hopped into the ring and waited for the match to begin.

Eventually, Ur noticed that Alzack and Rika were in the ring. So, to make sure that she did not explode in anger, she announced the beginning of the fight while putting all her attention on it so that she did not have to hear everyone making fun of her.

\*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\*

As soon as the signal was given, Alzack drew his pistols, Ebony and Ivory before rapid firing at Rika. In response, Rika dashed to the side, enhancing her speed with magic power, avoiding all of Alzack's magic power infused bullets. At the same time, she pulled her rifle off her back. Then, while running, she aimed at Alzack and squeezed the trigger.

In the next instant, a stream of bullets were fired towards Alzack. However, despite the fact that he was only using a pair of pistols, Alzack, after he stopped firing at Rika, managed to shoot down all the incoming bullets while occasionally reloading.

Eventually, both wizards stopped shooting as they stared each other in the eyes.

"\*Sigh\* If you were this good a shot a few months ago, I might have either asked Bisca to share you or fight her for you, you know." Rika said with a smile. "Unfortunately, you showed me your skill a bit too late."

Hearing that, Alzack began dripping cold sweat from his forehead.

"Please, never tell Bisca that." Alzack begged. "She said if I ever tried to copy Alfonzo and have a harem, she would use my balls for target practice."

Immediately upon hearing that, Rika started laughing hysterically. Not only Rika, though. In fact, everyone present started laughing at Alzack's panicked expression. But the laughter died down quickly enough.

"Damn, that was funny." Rika said while wiping a tear from her eyes. "But now's not the time to laugh, we've got a fight to finish.. Come on, let's go."

"No, the fight's already over." Alzack said as he pointed at a small pit in the ring under Rika's feet.

"Huh?" Rika exclaimed in confusion as she looked down at the spot where Alzack was pointing. And when she noticed a magic bullet that was still emitting magic power, she could not help but curse. "Well, shit... You actually perfected it."

"That's right." Alzack replied with a nod. "[Guns Magic: Delayed Shot: Tornado Shot."

With that, the bullet lodged into the ring under Rika burst into a column of violently spinning wind that threw Rika into the air with great force and cut at her with wind blades before twisting around and slamming her onto the ground outside of the ring.

With Rika outside of the ring, Ur started her ten count. Meanwhile, Rika struggled to pick herself up. However, thanks to all the cuts, the loss of blood, and the pain from slamming into the ground, Rika was unable to get back into the ring in time. Though, through sheer willpower alone, she did get close.

"Ten!" Ur shouted, finishing her ten count. "Winner by ring out, Alzack Connell. Now, there will be a thirty minute break. Wizards, use that time wisely to prepare."

With Ur's declaration, Rika passed out, falling to the ground. At the same time, Wendy, who had just finished healing Gajeel to an acceptable degree, sprinted towards Rika, once again beginning the healing process.

"Wow! Wendy really is the MVP of this exam." Cana said in a feigned forlorn tone. "\*Sigh\* If it weren't for Ur's brash decision, she would definitely be promoted to S-Class this year."

"That's it!" Ur roared in anger. "I've had enough! You wanna see a brash decision? I'll show all you brats what a real brash decision looks like."

Immediately, all the wizards who were making fun of Ur vanished from their seats in bursts of speed. At the same time, Ur started chasing them all around Tenrou Island. And the entire thirty minute break was filled with the sound of trees, rocks, and anything else that got in Ur's way, freezing and breaking while chasing the S-Class wizards.

Chapter 563: x787 S-Class Promotion Exam; Part 3

After destroying a good portion of the forest, Ur and the other S-Class wizards returned to the viewing stands by the ring. Once they were all seated, though Ur still seemed angry, Alzack and Masa hopped into the ring. This would be the last match of the tournament and everyone was looking forward to the outcome.

"Are the two of you ready?" Ur asked in an authoritative tone. After receiving nods from both fighters, she continued. "Then, Fight!"

Immediately after receiving the signal, Alzack drew his pistols. However, before he could even pull the triggers, Masa had already taken off running.

"[Enhancement Magic: Full Body Enhancement]." Masa chanted while running.

At the same time, Alzack started shooting. However, with his spell chanted, Masa's speed increased exponentially. As a result, none of Alzack's shots landed. Still, he did not give up. As soon as one of his magazine's was emptied, he swiped his pistol down towards his thigh, quickly reloading with the magazines that were strapped onto his thighs.

"[Guns Magic: Mud Shot]." Alzack chanted as he changed the direction of one of his pistols. Then, he fired a bullet at the ring in front of Masa. As soon as the magic bullet made contact with the ring, it exploded into a blob of thick, viscous mud. As a result, Masa's speed was slowed significantly.

In response, Masa swept his left arm in Alzack's direction, causing dozens of knives to be sent flying.

"[Knife Magic: Iron Maiden]." Masa chanted as he slowed down to not lose his footing.

"No way I'm letting any of those get close." Alzack muttered as he changed his magazines back to normal magic bullets and began shooting down all the incoming projectiles.

However, what Alzack forgot is the fact that Masa had other ways of getting close other than using [Knife Substitution]. While Alzack was busy dealing with the numerous knives that all changed directions to skewer him all over, Massa also changed direction and started running directly at Alzack.

Along the way, Masa easily dodged the bullets that ricocheted in his direction after hitting his knives. By the time Masa eventually arrived in front of Alzack, Alzack had dealt with all the flying knives, negating the effects of Masa's spell.

"I knew I'd be no match for you when fighting at range." Masa said as he flicked his wrist, causing knives to fall from his sleeves. Then, with three knives gripped between the fingers of each hand, Masa continued. "So, let's see how you do up close."

\*Clang!\*

With that said, Masa swept his right hand at Alzack's left shoulder. However, Alzack raised the pistol in his right hand to block. Then, Alzack swept his right arm in a circular motion towards the right side of his body, bringing Masa's arm along with it. Then, he raised the pistol in his left hand and...

\*Bang!\*

\*Ting!\*

Fired a bullet at the right side of Masa's torso. However, with incredible reflexes, Masa was able to bring the knives in his left hand across his body to block Alzack's bullet. Then, following the momentum from having his first strike redirected, Masa lashed out with his left heel, throwing a roundhouse kick at Alzack's temple.

Reacting just as quickly, Alzack ducked his head to avoid the kick while simultaneously changing the magazine in the pistol in his left hand. Then, he fired a bullet at the ground below Masa's feet.

"[Guns Magic: Ice Shot]." Alzack chanted.

Before Alzack could pull the trigger, however, Masa had already flicked one of the knives in his left hand behind Alzack. So, as soon as the bullet made contact with the ring, Masa disappeared, a single knife falling to the frozen ring in his place.

At the same time, as Masa reappeared behind Alzack, he raked his knives down at Alzack's back. However, because of [Magic Power Detection], Alzack had felt Masa's reappearance. Unfortunately, he knew he was not fast enough to evade the attack completely. Doing what he could, Alzack threw himself forward. Though, he was still cut on his back.

"Ugh!" Alzack grunted as he felt the searing pain on his back.

Despite the pain, Alzack rolled forward. As he did, he picked up the knife that fell when Masa teleported. Then, after he rolled away, Alzack killed his momentum before pushing himself up into a kneeling position, he threw the knife with all his might, irritating his injury in the process.

In response, Masa tilted his body out of the knife's flight path. Before he could straighten up, however...

\*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\* \*Bang!\*

Alzack fired his pistols several times in quick succession. Though, none of the bullets managed to hit Masa. And that was by design, something Masa noticed. In fact, all the bullets ended up imbedded in the ring in a circle around Masa. And Masa knew this could turn out bad for him if those bullets detonated.

Masa had already seen that Alzack had the ability to delay the effects of his magic bullets, and he did not want to be in the center of all their magical effects. So, he threw one of his knives outside of the circle to once again use [Knife Substitution], thinking that if he tried to jump over them, Alzack would detonate them immediately.

However, to Masa's surprise, when he cast [Knife Substitution], he did not move. And when he realized what was happening, he could not help but smile wryly at Alzack.

"Well played, Alzack." Masa said. "You've really had Alfonzo make magic bullets for every situation, haven't you?"

"Yeah, he told me about that one guy from the Magic Council that could teleport." Alzack said as he struggled to stand up, despite the wound on his back. "So, I thought, if I ever had to fight someone like that, I couldn't let him run away. And with that thought, these [Space Magic] disruption bullets were made. I never thought I'd have to use them like this, though."

In fact, ever since Himiko had used Mest's powers to escape from him in Cedar, Alfonzo had been working on a way to stop teleportation. And one day, Alzack had asked him what he was working on. So, Alfonzo naturally explained the [Space Magic] disruption and why he made it.

Hearing Alfonzo's explanation, Alzack asked him to make some of those bullets for him and Bisca, just in case they ever came across Himiko while they were out on a quest. Fortunately, they never did. So, these bullets stayed in Alzack's arsenal ever since then.

And today, they came in handy. Because despite the fact that [Knife Substitution] was a [Knife Magic] spell. It was undoubtedly a spell that used the principles of [Space Magic], as well. It was just less versatile than the actual [Teleportation] spell, as an item was needed to act as an anchor point before teleportation could be initiated.

"Well, now I know that I have to be wary of all your bullets from now on." Masa said. "It was a mistake on my part. I didn't even know Alfonzo had created magic items like that. \*Sigh\* I just hope the Boss isn't too disappointed in me."

"I don't think you need to worry about that." Alzack said while smiling awkwardly. "I bet he'll take it better than you think. Anyway, let's end this. [Guns Magic: Delayed Shot: Flame Cyclone]."

With that, about half of the magic bullets embedded in the ring around Masa activated. And with half of those bullets being [Firestorm Shots], and the other half being [Tornado Shots], the effects combined smoothly to produce a fiercely burning, rotating column of fire.

A moment later, after being blown up into the air, Masa fell heavily into the ring. And despite all the damage his suit took from the flames, his sunglasses and afro were still in perfect condition.

"Well done, Alzack." Masa said, still sounding just as poised as ever. "I'll challenge you to a rematch in the future. And I'll definitely make sure I'm ready for whatever you can throw at me."

With that said, Masa calmly turned his head away from Alzack before losing consciousness.

'Masa~!' Alfonzo and Elicia thought simultaneously after seeing Masa's cool display even after suffering defeat.

"The winner is Alzack!" Ur announced loudly. Then, she looked directly at Alzack, who was clearly in pain from the injuries to his back. "There will be another break. Once Alzack is healed, he will choose the S-Class wizard he wishes to challenge for his opportunity to be promoted to S-Class."

Reaching that point, Ur turned her attention to Wendy.

"I'm sorry to have to keep asking this of you, Wendy." Ur said as she could hear everyone who had been making fun of her earlier start to snicker. "but can you take care of healing Alzack and Masa?"

"Of course." Wendy replied as she ran towards Masa, who was more heavily injured, to start healing him.

"Until then, you are all free to do as you please." Ur said. "However, I expect everyone to be present for the final part of this year's promotion exam. Now, dismissed."

With that, Ur left the stands quickly, to avoid any more ridicule from her wizards, with Gildarts following close behind her. Meanwhile, the other S-Class wizards went to talk to the candidates.

"Lucy, what are we gonna do with you?" Elicia asked as she approached Lucy and wrapped her in a hug. "although the exam was little more than a spar, it was still more than that."

"\*Sigh\* I know." Lucy said, sounding disappointed in herself. "It's just that I've sparred with everyone so many times over the years that it's hard to get into the right frame of mind when I fight them."

"Don't worry, we'll definitely be working on that." Alfonzo said as he started combing his fingers through Lucy's hair. "You have to be able to turn it on and off on command in this line of work. And when we're done with you, you will be able to do just that."

"Now I feel kinda scared." Lucy said while smiling wryly. A moment later, she put on an expression filled with determination. "But I will definitely be ready for anything in the future."

As Lucy made her declaration, Rika approached Alfonzo, his wives, and his fiancées. And she had an annoyed expression on her face. Though, anyone who knew her would be able to tell she was faking her annoyance.

"Seriously, Alfonzo?" Rika said, stopping in front of Alfonzo with her hands resting on her hips. "We lived together for more than a month. And you couldn't tell me that Alzack had finally completed his [Delayed Shot] spell? I thought we had something special."

Smiling at Rika's act, Alfonzo could only shake his head.

"Rika, I've been away from the guild for most of the year." Alfonzo replied. "Do you really think I knew what Alzack had up his sleeves for this exam?"

"You should have, you're his best friend." Rika shot back. "And if you had told me about it, I would have made it worth your while, you know?"

As she reached the end of her sentence, Rika raised her right hand to her mouth before playfully, yet seductively, licking it.

"Seriously, Rika?" Alzack shouted from next to Wendy, who was still healing Masa. "You're trying to seduce my best friend into giving up my secrets?"

"Oh, don't get me started with you, Alzack." Rika barked back while pointing her right index finger at Alzack.

"Could you please not point the finger you were just licking at me?" Alzack muttered.

"We're on the same team." Rika continued, ignoring Alzack's muttering. "You should have told me about your new move either way."

"It's not like you were even at the guild for the last month or so." Alzack continued muttering. "And I only made it work after you left with Alfonzo. And as soon as you got back, we were named S-Class candidates and told we'd be fighting each other."

"That's not an excuse." Rika countered. "We all have iPhones. You could have called and told me."

"Tch! Whatever." Cana said while rolling her eyes. " I don't have anything to say about Alzack not telling you about his new spell. But it's obvious the only reason you said that to Fonzie was because you were looking for a reason to let him into your panties. But you can't be honest about it. You're just like Tear who can't be honest about how she wants Fonzie to--- MMMPH!"

"Okay, Cana, you don't have to bring that up all the time!" Ultear said as she forcefully covered Cana's mouth with her hands. Then, she looked around cautiously. "Especially when we're not at home. You don't need to tell my secret to everyone, right?"

"Yeah, like everyone doesn't already know by now." Mirajane said while smiling pleasantly. "It's not like you've been able to stop Cana from saying something every time."

"Yeah, but at least everyone pretends not to know if Cana doesn't say anything." Ultear replied as she took her hands away from Cana's mouth and slumped her shoulders.

"Then, you should just be honest about your desires." Cana said in a feigned tone of disdain. "Nobody likes someone who always hides their true feelings."

"One of these days, Cana." Ultear said as she raised her fist in Cana's direction.

"Any time, Tear." Cana replied with a battle thirsty grin. "We've always been on the same team in the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament, the only time we really go all-out when we fight guild mates. So, I haven't had the chance to fight all-out with you since the promotion exam in x783. But I gotta say, I'm looking forward to it."

Like that, the wizards of Fairy Tail continued to chat happily until Wendy finished healing Alzack and Masa. When she did, Ur and Gildarts returned. And when they did, everyone noticed that Ur seemed to be glowing while she had some extra pep in her step. However, they were all smart enough to not ask her about it. Though, Ultear made a mental note to ask about it later.

"Is everyone ready for the final part of this year's promotion exam?" Ur asked once everyone was seated, as not only the S-Class wizards were seated in the viewing stands. A moment later, she turned her attention to Alzack, who was standing in the ring. "Then, Alzack Conell, tell us, whom among the S-Class wizards present do you wish to face in order to prove your qualifications to join their ranks?"

"Wow, it must have been really good." Elicia said, whispering into Alfonzo's ear. "I mean, look at the way she's talking."

Immediately, Ur's fierce glare landed on Elicia, who shrank back before sticking her tongue out at her.

Shaking her head, Ur returned her attention to Alzack, awaiting his answer.

"Yes, I have chosen." Alzack said in a solemn tone. Then, he let his gaze roam over all the S-Class wizards in the stands before stopping on a certain person. "I choose..."

Chapter 564: x787 S-Class Promotion Exam; Part 4

"Is everyone ready for the final part of this year's promotion exam?" Ur asked once everyone was seated, as not only the S-Class wizards were seated in the viewing stands. A moment later, she turned her attention to Alzack, who was standing in the ring. "Then, Alzack Conell, tell us, whom among the S-Class wizards present do you wish to face in order to prove your qualifications to join their ranks?"

"Yes, I have chosen." Alzack said in a solemn tone. Then, he let his gaze roam over all the S-Class wizards in the stands before stopping on a certain person. "I choose Alfonzo Marcus."

Hearing Alzack's choice, most of the audience was stunned. Other than Irene, Alfonzo was objectively the strongest member of the guild. Alfonzo, on the other hand, smiled at Alzack's choice. Then, he stood from his seat and slowly made his way to the ring.

"Man, I don't think this is gonna go well for Alzack." Gray said quietly while he watched Alfonzo approach the ring.

"Indeed, Alzack uses guns that Alfonzo made. So, he's at a serious disadvantage." Fried said, assessing the situation calmly.

"Don't underestimate Alzack." Laki, who has trained with both Alfonzo and Alzack for a very long time, said while smiling. "Alzack is stronger than you think."

"Besides, Alfonzo will probably let him show what he's got so that we can evaluate him." Laxus added. "He knows how hard he can go in this fight."

"I think you're wrong this time, Laxus." Gildarts said. "Did you see the smile on the Kid's face? He's really looking forward to this."

"Gildarts is right." Elicia added. "Fonzie looks really excited."

"Then I guess Alzack has got something to show us, huh?" Ur asked rhetorically while she focused on the ring.

"Yes, that young man is definitely hiding something, if his confident expression is anything to go by." Irene said in an interested tone. "I just hope it's worth all this anticipation he's making everyone feel."

As soon as the last word left her mouth, Irene smiled. However, when everyone saw that smile, they could not help but shiver. For Alzack's sake, they really hoped he would put on a good show in this fight.

While the others were discussing the upcoming fight, Alfonzo reached the ring. Then, after a light leap, he landed on the ring opposite Alzack.

"Are the two of you ready?" Ur asked.

While Alfonzo nodded immediately, Alzack took a deep breath. Then, he unholstered his pistols, Evony and Ivory and looked at them with a complicated expression on his face.

"\*Sigh\* This is probably the most important fight of my career." Alzack muttered, though everyone present was able to hear him. "Unfortunately, I can't use you, my partners this time."

Reaching that point, Alzack looked up into the viewing stands. Then, when his eyes fell on Elicia, he tossed Ebony and Ivory towards her.

"Hold on to these for me, would you?" Alzack asked.

Naturally, this action surprised everyone. Despite that, Elicia acted quickly, shooting out a pair of threads from her fingertips and catching the two pistols.

"Of course." Elicia said as she pulled Evony and Ivory to her.

Nodding in response, Alzack returned his attention to Alfonzo. Then, he spoke once again.

"I'm ready." Alzack said in a determined tone.

"Then, let the match begin." Ur said loudly as she raised her right arm high above her head. A moment later, she swung it down as she continued. "Fight!"

In the next instant, Alfonzo was covered in arcs of violet lightning. Then he vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed. At the same time, Alzack tilted his head to the left. Then, he tilted his head back before turning his body to the right.

In that brief moment, Alfonzo, who was moving faster than the eye could see, had thrown a jab, a right uppercut, and a left front kick. All of which Alzack dodged successfully. Then, Alzack flicked his right hand upwards with his index and middle finger extended.

"[Bullet Magic: Finger Pistol]." Alzack chanted as two compressed bullets of magic power were fired from the tips of his fingers, forcing Alfonzo to evade. Still, he was moving too fast for the crowd to see with their eyes.

A moment later, a purple flash lit up the ring. And when it did, Alzack side flipped from his position. An instant later, a purple bolt of lightning fell from the sky. At the same time, while he was upside down, Alzack pointed his right index and middle fingers at a corner of the ring before firing his [Finger Pistol] once again.

A collective gasp could be heard from the stands. Not because Alzack seemingly fired randomly. No, instead, it was because Alfonzo was forced to stop for a moment to block Alzack's spell with his right hand covered in his magic power.

Despite the fact that he was forced to stop for a moment, Alfonzo quickly vanished in a burst of speed once again. However, Alzack continued firing his [Finger Pistol] in seemingly random directions. Yet, every time he did, Alfonzo would appear for a brief moment to deflect the spell.

"Damn, when did Alzack get this good?" Laxus asked as he leaned forward to watch the high speed match. "And when the hell did he start shooting without his guns?"

"It's not that he just got this good." Elicia said. "it's just that he's never had a reason to show it in front of the rest of the guild. Even when he fought Gray and Lucy two years ago, he was able to shoot all the [Ice Bullets] gray shot at him out of the air. But he only shot down the ones he needed to, instead. As for your second question, that's new to me, too."

Not only Elicia, but everyone was seeing Alzack use [Bullet Magic] for the first time. In fact, this was the first time he had used it in front of anyone, other than Bisca. And he only showed her after the two got married.

In reality, Alzack only started learning [Bullet Magic] after the Tenrou Island incident back in x784. After hearing Alfonzo's story about when he faced Hades, who also used this kind of magic, Alzack took it upon himself to take the [Bullet Magic] magic book that was recovered from Grimoire Heart's airship after Alfonzo let him choose from any of the magic books he and Elicia were able to recover.

"But he still got knocked out in that fight." Gray said in rebuttal.

"That's only because Aries' caught him and Bisca in her [Wool Bomb]." Lucy replied. "That spell has an effect that causes the opponent to relax, making ambushes much easier."

"Seriously?" Gray replied. "I never knew that."

A moment later, he slumped his shoulders in dejection.

"Despite all that, we still lost that fight." Gray said in a depressed tone.

"Yeah, we did." Lucy added, slumping her shoulders dejectedly , as well.

Back in the ring, Alzack had been moving to avoid attacks from Alfonzo, who was dropping bolts of lightning, firing balls of electricity, showering him with metal rain, and even throwing in the occasional melee attack to keep him on his toes for nearly fifteen minutes. Despite the fact that he had been on the defensive the entire fight, Alzack was still able to accurately shoot his [Finger Pistol] at the places where Alfonzo was moving to, causing him to stop his movement to defend.

Eventually, the flow of the battle changed when Alzack ducked to avoid a high kick from Alfonzo. At the same time, he slammed his right palm onto the ring.

"[Bullet Magic: Hand Cannon]." Alzack chanted in an intense tone.

In the next instant, the ring under Alzack exploded, propelling him high into the air. At the same time, Alfonzo quickly moved to avoid the flying debris. Then, when Alzack reached the height of his ascent, he placed the butts of his palms together with his fingers spread out and pointed at the ring.

"[Bullet Magic: Aerial Bombardment]." Alzack chanted.

With his chant, Alzack began flicking his fingers rapidly. And with every flick of a finger, a [Finger Pistol] about twice as large as the ones he fired earlier in the match was shot towards the ring. And as time went by, not only was Alzack keeping himself afloat with the recoil from his shots, but he was also covering every inch of the ring with his bombardment.

In the end, Alfonzo, who had yet to do so, was forced to fly away from the ring to avoid taking damage. An instant later, Alfonzo appeared above Alzack, who had stopped firing towards the ground and used the recoil from his last shot to turn around, with his right palm pointed at the Magic Gunner and gathering UV radiation on his outstretched palm.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Big Bang Attack]." Alfonzo chanted.

At the same time, Alzack, with his hands still together, pointed his palms at Alfonzo, as well.

"[Bullet Magic: Buster Cannon ]." Alzack chanted.

In the next instant, both Alfonzo's [Big Bang Attack] and Alzack's [Buster Cannon] were fired simultaneously. While Alfonzo remained in place after casting his spell, Alzack was sent rocketing downwards due to his spell's recoil. However, Alzack was counting on that.

\*Boom~~~~~!\*

Just as Alzack managed to flip himself over and land in the ring, the two spells collided, exploding on impact, engulfing Alfonzo's position in the air.

"\*Pant\* \*Pant\* \*Pant\* Damn..." Alzack muttered in a discontent tone. "I guess I lost."

In the next instant, Alfonzo appeared to Alzack's right with a short sword pressed to Alzack's throat.

"Yeah, but that was a hell of a fight." Alfonzo replied.

"\*Sigh\* You're just too damn fast." Alzack said with a shrug.

Although it seemed as if Alfonzo had been caught in the explosion, with the use of [Lightning Enhancement] in combination with [Shave], he left a long lasting after-image in his place. In fact, he had moved away before the two spells even collided. However, Alzack had actually caught that with his [Magic Power Detection]. Unfortunately, thanks to the fatigue from using such a powerful spell combined with the extra magic power consumption from using [Bullet Magic] instead of Ebony and Ivory, he was simply too exhausted to avoid Alfonzo's blade.

"Winner, Alfonzo." Ur declared after seeing that Alfonzo had a blade pressed to Alzack's neck. "That concludes this year's promotion exam. Now, I want all the S-Class wizards to meet me on Sixth Sense to discuss Alzack's qualifications to join the ranks of the S-Class wizards."

With that, Ur stood up. Then, she started walking towards Sixth Sense with the other S-Class wizards following behind her shortly afterwards, leaving the S-Class candidates to talk amongst themselves, as well. Naturally, all the S-Class candidates were impressed by Alzack's showing in his match against Alfonzo with Gajeel adding him to his list of people he wanted to fight when they got back.

A while later, all the S-Class wizards were gathered in Sixth Sense's dining hall. While most of the wizards were seated around a large table, Alfonzo was in the ship's kitchen cooking.

"Alright, is there anyone who doesn't think that Alzack is qualified to be an S-Class wizard?" Ur asked, getting right to the point once everyone was seated.

The only response Ur received to her question was silence, which she expected.

"Are you kidding, Ur?" Laxus asked. "I think there are several among us who would have lost even worse than Alzack if they fought Alfonzo while he was fighting like that."

"Yeah, and you're probably one of them." Gildarts added with a chuckle.

In response, Laxus growled in annoyance. However, he did not deny that accusation.

"It seems that Alfonzo has increased his speed by quite the considerable margin." Fried replied. "From what I can tell, he was comparable to Laxus in his [Lightning Form]."

"And that's while he's not using his [Soul Armaments]." Elicia added. "but you have to remember, Bedlam amplifies his creation ability. And that includes the creation of electricity."

"Meaning, his speed gets even faster when Bedlam is released." Erza followed up. "Then, there's the increase in power the released state provides, as well."

"Yeah, yeah, we get it." Laxus said in an annoyed tone. "he's faster than I am, now. But we're not here to talk about me. We're supposed to be talking about Alzack and him becoming S-Class."

"I thought we already covered that." Cana said while tilting her head in mock confusion. "No one disagreed that he should be S-Class right? So, that conversation is over."

Not only Cana, but everyone else sitting at the table looked at Laxus as if he had just said something stupid. And the fact that even Natsu, the objectively least intelligent member of the guild, was looking at him like that, too, made Laxus even more annoyed than he already was.

"Then why are we even here?" Laxus asked, his annoyance growing with every word.

"Because Alfonzo/Fonzie/The Kid is cooking." Everyone replied in unison.

In response, Laxus could only remain silent.

Like that, the discussion about Alzack's "qualifications to be promoted to S-Class" continued until dinner was over. Then, the S-Class wizards returned to the camp that was set up a few days ago. Not before all of them took a shower using the special soap Alfonzo and Elicia used back when they snuck into Crocus' prison to kill Jose Porla to wash off the scent of Alfonzo's cooking first, though.

#### Chapter 565: Mirajane's Brilliant Idea

After the S-Class wizards returned from their "discussion" about Alzack's S-Class qualifications, the entire group of Fairy Tail wizards discussed the tournament. Then, after talking for a while, they all decided to go to bed. The next morning, just after sunrise, the entire group woke up, had breakfast, broke down the camp, ring, and viewing stands, then boarded Sixth Sense and headed back to Hargeon.

A few hours later, the ship docked at Hargeon's port. Then, the Fairy Tail wizards all disembarked, gathering at the port's parking lot to get in their vehicles and head back to Magnolia.

"You know, I'm actually surprised about something that happened... Or rather, didn't happen on this trip to Tenrou Island." Alfonzo said after throwing a leg over his motorcycle.

"What do you mean?" Mirajane asked as she accepted the helmet Alfonzo handed her.

"Well... Not once did Natsu shout about wanting to fight anyone." Alfonzo replied. "I especially expected him to be all rowdy after Alzack's last two fights, you know?"

Hearing that, everyone, other than Gildarts and Ur, who had already driven away in Ur's Huracán, put on surprised expressions before shifting their gazes to Natsu, who Wendy had just cast her [Troia] spell on.

"Now that you mention it, that's pretty suspicious for this pink-haired idiot." Gray said while looking at Natsu suspiciously.

"Who are you and where is the real Natsu?" Elfman asked while walking towards Natsu menacingly. "There's no way a battle junkie like him could keep himself from asking for a fight like a real man! If you don't tell me where the real Natsu is, I'll make you pay for this! I won't let you make Lisanna cry!"

With every step he took, Elfman's voice grew louder. On top of that, when he was about halfway to Natsu, his body was covered in the light of his [Take Over Magic]. And by the time he arrived in front of Natsu, ready to grab him by his collar, Elfman was in the form of his [Take Over: Beast Soul].

In response, Natsu only stood there, scratching the back of his head while looking away awkwardly. However, when he did not reply, Elfman grew even more irritated. Before he could actually grab Natsu, however, his arms were stopped by a countless number of threads.

"Calm down, Elfman." Elicia said as she restrained Elfman. "That is the real Natsu."

"How is that possible?" Everyone shouted in confusion, simultaneously.

"\*Sigh\* If you guys were using [Magic Power detection], you would have realized that already." Alfonzo said while shaking his head in disappointment.

"We are using [Magic Power Detection]!" Everyone shouted in unison again.

"It's just impossible to believe that this flame brain could keep control of himself like that for so long." Gray said, continuing in place of everyone else. "I mean, he didn't pick a fight even once over the entire trip."

\*Smack!\*

By that point, Natsu was gritting his teeth and clenching his fists. ON top of that, there were wisps of flames being created all around him from time to time. Then, just as he was about to retort to Gray calling him stupid for the second time, he slapped his hands over his mouth before turning around so that he wouldn't have to see Gray's extremely punchable face.

Seeing Natsu's reaction, almost everyone on the scene was even more confident that this Natsu was an imposter. But there were a few people who completely trusted their [Magic Power Detection].

"So, you wanna tell us what's going on, Natsu?" Erza asked as she placed one of her gauntleted hands on Natsu's shoulder.

"\*Sigh\* Fine..." Natsu said after taking a few deep breaths to calm down the urge to punch Gray. Then, he turned around and slowly made eye contact with everyone present. "It's like this..."

Reaching that point, Natsu once again scratched his head. However, no one spoke, waiting for him to continue on his own.

"Lisanna said she would give me a reward if I could keep from getting myself knocked out by charging at someone without giving them a chance to reply to my challenge, like I usually do when I fight Alfonzo and Laxus." Natsu said while smiling bashfully with a blush on his face. "And if I could keep from starting any fights altogether, she said she would make the reward even more special. So..."

With that, the area around where all the Fairy Tail wizards' vehicles were parked fell into pin drop silence. Elfman even reverted back to his base form because he was too shocked to concentrate on his magic, at all. Then, after a few seconds of silence, the sound of quiet sobbing could be heard.

Looking in the sobbing's direction, still with those shocked expressions on their faces, they saw Mirajane, who had climbed onto the backseat of Alfonzo's motorcycle, clinging to his back and crying into it. And Alfonzo, who was smiling wryly because he had an idea why Mirajane was crying.

"Mira, what's wrong?" Elfman asked, sprinting towards Mirajane with concern etched all over his face.

"So, I was wrong back then." Evergreen muttered with a grin as she watched Elfman panic. "He's not just a sis-con, he's a double sis-con."

"Nothing's wrong, Elfman." Mirajane said as she straightened up and raised the visor on her helmet so she could wipe her eyes. "I'm just fine, really."

"Then, why are you crying?" Elfman asked, unable to see the bright smile Mirajane was wearing thanks to the helmet.

"Because I'm so \*Sniff\* proud of Lisanna." Mirajane replied. "My baby sister has grown up. \*Sniff\* Keeping her man in check with promises like that. \*Sigh\* They grow up so fast."

While Alfonzo, his girls, Laxus, Evergreen, Gray and Juvia grinned at Mirajane's words, the virgins in the group wore confused expressions, not exactly understanding Mirajane's insinuation. Meanwhile, Natsu's blush deepened, as he knew he had been found out, and Levy blushed just as fiercely as Natsu while stealing glances at Gajeel's confused face. Elfman, on the other hand, who was also not part of the group of virgins, turned around and glared at Natsu again.

"Come on, Elf, it's time to get back to Magnolia." Evergreen said, quickly walking over to Elfman's side before he could do something stupid because of his sister complex. Then, once she was close enough, she grabbed Elfman by the arm and dragged him towards Lucy's truck as she continued. "Do you really wanna make Ur mad if we're late. IF you do, she'll freeze you like a real man."

\*Bang!\*

As soon as her words fell, Evergreen, using the arm she was holding, flipped Elfman into the flat bed of Lucy's truck, causing it to shake violently. Then, she dusted her hands as if she had just done a good job while nodding to herself in satisfaction.

"Now, let's get moving before he snaps out of his stunned state." Evergreen said as she dashed towards her own Huracán.

Eventually, everyone loaded up into the vehicles before they all started driving back to Magnolia.

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

With Mirajane hugging his waist, Alfonzo was flying down the roads of Fiore with a considerable lead over the next vehicle carrying his guild mates. The whole time, he was laughing internally at what happened back at the port. And Mirajane, who could feel Alfonzo trembling from holding in his laughter, finally tried to speak up.

Unfortunately, because of the artificial engine sounds, the helmets, and the wind, Although Alfonzo could hear Mirajane speaking, he could not make out what she was saying. So, he opened up a [Telepathic Link] between the two of them.

{"What were you saying, Mira?"} Alfonzo asked.

{"I asked you why you've been laughing so much."} Mirajane replied.

{"Oh, it's because that situation back at the port was so funny."} Alfonzo said, his laughter still present in the [Telepathic Link]. {"On top of that, a lot of people gave away their sexual status after you said how proud of Lisanna you were."}

{"What do you mean?"} Mirajane asked in a curious tone.

Alfonzo then went on to tell Mirajane about everyone's reaction to her declaration of pride. And she, too, could not help but start laughing.

{"I guess that means Levy and Gajeel haven't reached that step yet, huh?"} Mirajane asked in a tone that sounded ready for gossip. Her tone changed a second later, however, as she continued. {"But it looks like Laxus got Lucky with Saya, though. Honestly, after realizing that, I kinda feel sorry for Chico. I mean, she's really liked Laxus a lot for a long time, you know."}

{"I really don't think you need to worry about her."} Alfonzo said. {"I mean I know I've been out of the guild a lot over the past two years, but any time I've been back, after Laxus started showing interest in Saya, I mean, I've never seen Chico looking at them with envy or anger. She even sits with them in the guild hall from time to time. So, I bet there's more going on with those three than we think."}

{"So, you think Laxus is going down the harem route like you did?"} Mirajane asked with a hint of mischief in her tone.

{"I think you mean like Lici did."} Alfonzo replied while smiling wryly. {"But there's a possibility. There's also the possibility that Laxus sat Chico down and talked it out with her."}

{"Yeah, I doubt that."} Mirajane said while shaking her head.

{"Actually, so do I."} Alfonzo replied. {"But there's always a possibility, right? We'll never know until we ask them."}

{"I guess you're right."} Mirajane replied. Then, after pausing for a moment or two, she changed the subject. {"Anyway, when are you going back to the Village Hidden in the Leaves?"}

{"On the twenty-third."} Alfonzo replied in a somewhat downcast tone. {"\*Sigh\* Although I've been coming back on the weekends, I really miss everyone. Especially Little Man. Being away from home so much really fucking sucks."}

{"Well, at least you'll get a week with everyone, right?"} Mirajane asked in a consoling tone, clearly trying to cheer up Alfonzo.

{"\*Sigh\* It won't even be a full week."} Alfonzo replied. {"I have to take Sixth Sense back to Akane Beach, remember. Then, I'll spend another day coming back to Magnolia. So, it will only be like five days."}

Hearing that, Mirajane fell silent in thought. Meanwhile, Alfonzo simply focused on the road while getting more depressed about not being able to stay with his family. A few moments later, Mirajane cheered happily.

{"I just had a great idea!"} Mirajane shouted over the [Telepathic Link]. {"We should all go with you to Akane Beach. Then, we can spend the week with you. After that, you can head back to the Village Hidden in the Leaves after dropping all of us off in Magnolia."}

IN response, Alfonzo's eyes lit up. And had he not been driving, he would have undoubtedly hugged and kissed Mirajane passionately. But since he was driving, he could only express his excitement over the [Telepathic Link].

{"That's a really fucking great idea!"} Alfonzo shouted over the [Telepathic Link]. {"Gimme a second, I'll add the others into the [Link] so we can talk about it."}

And Alfonzo immediately did just that. And it did not take long for Elicia, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Marin, Sun, and Lucy to agree with Mirajane's idea. They had no doubt that Shizuka would agree when they got back to Magnolia, as well. On top of that, they all thought bringing Amar'e out to play on the beach would make for a lot of cute memories. They even decided to bring all the maids with them, too.

So, while discussing the plans to go on a vacation with their entire family, the Fairy Tail wizards eventually reached Magnolia and headed to the guild hall for Ur's announcement of the S-Class Promotion Exam's results.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

Around 3 p.m., Ur and all the guild's S-Class wizards were once again standing on the stage on the guild hall's first floor. And like last time, all the A-Class wizards and below were gathered in front of the stage, this time waiting to hear if there would be a new S-Class wizard in their guild.

"The moment you've all been waiting for is here." Ur said in a sonorous tone. "I will now be announcing the results of the x787 S-Class Promotion Exam."

Immediately, the guild hall was filled with the sound of uproarious cheering. However, with a wave of Ur's hand, the hall fell silent rather quickly.

"As I explained last week, this year's exam was a one-on-one single elimination tournament." Ur continued. "And the winner of the tournament would gain the opportunity to face one of the S-Class wizards in order to prove their qualifications to join their ranks."

With the guild hall in pin-drop silence, the A-Class and below wizards hung on Ur's every word. Though, there was one wizard among them, Gozaburo, who was abnormally happy.

As it turned out, as soon as Masa arrived at the guild hall, the first thing he did was let Gozaburo know that he lost in the tournament. And although this news completely flabbergasted Gozaburo, because he did not think there was anyone participating in the exam who could defeat Masa, his expression stretched into a happy smile in an instant.

Naturally, Gozaburo was ecstatic that one of his subordinates had not surpassed him in terms of his rank. Unfortunately for Gozaburo, Ren punched him in the side of his head with all her strength after he showed such an expression at Masa's failure. So, although he was smiling happily while Ur spoke, he was currently unconscious.

"In the end, after a series of hard-fought battles, Alzack Connell showed us all that he was the most qualified for the opportunity to rise through the ranks." Ur continued. "Then, after showing us everything he had in a battle with Alfonzo Marcus, the objectively second strongest member of the guild, though it pains me to admit that he's stronger than me, the S-Class wizards and I unanimously decided that he had shown us more than enough to be promoted. So, Alzack, allow me to be the first to--"

"Kya~~~~~!" Bisca screamed excitedly, cutting off Ur's announcement. Then, she flung herself into Alzack's arms and rained kisses onto his face as she continued. "Al, you did it! Congratulations!"

"\*Cough\* ... the second to congratulate you on becoming Fairy Tail's newest S-Class wizard." Ur continued after coughing awkwardly.

After that, the entire guild broke into uproarious cheering and congratulated Alzack on his promotion. Then, a party started, and Alfonzo naturally cooked for it. However, because his best friend, Alzack, was the star of the party, he did it for free, causing Ur to almost have a stroke.

In the end, the party vacation ended after about three hours. And the reason was simple, in classic Fairy Tail fashion, the entire guild was embroiled in a brawl. Then, when nearly everyone was knocked out after the brawl, Alfonzo, his ladies, Laki, Alzack, Bisca, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Rika snuck away from the guild to pack bags for a weeklong stay at Alfonzo and Elicia's villa on Akane Beach. On top of that, Alfonzo, Laki, Wendy, Carla, and Saeko also packed enough for a trip to the Village Hidden in the Leaves after the weeklong ended, as well. That way, the vacation could last an extra day. Since Alfonzo would not have to drop anyone off in Magnolia before heading back to the Hidden Leaf Village.

#### Chapter 566: Back in the Hidden Leaf

After packing their bags, Alfonzo and the others left for Akane Beach. Then, after arriving, for the next week, they enjoyed themselves to the fullest. They played with Amar'e on the beach, they spent time at the resort, they grilled seafood on the beach, and they even set off fireworks a few nights. However, like all good things do, the vacation eventually came to an end.

So, while most of the group drove back to Magnolia to continue with their normal lives, Alfonzo, Laki, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki got into the Escalade and made their way to the Valley of the End. And just like last time, the members of Team Guy were the ones to escort them to the village.

After meeting with Hiruzen and introducing Laki, Kakashi escorted the group to the house where they usually stayed. And just as Alfonzo planned Laki took an interest in Kakashi. Although it did not seem to be romantic interest at the moment, she was curious to see what was under his mask.

"Why does he hide his face?" Laki asked in a curious tone after everyone put away their luggage and gathered in the residence's living room.

"Well, I'm sure there's a reason for it." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

Hearing that, Laki turned her attention to Alfonzo.

"Have you seen his face?" Laki asked. "Is it scarred or something?"

This time, not only Laki, but Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki also turned their attentions to Alfonzo, curious to hear his answer.

"Yeah, I've seen it." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "And he does have a scar. But it's not as bad as you're thinking. In fact, he's a pretty good looking dude."

"Then, why would he hide his face?" Carla asked with her arms crossed in front of her chest.

"Who knows?" Alfonzo replied with another shrug.

"Is he better looking than you?" Wendy asked.

As soon as Wendy asked her question, everyone turned their gazes to her. A moment later, after realizing what she had asked, Wendy reddened like a tomato. Then, she lowered her head in embarrassment.

"Oh my, does Wendy have a crush on Alfonzo?" Laki asked with a sadistic smile on her face.

"Well, can you really blame her?" Saeko asked in a serious tone. "Alfonzo is quite handsome. ON top of that, he's a good cook, really strong, and quite kind and gentle. There really isn't anything wrong with having a crush on him."

"Well, I have to admit it." Alfonzo said with a proud smile on his face. "When you put it like that, I'm pretty fucking awesome, ain't I? But still, I kinda feel bad for Lee."

"Indeed." Miyuki added. "If Miss Wendy does, indeed, have a crush on Master Alfonzo, I'm afraid he does not have a chance with her."

When Laki asked her question, Wendy's ears turned the same shade as her face. And when Saeko made her assessment about Alfonzo, the blush climbed down the petite Dragon Slayer's neck. But when Alfonzo brought up Lee, steam shot out of the top of Wendy's head. And after Miyuki made her comment, Wendy hurriedly stood up from where She was sitting.

"Well, I'm really tired after such a long trip." Wendy said, speaking so quickly that her words were hard to understand. "so, I'm gonna go to bed. I'll see you all later. Bye!"

After that, with magic power flooding her body, Wendy dashed out of the room as fast as she could. Then, about two seconds later, the sound of a door slamming shut could be heard echoing through the whole house.

"\*Sigh\* Did you all really have to tease her like that?" Carla asked in an exasperated tone. "It's gonna take forever to calm her down now. And I don't even wanna think about what she'll look like the next time she sees Lee."

"We did." Alfonzo replied in a solemn tone while nodding his head emphatically.

In response, Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki also nodded their heads, as well. Meanwhile, Carla looked at Alfonzo skeptically, her gaze asking for the reason why that was necessary.

"Because ever since Wendy started to grow up, it's been harder and harder to see her embarrassed face." Alfonzo continued. "And as we all know..."

"... embarrassed Wendy is the cutest." Alfonzo, Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki said in unison, finishing Alfonzo's previous sentence.

"Even if I agree with you..." Carla said with an awkward smile on her face. "Just who do you think is going to have to calm her down?"

"We thank you for your noble sacrifice." Laki said in a completely serious tone. Though, she was wearing her usual smile as she adjusted her glasses.

That last statement left Carla completely speechless. However, nothing else of note happened for the rest of the evening. So, after just hanging out for a while and having a dinner cooked by Alfonzo, the group separated and went to their own rooms for the evening before eventually going to bed.

On a side note, despite the fact that she was still feeling embarrassment, Wendy did come out of her room for dinner. However, she ate rather quickly before thanking Alfonzo for the meal and rushing right back into her room.

December 24, x787.

The next day started like any other. Alfonzo woke up with Miyuki staring at his face before telling him she wished he would never wake up. Then, after getting ready for the day, he started cooking breakfast. Around that time, everyone else also came out of their rooms. And it seemed as though Carla had managed to calm Wendy down after dinner last night, since she was no longer blushing... as fiercely as she was last night.

After breakfast, Alfonzo and Miyuki, accompanied by Kakashi, went to one of the training grounds in the village so that Alfonzo could continue his work. Meanwhile, Wendy and Carla left with Anko for Wendy's shift at the village hospital.

Around Lunch time, Miyuki separated from Alfonzo to prepare lunch for Laki and Saeko while Alfonzo had lunch with Kakashi. Then, around the time the men were finished eating, Miyuki returned to accompany them.

At the end of a long day of work, Alfonzo and Miyuki were the first ones to return to the house. After them, the kids from the academy showed up, happy to restart their training with Alfonzo and the others again. And finally, Wendy and Carla would return after Wendy's shift at the hospital ended.

Once the kids arrived, Alfonzo would start their basic training. Then, they would split up, with Alfonzo training Naruto in the use of [Seals], Wendy training Sakura in [Medical Ninjutsu], and Saeko training Sasuke in swordsmanship. Meanwhile, taking Rika's place, Laki train the rest of the kids in combat tactics.

However, not even ten minutes after they separated, Saeko knocked on the door to Alfonzo's makeshift workshop, interrupting his lessons with Naruto.

"Saeko, what's up?" Alfonzo asked while correcting Naruto's use of [Seals].

"I need your assistance." Saeko said politely. "It seems that Sasuke does not believe that learning swordsmanship will help him as much as learning [Ninjutsu] will. So, I wanted you to help me demonstrate what a skilled swordsman can do."

"So basically, you need a sparring partner, right?" Alfonzo asked as he stood up from his seat next to Naruto.

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

"Does that mean you're gonna fight, Big Bro Alfonzo?" Naruto asked excitedly as he looked away from the [Seal] he was creating.

"Looks that way." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. Then, he turned back to Saeko as he continued. "Sure, I'll help with your demonstration."

"Thank you." Saeko replied while bowing her head in gratitude.

"Alright, I'll be out in a few minutes." Alfonzo said. "I'm gonna tell Wendy, Carla, and Sakura. This will be a good experience for them, too. Oh, and I guess I'll get that girl on Guy's team, Tenten. She uses weapons, too. Maybe seeing us will make her decide to learn a single weapon instead of just throwing every weapon she owns at her opponents."

"Alright, I'll be waiting for you in the yard." Saeko replied as she turned around to return to the yard.

"Hey, wait for me!" Naruto shouted as he ran after Saeko. "There's no way I'm missing this!"

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, after watching Naruto run out the room, went to tell Wendy, Carla, and Sakura about the spar. Then, after the three young ladies agreed to watch it, he closed his eyes and focused on his [Magic Power Detection], which had been active for a little more than two full weeks.

"Found her." Alfonzo said quietly after he found his target. "And it looks like they're all together. I guess I'll bring all of them to watch."

With that said, Alfonzo vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed. A few moments later, Alfonzo appeared next to a certain table in Yakiniku Q with a flash of violet light, startling all the restaurant goers in the process.

"Hey, Guy." Alfonzo said with a smile. "How's it going?"

"Alfonzo!" Guy exclaimed with a smile. "My friend, have you come to join us for dinner? Of course, you're more than welcome."

"Not this time." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "I actually came to get Tenten. I wanted her to see something."

"Me?" Tenten asked in a confused tone while pointing her right index finger at herself.

"Yeah, I think seeing what I have to show you will really help you improve." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

Instead of replying immediately, Tenten looked at Guy with the question, "What should I do?" swirling in her eyes.

"You should go." Guy said energetically. "If Alfonzo says it will help you improve, then I believe whatever it is he wants to show you will help your youth burn brightly."

Hearing that, Tenten only stared at Guy with a blank expression. Alfonzo, on the other hand, could only smile wryly at Guy being Guy. Neji and Lee, however, were curious to know what Alfonzo wanted to show Tenten.

"In fact, if it's okay, we should all go." Guy said, completely ignoring Tenten's stare.

"It's fine with me." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

"Well then, you heard him, my youthful disciples." Guy said as he stood up from his seat. "Let's go!"

With a loud shout, Guy turned around and rushed out of the restaurant, leaving the other four staring at him blankly.

"This was supposed to be Guy-Sensei's treat." Neji muttered. "Now, who's gonna pay for the meal?"

"Yes, let's let our youth explode!" Lee shouted a moment later. "Guy-Sensei, wait for me!"

Then, like Guy before him, Lee also dashed out of the restaurant.

"\*Sigh\* do those two even know where they're supposed to go?" Tenten asked in an exasperated tone. Then, she looked at the table full of uncooked meat. "And Neji is right, who's gonna pay for all this."

"Don't worry, I'll take care of it." Alfonzo said exasperatedly. "Guy's gonna have to pay me back for this, though. Anyway, you two head over to my place. After paying the bill and finding Guy and Lee, I'll meet you there."

"Understood." Neji replied as he stood up and started to leave.

"Okay, we'll see you there." Tenten said as she followed Neji.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo headed to the front desk to pay for Team Guy's meal. Then, after paying, he once again focused on his [Magic Power Detection] to find Guy and Lee. And to his dismay, they had run in completely opposite directions after leaving the restaurant.

"\*sigh\* sometimes those two are so troublesome." Alfonzo said in an annoyed tone. Then, he once again vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed, leaving a sentence floating in the air of Yakiniku Q. "What a drag..."

After leaving the restaurant, Alfonzo caught up to Lee first. Then, without a word, he snatched him up and returned to the house, dropping him off right next to Wendy and leaving the young man thoroughly confused. However, after seeing Wendy, he could not help but smile brightly.

After that, Alfonzo caught up to Guy. And just like he had done with Lee, he snatched him up and returned to the house. However, since Kakashi was nearby when he caught Guy, he decided to snatch up Kakashi, too.

When Alfonzo eventually returned to the house, he released Guy and Kakashi. However, they were treated in markedly different ways. While Kakashi was placed gently next to Laki, Guy was dropped while Alfonzo was still moving at high speed, resulting in the Leaf's Blue Beast rolling violently across the backyard until he slammed into a tree.

At the same time, Neji and Tenten had just arrived at the house, as well. And by the time they made it into the backyard, Alfonzo and Saeko were standing opposite each other while everyone, other than Guy, who was still trying to get his bearings after rolling across the ground, were surrounding them and waiting for the spar to begin.

### Chapter 567: Flying Heaven's Sword-Style

"Ugh... What happened?" Guy asked as he finally got himself back together.

"It looks like Alfonzo and Saeko are going to spar." Kakashi said, interrupting Laki's numerous attempts to get him to remove his mask.

"Oh!" Guy exclaimed loudly as his head snapped toward the center of the circle of onlookers. "Their youth will shine brightly in this moment."

"But why are they fighting now?" Neji asked in a curious tone.

"And why did Alfonzo say that this would be good for me." Tenten asked in confusion.

"I can answer those questions." Miyuki said calmly as she bowed her head politely.

Immediately, Guy, Kakashi, Neji, and Tenten turned their heads in the maid's direction. Meanwhile, Lee, the only other person who was not present when all this started, was too busy engaging Wendy, who was smiling happily and blushing lightly, in conversation to focus on the conversation everyone else was having.

"The reason for this sparring match is so that Miss Saeko can show Young Master Uchiha the value of swordsmanship." Miyuki continued. "As for why you were invited here, Miss Tenten, it was to give you a new perspective on weapon combat. At least, that is how Master Alfonzo put it before he left to get you."

"Hmph!" Sasuke snorted at Miyuki's explanation.

"A new perspective?" Tenten muttered as her attention shifted back to the two fighters.

"Then, do you know why I was dragged here?" Kakashi asked while reading his little orange book with one of his hands in his pocket.

"To show me your face." Laki replied.

"I seriously doubt that." Kakashi said lackadaisically.

"I only grabbed you because you were there when I caught up to Guy, who had run off before I could tell him where to go." Alfonzo said, answering Kakashi's question.

In response, Kakashi looked up from his book and silently glanced at Alfonzo. Then, he glanced at Guy, who, at least, had the decency to wear a bashful expression after Alfonzo pointed out his blunder. After that, he shook his head and returned to reading his book.

"Anyway, now that everyone is watching, you wanna get started, Saeko?" Alfonzo asked, his expression turning solemn as he did so.

"Yes." Saeko replied concisely.

As soon as the words left her mouth, Saeko gripped the hilt of the katana hanging on her waist. Then, she dropped into an iaido stance, signaling she was ready to begin. At the same time, Alfonzo created a pair of double-edged, curved short swords in his hands. Then, he too lowered himself into a fighting stance.

At the same time Alfonzo took his stance, he tapped the heel of his left foot on the ground. An instant later, several small metal devices appeared from the ground in front of the spectators, creating a barrier that prevented stray attacks from injuring anyone. Also, the barrier would kept the magic power fluctuations contained, preventing them from affecting the rest of the village.

"Then, let's go." Alfonzo said.

In the next instant, without the use of his [Electromagnetism Magic] to augment his speed, Alfonzo vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed. An instant later, he reappeared in front of Saeko while slashing diagonally upwards with his right blade from Saeko's right hip to her left shoulder.

Seeing the speed at which Alfonzo was moving, Sasuke quickly activated his Sharingan, which had two tomoe spinning around his pupils. At the same time, Kakashi's book disappeared from his hand as he pulled his headband, which was covering his left eye, to reveal that he, too, had a Sharingan. With the two exposing their Sharingan, they would have a comparatively easier time keeping track of the spar than everyone present, other than Neji and Hinata, who both activated their Byakugan to follow the spar, as well.

\*Shing!\*

In response to Alfonzo's slash, Saeko quickly unsheathed her katana, using it to deflect Alfonzo's attack.

\*Clang!\*

The sound of the colliding blades echoed around the area. However, Saeko followed up her defense well before the echoes faded.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Sōryūsen]." Saeko said, naming her technique as she, with the sheath held in her left hand, swung it at Alfonzo's torso.

In response, Alfonzo quickly stepped back while lowering the blade in his right hand to meet the incoming sheath. Then, he swung the blade in his left hand upwards to meet the return slash from Saeko's sword.

\*Ting!\*

Using the blade in his right hand, Alfonzo pushed Saeko's sheath away from his body. Then, he thrust the same blade forward, aiming for the left side of Saeko's chest. In response, Saeko took half a step back before parrying the thrust to her left while simultaneously replacing the sheath on her hip.

In the next instant, Saeko held her katana's hilt with both hands. Then, she once again stepped forward, slashing at Alfonzo from his left shoulder to his right hip.

Reacting quickly, Alfonzo turned his body to avoid the slash. However, as he was about to return a slash of his own, Saeko shifted the grip on her katana's hilt before raising in a slash, that if Alfonzo did not defend, would remove his right arm.

In response, Alfonzo shifted the blade in his right hand into a reverse grip while simultaneously thrusting the blade in his left hand across his body, creating a cross between his blades, which he used to catch Saeko's upward slash.

\*Clang!\*

"Seriously, Saeko." Alfonzo said with a grin while the two stared each other in the eyes. "I'm really not trying to lose an arm for a second time."

"I had faith you would be able to defend." Saeko, with a sadistic grin on her face, replied. "Besides, seeing that instant of panic in your eyes was rather cute."

As Saeko said, Alfonzo actually panicked for an instant. Despite the fact that it happened almost seven years ago, losing an arm was a traumatic experience for Alfonzo. So, even though it no longer affected his fighting prowess, he still finds himself uneasy at the thought of losing an arm again.

Though, the painful experience of reattaching it with the Techno Organic Metal may have something to do with it, as well.

With that short conversation ending, Alfonzo and Saeko pushed away from each other. Then, Saeko sheathed her sword with such speed that a sonic boom was produced, making the less experienced among the onlookers cover their ears.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Ryūmeisen]." Saeko said, naming her technique as the handguard met the mouth of the sheath.

While most of the younger onlookers could not help but cover their ears, Alfonzo, Guy, and Kakashi only frowned in slight discomfort. Wendy, on the other hand, felt as if she would vomit from the sensory overload. Naturally, this caused Lee, who was halfway paying attention to Wendy, despite the fact that he was excited about the spar, to hold her and pat her back soothingly.

Knowing that her last technique would bother Wendy the most, Saeko apologized in her heart. However, she perfected this technique because of people like the Dragon Slayers, whose senses were far above a normal wizard's. So, seeing Wendy's reaction, her goal had been achieved.

At the same time, with her sword sheathed, Saeko took a step forward, flickering in front of Alfonzo before drawing her sword once again, slashing across Alfonzo's torso.

\*Clang!\*

Raising the short swords in his hands, Alfonzo managed to catch Saeko's slash. Then, he quickly forced Saeko's blade up over her head before bringing both blades down in an X-shape at Saeko's chest.

However, before Alfonzo could connect his attack, Saeko flooded her legs with magic power. Then, using the momentum of Alfonzo's redirection of her attack, she leapt into the air, avoiding his counterattack. Finally, with her hilt held firmly in both hands, she brought down an overhead slash.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Ryūtsuisen]." Saeko cried as gravity added to the power of her slash.

This forced Alfonzo to take a step backwards. Even though he was capable of blocking the attack with his swords, the additional force behind Saeko's attack would more than likely cause him to stiffen momentarily. So, in this case, avoiding was better than blocking.

Unfortunately, before Alfonzo could counter attack, Saeko stepped in to deliver a rising slash aimed at Alfonzo's chin while pressing the back of the blade up with her left hand to add additional force to the slash.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Ryūshosen]." Saeko named her technique just as Alfonzo tilted his head back to avoid having his jaw penetrated.

Usually Saeko's technique, [Ryūshosen] would involve her jumping into the attack, to add even more force. However, to take advantage of Alfonzo's instability after he quickly tilted his head back, she forwent the leap. Instead, she began repeatedly slashing her sword at high speed.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-style: Ryūsōsen]." Saeko said while her flurry of sword strikes continued.

\*Ting!\* \*Ting!\* \*Ting!\* \*Ting!\* \*Ting!\* \*Ting!\* \*Ting!\*

With the sheer speed of Saeko's attacks, Alfonzo could not find the opportunity to counter. Instead, he could only defend with the swords in his hands while slowly being pushed back.

Meanwhile, the onlookers, mostly the academy kids, were amazed by the show of skill. And Sasuke, who could follow most of the fight with his Sharingan active, found himself frustrated when Saeko's more advanced techniques were too fast for his Sharingan to copy. In fact, the whole reason he wanted to see Saeko fight Alfonzo was in the hopes of learning the techniques she refused to teach him until he got the basics of swordsmanship down to the point they became second nature.

Tenten, on the other hand, was amazed even more than the others. She had basic proficiency in most weapons. However, she was nowhere near the heights either Alfonzo or Saeko had reached with any of them. And that was why she settled on using all of them as projectile weapons. However, after seeing the display Alfonzo and Saeko put on, she was beginning to reconsider that strategy.

"This is what he wanted you to see, Tenten." Guy said, breaking Tenten out of her thoughts. "AS they say, it is better to be a master of one thing rather than a jack of all trades."

Even though Guy had told her this before, she never took him seriously. Besides the obvious reason of Guy being hard to take seriously on a regular basis, Tenten had never seen a high-level example of those words before.

Meanwhile, the spar continued with the two exchanging blows and techniques, with Alfonzo even using some of Aoshi Shinomori's double kodachi techniques for added flare. However, some of the more... emotionally sensitive people among the onlookers saw more than just a spar between swordsmen.

"Is it just me? Or does it look like their... flirting rather than just fighting?" Ino asked in a somewhat unsure tone.

"Yeah, it's not just you." Sakura replied with a nod.

"And it looks like Saeko is the aggressor." Carla added.

In fact, the three girls were right. Saeko, who was not very good at expressing her feelings in words, was using this opportunity to convey her feelings through her sword. And considering the fact that Alfonzo had been practicing Eskrima for almost twenty-five years, if you combine his two lives, he was skilled enough to feel his opponents emotions through their weapons.

Still, the spar could not go on forever. So, without deciding a victor, Alfonzo and Saeko ended their spar while smiling at each other. Meanwhile, the onlookers were just as amazed as they had been for the duration of the spar without a clear victor.

"So, Sasuke, do you still think learning the sword is useless when compared to [Ninjutsu]?" Alfonzo asked with a grin.

Sasuke, being called out in front of everyone, could only look away in response. However, he did not continue with his previous line of thinking.

"And if you think that was impressive, just imagine combining [Ninjutsu] with what you'll learned from her." Alfonzo continued. "The point I'm making is, if you have the capacity to learn more than one thing to a high-level, then why should you limit yourself to only one?"

Seeing Sasuke's eyes light up, Alfonzo smiled. Then, he turned his attention to Tenten.

"I get it." Tenten said with her hands raised in defeat before Alfonzo could say anything. "I know I've bitten off more than I can chew. I really should take the time to figure out which weapon I have the best affinity with. Then, I should stick to it."

"Well, I'm glad you catch on fast." Alfonzo said with a smile. "And depending on which weapon you want to learn, I should be able to get you started on most of them. But I'm best at using two short swords."

"thank you, I'll keep that in mind." Tenten replied in a grateful tone.

"Well then, the shows over." Alfonzo said as he dispelled the temporary magic items sustaining the barrier. "Those who are supposed to be training, get back to it. And those who weren't here before this all started, you can leave or stay, I really don't care. Just don't get in the way of everyone's training."

"What a drag..." Shikamaru said in a lethargic tone as he, Choji, Kiba, Ino, Hinata, and Shino approached Laki to continue their training.

With that, Alfonzo took Naruto, who was asking him to teach him how to use twin swords, back inside to continue the lesson about [Seals]. Wendy took Carla and Sakura back inside to continue her [Medical Ninjutsu] lesson. Saeko took Sasuke away to continue his swordsmanship training. And Laki went back to training the other academy kids while dragging Kakashi along to help her, despite his protests.

Meanwhile, Guy dragged the rest of his team to start training, as well, as he was pumped up from seeing such a "youthful" battle. Naturally, the only one who was as enthusiastic as Guy was Lee. However, Neji and Tenten followed their teacher without complaints.

### Chapter 568: Saeko's Confession

After sending off the guests, Alfonzo was in his makeshift workshop working on a new magic item. He had always wanted to create radio stations and music players for the magic vehicles, to make long trips a little less monotonous. And ever since he created a recording studio in his mansion, that desire became even stronger.

However, in the past, other things always came up that needed his attention. But now, Alfonzo finally had the time to work on that project. So, he intended to have, at least a prototype finished by the weekend. That way, he would be able to work on the real thing with Ai when he came back to see Amar'e and his ladies.

"\*Sigh\* Ai is still gonna be upset that I worked on this without her." Alfonzo muttered to himself while making the parts for the magic playing magic item. "Still, she's really got a talent for this kinda thing. Maybe I should fire her as a maid and hire her for Sixth Sense Holdings' R&D department."

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

"Well, it looks like she's here." Alfonzo whispered to himself with a smile. Then he put down what he was working on and turned to the door of the workshop and continued at a normal volume. "Come in."

A moment later, the door to the workshop opened. Though it, Saeko entered. Through, unlike her usual confident demeanor, she was slightly blushing while not making eye contact with Alfonzo.

Seeing Saeko's unusually shy expression, Alfonzo could not help widening his smile. However, he did not speak, waiting for Saeko to tell him why she was here.

Saeko, on the other hand, after closing the door to the workshop, slowly closed the distance between herself and Alfonzo. Then, when she was at a comfortable speaking distance, although she did not speak, she stole a glance at him. And when she saw the smile on his face, she felt even more shy.

'He knows why I'm here.' Saeko thought to herself with butterflies in her stomach. 'What am I thinking, of course he knows why I'm here. I know he's skilled enough to have sensed my emotions while we were sparring earlier. This is so embarrassing.'

Like that, with Alfonzo seated in front of his workbench and Saeko standing not far away with her head lowered and the blush on her cheeks intensifying, the room fell into silence. However, Alfonzo did not leave it like that for too long.

"So, do you need anything, Saeko?" Alfonzo asked, a teasing smile playing on his lips.

Hearing Alfonzo's question, Saeko flinched. Though, it was so minute that if Alfonzo had not been paying attention to her, he would have missed it.

"I... Um... wanted to talk to you about... something." Saeko stammered out.

"Okay, I'm all ears." Alfonzo said, his teasing smile not leaving his lips.

Once again, Saeko stole a glance at Alfonzo. And when she once again saw that smile, her shyness increased. Despite that, she took a deep breath to say what she wanted to say.

"During our spar this evening, I could... feel... your fondness for me, you know." Saeko said quietly.

"Yeah, I could feel yours, too." Alfonzo said with a nod. "But if you needed the spar to tell that I like you, then you really haven't been paying attention."

"\*Sigh\* I always had an idea about that." Saeko admitted. "but I was too scared to confirm it. I'm sure you've been able to notice that I have a little problem, right?"

"You're talking about the way you enjoy inflicting violence on others, right?" Alfonzo asked, his smile fading as he did so.

"Yes." Saeko replied pensively. "Because of that, I was afraid of how you'd react."

"Well, you shouldn't have been." Alfonzo replied, his expression morphing into a wry smile. "I've only seen you act that way with your enemies, so far. Besides, I get along just fine with Irene. And she's a pretty high-level sadist. Laki's a sadist, too, and I---"

"And she's the only one of the girls who have known you since childhood that you rejected." Saeko said, interrupting Alfonzo's reply. "And after hearing that, I didn't think you would accept me either. Because although she's a sadist, Laki doesn't genuinely enjoy hurting people. Something I do enjoy, which makes me way worse."

With that, the room fell silent and Saeko once again lowered her head.

\*Sigh\* I think you're under a misconception, Saeko." Alfonzo said softly. "The reason I didn't accept Laki has nothing to do with her sadism."

Hearing that, Saeko once again raised her head.

"I don't know who told you about me rejecting Laki's confession." Alfonzo continued. "It was done publicly, so it's not a secret. But whoever did, clearly didn't tell you the whole story."

"It was Juvia... She somehow noticed that I liked you right after I joined the guild." Saeko murmured.

"Well, that makes sense." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Back then, she kinda hated me... a lot. You know, since I had stolen away one of her 'soul mates'."

As he spoke the words, "soul mates," Alfonzo raised his hands to make air quotes.

"But there is more to that story, you know?" Alfonzo continued, despite the look of realization that flashed across Saeko's face. "Besides, she wasn't even around to see the real reason why I rejected Laki."

"Then, why did you reject her?" Saeko asked curiously. "From what I can tell, the two of you get along pretty well. Plus, she's quite pretty."

"I can't deny either of those points." Alfonzo said with a shrug. "But those had nothing to do with it, either. The real reason I rejected her was because she wanted me to break up with Lici, Cana, Erza, and Sun.. Those four were my only girlfriends back then, by the way... to be with her alone."

That caused Saeko to open her eyes wide in surprise. Then, her expression turned into a frown.

'If I had only asked someone about it, I would have been able to find out about that much earlier.' Saeko thought to herself. 'But I had no idea how to bring up something like that to anyone. Besides, until I really felt how fond of me he was during our spar, I did not have the courage to tell him how I felt before this. \*Sigh\* If only I had thought things through, we could have had this conversation over a year ago.'

"Yes, now that I think about it, Juvia was probably not the best source of information when it came to you." Saeko said in a frustrated tone. "Though, she has gotten better since then. I knew how much she... didn't like you back then. Yet, I still took her words at face value."

In response, Alfonzo only shrugged his shoulders.

"\*Sigh\* Now I feel kinda dumb for waiting this long." Saeko muttered. Then, with a resolute expression on her face, she continued while looking Alfonzo in the eyes. "If you don't mind, I'd like to tell you about what lead me to enjoying the violence I inflict on others."

Alfonzo simply nodded in response while gesturing to a second chair.

Sitting in the offered seat, Saeko told Alfonzo about how she had been returning from a competition with another swordsmanship dojo back when she was living in Takanosu. On her way home that evening, a man approached her while she was cutting between two buildings to save time. And how the man had every intention of violating her. Luckily, she had her practice sword on her, as she was returning from a competition, so she was able to defend herself.

However, while fighting off her attacker, she heard one of the man's bones break after one of her strikes. An anguished scream tore from his throat after that. And when she heard those two sounds in succession, she explained that something about her changed, and that she wanted to hear more.

So, she continued to hit him, despite the fact that he was no longer able to defend himself. In the end, she ended up beating him to death. Luckily, the knights in the town concluded that it was a case of self-defense. And the fact that the man who attacked her was suspected of several sexual crimes in the past, helped her case quite a bit, as well.

"Ever since that day, I've been afraid of myself." Saeko continued after her story ended. "I was afraid that dark part of me would take over and I would hurt someone I care about in the same way. That fear even kept me from confessing to the boy I liked back at the academy. Because of it, I had convinced myself that I was undeserving of anyone's affection."

Then, Saeko once again lowered her head while clenching her fists and gritting her teeth in frustration. A moment later, however, she smiled as she made eye contact with Alfonzo again.

"That was until you saved me and the others from that horde of zombies." Saeko said. "Your strength, your swordsmanship, I was drawn to them..."

Reaching that point, Saeko's smile turned into an embarrassed one.

"... tasting your cooking added to that feeling, as well." Saeko said in a mosquito-like whisper.

At that moment, Alfonzo had to use all his willpower to not laugh aloud. His friends had been telling him that he was using his cooking to conquer the hearts of maidens for a long time. So, hearing Saeko's embarrassed whispers, he could not help but think back to those conversations.

A moment later, seemingly having not noticed Alfonzo's struggle, the resolute expression returned to Saeko's face as she continued.

"Alfonzo, I like you." Saeko said in no uncertain terms. "In fact, it would not be an over exaggeration to say that I've fallen in love with you."

In the next instant, Saeko slid off her chair, dropping to one knee in front of Alfonzo. At the same time, she [Requipped] her katana into her hand. Then, she unsheathed it and presented it to Alfonzo respectfully with both hands raised above her bowed head.

"Therefore, from this day forward, I vow to give my body, heart, and soul to you and only you for the rest of my life." Saeko continued, the determination in her tone unwavering. "And should you require it, I shall become the sword that slays your enemies or the companion to keep you company during the lonely nights."

Seeing Saeko's actions and hearing her declaration, Alfonzo could not help but freeze up in dumbfounded amazement.

'I know that samurai and bushido exist in this world.' Alfonzo thought to himself while staring blankly at Saeko. 'Hell, the samurai from Naruto live in Iceberg. But I didn't think their doctrines existed in Fiore. Man, this is really awkward...' {A/N: From what I saw recently on the FT Wiki, Isvan was changed to Iceberg at some point. Not sure when, though.}

Shaking his head, Alfonzo accepted Saeko's sword. Though, he did not know what to do after that. So, Using his [Metal Magic], he drew the sheath to him. Then, he sheathed the sword and handed it back to Saeko. Meanwhile, Saeko looked up at Alfonzo with apprehension. And when he sheathed her sword, that apprehension turned into disappointment, thinking that he had rejected her confession.

"Saeko, I don't need a vow like that." Alfonzo said in a gentle tone. "I don't require your fealty."

Saeko's expression dropped after hearing that. Now, she was sure that her confession had been rejected. As a result, she felt tears pooling in her eyes.

"I'm no noble, Saeko." Alfonzo continued, completely aware of the misunderstanding Saeko was having. "I'm just a commoner. A very strong and very rich one, yes, but I'm still a commoner, nonetheless. So, the only thing I need from you is your affection. That's more than enough for me, okay? And if you can give me that, then, I'd be happy to have you as a girlfriend."

Hearing that, Saeko raised her head in confusion. With that, the tears that had gathered in her eyes slid down her face. A moment later, after registering what Alfonzo said, even more tears fell from her eyes. However, these tears were decidedly happier in nature.

Seeing the tears falling from Saeko's eyes, Alfonzo smiled gently as he reached out and wiped away her tears. This action snapped Saeko back to her senses. Then, she nodded her head while smiling beautifully.

"I understand." Saeko said happily. "Thank you... Thank you for accepting me."

With that, Saeko [Requipped] her katana back into her storage space. Then, she slowly reached forward, eventually wrapping her arms around Alfonzo, who pulled her up into his lap and initiated their first kiss. Then, after breaking the kiss, they spent the next while embracing tenderly as they talked about various topics.

In the end, Saeko fell asleep on Alfonzo's lap. So, he carried her to her bedroom and tucked her into bed before going back to his own bedroom and going to sleep himself.

#### Chapter 569: The Traitorous Chunin Instructor

Since the night Alfonzo and Saeko confirmed their relationship, a few months have passed, and the calendar has rolled over to yet another new year. In this time, not much of note has taken place. Other than Alfonzo completing the music devices that could be mounted in magic vehicles and advertising the recording studios to many of Ishgar's most popular performers, that is.

As for everyone's ordinary life, everything has gone as it always has. Alfonzo has continued to overhaul the Village Hidden in the Leaves' training fields while training Naruto in the [Art of Sealing] in the evenings. Wendy has continued her work in the village hospital along with training Sakura in the basics of [Medical Ninjutsu], Saeko has continued teaching swordsmanship to Sasuke, who stopped complaining about it after Saeko sparred with Alfonzo, and Laki continued to help train the academy kids while trying to see what was under Kakashi's mask at every opportunity.

Back in Magnolia, however, something of great importance, at least to the members of Fairy Tail, happened. Another pregnancy was announced at the beginning of February. And to everyone's surprise,

it was not Bisca who announced it. Instead, it was Lisanna. Apparently, the reward she promised Natsu after he did not get into any fights on Tenrou Island during the S-Class Promotion Exam was quite intense.

The only unfortunate thing that came from this undoubtedly good piece of news, was the fact that Mirajane was now quite impatient to have a baby of her own, claiming that she wanted hers and Lisanna's children to grow up together.

Luckily, the other ladies were not so impatient as Mirajane. So, Alfonzo was not getting flooded with pregnancy requests. Not to say that he was against having so many children. However, he would like to space them out, at least a little. That way, the older ones could help take care of the younger ones.

Back to the present, today was the day before the graduation exam for the ninja academy kids. Meaning, their time spent training with Alfonzo and the ladies had come to an end. So, instead of training today, they were all sitting down for a meal in the dining room of the residence.

"So, are you all ready for the exam tomorrow?" Alfonzo asked after everyone was seated for dinner.

"Of course, I am!" Naruto shouted energetically. "I'm gonna become a Genin. Then, I'm gonna complete all kinds of amazing missions. And when I do, they'll have no choice but to make me Hokage, you know?"

"Sure, Naruto..." everyone, tired of hearing about Naruto's dream of being Hokage by now, said in unison.

"What about the rest of you?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"After all the training you put us through, if we can't pass, we don't deserve to be shinobi." Kiba replied.

"\*Bark!\*" Akamaru added, raising his head from his food bowl just long enough to bark.

"I guess Akamaru thinks it's more important to eat than to talk." Wendy said with a smile.

"Who cares what that dog thinks." Carla said snappily.

"Grr!" Akamaru growled in response.

"\*Hiss!\*" Carla shot back.

"As often as this back and forth happens, I'm surprised the cat and the dog have not come to blows." Laki said while shifting her attention between Carla and Akamaru.

"It's because Akamaru is smarter than his master." Sasuke said in a condescending tone while quietly eating the dinner Alfonzo prepared. "Unlike Kiba, he would never charge into a fight that he could never win. Carla's at least as strong as a strong Chunin, after all."

"What was that?" Kiba shouted explosively. "I would never charge into a fight I couldn't win."

"Only because Akamaru would stop you, more than likely." Shino, the least likely to speak out of the Rookie 9, said in an emotionless tone.

The fact that Shino joined the conversation without being addressed directly first, caused everyone to stop what they were doing to look at him with shocked expression. Meanwhile, Shino continued to eat as if he had not done anything out of the ordinary. Eventually, the first to snap out of their stupor was Alfonzo, who began laughing uproariously. Not long afterwards, everyone other than Kiba began to laugh, too.

Like that, the dinner went on in a, mostly, harmonious manner. However, the occasional bickering started between the academy kids every now and then.

"Anyway, I wish you all good luck." Alfonzo said with a smile as he put his fork and knife down on the plate. A moment later, his expression hardened as he started leaking his magical pressure. "But if any of you fail... Hehehe..."

That chuckle was enough to make everyone at the table, even those from Fairy Tail, who would not be taking the graduation exam, shudder. They could only imagine the punishment Alfonzo would put anyone who failed through.

'I bet he'll make them ride in a vehicle without [Troia].' Wendy thought to herself while her shuddering intensified. Though, it seemed that she forgot that only Dragon Slayers would find something like that to be a serious punishment thanks to the fear Alfonzo's chuckle made her feel.

With that, dinner ended and the academy kids left for their own homes. Even Naruto, who had been living in the house with Alfonzo and the others, had gone to his own apartment.

Meanwhile, in a modest house somewhere in the village, a man, appearing to be in his late twenties with bluish-white, shoulder-length hair, green eyes, and wearing the standard Chunin attire of a Leaf Shinobi with is forehead protector worn like a bandana, sat in his living room with a sake cup in his hand and an open bottle of sake on the table in front of him.

"Damn it!" the white-haired man, Mizuki, the physical education teacher for the graduating class of the Ninja Academy for the last six months, exclaimed angrily. In the next instant, Mizuki brought his sake cup to his lips and downed hits contents in one go. He then continued as he slammed his cup onto the table. "How the hell did that little monster improve so much? At this rate, my plan to get him killed by the Anbu is going to fail."

\*Bang!\*

Mizuki slammed his cup onto the table so hard that spiderweb like cracks appeared all over the surface of the table. Despite that, the sake in the bottle did not spill at all, even though it shook wildly.

"I guess I'll have to use more drastic measures." Mizuki thought aloud. "There's no way he's experienced enough to notice a [Genjutsu] being cast on him when he's not prepared. That should be more than enough to make him fail the exam. Then, my plan will have no more obstacles. And if he somehow manages to obtain the Scroll of Seals, I'll have the perfect gift for when I join Lord Orochimaru. Hahahaha!"

As Mizuki laughed manically, he picked up the bottle of sake to pour another cup for himself. However, as soon as he did, the table crumbled into small pieces. Still, that did not stop Mizuki's laughter.

The next day, the people at the temporary residence started their day like any other. And just like any other day, Alfonzo had his [Magic Power Detection] active. Since he had help train the Rookie 9, he wanted to make sure they did well on their graduation exam. And although he would not be able to see them with his own eyes, he could tell what they were doing based on the way their magic power moved.

Like that, with Kakashi and Miyuki accompanying him, Alfonzo continued to work on the training grounds at a steady pace.

"Oh, by the way." Kakashi said with his nose buried in his little orange book. "This will be the last day I come with you on your job."

Hearing that, Alfonzo glanced at Kakashi for a moment. But he quickly returned to his work.

"Does that mean you're gonna be a Jōnin-Sensei, like Guy?" Alfonzo asked nonchalantly.

"\*Sigh\* My instinctive reaction is to ask how you knew that." Kakashi said in a downcast tone. "But considering how intelligent you are, it was probably easy to figure out."

"Yeah, I mean, the Class of x788 is graduating today and now you tell me you're not gonna be showing up anymore the same day. It's kinda obvious."

"Yeah, I thought you would say that." Kakashi replied, still not looking up from his book. "I'm really gonna miss this mission. It was the easiest mission I've ever taken. I'm basically getting paid to read my book all day long. \*Sigh\* This was my own personal piece of heaven."

"Even more surprising than that, you weren't late even once." Alfonzo said with a cheeky grin.  
"According to Guy... and every other Jōnin I've spoken to since I started this job, you're at least two hours late to everywhere and everything."

"\*sigh\* That doesn't apply to missions." Kakashi replied while shaking his head. "That kinda thing could cost people their lives."

"I guess that makes sense." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

At that moment, Alfonzo froze. Then, his expression turned into something fierce as his magic power started washing over the area. Naturally, both Kakashi and Miyuki were taken aback by this action while Kakashi adopted a defensive stance.

"That son of a bitch." Alfonzo growled in anger.

"Master Alfonzo, is something the matter?" Miyuki asked in a concerned tone.

"Yeah, I hope you have a good reason for that little display, because the Anbu are gonna be here any minute now." Kakashi added.

"Someone's trying to..." Alfonzo began to say before trailing off.

A moment later, Alfonzo retracted his magic power and put on a big, wide smile. It was clear whatever angered him had turned for the better.

"Miyuki, you should go back to the house." Alfonzo said before either of his companions could speak.  
"I'll tell you what happened after I go see the Hokage."

"Understood." Miyuki replied while curtseying politely.

Then, without another word, Miyuki followed Alfonzo's instructions and left Training Ground 40 to head back to their temporary residence. At the same time, Alfonzo turned his attention to Kakashi.

"Let's go, Kakashi." Alfonzo said, his expression turning solemn. "What I've got to tell the Hokage, I'm sure he's not gonna like it."

With that, Alfonzo vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed. At the same time, Kakashi put away his little book before doing the same.

Going back a few minutes, Naruto's class had already completed two-thirds of their graduation exam. Meaning, both the written portion and the physical portion were over. Now, the students who managed to pass both portions of the exam were waiting for their turns to take the final part of the exam, Jutsu mastery.

Already, more than half of the remaining students had taken the test, which was to perform the [Clone Jutsu] to an acceptable level in front of Iruka and Mizuki. And since each student only needed to perform one [Ninjutsu], the turns were passing quickly.

"I'm really nervous." Hinata said with her hands clasped in front of her chest.

"Don't worry, Hinata." Naruto said with a big smile. "I'm sure you'll do fine. You have the best magic power control of all of us. So, there's no way you'll fail."

"Hmph! The only one who has a possibility of failing is you, Loser." Sasuke said snidely.

"What did you say?" Naruto asked in an irritated tone. "Don't think you're better than me, Sasuke."

"Hmph!" Sasuke only snorted disinterestedly in reply.

Then, just as Naruto was about to continue the argument...

"Sasuke Uchiha, you're up next." Iruka's voice sounded from the next room over.

Without another word to Naruto, Sasuke stood up and walked into the room. However, before he stepped through the door, he looked back at Naruto and sneered. After that, he stepped into the room and closed the door behind him.

"Ahh! That guy is so irritating!" Naruto shouted angrily.

Like that, time passed as the aspiring shinobi were called into the testing room one by one. Finally, as the last name was called, Naruto walked toward the door to enter the testing room.

"Naruto, are you ready?" Iruka, a brown-haired man of average height and build with his hair tied up in a pony tail, black eyes, and a horizontal scar across the bridge of his nose wearing the standard Leaf Chunin attire, asked with a friendly smile while sitting next to Mizuki, who was also wearing a friendly smile, though Mizuki's was as fake as could be.

"Yes." Naruto replied with a determined nod.

"Good." Iruka replied with a nod. "Then, please perform the [Clone Jutsu]. To receive a passing mark, you'll need to create at least three [Clones]."

"Alright! Here I go!" Naruto said as he gently flared his magic power and put his hands together in a ram seal.

'Now's the time.' Mizuki thought to himself as he stealthily made a series of hand signs.

In the next instant, Mizuki's magic power stealthily approached Naruto while he was kneading his magic power. Then, it infiltrated the young Jinchuriki's magic power network, warping his perception. As a result, he began using a lot less magic power than needed to perform the [Clone Jutsu].

["Naruto, that silver-haired one is using [Genjutsu]."] The deep, ghastly voice of a demon, Kurama, the Nine-Tailed Fox, said from inside Naruto's mindscape.

'What? Seriously? But why?' Naruto asked internally.

["It looks like he wants to make you fail this childish exam."] Kurama replied. ["I have no idea why, though. Nor can I be bothered to care. But I'm dispelling it."]

In the next instant, Kurama used his magic power to disrupt the flow of Naruto's, as a result, the [Genjutsu] affecting Naruto's senses was dispelled. On top of that, as a backlash, Mizuki coughed up a small amount of blood.

"[Clone Jutsu]." Naruto chanted at the same time Mizuki coughed.

In the next instant, the entire room was filled with illusionary clones of Naruto. To make sure he became a Genin, he needed to make sure that he passed the exam, after all. Getting payback on Mizuki, who tried to make him fail the test could wait until his passing grade was secured.

"Mizuki, are you okay?" Iruka asked a moment later, having noticed Mizuki's coughing fit. However, before he could do anything to help Mizuki, he caught sight of all the Naruto [Clones] and froze in his seat.

"How dare you!" Naruto shouted angrily, breaking Iruka out of his daze.

Naruto's shout caused Iruka to turn his head in the young blond ninja's direction. And when he did, he was thoroughly shocked. Because instead of Naruto's bright blue eyes, Naruto's eyes were currently glowing red with slitted, beast-like pupils. On top of that, he was charging at Mizuki much faster than Iruka had ever seen him move in the time that he had been his teacher.

"Naruto, stop!" Iruka shouted as Naruto grabbed Mizuki by his collar.

Hearing Iruka's shout, Naruto, who had reeled his fist back to punch Mizuki in the face, came to a stop. Then, he looked at Iruka with an aggrieved expression.

"But Iruka-Sensei, he tried to put me under a [Genjutsu] to make me fail the exam!" Naruto shouted angrily.

"What? That's impossible!" Iruka shouted in disbelief.

Then, Iruka shifted his gaze to Mizuki. However, instead of seeing the expression of a wrongfully accused man, he saw one filled with malevolence.

"Mizuki..." Iruka muttered, once again in disbelief.

"Tch! How could someone like you possibly break my [Genjutsu]?" Mizuki asked, not even trying to hide his guilt. "There's no way a monster like you could have done that on your own. So, who is it? Who's helping you? I'll kill them for ruining my plans!"

Hearing that, both Naruto and Iruka were dumbfounded. Neither of them expected Mizuki to give himself away so easily. Unfortunately, that was what Mizuki was aiming for.

"No matter, if I kill you then escape, Lord Orochimaru will still accept me by his side!" Mizuki shouted as he quickly pulled a kunai from his weapon holster.

Then, with all the strength he could muster, Mizuki stabbed his kunai at Naruto's heart from a range that was too close to dodge.

"Naruto! NO!" Iruka shouted in panic as he lunged at Mizuki.

Before the kunai could hit its mark, however, Naruto was covered in an ominous red magic power that stopped the kunai in its tracks. Then, with that magic power still coating his entire body, Naruto threw a devastating right hook that landed on Mizuki's jaw, knocking him unconscious.

"I don't know why you hate me so much, Mizuki-Sensei." Naruto said in a grim tone. Then, he looked down at himself. More specifically, at the red magic power he was cloaked in as he continued. "No, I guess I do. But that doesn't matter right now. You tried to destroy my dream of becoming Hokage. And for that, I will never forgive you."

With that, Naruto released Mizuki, letting the traitorous Chunin's body fall to the floor while simultaneously retracting the red magic power back into his body.

Not long later, the room was flooded by Anbu. Having recognized the the Nine-Tailed Fox's magic power, they came quickly to contain Naruto, thinking he had lost control of the beast. But when they arrived, they weren't sure what to make of the situation.

Currently, Naruto was jumping for joy with a shinobi forehead protector gripped tightly in his hands, Iruka was watching Naruto with a proud smile, and Mizuki was unconscious and tied up on the floor in the corner of the room.

#### Chapter 570: About Naruto and the Nine-Tailed Fox

"So, you're telling me that one of the academy's teachers was planning to get Naruto killed and escape to Orochimaru's side?" Hiruzen asked angrily as he stared at the captain of the Anbu who rushed to the academy after feeling the Nine-Tailed Fox's magic power. "And how did no one notice this Mizuki's traitorous thoughts before this?"

"He hid them well.. very well, in fact." The Anbu captain replied in a stoic tone. "Not even Iruka Umino, who worked with him on a daily basis was able to see through his façade, Lord Hokage. But isn't it more important to discuss Naruto Uzumaki? Perhaps after twelve years, the [Seal] is weakening."

In response, Hiruzen glanced at Alfonzo, who arrived in his office with Kakashi around the same time the Anbu stormed the testing room in the academy. After receiving a nod from Alfonzo, Hiruzen released a heavy sigh.

"You can leave that matter to me." Hiruzen said sternly. "For now, this is an S-Class secret. Make sure that Iruka and the Anbu in your squad know, as well. Dismissed."

"Sir!" The Anbu Captain replied before quickly disappearing from the office.

Once the Anbu Captain was gone, Hiruzen picked up his pipe. Then, he took a long drag. After holding the smoke in his lungs for a moment, he exhaled a large cloud of smoke. Then, he once again turned to look at Alfonzo.

"so, you really did it, huh?" Hiruzen asked in a tired tone. "You really manage to help him control the Nine-Tailed Fox's power."

"To an extent." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "But other than getting him started on the right path, there's not much more I can do about it."

"What do you mean?" Hiruzen asked while narrowing his eyes.

Kakashi was focused on Alfonzo's next words, as well.

"Well, all I did was introduce the two to each other." Alfonzo replied. "Everything else is up to how well Naruto can get along with him. But considering Naruto's personality, I don't think it will take all that long."

"Introduced them? Get along? Why is it that I can understand all your words, but when you string them together into sentences, they don't make any sense." Hiruzen asked in a dumbfounded tone.

Like Hiruzen, Kakashi also seemed confused about what Alfonzo was talking about.

Seeing the expressions on Hiruzen and Kakashi's faces, Alfonzo exhaled a sigh.

"Fine then, let me start from the beginning." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone. "First, you are aware that the Nine-Tailed Fox is one of the Books of Zeref, right?"

Both Hiruzen and Kakashi nodded in response.

"Good." Alfonzo continued with a nod. "Then, did you know that the most powerful of Zeref's demons, or Etherious as they call themselves, have complete personalities?"

That bit of information was news to the two experienced shinobi. So, they shook their heads in response to Alfonzo's question.

"Even if that's true, how in the world do you know that?" Hiruzen asked skeptically.

"Well, because I've met one of them." Alfonzo replied with another shrug. "He called himself Jackal. Instead of magic, he used something called a curse. The [Bomb Curse] was what he called it. And he interrupted Crawford Seam and Org's execution. Hell, Lici even killed him."

'Well, it looked like she killed him, anyway.' Alfonzo thought to himself, finishing his sentence internally. 'We both know he's not dead, and won't truly die before we destroy the respawning chambers on Cube. But I can't tell them that. That's not something I'm supposed to know.'

"And you think the Tailed Beasts are like these Etherious, I would assume?" Kakashi asked. Though, it was more like a statement than a question.

Although he did not say anything, it was obvious Hiruzen was thinking the same thing.

"That's right." Alfonzo said with a nod. "And if you consider the way they've been treated for the past four hundred years, it's obvious why they don't get along with humans."

"Still, that doesn't explain why you... introduced Naruto to it." Hiruzen pointed out.

"First of all, not 'it.' But 'him'." Alfonzo pointed out. "and I was getting to that. According to the history of your village, the First Hokage captured all the Tailed Beasts and gave them away to the other villages to be used as weapons. And even before that, the Ghost of the Uchiha, Madara Uchiha forced the Nine-Tailed Fox to battle on his behalf when he came to destroy the village decades ago."

As that was not a secret to either Hiruzen or Kakashi, they simply nodded in response.

"So, I got to thinking, that it might be possible to befriend the Tailed Beasts." Alfonzo continued. "I mean, since they had basically been imprisoned for decades, they were probably starved for friendship. So, I interacted with the [Seal] on Naruto, bringing his consciousness inside the [Seal] with me. And as it turned out, I was right."

Alfonzo smiled proudly as he reached the end of his explanation.

"but how did you come to that conclusion?" Hiruzen asked. "If you had been wrong, it could have been disastrous."

"Not really." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "For one, the [Seal] is still going strong. So, even if he had been hostile, which he was when we first met him, I could have just strengthened the [Seal] before setting up a one way flow for the Nine-Tailed Fox's power. But that would have only made it angrier and more dangerous for the next Jinchuriki after Naruto."

Hearing that, Hiruzen and Kakashi nodded in agreement. Though they were not well-versed enough in [Seals] to know if making a one-way bypass for the Nine-Tailed Fox's magic power was possible, they understood that, if it were in fact possible to do so, it would definitely make the Fox angrier and harder to control in the future.

"And to answer your question about how I knew befriending the Fox would work, I've read about Killer Bee, the Jinchuriki of the Eight-Tails." Alfonzo continued. "And based on everything I read after raiding Danzo's base, he should be a Perfect Jinchuriki. Meaning, he can tap into all of the Eight-Tails power. And based on his personality, the only way he could have done that is by becoming its friend."

"I can see how you came to that conclusion." Hiruzen said after stopping to think for a while. "Still, had you been wrong, it could have been disastrous for the Leaf. Maybe not now, but definitely in the future."

"But I wasn't." Alfonzo replied with yet another shrug. "so, there's really no point in dwelling on it."

'If I didn't already know the canon, though things are different in this world,..' Alfonzo thought to himself. '... I would have never even tried something so bat-shit insane.'

"Anyway, just don't get in the way of Naruto interacting with the Fox." Alfonzo said. "I believe he'll be able to become friends with him with no issue. And then, at some point, the [Seal] won't even be necessary anymore."

"But then the Fox could break out of the boy's body." Hiruzen said in a panicked tone. "And that would more than likely spell the end for the Leaf."

"If you had a friend that you trusted with your life, and you know that one of your actions would definitely kill him, would you do it?" Alfonzo asked a seemingly unrelated question.

Confused by Alfonzo's question, both Hiruzen and Kakashi shook their heads in reply.

"And that's how the Fox will feel by the time I remove Naruto's [Seal]. Or rather, when Naruto removes it himself." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "Trust me. The Etherious are much more pure than humans. On top of that, they all seem to feel its beneath them to deceive a human. So, even though most of them are hostile to humans, they never lie to them. They'd rather just kill them, instead."

Like that, the conversation continued with Alfonzo trying to alleviate Hiruzen and Kakashi's fears. And he eventually succeeded, to an extent. At that point, he was allowed to leave. However, Kakashi did not leave with him, as Hiruzen had asked him to stay for a different conversation.

"What do you need of me, Lord Hokage?" Kakashi asked respectfully.

"You already know I want you to become a Jōnin Instructor for this batch of academy graduates, again, right?" Hiruzen asked.

"That's right." Kakashi replied with a nod. "But Lord Hokage, you know my standards. Don't be surprised if no one passes my test this year, either."

"Unfortunately, that cannot be allowed this time." Hiruzen said sternly. "I will be assigning you Sasuke Uchiha, Sakura Haruno, and Naruto Uzumaki as a Genin Team."

"\*Sigh\* And you want at least Sasuke and Naruto trained properly, right?" Kakashi said in an exasperated tone. "And you think I'm the best to train them because of the fact that I'm Minato-Sensei's student and have a Sharingan, right."

"Although you're mostly right, I want to make sure that Sakura is trained properly as well." Hiruzen replied. "According to the Anbu, that girl has been training with the girl from Fairy Tail, Wendy, who trained under Tsunade. So, if she is trained properly, she'll be a great asset to the village."

"But I know nothing about [Medical Ninjutsu], Sir.' Kakashi said in an apprehensive tone.

"That's true." Hiruzen said with a nod. "But you're quite skilled in every other aspect of being a shinobi... Well, accept for being punctual. I'll trust you not to pass that trait onto your students."

Under his mask, Kakashi could only grin sheepishly in reply.

"Anyway, until they leave, we'll ask Miss Wendy to continue Sakura's training in [Medical Ninjutsu]."

Hiruzen said, returning to his stern tone. "But keep this in mind, Sakura, with Tsunade's techniques under her belt, could grow into the most well-rounded kunoichi in the village if you train her properly. So, I'm counting on your skill as a teacher. Show me what made you one of the greatest Anbu trainers of your generation."

"\*Sigh\* I understand." Kakashi said in a resigned tone. "I'll do my best. Still, I don't know how to face Naruto. I was his father's student... But when things were at their worst for him, I didn't help at all."

"Just tell him the truth, Kakashi. That thanks to the orders you received, you were not allowed to help him."

Hiruzen said in a grandfatherly tone. A moment later, his smile turned into a knowing one as he continued. "But don't think I didn't know about the ways you helped him in secret. For example, all those groceries that seemingly showed up out of nowhere when he was completely out of food and money."

Kakashi could only look away sheepishly in response, embarrassed that he had been caught.

"Anyway, you should go and prepare to guide your new students. "I expect you to be on time to pick them up, as well. Also, have Yamato come see me, I have a mission for him."

"\*Sigh\* I'll try." Kakashi replied as he stood up. "I'll find Yamato immediately, too."

After standing up, Kakashi bowed respectfully. Then, in a swirl of leaves, he vanished from Hiruzen's office.

"\*Sigh\* I get the feeling that those kids are gonna end up waiting for quite a while after the Genin teams are announced." Hiruzen said as he picked up his pipe again. Then, after taking a toke, he looked around his office with a frown. A moment later, he spoke once again after exhaling the smoke in his lungs. "And just who does he expect to clean up all these leaves?"

Meanwhile, back at the residence where the guests from Magnolia were staying, the Rookie 9 had gathered to tell Alfonzo and the others that they had all passed the graduation exam. Even their families were in attendance to join the celebration. Unfortunately, Sakura's parents, who were only civilians, were not too friendly to Naruto. And that lead to a small argument between Sakura and her parents.

The argument was eventually ended when the shinobi parents stood up for Naruto, causing not only Sakura's parents to be thoroughly confused, but Naruto, as well. Despite all that, Naruto was not confused for long. Instead, he started telling everyone how he caught Mizuki, and how he was actually planning to betray the Leaf, in a proud tone. Naturally, he embellished quite a bit. But because everyone was so happy about the graduation and the kids becoming Genin, they did not say anything about it.

Under Kurama's instruction, Naruto did leave the part about using his magic power out, though. And Alfonzo greatly approved of that decision. Though, he was sure it would come out that he could use it, eventually. But for now, he was just happy to celebrate with the kids he helped to train over the last several months. And he did so by going all out in the kitchen, cooking a big enough meal that everyone could eat until they were stuffed, even Choji and his father, Choza.