

Fairy Tail 571

Chapter 571: Giving Her Body, Heart, and Soul

The day after the graduation exam, things started as they always did. However, when Alfonzo and Miyuki left the house to make their way to the training ground Alfonzo was working on, there was a man other than Kakashi waiting for them outside the door.

Standing just outside the door, with his hand raised to knock, was a man with short brown hair, almond shaped black eyes, wearing the standard Leaf Jōnin attire with a turtle neck that covered his chin, and a forehead protector that split downwards to cover his cheeks.

"Oh... Uh... Good morning." The brown-haired man said awkwardly as he slowly lowered his hand. Then, he put on a forced smile as he extended his hand towards Alfonzo for a handshake. "I'm Yamato. I was sent here to replace Kakashi... Now that he's..."

"Been assigned as a Jōnin Instructor." Alfonzo said, finishing Yamato's sentence with a smile. Then, he accepted Yamato's handshake as he continued. "It's nice to meet you, Yamato. I'm Alfonzo Marcus. And this is my attendant, Miyuki Kujo."

"It's a pleasure." Miyuki said with a curtsey after Alfonzo introduced her.

"Oh, the pleasure is mine." Yamato replied as he released Alfonzo's hand. "Well then, shall we be on our way?"

"Sure, let's go." Alfonzo replied with a nod as he and Miyuki followed Yamato to Training Ground 40.

'Holy shit, he sounds just like Troy Baker.' Alfonzo thought to himself while continuing to chat with Yamato along the way. 'I wonder if his voice will change at some point in the future.'

Alfonzo chuckled internally at how characters would change voice actors in anime, knowing that stuff like that did not happen in real life.

Other than getting Yamato as an observer, the day went the same as usual. Until the evening, at least. Though the Rookie 9 did come over to talk about how their day went and who their Jōnin Instructors were, they did not train. Nor did they stay long enough for dinner.

To be honest, Alfonzo was expecting as much, though. But them leaving before dinner was unexpected. It was funny to see Choji looking back every few steps as he went home, though.

Currently, after sending off the newly graduated Genin, the whole group, Alfonzo, Laki, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki, were in the kitchen of the residence. While Alfonzo was cooking and Miyuki was assisting him, Laki, Wendy, Carla, and Saeko were simply standing around while enjoying the scents of the food Alfonzo was preparing.

"So, they all have another test tomorrow, huh?" Laki asked with her usual smile on her face. "Maybe I'll go watch. Kakashi will be training the three you, Wendy, and Saeko helped. Maybe his mask will come off."

"I seriously doubt that it will." Alfonzo replied with a shrug while cooking dinner. "But I won't stop you. And I'm sure you already know this, but Kakashi probably won't show up until 9 a.m.,"

"Huh? But Sakura told us that their Survival Test was at 7 a.m." Wendy said in a confused tone.

"That's because Kakashi is always late." Miyuki replied. "Yesterday, Master Alfonzo brought it up with him in conversation."

"Really?" Saeko asked in a curious tone. "But I've never seen him be late when going with Alfonzo to the Training Grounds, though."

"Apparently, he's only on time when it comes to missions." Miyuki replied as she brought more ingredients to Alfonzo.

"Yeah, someone could get killed if you're like that on missions." Alfonzo added. "At least, that's what he said, anyway."

"It's hard to believe someone so skilled can act like that." Saeko said with a slight frown.

"Well, most people with talent have some quirks." Carla said while smiling wryly. "I mean, look at Fairy Tail. No one in the guild, except me and Wendy, are normal either."

Immediately, everyone stopped and turned towards Carla.

"What, why are you all looking at me like that?" Carla asked as she put her paws on her hips in defiance.

"Wendy aside, you? Normal?" Alfonzo asked with an eyebrow raised.

"And what's not normal about me?" Carla asked aggressively.

"You're a talking, flying cat." Laki said bluntly.

"And no matter how you look at it, that's not normal." Saeko added.

Hearing that, Carla stumbled backwards as if she had been punched in the gut. In fact, she almost fell off the counter, which she was standing on when this conversation began. Luckily, Wendy reacted quickly and caught her in her arms.

"You did get one thing partially right, though." Alfonzo said with a smile as he added more ingredients to the skillet he was tending to. "Wendy is the closest thing to normal our guild has. But even she's not completely normal."

"Really?" Wendy asked in a tone that sounded like she had been betrayed. "What's not normal about me?"

"You're a Dragon Slayer." Laki said bluntly.

"Yes, and Dragon Slayers are abnormal by default." Miyuki added.

Hearing that, Wendy's shoulders slumped.

"But what's wrong with that?" Alfonzo asked. "Being normal means you're like everyone else. But we're all unique. So, that's a good thing, right?"

While Wendy cheered up at that, Carla was still in shock that no one considered her normal. Despite that, Alfonzo and Miyuki eventually finished preparing dinner. Then, the group sat down to eat. After that, they all headed to their bedrooms, except for Alfonzo, who went to his workshop for about an hour and a half.

After returning to his room, Alfonzo smiled wryly just outside of the door. Someone was inside his room, and thanks to [Magic Power Detection], he knew exactly who it was.

Opening the door, Alfonzo was not surprised when he saw Saeko. However, when he saw her position and what she was wearing, he found himself thoroughly surprised..

Currently, Saeko was sitting in front of his door in the seiza position. On top of that, she was wearing a loose white yukata with her long, purple hair let down.

"Welcome back, Alfonzo." Saeko said with a bashful smile on her face. "I hope you don't mind, but I wanted to spend the night with you. Now that there is no training in the evenings, I thought tonight would be a good time."

Understanding exactly what Saeko meant by spend the night, Alfonzo walked through the door. Then, he closed the door behind him. And as soon as the door was closed, the walls, floor, and ceiling were covered in a thin layer of metal etched with miniscule silencing sigils.

Seeing Alfonzo's actions, Saeko's cheeks reddened. Despite her apparent bashfulness, she stood from her seiza position. Then she stepped towards Alfonzo before taking his hand gently. After that, she led him to the bed before having him sit on its edge.

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"I won't ask if you're sure about this, because I can see in your eyes that you are." Alfonzo said as he allowed Saeko to take off his shirt. "But I wasn't expecting this. Not so early, at least. I mean, you seem to have quite a few traditional values."

"Though that is true." Saeko said as she carefully folded Alfonzo's shirt. "I have sworn to give you my body, heart, and soul. And giving you my body is what I intend to do."

"I see." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

A moment later, Saeko had finished folding Alfonzo's shirt. Then, after placing it on the foot of the bed, she leaned forward and kissed him. AS she did, she ran her hands up and down his naked torso. At the same time, Alfonzo pulled her close, his hands resting on her ass in the end.

"Mmm~!" Saeko moaned into the kiss as Alfonzo squeezed her well-toned ass.

A moment later, Saeko broke the kiss. Then, she started kissing down Alfonzo's neck, to his chest and down his abdomen. When she eventually reached the waistband of his pants, she gently unbuckled his belt, unbuttoned his pants, and unzipped them. Then, she attentively helped him take off his pants.

Now wearing only his underwear, Alfonzo watched as Saeko, like she did with his shirt, folded his pants before placing them on top of his shirt. Then, she returned her attention to Alfonzo's body. And after looking it up and down for a few moments, she reached out her hands to the bulge in his underwear gently.

With gentle movement's, Saeko caressed Alfonzo's dick over his boxers. However, it did not take long for her to also pull his boxers down, revealing his half-erect dick. Once it was revealed, Saeko took his dick in her hands, she began stroking it slowly, yet firmly.

Before she could do any more, however, Alfonzo's right hand shot out, grabbing a fistful of Saeko's hair before pulling her forcefully into another kiss. Meanwhile, Saeko continued to stroke his dick. And as the kiss deepened, so too did her hand move up and down faster and faster.

Before long, Saeko, while continuing to stroke Alfonzo's dick, used her free hand to untie the sash holding her yukata shut. Then, once it was open, she pressed her body forward while sandwiching Alfonzo's dick between her D-cup breasts. After that, with her hands on her breasts, she began using them to stroke Alfonzo's dick up and down.

This kiss and tit job went on for the next few minutes. However, just as Alfonzo was fully erect, he let go of Saeko's hair, breaking the kiss in the process. Then, he reached down and pulled her up, before spinning around and throwing her on the bed, face up.

"Kya!" Saeko yelled in surprise at Alfonzo's quick turnaround of the situation.

"If you really want me to make your body mine, then that's what I'll do." Alfonzo said as he looked down at Saeko's body clad in only an open yukata.

And even though he had seen Saeko in a skimpy bikini at his mansion, he could not help but marvel at her toned body. There was not an ounce of unnecessary fat. Her arms were thin, yet powerful, her hips were relatively wide, and her legs were muscled, yet seemed soft at the same time. On top of that, her breasts were elastic and shaped perfectly.

Then, without another word, Alfonzo leaned forward and kissed Saeko on the left side of her neck. And once he started, he quickly kissed his way downward. Stopping to suck, lick, and nibble on her hard nipples as he moved down. Then, he let his tongue run down her stomach until he reached her shaved pussy.

"Ahn~~~~!" Saeko moaned as Alfonzo started licking her lower lips. And when he stuck his tongue inside, she could not help but moan even louder as she gripped two handfuls of his hair. "Oh~! Alfonzo~~~~! This is... Ahn~! Amazing~~~~!"

The longer Alfonzo's tongue brought her pleasure, the harder Saeko pulled on his hair. On top of that, her legs were beginning to shake while droplets of sweat started appearing all over her body. Then, after a few minutes, when Alfonzo pulled his tongue out of her pussy and started flicking it on her clit, she reached her limit.

"Ahh~~~~!" Saeko screamed as she flailed her legs wildly while pulling Alfonzo's head deeper into her crotch with all her strength.

Eventually, after fifteen seconds or so, Saeko came down from her orgasm as she let go of Alfonzo's hair and her legs flopped to the bed listlessly. Meanwhile, on her face was a satisfied smile.

At the same time, while wiping Saeko's juices off his face, Alfonzo crawled up between Saeko's legs. Then, while on his knees, he held his dick and rubbed it against her dripping wet pussy.

"I hope you're ready for the real thing." Alfonzo said while grinning lustfully.

Opening her eyes, Saeko looked up at Alfonzo's face. And when she saw the grin he was wearing and the lustful glint in his eyes, she subconsciously opened her legs a little wider while nodding with expectation.

With that, Alfonzo put the tip of his dick against Saeko's pussy lips. Then, he slowly pushed it inside. Meanwhile, Saeko closed her eyes to endure the feeling of her insides being stretched out. Luckily, because of all her harsh training, her hymen had been broken long ago. So, aside from the uncomfortable feeling, that was quickly turning pleasurable, of having her vaginal walls stretched, she did not feel any of the pain she had heard about when a woman loses her virginity.

When Alfonzo reached her deepest parts, he leaned forward to kiss Saeko. And when he felt her vaginal walls relax, he started to move slowly while continuing to kiss her.

"Mmm~!" Saeko moaned into the kiss as she wrapped her arms around Alfonzo's neck. And as his strokes increased in speed, she also wrapped her legs around his waist as she continued to moan into the kiss. "Mmm~! Mmm~~~~!"

Eventually, when Alfonzo reached a certain speed, Saeko broke the kiss as she threw her head back.

"Ahn~~~~! Alfonzo~~~! Faster~~~! Mmm~~~~! Faster~~~~!" Saeko shouted in ecstasy as Alfonzo hit all her most sensitive spots.

When Alfonzo finally brought her to another orgasm, Saeko could not help but bite down on his shoulder. However, her bite did not even cause Alfonzo to flinch. Instead, it made him intensify his pounding. Then, just as Saeko's orgasm ended, she was brought to another one when Alfonzo shot his load deep inside of her.

Like that, the two shuddered together as they rode out their orgasms. Then, as Alfonzo was the first to recover, he rolled over onto his back, with Saeko still impaled on his dick.

"I hope you're not too tired to continue." Alfonzo said with a grin while planting his feet on the mattress. "Because we're just getting started."

With that, before Saeko had fully recovered from her last orgasm, Alfonzo sat her upright on his dick before he started pounding up into her from below. As a result, he could now get a firm grip of her ass while watching her breasts bounce with every thrust.

The couple continued their fun for the next few hours, until Saeko passed out after an especially powerful orgasm. Then, Alfonzo tucked them both into bed, kissed Saeko on the forehead, and fell asleep himself.

Chapter 572: Erza, Irene, and the Truth

The next morning, Alfonzo woke up in a situation he was rather accustomed to. Clinging to him with a content smile on her face, Saeko slept peacefully. Meanwhile, Miyuki, who often stared at him while he was sleep, was hanging over him, her face less than a foot away from his.

"Tch!" Miyuki clicked her tongue in dissatisfaction. "I really... really... really wish you never woke up."

"*Sigh* Doesn't this get old, Miyuki?" Alfonzo asked after having heard the same thing he's heard every morning for the last few months.

"No, not at all." Miyuki said as she straightened up before climbing off the bed. Then, at volume low enough that only she could hear, she continued in a whisper. "Just when I summoned all my courage..."

Did you say something, Miyuki?" Alfonzo asked as he turned his head in Miyuki's direction.

"No, nothing at all, Master Alfonzo." Miyuki said as she walked over the closet. "Now, you should go get washed up. I'll have a change of clothes ready for you by the time you come back."

sigh I know..." Alfonzo muttered. "I'm glad tomorrow is the weekend. I wanna go home."

With his utterance, Alfonzo carefully pulled himself away from Saeko's hug. And because she was so exhausted from last night's fun, Saeko did not even wake up. Though, she did frown slightly when she could no longer feel Alfonzo's warmth. So, Alfonzo grabbed his pillow and stuffed into Saeko's arms, causing her to snuggle up to it happily.

Now naked and out of bed, Alfonzo leisurely walked to the bathroom. And just like always, Miyuki did not blush in the slightest after seeing his body. Then, once she finished preparing his clothes, she left the room to start preparing the ingredients for breakfast.

Like that, the day went by as any other day would.

Earth land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

Around noon, after all the Fairy Tail wizards in Magnolia finished training, an unusual pair sat together at a small table on the guild hall's first floor. Though it was called unusual, it was not surprising to see the two scarlet-haired beauties sitting together.

"so, what did you want to speak with me about, Irne?" Erza asked in a relaxed tone.

Meanwhile, all of Erza's friends sat at their usual table while stealing glances at Erza and Irene.

"So, do you think she's finally gonna tell her?" Marin asked after nudging Elicia with her elbow.

"I don't know, but I hope so." Elicia replied. "Watching them dance around each other is getting old."

"Yeah, I don't know why she hasn't just told her." Cana said before taking a swig of a mug of ale.

"Oh, just like you did when Gildarts first came back after you joined the guild?" Elicia asked in a playful tone.

Spurt!

Immediately, Cana spewed her mouthful of ale all over the table and the person sitting in front of her, Ultear.

"Damn it, Cana!" Ultear shouted before Cana could respond to Elicia as she stood up angrily. "How many times has it been now? Every time you get surprised, you spit out your drink all over someone. Well, I've had enough!"

With that, Ultear lunged across the table and punched Cana in the jaw. As a result, Cana was sent flying backwards, smashing into the table where Evergreen and Elfman were having lunch together.

Crash!

On impact, Cana all the plates and cups on the table were knocked to the floor.

"Ultear threw that punch like a real man!" Elfman shouted energetically.

"Cana!" Evergreen shouted angrily while she was covered in food. "I'll make you pay for that."

In the next instant, Evergreen picked up Cana and kicked her away. At the same time, Ultear appeared next to Elfman with her own foot raised.

"I'm not a damn man, you moron!" Ultear shouted as she kicked Elfman not the next table over.

"Hey! Don't hit my Elf!" Evergreen shouted after turning away from Cana, just in time to see Ultear kick Elfman away.

With that, the rest of the guild was pulled into a Fairy Tail-style, guild wide brawl. Meanwhile, Erza and Irene sat at their table and watched the guild hall devolve into violence with blank expressions on their faces.

"*Sigh* It's never going to change, is it?" Erza said in an exasperated tone while watching the ongoing brawl. "Guild members really should not fight like this."

That statement caused Irene to turn her blank gaze from the guild hall to Erza.

'Oh, Erza. My Erza.' Irene thought to herself as she gently shook her head. 'Of all the members of Fairy Tail, you are the last one to have the right to say something like that. Since the day I joined the guild, I've seen you beat up more people during these brawls than anyone else. O well, it's not like I care. In fact, I like seeing the violence.'

"So, what was it you wanted to say, again, Irene?" Erza asked after turning away from the brawl.

"*Sigh* I just wanted to tell you the truth about me... and you." Irene replied. "You see, over four hundred years ago, I was the queen of a kingdom on Ishgar called Dragnof. And in those times, we of Dragnof believed that humans and dragons should live in harmony. Unfortunately, many dragons did not think that way. But there were some dragons who did. And they came to reside in Dragnof."

"Yes, I heard about the ancient country of Dragnof from Alfonzo some time ago." Erza replied. "But I would assume that is not the reason you wanted to talk to me."

"That's correct." Irene replied with a nod. "Back during my time as Queen, in order to quell a border conflict with a neighboring kingdom, I agreed to marry the general of that kingdom. A man named Rung."

At that point, Irene gritted her teeth for a moment, and Erza did not miss it. Still, she continued telling her story.

"When it was first decided that we would be wed, I thought nothing of it." Irene continued. "As a member of royalty, I was not expecting to be able to choose my own husband. I knew my marriage would be decided based on what was best for Dragnof. On top of that, Rung seemed like the kind of man who would do whatever was best for his people. So, I saw no harm in marrying him."

As she spoke, Irene's expression grew darker and darker. But her words never stopped.

"Not long after we were wed, I was impregnated." Irene said. "At the same time, it was found that Dragon Slayers would turn into dragons themselves if they overused their magic. And as the first Dragon

Slayer, I was no exception. Unfortunately, before I could announce my pregnancy, I was surrounded by the palace guards. The palace guards who took an oath to protect me with their lives."

By now, Irene's magic power was beginning to leak. Though, it was not enough to affect those in the guild hall. Nor was it enough to activate the security measures Alfonzo installed in the building.

"Once I was surrounded by the guards, Rung walked through the encirclement." Irene continued, her magic power leaking more and more with every word. "Then, he announced that I was under arrest. Thoroughly surprised, I did not resist as I was dragged to the prison. Meanwhile, Rung announced to the citizens of Dragnof that I had been a dragon all along and usurped my kingdom from me."

By now, Irene's magic was leaking to a dangerous degree. Even the brawlers, though they did not stop fighting, were feeling uneasy.

"Irene." Erza said calmly.

Hearing Erza's voice, Irene snapped out of her growing rage. Then, after realizing what she was doing, she shook her head as she reeled in her magic power.

"sorry about that." Irene said, though she did not seem all that apologetic. "Anyway, where was I?"

"*Sigh* You were telling me how your kingdom had been usurped." Erza replied.

"Ah, yes." Irene said, taking a deep breath to get her emotions under control. "After imprisoning me, Rung had me tortured for the secrets of Dragnof every day for three years. Unfortunately, he did not know I was pregnant. Even if he did, I imagine that he would have only tried to use it against me to get what he wanted."

"Does that mean you give birth to your child while imprisoned?" Erza asked with a strange expression on her face.

Like most members of the guild... Or rather most members of the guild with IQs in the double digits, Erza had surmised that Irene was her mother. But if Irne had her child back while she was imprisoned, then her guess had to be wrong. ON top of that, Irene was a dragon until only recently. So, if Irene gave birth to another child, it would have undoubtedly been a dragon, or at the very least, half-dragon. And she knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that she was one hundred percent human.

"No." Iren replied while shaking her head lightly. "With my magic, I managed to put the fetus in statis. I refused to allow my child to be born in a dark, dank dungeon. Nor would I allow it to be used against me in such a manner."

"I see." Erza replied, her voice sounding strangely relieved at that information.

"After years of torture, I could no longer stand the constant pain." Irene said, continuing her story. "So, I finally gave in. I allowed the [Dragonization], I had been fighting back with my will alone, to finally claim me. And at that moment, I transformed into a dragon. At that moment, I lost the majority of my human emotions, lost the ability to taste food, though I'm not sure how I was able to taste Alfonzo's..."

At that moment, Irene trailed off and fell into a contemplative state. She really had no idea how that was even possible. Meanwhile, Erza could only smile wryly. She knew exactly what Irene was thinking.

And although she could not relate, she had often contemplated about how the taste of Alfonzo's cooking could defy reality the way it does.

"*Cough*" Erza coughed lightly to get Irene's attention. "Perhaps you should continue with your story, Irene."

"Oh! You're right." Irene said, the slightest tint of red dusting her cheeks. I can ponder about that later. Anyway, as I was saying, I lost the majority of my emotions, the ability to taste, and even the ability to sleep. The only thing I had was an all-consuming rage. And with that rage, I destroyed my own kingdom and its citizens. The same citizens I was sworn to protect... the same citizens who betrayed me."

Inside her head, Irene could hear Belserion trying to console her. At the same time, Erza's [Armament Spirit], Astraia, was nodding along with Irene's past actions, saying that betrayal on that level only deserved death as a punishment.

"After destroying Dragnof, for the next four hundred years, I roamed Ishgar as a dragon." Irene continued. "I killed many people, destroyed many towns and villages... All in an attempt to find a place where I could be left alone so that I could find a way to regain my humanity."

Hearing that, Erza did not know what to think. She wanted to be angry that that Irene had harmed so many innocents. But at the same time, she felt like Irene could not be blamed, as she was not in her right mind at the time.

"However, I was unsuccessful." Irene continued. "There was no way to reverse the [Dragonization]. And all the while, I kept my baby in stasis in the hopes that when I one day regained my humanity, she would have a mother to care for."

With that said, Irene lowered her head and clenched her fists.

"But over time, the last vestiges of my humanity were waning." Irene said with her head still lowered. "And a thought... a truly heinous thought crept into my mind. I could regain my humanity if I gave birth to my child and transferred my soul into her body. Then, with glee in my heart, I prepared everything I needed to do so."

By now, not only Irene's clenched fists were shaking. But her entire body was doing so. Still, she continued her story.

"And after preparing everything to perform the ritual, I finally gave birth to my daughter." Irene said, her voice shaking just as much as her body. "But when I looked into her face. The face of a beautiful baby girl with scarlet hair and brown eyes so similar to my own, I could not bring myself to do it."

A sad smile made its way onto Irene's face as she reached this point. Meanwhile, Erza had clenched her fists, as well.

"Unfortunately, I knew this feeling was only temporary." Irene said in a sad tone. "so, in an attempt to not lose the last of my humanity, I left the baby in a small village, Rosemary Village, almost twenty-three years ago. Then, I left, thinking I would never see her again. This was my last and only act of kindness to a daughter that should have grown up with all the kindness the world had to offer."

As she reached the end of her story, Erza saw something she never expected. She saw tears streaming down Irene's face. But she still managed to ask her question in a relatively calm tone.

Meanwhile, sitting at another table, having not participated in the brawl, Heine and Juliet were watching Erza and Irene. And when they saw Irene begin to cry, they both aimed their killing intent at Erza for making Irene sad.

"And that child... was me?, wasn't it?" Erza asked, her voice shaking slightly at the end.

Though she did not manage to reply verbally, Irene did manage to nod her head in confirmation.

Seeing that, Erza remained silent for a few moments. Meanwhile, Heine and Juliet's killing intents dispersed harmlessly as they stared at the mother-daughter duo with shock.

"Then..." Erza said quietly in a hesitant tone. "Should I.. call you... mother?"

Immediately, Irene's head shot up to stare at Erza. Then, her tears started flowing even more freely. A moment later, she wiped her eyes and shook her head.

"No, that's not necessary." Irene said in a shaky voice. "I don't expect you to do that after all these years. I don't even expect you to forgive me. I just wanted you to know... the truth. The truth about why you were left alone in that village. And the reason no one was there to protect you when the Cult of Zeref abducted you. And to tell you, I'm sorry for not being there for you... with you."

With that, Irene lowered her head and continued to cry. Unbeknownst to her, ever since she regained her humanity, her emotions had returned, just like her ability to taste and sleep. However, unlike those things, her emotions had been returning slowly. But after voluntarily remembering the worst part of her life, the slowly crumbling wall that held back her emotions broke.. no shattered all at once.

"Irene, raise your head." Erza said in a solemn tone.

Hearing Erza's tone, Irene was hesitant to raise her head. Though, she did so in the end. And when she did, she was surprised to see Erza gazing at her compassionately.

"I hold no ill will for the life I've lived." Erza said gently. "Though I can't say it was easy, especially as a child, I was able to find happiness. A guild I could call family. Friends I could rely on. A group of wonderful women I call sisters. And a man who has accepted my everything and become my husband. Honestly, I have nothing to complain about."

Hearing that, Irene felt a sense of relief washing over her.

"And I want to thank you, Irene." Erza continued with a smile. "Had you completely lost your humanity, I would have never had the chance to find any of those things. And although it would be hard to refer to you as my mother for now, I would like us to take the time to get to know each other. That way, in the future, calling you mother may come as naturally as breathing."

At Erza's declaration, Irene's breath caught in her throat. At the same time, she continued to cry. However, she also had a smile so dazzling that it could light up any room on her face.

"Yes, I would like that, as well." Irene replied while once again trying to wipe her tears.

Meanwhile, acting as background music for the tender moment between the estranged mother and daughter, the guild wide brawl continued. And for some reason, all those participating seemed to be just that little bit happier as they punched their guild mates in the face.

Chapter 573: Someone Is Infiltrating Magnolia

{ "Every day, all the kids, especially Naruto, have been complaining to me about the D-Rank missions they've been taking." } Alfonzo, on a video call with Elicia, said with an amused smile on his face.

"Well, I can imagine just how boring that would be, though." Elicia replied with a wry smile on her face. "I mean, do you remember when we were taking D-Rank quests? At least we were allowed to leave the town. Most of the time, we even hunted magic beasts. But what they're doing is painting walls, pulling weeds, and catching cats."

Hearing the last part, "catching cats," Alfonzo could not help but make a strange face. A strange face that Amar'e, who was sitting on Elicia's lap, immediately started laughing at while reaching for the iPhone.

Seeing the smile on Amar'e's face, Alfonzo proceeded to make all sorts of funny faces at the iPhone's camera, making Amar'e laugh even more happily. Elicia smiled happily, as well. Meanwhile, Alfonzo continued thinking about the cat he watched Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke chase down under Kakashi's supervision.

{ "*Sigh* Don't underestimate that lost cat mission, Lici." } Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. { "When we were D-Class wizards, I doubt either of us could have done any better than Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke." }

Hearing that, Elicia put on a strange expression, as well. Unfortunately, Amar'e missed it because he was so focused on the iPhone screen. A moment later, Elicia exhaled a sigh just like Alfonzo had done before.

Then, she smiled wryly as she remembered the effort Team 7, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke, had to put into catching the cat in the anime.

"Anyway, it's about time to give Mar'e a bath." Elicia said with a smile. "But we'll talk to you tomorrow, okay, Fonzie."

{ "*Sigh* Okay." } Alfonzo said in a dejected tone. { "I can't wait until this job is over. Then I can help give Little Man baths, too." }

Hearing that, Elicia smiled brightly as she reached forward to pick up her iPhone.

"Don't worry, it won't last too much longer. Elicia replied. Then, she looked down at Amar'e while holding the iPhone in front of his face as she continued in a sing-song tone. "Okay, Mar'e, say bye to Daddy~."

In response, Amar'e reached his little arms forward and tried grabbing Alfonzo's hair through the screen. However, he started frowning when he couldn't. Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Elicia could not help but smile at how cute their son was.

{ "Alright, Little Man." } Alfonzo said with a fond smile on his face. { "I'll see you---" }

Beep! *Beep!* *Beep!*

Before Alfonzo could finish saying his goodbyes, Amar'e tapped the end call button. As a result, Alfonzo disappeared from the screen. And when he did, Amar'e froze for a moment. Then, the frown he was wearing began to transform. Not long later, his eyes started watering. And finally, he started crying at the top of his lungs, greatly surprising Elicia.

"Don't worry, Mar'e." Elicia said in a soothing tone while hugging and rocking Amar'e gently. "Daddy will be back. He'll talk to you later."

Despite Elicia's soothing tone and actions, Amar'e took quite a while to calm down. And his crying was so loud that it drew the attention of Erza, Mirajane, Lucy, and Shizuka, who quickly approached Elicia's room to see what was wrong. Cana, Ultear, Marin, and Sun, on the other hand, were currently out of the house on quests.

bang!

"Amar'e! What's wrong?" Shizuka, after flinging Elicia's bedroom door open, asked loudly as she rushed into the room.

Shortly after Shizuka ran into the room, she arrived in front of Elicia and pulled Amar'e from her arms before hugging him to her bosom. Meanwhile, Elicia could only look on while smiling awkwardly.

"Lici, is everything okay?" Lucy, the next to arrive, asked in a concerned tone. "I could hear Amar'e crying from all the way down the hall."

A moment after Lucy, both Erza and Mirajane also arrived. However, they did not speak, waiting for Elicia's explanation.

"Everything is fine." Elicia replied with a smile. "Amar'e just got upset because he accidentally hung up on Fonzie."

Hearing that, the other ladies sighed in relief. Then, Shizuka, who was holding Amar'e to her chest, looked down at Amar'e with a smile.

"You just missed your daddy, huh?" Shizuka asked Amar'e who had stopped crying.

Unfortunately, Amar'e seemed completely uninterested in what Shizuka had to say, as he had stopped crying by now and was happily slapped his little hands on her breasts and laughed at how they deformed in shape before returning to normal.

"*Sigh* I'm just glad nothing is wrong." Erza said in a relieved tone. "I was quite scared after hearing him cry."

"That's why Alfonzo should just have a baby with me, too." Mirajane grumbled. "If he did, the kids could play together. Then, they wouldn't cry like that."

Hearing that, everyone in the room, other than Amar'e, stared at Mirajane with strange expressions. A moment later, Elicia shook her head. Then, she turned her attention back to Shizuka and Amar'e.

"Anyway, it's time for Mar'e's bath." Elicia said with a smile as she held her arms out to take Amar'e from Shizuka.

"Oh, then I'll come with you." Shizuka replied with a smile as she started bouncing Amar'e in her arms. "I can help you give him a bath."

In response, Elicia dropped her arms. Then, she shrugged as if she did not mind.

"Alright, then come with me." Elicia replied as she turned towards the bathroom in her bedroom.

Before Elicia could take more than a few steps, however, she was stopped.

"I wanna come, too." Mirajane said as she stepped forward. "It will be good practice for when I have a baby, too."

In the end, the four ladies and Amar'e went down to the underground bath together. Along the way, Maria joined them to make sure they had everything they needed to bathe Amar'e while enjoying their time in the bath, as well.

The next day, Elicia woke up at an uncharacteristically early time. However, ever since she got pregnant with Amar'e her sleep habits had changed. And now, she had even become an early riser. Though, that was only when she had something to do.

"*Sigh* I kinda hate taking quests now." Elicia said as she looked at Amar'e sleeping in his crib. "Every time I have to leave Mar'e, it feels like my heart breaks. But I chose this life. And I really enjoy being a wizard. So, I'll just have to learn how to juggle the two."

With that, Elicia got out of bed. Then, she went into her closet to pick out the battle attire she planned to wear on her quest to subjugate an S-Class magic beast. On top of that, she packed a few days' worth of clothes as it would take her about ten hours to drive to the quest location. And she was certain that she would not want to drive back after driving that far and fighting a magical beast.

As soon as she was done packing, Elicia saw Grayfia standing at her bedroom door.

"Good morning, Madam Elicia. I've come to watch over the Young Master." Grayfia said while bowing her head politely. "And to wish you luck on your quest, as well."

Smiling at Grayfia's polite greeting, Elicia picked up her bag. Then, she made her way over to Amar'e's crib and watched him sleep for a few moments, seemingly struggling to tear her eyes away from him.

Eventually winning the struggle against herself, Elicia sighed. Then, she smiled once again before leaning down and kissing Amar'e on the forehead.

"Mommy will be back soon, Mar'e." Elicia said quietly, making sure to not wake Amar'e. "Be a good boy for Grayfia and the other girls, okay?"

With that, Elicia stood up and spun on her heels before heading for the door to her bedroom. At the same time, seeing Elicia walking towards her, Grayfia stepped aside, making room for Elicia to leave.

"I pray for your safe return, Madam Elicia." Grayfia said, bowing politely once again.

In response, Elicia stopped next to Grayfia.

"I'm sure we've told you this more than once, Grayfia." Elicia said while shaking her head. "But you really don't have to be so formal. And you don't have to make sure the other girls are so formal, either."

"I'm afraid I cannot acquiesce." Grayfia replied with her usual stoic expression on her face. "That would simply be unbecoming of a maid."

Shaking her head at the expected answer, Elicia turned to leave again. However, Grayfia's following words made her stop and smile brightly.

"However, should the opportunity present itself when I'm off duty, I would enjoy having a cup of tea and speaking of this season's collection." Grayfia said without changing her tone.

"Great." Elicia replied. "Then, it's a date. Just let me know when your next day off is."

In response, Grayfia only bowed her head once again. Meanwhile, Elicia skipped away from her bedroom happily. A few minutes later, she arrived in the kitchen, where Erza, Mirajane, Lucy, and Shizuka were eating breakfast.

"Good morning, everyone." Elicia said in a cheerful manner. "What are you all planning to do today?"

"Good morning, Elicia." Erza replied with a smile. "It looks like you're ready to go on your quest."

"Yup." Elicia replied with a somewhat forced smile. "I'll try to make it quick so that I can come back to Mar'e. So, what will you guys be doing?"

"I'm gonna go spend time with Lisanna." Mirajane said with a smile. "Apparently, Natsu is going on a quest today. So, I'll keep her company."

As she spoke about Natsu taking a quest, Mirajane glanced at Erza and Lucy, members of Team Natsu. However, there were no negative feelings in her gaze.

"Indeed." Erza added. "We'll be going on a quest with the rest of Team Natsu." Erza added. "I believe Juvia will be accompanying us, too."

"I don't know why we haven't just added her to the team yet." Lucy said while shaking her head. "I mean, she practically comes on all our quests with us. So, why do we just keep saying she's only accompanying Team Natsu."

"If I had to guess, it's because Juvia only acknowledges Gray as her teammate, right?" Elicia said while tapping her chin with her left index finger.

"That is correct." Erza replied with a nod. "Perhaps we should have Gray talk to her about officially joining."

Shrugging her shoulders, Elicia accepted a bag containing a packed breakfast and lunch from Maria, as she turned to Shizuka, who seemed to be eating while still half asleep.

"What about you, Shizuka?" Elicia asked in a curious tone. "You have a shift at the guild's infirmary today, right?"

"Nuh uh." Shizuka replied while shaking her head lazily. "Today is my day off. So, I'm gonna go back to sleep."

"Then, does that mean you stayed up late last night because you didn't have to go to work today?" Lucy asked curiously.

"Uh huh." Shizuka replied sleepily. "I stayed up listening to Maria sing in the studio. She's really good, you know."

Maria, who was standing to the side to serve the ladies, could not help but blush after being praised like that. However, she did not say anything.

"Yeah, she really is." Elicia added. "I remember the first time we walked in on her recording with Miyuki working the controls. It really was good, you know?"

With that, the ladies continued to chat about Maria's singing, which embarrassed her even further. However, the time for Elicia to leave eventually arrived. So, after giving all her sisters a hug, she took the

elevator down to the underground parking garage. Then, she hopped in her Huracán and opened the garage door.

Shortly afterwards, Elicia was driving through the streets of Magnolia towards one of its gates while thinking about the magic beast she was supposed to hunt.

"But seriously, what's up with Lupinus?" Elicia asked as she approached the eastern gate. "first a lycan, then an Inferno Bear, and now a Manticore. Does that town have something that attracts strong magical---"

Just before reaching the gate, Elicia spread her [Magic Power Detection], a practice everyone who could use it had adopted whenever they left Magnolia. And just as she did, she felt a magic power signature she did not recognize.

Had that been it, it would not have been enough to make her stop talking to herself mid-sentence. What made her stop was the fact that the magic power signature was on par with Brandish's in power. And it was about to enter the town. On top of that, it was entering from the same gate Elicia was leaving from.

Naturally, Elicia kept the magic power signature in her perception. And when it entered the town, she could also feel Irene start to move, as well. Brandish, on the other hand, was probably uninterested as she did not even move from within her apartment.

"Well, I guess I should see what's going on with this newcomer." Elicia said as she drove towards the magic power signature. "And if Irene is moving, it's probably someone from Alvarez. The only question is... who?"

A few minutes later, Elicia was approaching the gate. However, instead of driving through it, she turned the wheel and pulled the emergency break, causing the magic vehicle to drift to a stop not far from the carriage rental shop near the gate. Then, once the Huracán came to a stop, she rolled down the passenger side window with a smile while appearing to stare at the wall next to the magic vehicle.

Chapter 574: Elicia Vs. Jacob Lessio

Shortly before Elicia reached the eastern gate of Magnolia, a tall, muscular man wearing a spandex purple turtle neck under a black suit, black gloves with oval patterns on the knuckles, and black shoes was approaching the same gate.

This man also had black hair in a buzz cut with a receding hairline, a small skull tattoo in the middle of his large forehead, small black eyes, a prominent nose, high cheek bones and a long jaw, leaving a lot of room between his chin and comparatively small mouth.

"Hmm...? It looks like there's a barrier surrounding the town." The man, Jacob Lessio, said as he stopped just outside the gate and looked up at the dome shaped barrier, that should be invisible to onlookers, surrounding Magnolia. "I wonder what it's for. It doesn't look like its meant to stop people from entering."

Shaking his head, as the purpose of the barrier was of no consequence, Jacob started walking again. And as he passed through the gate, no one seemed to notice him. And that was thanks to the magic he specialized in, [Stealth Magic], also known as Assassination Magic.

This [Stealth Magic], much like Elicia's [Camouflage Magic], allows Jacob to render himself invisible to sight, sound, and smell. It also allows him to extend the same effects to his weapons. However, curiously enough, Jacob is unable to see anything he places the effects of his [Stealth Magic] upon, which is a stark difference from[Elicia's Camouflage Magic].

On top of that, Jacob's magic allows him to see and interact with things that would normally be unseen, such as spirits or ghosts, something Elicia's magic is incapable of.

"Now, I just need to find Irene and Brandish." Jacob said to himself as he walked down the street. "I doubt they've been captured. There shouldn't be anyone on Ishgar strong enough to do that."

A few moments later, Jacob saw a sleek magic vehicle approaching from down the street. He also noticed the brown-skinned woman with shoulder-length, straight black hair behind the steering wheel.

"Oh, that's quite the impressive magic vehicle." Jacob said in an admiring tone. "Perhaps August would enjoy such a toy. I should find a way to bring one back for him when I return to the Empire."

A moment later, after noticing that the magic vehicle was headed straight towards him, Jacob, who knew the driver should not be able to see him, calmly stepped to the side of the street, almost pressing his back against a nearby building. And when he did, he saw that the young woman's eyes followed his movements.

"Huh?" Jacob exclaimed in surprise. "Can she see me?"

A moment later, Jacob shook his head.

"Impossible." Jacob said to himself. "There's no way she can see through my [Stealth Magic]."

As if to mock his answer, Jacob saw the young woman, Elicia, smile before she violently spun the wheel in his direction. Then, his eyes widened as the magic vehicle slid into a drift, stopping less than a foot away from him.

"Now, why would someone with so much magic power be sneaking into Magnolia while in [Stealth]?" Elicia asked in a cheerful tone. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind coming with me so we can talk about it, Jacob Lessio."

"What?" Jacob exclaimed in surprise once again. "She really can see me! And how does she know my name?"

In fact, Elicia was not able to see or hear Jacob. However, thanks to [Magic Power Detection], she knew exactly where he was.

"We should probably take this outside of the town, though." Elicia muttered as she wiggled the fingers of her left hand. "Wouldn't wanna hurt any of the people walking the streets, would we?"

Hearing Elicia's words, Jacob raised his hands to clap, intending on using his other magic, [Transport Magic]. However, before he could clap his hands, he felt thin threads wrapping around his wrists, stopping his movements. Then, he felt his torso was quickly wrapped by the same threads, as well.

Before Jacob could react to the situation he found himself in, Elicia stepped on the accelerator, pulled the emergency break once again, shifted the magic vehicle into gear, and spun the steering wheel. As a result, the entire Huracán basically spun in place, just avoiding the wall of the building Jacob was pressed up against, before speeding towards the town gate.

Meanwhile, as the magic vehicle turned, Jacob was whipped along with it. Then, as it took off towards the gates, he was dragged along behind it, damaging his suit in the process.

"This woman... Just who is she?" Jacob asked while trying to make sure that his head did not strike the ground while he was being dragged. "And how did she see through my [Stealth Magic]."

Less than a minute later, Elicia had driven a mile from Magnolia's gate. Around the same time, Jacob somehow slipped a knife into his right hand. Then, he cut the threads entangling his body. As a result, he rolled along behind the Huracán, though at a much slower pace, until he came to a stop.

"He managed to cut my threads." Elicia muttered as she stepped on the break and spun the wheel, once again causing the magic vehicle to drift to a stop. "Well, what did I expect from a member of the Spriggan 12? They're on a different level from most of the wizards on Ishgar."

By the time Elicia's Huracán stopped and she stepped out of the driver's seat, Jacob was picking himself up from the ground. And when he was finally standing, he could not help but look down at his ruined suit. On top of that, he had dropped his [Stealth Magic], thinking it useless as Elicia could detect him.

"How unfortunate." Jacob muttered as he gazed upon his suit filled with tears. "It looks like I'll have to find a tailor before I go back."

"Oh, you need a tailor?" Elicia said cheerfully as she walked towards Jacob. "Then, you ran into the right person. I'm the owner of the Taylor Shop, the the most popular clothing store and tailor shop on Ishgar. And once you've answered a few questions, I'd be happy to make a suit just for you. I'll even give you a discount. Unfortunately, I don't think I'll be able to let you go home, though. Sorry."

Hearing what Elicia had to say, Jacob looked up from his ruined clothing. And based on the expression he wore, he was not happy that Elicia was mocking him, either. However, he did not flare up in anger. Instead, he studied his opponent.

'She's got quite the amount of magic power.' Jacob thought to himself. 'She's probably on par with Brandish or Serena. And from the way she moves, she's a trained martial artist, as well. And because she can see through my [Stealth Magic], getting away from her to complete my mission won't be easy. *Sigh* I guess I'll have to kill her. Though, I'd rather not kill a woman if I could avoid it.'

"So, will you come along peacefully" Elicia asked while tilting her head cutely and smiling brightly. "Or... will we have to do this the hard way?"

"Sorry, Miss." Jacob replied as he started taking off his blazer. "But I've got a mission to complete. So, I'm going to have to put you down."

With his blazer now removed, Jacob revealed that his turtle neck was sleeveless. At the same time, he reached into his pants pockets, taking out a magic gun and a knife as he pulled his hands out.

"*Sigh* I was expecting you to say that." Elicia muttered as she took her fighting stance. "I'm gonna be late for my quest because of this. And that means I'll be away from Mar'e for even longer. Wait! I could just go back home and see him again before leaving after I capture you."

While Elicia was talking to herself and considering how she should proceed after the fight ended, Jacob raised the magic pistol in his left hand and fired several shots at her. However, to Jacob's surprise, the bullets penetrated Elicia's body without her even reacting. Then, when her image began to fade away, Jacob widened his eyes in disbelief.

A moment later, Jacob dropped to one knee. As he did, he felt a gust of wind blow past the place where his head used to be. Looking up, Jacob saw Elicia's leg that had just swung past his head.

"Your instincts are pretty good." Elicia said as she lowered her leg, using it to pivot, and swung a low kick at Jacob's back.

In response, Jacob jumped over the kick. At the same time, he spun his body in mid-air and threw the knife in his right hand at Elicia.

Reacting quickly to the incoming knife, Elicia ejected threads from her fingertips. Then, she caught the knife before flinging it back at Jacob, who once again raised the pistol in his left hand and shot it down.

Landing on the ground a moment later, Jacob swung his left hand at Elicia's head, intending to pistol whip her. However, Elicia tilted her head back, narrowly avoiding the strike. Then, while continuing her rotation, she threw her other leg at Jacob's torso.

Allowing the kick to strike his torso, Jacob slightly twisted his body to mitigate the force. Then, he clamped his left arm down towards Elicia's leg. At the same time, he raised the pistol, aiming at Elicia's back.

"Uh oh!" Elicia exclaimed.

Bang!

Just before Jacob squeezed the trigger, Elicia flung her body upwards while twisting her body. As a result, the bullet passed just below her. At the same time, Elicia's free leg lashed towards Jacob's head. And with no time to react, Jacob was kicked in the side of the head, sending him flying as he released her leg.

A moment later, Jacob slammed into the ground, rolling a few times to bleed off the momentum, before pushing himself back to his feet.

"That hurt." Jacob muttered as he rubbed the side of his head. "You really pack quite the punch, Miss."

"I do what I can." Elicia replied as she once again took her fighting stance.

After Elicia spoke, Jacob once again raised his pistol before firing the remainder of the bullets at her. Elicia, on the other hand, while watching the muzzle of the pistol, dodged each shot while approaching Jacob. At the same time, she stealthily extended her threads towards him.

"That won't work a second time." Jacob said as he reached for the belt at his waist.

A moment later, Jacob pulled the belt from around his pants, revealing it to be a whip. Then, he lashed the whip at the threads. And although he was unable to sever them, he managed to keep them from approaching close enough to wrap him up again.

Despite keeping the threads at bay, Jacob was unable to stop Elicia from closing the distance. And with his pistol now empty and lacking the time to reload, he tossed the gun away. Then, he lashed the whip at Elicia.

In response, Elicia coiled her threads into a whip of her own before lashing it against Jacob's. And for the next few moments, they exchanged blows at high speed.

'It's a good thing I've trained with Lucy so much.' Elicia thought to herself while defending against Jacob's whip strikes. 'Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to keep this up so long.'

Despite her thoughts, it was clear that Elicia would eventually be overwhelmed, as she was not truly a whip wielder. So, she began using her threads to harass Jacob, causing him to split his focus between Elicia's whip and the threads she sent to entangle him.

Around that time, Irene, who had started moving as soon as she felt Jacob enter Magnolia, arrived, floating above the battlefield.

"I guess it's been too long since the last time I sent a report." Irene muttered to herself. "Well, I should have expected them to start suspecting something was wrong sooner or later. Anyway, it looks like Elicia can handle him. But I'll wait right here just to be sure. I wouldn't want Alfonzo to go on a rampage if anything were to happen to her."

By the time Irene finished her thought, Elicia had reached a range where the whips would no longer be effective. So, like he had done with his pistol, Jacob tossed it away. Then, he reached behind his back, producing two more knives.

Swish!

Immediately after Elicia got into range, Jacob swiped his left dagger at Elicia's throat. However, she was able to bend her back just in time to avoid it. Then, she fell to her back and immediately pushed off with her hands, propelling herself towards Jacob's stomach, feet first.

"Ugh!" Jacob grunted as the wind was knocked out of him by Elicia's kick.

In the next instant,, Elicia, now standing on her hands, pushed off with her left hand, spinning on her right, as she sent both of her legs flying at Jacob's head and left shoulder. In response, Jacob raised his knives to defend. On top of that, the sharp edges were facing Elicia's legs.

Unfortunately for him, Elicia was expecting Jacob's defense. So, as she threw her kicks, she surrounded her legs with hardened threads. As a result, when Elicia's legs and Jacob's knives made contact, the knives were pushed back, their blunt sides slamming into Jacob's head and shoulder a moment later.

Once again, Jacob was sent flying. However, this time, he was able to regain his balance mid-air.

"[Thread Magic: Thread Entanglement]." Elicia changed, reeling in all the threads she spread around the area as she did so.

Then, as soon as he landed, Jacob began whirling in place, cutting all the threads that were moving to entangle him. And to Elicia's surprise, he did so successfully.

"*Sigh* He really is good." Elicia muttered as she stood up on her feet.

["If you would have just used me, this could have all been taken care of much easier."] Scylla said from Elicia's inner world.

'Yeah, I know.' Elicia replied internally. 'I just wanted to see if I could take out one of the Spriggan 12 without you. But I guess we both know the answer to that question, don't we.'

["Tch!"] Scylla clicked her tongue disdainfully. ["Although that's true, you didn't even think to use my sealed state at all, did you?"]

'Nope, not in the slightest.' Elicia said cheerfully.

["*Sigh* It amazes me that you can even take care of Mar'e."] Scylla said in an exasperated tone. ["It seems like when you're with him, that's the only time you ever think all your actions through."]

'That's because he's the most important thing in this world to me.' Elicia replied. 'Anyway, let's stop playing around. I'm gonna catch this guy, go see Mar'e again, and finally get moving on this quest.'

"[Mend the Seams of Reality, Scylla]." Elicia chanted, releasing Scylla's first seal.

A moment later, after a bright golden glow, Elicia's hands were covered in golden dragon scales, leaving Jacob in a state of disbelief.

"What is that?" Jacob asked in dumbfounded amazement. "How did your hands change like that?"

"Sorry, that's a secret." Elicia said with a smile as she pointed her right hand at Jacob. "[Needle Storm]."

In the next instant, all the scales covering Elicia's right hand shot towards Jacob, transforming into dragon motif golden needles in midair. On top of that, they were all connected to Elicia's hand by thin threads. Threads she could use to manipulate the needles to move however she wanted.

Like before, Jacob began whirling in place, deflecting all the incoming needles as they circled him and tried to stab into his acupoints. And thanks to the added force because of Scylla's release, it was clear that Jacob was struggling to keep up.

Despite his struggle, Jacob managed to remain unharmed. However, he was completely focused on the flying needles. So, when Elicia approached him at a low angle, he completely missed her. And when he finally noticed her, her right foot was shooting up towards his prominent chin.

Bang!

In the next instant, Elicia's foot connected with Jacob's chin, sending him rocketing into the sky. Then, after another instant, Elicia vanished from where she stood before appearing behind Jacob in the air. Then, she wrapped her arms around Jacob's arms and torso while also wrapping him with her threads and stabbing her needles into his acupoints, paralyzing him temporarily.

"Damn it." Jacob muttered.

"This is gonna hurt." Elicia said as she started spinning herself and Jacob at high speed. "I probably shouldn't use the name of Lee's attack, though. Don't want him thinking I stole it if he ever sees this. So... [Izuna Drop]."

Boom!

A moment later, Elicia reoriented herself and Jacob to fall head first while continuing to spin them. Then, after about two seconds, they slammed into the ground, kicking up a dust cloud on impact.

Not even a second later, Elicia flew out of the dust cloud, her right hand once again covered in dragon scales. Then she started dusting the dust out of her hair and clothes. At the same time, Irene descended from the sky.

"You've grown a lot since I first met you, Elicia." Irene said as she landed next to Elicia. "To think you could defeat Jacob on your own. Truly impressive."

"*Sigh* Not as much as I would have liked, though." Elicia replied while sealing Scylla once again. "I still had to unseal Scylla to beat him."

"Don't sell yourself short, Girl." Irene said sharply. "I doubt even Ur would have been able to defeat him without using Yuki-Onna."

"I guess you're right." Elicia replied as she looked towards the dust cloud that was dispersing. "Anyway, let's get him back to the guild hall and report to Ur. Then, I'm gonna go see Mar'e again."

With that, Elicia and Irene started walking towards Elicia's Huracán. At the same time, Elicia dragged Jacob behind them before fastening him to its roof. Then, they drove back towards Magnolia to report at the guild hall.

Chapter 575: In the Guild's Prison

"So, this guy is one of the Spriggan Emperor's royal guards, huh?" Ur asked as she glanced at Jacob. "If he's here, then I guess you two must be under suspicion back in Alvarez. And if he doesn't come back for a while, those suspicions will be confirmed, right?"

Currently, Elicia, Gildarts, Ur, Irene, and Brandish were all gathered in front of Jacob Lessio's cell in the Fairy Tail guild hall's underground prison. However, unlike most prison cells, this one had no bars. In fact, it was little more than a metal box with space for air to circulate.

However, despite the fact that it was no more than a metal box, it was probably one of the highest security prison cells in the world. Like the guild master's office, there were sigils that made the walls see through. Meaning, those gathered could see into the cell. ON top of that, it could be made to be one-way or two-way.

Aside from the viewing sigils, there were also a large number of anti-magic sigils lining the inside of the cell. Meaning, unless the prisoner outclassed Alfonzo by a significant amount of magic power, they would be unable to use any magic while in the cell. And considering that Alfonzo upgraded the cells after unlocking Riot and Bedlam's first seals, the number of wizards who could boast such a thing were quite limited in number.

"So it would seem." Irene replied with a nod. Then, with a bitter smile on her face, she continued. "I suppose this is my fault. After regaining my humanity... No, I guess even before that, When I left for the

Village Hidden in the Leaves with Alfonzo and Elicia, I stopped sending regular reports. So, the emperor must have sent Jacob to either check on us or ascertain our loyalty."

"*Sigh* This is gonna be such a pain...' Brandish said in a lethargic tone. "That means we're gonna have to fight them soon, doesn't it. Mari is gonna be so mad."

"By Mari, you're talking about the Warrior Queen, Dimaria Yesta, right?" Elicia asked feigning a pondering expression. "She uses [Take Over: God Soul] and [Age Seal Magic], magic that can stop the time in an area, right?"

"That's right." Irene replied with a nod. "She's one of the stronger members of the Spriggan 12. I doubt there are any wizards outside of Fairy Tail that could face her in frontal combat. And the number of those who can is quite limited."

"How do you fight someone who can move freely in stopped time?" Gildarts asked curiously while frowning slightly. "I mean, she would only have to stop time around you, walk up to you calmly, and kill you while you can't move, right?"

"And that's usually how she works." Brandish replied. "*Sigh* Fighting her is like fighting a cheater. It's so unfair."

"We probably don't need to worry about her, though." Elicia said with a shrug. "I'm sure Fonzie could do something about it."

"What makes you say that?" Irene asked in an interested tone.

Not only Irene, but even Brandish looked at Elicia with an interested gaze. However, before Elicia could reply, Ur was the one to answer Irene's question.

"Well, I'm sure you've heard about the attack we survived from Acnologia a few years ago, yes?" Ur asked. Then, after receiving a nod from Irene and Brandish, she continued. "Well, we were naturally barely able to even scratch Acnologia during that attack. And when that big bastard got bored, he flew up into the sky and breathed a dragon breath that would have obliterated all of Tenrou Island."

Hearing that, both Irene and Brandish raised their eyebrows in surprise. A moment later, however, they both furrowed their eyebrows.

"That's impossible." Irene said while shaking her head a moment later. "I mean, we were just there less than six months ago. And there's no way Tenrou could still be standing if what you said is true."

"Oh, it's true." Gildarts replied. "And we all owe the kid our lives. If it weren't for the magic item he crafted, all of Fairy Tail's S-Class wizards and S-Class candidates would have died that day. *Sigh* I must really be a lucky son of a bitch to have survived a run in with Acnologia twice in this life."

"Oh, that's right, I almost forgot that he was the one who took your arm and leg, Uncle Gildarts." Elicia said with an exaggerated expression of realization. Then, when she saw Gildarts' eyebrows twitching in frustration, she smiled cheekily.

"But how?" Irene asked, ignoring Elicia's mischief. "Although I'm sure I could block Acnologia's breath with my [Enchantments], I doubt Alfonzo could make a magic item capable of producing a barrier that

strong. Especially not a few years ago. He just doesn't have the necessary amount of magic power... Even now."

"Have you heard of [Fairy Sphere]?" Ur asked.

"Yes." Irene replied with a nod. "It's one of Fairy Tail's Three Great Fairy Magics. I've never seen it before, though."

"Fairy Sphere is an absolute defense magic." Gildarts said solemnly. "And according to the guild's first master, Mavis Vermillion, it can even protect against the passage of time."

"Meaning it stops time for those inside." Elicia said, picking up where Gildarts left off. "And Master Mavis told him that after he used it, we should have all been stuck in the barrier for ten years."

"Ten years?" Brandish asked in an astonished tone. "Then, how are you even here? That was only three and a half years ago."

"Honestly, no one but Alfonzo knows." Ur replied while shaking her head with a wry smile on her face. "I heard him talking about it with the first master back on Tenrou Island. But the concept was way over my head. It gave me a headache just thinking about it."

Elicia and Gildarts nodded their heads in response with Ur's statement.

"Hmm... Interesting." Irene said while stroking her chin with her right hand. "I guess I'll have to have a conversation with him the next time he comes home. Not only did he imbue [Fairy Spere] into a magic item, but he also even managed to have that item continue working through stopped time."

Looking at Irene's expression of interest, Gildarts, Ur, and Brandish shook their heads. Elicia, on the other hand, had her eyes light up.

'Is Fonzie moving towards that legendary route?' Elicia thought to herself. 'I thought it was only possible in hent... *Cough* more adult oriented anime. But there might be a chance to see Oyakodon in real life.'

["*Sigh* You really are a degenerate."] Scylla said in an exasperated tone. ["You didn't even think about if the people involved would be okay with it. Though, something tells me that the shameless Erza wouldn't have an issue with it."]

Ignoring Scylla's retort, Elicia was positively vibrating with excitement. And it was clear for everyone present to see. However, everyone thought she must either be thinking about Alfonzo or Amar'e, as this had become something of a common sight to those who have known Elicia long enough.

"Anyway, now that we've caught a third spy from Alvarez, what are we gonna do?" Ur asked in a solemn tone.

"Hey!" Brandish yelled in opposition.

"Well, she's not wrong, Brandish." Irene said with a smile. "When they caught us, we really were spies. It's just that in the end, they were able to make us switch sides. Unfortunately, that won't be possible with Jacob. He's completely loyal to the Spriggan Emperor."

"Are you sure?" Gildarts asked. "I mean, we never thought we would be able to make the two of you change sides when you were caught, either."

"Yes, I'm quite sure." Irene replied solemnly. "Although to the people of Ishgar, the people of Alakitasia are ruthless enemies. To them, they are just doing everything they can to help their emperor achieve his goals."

"*Sigh* You're probably right." Ur replied. "Still, I think we should talk to him at the very least."

With that, Ur stepped towards the one-way transparent wall. Then, she placed her hand on a few sigils that were visible and injected her magic power into them. In the next instant, all those standing outside the cell could see Jacob raise his head and look in their direction.

"I guess Invel was right." Jacob said, his voice able to be heard through the transparent wall as he looked away. "To think, Scarlet Despair and Nation Destroyer would betray His Majesty. *Sigh* I really thought he was just being paranoid."

"Well, things are less bothersome on this side." Brandish replied with a shrug. "I never liked going on the missions to destroy rebels. And now I don't have to. Unless I take a quest to do so on my own."

"And that's all you have to say about your betrayal after all the emperor has done for you over the years?" Jacob asked while still looking away. "And it would seem betrayal has made you even more indecent. You're covering even less skin than before. Would you please put on some decent clothes."

In response, Brandish looked down at her clothing, a green overcoat with gold trim and a fur collar, a skimpy black bikini with gold accents that pressed her breasts together, forming quite the line of cleavage, and black and gold high heeled sandals that showed off her polished toenails.

"Nah. That's too much trouble." Brandish replied a moment later while shaking her head.

"*Sigh* Young women now a days have no sense of modesty." Jacob muttered. "Back in my day, the young ladies knew what it meant to be virtuous. But now... *Sigh*"

While Jacob continued to mutter about the values of today's young ladies, Gildarts and Ur looked at him as if he were crazy for talking about such a thing in the current situation. Meanwhile, Irene looked as if she had expected him to say something like that. Elicia, on the other hand, was smiling with pride. The bikini Brandish was wearing was made by her, after all.

"Enough, Jacob." Irene said after she got tired of Jacob's babbling. "I really would rather not have to kill you. So, is there any way we could get you to change sides?"

Hearing that, Jacob snapped his head in Irene's direction with a shocked expression on his face.

"Did I just hear that correctly?" Jacob asked in a dumbfounded tone. "The Scarlet Disaster, Irene Belserion, just said that she'd rather not kill one of her enemies? Does this cell cause illusions or something?"

Hearing that, Brandish looked at Jacob with a sympathetic gaze while Elicia giggled. Gildarts and Ur, on the other hand, looked at Irene with expressions that screamed: "Just how bad was she that he's wondering if he's in an illusion right now?" Meanwhile, Irene materialized her staff, Belserion, in her left hand before pointing its protrusions at Jacob.

"I see. How unfortunate." Irene said in a cold tone. "It would seem negotiations have broken down. I can't say that I enjoyed being comrades with you in the past. But you were at least good at what you did. So, it's truly unfortunate that I have to kill you."

With every word she spoke, Irene's magic power leaked more and more, putting pressure on everyone in front of the cell. And despite the fact that her magic power was being kept out of the cell, even Jacob paled rapidly at the change in the atmosphere.

"What do you mean?" Jacob asked in a dumbfounded tone. "When did the negotiations even start? Did I miss something?"

"Hey, stop!" Ur shouted in a panic. "At least take him out of the cell and the guild hall before you do that! Or were you thinking of bringing down the whole guild hall?"

Hearing that, Irene turned towards Ur with a cold smile on her face.

"Oh, come now, Ur." Irene said, her smile turning playful. "I was only joking. You know, just to intimidate him. I would never do anything to harm the guild. Especially after what Alfonzo did for me."

"*Sigh* I can never tell when you're joking or not." Ur said in a relieved tone.

"Anyway, I think we should pass him to the Magic Council." Irene said as she dematerialized Belserion. "And I volunteer to take him to the nearest Magic Council branch. But I expect him to try to escape. So, but I promise, I'll do my best to take him back into custody alive... If that happens, that is."

While Irene smiled innocently, Elicia, Gildarts, Ur, and Jacob stared at Irene blankly. Brandish, on the other hand, sighed in exasperation. It was obvious that Irene had every intension of taking Jacob somewhere that would be missed when she erased him and the surroundings.

"*sigh* Well, to make sure he doesn't have a chance to try and escape, we'll leave him in there." Ur said while shaking her head. "I don't think we have any anti-magic cuffs that can handle someone with that much magic power. So, we'll wait for Alfonzo to come back and do something about that."

"That's probably the best decision." Gildarts replied. "I'm sure the kid can make something even more powerful than what we have right now. I mean, he was able to restrain Irene in her dragon form before, right? *Sigh* He really has grown. I remember when he couldn't even restrain me at half strength. Now, he's even stronger than I am."

"Of course he is." Elicia smiled while proudly puffing her chest out. "I've been telling you all the same thing for years. Fonzie is the best."

With that, Elicia started gushing about Alfonzo, eventually adding Amar'e to her bragging. Meanwhile, everyone else only stared at her with blank gazes as she went on and on by herself. Then, after a few minutes without any signs of Elicia stopping, Ur pressed her hand on the sigils again, disengaging the wall's transparency, as Gildarts, Irene, and Brandish started making their way out of the prison. And once she was done, Ur joined the others who left, leaving Elicia to continue talking to herself about Alfonzo and Amar'e for quite some time.

Chapter 576: Naruto's First C-Rank Mission

A little over three weeks have passed since Jacob was captured and imprisoned by Elicia in Fairy Tail's prison. Since then, not much of note has happened. The wizards of Fairy Tail have taken and completed quests like usual and Alfonzo has continued his work in the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And as time continued to march forward, he inched closer and closer to the completion of his task.

However, things in the village were about to change. For example, a certain trio of young shinobi and their perpetually late, white-haired Jōnin Instructor, were meeting with an intoxicated old man in the Hokage's office. So, they would be leaving on their first C-Rank mission shortly.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, accompanied by Miyuki and Yamato, was spreading metals under the surface of one of the training grounds in the village. At the same time, he was constantly inscribing sigils into the metal. However, after working for another hour, his eyebrow raised in surprise.

'Oh, it looks like the Land of Waves Arc is starting.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he sensed Kakashi, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke gathering at the village's main gate with an unfamiliar magic power signature. 'Honestly, back when I first watched Naruto, it was that arc that really made me take the series seriously. So, I'm curious to know how it will turn out now that those three are so much stronger.'

A moment later, Alfonzo shook his head. Although tomorrow was the weekend, and he had the right to leave the village to follow them, he had no idea with country on Ishgar correlated to Land of Waves from Naruto. So, once the group got out of the range of his [Magic Power Detection], he would have no way of tracking them.

At the same time, after seeing Alfonzo shake his head, Yamato grew slightly concerned, thinking there was a problem with his work. So, he stood up and approached Alfonzo.

"Alfonzo, is there anything wrong?" Yamato asked.

"Huh?" Alfonzo asked, snapping out of his thoughts. "What do you mean?"

"Well, the way you shook your head made it look like you were disappointed about something." Yamato replied. "Is there some kind of setback on your work?"

Smiling wryly, Alfonzo shook his head.

"Nah, everything's good." Alfonzo said. "I was just thinking about something completely unrelated to my work. Last month, my wife had to capture an enemy to our guild, and I'm just disappointed that I wasn't there to help her with that."

"Ah, I see." Yamato replied in a tone filled with understanding. "I think I can understand what you mean. Although I'm not married, I can imagine the feeling of letting your loved ones go into dangerous situations without you. But since you're still in the village, I can assume nothing happened to her, right?"

"Yeah, in fact, I was not even that concerned about the whole thing." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "But the fact that I wasn't there for her when she had to deal with that is what I'm disappointed about. I mean, I know she's strong. But still..."

In response, Yamato smiled before he patted Alfonzo on the shoulder reassuringly.

"I get it." Yamato said while maintaining his smile. "You trust her to handle herself without issue because you believe in her strength. But at the same time, you can't help but worry about her because of how much you care, right?"

"Right." Alfonzo said with a nod. "Lici always tells me that she knows she doesn't have to worry about me getting hurt when I'm out on a quest. Yet, she can't help but worry, because that's what loved ones do. And as my wife, she has the right to have full confidence in me while simultaneously worrying herself to death about me."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo could not help but chuckle before continuing.

"But as her husband, I think I have the same right, don't I?" Alfonzo asked with a proud smile.

"Yeah, I think you do." Yamato replied with a nod and a smile of his own.

Meanwhile, Miyuki stood to the side while watching the two men chat. However, because of her normally stoic expression, no one would be able to know what she thought about their conversation.

May, x788.

Nearly a month has passed since Kakashi led Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke on the C-Ranked mission to protect the old man, Tazuna, a master bridge builder, while he built a bridge connecting a small island nation to Fiore.

Being a C-Ranked mission, Team7 was expecting to face bandits without any wizards or shinobi in their ranks, at the most. However, before they could even make it out of Fiore, they were attacked by a pair of rogue Chunin. And just like in the canon version of events, to test his students' abilities, Kakashi made it seem like he had been defeated in a sneak attack by the two rogue shinobi.

However, that was where the similarities with this part of the canon event ended.

With Sasuke having the Sharingan unlocked already, he saw through Kakashi's plan immediately. On top of that, with Naruto getting along with Kurama, he was able to sense the two shinobi, who were disguising themselves as puddles on the road, and he had already secretly alerted the rest of his team.

So, as soon as they struck, Sasuke immediately let Naruto and Sakura know that Kakashi was fine. Then, Sakura, using the [Magic Power Strengthening Technique] she learned from Wendy, and Naruto, using the [Rasengan], a mass of violently spinning magic power, a technique created by his father, Minato Namikaze, quickly put the two rogue shinobi down.

Seeing the Genin's display of their prowess, Kakashi reappeared next to them with his visible eye wide open while Tazuna, who had mocked the three for only being kids, was completely shocked by how strong they were. Unfortunately, before Tazuna could get over his shock, the four Leaf shinobi turned accusatory gazes towards the bridge builder.

And Kakashi, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke had every right to do so. As previously mentioned, they were expecting to not be facing any shinobi or wizards on this mission, since the mission Tazuna paid for was a C-Rank mission. And when they saw the expression he wore, they knew immediately that he had lied about his mission request.

However, after discussing it with the rest of his team, and sending a message back to the village to seek instructions, Kakashi received permission to continue should he decide to do so. And in the end, Kakashi, under the gazes of his three Genin, decided to continue the mission.

Unfortunately, not long after the team reached the small island nation, they were once again attacked by a rogue shinobi, Zabuzza Momochi. However, this one was in a completely different league from the two Chunin that were dealt with earlier.

In fact, he was a rather famous rogue shinobi who had been at the rank of Jōnin escaped from his village, the Village Hidden in the Mist, after trying, and failing, to assassinate its leader, the Fourth Mizukage, Yagura Karatachi. On top of that, he was a member of the Mist Village's elite force known as the Seven Ninja Swordsmen of the Mist, and wielded the famed sword, the Executioner's Blade.

The Executioner's Blade was a large, single-edged blade measuring 8'2" long. Also, it had the special ability to repair itself, should it be damaged, using the iron in the blood of the victims it cuts.

However, like before, things differed greatly from the canon version of this encounter. With Kakashi facing Zabuzza up front, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke played support roles, as they were not paralyzed by fear thanks to the Fairy Tail wizards' training. And in the end, Zabuzza was defeated.

But just as Kakashi was about to give the finishing blow, a senbon needle flew in, piercing into Zabuzza's neck, seemingly taking his life. Then, a masked shinobi that was identified as a Hunter from the Village Hidden in the Mist arrived, stating that they had been tracking Zabuzza for quite some time to dispose of him.

And while Kakashi, Sakura, and Sasuke were convinced, Naruto felt something was wrong due to his instincts. Then, just as the Hunter was about to take Zabuzza's body away to dispose of it properly, Kurama alerted Naruto that Zabuzza was still alive, which Naruto quickly relayed to the rest of his team.

Hearing Naruto's claim, the Hunter did not even try to defend themselves. Instead, they immediately ran away with Zabuza's unconscious body that was in a state of false death. Unfortunately for them, Kakashi could out pace a Chunin, regardless of the fact that he was down by half of his total amount of magic power.

In the end, both the fake Hunter, an effeminate, teenage boy named Haku, and Zabuza were killed, erasing the greatest threat to Team 7's mission. Then, when the team arrived at Tazuna's home, and after a few days of rest, Kakashi assassinated Gatō, ending all the most pressing threats to Tazuna's safety.

After that, there really was not much left to the mission. Other than cleaning up the normal thugs who were formally under Gatō's control when they came to make trouble for the bridge building team, they only had to wait for Tazuna to finish his work before they could head home.

With all that said, Team 7's first C-Rank mission ended up being bumped up to an A-Rank mission, and they completed it with flying colors. A feat which greatly surprised Hiruzen when he heard the team's report.

Not long after giving their report to Hiruzen, Team 7 dispersed. Meanwhile, Kakashi, along with the other Jōnin Instructors and Iruka Umino, the teacher of the recently graduated class from the academy, were called to gather in Hiruzen's office for an important meeting.

"I'm sure all of you are aware of why you were summoned here." Hiruzen said while sitting behind his desk with his pipe in hand. Then, as he let his gaze shift between the four Jōnin standing in front of his desk, he continued. "But I'll explain it anyway. The next Chunin Exam will be held in our village in a little more than two weeks. So, I wanted to ask, which of you will send your teams to participate this time around?"

The Chunin Exam, a series of exams that are meant to test the qualifications for Genin to be promoted to Chunin. Usually lasting for a little over a month, this series of tests aim to test a Genin's intelligence, fighting prowess, survival skills, ability to gather information, and other similar things that would be expected of a Chunin. However, this test is unlike any of the tests the Genin would have seen during their time in the academy, as there is a real chance of death while taking these exams.

After Hiruzen's words fell, Kakashi, Guy, another man in his mid-twenties, and a beautiful woman, also in her mid-twenties, exchanged glances. Meanwhile, Iruka wore an anxious expression. Then, Guy stepped forward, being the first to answer Hiruzen's question.

"After allowing them to grow for a year, I, Might Guy, nominate the members of Team 9, Neji Hyuga, Tenten, and Rock Lee, as participants to take part in the Chunin Exam." Guy said in an uncharacteristically serious tone.

A moment later, Kakashi stepped forward, the next to reply.

"I, Kakashi Hatake, leader of Team 7, nominate the members of my team, Sasuke Uchiha, Sakura Haruno, and Naruto Uzumaki as participants for the Chunin Exam.

Following Kakashi, the woman, a fair-skinned woman with untamed, upper back-length black hair and unusual red eyes with an additional ring in the middle of her irises with red lipstick and purple eye shadow wearing a red, single sleeved shirt inlaid with chain mail that only covered her right arm, a dress that appeared to be made of bandages with rose thorn patterns, normal bandages wrapped around her hands and thighs, standard shinobi sandals, and a Leaf Village forehead protector, was the next to step forward.

"I, Kurenai Yuhi, leader of Team 8, nominate my team, Kiba Inuzuka, Hinata Hyuga, and Shino Aburame as participants for the Chunin Exam." The woman, Kurenai Yuhi, said in a solemn tone.

And lastly, the man, a tall, olive-skinned man with brown eyes, short, spiky black hair, and a beard wearing the standard Leaf Village Jōnin attire and a cigarette dangling between his lips, stepped forward, as well.

"I, Asuma Sarutobi, leader of Team 10, nominate the members of my team, Ino Yamanaka, Shikamaru Nara, and Choji Akimichi as participants for the Chunin Exam." The man, Asuma Sarutobi, said in a similar solemn tone.

Hearing that, Hiruzen nodded his head in approval. However, Iruka was visibly panicking. Though he did not react much to Guy's intention to have his team participate. When he heard Kakashi, Kurenai, and Asuma's declarations, he could not help but panic.

"You three cant' be serious!" Iruka shouted. "You all know what those exams are like. They're very dangerous. And those kids have not even been shinobi for a year. Are you trying to send them to their deaths?"

After asking that question, Iruka turned his gaze towards Hiruzen.

"Lord Hokage, please excuse me for speaking out of turn." Iruka said while bowing politely. "but I was the teacher for teams 7, 8, and 10 before they graduated. And I strongly advise against allowing them to participate in the Chunin Exams so early in their shinobi careers."

"Iruka..." Kakashi said before Hiruzen could reply, his visible eye narrowing as he did so. "You may have been their teacher before. But they are under my charge now. And you have no right to dictate how I raise my students."

Although they did not speak, Kurenai and Asuma also looked displeased with Iruka's interruption.

"How can you say that?" Iruka asked angrily. "They're only kids, fresh academy graduates. There's no way they're ready yet."

"As their Jōnin Instructor, that is for me to decide." Kakashi replied coldly, his eye narrowing even further.

Hearing Kakashi's tone, Iruka was taken aback. Then, he looked at Kurenai and Asuma, only to receive cold glares in return.

"At least allow me to test them first." Iruka said in a frantic attempt to keep his former students out of harm's way. "That way, we can make sure that---"

"There's no need." Kakashi said, cutting Iruka off. Then, Kakashi bowed to Hiruzen respectfully. "If you'll excuse me, Lord Hokage, I need to inform my team about the upcoming Chunin exam and their chance to participate."

"As do I." Kurenai said.

"I need to let my team know, too." Asuma added.

"My youthful disciples need to know about the chance to let their youths explode, as well." Guy added energetically.

In response, Hiruzen waved his hand, dismissing the four Jōnin instructors. Then, once they were all gone, he turned to Iruka, who wore a dismayed expression.

"In most cases, I would agree with you, Iruka." Hiruzen said calmly. "However, you have not seen those children's mission reports. If you had, you wouldn't be so against them participating in the exam."

"But they're so young." Iruka argued. "There's no way they could be ready yet."

Shaking his head at Iruka's insistence, Hiruzen eventually waved him away as well. As Kakashi said, Iruka had no right to interfere with the decisions of their Jōnin Instructors, no matter how protective of his former students he may be.

Chapter 577: The Chunin Exam Is Right Around the Corner

While working on one of the training grounds in the Village Hidden in the Leaves, Alfonzo raised an eyebrow after feeling an abnormality through his [Magic Power Detection]. Despite that, he did not stop his work, nor did he lower the speed at which he worked.

'Looks like Gaara is here.' Alfonzo muttered internally. 'And if that's the case, I guess that means the Chunin Exams will be starting soon. I'm definitely gonna stop Orochimaru from biting Sasuke. But should I kill him when he shows up to give Sasuke the [Cursed Seal of Heaven]? Or should I let him get away so I expose him in front of Hiruzen. But if Hiruzen doesn't die, will that mess up the canon where Tsunade becomes the Fifth Hokage. But if she does, who will become the new master of Mermaid Heel?'

Despite the complicated thoughts running through his head, Alfonzo continued to work meticulously. So, Yamato did not notice anything wrong. Miyuki, on the other hand, could tell that something was on her master's mind. Though, she had no way of knowing what it was. Still, Elicia and the other women living in the mansion had asked her to stop him if he seemed to be pushing himself too hard. And this seemed like the kind of situation they were talking about.

"Master Alfonzo, perhaps now is time for a break." Miyuki said in a respectful tone. "From what I can tell, something is occupying your thoughts. And although I have complete faith that it will not hinder your work, I do believe it is better to be safe than sorry."

"Huh?" Alfonzo said, sounding confused. However, when he looked into Miyuki's eyes, he nodded his head.

'*Sigh* She's spent more time watching me than doing almost anything else for almost a year.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'So, I guess it's only natural that she can tell when I have something on my mind. Well, I guess now is as good a time as any for a break. So, why not?'

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a smile and a nod. "I guess I could use a drink. It's getting a little hot out, and I'm getting a little thirsty. Besides, Maybe I can call Lici and get a chance to see Little Man for a few minutes before I get back to work."

"Understood." Miyuki said as she reached into the basket containing Alfonzo's lunch.

A moment later, Miyuki pulled a thermos out of the basket before quickly opening it. Then, she poured a cup of tea for Alfonzo. Meanwhile, Alfonzo stopped working and made his way over to where Miyuki and Yamato were watching him work.

"Blackberry Sage Tea, Master Alfonzo." Miyuki said as she presented the teacup to Alfonzo.

"Thanks." Alfonzo replied with a nod. Then, he smelled the tea with a pleasant expression on his face. "I love the smell of this tea."

A moment later, Alfonzo took a sip. Meanwhile, Yamato was looking back and forth between Alfonzo and Miyuki with confusion written all over his face.

'Just how did she know there was something on his mind?' Yamato asked himself in a dumbfounded tone. 'I mean, from what I could tell, he was working the exact same way as he usually does. This doesn't make any sense.'

Not long after that, Alfonzo finished his break and got back to work. Then, the rest of his day went on without issue. Though, he did notice a brief interaction between Naruto, Sakura, Sasuke, and a group of three unfamiliar shinobi through his [Magic Power Detection]. However, there was no need for him to act in the end.

After the work day ended, Yamato escorted Alfonzo and Miyuki back to their residence. Then, as Yamato left, Alfonzo and Miyuki gathered with Saeko in the residence's living room.

"I guess Laki is out pestering Kakashi again, huh?" Alfonzo said with a smile.

"That's right." Saeko replied as she snuggled up to Alfonzo's side on the couch. "She seems to be completely obsessed about seeing what's under his mask."

"Yeah, but at least it seems like she's enjoying herself." Alfonzo said while shaking his head lightly. "But for Kakashi's sake, I hope she doesn't get fed up with the chase. Because if she decides to find out by force, I don't think there's anything he could do about it."

"Are you suggesting that Laki would forcefully capture him to find out if she got fed up?" Saeko asked with a concerned expression on her face.

"No, I'm not suggesting anything." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "I'm saying there's no doubt she would kidnap that mother fucker, take him to a secluded place, tie him up, take off his mask, and then put him through a round of torture for making her wait so long."

"She's not that bad, is she?" Miyuki asked cautiously. "She seems quite nice to me."

"Oh, don't get me wrong." Alfonzo said with a smile. "As outside of what people consider normal as Laki is, she's not a bad person. But the reason she'd do all that is a little different, I think."

"It's so that she could assert dominance, right?" Saeko asked, basically finishing Alfonzo's thought. "She's quite the sadist from what I can tell."

"That's right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Though I don't think she realizes it yet. But she's pretty into him."

"Indeed." Saeko replied. "I don't think she's noticed that she spends less time staring at you, either."

"Anyway, we can talk about Laki and her pursuits later, Naruto is almost here." Alfonzo said with a chuckle. "Sasuke and Sakura are coming this way, too. But they're moving at a much slower pace."

Smiling in reply, Saeko dug into Alfonzo's side more fervently. Meanwhile, Miyuki made her way towards the kitchen to prepare drinks for the guests.

A few minutes later, the sound of the door, that Alfonzo had preemptively unlocked with his [Metal Magic], could be heard slamming open. That was quickly followed by the sound of footsteps. And finally, Naruto burst into the living room with an excited expression on his face.

"Hey, Big Bro Alfonzo!" Naruto shouted. "I met the Jinchuriki of the One-Tailed Beast today. And man, he was really crazy. Like crazy, I'm gonna kill everyone one minute to I'm still gonna kill everyone, but I can talk to them without sounding crazy, crazy."

Hearing Naruto's colorful explanation, Alfonzo and Saeko could not help giggling a bit. Meanwhile, Miyuki did not laugh. However, she did crack a hint of a smile. A moment later, Alfonzo stopped laughing and spoke in a stern tone.

"I assume the Fox told you that this person was a Jinchuriki, right?" Alfonzo asked.

"That's right." Naruto replied with a nod. Then, as if he could read Alfonzo's mind, he replied to the next thing he would have said. "Don't worry, I didn't tell anyone that he told me. I just told them that I could feel the [Seal] holding the One-Tailed Beast inside of that creepy guy."

'Gaara may be nuts, but until you've seen Orochimaru, you ain't seen creepy.' Alfonzo thought to himself while shaking his head.

["Yeah, I've never even seen him in person."] Bedlam said from Alfonzo's inner world. ["But just the thought of being near him creeps me out. And I don't like that feeling. So, why don't we kill him next time we run into him."]

["Yeah, what did that one Ice Goddess chick from that fan fic say about him?"] Riot asked in a disgusted tone. ["He likes piercing young men with things... And they aren't kunai... *Gag*"]

While Rioted gagged, Alfonzo and Bedlam shivered in terror. Although Naruto did not notice, because she was snuggling with Alfonzo, Saeko noticed his shivering immediately.

"Alfonzo, are you okay?" Saeko asked in a concerned tone.

"Huh?" Naruto made a confused sound after hearing Saeko's question. "Is something wrong, Big Bro?"

At around the same time, the sound of the residence's front door closing could be heard. A moment after that, Sakura and Sasuke entered the living room.

"Seriously, Naruto..." Sakura said while resting her hands on her hips. "You couldn't even stop long enough to close the door behind you? What if someone had snuck in after you came inside?"

Despite registering Sakura's words, Naruto did not respond, which made her rather angry. Instead, he was staring at Alfonzo, waiting for his response to Saeko's question.

"Don't worry about it." Alfonzo said while waving one hand dismissively and pulling Saeko closer with the other. "I just remembered something really fucking unpleasant. It still creeps me out to this day... and it happened almost four years ago."

Hearing that, both Naruto and Sakura widened their eyes in surprise. Sasuke, on the other hand, narrowed his. Neither of the three could think of anything that would be able to creep out someone as strong as Alfonzo.

"I can tell what the three of you are thinking just from the looks on your faces." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "And no, I'm not scared of that little pedo-snake. But he's just too fucking creepy."

"Pedo-snake?" Sakura asked in a confused tone.

"Anyway, I guess Naruto told you about the One-Tail's Jinchuriki, right?" Alfonzo asked in an obvious attempt to change the subject. "So, what do you think?"

"He's highly unstable and dangerous." Sasuke replied solemnly. "And not just to his enemies, as the two who should have been his team mates seemed to be scared of him, too."

"Yeah, he even threatened to kill one of them." Naruto added. "And the guy started shaking like the legs of a newborn deer."

"I really don't have any idea how someone could be that crazy." Sakura said, gently shaking her head as she did so.

After hearing Sakura say that, Naruto looked a bit downcast, and Alfonzo and Saeko knew exactly why. As a Jinchuriki himself, he could understand why he would end up like that.

"Are you serious, Sakura?" Alfonzo asked while rolling her eyes. "The kid is a Jinchuriki, he literally has a demon [Sealed] inside of him. And with him acting like that, it's more than likely his whole village knows about it. I mean, have you forgotten how you and all the other villagers treated Naruto just because it was rumored that he was the reincarnation of the Nine-Tailed Fox?"

As a matter of fact, she had not forgotten. However, because Naruto was never malicious in his actions, Sakura did not equate them as the same type of person. Though, when Naruto used the Nine-Tailed Fox's ominous magic power during the mission to the Land of Waves, she remembered the fear it made her feel at first.

"Anyway, if he's here at this time, he's probably a participant in the Chunin Exams." Alfonzo said after seeing Sakura lower her head in shame. "So, you guys need to be careful if you run into him during the exam. I don't know what kind of tests you'll have to go through, but I'm certain that your lives will be on the line at some point during the exam."

"Wait, how do you know about the Chunin Exams?" Sasuke asked with narrowed eyes. On top of that, his Sharingan activated so that he wouldn't miss any of Alfonzo's expressions. "We just found out about it a couple of days ago, ourselves."

"Oh, it's because Kakashi had dinner over here the day before yesterday." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "And to make Laki lose focus on getting him to take his mask off for even a few moments, he told us about it."

While Sasuke looked completely dumbfounded about the reason, Sakura wore an expression that suggested she was interested in seeing under Kakashi's mask, too. Naruto, on the other hand, was thinking about something totally different.

"Hey, you invited Kakashi-Sensei to dinner, but you didn't invite us?" Naruto asked indignantly.

That immediately made Sakura and Sasuke's expressions change. Then, they both stared at Alfonzo' with aggrieved expressions. At the same time, Miyuki finally came back from preparing tea. Then, she placed five teacups on the coffee table, filled each from the pot of tea, and finally took her place behind Alfonzo.

After Miyuki finished her task, and while ignoring the aggrieved expressions on the young shinobi's faces, Alfonzo unhurriedly picked up his tea cup, sniffed its aroma deeply, smiled satisfactorily, and took a sip. Then, he looked back at Miyuki with a smile.

"Your tea is great as always, Miyuki." Alfonzo said.

"I thank you for your praise, Master Alfonzo." Miyuki said while bowing her head politely.

"Hey! Don't try to change the subject!" Naruto shouted.

"So, since you're yelling at me, I guess that means you won't be staying for dinner tonight, right?" Alfonzo asked as he turned back towards Naruto with his eyes narrowed.

Immediately, Naruto's face paled. Then, he jumped over the coffee table, landing on the couch next to Alfonzo while fawning on him in an attempt to make him change his mind. Naturally, Alfonzo teased Naruto the entire time, seemingly making things hard on him. However, as soon as Wendy and Carla got home, he quickly got up and started preparing dinner with Miyuki.

Sometime before the dinner was ready, Laki, while dragging Kakashi, who was wearing a helpless expression, behind her, came home as well. Naturally, seeing Kakashi looking so helpless was a first for the three Genin in the room. However, they were smart enough to not say anything.

Eventually, Alfonzo and Miyuki brought dinner to the dining room where everyone sat down and ate together. And once dinner was over, Team 7 went home while Alfonzo, Laki, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki retired to their bedrooms for the night.

Chapter 578: Another Deal with Hiruzen

Like every morning, Alfonzo and the other visitors to the Village Hidden in the Leaves woke up shortly after sunrise. Then, they took the time to get prepared for the day. Also like always, Yamato was waiting for Alfonzo and Miyuki outside the front door of the residence. However, instead of just escorting them to the training grounds, he had a different order to fulfill.

"Hey, morning, Yamato." Alfonzo said with a smile. "You know, if you were to show up a little earlier each morning, you could join us for breakfast. In fact, Kakashi used to do that every now and then, too."

Taken slightly aback, Yamato found himself annoyed with his senior shinobi. He had met with Kakashi on more than a few occasions since Kakashi first got the mission to follow Alfonzo while he worked. And every time he did, Kakashi would brag about how good Alfonzo's cooking was.

However, when he was assigned the same mission after Kakashi received a Genin team, Kakashi never told him about the fact that he would come over early to join the visitors for breakfast from time to time.

"*Sigh* It looks like I need to have a long conversation with Kakashi next time I run into him." Yamato muttered in a discontent tone. Then, he shook his head to rid himself of those thoughts. "Anyway, Lord Hokage asked me to escort you to see him. So, if you wouldn't mind following me."

Hearing that, Alfonzo had an idea of what Hiruzen wanted to talk to him about. So, he nodded in understanding. Then, he turned back to Miyuki.

"Alright, Miyuki, you don't have to follow me to the Hokage's office." Alfonzo said. "I'll come to get you before we head to the training grounds."

"Understood." Miyuki replied. "I'll await your return, Master Alfonzo."

Then, with a polite bow, Miyuki turned around and retreated into the house.

"Alright, let's go." Alfonzo said with a nod.

Nodding back in return, Yamato, with Alfonzo following him, turned around and started walking towards the Hokage Tower. Then, after about fifteen minutes, the two arrived outside Hiruzen's office.

Knock! *Knock!*

"Lord Hokage, it's Yamato." Yamato said respectfully after knocking on the door. "I've brought Alfonzo Marcus per your request."

"Come in." Hiruzen said from the other side of the door.

Once again nodding to Alfonzo, Yamato grabbed the doorknob before opening the door and gesturing for Alfonzo to enter.

Wasting no time, Alfonzo stepped through the open door before Yamato followed him inside Hiruzen's office and closed the door behind him. Then, as Yamato stood by the door, Alfonzo strode towards Hiruzen's desk and took a seat after Hiruzen gestured for him to do so.

"Good morning, Alfonzo." Hiruzen said with a grandfatherly smile. "I've heard about the progress of your work on the training grounds from both Kakashi and Yamato. And I must say, I'm quite impressed."

"Well, I aim to please." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "but I doubt that's why you actually called me here. In fact, I have a pretty good idea why you asked to see me. But just in case I'm wrong, can you tell me what's going on?"

"*Sigh* I figured you would understand before I even had the chance to tell you." Hiruzen replied while shaking his head. "but just to make sure we're on the same page, I'll tell you."

Reaching that point, Hiruzen picked up his pipe, held it to his mouth, and lit it before taking a deep drag. Then, after holding the smoke in his lungs for a moment, he exhaled a cloud of smoke.

"I'd like you to postpone your work until the Chunin Exam ends." Hiruzen said. "Although we can stop the visiting shinobi from the other large and small villages from going to the classified areas of the village, we can't justifiably stop them from travelling to the public training grounds. And I'd rather not chance them seeing you working to upgrade our facilities."

"Yeah, that's exactly what I was expecting to hear." Alfonzo replied with an understanding nod. Then, he put on a cunning smile as he continued. "You're looking to have an advantage over the other villages, so you don't want them to see me working and inquire about what I'm doing. But I have a question for you."

Knowing that Alfonzo would see through his request, Hiruzen nodded. But he was quite curious about Alfonzo's question. At the same time, he was dreading to hear it.

"Please." Hiruzen said, gesturing with his free hand for Alfonzo to continue.

"What exactly do I get out of accepting your request?" Alfonzo asked in a solemn tone after shifting his expression to one that matched his tone. "As you know, I'm a businessman. And working with those villages would bring me quite the profit. So, why should I stop working and preventing them from seeing the upgrades. You should also keep in mind that this was not mentioned in the contract."

Hiruzen groaned internally after hearing Alfonzo's question. In fact, that question was the exact reason why he was dreading Alfonzo's question. To keep him from disclosing his ability to upgrade the training grounds, Hiruzen knew it would cost him quite the sum.

["You're really crafty, Alfonzo."] Bedlam said from Alfonzo's inner world with a shit-eating grin on his face. ["We all know that you're absolutely against doing another job like this one. So, even if Hiruzen had not asked you to stop while the other village's shinobi were here, you would have come up with a reason to stop on your own."]

'Yeah, but he doesn't know that.' Alfonzo replied, smiling like an old fox on the inside. 'And if I can, why shouldn't I get some extra benefits for myself. It's not like I'm doing anything against my conscience or that breaks the contract, right?'

["Hell yeah!"] Riot shouted ecstatically. ["fleece the fuck outta that negligent old man. He can see this as a punishment for letting Danzo run wild for so many years. It's not like he doesn't deserve it. Hmph! He's supposed to be the leader of this village. Yet, he let his personal feelings affect the way he dealt with his subordinates."]

["For one of the few times since we were created, I fully agree with Riot."] Bedlam said with a chuckle. ["I just didn't expect you to go this route, Alfonzo."]

'Well, the fact that he let so much evil fester in his own village, for so long, made me think he needed to be punished, too.' Alfonzo replied internally. 'I just couldn't think of a way to justifiably punish him for it. I mean, he's too worshipped in this village to take a heavy handed approach. But running his pockets won't bother anyone, right?'

While Alfonzo was conversing with his [Armament Spirits], Hiruzen was visibly grimacing. He knew everything Alfonzo said was true. And like Alfonzo discussed with Riot and Bedlam, it was not against the terms of the contract he signed with the village. So, there was no reason for Alfonzo to heed his request.

Meanwhile, Yamato and the Anbu hidden in the room were staring at Alfonzo with dumbfounded expressions while their mouths hung open. Never had they expected Alfonzo to counter with such a reason. And although they were not happy with Alfonzo's attitude, they knew he was right. And as a businessman, everything he did was for the sake of his profits.

Eventually, Hiruzen put on a resigned expression. Then, he took another long drag from his pipe. After once again holding the smoke in his lungs for a few seconds, he exhaled a cloud of smoke. Then, he looked at Alfonzo with a pleading expression.

"*Sigh* What would it take for you to accept my request?" Hiruzen asked.

"Hmm.... Now... That's the million Jewel question, isn't it?" Alfonzo asked while cupping his chin with his right hand. "Hmm.... How about you let me pick a few of my guild mates to get their chakra affinity tested. Then, when we discover their affinities, you let me teach them a few Jutsu?"

Hiruzen audibly groaned once again.

"Haven't we already done that?" Hiruzen asked.

"Nope." Alfonzo replied. "That was compensation for Danzo's attack on us, remember? Besides, you only let them learn one Jutsu each."

"And how many do you have in mind?" Hiruzen asked apprehensively.

"The three from before and the ones who have come since." Alfonzo replied. "That would make a total of..."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo began muttering the names of everyone who has accompanied him to the Village Hidden in the Leaves over the past year and a half while counting on his fingers.

"Nine." Alfonzo said after he was done counting.

Though he struggled for a while, Hiruzen eventually agreed. At first, he was expecting Alfonzo to want a monetary reward for accepting his request. However, only allowing nine people to have unrestricted access to their library of Jutsu was a lot less of a hit than he expected.

In fact, the reason the number was so small, was simple. Most of the wizards in Fairy Tail were not smart enough to comprehend the intricacies of [Ninjutsu] or [Genjutsu]. And those who were, were either wielding stronger magic or were not willing to split their attention to another branch of magic.

"Oh, I wanna teach some of my wives and wives to be, too." Alfonzo added after a few seconds of thought. "So, I guess that would add another eight to the total. Oh, I think the guild master, Ur would benefit from learning another discipline, too."

As Alfonzo continued to speak, Hiruzen's expression grew more and more pale. Because despite wanting to reject, He knew that Alfonzo was not being excessive if you considered how much money he stood to make if he cooperated with the other villages.

'*Sigh* Maybe I should have let him just cooperate with the other villages.' Hiruzen thought to himself. 'If I did, there's a good chance he and his guild would end up destroying those villages after they tried to keep him from working with the other villages by force. Because despite each village having thousands of shinobi, I'm sure that woman, Irene Belserion could destroy most, if not all of them, by herself with very little effort.'

While Hiruzen continued toying with that thought in his head, he eventually forgot about it as his conversation with Alfonzo came to an end.

After speaking with Hiruzen, Alfonzo and Yamato left the Hokage Tower. And while they made their way back to the residence where the visitors from magnolia were staying, Yamato could not help but look at Alfonzo with an awed expression.

Never before had he ever considered doing anything but following the Hokage's instructions without question. But that was natural, as he was a shinobi of the Hidden Leaf who did not have any traitorous thoughts.

"Is there something on my face?" Alfonzo asked, snapping Yamato out of his revelry.

"Huh? Oh, no." Yamato replied as he quickly looked away.

"Anyway, since I don't have anything to do for the rest of the day, wanna come over and grab a bite with us?" Alfonzo asked. "But since there's a while until lunch, we could have a little spar in the meantime... If you're up for it, that is."

Remembering how Kakashi bragged about getting to eat Alfonzo's cooking on more than one occasion, Yamato immediately agreed to have lunch with him. As for the spar, he did not mind, either. In fact, Yamato was looking forward to it. Since he knew that Alfonzo was one of the stronger wizards on Fiore, he knew that it would definitely broaden his horizons.

Eventually, the two arrived at the house. And when they did, they immediately headed to the backyard to spar, which attracted the attention of those in the house. So, Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki also made their way out to the backyard to watch. At which point, Alfonzo explained the result of his conversation with Hiruzen.

After Alfonzo's explanation, Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki backed away, giving Alfonzo and Yamato enough room to spar. And when she saw Yamato's [Ninjutsu], which was a combination of [Water-Style], [Earth-Style], and [Wood-Style Ninjutsu], Laki could not keep from having her eyes light up at the [Wood-Style] in particular.

Alfonzo had told her about the [Wood-Style] after his first trip to the Village Hidden in the Leaves. Unfortunately, he did not have the permission to teach it to others at that time. But getting the chance to see it for herself, she was having all sorts of ideas how she could use her [Wood-Make Magic] in combat.

Naturally, that was Alfonzo's reason for wanting to spar with Yamato at his residence. In fact, with Hiruzen's promise, he was even allowed to teach Laki all the [Wood-Style Ninjutsu] that were cataloged in Danzo's records.

["Are you sure you want to do that?"] Bedlam asked with a cheshire grin as Alfonzo dodged away from a wooden tendril that grew from right beneath him. ["You did so much to get her interested in Kakashi. But if you actually teach her all those [Ninjutsu], she might shift her focus back to you."]

'*Sigh* I know what you mean.' Alfonzo replied as he closed the distance with Yamato and lashed his right leg at the shinobi's left shoulder. 'But that's not a good enough reason to not help her get stronger. And considering all the shit Hashirama could do with the [Wood-Style], Laki will probably be a god damn monster if she combines that with her high amount of magic power, her [Soul Armament], and her strange imagination.'

["Yeah, I know you're right."] Bedlam replied.

["Quit your bitchin'." Riot interjected. ["We all know that if Laki was willing to share, Alfonzo would accept her. So, just let shit happen as it's supposed to."]

With that, Alfonzo's conversation with his [Armament Spirits] continued while he simultaneously sparred with Yamato. Eventually, the time for lunch came and they stopped. Then, with Miyuki's help, Alfonzo cooked a rather large lunch and the group sat down to eat. And while they did, Laki energetically questioned Yamato about his [Wood-Style Ninjutsu].

Then, after lunch ended, not sure if they had already had her lunch or not, Alfonzo, accompanied by Yamato, brought some lunch he packed away for Wendy and Carla to the hospital. After that, the rest of the day passed peacefully as the number of visitors to the Hidden Leaf increased due to the Chunin Exam.

Chapter 579: Gathering Before the Chunin Exam Begins

As the sun rose on the eastern horizon, the atmosphere in the Village Hidden in the Leaves was slightly different than usual. The Genin teams eligible to participate in the Chunin Exams were all more energetic than usual, their anticipation palpable.

Meanwhile, the wizards of Fairy Tail were also getting ready for the day. Though the sun had just risen, Alfonzo was already in the backyard of the residence getting ready to do some training before breakfast.

"Good morning, Alfonzo." Wendy said as she stepped out of the house. "Do you mind if I join you for training?"

"No, not at all." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "In fact, you're just in time. I was just about to put up a gravity field. So, I'll set it to what you can handle."

Nodding in response, Wendy approached Alfonzo. Meanwhile, Carla, who looked like she was still half-asleep, sat on the veranda and watched the two.

"So, how much gravity can you handle?" Alfonzo asked.

"Um... about fifty times normal." Wendy replied. "I can probably do more, but I wanna wish Lee luck before the Chunin Exam starts."

As she spoke the last part, Wendy blushed while looking down, trying to avoid the smile Alfonzo was shooting her way. Alfonzo, on the other hand, although he was smiling at Wendy, he had no intention of teasing her. Instead, he patted her on the head and spoke cheerfully.

"That kid is really lucky." Alfonzo said. "To catch our little Dragon Slayer's eyes is really a blessing for him."

Hearing that, Wendy lowered her head even further. At the same time, Alfonzo tapped the heel of his left foot on the ground. Then, a sheet of metal stretched out over the backyard with a number of sigils engraved into it that had the purpose of augmenting the gravity in the surroundings.

After the stage was set, Alfonzo and Wendy started with a warm up. And not long after they started, Laki and Saeko joined them. From there, the quartet trained until it was time for Alfonzo and Miyuki to start preparing breakfast.

After a good meal, everyone in the house left, wanting to meet the people they knew before the Chunin Exam started. However, while they were talking, not only Alfonzo, but Laki, Wendy, and Saeko each raised an eyebrow as they had all picked up something strange with their [Magic Power Detection].

"Did two people just teleport into the village?" Saeko asked as she furrowed her brows.

"That's what it feels like." Laki replied. "And one of them is at least S-Class in strength."

"Yeah, and I know exactly who that is." Alfonzo said with a solemn expression on his face. Then, he turned to Laki as he continued. "Do you remember when I went on that quest from the kingdom with Mira and Marin?"

In response, Laki nodded. At the same time, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki all focused their attention on Alfonzo's following words.

"Well, one of the scientists I was sent to bring in was a rogue shinobi from this village." Alfonzo continued. "His right-hand man was a traitor of this village, too. And the two magic power signatures that just appeared in the village are those two, Orochimaru and kabuto Yakushi."

"Really?" Wendy asked, sounding slightly panicked. "But you caught them, right? Does that mean they broke out of prison?"

"Yeah, it happened a while ago." Alfonzo replied.

"Then, What should we do?" Carla asked in a solemn tone.

"For now, nothing." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "If we act on our own, it will damage the Leaf Village's reputation. And with so many foreign shinobi here, that could be disastrous for them."

"Indeed." Saeko said with a nod. "And the information that they could not even handle one of their own fugitives will definitely make it to their enemies."

"Right." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Anyway, I doubt they'll do anything right away. So, we should have some time to talk to the old man and make a plan."

'If I had to guess, that's probably not the real Orochimaru, though.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'It's probably a clone using the Second Tsuchikage's [Splitting Technique]. Still, if I can kill that clone, it should greatly weaken him. So, he won't be as dangerous during the invasion.'

"How will we handle this situation, Alfonzo?" Saeko asked, seeming ready to fight as she raised her left hand to her hip where her katana usually hung.

"We'll probably have to be covert." Alfonzo replied. "After we talk to the kids, I'll go see the Hokage and come up with a plan. Then, I'll let you all know what our next move will be."

"Unfortunately, I won't be able to help." Wendy said, sounding slightly disappointed. "I already asked to have my shift at the hospital pushed back. So, asking to have the day off after that wouldn't be right."

"And I'll be at the hospital with Wendy." Carla added quickly.

"Don't worry about it." Alfonzo said. "Honestly, I'll probably be the only one to act."

"What?" Laki and Saeko exclaimed in discontent tones.

Even Miyuki, who knew she would not be a part of the fighting force for this operation, looked discontent with Alfonzo's words. However, she remained silent. Though, her glare on the back of Alfonzo's head made him feel rather itchy.

"Don't look at me like that." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "I'm the only one who can move without being detected. At least by sight. And as long as I talk to Hiruzen, the sensors among our observation detail won't act. And I'm almost certain that the Hokage will want our involvement kept as secret as possible."

"I know you can make yourself invisible." Laki said. "But if anyone notices you aren't in the house, they'll ask questions."

"Hehehe... Don't worry, I can do something about that." Alfonzo said with a chuckle.

'As long as there are no Hyuga in our observation detail, anyway.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Now that I think about it, I should probably find Anko to talk to her. Maybe I can get rid of that [Curse Mark] she got from the Pedo-Snake, too.'

["If you do that, you'll have another woman throwing herself at you, you know."] Bedlam said. ["but since she's pretty hot, I approve."]

In response, Alfonzo rolled his eyes internally. However, he chose to not dignify Bedlam's statement with a response.

Around that time, Alfonzo, Laki, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki arrived at the Ninja Academy, the venue for the first test of the Chunin Exam. And when they did, they were just in time to see Guy leading his Genin team towards the door.

"Yo, Guy!" Alfonzo shouted as his group approached the entrance to the academy.

Immediately upon hearing his name called, Guy, along with Neji, Tenten, and Lee, stopped and turned around. And when they saw the group from Magnolia, Guy and Lee's eyes lit up. And to everyone's surprise, Lee actually took off towards the new arrivals even faster than Guy. Though, because of their difference in strength, Guy arrived first.

"Alfonzo, my friend!" Guy shouted energetically. "Have you come to wish my youthful disciples good luck?"

"Yeah, that's right." Alfonzo replied while side stepping Guy's attempt to hug him. "I've heard a lot about this Chunin Exam from Kakashi. So, I know it can be pretty dangerous.

"Indeed." Guy replied with a nod. "Although I never took it, as I was promoted during war times, I've seen a lot of participants lose their lives over the years."

Meanwhile, Lee had arrived in front of Wendy with a wide smile on his face.

"Good morning, Wendy." Lee said enthusiastically. "I was hoping I'd get a chance to see you before the exam. And now that I have, I'm truly happy. Now, I will be able to let my youth explode splendidly during the Chunin Exam."

In response, Wendy blushed fiercely, mostly because she could feel Laki and Saeko's teasing gazes on her. Still, she smiled brightly at Lee's enthusiasm.

"Please be careful, Lee." Wendy said quietly. "Even though I can heal you if you get hurt, I'd rather that I didn't have to."

This time it was Lee's turn to blush. Feeling the care in Wendy's words made him feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

"I promise, I'll do my best to not get hurt." Lee said while giving Wendy a thumbs up in a nice guy pose. "The last thing I want to do is make you worry about me."

Wendy nodded in response, though her blush intensified. At the same time, Kurenai and Asuma led their teams over just as Alfonzo's and Guy's groups finished their conversation.

"Oh, it's Alfonzo." Kiba said. "did you come by to wish us luck?"

"G-Good morning, Alfonzo." Hinata said in a quiet, shy tone.

Shino, on the other hand, only nodded in greeting to the wizards from Magnolia.

Seeing her students all greet the unfamiliar wizards, Kurenai looked at them with interest. As a Jōnin of the Hidden Leaf Village, she was aware that there were some guests in the village who received rather good treatment from Hiruzen. However, this was the first time she had ever met them. And although she was not a sensor-type shinobi, she could tell that they were all relatively strong. As strong as Jōnin, at the very least.

Asuma, on the other hand, saw that Kurenai was looking at the visitors with an interested gaze and felt a bit uncomfortable. Mostly because Alfonzo was among them. As he had been in a rather ambiguous relationship with Kurenai for a while, it was only natural. Even so, he managed to keep his uncomfortable feeling in check and turned his attention to Shikamaru.

"Hey, Shikamaru, this is the guy who helped train you before you graduated from the academy, right?" Asuma asked in a nonchalant tone.

"Yeah, and he made us work so hard, too." Shikamaru replied listlessly. "It was such a drag."

"But he fed us a lot, too." Choji said with a smile as he stuffed his hand into a bag of potato chips. "And his cooking is really good. Even my dad had nothing but good things to say about it."

Hearing that, Asuma nodded. Though, he did not take it all that seriously. The Akimichis were known for having healthy appetites because of their family techniques. And they pretty much said that just about everything was good.

"On top of all that, his wife, Elicia, is the owner of the Taylor Shop, the most popular clothing store on Ishgar." Ino added excitedly. "She even gave us all the clothes we're wearing."

As she spoke the last part, Ino twirled on the spot, showing off the clothes she was wearing, which were similar to her canon outfit with a few more stylish points and protection built in.

After Ino spoke, Kurenai looked at her with wide open eyes. Then, she snapped her head in Alfonso's direction.

"If your wife is the owner of the Taylor Shop, then that makes you Alfonso Marcus, the inventor of all those household magic items that have made life much easier for everyone on the continent, right?" Kurenai asked in an amazed tone.

"Yeah, that's me." Alfonzo replied. "And the two of you are?"

"Oh, that's right, we haven't introduced ourselves." Kurenai replied with a smile. "I'm Kurenai Yuhi, the Jōnin Instructor of team 8. It's nice to meet you."

'If I can become friends with him, maybe there's a chance his wife can make me some custom outfits like she did with the kids.' Kurenai thought to herself with determination burning in her eyes.

Seeing the expression on Kurenai's face, Asuma's uneasy feeling got more severe. Still, he knew it was not a good idea to lash out. So, he put on a stiff smile and introduced himself as well.

"And I'm Asuma Sarutobi, the leader of Team 10." Asuma added as he stretched out his right hand for a handshake. "It's a pleasure."

Accepting Asuma's handshake, Alfonzo could only smile wryly on the inside. From the glint in Asuma's eyes, he could tell that he was getting jealous at the fact that Kurenai seemed so interested in him. However, as a man who has lived for nearly fifty years if you added up his two lives, Alfonzo was certain that she was only so interested because of the fact that Elicia was his wife.

"Sarutobi, huh?" Saeko asked as she put on a contemplating expression. "Isn't that the surname of the current Hokage?"

"Yeah, that's right." Asuma replied as he retracted his hand. "He's my father. I'm his second son."

"Oh, that makes sense." Saeko replied with a nod.

"Hey, Asuma, I can call you that, right?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Sure." Asuma replied with a nod.

"So, Asuma, I heard you use a pretty unique pair of weapons." Alfonzo continued. "Kakashi told me about them when we were talking a while ago. Would you mind letting me see them? You see, I'm kind of a weapon crafter. And I like to see unique and interesting weapons."

Although it was true that he heard about all sorts of interesting weapons used by the different notable shinobi from around the continent, Alfonzo actually already knew about the Chakra Metal bladed knuckle dusters Asuma used from the Naruto anime and manga. Still, he always wanted to see them up close.

"You make weapons, too?" Asuma asked in a surprised tone.

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "You've heard of Titania, Erza Scarlet from my guild, Fairy Tail, right?"

In response, everyone from the Village Hidden in the Leaves who were gathered outside of the academy's entrance nodded their heads.

"Well, I made all her weapons and armor." Alfonzo said, sounding proud of his accomplishments.

"Wait, Erza Scarlet has a whole armory of weapons and armor in the [Requip] space of her magic." Shikamaru said in an amazed tone. "How is it possible that you could have made them all?"

"Well, you know that one of the types of magic that I use is [Metal Magic], right?" Alfonzo asked instead of answering Shikamaru's question directly.

Even before Alfonzo asked his question, Shikamaru had already realized that. He was just surprised at the amount of weapons Alfonzo must have made over the years.

"Anyway, Asuma, for the right price, I could probably upgrade your weapons." Alfonzo said, turning his attention back to Asuma. "and since I'm not gonna be making them from scratch, the price won't be that high, either. And because you'd be showing me something unique, I'd be willing to lower the price even further."

Hearing Alfonzo's tone, Laki, Wendy, Carla, and Saeko all sighed in unison. Alfonzo had slipped into his money making mode. And there was a good chance that he would not come out of it for a while.

Meanwhile, Asuma was dumbfounded. His weapons were the best of their kind, granted they were not widely used. Still, he had heard of Alfonzo, the man known as the best magic item crafter on the continent. So, he knew what kind of opportunity he had just received. But because he was wary of Kurenai's interest in Alfonzo, he hesitated to agree.

Seeing the struggle in Asuma's eyes, Alfonzo smiled. Then, he stepped forward so he could whisper to Asuma.

"Take it easy, Dude." Alfonzo said at a volume that only Asuma could hear. "She's only interested in me because of my first wife. She wants to get close to Lici through me so she can get Lici to make her some clothes. Trust me, I've seen this happen a lot ever since Lici opened the Taylor Shop. Besides, I would never scheme on another man's woman."

Asuma was completely taken aback by Alfonzo's whisper. As a shinobi, he was trained to hide his thoughts from showing up in his expression or body language. And as an Elite Jōnin, he was confident that he was quite good at it.

Despite that, Alfonzo had seen through not only him, but Kurenai's thoughts quite easily. And this caused a seed of respect to be planted in Asuma's heart.

"Alright, if we have time later, I'll let you see them." Asuma replied with a much more genuine smile. "I probably won't have time until the Chunin Exam is over, though."

"That's okay with me." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "I'll probably be here until November or so, anyway. So, just come find me whenever."

"Whoa, there sure are a lot of you gathered outside the academy." The lazy sounding voice of a male could be heard from a short distance away.

In the next instant, in a swirl of leaves, Kakashi, with his nose buried in his little orange book, appeared next to the group of wizards and shinobi.

"Kakashi, my rival!" Guy shouted energetically as soon as he caught sight of Kakashi. "Come, let us compete. How about a race around the village while running on our hands?"

"Not today, Guy." Kakashi said without even looking up from his book. "Today is too important for that."

"I'm actually surprised that you showed up before the Exam even started, Kakashi." Kurenai said in a slightly ridiculing tone. "I don't remember the last time you showed up on time for anything."

Looking up from his book to glance at Kurenai for a moment, Kakashi eventually shook his head without replying. The fact that Kakashi had surpassed her in everything ever since their academy days had always been a sore spot for Kurenai, who always wanted to be the best. And he knew there was no point in engaging her over this.

"Anyway, where is the rest of your team, Kakashi?" Alfonzo asked curiously, though he already knew they were on their way.

"They'll be here on time." Kakashi replied, still not looking up from his book as he did so. "Anyway, I'm gonna wait for them inside. I'll see you all later."

With that, Kakashi walked into the Ninja Academy without another word. Not long afterwards, Team 8, Team 9, and Team 10 bid farewell to the visitors from Magnolia and made their way into the academy, as well.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo and the ladies waited outside for Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke. And the trio arrived only about fifteen minutes before the exams started. Meaning, they did not have much time to speak to them. So, after a short round of well wishes, Alfonzo headed towards the Hokage Tower, Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki returned to the residence, and Wendy and Carla made their way to the Hospital.

Chapter 580: The Chunin Exam Begins

After separating from the ladies, Alfonzo quickly arrived at the Hokage Tower and he was able to gain an audience with Hiruzen without issue.

"To what do I owe the pleasure, Alfonzo?" Hiruzen asked as he put his pen down and looked away from the document he was reading.

"I've got some bad news, Hiruzen." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone.

Hearing that, Hiruzen could not help but raise an eyebrow. Still, he gestured for Alfonzo to continue.

"Orochimaru and Kabuto Yakushi, who I led a team of other wizards to capture almost three years ago, are in the village right now." Alfonzo said in a grave tone.

Bang!

Woosh! *Woosh!* *Woosh!* *Woosh!*

In response, Hiruzen slammed his hands on top of his desk, leaving two hand-shaped indents on its surface, as he stood up violently. On top of that, the four Anbu concealing themselves in the room appeared around Alfonzo at break-neck speed with their short swords drawn.

Alfonzo only glanced at the four Anbu with disinterest before turning his attention back to Hiruzen. Hiruzen on the other hand, quickly waved off the Anbu, making sure they did not do something not only they, but the entire village would end up regretting in the end. Alfonzo had taken down Danzo and all of his Root shinobi, single-handedly, after all.

"Are you sure it was Orochimaru? Hiruzen asked with a stern expression on his face.

"I am." Alfonzo replied with a solemn nod. "I don't' know if Guy told you after he came back to lead Team 9, but my guild mates and I use a particular skill that allows us to sense everything around us with magic power in it."

"He did." Hiruzen replied with a nod. "I almost did not believe him when I heard about it. To think there are so many sensors in your guild is unthinkable."

"Well, it's not exactly something we were born with like the shinobi of your village." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "Instead, it was a skill I came up with when I was nine... I think. It was on my first D-Class quest that I thought of it."

When Alfonzo first started speaking, Hiruzen sat back in his chair. However, when he heard that Alfonzo created this method to detect magic power, he shot up to his feet again with his eyes opened wide.

"Anyway, while I was on the way to the academy to wish good luck to the kids I helped train, I felt two magic power signatures appear in the village out of nowhere." Alfonzo continued, knowing exactly what Hiruzen was thinking. "And those two magic power signatures were exactly Orochimaru's and Kabuto's."

Suppressing his instinct to ask Alfonzo for the technique that made him and his guild mates into sensors, Hiruzen once again sat down. However, the greed in his eyes while he was looking at Alfonzo was clear as day.

'*Sigh* I know it's a really desirable skill.' Alfonzo thought to himself while looking Hiruzen in the eyes. 'But I really hope he doesn't do anything stupid because he wants to make his village stronger. Because I won't be teaching [Magic Power Detection] to anyone outside of the guild.'

"So, where is Orochimaru now?" Hiruzen asked in a solemn tone.

"Right now, he's moving around the village, I can't tell what he's doing, though." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "I can take care of him if you want, though. I kicked his ass once before, so I'm sure I could do it again."

That statement was enough to make Hiruzen sober up from his state of greed. Not even he was confident that he could defeat Orochimaru one-on-one two and a half years ago. But according to the report Guy gave when he came back from his time with Quatro Cerberus, Alfonzo had defeated both Orochimaru and Mayuri Kurotsuchi alone. And he had only weakened over the two and a half years since then due to age. Meanwhile, Alfonzo had more than likely only grown stronger since then.

"If I were to ask you to take care of him..." Hiruzen said hesitantly. "Would you be able to keep damage to the village down to a minimum? I heard from Guy about the damage you did to their underground hideout. And I'd rather not have a large part of the village destroyed in the ensuing conflict."

"Did you forget who you're talking to?" Alfonzo asked with a somewhat offended expression on his face. "Of all the Fairy Tail wizards, I'm probably the only one who has never caused any excessive property damage while on a quest."

Naturally, Hiruzen was aware of what Alfonzo just said. However, a fight between S-Class threats could cause untold amounts of damage with the slightest mistake. Still, he did not have much choice other than trusting Alfonzo on this. At the same time, he decided that he would call back his other disciple, Jiraiya, as quickly as possible.

"*Sigh* Very well." Hiruzen said in a tired tone.

"The only issue is that if the other villages find out that you needed an outsider to fight your enemies, it might cause you some trouble, right?"

Hearing that, Hiruzen frowned deeply. He knew what Alfonzo said was true. However, keeping his villagers safe was his top priority. So, he was less concerned with the drop in his village's reputation than that.

"It doesn't matter." Hiruzen replied after thinking about it for a few seconds. "The villagers' safety comes first. If you could take care of him without alerting the shinobi from the other villages, that would naturally be for the best. But if it comes down to protecting the village or the fact that we needed your help to deal with Orochimaru, I'll choose the former every time."

Nodding in response, Alfonzo respected Hiruzen's decision. Had Danzo become Hokage like he wanted, he would have never given such consideration to the villagers. He would have more than likely sacrificed quite a few of them if it meant taking Orochimaru down.

"Well, as it just so happens, I can do it without letting anyone know." Alfonzo said with a smile and a nod. "I'll just wait until he's not close enough to anything to alert the shinobi from the other villages. But if you hadn't cared about the safety of your citizens, I would have more than likely not cared enough to handle him for you. In fact, I would have gotten back to working on the training grounds and finished them as quickly as possible, regardless of if any of the other shinobi saw me working or not."

Hearing that, Hiruzen gasped in shock while the four Anbu in the room clutched their weapons tightly. A moment later, however, Hiruzen breathed a sigh of relief while waving at the Anbu to stand down. Then, he looked Alfonzo in the eyes with a solemn expression on his face.

"So, you were testing me, huh?" Hiruzen asked as he narrowed his eyes.

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied with a nod of his own. "I would really not wanna help some bastard who did not care about the safety of his people. But you just showed me that you're not that kind of bastard."

As he spoke the last part of his sentence, Alfonzo smiled, causing Hiruzen's expression to ease up. He had heard about Fairy Tail's reputation of not allowing any innocent bystanders to come to harm while they were out on quests, so he could understand why Alfonzo tested him like that.

"Then, I'll leave the issue with Orochimaru to you." Hiruzen said in a relieved tone. "But I'll still have some of my Anbu on the lookout for him. It would be great if we had that technique you mentioned earlier, though."

"No can do." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "That's one of the core secrets of our guild. So, I can't teach it to you. If you wanna learn it, you'll have to talk to my guild master, Ur Milkovich. But the

price will probably be steep. If you think I'm an unscrupulous businessman, until you deal with Ur, you ain't seen shit. Hehehe."

Hearing the chuckle at the end of Alfonzo's words, Hiruzen could not help but shudder and groan audibly. He knew exactly what it meant to ask for a guild's secrets. And even if Ur did not reject him outright, he knew she would ask for a price that he was definitely not willing to pay.

"Forget it." Hiruzen said while waving his hand dismissively. "Like I said, I'll leave the issue with Orochimaru and Kabuto to you and the members of your guild. I just hope that no one from outside the village will find out about it if possible."

"No problem." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "Just wait for our news."

"I have one more request, Alfonzo." Hiruzen said in an uncertain tone. He then continued after receiving a nod from Alfonzo. "If possible, could you bring Orochimaru in alive? He's my disciple. And although he has committed some rather horrible crimes, I couldn't stand to see him die if at all possible."

Having expected Hiruzen's request, Alfonzo could only say that he would try. Then, after Hiruzen nodded in acknowledgement, he took his leave from the Hokage Tower. Then, he made his way back to the residence where he and the others from Magnolia were staying. As soon as he arrived, he found Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki gathered in the living room, awaiting his return.

"What did the Hokage say?" Saeko asked as soon as Alfonzo entered the living room.

"He said he would leave it to us." Alfonzo replied. "The caveat is that we can't cause damage to the village or let any of the shinobi from the other villages find out."

Hearing that, the three ladies furrowed their brows.

"That could be an issue." Laki said calmly. "Those two we sensed have split up and are moving separately."

"I know." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "So, it looks like I won't be moving alone on this."

That caused an excited expression to appear on Laki and Saeko's faces. They were members of Fairy Tail, after all. And like most members of Fairy Tail, they liked a good fight. So, they were looking forward to fighting one, or both, of the rogue shinobi.

"So, we'll do it like this." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "I'll take care of Orochimaru while the two of you deal with Kabuto. And before you look at me with discontent, that kabuto guy isn't that easy to deal with. According to Guy, he has an insane regenerative healing factor. So, you can't look down on him because he's only an A-Class threat."

Learning that bit of information was enough for Laki and Saeko to wipe away their discontentment and took their task much more seriously. After that, the three wizards from Fairy Tail took some time to discuss their plan of action. And since they were both aware of exactly where Orochimaru and kabuto were, as long as they stayed in the village, they were ready to move about half an hour later.

Around the same time, the first part of the Chunin Exam came to an end and the Genin who passed it, a total of twenty-six three-man teams, were dismissed and ordered to report outside of the Forty-Fourth Training Ground, also known as the Forest of Death, tomorrow at eight o'clock in the morning.

So, following their orders, all the Leaf Shinobi returned to their houses to get a good night's rest while the Genin from the other villages returned to their lodgings to do the same. Unfortunately, there was an accident that night. And no one, other than Alfonzo and the others would know about it until the next day.

As for Alfonzo and the others, they were only monitoring Orochimaru and Kabuto's movements for the whole night. Even though they saw the previously mentioned accident, Alfonzo was disinclined to do anything about it. Because something like this happened in the source material, as well. And if things followed the canon, he knew where he would be able to find Orochimaru during the second part of the Chunin Exam. And the chances of any ordinary people getting hurt would be greatly reduced.

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The next morning, a total of seventy-eight Genin were gathered outside of the Forest of Death. In front of the group of Genin, a purple-haired woman with a fanned out ponytail and wearing a tan overcoat stood in front of them with a tent behind her. And the sadistic smile on her face was causing some of the gathered Genin's confidence to wane.

"Good morning, everyone." The purple-haired woman, Anko, said with a smile. "I hope you're ready for the next part of this Chunin Exam. Because by the time it's done, at least half of you will be disqualified."

That statement was enough to make most of those whose confidence had already taken a hit to go into an uproar. However, a well-placed kunai that streaked across a Genin's cheek, leaving a shallow scratch, caused it all to die down rather quickly.

"Here, I believe this is yours." A tall young woman wearing a forehead protector that signified she was from the Village Hidden in the Grass, one of the minor shinobi villages on the continent, said as she approached Anko with the kunai she threw held by her abnormally long tongue.

Seeing this young woman gave Anko an uneasy feeling. Especially the amused glint she could see in her eyes. Still, she took her kunai back, pushing down the unease she was feeling, as she nodded to the Grass Genin.

"Now, before we get this test started, I'll need each of you to sign one of these waivers." Anko said after putting her kunai into her weapon bag and pulling out a document. "It states that any deaths that occur while you're in the forest behind me are not the fault of the Village Hidden in the Leaves. If you sign it, we can proceed with the explanation of the tests rules. If not, you can get the hell outta here. So, make your choice."

Although many of the Genin present were shaken by the possibility of death Anko spoke of, none of them retreated and they all signed the waiver. Then, after receiving all the signed waivers, Anko once again reached into her weapon bag and took out a sealed scroll.

"Good." Anko said with a nod as she held up the scroll. "No shinobi who is so afraid of death that they refuse to act is worthy of becoming a Chunin. Now, this is how the second part of the Exam will go. Each team will get a scroll. And there are two kinds of scrolls, Heaven and Earth. Your objective, once the test starts is to get whichever scroll you don't have, completing the set, and making it to the tower in the center of the forest within five days. Anyone who fails to get a second scroll before the deadline will fail. If you managed to get both scrolls but can't make it to the tower before the deadline, you will fail. And if you happen to die while in the forest, I'm sure you can guess it...you fail. Any questions?"

Though many of the Genin were shaken by the explanation, especially the extra emphasis Anko put on the word "die," they shook their heads. Then, Anko gestured for each team to enter the tent behind her to receive their scrolls in secret. After that, she dispersed them, with each team under the guidance of a Leaf Chunin, to wait for the test to start at different entrances to the Forest of Death.

