

## Fairy Tail 581

### Chapter 581: Team 7's Teamwork

Early in the morning, before the Genin still qualified to participate in the Chunin Exam had left their lodgings, Alfonzo, Laki, Wendy, Carla, Saeko, and Miyuki had gathered in the living room of their temporary residence.

"So, is everyone ready?" Alfonzo asked in a solemn tone.

In response, Laki and Saeko nodded their heads in confirmation. Meanwhile, Wendy wore a regretful expression, as she could not help with this operation, and Carla looked concerned. Miyuki, on the other hand, wore her usual expression. Though, if one were to look deep into her eyes, they would see that she was also worried.

"Okay, good." Alfonzo continued with a nod of his own. "Laki, you're gonna have to use your [Wood-Make Magic to create some clones of you and Saeko so that it looks like you haven't left the house. Can you do it?"

"I can." Laki replied. "But if anyone gets too close, they'll be able to tell the difference between the clones and the real thing. Then, they'll instantly know we're out of the house without our usual hidden escort."

"Besides, you only mentioned that Laki needs to make clones for her and I." Saeko added. "What about you?"

"Oh, I can take care of that myself." Alfonzo said with a grin.

\*Poof!\*

In the next instant, Alfonzo was covered in a cloud of smoke. Then, when the cloud dissipated, he was standing there in the same position as if nothing happened. Naturally, this caused everyone to be dumbfounded, as it seemed like Alfonzo had not done anything but caused a cloud of smoke to appear and dissipate. However, they eventually picked up an identical magic power signature to the Alfonzo in front of them. And it was standing directly between Laki and Saeko.

Turning their heads to the place where they picked up the magic power signature, Laki, Wendy, and Saeko were unable to see anything with their eyes. However, their [Magic Power Detection] was telling them that Alfonzo was definitely standing there.

A moment later, both Carla and Miyuki also looked in the direction where everyone else was looking. And they were just in time to see Saeko reach out and touch something.

"What did you do, Alfonzo?" Saeko asked as she wrapped her hands around Alfonzo's right hand. "I know you can turn invisible, but how are there two of you."

In the next instant, Alfonzo stopped bending the light around him with his [Electromagnetism Magic], reappearing between Laki and Saeko. Meanwhile, the [Shadow Clone] he created smiled at everyone smugly.

"I used one of the techniques I learned from that one guy, Danzo's records." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "It's called the [Shadow Clone Jutsu]. Lici can use it, too."

"But how?" Laki asked while patting both Alfonzo's with her hands repeatedly. "I've seen the shinobi use [Ninjutsu]. And they always have to make those hands signs."

"My magic power control is too good for that to matter." Alfonzo said with a shrug. "The hand signs are only there to direct the magic power in a shinobi's body in a certain way. But since I have such good control of my magic power, I only needed to memorize how each hand sign makes my magic power move. Then, I could do it on my own without them."

As the people in the room were some of the more intelligent members of the guild, they all immediately understood Alfonzo's explanation. Then, they found themselves curious to know what kind of things they would be able to do with the Jutsu taught in the Hidden Villages.

Understanding what the ladies were thinking, Alfonzo smiled.

"Don't worry, I made a deal with Hiruzen, remember?" Alfonzo asked. "I'll be able to teach you how to use [Ninjutsu] and Genjutsu] after the Chunin Exams end and the people from the other villages leave."

"Oh, you did say that before, didn't you?" Saeko said with a smile. "Well then, I'm looking forward to it."

"Actually, I'll probably end up teaching you about it early, though." Alfonzo said with a contemplative expression on his face as he turned towards Laki. "From what I've read, [Wood-Style] is the best there is when it comes to suppressing a Tailed Beast. And unfortunately, there's an unstable Jinchuriki in the village right now. And he's participating in the Chunin Exam."

"You don't mean Naruto, do you?" Wendy asked in a concerned tone.

"No, of course not." Alfonzo said while waving dismissively. "He's a kid from the Village Hidden in the Sand in Desierto. And an unstable Jinchuriki increases the chance of the Tailed Beast seizing control. So, I want you to be able to stop him should that happen."

"I understand." Laki replied with a nod. "I wonder how it will feel to make something as big as a Tailed Beast suffer."

Hearing Laki's last sentence, everyone could only smile wryly. Not long after that, Alfonzo made himself invisible again. Then, when Wendy and Carla left for the hospital, he silently followed them out of the house, leaving his clone there to throw off any suspicions, before making his way to the Forest of Death.

From there time flashed forward by about an hour. Currently, all the teams of Genin had been split up and taken to different entrances to the Forest of Death. Meanwhile, Alfonzo was floating in the air, watching Orochimaru, who had killed the female Genin from a team of shinobi from the Village Hidden in the Grass, and took her place in her team without alerting the other members.

"\*Sigh\* I'm kinda worried about Anko's intelligence." Alfonzo murmured quietly while he continued to watch Orochimaru. "I mean, seriously? Is there anyone else who uses their tongue like that? And even if there is, shouldn't you always assume it's that creepy son of a bitch first?"

Meanwhile, Orochimaru, who was still in disguise, suddenly started looking around warily. He could feel that someone was staring at him. Unfortunately, he was unable to tell where this stare was coming from.

Naturally, Orochimaru's strange behavior, of looking around cautiously, caught the attention of the two Grass Genin accompanying him.

"Hey, is something wrong?"" one of the Genin, a young man, asked in a wary tone.

"No, I'm fine." Orochimaru, using the voice of the young woman he killed, replied in an irritated tone. "Didn't I already tell you, don't talk to me if you don't wanna end up dead? Or... does that mean you're looking to have me kill you?"

Hearing their team mate's cold tone, the two young man who were on her team shuddered violently. For some reason, ever since this morning, their team mate had been in a horrible mood. And although they were used to her threatening to kill them for annoying her, there was never this much killing intent when she did so in the past.

Before the conversation between the Grass shinobi could continue, a smoke signal rose from the center of the Forest. And as soon as it did, the Leaf Chunin responsible for this team of Genin opened the gate leading to the Forest of Death.

Immediately after the gate was opened, Orochimaru and the two Grass Genin dashed into the forest. Naturally, Alfonzo followed them, as well. However, not even thirty seconds after they entered the forest, Orochimaru stopped and turned around to face the two Grass Genin with murder blazing in his eyes.

"What are you thinking?" One of the Genin asked in a scared tone as he took a step back.

"It's unfortunate, but this is where the Chunin exam ends for the two of you." Orochimaru said without dropping his disguise.

Before he could take action, however, Orochimaru came to a stop. Then, he looked around, getting the feeling that he was being watched again. Then, he turned back towards the two Grass Genin and snorted.

"You two should consider yourselves lucky." Orochimaru said as he turned around. "You'll get to live another day. But if I run into you again while we're in this forest, I'm definitely going to kill you."

After speaking his piece, Orochimaru dashed away into the forest at a speed much faster than any Genin could achieve, leaving the two Grass shinobi standing there dumbfounded and afraid.

'I got that same feeling again.' Orochimaru thought to himself as he raced through the forest. 'But there's no way anyone should know who I am. So, there's no need to watch an unimportant Genin girl from the Village Hidden in the Grass. I even used a [Secret Art] to change the feeling of my magic power to that of this girl.'

Unfortunately, the [Secret Art] Orochimaru was referring to only masked the feeling of one's magic power outwardly. But [Magic Power Detection] reads the flow of magic power inside a person or object. So, changing the way it is felt outwardly has no effect. And that's how Alfonzo was able to pick him out so easily.

About an hour and a half later, Orochimaru landed on the limb of a tree overlooking a team of Genin who just defeated an enemy team. And one of those Genin was his target. So, he used his abnormally long tongue to lick his lips in anticipation.

"You'll be the perfect new vessel for me, Sasuke Uchiha." Orochimaru basically purred as he watched Sasuke, Naruto, and Sakura search through the belongings of the Rain Genin they just defeated.

Going back about ten minutes, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke were running through the Forest of Death, searching for opponents so they could get the scroll they needed. And while they were running, Naruto's eyebrows twitched minutely.

"Hey, guys, can we stop for a minute?" Naruto asked in an embarrassed tone. "I was so excited for the test today that I forgot to go to the bathroom this morning. I wouldn't wanna have an accident while we were fighting an enemy shinobi, you know?"

Hearing what Naruto just said, both Sasuke and Sakura put on disgusted expressions. Still, they stopped so that Naruto could do his business.

In reality, however, thanks to their time spent with Alfonzo and the others from magnolia, the team of Genin had a much better relationship at this point than they did in the Canon version of this event. So, although they wore disgusted expressions, they were actually paying more attention to something else Naruto said. Namely, "fighting an enemy shinobi."

'So, there's one enemy following us, huh?' Sakura and Sasuke thought simultaneously as the group of three came to a stop.

"God, do you have to be so gross, Naruto?" Sakura asked in a disdainful tone. "Whatever, as long as you're gone, that just means I get a little more time alone with my Sasuke."

"Hmph!" Sasuke grunted unconcernedly. "Just hurry up, Loser. We still need to get that other scroll."

"Yeah, yeah, I'm going." Naruto replied uncaringly as he walked away from the other two, disappearing behind a nearby tree.

At the same time, just as Naruto could no longer be seen by Sakura and Sasuke, a young male shinobi wearing a pair of goggles, a gas mask, and a forehead protector that signified that he was from the Village Hidden in the Rain carefully and silently snuck towards Naruto from high up in the trees. Then, when he arrived above Naruto and saw him peeing on the trunk of a large tree, he wore a sinister smile under his gas mask as he slowly lowered himself with a wire.

A few moments later, just as Naruto zipped up his pants, the Rain Genin was suspended behind Naruto with a senbon in his hand. Then, with a vicious expression on his face, the Rain Genin stabbed the senbon into the side of Naruto's neck, aiming to kill him in one hit.

\*Poof!\*

However, as soon as the killing blow was landed, Naruto popped into a cloud of smoke, greatly surprising the Rain Genin. In the next instant, before the Rain Genin could react, he felt a huge impact in the middle of his back.

\*Boom!\*

"[Rasengan]!" Naruto shouted as he slammed the violently spinning ball of Chakra he held in his hand into the Rain Genin's back.

In the next instant, the wire holding up the Rain Genin snapped and he slammed face first into the tree that Naruto's [Shadow Clone] was just peeing on. And with several broken bones, including his spinal column, the Rain Genin lost consciousness.

"Seriously, how rude do you have to be to ambush a guy while he's taking a pee?" Naruto asked as he stepped forward and grabbed the badly injured Rain Genin. "Well, I'll take this guy to Sasuke, he should be able to find out where this guy's buddies are with some [Genjutsu]."

Not long after that, Naruto, while dragging the Rain Genin, returned to Sakura and Sasuke. Then, he dropped the injured shinobi in front of them like a sack of garbage.

"This guy actually tried to ambush me while I was peeing." Naruto said indignantly. "but I made sure not to kill him. So, Sasuke, why don't you use your Sharingan to find out where his buddies are hiding?"

At first, Sasuke was suspicious about Naruto actually being the one who was beaten and captured while the enemy shinobi used the [Transformation Jutsu] to swap their appearances. But when Naruto mentioned his Sharingan, he dropped those suspicions immediately. No one from outside the village should know that he was the Sharingan, after all. Especially since no one has spoken his name since the exam began.

"Alright, Sasuke replied as he knelt in front of the Rain Genin with his irises turning red and three tomoe spinning in each. "Then, he took off the Rain Genin's goggles, opened his eyelids, and looked directly into the unconscious shinobi's eyes. "Where are your comrades waiting for you?"

Though he was unconscious, the Rain Genin answered Sasuke's question in a tone that sounded as if he was speaking in his sleep thanks to the [Genjutsu] he cast through his eyes. Then, after getting the information he wanted, Sasuke deactivated his Sharingan and stood up.

"Alright, let's go." Sasuke said as he turned in the direction the Rain Genin pointed out. "One of the other two is holding the scroll. So we don't need this guy for anything else."

With that, Sasuke dashed forward. And when Naruto was about to follow him, he stopped and looked at Sakura who was kneeling down next to the Rain Genin.

"Sakura, what are you doing?" Naruto asked in a confused tone.

At that moment, a thin needle of magic power extended from Sakura's right index finger. Then, she jabbed it into several acupoints on the Rain Shinobi's torso. After that, she retracted her magic power and stood up.

"Just making sure he won't wake up for a while." Sakura replied. "he should sleep all the way through the rest of this stage of the exam, now. It will be up to luck if he'll be eaten by a wild animal or not."

Hearing that, Naruto could only shiver while thinking that Sakura was scary. Still, he delayed no longer in following after Sasuke with Sakura following him closely. Eventually, both Naruto and Sakura caught up with Sasuke, who was standing on a tree branch overlooking a pair of Rain shinobi.

"That should be them." Sasuke said once Naruto and Sakura arrived.

"How should we handle this, then?" Sakura asked while looking down at the Shinobi.

A moment later, Sasuke's Sharingan activated again. Then, he turned his head towards Sakura.

"Can you jump down between them and create a smoke screen that will not only block their visions but disorient them, too?" Sasuke asked.

"No problem." Sakura replied as she reached into her weapon pouch and put on a pair of gloves.

Then, as soon as both gloves were on properly, Sakura jumped from atop the tree branch, falling towards the place between the two Rain Genin.

"Cha!" Sakura shouted when she was less than half a foot above the two Rain Genin.

"Huh?" The two Genin exclaimed in confusion as they looked up.

\*Boom~~~~!\*

However, by the time they looked up, Sakura had fallen to the ground between them while using the [Magic Power Strengthening Technique] as she heavily smashed her right fist into the ground. As a result

of the impact, the ground was cracked, causing the two Rain Genin to lose their footing. On top of that, a large cloud of dust and debris was shot up, obscuring their fields of vision.

Then, as soon as the dust cloud was kicked up, two dozen shuriken flew into the cloud of dust. Then, after the sound of metals colliding, the wires connected to the shuriken were all pulled taught. And if one were to follow the wires to their source, they would see them all wrapped around Sasuke's fingers from the tree branch above.

"Now, Sakura, move!" Sasuke shouted as he went through a series of hand signs. "[Fire-Style: Fire Dragon Jutsu]."

As soon as she heard Sasuke's shout, Sakura immediately fled from the dust cloud. Then, Sasuke spit a torrent of flames onto the wires connected to his shuriken. When the flames came in contact with the wires, they quickly traveled down them towards the shuriken. As a result, they ended up burning the Rain Genin, who were wrapped by the wires, severely.

A moment later, the flames produced by Sasuke's [Ninjutsu] died out and the dust cloud settled. Now, the only thing left were the burnt corpses of a pair of unlucky Rain shinobi.

"I really hope you didn't burn up the scroll too, Sasuke." Naruto said as he and Sasuke landed next to the corpses. "Otherwise, we're definitely gonna have to look for another team."

"Hmph!" Sasuke snorted. "We might have to look for another team anyway if they have the same scroll as we do."

"Yeah, I guess." Naruto said as he knelt down to rummage through the Rain Genin's belongings.

At that moment, not only did Sakura gather with the rest of her team after jumping away from the dust cloud, but Orochimaru also appeared on a tree branch overlooking the trio. On top of that, all four of them were unaware that Alfonzo was floating nearby, as well.

Chapter 582: Team 7 Vs. Orochimaru

In the Hidden Leaf Village's Forty-Fourth Training Ground, the Forest of Death, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke were searching through the remains of the Rain Shinobi they just defeated for the scroll they needed to pass this exam.

"These guys must be pretty tough." Naruto said as he emptied out one of the Rain Genin's Ninja Backpacks. "Even after getting burned up so badly, they're still alive."

"Yeah, but just barely." Sakura replied as she checked the Rain Genin's conditions. "What do you think we should do with them? Should I stabilize their injuries?"

"No, leave them be." Sasuke replied coldly. "If it was us in this situation, they wouldn't try to help us and keep us alive, would they?"

"Probably not... But still..." Sakura said, sounding as if she wanted to help the injured people in front of her.

"All though I don't like the idea of leaving them to die, either." Naruto said as he rummaged through all the scrolls the Rain Genin was carrying. "If we help them, they'll probably come back for revenge. Or at the very least to take their scroll back... and ours while they're at it."

Sakura knew that what Naruto said was right. However, because she had been learning [Medical Ninjutsu] from the overly kind-hearted Wendy, she had adopted some of her attitude towards saving lives. That said, she would not do anything to jeopardize her team's chances of passing to the next round of the Chunin Exam.

"This guy doesn't have it." Sasuke said while shaking his head as he turned to look at Naruto. "That means the one you're looking at should have it."

"He does!" Naruto exclaimed excitedly only a moment later. "It's this one. See, it says Earth on it. And it's just what we're---"

Before Naruto could finish his excited exclamation, a long, thin, pink ribbon like object shot down from above before wrapping around the scroll in Naruto's hand. Then, with a firm tug, it was pulled up into the sky.

At first, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke were startled by what just happened. However, it only took a moment for them to go on high alert. Then, as they took their battle formation, they looked up to where the scroll was pulled to.

"Hey, she's a kunoichi from the Grass, right?" Sakura asked quietly. "I remember seeing her in the room where the first test was held."

"Yeah..." Sasuke replied without taking his activated Sharingan off the kunoichi standing on a tree branch above them.

"Hey, guys... We need to be careful with this one." Naruto whispered. "I'm getting a bad feeling about this.'

Thanks to the fact that he has been getting along with the Nine-Tailed Fox, Kurama, Naruto has gained the ability to sense the emotions of those around him. On top of that, he has been getting more proficient in sensing the difference between himself and his enemies' relative power levels.

Hearing the uneasy tone from Naruto, Sakura and Sasuke raised their guard even higher. Despite that, they were not experienced enough to feel the difference between themselves and Orochimaru. So, they were not planning to run away.

"don't worry, Naruto." Sasuke said in a determined tone. "there's only one of her and there are three of us. So, we should be able to take her no matter how good she is. Remember, she's only a Genin like us."

"Well... Well... Well... I've finally found you." Orochimaru said as he jumped down from the branch he had been observing Team 7 from. "Unfortunately, I don't need this scroll. But I'd rather not let anyone from the Leaf have it, either."

Despite the fact that he was speaking rather clearly, Orochimaru was still holding the scroll with his tongue, the ribbon-like object that snatched it from Naruto. Then, after finishing what he had to say, Orochimaru tilted his head back before pulling his tongue, with the scroll still grasped by it, into his mouth and swallowing the scroll.

"What the...?" Naruto exclaimed in confusion. "she just swallowed it."

"Now, if you want it back, you'll have to kill me and cut it out of my stomach. Cucucu."

'Now, let me see what you'll do, Sasuke.' Orochimaru thought to himself. 'This will be a good test to see your level of progress. I hope you don't disappoint me.'

"What are we gonna do?" Sakura asked. "We need that scroll. But we don't have to have that one. We could look for someone else if we wanna get another Earth Scroll."

"Are you suggesting we run away?" Sasuke asked with his eyebrows furrowed.

"I don't know." Sakura replied while shaking her head. "but the last time Naruto said he had a bad idea about something was when we fought Zabuza Momochi, remember? And it took all three of us helping Kakashi-Sensei to beat him back then."

That was enough to make Sasuke stop to think. Unfortunately, he did not get much time to do so.

"If you won't decide, I'll decide for you." Orochimaru said with a hideous grin on his face.

In the next instant, Orochimaru dashed forward. Though, since he wanted to test Sasuke, he did not use his full strength.

"Scatter!" Sasuke shouted as he noticed Orochimaru's approach. "It doesn't look like she's gonna give us a choice. We have to take her down."

With that, Naruto and Sakura leapt to either side. At the same time, Sasuke unsheathed a sword that was strapped across the small of his back. Then, he seemingly disappeared from where he stood, reappearing in front of Orochimaru an instant later as he slashed his katana downwards.

\*Clang!\*

"Oh~, you're faster than I expected." Orochimaru said as he used a kunai to guard against Sasuke's slash.  
"But if this is all you have, you'll never get the scroll back."

With that, Orochimaru drew a second kunai and began trading blows with Sasuke, the sound of metal meeting metal ringing out through the surroundings.

At the same time, Naruto had used the [Shadow Clone Jutsu] and created enough [Shadow Clones] to completely surround Orochimaru and Sasuke. Then, he commanded four of them to attack Orochimaru from his front left, front right, back left, and back right simultaneously.

As a result of Naruto's attack, Orochimaru was forced to divert his attention from Sasuke, though it was not an issue for him, to deflect the two attacks from behind. An instant later, he swept his kunai at the throats of the two [Shadow Clones] who attack from the front.

Needless to say, Naruto's four clones were easily dispatched. However, just before the two attacking from the front were killed, they managed to push Sasuke away from Orochimaru.

\*Boom!\*

As soon as Sasuke was pushed away, Sakura fell from above, slamming her right leg down at the top of Orochimaru's head. As a result, a large dust cloud was kicked up, covering Naruto and Sasuke's view of the situation.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, who had been watching the exchange, was impressed by the teamwork shown by Team 7. And the reason he had not acted so far was simple, like Orochimaru, he wanted to see their level of progress. However, as soon as Orochimaru started getting serious, he would act to make sure that Sasuke did not end up with a [Cursed Seal of Heaven] on his neck.

"Did we get him?" Naruto asked as he kept his eyes trained on the dust cloud.

'Not if you're gonna keep chanting revival spells like that.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Then again, that was nowhere near enough to take out Orochimaru in the first place. Still, I guess I'll have to act soon. Sakura's not in the most favorable position right now.'

As soon as that thought finished, Sakura came flying out of the dust cloud. However, it was clear she had no control of her flight. Luckily, before she could slam head first into a tree, Sasuke used his speed to catch her.

"Sakura, are you okay?" Sasuke asked as he lowered Sakura to the ground.

"Yeah, I'm not hurt." Sakura replied. "but I don't think my full-powered kick hurt her at all."

"Cucucu. You've done better than I expected." Orochimaru said as he swung his arm, dispersing the cloud of dust with his movement. "but if you can't do better, you are all going to die here."

At that point, all of Naruto's [Shadow Clones] were dispelled, greatly surprising Orochimaru, Sakura, and Sasuke. However, when they looked over to see what happened to Naruto, they were even more surprised.

At the moment, Naruto was cloaked in billowing, ominous red magic power. On top of that, his eyes had turned red with slit pupils, the whisker marks on his face had become more pronounced, and his canine teeth and fingernails had grown, making them look like fangs and claws.

"Is that... Naruto?" Sakura asked in a dumbfounded, frightened tone.

"Yeah, but I have no idea what that power is." Sasuke replied while narrowing his eyes.

"OH, because of your heightened emotions, it looks like some of its power has leaked through the [Seal]." Orochimaru said as he licked his lips. "Well, we can't have that. If too much leaks, it would be dangerous, even for me."

"No one gets away with threatening my friends!" Naruto shouted as he dropped down to all fours and started running towards Orochimaru like a feral beast.

Orochimaru, on the other hand, seemed completely unconcerned with Naruto's increase in strength. Despite that, he was cautious while engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the Nine-Tails Jinchuriki.

Meanwhile, Sakura and Sasuke recovered from their shock while watching the high-intensity exchange. So, they prepared to help Naruto once they noticed an opening.

Unfortunately, the first opening they happened to see was one left open by Naruto. One that Orochimaru did not miss. With the tips of his fingers glowing with the light of his magic power, Orochimaru jammed the fingers of his right hand onto Naruto's abdomen, around the Nine-Tailed Fox's [Seal], cutting off the flow of the Tailed Beast's magic power.

"Ugh!" Naruto grunted in pain as his forward momentum was stopped completely and his body bent around Orochimaru's hand.

"Cucucu! Without the extra boost from the beast, you're nothing but trash." Orochimaru said as he prepared to throw Naruto's body to the side. "but I won't kill you now. I don't want that thing to come out---"

\*Poof!\*

\*Bang!\*

\*Bang!\*

Before Orochimaru could finish what he wanted to say, the Naruto in his hand poofed out of existence, alerting Orochimaru to the fact that it was a [Shadow Clone]. However, before he could react, another Naruto, this one also cloaked in the Nine-Tailed Fox's magic power, broke through the ground under

Orochimaru. Then, with great momentum, he slammed an uppercut into Orochimaru's chin, sending him rocketing up into the air.

"Now!" Sasuke shouted as he sheathed his katana and placed the sheath on his left hip. "[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Sōryūsen]."

In the next instant, Sasuke disappeared from where he stood in a burst of speed. Then, when he reappeared, he had already unsheathed his katana, slashing it at Orochimaru. And despite the speed of his slash, Orochimaru was able to tilt his body back to avoid the majority of the blow.

\*Bang!\*

However, he was still slashed across the face. On top of that, Orochimaru was not expecting the follow up strike Sasuke delivered to his torso with the sheath. As a result, his balance in mid-air was disrupted. Another thing to take note of was the fact that there was no blood leaking from the wound on Orochimaru's face. Though no one other than Alfonzo noticed it at the time.

Realizing that his slash was only a glancing blow, Sasuke clicked his tongue internally. Then, he dropped his sheath before he raised his katana over his head with both hands wrapped around the hilt.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Ryūtsui-Shōsen]." Sasuke chanted as he swung his katana downwards.

In the next instant, Sasuke swung his katana with great force. Unfortunately, Orochimaru, despite his unstable posture, was able to react quickly, blocking the slash with his kunai.

Even so, despite his successful defense, Orochimaru was launched down towards the ground, with gravity causing Sasuke to follow him closely. However, because he was not injured by Sasuke's slash, he landed on his feet stably. Then, he hopped backwards to distance himself from Sasuke's landing point.

"[Rasengan]!"

Unfortunately, right before Orochimaru landed again, Naruto appeared behind him with a [Rasengan] rotating in his palm before slamming it into Orochimaru's back. As a result, Orochimaru was sent back towards where he first landed.

As soon as Orochimaru was back where he started, Sasuke landed on the ground and finished his combo attack, slashing his sword upwards, cutting into Orochimaru's torso and launching him back into the air.

This time, unlike when Sasuke cut his face, there was a splash of blood from Orochimaru's torso, though the cut was not too deep. On top of that, before Orochimaru could regain his balance, Sakura fell from the sky, once again slamming her right leg down with the [magic Power Strengthening Technique].

\*Boom~~~!\*

Once again, a dust cloud was kicked up by Sakura's monstrous strength. Unlike last time, however, when Sakura came flying out of the cloud, she seemed to be doing so on her own volition. A moment later, Naruto, still wrapped in the Nine-Tail Fox's magic power and Sasuke gathered with Sakura.

"Well, those kids really have gotten pretty good." Alfonzo said with a smile. "Unfortunately, that's still not enough to deal with that Pedo-Snake."

And just as Alfonzo said, the dust cloud was once again swept away by a swing of Orochimaru's arm. And when he was once again visible, the three Genin could see that he was covered in blood, his clothes were torn, and there was a slash on his face. Though, there was no blood leaking from that gash.

"What the...?" Naruto exclaimed once again in confusion. "How is his face not bleeding with that big cut on it."

"Cucucu! Magnificent." Orochimaru said in a jubilant tone as he reached up to grab his face. "You might be even better than Itachi at this age. You'll make the perfect vessel, Sasuke."

\*Rip!\*

Gritting his teeth at the mention of his older brother, all the rage that was building up vanished immediately when he saw Orochimaru rip off the female Grass Genin's face, revealing a completely different face of a man with feminine, snake-like features. Not only Sasuke, but Naruto and Sakura were also completely dumbfounded.

Adding to the three Genin's confusion, Orochimaru tilted his head back. Then, he opened his mouth much further than should be possible for a human, his mouth looking like the unhinged jaws of a snake.

A moment later, a pair of pale-skinned hands popped out from Orochimaru's mouth before pulling out a completely uninjured Orochimaru and letting the old one fall to the ground like the shed skin of a snake.

However, before anyone from Team 7 could ask any questions, or in Naruto's case, empty the contents of his stomach in disgust, a suffocating magic power pressure mixed with a potent killing intent was unleashed, causing Sakura and Sasuke to freeze. And while Naruto did not freeze, mostly thanks to the Kurama's influence, he was hit by a powerful [Genjutsu] that made him stand still for a few moments while Kurama tried to help him dispel it.

On a side note, had Kurama's [Seal] been lifted, he would have been able to dispel Orochimaru's [Genjutsu] in an instant.

"Cucucu! I'll definitely make you mine, Sasuke." Orochimaru said as his neck elongated at high speed.

On top of his neck elongating, Orochimaru opened his mouth wide, revealing a pair of long, sharp fangs that were aimed at the side of Sasuke's neck.

"Alright, I think that's enough, little Pedo-Snake."

\*Boom!\*

Less than a foot away from Sasuke, a violet flash intercepted Orochimaru before slamming his head into the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust for a third time. And that was enough to snap Sakura and Sasuke out of their fear-induced frozen states. At the same time, Kurama succeeded in dispelling the [Genjutsu] placed on Naruto. So, the three jumped back away from the dust cloud.

"Hey, didn't the voice of the person that just saved us sound like Big Bro Alfonzo?" Naruto asked while not letting his guard down.

"You three don't need to guess." Alfonzo replied from the dust cloud. "it really is me. I found out that the little Pedo-Snake had entered the village and your Hokage asked me to deal with him. You know, since I kicked his ass once before."

With that, Alfonzo swept his arm like Orochimaru had done, dispersing the dust cloud. And when he did, the Genin of Team 7 could see Alfonzo, with his right foot arching with violent electricity, trampling Orochimaru's head.

"Now, you three should just leave this guy to me." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I'll even get that scroll he swallowed back for you.'

#### Chapter 583: Orochimaru Captured... Again

With his head pressed into the ground by a foot clad in purple electricity, Orochimaru was thoroughly confused by how he ended up that way. However, when he heard the voice of the person who captured him three and a half years ago, combined with that irritating nickname, Orochimaru almost had an aneurysm.

"How...? How are you here?" Orochimaru managed to rasp out "Since when are outsiders allowed to medal in the Chunin Exam?"

"If that isn't the fucking pot calling the kettle black." Alfonzo said in a disdainful tone. "In case you forgot, you're a rogue shinobi. Meaning, you're no longer a member of the Village Hidden in the Leaves. Other words, an outsider."

Alfonzo's disdainful tone made Orochimaru even angrier. Despite that, no matter how hard he struggled, he was unable to free himself. Luckily, just as Alfonzo thought, he was not here with his real body. Instead, he was using a cloning technique. Though, it was not the Second Tsuchikage's [Splitting Technique]. Instead, it was something he derived from it called a [Blood Clone].

"Anyway, I figured you'd want to get an Uchiha as your next vessel, Pedo-Snake." Alfonzo said without giving Orochimaru a chance to retort. "I mean, having a Sharingan would be nice, right? But without the Uchiha bloodline, it wastes too much magic power. So, why not get an Uchiha as your next vessel, right?"

At that moment, Orochimaru's struggles ceased for a moment. He had no idea how Alfonzo could possibly know his plans, but the fact that he did was terrifying. And for the first time ever, he regretted the fact that if this [Blood Clone] was killed, its memories would not be passed on to his main body.

In fact, when Orochimaru created this cloning technique, the fact that the clone would not pass on its memories like the [Shadow Clone Jutsu] does was made that way by design. Because the [Blood Clone] was supposed to last much longer than any other cloning technique, being inundated by all its memories upon its death could be dangerous.

Unfortunately, that means that Orochimaru's main body would have no idea that Alfonzo is in the village. So, there will probably be no change to the plans he made with the Village Hidden in the Sand to destroy the Leaf during the final round of the Chunin Exam.

"So, when I felt you and Kabuto being [Reverse Summoned] into the village yesterday, I knew you would come after Sasuke to mark him with that disgusting [Cursed Seal of Heaven]." Alfonzo said as he put a little more force in to the foot he was using to press Orochimaru's head into the ground.

Orochimaru's shock deepened even further after hearing Alfonzo mention the [cursed Seal of Heaven]. No one outside of him should know its true name. Though most people know he has the ability to place a [Cursed seal] on people, giving them enormous power, he has never told anyone what the [Seal] is actually called, not even kabuto.

"How do you know that name?" Orochimaru asked in a shaky tone.

"Do you really think you have any secrets that I can't find?" Alfonzo asked with a sneer forming on his lips. "Or did you forget, I already knew about Kurotsuchi's Zanpakuto project before I ever squeezed his research notes out of him. Trust me, little Pedo-Snake, if I want to find out about something, there's nothing in this world that can stop me."

Naturally, that was a lie. Although Alfonzo had a fairly decent information network thanks to all the business under Sixth Sense Holdings, it was not so comprehensive that he could get secret intel about people like Orochimaru or Mayuri Kurotsuchi. Instead, all the information he just mentioned was once again thanks to his meta-knowledge.

In fact, for the first fifteen years of his life, other than his apprenticeship under Nell Goldstein, Alfonzo hadn't even met anyone from outside the Fairy Tail storyline, making him think that information would not be useful. But after meeting Marin a month after he and Elicia turned fifteen, they started popping up everywhere.

Orochimaru really had nothing to say. Seeing that, Alfonzo shook his head. Then, he turned his attention towards Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke with a smile on his face.

"You three have grown a lot." Alfonzo said as he tapped the heel of his foot on Orochimaru's head. "And your team work was really impressive."

Hearing Alfonzo's praise, Naruto smiled bashfully while scratching the back of his head in embarrassment, Sakura smiled happily because she had been recognized for something more than just her book smarts, and Sasuke raised his head proudly while wearing an expression that shouted: "Did you expect anything less?"

"Anyway, I'm really proud of you." Alfonzo continued with a smile. "So, I really hope that the three of you will all be Chunin by the time this exam is over. Oh yeah, I almost forgot..."

With that, Alfonzo took his foot off of Orochimaru's head. Despite that, the rogue shinobi did not move at all. And the reason for that was because of the last time Alfonzo tapped his foot on Orochimaru's head. At that moment, Alfonzo raised the output of the electricity wrapped around his foot, knocking Orochimaru unconscious.

Unfortunately, Orochimaru would not have the opportunity to stay unconscious for long. Because after Alfonzo stepped away from his head, the stretched neck snapped back like a rubber band, which woke up Orochimaru immediately. However, before he could even try to flee, Alfonzo appeared next to him and grabbed him by his shoulder.

At the same time, as soon as Alfonzo's hand came into contact with Orochimaru, metallic restraints wrapped around Orochimaru's torso and limbs, leaving him unable to move. On top of that, the restraints were etched with anti-magic sigils, making it impossible for Orochimaru to use any of the strange techniques he was known for.

"Now, I just gotta get that scroll back..." Alfonzo muttered to himself as his hand was covered with a black, metallic liquid.

Hearing that Alfonzo still had the intention to get back the scroll he swallowed earlier, Orochimaru's pupils dilated to their limits. He wanted to say that he would cough it up himself. However, before he could, Alfonzo's hand plunged into his torso.

"Gya~~~~~!" A heart-rending scream tore from Orochimaru's throat as Alfonzo's entire hand penetrated his abdomen.

A little more than a second later, Alfonzo pulled his hand out of Orochimaru's abdomen while holding a black scroll with the word "Earth" written on it. Then, he casually tossed it towards Team 7. However, neither of the three caught it, taking a step back and letting it fall to the ground between them.

Meanwhile, Orochimaru continued to scream bloody murder. The pain he was in was worse than anything he had ever felt, which meant it must be quite considerable. Especially since he had survived two wars in the past.

One thing to take note of was the fact that the black, liquid-metal substance that was coating Alfonzo's hand, the Techno Organic Metal, was no longer on his hand when he pulled it out of Orochimaru's stomach.

"Damn you!" Orochimaru cursed through gritted teeth between screams. "What did you do to me? And why does this hurt so much worse than having a hole in my stomach usually does?"

"It actually doesn't surprise me that you've been in this state before, Pedo-Snake." Alfonzo said as he reached into Orochimaru's Ninja Backpack and pulled out all the scrolls. Then, when he found another Earth Scroll, he continued while tossing it towards Team 7. "But it only hurts so much because I'm healing your wound. Though, I'll admit that having a wound healed this way is the most painful thing I've ever experienced, too."

"What exactly are you doing to me?" Orochimaru asked while sweat constantly streamed down his face.

"I'm using a little bit of a metal I found about six years ago... I think." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "I called it the Techno Organic Metal, a living metal that actively seeks out the wounded and parasitizes them while healing their wounds. Of course, there are some side effects, but I won't get into that for now. Anyway, I promise you'll be good as new when I take the metal out, so don't worry. You'll just have to endure a little pain, mkay?"

Seeing the flames of anger in Orochimaru's eyes, Alfonzo's smile widened. Then, he turned to Team 7 and spoke once again.

"Anyway, I'm gonna take this guy to see the Hokage." Alfonzo said. "And if I find out that you three have somehow failed this part of the exam five days later... Hehehe... Let's just say you won't like the consequences."

Utterly terrified by the implications of Alfonzo's threat, all three Genin, Naruto, Sakura, and Sasuke, nodded their heads in fear. Then, they picked up the Earth Scroll Alfonzo fished out of Orochimaru's Ninja Backpack and dashed off towards the center of the forest.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo only watched the three kids leave with a grin on his face while listening to Orochimaru's pained grunts and screams. Then, to make sure he wouldn't be found out, he gagged Orochimaru with a piece of metal that had the ability to absorb soundwaves. After that, he put away all the scrolls he dumped out of Orochimaru's Ninja Backpack, bent the light around himself and Orochimaru, and flew out of the Forest of Death to drop off his package.

At the same time, back in the village proper, Laki and Saeko were out shopping. Though, that was only a façade. Rather, they were keeping an eye on Kabuto, who was moving around while in disguise.

Unfortunately, there were no opportunities to take him down without making a ruckus that would alert the shinobi from other nations. So, they could only continue to monitor him for now.

"\*Sigh\* This is even harder than doing quests without causing property damage." Laki said in a frustrated tone. "I don't know how Lici does it. Finishing a quest without anyone seeing her, I mean."

"Well, the fact that she can make herself invisible probably helps quite a bit." Saeko replied as she looked at a beautiful kimono on display in a store. Then, with a nod, she held it up to her front and turned to Laki. "What do you think, would this look good on me?"

"I think you should just buy it and ask Alfonzo." Laki said with a smile. "That's whose opinion really matters to you, right?"

In response, Saeko blushed, looking like quite the shy maiden, a rather drastic contrast from her usual valiant, yet sadistic, warrior persona. However, there was also a bit of awkwardness in her expression, too. And Laki could see right through the reason for it.

"You don't have to worry about me." Laki said in a very tranquil way. "I know I don't have a chance with Alfonzo. Especially because I'm not willing to share him. That said, I would accept him right away if he left all the others for me, even though I know that's impossible."

"But what about Kakashi?" Saeko asked as she started walking towards the checkout counter with Laki following behind her. "It looks like you really like him, too."

"I'll admit I do enjoy his company." Laki replied. "and I'm really curious to see what is underneath his mask. I would even go so far as to say that I'd like to date him with the chance to get married in the

future. But if Alfonzo broke up with you and the others and told me he wanted to be with me, I'd break up with Kakashi or any other man I was seeing in a heartbeat."

"Is that really a healthy mindset to have?" Saeko asked as she placed the kimono on the counter. Then, she looked at the shopkeeper for a moment to say, "I'll take this one."

While the shopkeeper wrapped the kimono Saeko selected and accepted the payment, Laki answered Saeko's question.

"If it were possible that Alfonzo would ever do that, it wouldn't be." Laki said while shaking her head gently. "But then again, if he were the type to do something like that, I probably wouldn't have such deep feelings for him."

Reaching that point, Laki looked out of the shop's front window, and she just so happened to see a certain white-haired Leaf Jōnin walking down the street while reading a little orange book.

"Hey, Saeko, I'll see you later." Laki said as she walked away from Saeko. "Don't worry, I'll keep tracking that guy. But there's something I need to do in the meantime."

As she reached the end of her sentence, Laki walked out of the shop. Then, she started running down the street to catch up with Kakashi, who, after noticing that Laki was coming, sighed audibly. Yet, he did not try to run away from her. In fact, if one could see into his visible eye, they would see a bit of fondness shining in it.

Meanwhile, Saeko, after seeing Laki's actions, was at first taken aback. Then, she smiled as she finished the transaction with the shop keeper. After that, she left the shop with a new kimono. However, after a

few steps, she felt a familiar magic power signature flying overhead and heading towards the Hokage Tower.

"I guess Alfonzo is done." Saeko said with a smile. "Well, as long as Kabuto doesn't leave the village, I can track him from home. So, I'll go back to wait for him. I wanna know how Alfonzo's capture went as soon as possible."

With that, Saeko, with a little extra pep in her step, returned to the temporary residence. And when she arrived, she put on her new kimono to get Alfonzo's opinion about how it looked on her.

#### Chapter 584: Hiruzen's Good Mood

Shortly after leaving the Forest of Death, while bending the light around himself and Orochimaru, Alfonzo was floating outside of Hiruzen's office and looking in through an open window.

However, he refrained from entering for the time being. And the reason was simple, there were several shinobi from the Village Hidden in the Grass in Hiruzen's office at the moment. Anko, the head proctor for the second part of the Chunin Exam, was inside, as well. Alfonzo guessed that she was called in because one of the Genin who should have been in the Forest of Death for the second part of the Chunin Exam had just been found murdered.

"We demand an explanation for this!" The Jōnin Instructor of the team with the murdered kunoichi shouted angrily. "If not, the Village Hidden in the Grass will take this as a declaration of war from the Leaf!"

"Please calm down." Hiruzen said calmly. "We've already put a team on this case. And I promise you, we will find the culprit."

"Hmph!" The Grass Jōnin snorted before turning around and leaving the office without another word.

The other two Jōnin instructors followed the first out of Hiruzen's office shortly afterwards. Not before shooting him and Anko dirty looks, though.

"Hmph! They're nothing but talk." Anko said angrily once all the Grass shinobi left the office. "We all know there will be no war just because of a single Genin's death."

"Indeed." Hiruzen replied as he took his pipe out of one of the drawers in his desk. "Even so, this could hurt the Leaf's reputation. Regardless of whether it leads to war, or not, the fact remains that we were unable to protect a foreign guest, leading to their death outside of the Chunin Exam."

In response, Anko could only grit her teeth. Because no matter how much she did not like it, it was true that a Genin from another village was killed while in the Village Hidden in the Leaves.

"Looks like you guys aren't having the best day."

When a disembodied voice floated into the room, not only Anko and Hiruzen, but all the Anbu in the room went on high alert. However, when Alfonzo appeared in the middle of the room with a smile on his face, they all deflated immediately.

Yet, when they saw that there was a second person, restrained and gagged, on the floor next to Alfonzo, Hiruzen and the Anbu's eyes lit up. Meanwhile, Anko, although she felt that the person on the floor was familiar, she was confused by Alfonzo's sudden appearance.

"Alfonzo, what are you doing here?" Anko asked in a curious manner.

"Oh, nothing special." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "Just completing a little work your Hokage asked me to do."

Anko only looked even more confused at the response her question received. So, she turned towards Hiruzen for a more comprehensive explanation. However, when she saw the disbelieving expression on Hiruzen's face, she had no idea what she should be thinking right now.

"Is that really him?" Hiruzen asked in a dumbfounded tone.

"Of course it is." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Did you think catching him for a second time would be harder than the first?"

With that said, Alfonzo crouched down. Then, he grabbed the restrained person by his long, black hair and lifted his head, revealing his face to everyone in the room.

"Orochimaru!" Anko spat through gritted teeth. "Why the hell is he here? And why isn't he dead yet"

"Well, to answer your first question, he was here to find a new vessel to house his soul." Alfonzo replied as he let go of Orochimaru's hair. "And the one he chose just happened to be Sasuke Uchiha. In fact, when I caught him, he was trying to mark him with the same nasty [Curse Seal] he put on you all those years ago."

Hearing that, Anko's hand immediately flew up to the side of her neck, covering the [Cursed Seal] that was already hidden under her clothes. At the same time, the intensity behind the glare she was shooting at Orochimaru rose by a few levels.

"And to answer your second question, you'll have to ask your Hokage." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "It was his request that I brought this nasty mother fucker in alive. But if it were up to me, I would have killed him and been done with it. I mean, it's not like it will kill him for good, anyway."

At first, Anko turned towards Hiruzen with an obvious question in her eyes. However, when Alfonzo said something about Orochimaru not dying for good even if he were killed, she, like everyone else in the room, looked at Alfonzo with confusion written all over her face.

"What does that mean, Alfonzo?" Hiruzen asked hurriedly in a concerned tone.

"Well, I'm not sure what kind of technique he used exactly." Alfonzo replied nonchalantly. "But this here..."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo kicked Orochimaru in the ribs, causing him to grunt in pain. However, when his foot came in contact with Orochimaru's body, Alfonzo remembered something rather important.

"Oh, almost forgot." Alfonzo said as he crouched down and flipped Orochimaru over on to his back. Then, he continued as he placed his right palm on Orochimaru's abdomen. "Don't wanna kill you by accident while I wasn't thinking about it."

Then, Alfonzo slowly pulled his hand away from Orochimaru's abdomen. When he did, there was a black, viscous, metallic substance stretching from Orochimaru's abdomen to Alfonzo's hand. Then, after a short while, the metallic substance was separated from Orochimaru, who was now sweating heavily thanks to the pain of having the Techno Organic Metal extracted.

"That probably would have hurt a whole lot less if I had just dispelled the metal while it was still inside of you." Alfonzo said as he stood up and stared down at Orochimaru with the blob of Techno Organic Metal in his hand. "But I don't like you very much. And since I can't kill you, inflicting pain is the next best option, right?"

In response, Orochimaru did not speak. Or rather, he could not speak, as he was still gagged. But he did glare at Alfonzo with the promise of death in the future. A slow, painful death.

"I really don't like the way you're looking at me." Alfonzo said coldly. Then, he extended the hand holding the Techno Organic Metal to hover over Orochimaru's chest as he continued. "Maybe I should put it back. I'm sure if I paid attention and concentrated hard enough, I could make it continuously injure you from the inside while its natural healing properties continue to heal you back."

"What is that?" Hiruzen asked after Alfonzo and Orochimaru held eye contact from a few seconds.

"This?" Alfonzo asked as he shifted his gaze from Orochimaru to the Techno Organic Metal in his hand. "It's a metal I found a few years ago that has miraculous healing properties. I even used it to reattach the arm I lost to a Leviathan a few years ago."

Hearing that Alfonzo had once lost an arm surprised both Anko and Hiruzen. However, Alfonzo continued to speak before they could ask any questions about it.

"But it hurts like a bitch while it does its thing." Alfonzo continued apathetically. "On top of that, it gives all the living tissue it comes in contact with metallic properties. Meaning, it turns them hard and inflexible. Until it is removed from the body, anyway."

"Does that include internal organs?" Hiruzen asked in a solemn tone.

"Yeah, if it spreads that far." Alfonzo replied with a nod. Then, he kicked Orochimaru in the ribs once again as he continued. "But you don't need to worry about that with this guy. Because I created this metal with my magic, I can control it to keep it from doing too much damage. But if I were to just leave it alone, it would act like the metal usually does."

Hiruzen could not help but draw in a breath of cold air after hearing about this living metal. Despite its miraculous healing abilities, it sounded like quite the terrifying double-edged sword.

Shaking off those thoughts, Hiruzen turned his focus on his wayward disciple.

"Orochimaru, why are you here?" Hiruzen asked in a solemn tone. "After everything you've done, you should know that you are no longer welcomed in the village."

In response, Orochimaru only snorted. But that's not because he did not have anything to say. Rather, it was because he could not speak. He was still gagged by the sound-absorbing metal Alfonzo created, after all.

"Oh, forgot about that, too." Alfonzo said with a shrug. "Well, I'll just get rid of this. But after that, I'm outta here. I have no interest in interrogating someone like him. So, I'll see you later. Oh, and don't worry about Kabuto, we'll keep an eye on him and keep him from doing anything too extreme."

"Alright, from here, we'll deal with Orochimaru." Hiruzen replied with a nod. "And allow me to thank you for your help in this matter."

Waving dismissively, Alfonzo dispelled the metal gagging Orochimaru. Then, he controlled the visible light to render himself invisible before flying out of the window and returning to his temporary residence.

After Alfonzo left, the office fell into silence for a while. However, that silence was eventually broken by Orochimaru, who could not even stand up from the floor on his own.

"Cucucu... To think, the most reputable and strongest of the five great hidden villages would need to ask an outsider for help to capture its greatest traitor." Orochimaru said with a mirthful smile on his face.  
"Oh how the village has fallen under your lead, Sensei."

In response, Hiruzen knitted his brows in frustration. However, he was not the first to reply to Orochimaru's taunt. Instead, that honor was taken by the Senin's former pupil, Anko.

"I really need to thank Alfonzo." Anko said with a blood thirsty, sadistic smile on her face. "To think you'd one day fall into my hands. Now, I'm gonna have a lot of fun making you pay for all the suffering I've had to go through because of you, Orochimaru."

Upon hearing his old disciple's voice, Orochimaru slowly turned his head in Anko's direction while wearing a disdainful smile.

"Do you really think you have the ability to make me speak about my plans?" Orochimaru asked condescendingly. "Or did you forget? I taught you everything you know about information extraction."

In response, Anko only tilted her head in confusion.

"When did I say anything about finding out about your plans or anything like that?" Anko asked in a feigned tone of confusion. "In fact, I don't care about that at all. The only thing I wanna do is inflict as much pain as humanly possible on you. Even if you are just some kind of clone, there will be something therapeutic about it, don't you think?"

Hearing Anko say that, Orochimaru was not all that surprised. However, the fact that she said it in front of Hiruzen, the Hokage, surprised him quite a bit. And what surprised him even more was the fact that when he glanced at Hiruzen to see his reaction, Hiruzen only shrugged, as if it could not be helped.

"Because of this [Cursed Seal] you put on me, I spend more time in pain than anything else." Anko said with her expression distorting in rage. "And because of your betrayal, the whole village has treated me like a spy you left planted for years! All because I was your fucking disciple once upon a time! I've even been stuck at Special Jōnin for years because of your influence!"

By the end of her little tirade, Anko was roaring at the top of her lungs. And because of that, the pity that could be seen in the eyes of both Hiruzen and the group of Anbu in the room was quite deep. However, Orochimaru looked completely unbothered.

"That's quite a fitting price for not following me when I left, no?" Orochimaru asked with a smile. "In fact, I think it's quite light. Even if I never gave you the chance because I expelled you from my tutelage years before. In fact, you should have found a way to follow me on your own to show respect to your master, Little Anko."

Hearing that, Anko had to fight her urge to kill Orochimaru right here and now, with every fiber of her being. Luckily, before her urges could overcome her reason, Hiruzen interjected.

"Calm down, Anko." Hiruzen said in a grandfatherly tone. "I promise, you'll get the chance to vent your anger of many years. But first, we need to send him to the T&I Department to extract as much information as we can from him. And I'll be putting Inoichi on this. Although I know you're excellent when it comes to physical torture, I know that won't work on Orochimaru. But when we're able to get the information we need from him, you can do whatever you want to him."

And that really was enough to make Anko calm down. However, she still shot a glare that promised immense pain and eventual death at Orochimaru.

"Fine." Anko said sharply. "I hope you keep that promise."

With that said, Anko walked past Orochimaru, who was still lying on the floor, kicking him in the ribs as she walked by, and left the office. However, just before she closed the door behind her, she looked back to say one last thing.

"I'll be at Alfonzo's place." Anko said while looking back over her shoulder. "There's probably a good chance he will be able to remove this disgusting mark on my shoulder if I let him try."

Then, without waiting for a reply, Anko closed the door behind her and headed to the visitor's from Magnolia's temporary residence. Meanwhile, Orochimaru sneered at Anko's departing back. However, before he could say anything, Hiruzen spoke once again.

"I know what you're thinking, Orochimaru." Hiruzen said after taking a long pull from his pipe. "That an outsider could never see through your [Cursed Seal], right? Especially since someone like Jiraiya, a grand master in the [Art of Sealing], couldn't do anything about it."

In response, Orochimaru once again looked into Hiruzen's eyes.

"But what you don't know..." Hiruzen said, trailing off to take another pull from his pipe. "...Is that because of Danzo, who met an untimely end thanks to the mistake of trying to kidnap both Alfonzo and his wife, Alfonzo gained access to everything our village has to offer. And that includes all the information on [Sealing] we have thanks to Lady Mito and Kushina. And he's mastered it all."

That information left Orochimaru completely dumbfounded. And for the first time since Hiruzen met him, he did not have a snappy comeback or a witty response. And more than anything else, just seeing that look on his former disciple's face, brought Hiruzen an immense sense of satisfaction.

"Now, I want someone to take this unfilial disciple to the T&I Department." Hiruzen said in a tone that would make people think he had grown younger by a decade. "Let Inoichi try his hand at information extraction. Then, regardless of the outcome, hand him over to Anko."

"Understood." One of the Anbu hidden in the room replied after appearing next to Orochimaru.

"Oh, and make sure everyone knows that those restraints are not to come off under any circumstances." Hiruzen added just as the Anbu picked up Orochimaru from the floor.

A moment later, after nodding his head, the Anbu vanished from the office with Orochimaru. At the same time, Hiruzen brought his pipe to his lips in the best mood he had been in for quite some time. However, when he looked down at his desk and saw all the paperwork he had yet to finish for the day, his mood plummeted rather quickly.

#### Chapter 585: Freeing Anko from Orochimaru's Grasp

"So, I just left him with the Hokage in his office." Alfonzo said, wrapping up the retelling of his encounter with Orochimaru.

Currently, Alfonzo, Saeko, and Miyuki were gathered in the temporary residence's living room. Meanwhile, Laki was on her way back to the house, as well. Wendy and Carla, on the other hand, were at the hospital for Wendy's shift.

As for the reason why Laki was on her way back to the house, it was quite simple. Kakashi, after getting news that his Genin had completed the second part of the exam, had to rush to the Forest of Death, or rather to the tower in the center of the Forest of Death to congratulate them. So, Laki ended up being left all alone.

Despite that, Alfonzo, Laki, and Saeko all had Kabuto within their range of [Magic Power Detection]. So, no matter what he did, they would be aware of his movements. Even Wendy, who was focused on giving treatment at the hospital, had a small part of her attention on Kabuto, as well.

"I can't believe those kids were able to do that well against Orochimaru." Saeko said with a measure of pride in her tone. "and to think Sasuke is already using the [Flying Heaven's Sword-Style] so proficiently. I might have to teach him even more soon."

"I don't' think you should." Alfonzo said while shaking his head gently. "He needs to have his pride completely broken first. Otherwise, he'll let it go to his head."

"You're probably right." Saeko said after thinking about what Alfonzo had to say for a while.

"Master Alfonzo, it's almost time for lunch." Miyuki said after there was a lull in the conversation. "Do you think we should start preparing?"

"Yeah, probably." Alfonzo said as he looked towards the direction of the Hokage Tower. "Besides, I think we'll be having a guest this afternoon."

"We will?" Saeko asked in a curious tone. "Who? The Hokage?"

"Nah, he's probably too concerned with trying to get information out of Orochimaru's [Clone]." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "It's Anko. She probably has the idea that I may be able to get rid of that [Curse Seal] on her neck after I mentioned it casually while I was in the Hokage's office."

"\*Sigh\* If you do, there will be another one throwing herself at you." Saeko said while shaking her head and smiling wryly.

"You know, Bedlam said the same thing." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"Well, it's kinda obvious, isn't it?" Saeko asked. "I mean, you'd basically be saving her life, right? I know that had a big impact on how I fell for you, too."

"Well, I guess there's a reason why the damsel in distress trope is so common in stories, huh?" Alfonzo said as he stood up from the couch. Then, he started walking towards the kitchen as he continued. "Anyway, let's get started on Lunch, Miyuki. I'll make enough for Wendy and Carla, too. Then, I'll ask one of you to take it to them at the hospital."

"Yes, Master Alfonzo." Miyuki replied with a polite bow before she followed Alfonzo into the kitchen.

Shortly after Alfonzo and Miyuki disappeared into the kitchen, Laki returned. And although it was not evident, anyone who knew her well enough could tell that she was not happy about having her time with Kakashi interrupted.

Then, shortly before Alfonzo and Miyuki were finished cooking, Anko arrived and knocked on the door.

"Oh, good afternoon, Anko." Saeko said with a smile as she opened the front door. "Alfonzo said that we should be expecting you to show up. And you're just in time, lunch should be ready any minute now."

Hearing that last part, Anko's eyes lit up like torch lights. It had been a long time since she had Alfonzo's cooking. And to say that she was missing it would be an understatement.

Like that, Anko joined Alfonzo, Laki, Saeko, and Miyuki for lunch. Then, as soon as the meal ended, Laki and Saeko left the house. And there were two reasons for that. First, they headed to the hospital to deliver lunch to Wendy and Carla. And second, it would be easier to intercept Kabuto if they were out and about, lurking close to where Kabuto was doing whatever it was that he was doing.

Meanwhile, Anko was sitting in the residence's living room with Alfonzo, where Miyuki had just served some after-meal tea.

"So, I can guess why you're here, Anko." Alfonzo said after taking a sip of his tea. "but just for shits and giggles, why don't you tell me anyway."

Smiling at Alfonzo's choice of words, Anko also took a sip of her tea. Then, she set the teacup down on the saucer.

"You know, the more time I spend around you, the more I can understand why Yoruichi fell for you so hard." Anko said casually. "The fact that you're so unrestrained in both your words and actions is like a breath of fresh air."

"Well, that's just what happens when you grow up in Fairy Tail." Alfonzo replied with a shrug.

"I guess so." Anko replied with a smile. Then, she raised her hand to the side of her neck and pressed the spot where the [Cursed Seal of Heaven] was located as her expression turned solemn and she continued to speak. "Anyway, to answer your question, I was wondering if you could do anything about this [Curse Seal]. I mean, I never even told you about it, yet you knew it was there. You even know that Orochimaru was the one that put it there."

In fact, even if Alfonzo did not have the meta knowledge from his past life, Alfonzo would have been able to identify the [Cursed Seal of Heaven] and the one who placed it thanks to his [magic Power Detection]. He would not have known what it was called, though. Even so, after all the training he did

with sigils, the research he did into the soul, and all the knowledge about the [Sealing Arts] he had absorbed, he was close to sure that he could remove it.

"Honestly, I don't have one hundred percent certainty that I can get rid of that thing." Alfonzo replied in just as solemn a tone as Anko. "but I'm willing to take a look at it. And if I do that, I can guarantee that you won't be hurt, at the very least."

"Not a hundred percent." Anko muttered, picking up on the crux of what Alfonzo said. "That should mean that you at least have a level of confidence that you could get rid of it, right?"

"Yeah, but I couldn't give you a number until I actually take a look." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

"Well then, what are we waiting for?" Anko said as she stood up quickly.

In response, Alfonzo only looked at her dumbfoundedly. He could not understand why Anko trusted him so much. Other than that month he spent at Mermaid Heel, they had only met less than a handful of times. And that should have, in no way, been enough to foster such trust.

"I know what you're thinking." Anko said with a somewhat gentle smile. "And you're right, I really shouldn't trust you so much. But since Yoruichi, my best friend, trusted you so much, then I decided that I will, too."

Shaking his head, Alfonzo still didn't think that was enough. Still, since Anko gave him her trust, he decided he would live up to it the best he could. So, he, too, stood up. Then, he started walking towards the living room's exit.

"Alright, then, let's go." Alfonzo said as he strode out of the living room. "Miyuki, I'll be putting up a silencing barrier in the room I'm working in. So, I won't be able to hear anything going on outside. I'll need absolute concentration for this."

"I understand." Miyuki replied with a bow. "I won't let anyone enter that room until you give the order."

Nodding his head at his personal maid's quick wittedness, Alfonzo led Anko to the room he was using as his makeshift work shop. Then, upon entry, he cleared off the workbench and covered it with a sheet he picked up along the way. At the same time, he created the silencing barrier by covering the walls, floor, and ceiling with metal etched with sigils.

"Okay, I'll need you to get naked from the waist up." Alfonzo said.

Before he could speak any further, Anko started undressing immediately, clearly unbothered by the fact that Alfonzo would see her naked, leaving Alfonzo dumbfounded once again.

Quickly turning around, Alfonzo pointed at the workbench.

"When you're ready, lay down face first." Alfonzo said.

"Aww~, are you embarrassed?" Anko asked in a teasing, sing-song tone. "To think a modern day harem king would be embarrassed about seeing a half-naked woman."

Hardly." Alfonzo replied, his voice not shaking in the slightest. "but you're neither my fiancée, my girl, my woman, or my wife. So, I'm not gonna take advantage of the situation to sneak a peek."

Knowing that Alfonzo would react that way, Anko respected his conviction to his own principles. Still, she was a little disappointed that he did not lose himself at the thought of seeing her body. She was rather confident in her looks and figure, after all.

"Tch! You're no fun." Anko said grumpily as she finished undressing the upper half of her body.

Then, without trying to tempt Alfonzo any further, she walked towards the work bench, climbed on top, and lay down, face first.

"Okay, I'm ready." Anko said while lying down with her arms folded under her head.

""Alright." Alfonzo replied as he turned around.

Seeing that Anko was lying down obediently, Alfonzo strode towards the work bench. When he arrived, the tip of his right index finger was glowing with the light of his magic power. Then, he pressed it on the center of the [Cursed Seal of Heaven], which took the shape of three tomoe positioned to make a triskelion,

Immediately after Alfonzo pressed the center of the [Seal], it unfolded, covering all of Anko's neck and most of her back and chest. And despite not being able to see the portion of the seal on the front of Anko's body, Alfonzo could sense it just fine with [Magic Power Detection].

"Damn, this Orochimaru is a really piece of shit." Alfonzo spat in disdain. "Just on the surface, I can see at least nineteen nodes in this [Seal] that would have killed you if they had been even a little off."

"What?" Anko shouted in a combination of anger and disbelief. "Nineteen? Are you fucking kidding me?"

"Nope, not at all." Alfonzo replied. "Honestly, I don't even know if I can call this a [Seal]. I mean, there's little to no technique. It's more like he just mixed and matched until something worked."

At that moment, Anko remembered that she was only one of many that Orochimaru tried to put this [Seal] on. However, she was the only one who survived. After that, Orochimaru basically threw her away, as if he had gotten everything he could out of her.

Just that memory made Anko grit her teeth. However, she was brought out of her recollections when Alfonzo spoke once again.

"The good news is that I have about ninety percent certainty that I can remove this thing." Alfonzo said in a serious tone. "And the better news is that even if I fail, it won't affect your well-being at all."

Hearing that, Anko knew that she had made the right decision. Even Jiraiya, who was considered to be a [Seal] Master, did not want to mess with the [Seal] on her neck in fear of killing her should something go wrong.

"Then, like I said before, what are we waiting for?" Anko asked in a clearly more positive tone than before. "Regardless of whether you can remove it or not, I'm gonna give that Orochimaru [Clone] at least a thousand times the pain I've had to live with for the past twelve years."

Smiling momentarily, Alfonzo switched his expression into a serious one as he got to work. First, using his [Metal Magic], he fastened Anko to the work bench with anti-magic restraints, just in case her magic power activated instinctively. After that, using the knowledge about the human body he learned from Porlyusica and several precisely placed needles, he numbed Anko's pain receptors.

Once all the preparations were made, Alfonzo finally started removing the [Cursed Seal of Heaven]. And over the next three hours, he worked diligently. He even unsealed Riot and Bedlam for a good part of the procedure. That way, while he was overwhelming the magic power Orochimaru left in the [Seal], his [Armament Spirits] would be able to destroy the piece of Orochimaru's soul that was present within the [Seal], as well.

As a matter of fact, Anko's version of the [Cursed Seal of Heaven] was an incomplete version, as it did not have the ability to strengthen the one it was placed on. However, it did have the primary function that Orochimaru intended for it to have. And that was a piece of his soul. That way, he would be able to resurrect himself should he die at some point. On top of that, the [Cursed Seal of Heaven] was a necessary component for his body swapping technique, as well.

After three hours passed, Alfonzo, who was covered in sweat, not from over exertion, but from mental fatigue, finally retracted his magic power, resealing Riot and Bedlam, and dispelling the restraints holding Anko in place, as well as the needles he created to numb her pain receptors. Then, he took a few steps backwards before creating a metal chair behind him and flopping down tiredly.

"\*Sigh\* I'm finally done." Alfonzo said in an exhausted tone.

Hearing that, Anko immediately stood up from the work bench. Not bothering to get dressed, she started moving her body. And after a few minutes, she realized there was no pain when she moved. On top of that, she could no longer feel that unpleasant magic power that she had been living with for twelve years.

So, after confirming that Alfonzo had indeed removed the [Curse Seal], she smiled so brightly that she could give the sun a run for its money. Then, she flung herself at Alfonzo, knocking him and the chair to the floor, and wrapped him in a tight hug as she buried her face in the side of his neck.

For the next few moments, Anko stayed silent. However, Alfonzo could feel her body, that was pressed against his, trembling. On top of that, he could feel the skin on the side of his neck getting wet. Then, with a gentle smile on his face, he raised his right hand and gently patted her back to help calm her down.

"It's okay." Alfonzo said in a soothing tone. "Now you're free."

With Alfonzo's caring tone, Anko could no longer hold back, as she cried loudly, letting out all the negativity that had piled up over the years.

Eventually, after crying for nearly five minutes, Anko's tears finally dried up. Then, she spoke quietly without raising her head from Alfonzo's neck.

"Alfonzo, thank you..." Anko said with her voice trembling with emotion. "Seriously, thank you so much. You have no idea what this means to me."

Instead of responding verbally, Alfonzo just continued to smile while patting Anko's back. And they would stay in that position for a while longer, at least until Anko had control of her emotions again.

#### Chapter 586: Misinformation

After She was freed from Orochimaru's [Curse Seal], Anko did not stay with Alfonzo for very long. Although she wanted to show her gratitude in a rather physical way, she was more interested in figuring out what her limits were now that she no longer had to spend magic power to suppress the [Curse Seal].

As for the rest of the Hidden Leaf Village, things went as they normally did, with the exception of the T&I Department trying, and failing, to get any information about what Orochimaru was planning by infiltrating the Hidden Leaf.

Another thing to take note of was the fact that Alfonzo stopped Laki and Saeko from capturing Kabuto. And his reason was because the Orochimaru he captured was definitely a clone. So, if the real Orochimaru stopped getting reports from his right hand man, it could cause issues in the future.

In actuality, Alfonzo only wanted the Konoha Crush Plan to happen. AS long as it did, he would be able to keep casualties and damage to the village to a minimum. But if Orochimaru pulled back and did something different, then he would not be able to help as much without his meta knowledge.

Despite all that, Alfonzo, Laki, Saeko, and even Wendy kept an eye on kabuto through their [Magic Power Detection]. And like that, three days passed within the blink of an eye. And over those three days, just as expected, the Orochimaru [Clone] did not let a single word slip about his plans.

On top of that, Anko still had yet to get her revenge, as she was still responsible for the second part of the Chunin Exam in the Forest of Death. However, Alfonzo thought keeping the Orochimaru [Clone] alive for too long might be dangerous. And he was currently in Hiruzen's office letting him know why.

"So, you're saying we should kill him right away?" Hiruzen asked in a solemn tone. "But we've yet to get any information out of him."

"I figured as much." Alfonzo replied in just as solemn a tone. "But if you don't, Kabuto might start to think something went wrong."

Hearing that, Hiruzen fell silent in consideration. Then, after a few moments, he looked Alfonzo in the eye.

"And if Kabuto reports that he can't find Orochimaru's [Clone], you think Orochimaru might pull back whatever it is that he's planning." Hiruzen asked.

"More or less." Alfonzo replied.

"And what's the issue with that?" Hiruzen asked with his eyebrows furrowed.

"Normally, there wouldn't be any." Alfonzo said with a wry smile. "But if he does, he'll definitely pull back to plan for any contingencies that he was unaware of. And that might happen when I'm not here."

Alfonzo suggestion that the Village Hidden in the Leaves might not be able to handle Orochimaru's scheme without him was a serious hit to Hiruzen's pride. The Leaf was the strongest of all the Hidden Villages, after all. However, when he remembered that Orochimaru and Kabuto had snuck into the

village without anyone, other than the visitors from magnolia, knowing about it, he had to stop and rethink it.

And while Hiruzen stopped to think, the room fell into a tense silence. Though, it did not seem to affect Alfonzo. The Anbu hiding in the room, however, were quite unhappy about Alfonzo's insinuation. That said, it was not their place to object, so they kept their silence. There gazes towards Alfonzo did get a lot less friendly, though.

"\*Sigh\* I understand." Hiruzen replied in a heavy tone. "I suppose I should call Anko back to take her revenge then."

"Good." Alfonzo said with a nod. "And might I make another suggestion?"

"What is it?" Hiruzen asked without changing his tone.

"Announce that Orochimaru was the one who killed the Genin from the Grass." Alfonzo replied. "And tell everyone why he did it. Don't tell them who his target was, though. Also, let everyone know that you were the one who killed him. And to make it more believable, tell them you did it along with a squad of Anbu."

At first, Hiruzen was nodding along with Alfonzo's suggestion. However, when Alfonzo said that he should take credit for the kill, he could not help but shake his head.

"I agree with most of what you said." Hiruzen said while continuing to shake his head. "But Orochimaru would never believe that I was the one who killed him. Especially if I didn't know it was a clone. He knows me too well. And he knows that I'd never be able to kill one of my disciples."

Alfonzo had already considered that. But since he was not supposed to know Hiruzen's personality all that well, he made such a suggestion.

"I guess I should have seen that coming." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "I mean, you let Danzo run wild for so long. You even forgave him for that time he tried to assassinate you."

That caused Hiruzen's expression to darken. But Alfonzo did not really care. Instead, his eyes lit up because he had another idea.

"In that case, have Anko kill him, just like you planned." Alfonzo said with a bit more energy in his tone. "Then, announce it. Tell everyone that she swept in just as you defeated him with the Anbu. But because of fatigue, you were unable to stop her from taking the revenge she had been looking forward to for so long. And as long as you actually let Anko kill him, I'm sure she'd play along."

Like Alfonzo, Hiruzen's eyes lit up after hearing that plan, as well. And the reason was simple, he would be able to kill two birds with one stone if he implemented that plan. First, they would be able to get rid of Orochimaru's [Clone] without alerting Kabuto to the truth. And second, they could hopefully wipe away the stigma being Orochimaru's former disciple left on Anko. Though, it might make her a target in the future.

"We'll go with that." Hiruzen said with a strong nod. "I'll summon Anko immediately."

Nodding in response, Alfonzo stood up and bid Hiruzen goodbye. He did not want his name associated with this plan at all. Because if it leaked, it could make its way to Orochimaru. And if it did, there was no way he would come to the Village during the final round of the Chunin Exams.

'I don't remember how many people had those [Curse Marks] on them in the anime and manga, but I know that Kimimaro did. And he's already dead.' Alfonzo thought to himself while returning to his temporary residence. "I'm not sure if Guren had one either. But since she's dead, too, it doesn't really matter. So, the only ones I know that have one are the Sound 4. And putting them down or capturing them shouldn't be an issue.'

The rest of the day went by without anything happening. Or, that's how it should have been. At sunset, shocking news began circulating around the village. The news that Orochimaru had infiltrated the Chunin Exams and been killed when he was found out.

Even more surprising was the fact that Anko Mitarashi, Orochimaru's former disciple, was the one who killed him, not before he was completely subdued by the Third Hokage and a squad of the most elite Anbu.

Naturally, with the information spreading around the Village in the Leaves so quickly, Kabuto was also made aware of this information. And at first, he did not believe it. For Orochimaru to be caught like that was near impossible in his opinion. However, when he thought about it further, he had not heard from Orochimaru since the day they entered the village five days ago.

"Could Lord Orochimaru's [Blood Clone] have really been captured and executed?" Kabuto asked himself in a disbelieving tone. He then continued while adjusting his glasses. "But it's true that I haven't been able to get in contact with him recently. I need to find out the truth."

With that, Kabuto started moving to confirm the truth of the news spreading around the village. However, after a few steps, his eyes lit up with excitement.

"Actually, the death of Lord Orochimaru's [Blood Clone] might be a good thing." Kabuto muttered to himself. "Since that old fool saw it die with his own eyes, he would never be on guard for our true objective. Lord Orochimaru may be upset that he lost his [Blood Clone] but I'm sure he would relish the opportunity it presents."

After speaking that thought aloud, Kabuto picked up his pace. And it did not take long for him to confirm the information, as there were more than a few eye witnesses who saw Orochimaru's corpse being escorted from the Forest of Death.

Even so, Kabuto snuck into the village's morgue to see for himself. And when he finally confirmed the death of Orochimaru's [Blood Clone], he retreated to somewhere he deemed safe before contacting Orochimaru. And had Alfonzo been nearby, he would have been surprised that Kabuto actually used an iPhone to send the message. He was even careful enough to not use any words that would make his message suspicious. Yet, he managed to convey the message that the [Blood Clone] had been killed by Anko.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Desierto, the Village Hidden in the Sand.

"Cucucu... I already knew that my [Blood Clone] had been killed." Orochimaru, disguised as Raza, the Kazekage, said with a chuckle while reading Kabuto's message on his iPhone. "But to think it was my failed apprentice, Anko, who killed it. And Sensei... Oh, Sensei, I can't believe you were even able to find my [Clone]."

Reaching that point, Orochimaru put away his iPhone. Then he stopped to think for a while.

"But Kabuto is right." Orochimaru continued after thinking. "Now that they believe me to be dead, when the plan truly begins, no one, not even Sensei, will see it coming. And finally, you'll die at my hands, Sensei. And the Village Hidden in the Leaves will join you shortly afterwards. Cucucu!"

Orochimaru's self-satisfied laughter echoed through Raza's empty home,

Earth Land, Alakitasia, Alvarez Empire, Vistarion.

In the throne room of the Alvarez Empire's Imperial Castle, Emperor Spriggan, or rather Zeref, sat in silence with his eyes closed. However, that silence was broken when the large doors to the throne room were opened abruptly. Shortly afterwards, the Chief of Staff, Invel entered with a concerned expression on his face.

"Invel, what's the matter?" Zeref asked calmly as he slowly opened his eyes.

"It would seem I have bad news, Your Majesty." Invel said after approaching the throne to a respectful distance and bowing his head.

"Is there a problem with Jacob?" Zeref asked, still in the same calm tone.

"Unfortunately, that is the case." Invel replied in a solemn tone. "We have not received a report from him in nearly two months. Not since he landed on Ishgar. And I specifically told him to contact me once a month. I'm afraid he was captured, or even worse."

Hearing that, Zeref fell into thought. Though, his calm facial expression did not change in the slightest.

"I see." Zeref said after thinking for a while. "This is truly unexpected. To think that Jacob, even with his [Stealth Magic] was discovered."

"What should we do about this?" Invel asked. "Would you like me to send a force to recover him? And while they are there, they could even investigate the whereabouts of Irene and Brandish."

"No." Zeref replied while shaking his head. "Losing contact with not only Jacob, but Irene and Brandish as well, tells me there is something happening on Ishgar that we did not anticipate. So, rather than depleting our forces any further, it would be better to conserve our war potential for the invasion that is planned for the future."

Though Invel gritted his teeth in frustration at Zeref's words. It was not Zeref he was frustrated at. Instead, it was the people from Ishgar, more specifically, those from Fairy Tail, who was gaining his ire. To think they would do so much to hinder His Majesty's plans.

"I understand." Invel said as he bowed his head even lower. "I'll make sure all the preparations for the invasion are perfect."

"Good." Zeref said with a nod. Then, go. Remember, there is no room for any more mistakes, Invel."

"Yes, Your Majesty." Invel said as he retreated from the throne room.

As soon as he turned around, Invel's expression turned into one filled with rage.

'This is all that God Serena's fault.' Invel thought to himself. 'Had he reported clearly about that Alfonzo Marcus in his report, we would have never had to send Irene and Brandish to investigate. And Jacob would not have been lost trying to find them, either. As soon as he arrives on Alakitasia, he's got a lot of explaining to do.'

Meanwhile, Zeref remained sitting on his throne with his eyes closed. However, as soon as the doors to the throne room were closed behind Invel, he opened his eyes and began stroking his chin with his right hand.

"Something must have changed on Ishgar." Zeref said in a contemplative tone. "And it more than likely centers around that boy, Alfonzo Marcus. Perhaps I should take a trip to Ishgar to see the changes for myself."

With that said, Zeref simply disappeared from the throne room without telling anyone.

#### Chapter 587: An Unexpected Visitor

Two days have passed since the news about Orochimaru's apparent death spread throughout the Village Hidden in the Leaves. That was not the only thing that happened in that time, though. On top of the news spreading, the second part of the Chunin Exam ended, as well.

However, the Third part of the exam, which would be a one-on-one single elimination tournament, would be held in a month's time, on June 30. So, all the participants would have a month to prepare.

Meanwhile, Kakashi, Guy, as well as Teams 7, 8, 9, with the exception of Lee, who was hospitalized, and 10 were all gathered at the temporary residence where Alfonzo and the others were staying. Wendy and Carla were also absent, as Wendy was tending to Lee in the hospital. And the Genin were recounting their experiences during the Forest of Death phase of the Chunin Exam.

"\*Sigh\* We were actually the last team from the Leaf to arrive at the tower." Kiba said in a disappointed tone. "Well, at least one of us made it to the tournament that will happen next month."

With that, Hinata and Kiba turned to Shino, who was eating quietly with pride in their expressions.

"So, how many people will be participating in the tournament next month?" Saeko asked curiously.

"Eight." Sakura replied. Then, she lowered her head and looked a bit dejected. "Unfortunately, I won't be a part of it this time. \*Sigh\* I can't believe I had a draw with Ino-Pig. And I got so much stronger thanks to Wendy's help."

"You think I was just playing around while you were training with Wendy?" Ino asked in an irate tone. "I was training just as hard as you with Rika and Laki, Billboard Brow!"

"What did you just call me?" Sakura asked in a similar tone to Ino's.

And that led to a round of the normal bickering between Sakura and Ino. Meanwhile, the others simply ignored them.

"So, who else made it to the big stage?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Me and Sasuke made it." Naruto replied with a big smile.

"It's too bad you'll be losing in the first round, though, Naruto." Neji said calmly.

"No way! You're going down in the first round, Neji!" Naruto shouted. "I'm gonna be Hokage someday. So, there's no way I'll lose in the Chunin Exam!"

"I guess that makes four." Alfonzo said, maintaining his smile. "Anyone else?"

Instead of replying, everyone turned their attention onto Shikamaru, who looked like he would have rather lost.

"\*Sigh\* It's such a drag." Shikamaru said while scratching the back of his head. "I think I would have been okay with losing. \*Sigh\* But that girl from the Sound Village was just too weak."

'So, Shikamaru fought Kin in the prelims in this world, too.' Alfonzo thought to himself.

"You all had to fight after reaching the tower in the middle of the forest?" Saeko asked in an interested tone.

"Yeah, there were too many teams who passed." Choji said with a nod while stuffing food into his mouth. "So, everyone had to fight once to narrow the numbers down."

"Who fought who?" Laki asked while tilting her head in curiosity.

"I fought this guy from the Sound who controlled soundwaves with this thing on his arm." Sasuke said calmly. "He wasn't much trouble, though. I didn't even have to draw my sword."

"I got to beat up Kiba." Naruto said with a big smile, causing Kiba to clench his fists and grit his teeth while Akamaru barked in protest.

"I lost to Shino." Choji said in a downcast tone.

"I fought with Hinata." Neji said. "But the fight was really close. Much closer than I could have ever imagined. I never thought my timid, younger cousin would ever be that strong."

"Yeah, Hinata was awesome!" Naruto cheered. "I really thought she was gonna win!"

"Do you always have to yell, Naruto?" Shikamaru asked in an annoyed tone.

In response, Kakashi, Neji, and Sasuke nodded in agreement with Shikamaru's annoyed feeling. Meanwhile, Hinata, who was just praised by Naruto, lowered her head with a blush that reached the tips of her ears and poked the tips of her fingers together shyly.

"\*Sigh\* I lost to this girl from the Sand who used a big war fan and [Wind-Style Ninjutsu]." Tenten said in a depressed tone. "If I had more time to learn the kusarigama, I could have won."

"Well, you have plenty of time to improve." Saeko said in an encouraging tone.

"And who did Lee fight?" Alfonzo asked, though he had a pretty good idea since he ended up in the hospital.

"He fought that psycho guy from the Sand." Naruto said through gritted teeth. "I really thought he would win. He beat that guy up real good, too. But in the end..."

"\*Sigh\* If it weren't for Guy, Lee would have probably lost his life to that kid." Kakashi said while shaking his head. "The rules stated that killing was not allowed, but he did not seem to care at all."

'Yeah, that was definitely Gaara.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'I wonder, should I slap a real [Seal] on Shukaku in secret?'

While Alfonzo was having that thought, the mood in the room fell visibly. Luckily, it did not last long as Laki asked a question.

"There's one more fight, right?" Laki asked as she put some food on Kakashi's plate with a smile.

"Yeah." Sasuke said with a nod. "A guy from the Sand who used puppets fought a guy from the Sound who shot air waves from holes in his hands."

'So, Kankuro fought that one guy.' Alfonzo thought to himself with a smile. 'I can't remember his name, but I remember Naruto calling him "Handjob Man" in that one fan fic.'

"Well, congratulations to those who made it to the big show." Alfonzo said cheerfully. "and to those of you who didn't, you'll just have to train harder and try again next time. By the way, what are your plans when it comes to training for this month."

"I want you to help me train, Big Bro Alfonzo." Naruto said, raising his hand high.

Although Kakashi twitched an eyebrow at how easily Naruto was ready to ditch him for someone else, since he planned to focus on Sasuke because he had some of the same affinities, he did not say anything.

"I'd like to train with Saeko, as well." Sasuke said as he made eye contact with Saeko. "I want to learn more about the sword from you."

Hearing Sasuke ready to ditch him, as well, Kakashi's brows began twitching even more violently. However, this time he could not stay silent.

"Actually, I'll be taking care of your training, Sasuke." Kakashi said in a tone that was extremely irritated just under the surface. "I planned to teach you my signature Jutsu, [Chidori]."

Hearing that, Sasuke's eyes lit up. He had seen how powerful that [Ninjutsu] was when they confronted Zabuza on that mission. And ever since then, he's wanted to learn it. Then, he wore a rather complicated expression because he wanted to learn more about the [Flying Heaven's Sword-Style], as well.

"Unfortunately, we won't even be in the village for most of the month." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly at Kakashi's reaction. "I'm getting married again. So, we're all gonna be back in Magnolia for the ceremony."

"Again?" Guy asked, as he had attended Alfonzo and Elicia's wedding. "How many will that make now?"

"Weddings or wives?" Alfonzo asked while smiling awkwardly.

Everyone from the Leaf Village could only look at Alfonzo dumbfoundedly. The fact that he made it seem like the number was different for each was astonishing to them.

"Both?" Guy asked in an uncertain tone.

"Well, this will be my fourth wedding and I'll get my ninth wife." Alfonzo replied nonchalantly.

The room fell into an awkward silence for a while after Alfonzo's declaration. But like the last time a silence fell, it was broken rather quickly.

"Does that mean you won't be here to see us fight in the finals?" Naruto asked in a sad tone.

"Oh, don't worry about that." Alfonzo said while waving dismissively. "We'll definitely be here for that. We just won't be here to help you train."

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

Meanwhile, a man who looked much younger than his actual age and wearing predominately black robes was strolling through the streets of Magnolia. While he did, he listened to the conversations of the townsfolk he walked past.

However, even though he walked past them leisurely, none of those townsfolk seemed to recognize his presence. Eventually, he reached a large tower past the northern border of the city. And when he did, he could not help looking up at it in awe.

"This wasn't here the last time I came to Magnolia." The man, Zeref, the emperor of the Alvarez Empire said to himself while examining the tall, metal tower. "I guess things can change a lot in a hundred years, huh?"

Just as he said he would after receiving the report about Jacob cutting communications from Invel, Zeref made his way to Ishgar. And since he knew that Irene, Brandish, and Jacob were all sent to Magnolia, he, too, went to Magnolia to find out what was going on.

Although Zeref was surprised by the grandeur of the new Fairy Tail guild hall, what surprised him even more was the fact that he could not sense anything that was going on inside. He even had the feeling that he would be discovered if he were to enter.

"Going inside is not my objective, anyway." Zeref said as he shook his head and turned around. "First, I need to find Irene, Brandish, and Jacob. Then, I need to find out what is so special about that Alfonzo boy."

After saying that, Zeref turned his head to the right and looked up in the sky.

"So, do you have anything to tell me about any of that, Irene?"

At the end of Zeref's line of sight, Irene was floating in the air, looking down at him from above.

"I thought you would eventually come to see what was going on here." Irene said with a cramped smile. "But I didn't think you'd come so soon."

Smiling in return, Zeref gestured for Irene to come down.

"I know what you're thinking, Irene." Zeref said. "But I'm not here to fight or cause an uproar. That would ruin my plans for the future. I just want to talk."

Knowing that Zeref had no reason to lie to her, Irene eventually landed next to him.

"If talking is all you want to do, then, you can follow me." Irene said, not confident that she would be able to beat Zeref at this point.

Then, without another word, Irene strode away from the guild hall with Zeref following her. She led her former emperor towards Magnolia. And after about a twenty-minute walk, they arrived at the residence where she lived with Heine and Juliet.

However, when Zeref saw the four-story home, he was once again surprised by what he saw.

"It looks like you're doing pretty well for yourself, Irene." Zeref said while examining the house. "To think such a fine magic item is your house. This place might even have better defenses than the Imperial Palace."

"Well, it was designed by the same person who built the Fairy Tail guild hall." Irene said with a shrug. "And I'm pretty sure you're already aware of who that is."

"Ah, yes. Your original target." Zeref replied while continuing to look up at Irene's house.

"Anyway, let's go inside." Irene said, sounding completely at ease. Though, the only reason for that was because there was nothing she could do if Zeref decided to be hostile.

Nodding his head, Zeref followed Irene into the house.

Upon entry, the first thing Irene and Zeref noticed was Heine, who was tending to some potted plants in the foyer.

"Oh, Lady Irene you're---" Heine began to say.

Before she could finish her greeting, Heine's words were caught in her throat. Seeing Zeref following her master was more than what she was ready for, after all.

"Heine, bring a pot of tea to the reception room." Irene ordered casually. "And where is Juliet?"

"She's out on a quest." Heine replied after taking a moment to get her emotions under control.

"I see." Irene replied with a nod.

Then, without another word, Irene walked towards the reception room with Zeref following behind her while examining the magic that was placed all over the house.

Eventually, the two reached the reception room where Irene and Zeref sat on opposite couches.

"That boy really is much more than Serena reported to us, isn't he?" Zeref asked with a smile.

"Yes, I was quite surprised when I found out just how skilled he is, as well.' Irene replied as she took her hat off.

Nodding in response, Zeref dropped his smile.

"So, tell me how it happened?" Zeref asked in a solemn tone. "How did you regain your humanity?"

"\*Sigh\* I knew you'd notice right away." Irene said with a shrug.

"And that's why I did not ask why you betrayed me." Zeref said in the same tone. "That was the only way you would have betrayed me, after all. I just want to know how it happened."

"Unfortunately, I can't tell you that." Irene said while shaking her head lightly. "If I did, I would be betraying the one who helped me. And I'm not willing to do that, even for you, who has also helped me quite a bit."

Hearing that, Zeref's expression relaxed.

"\*Sigh\* I figured as much." Zeref said while smiling helplessly. "But now, my curiosity is killing me."

"Sorry, but that information will be one of Fairy Tail's trump cards during your inevitable invasion, Zeref." Irene said in a solemn tone.

"So, you told them about that, too, huh?" Zeref asked while smiling wryly.

"It was the condition I had to fulfill to become human again." Irene said in a resolute tone. "And I don't regret it in the slightest."

"Nor should you." Zeref replied with a gentle smile. "I really am happy for you, Irene."

As soon as those words left Zeref's mouth, his expression switched back to a solemn one.

"Although I am happy for you, that will not change the fact that you have become the enemy of the Alvarez Empire." Zeref said in a heavy tone.

"I know." Irene replied, her expression turning solemn, as well.

"I only have one more question." Zeref said without changing his tone.

Instead of responding verbally, Irene nodded her head, gesturing for Zeref to ask his question.

"What happened to Jacob and Brandish?" Zeref asked.

"Brandish chose this side, as well. She said she was tired of all the missions to kill or subdue the Empire's enemies." Irene replied. "AS for Jacob, he's been imprisoned. But he's still alive."

"I see." Zeref said with a nod. "It looks like Brandish has become my enemy, as well."

With that said, Zeref stood up from the couch he was sitting on and looked down at Irene as he began speaking once again.

"Well then, I'll be going now." Zeref said, his expression becoming tranquil once again. "Enjoy the time you have left, Irene. Because I doubt that you will survive our next meeting. Especially since the next time we'll meet will be on the battlefield."

Then, before Irene could respond, Zeref flared his magic power to activate his [Teleportation] spell. However, nothing happened. And after a few moments, his expression turned rather awkward.

"Oh, I forgot to mention, this place is protected against [Teleportation]." Irene said with an awkward smile on her face.

Zeref could only stare at his awkwardly smiling ex-subordinate with a dumbfounded expression on his face.

Just when the awkward atmosphere in the reception room reached its peak, Heine, carrying a tray with a teapot and two teacups on it, entered the room. However, when she felt the awkward atmosphere, she could not help but ask...

"Did I come at a bad time?"

"Well, since Heine has brought the tea, don't rush to leave." Irene said with a smile.

In response, Zeref sat back on the couch, feeling rather awkward. Still, he had a cup of tea with Irene and talked about some random things before leaving the house and [teleporting] back to Vistarion once he was outside.

A few minutes after Zeref [Teleported] away, Elicia, Gildarts, and Ur arrived at Irene's house to ask about the massive magic power signature that just left. And Irene told them about her meeting with Zeref without hiding any details.

Chapter 588: Another Scheduled Wedding and Fairy Tail's Weapons of Mass Destruction

"We're back!" Alfonzo shouted as soon as he entered the Fairy Tail guild hall.

Immediately, the brawl that was going on came to a stop. At the same time, Elicia, who was not participating in the brawl flung herself towards Alfonzo before wrapping her arms and legs around his neck and torso with a smile on her face.

"Welcome back!" Elicia exclaimed excitedly before rubbing her cheeks against her husband's.

Shortly afterwards, Alfonzo's other ladies, led by Ultear, Mirajane, Marin, Lucy, and Shizuka, the ones who would be marrying Alfonzo in a week, hurried over as well. Then, with a combined effort, they pulled Elicia off of Alfonzo and proceeded to hug him themselves.

"I thought you were gonna be late." Mirajane said with a pout as she pressed herself tightly onto Alfonzo.

"Of course not." Alfonzo said with a smile as he started combing his fingers through Mirajane's hair. "I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"Good, you know your place." Ultear said in a haughty tone. "Otherwise, your punishment would have been severe."

"\*Sigh\* It looks like Tear is thirsty again." Cana said while shaking her head forlornly.

After hearing the same retort so many times, Ultear did not even react. Instead, she just smiled at Alfonzo, who pulled her into a hug.

"I really missed you all." Alfonzo said with a smile as he looked at all his ladies. "Oh, and I need to tell you, Saeko is one of you now, too."

Having expected as much, Elicia, Cana, Ultear, Erza, Mirajane, Marin, Sun, Lucy, and Shizuka all nodded at Saeko in acknowledgement. A moment later, however, Cana sighed while touching her forehead with the fingers of her left hand.

"\*Sigh\* It's never gonna end, is it?" Cana asked while shaking her head. "The harem just keeps on expanding."

"Just like the universe." Elicia added with a smile. "Fonzie's really gonna be the harem king... No, the harem emperor when everything is said and done."

Alfonzo could only smile wryly at Cana and Elicia's comments. Meanwhile, the other ladies laughed, though they did not really mind. However, when they thought back to how against a harem Alfonzo was at the beginning, they found it even funnier that he now had ten women.

Meanwhile, from a short distance away, Rika was looking at Saeko as if she had been betrayed.

"I would have definitely been the next one if he didn't insist on bringing Laki with him this time." Rika muttered to herself. "But he said it would help Laki get stronger, so, I agreed. Damn it."

"By the way, how is Lisanna?" Alfonzo asked in curiosity. "she should be about six months along, right?"

"That's right." Lisanna, approaching the group while holding Natsu's hand, said with a bright smile on her face. "Soon, Mar'e will have a little playmate."

"And if we're lucky, he'll have a little brother or sister next year, too." Mirajane said while looking at Alfonzo with hungry eyes.

Seeing the glint in Mirajane's eyes, the song "Hungry Eyes" by Eric Cameron started playing in Alfonzo's head. However, he quickly shook his head to drive it out of his thoughts.

"We'll see." Alfonzo said in reply to Mirajane's statement. "We can only hope that luck is on our side."

Satisfied with Alfonzo's response, Mirajane nodded her head. At the same time, Lisanna and Natsu approached even closer. And Alfonzo found it really surprising that Natsu had not leapt at him asking for a fight yet.

"Hey, Alfonzo." Natsu said with a smile. "Welcome back. So, can we have a fight? I wanna show you how much I've grown."

With that, Alfonzo's expression turned into a sight to see. The surprise on his face was so exaggerated that everyone present could not help but laugh.

"Who the fuck are you?" Alfonzo asked while taking a step back and pointing at Natsu's nose. "And what the fuck did you do with Natsu?"

That reaction only caused the laughter to turn uproarious. Meanwhile, Natsu looked away bashfully while scratching the back of his head.

"I'm the real Natsu." Natsu said quietly. "but I'm gonna be a father soon. And I don't wanna be a bad example for my kid."

That response dumbfounded Alfonzo even more. Meanwhile, all the other members of Fairy Tail who were present for Natsu's growth in character could only look at Alfonzo, who had not seen Natsu since his change started, sympathetically. They, too, were in disbelief when Natsu started to change his character, after all.

"Anyway, Alfonzo, can I ask you a favor? Actually, make that two." Lisanna said once Alfonzo started coming back to his senses.

"Sure, go ahead." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "I won't promise that I'll accept doing it, though."

Nodding in response, Lisanna smiled as she asked her first favor.

"Natsu and I are gonna get married before the baby is born in September." Lisanna said, her smile widening as she spoke about the baby. "So, can we use your house for the ceremony? It's the nicest place in Magnolia, after all."

"Sure." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "And if you do it on a weekend, I'll even be able to attend."

"That was the plan." Lisanna said with a nod. Then, she put on a more apprehensive expression. Still, she asked her second question. "And... Um... Would you... Um... Cook... for our reception?"

Even though not many people were part of the group talking near the guild hall's entrance, the entire guild hall fell into silence, as the brawlers had even stopped fighting to hear the answer to Lisanna's question.

'Man, I haven't seen the guild hall like this in a while.' Alfonzo said as he let his eyes sweep across the guild hall's first floor. 'Not since Gramps implemented the points system to get my cooking. Speaking of which, I haven't seen him in a while. I wonder how the old man is doing.'

"Alfonzo?" Mirajane said, pulling Alfonzo out of his random thoughts.

"Oh, sorry." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "For some reason, I started thinking about the past. But to answer your question, you know my rates. But since we're gonna be in-laws after next week, I'll give you a fifty percent discount. I won't charge you for using my house as the venue, though."

Hearing that, Lisanna sighed in relief. Honestly, even if Alfonzo had not given her the discount, she would have sighed in relief. Alfonzo's rates were not that expensive, after all. But the other members of the guild began cheering as if they had all won the lottery.

It had been a while since Alfonzo spent any significant amount of time in Magnolia. So, even though they had earned points from their quests, they had no way of spending them. But if Alfonzo would be cooking for Natsu and Lisanna's reception, that means they would be able to eat as much as they wanted and save the points they earned for whenever Alfonzo was done working at the Village Hidden in the Leaves, as well. Basically, they would be able to kill two birds with one stone.

At that moment, while the guild was bursting with jubilation, the elevator doors opened. And through them Gildarts, Ur, Irene, and Brandish entered the first floor. However, since they had been in Ur's office, they were unaware of why the guild was in such an uproar. But they were sure that it had something to do with Alfonzo's return.

"Elicia!" Ur shouted after looking around for a while. "You were supposed to bring Alfonzo up to see me as soon as he returned. Instead, I find you down here having fun with the rest of the guild's ruffians!"

With Ur's shout, the guild hall immediately fell into pin-drop silence. Meanwhile, Elicia, who had been entrusted with the task of bringing Alfonzo up to see Ur, smiled sheepishly. Then, she knocked her knuckles on the side of her head and smiled in the cutest manner she could muster as she replied.

"Oops." Elicia said with a nervous giggle. "I kinda forgot. I was just so happy to see Fonzie. Then, Lisanna asked Fonzie if she and Natsu could get married at our house. And then Fonzie agreed to cook at the reception... So much happened that I was overwhelmed."

Hearing that Alfonzo would be cooking for Lisanna's wedding, Gildarts, Ur, Irene, and Brandish also found themselves getting excited. However, they quickly returned to normal. Well... Ur, Irene, and Brandish did. Gildarts, on the other hand, was drooling. It had been a while since he had any of Alfonzo's cooking. Since he was completely incapable of completing a quest without destroying everything he came in contact with, after all.

"\*Cough\* Although I'll admit that is very good news for Natsu and Lisanna, you know what we needed to talk to him about was very important, right?" Ur asked in a stern tone to hide her excitement from the good news.

"Hmm? What happened?" Alfonzo asked as he turned his gaze towards Elicia.

"You'll find out once we're in my office." Ur replied before Elicia could. "Now, let's go."

With that, Ur turned around and headed back to the elevator. She was closely followed by Gildarts, Irene, and Brandish. Meanwhile, Alfonzo looked at Elicia with confusion, thinking she could have told him this over the phone, right? Still, after Elicia held his hand, the two of them followed Ur and the others into the elevator.

"What was that about?" Cana asked after taking a swig from a mug of ale. "Tear, do you know anything?"

"No, nothing at all." Ultear replied while shaking her head. "Mom hasn't told me about anything that sounded so important."

"I'm surprised Lici didn't tell us about it already." Mirajane said.

"Are you really?" Lucy asked with a wry smile. "Unless it has something to do with Alfonzo, Amar'e, or making clothes, she can be really absent-minded, you know?"

No one present could argue with that statement in good conscience. So, they decided to leave it alone.

"Well, if we're supposed to know about it, I'm sure the guild master and the others will let us know." Erza said in a solemn tone.

"Oh, that's right." Marin said as if she had just remembered. "Your mom didn't say anything about it, either, Erza?"

"No." Erza said, still looking slightly uncomfortable with having Irene referred to as her mother. "But if it's really that important, I'm sure we'll find out sooner rather than later."

"I hope everything is okay." Sun said in a concerned tone.

"Everything will be fine." Shizuka said with a smile as she pulled Sun into a hug while burying the mermaid's face between her breasts and gently stroking her hair. "They're telling Fonzie about it. And there are no problems he can't take care of, right?"

A few moments later, after not receiving an answer from Sun, Shizuka put on an expression filled with confusion. She then looked down, and when she saw Sun flailing her arms, with the strength in her arms weakening by the second, her confusion grew exponentially.

"Sun, is something wrong?" Shizuka asked, not aware of what she was doing to Sun.

"Um... I think you're suffocating her, Shizuka." Rika pointed out while smiling wryly.

"Huh? Really?" Shizuka exclaimed in panic as she pulled Sun away from her bosom. "Sun, are you okay?"

"My life just flashed past my eyes as I travelled down a dark tunnel with a beautiful light at the end, ya see?" Sun said in a loopy tone.

"\*Sigh\* Those things really are weapons of mass destruction." Cana said in an amazed tone. "But at the same time, I can't help but want to touch, squeeze, and grope them."

Not only Alfonzo's other women, but every man and most of the women on the guild hall's first floor nodded in agreement with Cana's statement. Shizuka, on the other hand, only tilted her head cutely while looking at Cana.

"Wait till I get married to Fonzie." Shizuka said. "then, I won't have an issue if you try touching them."

Hearing that, the same group of people gulped down a mouthful of saliva. However, there was one person who acted completely different.

As soon as Shizuka's words fell, Rika, who has known Shizuka for as long as either of them could remember, snuck up behind her best friend, reached under her arms, and grasped Shizuka's breasts.

"Too bad most of you will never get to do this, though." Rika said with a smile. "You'll just have to burn in jealousy, won't you?"

That taunt caused most of the guild to burn with rage and envy. They burned with so much envy, in fact, that the brawl that ended because Alfonzo agreed to cook for Natsu and Lisanna's reception was restarted. Though, Rika was the main target of everyone's renewed aggression.

Chapter 589: Mavis Vermilion

After arriving in Ur's office, Alfonzo, with Elicia by his side, sat down on one of the couches. At the same time, Irene and Brandish took a seat on the opposite couch. Meanwhile, Ur took a seat behind her desk while Gildarts stood next to her.

"So, what's this big news you have to tell me?" Alfonzo asked while making eye contact with Ur.

"\*Sigh\* It's news that I really wish I didn't have to tell you." Ur said while shaking her head. "\*Sigh\* A few days ago, Magnolia received a visitor. One that, had he been hostile, the entire town might no longer be here."

Hearing that, Alfonzo's eyes opened wide. Then, the image of a giant black dragon with white feathered wings appeared in his mind.

"Did... Did Acnologia fly over or something?" Alfonzo asked in a shaky voice. "No... That's impossible. If he had shown up, he would have noticed all the dragon slayers and killed everyone without hesitation."

Hearing Alfonzo's guess, Gildarts, Ur, and Elicia, the people present who faced Acnologia on Tenrou Island, shuddered in fear. Meanwhile, Irene wore a leisurely expression, confident that if she had to, she could kill Acnologia. Brandish, on the other hand, who had never seen Acnologia before, looked around with confusion on her face.

"Luckily, that wasn't the case." Ur said while wiping a bead of cold sweat from her forehead.

"Yeah, if that was what happened, you would have more than likely returned to a smoking crater, and not Magnolia." Gildarts added with a stiff smile.

"Like there's any way Acnologia would have shown up without any hostility." Elicia said, grabbing onto Alfonzo's arm in apprehension as she spoke.

Realizing that everyone was right, Alfonzo nodded his head slowly in agreement.

"I don't know why you're so worried about Acnologia." Irene said in a confident tone. "I could kill him if I really needed to. I would just have to go all out."

Immediately, Alfonzo, Elicia, Gildarts, and Ur snapped their heads in Irene's direction with incredulous expressions on their faces.

Seeing the expressions the four were wearing, Brandish did not know what to think. However, she also looked at Irene quizzically.

"Irene, how strong is Acnologia really?" Brandish asked. "I mean, if you could beat him like you said you could, would they look like that?"

Waving dismissively in response to Brandish's question, Irene eventually looked around at the gazes she was receiving.

"Trust me, I'm a lot stronger than you think." Irene said, still confident in her strength.

"Have you ever fought Acnologia, Irene?" Gildarts asked, already knowing the answer to his question.

"No, never." Irene replied while gently shaking her head.

"Of course she hasn't." Alfonzo said while smiling wryly. "If she had, the fight would have only ended when one of them died, after all. I mean, you all know how Acnologia feels about dragons. And if I'm not mistaken, Acnologia's [Dragonization] happened after Irene's back then."

"That should be correct." Irene replied. "and since dragons grow stronger with time, I should be stronger than him."

"I really have to disagree.' Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "I've seen both you and him in your dragon forms. And I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt, you can't hold a candle to him."

Irene's expression changed immediately. With a deep frown marring her beautiful face, she glared at Alfonzo with anger rising in her eyes.

"Look, I'm not trying to insult you, Irene." Alfonzo said after noticing Irene's plummeting mood. "But I fought that big son of a bitch up front almost four years ago. And the most damage I could do was breaking a few scales on one side of his body. And that was after casting a spell that was able to send a ten ton ball of Techno Organic Metal out of Earth Land's atmosphere."

That statement was enough to make Irene retract a large part of her anger. Still, she was unconvinced that she would not be able to defeat Acnologia if she gave it her all.

"On top of that, pure magical attacks have no effect on him." Ur added in a solemn tone. "Like most dragons and Dragon Slayers, Acnologia is immune to a type of magic. However, instead of a particular element, Acnologia seems to be immune, or at least highly resistant, to magic as a whole."

"So, what would your [Sage Dragon Slayer Magic] or [Enchantments] be able to do to something like that?" Elicia asked, following up after Ur.

That question was enough to make Irene stop and reconsider. As she said, she had never fought Acnologia. So, she did not know the properties of the [Dragon Slayer Magic] that turned him into a dragon.

"But to be honest, none of us had even unsealed our [Soul Armament's] first seals back then." Alfonzo said, breaking the silence Irene's contemplations brought with it. "Plus, we're all a lot stronger than we were back then. So, the fight probably won't be as one-sided as it was back then, either."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo stopped to take a deep breath while everyone's eyes landed on him. Then, he continued in an extremely solemn tone.

"But I still can't see any way of winning against him, even if everyone in the guild went all out." Alfonzo said, finishing his thought.

'Luckily, if everything follows the canon, we won't have to fight him again until x792.' Alfonzo thought to himself.

Hearing that, Irene finally understood the power gap between herself and Acnologia... At least, from the perspective of those who fought him four years ago. But she was still unconvinced that she could not defeat him if she used her full power.

"Anyway, if it wasn't Acnologia who showed up, then who was it?" Alfonzo asked, getting the conversation back on track.

"Emperor Spriggan." Brandish replied in her usual, too bored to care, tone.

Though she sounded as if she did not care, a tinge of fear could be seen in Brandish's eyes. As a former member of the Spriggan 12, she had some idea of how strong Zeref was. And the fact that she was now declared an enemy of the Alvarez Empire worried her quite a bit.

Alfonzo, on the other hand, opened his eyes wide. However, it also made sense to him that Zeref would appear. Though, he did not expect it to be quite so early.

"And what did he want when she showed up here?" Alfonzo asked.

"He wanted to confirm the states of me, Brandish, and Jacob." Irene replied, her mood having returned to normal by now. "But... Had he been hostile, I'm not sure I could have stopped him from wiping out the guild."

"You say that, but you think you could have defeated Acnologia by yourself?" Ur asked in a dumbfounded tone. "I'm not saying I know how strong Zeref is, but I know that what I felt from him while he was here was a lot less than what I felt from Acnologia back then. Not that I'd be able to take him on, either."

That statement finally caused Irene to open her eyes wide in surprise. As she had only learned [Magic Power Detection] recently, she had no way of comparing the magic power Acnologia and Zeref possessed. However, she knew that Ur would never joke around about something like that. So, her confidence just took a massive hit.

"Anyway, he didn't ask to have that Jacob guy back?" Alfonzo asked in a somewhat confused tone.

"No, he didn't request anything." Irene replied after snapping out of her daze. "The only things he did were walk through Magnolia, approach the guild hall, look it up and down a few times, find me watching him, come to my house, have a cup of tea, tell me that Brandish and I were officially enemies of the Empire, and leave."

Reaching that point, Irene could not help letting out a little giggle.

"Oh, and he tried to teleport out of my house after saying everything he had to say." Irene said while suppressing even louder laughter.

While Gildarts, Ur, and Brandish looked at Irene with strange expressions, Alfonzo and Elicia also had to hold back their laughter.

"I don't get it." Gildarts said, confused by the three laughing wizards.

"Neither do I." Ur added. "Must be some kind of inside joke, or something."

"What exactly is so funny?" Brandish asked while her gaze switched back and forth between Alfonzo, Elicia, and Irene.

"Well, one of the things I added to Irene's house when I made the blueprints was an anti-teleportation barrier." Alfonzo replied after getting his laughter under control. "So, I can only imagine the awkward expression on Zeref's face when he said everything he wanted to say, stood up, and tried to [Teleport] away like a badass."

Though Gildarts and Ur had never seen Zeref's face, they still could imagine how someone would look when their moment was ruined. Brandish, on the other hand, who had seen Zeref's face, that calm, completely unchanging expression of tranquility he always wore, immediately burst into laughter after imagining the expression he must have made when his [Teleportation] failed.

Like that, Ur's office was filled with the sound of laughter for a short while. However, everyone eventually returned to a serious mood as they continued their discussion.

"Although telling you about what happened while you were away was one of the reasons we called you up here, Alfonzo." Ur said, regaining her solemn tone. "The other reason was that we, the strongest members of the guild, could discuss countermeasures in case Zeref shows up unannounced again."

Hearing that, Alfonzo smiled wryly. Then, he shook his head gently.

"The real question is, what can we do?" Alfonzo asked. Then he looked at Irene and continued. "Irene, if you were to go all out against Zeref, could you win?"

"No." Irene replied succinctly. "Though I might be able to overwhelm him for a while, I would never be able to defeat him. He is immortal and undying, after all."

"That's right. Defeating Zeref in a frontal clash is impossible... For now, anyway."

That response did not come from any of the six wizards present in the room. Instead, it came from the figure of a young-looking girl with long, pastel yellow hair and green eyes who floated up through the floor.

"Master Mavis?" Ur said, standing up from her desk. "Why have you come?"

"Because dealing with Zeref is imperative for the continued existence of Fairy Tail." Mavis said in a solemn tone. Then, she turned her attention to Alfonzo as she continued. "and those [Soul Armaments] you created are most-likely the key."

"What do you mean?" Alfonzo asked with a serious expression on his face. Though, he had an idea of what Mavis was referring to.

"I'm not sure if you all know this, but there is a reason for Zeref's immortality." Mavis said while looking around at the six wizards present. "And that is because he was cursed by Ankhseram. Just as I was. Though, his curse is much more severe than the one I was inflicted with."

Immediately, Alfonzo and Elicia put on feigned expressions of shock. And those expressions perfectly matched the genuine ones Gildarts, Ur, Irene, and Brandish wore.

"Master Mavis... You..." Ur said, her words coming out very shaky. "You were... Cursed by... Ankhseram?"

"Yes, it happened a long time ago." Mavis replied calmly. "Back when I saved Makarov's father, Yuri, using an incomplete Grand Magic."

The room fell into silence as the people who were not aware of Mavis' current state of being processed what they just heard. However, Mavis was in no hurry to break the current atmosphere. Instead, her gaze landed on Alfonzo, the most talented member of Fairy Tail to ever exist.

"What kind of curse were you inflicted with, Master Mavis?" Gildarts, speaking in an uncharacteristically respectful tone, asked.

"\*Sigh\* As punishment for saving Yuri Dreyar, I was cursed with taking the lives of those around me if I were to care about them too much." Mavis replied in a depressed tone. "And because of that curse, Yuri's wife, Rita, lost her life while giving birth to Makarov. On top of that, I stopped aging from that point, as well. That's why I still retain this child's body."

That revelation caused a wave of shocked gasps throughout the room. However, Alfonzo and Elicia seemed to be quite calm, as they exchanged glances. And Mavis did not miss that.

"Wait... Retain a child's body?" Gildarts asked in a confused tone. "But I heard that you died a longtime ago."

"Oh, that was false." Mavis replied as she looked away from Alfonzo and Elicia, turning her gaze towards Gildarts with a smile. "My body is actually still alive. So, what you see now is not a ghost or spirit. Rather, it's a [Projection]."

Everyone, other than Ur, wore looks of surprise on their faces. Ur's expression, on the other hand, showed that she already knew about that fact. Because, she had already been shown the [Fairy Heart] when Makarov passed her the position of guild master a few years ago.

"So, you were cursed by Ankhseram, huh?" Alfonzo asked in a contemplative tone. "If that's the case, we might be able to do something about that."

All heads in the room snapped in Alfonzo's direction upon hearing that. Then, they remembered how Alfonzo helped the Elric Brothers and Izumi negotiate with Ankhseram to regain what they had lost after attempting [Human Transmutation].

"But won't you need a Philosopher's stone] to do what you must be thinking?" Ur asked skeptically.

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied with a nod. "But since I have one, there's no problem."

"Huh?" Gildarts exclaimed in confusion. "But I thought you used the last of the one you had when Izumi negotiated with Ankhseram."

"Oh, when we took care of the rest of the homunculus, we found a few more in their hideout under Crocus." Elicia replied casually while shrugging her shoulders.

Once again, everyone looked at Alfonzo and Elicia incredulously. And there were two reasons for that. First, the fact that they had more Philosopher's Stones and never told anyone about them was frustrating. However, what was even more frustrating was the fact that they attacked the homunculus on their own without telling anyone.

"\*Sigh\* Lici, we were supposed to keep that a secret, remember?" Alfonzo asked in an exasperated tone while wearing a tired smile.

In response, Elicia opened her eyes wide in shock as she covered her mouth with her hands. Then, while trying to look as cute as possible, she tilted her head to the side and knocked on the side of her head with her knuckles.

"Oops." Elicia said in the most innocent tone she could muster. "Then, I guess it's a good thing I didn't mention that we took Erza and Marin along with us, huh?"

\*Smack!\*

As soon as Elicia finished speaking, Alfonzo face palmed hard enough that the smack could probably be heard from the tenth floor. Meanwhile, Gildarts, Ur, Mavis, Irene, and brandish looked at Elicia as if they wanted to say something, but had no idea what to say. A moment later, Elicia realized that she said something else she was not supposed to.

["I'm amazed you haven't let the fact that you're a reincarnate slip yet."] Scylla said in a tired tone from Elicia's inner world.

Normally, Elicia would try to defend herself, even a little bit. However, she knew she had said way too much today. So, she just kept her mouth shut.

"Anyway..." Alfonzo mumbled, trying to change the subject from Elicia's slip of the tongue. "We'll need either the Elrics or Izumi to make a [Human Transmutation Circle if we wanna help Master Mavis break the curse. But we'll need to know where her body is before any of that."

"Don't worry, Ur already knows." Mavis replied. "And since we're planning to do something about my curse, there's no longer a reason to keep it secret. But we'll need someone else to cast a spell to get me out of it."

"What spell?" Brandish asked curiously.

"One of the three Great Fairy Magics, [Fairy Glitter]."

Mavis replied.

"Chapter 590: The Secret Underground Chamber

"You want to teach someone [Fairy Glitter]?" Ur asked in a tone filled with disbelief.

"Yes."

Mavis replied with a stern nod. "That spell is the only way to free me."

"Free you?" Irene asked in a curious tone. "What do you mean?"

"It would be better to show you than tell you."

Mavis replied. Then, she looked at Ur as she continued.

"Show them the way, Ur."

"If that's your order." Ur replied with a nod.

Then, Ur stood up from her desk and walked towards the elevator while everyone else in the office followed her. Meanwhile, Mavis, who did not need to use the elevator, watched everyone for a moment. Then, she sank into the floor.

Once everyone was in the elevator, Ur pressed the button that took them down to the lowest point of the guild hall, the library. A few moments later, the elevator doors opened and everyone exited into the library.

However, instead of looking at any of the books, Ur walked to a particular wall without a word. Naturally, the others followed her. Then, while standing in front of the wall, Ur inserted her magic power into it in a certain pattern. A moment later, the wall moved, revealing a staircase that led even further underground.

"Okay, how did I not notice these stairs while we were building the new guild hall?" Alfonzo asked in a dumbfounded tone.

This time, Alfonzo was not just speaking to keep up appearances. Although he knew about the chamber where Mavis' body was kept, he was never able to find it. Not even with his [Magic Power Detection]. And the fact that he never detected this stairway when he was overseeing the construction of the guild hall made him even more thoroughly confused.

"I know what you mean." Ur replied while leading the group down the stairs. "If the old man hadn't shown me this, I would have never known it was here, either."

"Interesting, the magic power I can feel from below us is overwhelming." Irene said with an intrigued smile on her face. "What kind of wards and barriers are set up here to keep it all from leaking outside."

"That's the thing, I can't feel anything like that... At all." Alfonzo replied. "But that should be impossible. I mean, everything has a magic power signature. And barriers are no exception."

While the group continued discussing the incomprehensible magic power and how it was kept from leaking outside, they eventually reached the bottom of the stairs. And when they did, they arrived in an empty chamber. Though, that was a bit... no, quite inaccurate.

The chamber would have been empty, if it was not for the gigantic lacrima placed against the back wall. However, that lacrima was no ordinary lacrima. Because inside of the lacrima, a body identical to the image of Mavis Vermilion was sealed inside.

"What the...?" Gildarts mumbled in disbelief.

"Is that... the first Master?" Brandish asked in a tone similar to Gildarts.

"Yes." Mavis said as she floated down through the ceiling. "That is me. Precht, or rather Hades of Grimoire Heart helped me seal myself in here so that I wouldn't be able to hurt anyone because of my curse."

"Not only that." Ur said in a solemn tone. "But this is the [Fairy Heart] Zeref wants so much. That so called source of unlimited magic power."

With Mavis' and Ur's words, Gildarts remembered that Hades was once the second master of Fairy Tail, Precht Gaebolg. Meanwhile, Irene and Brandish, who knew very little about the Subjugated Dark Guilds on Ishgar had no idea what they were talking about.

So, Elicia took it upon herself to inform them of who Hades and Grimoire Heart were.

"Well, now that everyone is up to speed, why do you need to teach someone Fairy Glitter?" Ur asked.

"Because it is necessary to free me from this lacrima." Mavis replied. "The only way to set me free is to hit my projection with Fairy Glitter while in this room with the lacrima."

"Seriously?" Ur asked in shock. "But what if something goes wrong, wouldn't that injure your spirit, or something?"

"I assure you, everything will be fine." Mavis replied with a smile.

The room fell into silence after that. Most of those present were digesting what Mavis just said. However, the silence was eventually broken.

"Well, if that's what the first master says, then that's' what we gotta do.' Alfonzo said with a shrug. "The only question is, who should we have learn it?"

Once again, the room fell silent while everyone thought of a suitable candidate.

"How about Cana?" Elicia asked, picking the person from the canon to do it.

"That's actually not a bad idea." Ur replied. "With Hoyle, she has the potential to use the spell several times in a row depending on what cards she draws."

Just as Ur said, with Hoyle released, Cana can either amplify the power of her spells or cast them more than once with no additional magic power cost, depending on the hands she can put together with the cards she draws from Hoyle's deck. And if she could somehow manage to draw a [Royal Flush] or a [Four of a Kind], she could really do a lot of damage with [Fairy Glitter].

"I agree." Gildarts said excitedly. "My baby girl will be even stronger."

Alfonzo, Irene, and Brandish also had no issues with Cana being the one to learn [Fairy Glitter]. So, after a bit more discussion, they left the hidden chamber and returned to the guild hall's first floor. And to no one's surprise, there was another brawl going on.

"\*Sigh\* I really miss being home." Alfonzo said with a wide smile on his face. Then, he looked back at Ur with pleading eyes. "Can we have the conversation with Cana a little later? I really wanna join in."

Chuckling hollowly, Ur shooed Alfonzo away with a hand gesture. Then, she led Elicia, Gildarts, Irene, and Brandish over to the bar to spectate.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo dashed into the fray with a smile on his face. And from the way he started wailing on people, he looked like a wolf that just found a herd of sheep that was left unattended to.

"Wow! Look at him go!" Elicia cheered as she took a seat at the bar next to Ur and Brandish.

"He looks like a bully." Brandish muttered with a grin.

"Yeah, but he looks like he's having fun." Ur added. "I can only imagine how much his impulses have been bottled up during all that time away from the guild."

"Yeah, even I wanna give fighting him a go at this point." Gildarts said while his eyes tracked Alfonzo through the melee.

"Why?" Irene asked with a smile. "Are you looking to get beat up, or something? If that's the case, I can fight with you if you want."

"\*Cough\* No, that's okay." Gildarts said while looking away awkwardly.

"Anyway, we did come here for another reason, didn't we?" Elicia asked after calming down a bit. "We were supposed to talk to Cana about learning [Fairy Glitter], right?"

"There's no rush." Mavis, who rose from the floor next to the bar, said with a smile, as she, too, watched Alfonzo rampage through his guild mates. "Just let him blow off a little steam."

Mavis then turned to Elicia.

"Besides, you live with Cana, right?" Mavis asked, although she already knew the answer to the question. "You can just tell her after you go home. And if you need me to give her any further explanation, just tell Alfonzo to let me inside the barrier surrounding your house."

After reaching that point, Mavis pouted in a way that was suitable for her appearance.

"Because even I, in this form, can't penetrate that barrier he set up." Mavis said in a discontent tone.

From that point, the brawl did not last very long. And eventually, Alfonzo, as the final winner, stood alone among the unconscious and groaning members of Fairy Tail.

"Alright, I'm going home." Alfonzo said, looking quite refreshed after the brawl. "I miss Little Man."

Hopping up off her bar stool, Elicia skipped over to Alfonzo and held his arm with a wide smile on her face.

"Okay, I'll come with you." Elicia said happily. Then she looked back to Ur and the others. "Just tell everyone we went home. Oh, and let Cana know we have something important to talk to her about when she wakes up."

Nodding in response, Ur once again shooed them away. However, before they could get too far, she looked as if she just remembered something important.

"Hey, Kid!" Ur shouted just as Alfonzo and Elicia reached the sliding doors. "Where is Wendy? Did she already go home?"

"Oh, that's right!" Alfonzo said as he slapped his right fist down into his left palm. "She stayed in the Village Hidden in the Leaves. Her little boyfriend got hurt during the second part of the Chunin Exam, and she's taking care of him."

In response, Ur fell silent with a dumbfounded expression on her face. And after not receiving a response for a while, Alfonzo shrugged his shoulders. Then, he led Elicia out of the guild hall. And just as the sliding doors closed behind them...

"What~~~~~!"

... they could hear Ur's scream of disbelief penetrating the metal walls and heavy sliding doors of the guild hall.

About half an hour later, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Amar'e were all sitting in the bathtub in Alfonzo's bathroom. While Amar'e was playing with the water and Elicia was giving him a bath, she was leaning against Alfonzo's chest, who was smiling happily while he watched his wife and son warmly.

On top of that, Alfonzo had just finished telling Elicia about his experiences pertaining to the Chunin Exam.

"So, you actually caught Orochimaru before he could put the [Cursed seal of heaven] on Sasuke?" Elicia asked with a smile.

"Yeah, since we noticed from the moment he was [Reverse Summoned] into the village, tracking him was easy." Alfonzo replied. "So, I started following him from the moment everyone gathered to enter the Forest of Death."

"Well, I guess messing up canon is better than having Sasuke go full emo." Elicia nodded as she rinsed the soap off Amar'e's body.

"Oh, and I removed Orochimaru's [Curse Seal] from Anko, too." Alfonzo added as he started tickling Amar'e.

"Really?" Elicia asked with her eyes wide open. Then, she stopped to ponder for a moment. "but how does his [Curse Seal] even work in this world? I mean, it drew in Natural Energy in Naruto. But there is no Natural Energy in this world, right? So how does it, or even [Sage Mode] work?"

"If I hadn't gotten all of Danzo's records, I wouldn't be able to answer that question." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "but since I did, I can. It actually works like this..."

Alfonzo then went on to explain that while chakra in Naruto was a combination of spiritual and physical energy from a shinobi's body, while magic power was its equivalent on Earth Land. Whereas natural Energy's equivalent is pure ethernano.

And like all wizards on Earth Land, shinobi take in ethernano and refine it into magic power in their magic power containers. However, for [Sage Mode] and the [Cursed Seal of Heaven], they use ethernano in its pure state by delicately mixing it together with magic power at a certain ratio.

"And that means that training in [Sage Mode] in this world is a lot less dangerous." Alfonzo said, getting to the end of his explanation. "Because any excess ethernano ends up being converted into magic power. However, if any of the ethernano absorbed starts converting into magic power, the [Sage Mode] process fails, and the shinobi has to start all over again."

"Although it's safer, it sounds like the training is a lot harder, too, right?" Elicia asked as she picked up Amar'e and started climbing out of the bathtub.

"Right." Alfonzo replied as he followed Elicia out of the tub. "But somehow, the same people are the only ones who have trained it so far. But from what I've heard, Jiraiya looks even more like a toad than in the canon thanks to his lacking control."

"Oh, I kinda wanna see that now." Elicia said with a giggle, causing Amar'e to giggle along with her.

Like that, the two continued to chat and laugh as they got themselves and Amar'e dried off and dressed. Then, just as they were all dressed, the door to Alfonzo's bedroom was knocked on.

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

"Hey, Fonzie, Lici!" Cana's voice could be heard from the other side of the door. "Dad and Ur said you needed to talk to me about something. So, what's up?"

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia exchanged glances. Meanwhile, Amar'e, after hearing Cana's voice, got excited. She was the most fun to play with out of all his aunties, after all.

Seeing Amar'e's reaction, Alfonzo smiled. Then, he stood up and made his way over to the door.

"Cana, come in." Alfonzo said with a smile. "We do have some stuff to talk about with you. And you can play with Little Man while we talk."