

Fairy Tail 601

Chapter 601: New Shadows

After defeating the Ruthless Ice Raven, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca first checked the room where the treasure chests were for any changes. However, the room had not changed. There was still one open chest and one that needed Twilight Fragments to unlock. So, they quickly made their way up to the sixth floor.

After reaching the sixth floor, the group explored a brisk place just like they had before. However, they slowed down a bit when they came across a new Shadow.

After coming across a large crawling Shadow, the group was experienced enough to know that it would divide into a group of five. And it did just that. However, they were only familiar with three of the five shadows they saw. They were a pair of Merciless Maya and a Muttering Tiara.

The other two Shadows were the ones they were unfamiliar with. And they were the same type. They had small, black, humanoid bodies with equally black feathered wings and a red mask covering their faces. ON top of that, they held a suitably-sized short bow in their right hands.

"They kinda look like the cupids in fairy tales." Bisca said as she [Requipped] her magic rifle.

"Yeah, just a lot uglier." Elicia added.

Seeming as if they could understand what Elicia said, the two cupid-looking Shadows raised their bows, materialized an arrow in their left hands, knocked and drew the arrows, and aimed at Elicia.

"Tch! They're so sensitive." Elicia grumbled as threads began growing from her fingertips.

"Well, you did just call them ugly." Alfonzo said with a smile. "You wouldn't be happy either if someone called you ugly, would you?"

"Hmph!" Elicia snorted in reply. "As if someone would call me ugly. Have you seen me?"

"Wow! And you used to call me arrogant." Alfonzo said as he flashed away from the group and cut the Muttering Tiara with a short sword he made with his [Metal Magic].

To Alfonzo's surprise, although he used just as much strength as he usually did when dealing with the Muttering Tiaras from before, it was not killed in a single blow.

In the next instant, one of the cupid-like Shadows turned towards the Muttering Tiara. Then, it's bow glowed in a soothing, white light. A moment later, the white light was transferred to the Muttering Tiara. And at a speed visible to the naked eye, the wound from Alfonzo's sword fully healed.

"Oh, great... They got stronger." Alzack muttered as he aimed his pistols at the Merciless Maya." They have healers now, too. [Guns Magic: Icicle Shot]."

Bang! *Bang!*

With his chant, Alzack pulled the triggers to his pistols and fired a volley of icicles at the two Merciless Maya, killing them instantly.

"At least they're still weak to the same stuff." Alzack muttered as he pointed his pistols at the cupid-like creatures.

{"I just finished analyzing the new Shadows."} Mitsuru's voice sounded over the comms. {"They're called Obsessed Cupids. I'll need you to experiment to see their weaknesses, though."}

"Yeah, we expected that." Elicia replied as she lashed her threads towards the Obsessed Cupids.

However, Elicia was not trying to attack when she swung her threads. Instead, she used them to entangle the arrows the Obsessed Cupids fired at her. Apparently, they had not yet forgotten about the insult they received from her.

Unfortunately, just before the threads could entangle the arrows, the Obsessed Cupid's bows glowed again. Then, they released several [Wind Blade Curses] that cut through Elicia's threads.

"So, they can heal and use wind, huh?" Elicia muttered as she ejected more threats before using them to avoid the [Wind Curse].

Bang!

"I think I can tell what they're weaknesses are before testing everything." Bisca said as she fired a magic bullet. "I'm pretty sure it has something to do with their masks. I mean, so far, all the ones with red masks are weak against ice."

And just as Bisca surmised, as soon as the magic bullet, which was an [Icicle Shot] hit the Obsessed Cupid she was aiming at, it started to fall out of the sky. However, before it hit the floor, it dispersed into a cloud of black smoke.

"I think Bisca's on to something." Alfonzo said as he appeared behind the second Obsessed Cupid with the same short sword. "We'll have to put that theory to the test on any new Shadows we find."

With that said, Alfonzo cleaved upwards, putting more strength into it this time, bisecting the Obsessed Cupid from crotch to head. At the same time, Elicia shredded the Muttering Tiara with her threads while vibrating them at high-speed.

"They really are stronger than before." Elicia said. "But I guess that will continue the further we go up."

"But they didn't get any stronger until after we got past the Guardian." Alzack pointed out.

"We can think about that later." Bisca said. "For now, we need to hurry. We only have so much time to climb."

"Bisca's right, let's go." Alfonzo said with a nod. "Miss Kirijo, which way?"

{"Take the corridor on your left."} Mitsuru replied. {"The one on your right leads back to a room you've already explored."}

Following Mitsuru's instructions, the group dashed off, clearing room after room. They eventually ran into a second new Shadow when they reached the last room before the staircase. However, something about this one was different.

Though it was a huge crawling Shadow until they got close. When they finally did, it only turned into a single Shadow, a large, three-foot tall, black insect with a sturdy looking carapace.

"Is that... a big... cockroach? Bisca asked in a shaken tone. "I hate cockroaches! Die! Die! Die!"

Bang! *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!*

With her shout, Bisca squeezed the trigger of her magic rifle. As a result, a stream of normal magic bullets bombarded the big insect. And all though its carapace was strong, cracks began to appear after a short time.

In pain, the insect opened its carapace and flapped the wings hidden underneath. However, it did not start flying. Instead, it rushed forward at high-speed. Or at least, that's what should have happened. Instead, because of Bisca's bullet storm, it was pushed backwards once its legs left the floor.

"Die! Die! Die! Die! Die!" Bisca continued to scream as she held the trigger.

"*Sigh* This is bringing back some bad memories." Alzack muttered. "At least we won't have to pay to patch up a bunch of holes in the walls this time, though."

"Bisca actually found a roach in your house once?" Elicia asked with a grossed out expression on her face.

"No." Alzack replied while shaking her head. "It was only a really big watermelon seed that fell on the floor unnoticed. But Bisca freaked out without even seeing if it was moving."

Hearing that, Alfonzo, Elicia, and even Mitsuru, back on the first floor, wore dumbfounded expressions.

"Mitsuru, did something happen?" Akihiko, who was shadow boxing to kill time, asked after seeing Mitsuru's expression.

Akihiko's question quickly brought Mitsuru back to her senses.

"Everything is fine, Akihiko." Mitsuru replied while trying to suppress a smile. "I was just surprised by what they were talking about up there."

"Oh, okay." Akihiko replied. Though, he was curious to know what Mitsuru heard to make her put on a face like that.

Meanwhile, back on the sixth floor, the large insect had just dispersed into a puff of black smoke.

"*Pant* *Pant* *Pant* It's finally dead." Bisca said through ragged breaths. "Now, we just need to look for the other thirty that are definitely nearby. Then, we can kill those, too."

That only caused the other three to look at her strangely.

{"Um... That Shadow was call... Grave Beetle."} Mitsuru cut in over the comms in an awkward tone.

This time, Bisca was the one with the strange expression on her face.

"Well, people often mistake beetles for roaches." Alfonzo said in a consoling tone that was ruined by the laughter he was trying to hold back. "So... Pfft... Don't worry about it. Hahahaha!"

At the end of his sentence, Alfonzo could not hold it in any more. So, he started laughing uproariously. And that led to Elicia and Alzack laughing, too. Bisca, on the other hand, turned beet red in embarrassment. Then, she glared at Alzack. And her glare said... no screamed: "Keep laughing and you'll be sleeping on the couch for a long, long time."

"*Cough* Hey, we should get moving." Alzack said while cold sweat dripped down his back. "We don't have the time for this."

With that, Alzack started walking towards the stairs quickly. And when Bisca saw that, she snorted victoriously before following him. Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Elicia smiled at each other before doing the same.

Reaching the seventh floor, things continued at a similar pace. However, they did encounter a new Shadow on this floor, as well. Except, the encounter was strange.

First, the Shadow was already formed into a type of Shadow instead of crawling around as a dark slime. Second, as soon as it caught sight of the party, it turned around and ran as fast as it could. And third, it was as fast as any C-Class wizard. So, it was pretty fast.

Luckily, no one in the party was slow enough for it to lose them. So, the Shadow, Wealth Hand, which took the form of a golden hand with a green head where the wrist should be, was quickly surrounded. But when the team tried using elemental attacks on it, they had little to no effect. So, they just beat it up the old fashioned way. And when it eventually died, it dropped a coin made of a gold-colored metal that Alfonzo did not recognize.

"What is this?" Alfonzo asked as he approached the coin.

"What's wrong, Fonzie?" Elicia asked curiously. "is that a metal you've never seen before?"

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied as he crouched down to pick up the coin.

However, as soon as Alfonzo's fingertips came in contact with the metal, he froze completely. Naturally, upon touching the metal, he had injected his magic power into it to see its structure. However, this metal was so dense that he did not know what to do with it. In fact, he was unsure if he would even be able to lift it.

Despite his doubts, Alfonzo braced himself to pick it up. And when he finally put some force into lifting it, he toppled backwards onto the floor.

"Fonzie! Are you okay?" Elicia asked in a worried tone as she rushed to help Alfonzo up.

"It's so... light..." Alfonzo said in a dumbfounded tone. "but how?"

Seeing the expression on Alfonzo's face while he looked at the coin in his hand, Elicia stood up and sighed.

"Alright, let's find the teleporter." Elicia said in an exasperated tone. "Fonzie's not gonna be able to concentrate on anything now that he's like that."

Hearing Elicia's words and seeing Alfonzo's current state, Alzack and Bisca could only smile. They knew that this couple was very alike in certain ways. For example, when they were involved in the things that interested them, almost nothing could pull them away.

"No, I can study this during the day." Alfonzo said, shaking himself out of his trance. "We've got a job to do. And I'm not going to be distracted from it."

Although what Alzack and Bisca thought was undoubtedly true, they had forgotten one thing.

Alfonzo takes great pride in being a Fairy Tail wizard. And he takes even greater pride in the fact that he's never failed a quest. Though, he takes even greater pride in the fact that he's never caused any excessive property damage while on a quest. Something that even Elicia can't claim.

With Alfonzo's declaration, he put the coin in the bag he carried on his hip while on quests. Then, he led the rest of the party to continue their exploration. And along the way, until they reached the eleventh floor, they did not find any new Shadows.

However, the eleventh floor was different. Not different in the fact that they finally found a new Shadow, though. Instead, it was similar to the fifth floor, with a long flight of stairs in front of them. On top of that, there was a two-way teleporter platform to the right of the stairs.

"Miss Kirijo, how much time do we have left?" Alfonzo asked over the comms.

{"Approximately six minutes."} Mitsuru replied.

"Then, I guess we should call it a night, huh?" Alzack said.

"Yeah." Bisca replied with a nod. "There's no guarantee that we can beat the Guardian and come back to the teleporter before the time is up."

"I'm tired, anyway." Elicia said while stretching her arms over her head. "I wanna go to bed."

"Yeah, I'm kinda tired, too." Alfonzo said as he glanced at Elicia and they briefly made eye contact. "So, let's go."

During that brief eye contact, the two had a quick conversation.

Elicia: Wasn't the second Guardian supposed to be on the tenth floor?

Alfonzo: Yeah, that's what I remember, too. But we're on the eleventh now. So, I don't know what's going on.

Elicia: I guess real life really is different than games.

Alfonzo: I told you that yesterday.

After that short conversation, the group stood on the teleporter and headed back down to the first floor. Then, along with Mitsuru and Akihiko, they left Tartarus and headed back to their hotel and dorm, respectively.

Chapter 602: Yukari Takeba

Another day passed after those who entered Tartarus during the Dark Hour returned. While Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca took the time to tour around the island in pairs, Mitsuru and Akihiko went to school like the students they were. However, after the school day ended, they made their way towards the hotel where Alfonzo and the others were staying.

The reason for their unannounced visit was because Akihiko wanted to talk to the wizards from Fairy Tail. And if he was lucky, he would get the chance to spar with one, if not all, of them. Mitsuru, on the other hand, only followed along to make sure that Akihiko did not cause any trouble.

However, neither of them noticed that they were being followed all the way until they knocked on the door of Alfonzo Elicia's room

Knock! *Knock!* *Knock!*

"Tch! It's not room service." Elicia grumbled from the inside of the room. "It's only Mitsuru and Aki."

Hearing that, Akihiko looked at Mitsuru in confusion.

"They said something about being able to feel everything with magic power in a certain radius." Mitsuru said, replying to Akihiko's unasked question. "And they probably remembered the feeling of our magic power."

"Ah! I see." Akihiko said in an understanding tone. "That would be useful the next time I got out to train."

"Do you ever think about anything other than training?" Mitsuru asked.

"Is there anything else to think about?" Akihiko asked in genuinely confused tone.

At that moment, the door to the room opened. Elicia stood in the open doorway with a smile on her face.

"Wasn't expecting to see you until tonight." Elicia said cheerfully. "Let me guess, Aki couldn't wait until the quest was over to ask for a spar, could he?"

"*Sigh* They only met you once, Akihiko." Mitsuru said in an exasperated tone as she glanced to her side. "And they can already figure out your habits."

In response, Akihiko only scratched the side of his head awkwardly.

"Anyway, why don't you all come in." Elicia said with a smile. "Oh, bring the friend you left around the corner, too. The more the merrier, after all."

Hearing that, Mitsuru and Akihiko both wore confused expressions. And when Elicia saw that, she put on a confused expression of her own.

"Hmm? They're not with you, then?" Elicia asked as she tilted her head in confusion. "But their magic power moves in a way that is similar to yours. So, I thought you were bringing a new member of your future team to meet us."

That caused Mitsuru's expression to change to one filled with surprise. Then, her eyes narrowed.

"We didn't bring anyone with us." Mitsuru said in a cold tone. "It seems we have a spy. Do you think you could catch them, Miss Elicia?"

"*Sigh* I told you, call me Lici." Elicia said as she flicked her wrist. "And I can catch them, no problem."

Hearing that, the one following Mitsuru and Akihiko panicked. Then, they quickly turned around to run. However, before they could even take a step, they were wrapped up tightly by Elicia's threads.

"Kya! What is this?" A female voice yelped from around the corner. "Is this... thread? But where did they come from?"

A moment later, a teenage girl with light brown hair and brown eyes, wrapped up in a cocoon of threads with only her head showing, was dragged around the corner. And she was naturally struggling to free herself the whole time.

"Takeba?" Mitsuru asked after seeing the girl's face. "Why are you here? And why were you following us?"

In response, the girl, Takeba, or rather, Yukari Takeba, averted her eyes from the three people standing in front of her. Unfortunately, that did not allow her to avoid the interrogative gazes from the three.

"Mitsuru, do you recognize her?" Akihiko asked while studying Yukari.

"Yes." Mitsuru replied with a nod. "She's a first-year student at our school."

Hearing that, Akihiko nodded his head, as well. Meanwhile, Elicia studied Yukari, as well.

'I guess she's trying to find clues about her father's death from ten years ago.' Elicia thought to herself. 'It's no surprise that she already knew that her father worked for the Kirijo Group. She just has no idea what actually happened.'

"So, are you going to answer my question, Takeba?" Mitsuru asked as she crossed her arms in front of her.

"Well, you see..." Yukari said while still not making eye contact with anyone. "While I was on my way home, I saw the two of you walking into this hotel. And I was surprised. So, I followed you, wanting to get some good gossip. 'The president of the Student Council and the captain of the Boxing Team have an illicit rendezvous off school grounds.' Or something like that."

"Pfft! Hahahahahaha!" Elicia laughed uproariously after hearing Yukari's, clearly made up on the spot, explanation.

Meanwhile, Akihiko wore a confused expression. On the other hand, Mitsuru's expression turned extremely dark. And if it weren't for her good upbringing and the training she had undergone to keep her emotions in check, Elicia had no doubt that she would have summoned her Persona, Penthesilea, and turned Yukari into an ice statue on the spot.

On a side note, aside from being able to scan enemies and map Tartarus, Penthesilea is also quite formidable in battle, having the ability to use [Ice Magic]. On top of that, Mitsuru is also quite skilled in the use of the rapier. Unfortunately, because there is no one to provide support from the back lines, Mitsuru had been relegated to the support role.

"Hey, Lici, what's going on out there?" Alfonzo asked as he appeared in the doorway of the room.

"Haha... O.M.G. Haha! Fonzie... You're... Hahaha!" Elicia tried to answer Alfonzo's question. Unfortunately, she was laughing too hard to form a complete sentence.

Smiling helplessly at his wife, Alfonzo turned an inquisitive gaze towards Mitsuru and Akihiko. However, Mitsuru was staring bloody murder at Yukari and Akihiko was too confused to notice. So, he could only wait until Elicia calmed down enough to explain.

A couple of minutes later, Elicia finally got her laughter under control. By that time, Alzack and Bisca, who were out strolling around the island on a date, had returned and were thoroughly confused. However, they, too, were forced to wait for Elicia to calm down to get an explanation. And when they finally heard what happened...

"Hahahahahahaha!" x 3

... Alfonzo, Alzack, and Bisca all burst into raucous laughter.

Unfortunately, all the laughter annoyed the other guests who rented rooms on the same corridor. So, along with the delivery of the room service to Alfonzo and Elicia's room, the manager also came to scold them and ask them to keep the noise down. However, when the manager saw that Mitsuru was with the group of people making all the noise, he quietly backed down without saying anything.

"Anyway, why don't we all go inside." Alfonzo said while wiping a tear from his eye. "We can talk about why the three of you showed up at our door while Lici and I have a bite to eat."

With that, Elicia unbound Yukari. Then, Alfonzo and Elicia took the lead in entering their hotel room, closely followed by Alzack and Bisca. Meanwhile, Mitsuru was still staring at Yukari with a murderous gaze. However, she eventually exhaled an exasperated sigh before dragging Akihiko into the room, as well.

Meanwhile, Yukari slowly picked herself up from the floor. Then, she stared at the open hotel room door while contemplating running away. However, she eventually gritted her teeth before entering the room, too.

'I don't know why they came here, but if I go inside I might find out.' Yukari thought to herself with a stern expression on her face. 'Besides, that was Elicia Taylor, the famous Magic Seamstress. And the guy who came with her was Alfonzo Marcus, they're both S-class wizards from Fairy Tail. Which means, something big must be happening. And I wanna know what it is.'

After having those thoughts, Yukari's face flushed in excitement as she continued her internal monologue.

'I might be able to get some clothes personally designed for me by the Magic Seamstress, too.' Yukari thought as she closed the door to the hotel room behind her.

To Yukari's surprise, as soon as the door closed behind her, she was once again wrapped up by threads. Then, she was pulled into a corner of the room that had been blocked off by curtains that were hanging from metal rails that seemed to be sticking to the walls.

"Hey! What are you doing!?" Yukari shouted in both confusion and indignation. "And why are you taking my clothes off? Aren't you married? Hey! Stop!"

"Why are you asking such silly questions?" Elicia asked in a cheerful tone. "Of course I'm married. And I love my Fonzie so~~~~ much. But how am I supposed to take proper measurements if you're dressed? And if the measurements are off, the clothes I make won't fit you properly. And I can't have that."

Immediately, Yukari's eyes widened as her struggles came to a sudden stop. She had just been thinking about getting some clothes from Elicia. And now that dream was coming true. Still, she pouted at the way it happened.

'She didn't have to drag me in here like this, though.' Yukari grumbled to herself. 'If she had just told me that was what she was doing, I would have agreed right away.'

"By the way, what's your name?" Elicia asked as she finished undressing Yukari. "I'm Elicia Taylor. But you can just call me Lici. I'm the owner of the Taylor Shop. I'm an S-Class wizard from Fairy Tail, too..."

While Elicia's onslaught of words seemed never ending, she efficiently took Yukari's measurements. Meanwhile, outside of the curtain, which was created by Alfonzo and Elicia using their [Metal Magic] and Thread Magic], respectively, Mitsuru's eyes turned somewhat vacant as she stared off into the distance. The memories of how Elicia basically treated her the same way, just in her own home, flashing through her mind.

"Anyway, why did the two of you come here?' Alfonzo asked, breaking the strange atmosphere. "We would have seen each other tonight, anyway, right?"

"It's because Akihiko wanted to spar with you. Mitsuru said after she regained her senses. "And I came with him to stop him from going too far if you rejected."

"But didn't we say we would spar with him after the quest was complete?" Bisca asked in a curious tone.

"*Sigh* He's just got a one track mind." Mitsuru said. "He's the type to not stop until he gets a fight that he wants."

Immediately, the same image of Akihiko's hair turning pink and spiky while flames were spewing from his mouth appeared in the heads of Alfonzo, Alzack, and Bisca. Then, they all had to try their best to not laugh out loud.

"More important than that, Miss Elicia said something about Takeba having a feel similar to the two of us." Mitsuru said in a quizzical tone. "What did she mean?"

"Oh, now that you mention it." Alfonzo said while glancing at the curtained off area of the room. "Yeah, she feels like she has the 'potential' you all were talking about."

That caused Mitsuru and Akihiko to widen their eyes. Then, like Alfonzo, they shifted their gazes towards the curtained off area, as well.

"What is this 'potential' you're talking about?" Yukari asked from behind the curtain, as she had been paying attention to the conversation going on in the rest of the room while ignoring Elicia's word barrage.

A moment later, the curtains opened and Yukari stepped out of the curtained off area, fully dressed once again. However, Elicia stayed in the curtained off area while sketching on a note pad.

'Hmm... She's got low C-Class magic power reserves, too.' Alzack muttered while watching Yukari approach.

Meanwhile, Mitsuru and Akihiko exchanged glances. Then, they nodded to each other before Mitsuru stepped forward and explained the Dark Hour and Tartarus to Yukari.

'So, is that why I've been sleeping about an hour less than usual?' Yukari thought to herself after hearing Mitsuru's explanation. 'Because I've been sleeping through this... Dark Hour?'

"Takeba, we need people like you to help us investigate the truth about the dark Hour.' Mitsuru said in a solemn tone. 'Right now, the wizards from Fairy Tail are doing the preliminary investigations at the request of the Kirijo Group. But they won't be here for long. So, I beseech you, please join us to deal with this threat."

Everyone else in the room fell silent after Mitsuru made her request. While Alfonzo, Alzack, Bisca, Mitsuru, and Akihiko waited for Yukari's reply, Elicia was not paying attention to the conversation at all, as she was having too much fun designing clothes for Yukari. Yukari, on the other hand, lowered her head as she fell into thought.

'She wants me to help them fight?' Yukari thought to herself. 'But I've never been in a fight in my life. The only training I have with a weapon is the time I've spent in the school's archery club. But that's not really useful in a fight. I don't know if I could handle that. Then again, if I follow them into these fights, I could get closer to the Kirijo Group. And I would be able to find out what really happened to my father much easier.'

Reaching that point, Yukari's expression turned resolute. Then, with that same level of resolve flashing in her eyes, she raised her head and looked Mitsuru in her eyes.

"I accept." Yukari said solemnly. "If you need my help to keep the people of Tatsumi Port Island safe, I'll lend you my strength."

Hearing that, Mitsuru and Akihiko sighed in relief. Meanwhile, Alzack and Bisca smiled. Alfonzo, on the other hand, narrowed his eyes while staring at Yukari, who did not seem to notice his gaze.

'She probably joined to find out about her father.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Just like she did in the game. But I wonder how much of this will be similar to the game. On top of that, will Nyx appear? And if he does, should I come here and deal with him myself? But what about the silent protagonist, Mikoto Yuki? Will he have to be sacrificed to keep the Dark Hour from reappearing after Nyx is put down? *Sigh* I guess I'll have to make something to stop that before the time comes, won't I? The Answer was so stupid that I can't bear to let it happen in this reality.'

Chapter 603: Yukari's Shock and Awe

After Yukari accepted Mitsuru's invitation to join the future S.E.E.S., the rest of the afternoon was spent explaining what she was getting herself into. And although she did not accept simply on the spur of the moment, she was not ready for what she heard.

"Wait, so you're telling me that the school transforms into a gigantic tower every night at midnight?" Yukari asked in a disbelieving tone while she walked with Mitsuru, Akihiko, and the wizards from Fairy Tail towards Gekkokan High School. "But that should be impossible."

"In a world filled with magic, almost nothing is impossible." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I've even fought things that just grew their heads back after I cut them off. So, a building transforming into something else is way outside the realm of impossibility."

Hearing that, not only Yukari, but even Mitsuru and Akihiko looked at Alfonzo with dumbfounded expressions. Alzack and Bisca also looked at him with strange expressions. Even though they had heard about the fight with the homunculi before, they still could not imagine something like that.

The only person who was unfazed was Elicia, who had also fought with the homunculus in the past.

"What can I say?" Elicia asked while shrugging her shoulders. "Not everyone dies when they are killed."

With that, all the incredulous expressions shifted towards Elicia.

"I basically ripped one of those things apart from the inside out." Elicia continued after feeling everyone's gazes. "And it just regrew a new body less than a minute later."

When they heard Elicia's explanation, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari felt that she was just messing with them. Growing back a head was hard enough to believe. But a whole body was simply too farfetched.

"Well, I can understand why you don't believe me." Elicia said with a smile while shaking her head. "I wouldn't have believed it either if I didn't experience it myself, after all."

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Before the conversation could continue, the clock struck midnight and the Dark Hour came once again. And when it did, Yukari, who had never been awake to experience it, began to tremble. The atmosphere created by this strange time of the day rattling her badly.

"Is this... the Dark Hour?" Yukari asked in a shaky tone while looking around with a frightened expression on her face. "It's so... creepy."

"Yes, this is what we're trying to keep people safe from." Mitsuru said in a solemn tone. Then, she pointed towards the place where Gekkoukan High School once stood. "And we think the answer to all our questions can be found at the top of that tower."

Following the direction of Mitsuru's pointing finger, Yukari's eyes and mouth opened wide when she saw the outer appearance of Tartarus, she began trembling even harder.

"No... way..." Yukari mumbled at a volume that was barely louder than a whisper.

"Well, let's go inside." Alzack said. "We only have an hour."

Nodding in response, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Bisca made their way inside of Tartarus with Alzack. Meanwhile, Akihiko followed them without hesitation. Mitsuru, on the other hand, glanced at Yukari, who was still stunned into inaction. Then, she started pushing her motorcycle inside, as well.

"You've agreed to participate in something quite large in scale." Mitsuru said while walking away. "And I understand you did not know what you were getting yourself into. So, if you decide to leave now, no one will blame you. But if you decide to follow us after tonight, I'm afraid there will be no turning back."

After saying that, Mitsuru disappeared past the doors of Tartarus, leaving Yukari with a conflicted expression on her face. But she eventually gritted her teeth and followed everyone else with resolute steps.

However, when Yukari finally stepped into Tartarus' entrance hall, she was thoroughly dumbfounded when she saw Mitsuru holding what appeared to be a magic pistol to the side of her head.

"Hey! What are you doing!?" Yukari shouted in shock.

Even so, Mitsuru did not even flinch, as she pulled the trigger.

Bang!

"[Penthesilea]." Mitsuru chanted as her head jerked to one side.

"Kya~~~!" Yukari screamed when she saw that.

However, Yukari's scream did not last very long when she saw the figure of Penthesilea materialize behind Mitsuru.

"That's how we summon the Personas we told you about." Akihiko said, giving Yukari an explanation. "That gun Mitsuru is holding is called an Evoker Pistol. And after tonight, you'll have one, too."

Hearing Akihiko's explanation, Yukari turned towards him with an angry expression on her face.

"Why didn't you tell me about that before!?" Yukari shouted. "I almost had a heart attack. I thought she was going to kill herself."

"OH... Now that you mention it." Akihiko said while scratching his head. "I guess we probably should have mentioned that, huh?"

Seeing Akihiko's nonchalant reaction, Yukari felt she just landed a full powered punch on a wall of cotton. So, instead of staying angry, she just let her shoulder slump. Then, she looked at everyone else, who did not seem to be bothered. In fact, the wizards from Fairy Tail were all wearing amused smiles after seeing her reaction.

"Alright, now that the show is over, let's get going." Alfonzo said with a grin as he approached Mitsuru with his hand out.

Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca also approached Mitsuru. And when they were within an arm's reach, Mitsuru handed each of them a communication device. Then, after the four Fairy Tail wizards put them on, they all moved towards the teleporter platform before heading up to the eleventh floor.

Not long after the four from Fairy Tail disappeared, Mitsuru handed communication devices to Akihiko and Yukari, as well.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca made their way up the long flight of stairs to face the second guardian. And what they saw surprised them.

Instead of one Shadow, there were three. Two of which, they were familiar with, as they were the Magic Hands they had been dealing with since the moment they entered Tartarus. However, they were about fifty percent bigger than the normal ones.

But the third monster was the one they felt an actual threat from. It appeared to be a large, rubber tire on a fancy metal rim with a lion's head sticking out of one side of the tire. And based on the way it rolled around the arena area, it was quite quick and probably hit quite hard, as well.

"Giant, severed hands, I can believe." Bisca said as she watched the three Shadows move around the area. "but now we're fighting sentient wheels? What is this world coming to?"

"Who knows?" Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "But we can think about that later. We don't have the time to contemplate right now. Alzack, Bisca, handle those Magic Hands. Hopefully they have the same weakness as the ones on the lower floors."

"Got it." Alzack and Bisca replied simultaneously as they both loaded [Fire Ball Shots] into their guns. Meanwhile, Alfonzo charged forward to attack the sentient wheel.

{"That' Shadow is called the Barbaric Beast Wheel.."} Mitsuru said over the comms.

"And we'll have to figure out if it has any weaknesses ourselves, right?" Elicia asked as she ejected a large amount of thread from her fingertips.

{"Unfortunately."} Mitsuru replied. {"As I told you, my Persona is actually better suited for battle than support."}

"I know, I'm just complaining for the sake of it." Elicia said with a smile.

In the next instant, Elicia's threads wrapped around the spokes of the rim at the center of the Barbaric Beast Wheel. Then, she pulled them taught, trying to stop the Shadow from moving.

Unfortunately, the Barbaric Beast Wheel was stronger than Elicia expected. So, instead of stopping its movements, she was dragged along behind it as it rolled around the arena, picking up speed and momentum as it went.

"Uh oh! Fonzie! Do something!" Elicia said as she slid around on the arena area as if she were jet skiing.

"I'm on it." Alfonzo said as he appeared in front of the Shadow.

In the next instant, Alfonzo created a long metal spike. Then, he jammed it into the lion head's mouth. As a result, it stabbed into the tire behind it. And after less than a second, because of the spinning wheel, the spike slammed into the floor before flipping the Barbaric Beast Wheel, and causing it to fly through the air.

"Now!" Elicia shouted excitedly as she lengthened her threads.

Then, with all her strength, Elicia began to spin in place, whipping the airborne Shadow around, slamming it into the floor and walls with every opportunity. In fact, her thrashing was so violent that after a minute or so, Elicia's threads broke, sending the Shadow flying once again.

Bang! *Screech!*

Eventually, the Barbaric Beast Wheel slammed into the floor and skidded for a while on its side. However, it did not take long for it to start stirring once again, attempting to right itself and continue its rampage.

"Alfonzo, the Magic Hands are down." Alzack said.

"Alright, light that mother fucker up, then!" Alfonzo shouted from high above the Barbaric Beast Wheel.

Bang! *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!*

In response, Alzack and Bisca, who easily took care of the Magic Hands, which were weak to [Fire Magic], unloaded the rest of their magazines at the Barbaric Beast Wheel. However, the Barbaric Beast Wheel did not seem to be too bothered by the flames from the [Fire Ball shots].

{"It's resistant to fire."} Mitsuru said over the comms. {"Switch to another element."}

Reacting quickly, Alzack ejected his magazines before switching to [Lightning Bolt Shots] while Bisca loaded a magazine filled with [Icicle Shots]. Then, the couple restarted their barrage once again.

At the same time, Alfonzo was floating above the downed Barbaric Beast Wheel and gathering an absurd amount of lightning on each hand. Then, he brought his hands together with his palms pointed down at the Shadow.

["Electromagnetism Magic: Final Flash]." Alfonzo chanted as he fired a beam of violent lightning downwards.

Boom~~~~~!

In the next instant, Alfonzo's spell slammed into the Barbaric Beast Wheel. At the same time, it created a crater in the floor and sent a cloud of dust and debris into the air. On top of that, Alzack and Bisca continued firing into the dust cloud until it dispersed.

A few moments later, the dust settled. And when it did, the Barbaric Beast Wheel was nowhere in sight, more than likely destroyed by the gun fire from Alzack and Bisca, rather than Alfonzo's [Final Flash].

Even so, after realizing the enemy had been defeated, the four wizards did not waste any time. Instead, they rushed up the stairs to check the treasure chest room before heading up to the twelfth floor.

From there, they rushed through the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth floors at a rate of ten minutes per floor. On top of that, there were no new Shadows to slow them down. And when they reached the seventeenth floor, they realized there would be another Guardian up ahead when they found another long flight of stairs right as they entered the floor.

"The Shadows got stronger after the last Guardian again." Bisca said. "Still, they're at the very most a match for a high-level C-Class wizard. So, when Mitsuru and her team start exploring, they shouldn't have any problem handling it."

"As long as they stay at that level." Alzack pointed out. "But we have no way of knowing if that's the way things will be."

"We can only hope." Elicia said. "But as long as they train hard, there shouldn't be any issues as long as the Shadows don't get super strong."

"Lici's right." Alfonzo said. "At least we won't have to worry about Akihiko training hard. And Miss Kirijo seems pretty strict with herself, too. I'm just worried for the new people they recruit. I mean, putting a gun to your head and pulling the trigger takes a special kind of... person. Even if they know the gun isn't loaded with bullets."

"By the way, Mitsuru, how much time do we have left?" Bisca asked into the comms.

{"Eight minutes."} Mitsuru replied.

"That should be enough time." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I'll just released Riot and Bedlam. Then, we can go back to the hotel."

The other three nodded in agreement. Then, they gathered by the teleporter platform. Meanwhile, Alfonzo flashed up the stairs with his body covered in violet lightning.

At the same time, back on the first floor, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari, who were all listening through the communications devices wore confused expressions.

"What does he mean by 'release Riot and Bedlam'?" Yukari, the newest member of the team, asked while staring at Mitsuru and Akihiko with a confused expression on her face.

"No clue." Akihiko replied while also looking at Mitsuru with a curious gaze.

"This is the first time I've ever heard of something like that, too." Mitsuru said while shaking her head.

A moment later, Alfonzo's voice sounded through the comms.

{'[Run Wild with Destruction on your fingertips. Usher in Pandemonium with Creation in Your Hands. Riot, Bedlam.]'}

With that, Mitsuru's expression fell. She could feel Alfonzo's spike in power through Penthesilea, and if she had not been straddling her motorcycle, she would have fallen to her knees from the shock and pressure.

"Mitsuru, are you okay?" Akihiko asked as he rushed over to Mitsuru's side.

Yukari was also surprised to see Mitsuru in that state. However, she had no idea how to react. But she figured it had something to do with the chant they heard over the comms.

In the next instant, the entire tower shook for the third time in a few days, surprising the three completely.

"Kya~~~~!" Yukari screamed in surprise.

At the same time, Akihiko moved to protect Mitsuru, who was still incapable of moving. However, the shaking did not last very long. So, they breathed a sigh of relief. Shortly after that, Mitsuru's expression started returning to normal, as Alfonzo had resealed Riot and Bedlam again.

Mitsuru, is everything okay?" Akihiko asked in a concerned tone.

"Yes, I'm fine Akihiko." Mitsuru replied while taking deep breaths. "I'm fine now."

"What exactly just happened?" Yukari asked. "And what made the tower shake like that?"

"It was Mr. Marcus." Mitsuru said. "His attack is what caused the tower to shake like that. He annihilated the Guardian on the seventeenth floor with one attack."

Hearing that, Akihiko and Yukari opened their eyes wide in surprise. To think that only one attack could make a tower like this shake so hard.

"But why did you go pale like that?" Akihiko asked.

"It was because of that chant before the shaking." Mitsuru replied. "After Mr. Marcus finished, his magic power spiked by so much that I could not handle it."

"Just how strong is he?" Yukari asked in an amazed tone. "And what could make someone's magic power spike by that much at once?"

"And can they all do that?" Akihiko added a question of his own.

While Yukari was asking her questions, the teleporter platform flashed before the four Fairy Tail wizards appeared on the first floor of Tartarus.

"That's a Fairy Tail Secret." Elicia said, her voice startling the three teenagers. "So, we can't tell you that."

"Anyway, we shouldn't have more than a few minutes left before the Dark Hour ends." Alzack said. "So, we should hurry and get out of here."

With that, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari nodded their heads. Then, the group of seven left Tartarus for the night and headed back to their own resting places.

Chapter 604: Moving Preemptively

Watching Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, Bisca, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari leave the gates of Gekkokan High School after the Dark Hour ended from a top a tall building, the usual friendly smile on Shuji Ikutsuki's face was nowhere to be seen. Instead, he wore an extremely solemn expression.

"Those fools from the Kirijo Group." Shuji said coldly. "Just because their experiment failed, they want to wipe out all the wonders that were brought into this world. They truly lack ambition."

In fact, the experiment Shuji was referring to was the cause of the Dark Hour's appearance in this world. And the only reason it only seemed to affect Tatsumi Port Island was that the experiment was done on this island.

It all started when Mitsuru's grandfather, the former head of the Kirijo Group, as well as a power-hungry man, first encountered Shadows. However, back then, there weren't so many. Instead, there were only twelve. Yet, they were exceptionally powerful. Though, they did not seem to be hostile to humans.

However, when the former head of the Kirijo Group saw these powerful, yet seemingly docile, creatures, he wanted to subjugate them and use them for his own purposes. So, he put together a team of scientists, most of whom he poached from the Bureau of Magical Development. Even Mayuri Kurotsuchi collaborated with them for the first year.

Unfortunately, the experiment ended in failure. On top of that, all those who took part in the experiment ended up dead and a large part of Tatsumi Port Island was destroyed when an unexpected power surge caused a huge explosion. As a result, all the twelve Shadows, which had previously been captured, ran in all directions, never to be seen again.

Thousands of lives were lost in that explosion. Many families were destroyed in an instant. And that included Yukari's family, as her father was one of the researchers during the experiment. There was even one boy, who despite living within the blast radius, survived. And he was the only survivor.

Though the result of that experiment and the reason for the explosion were kept under wraps, there were a few people who knew the truth. And Shuji was one of them. Unfortunately, he was not one of the kind-hearted people who wish to clean up the mistakes of the past. Instead, he wants to resume the research to gain power, just like the former head of the Kirijo Group.

"Still, I can't believe the quest was accepted by such strong wizards from the mainland." Shuji said with a frown on his face while he watched the group of seven return to their lodgings. "Because of them, much of my activities have had to be put on hold. Otherwise, I have no doubt they would sense something was wrong. Even if they had no idea what it was. And that would cause them to start snooping round where their noses don't belong."

When Shuji thought about how much his plans were pushed back just because those four from Fairy Tail showed up, he could not help but grit his teeth.

"But at least they did something good, bringing that Leviathan Corpse and selling it to the Kirijo Group." Shuji continued after shaking his head. "Though some of the materials would be used to make equipment for those brats who will be playing hero, the rest can be used for my plans. Hehehe!"

After releasing that creepy little chuckle, Shuji turned around to return to the interior of the building. However, just as he did so, he somehow lost his balance. Then, after taking a few steps backwards to stabilize his footing, he realized that his right foot did not land on a solid surface.

Immediately, Shuji's face paled, as he realized he was going to fall from the top of the building. Then, he watched as his life and the side of the building flashed past his eyes as he fell.

"Ahh~~~~~!" Shuji screamed while flailing his arms as he plummeted to his death.

At the same time, a few long threads vanished as the magic power sustaining them was dispelled.

Boom!

A few seconds later, Shuji's body slammed into the street below, splattering his blood, organs, bones, and limbs all over the side of the street. However, since it was so late at night, no one would notice his death until the morning.

Meanwhile, the culprit, Elicia, smiled brightly once she noticed that her plan had succeeded. Alfonzo smiled, as well. Alzack and Bisca, however, looked at them with somewhat aghast and confused expressions on their faces.

"Lici... you...?" Bisca asked in a slightly horrified tone.

"We'll tell you about it when we get back to the hotel." Alfonzo said, cutting off Bisca before she could finish asking her question. "Just trust us for now."

While they were still shaken up by what they sensed through their [Magic Power Detections], Alzack and Bisca trusted Alfonzo and Elicia implicitly. So, they simply nodded in response. Though, their pale expressions did not go away so quickly.

Meanwhile, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari were confused. There was no context to the Fairy Tail wizards' conversation. So, they had no way of making sense of it. Though, they would find out soon enough. On top of that, there would be new information to go along with it.

"What's up?" Alfonzo asked after noticing the questioning gazes he and the others were getting from the three teens.

"Nothing." Mitsuru replied after a few moments of silence. "It's not our business to dig into your secrets."

In response, Alfonzo and Elicia only smiled. Then, the two groups said their goodbyes and went their separate ways. Then after about ten minutes, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca arrived in Alfonzo and Elicia's hotel room.

"So, what was that all about?" Alzack asked in a sterner tone than usual. "Fairy Tail wizards don't kill civilians. And that's exactly what you just did."

Seeing Alzack and Bisca's serious expressions made Alfonzo and Elicia smile. For as long as they could remember, Alzack basically followed their words as if they were gospel. But seeing him put his foot down when he thought they were in the wrong made them both feel gratified.

"You'll understand once you take a look at this." Elicia said as she opened a pocket on her luggage that Alfonzo had expanded with space expansion sigils.

A moment later, Elicia pulled out a stack of documents before handing them over to Alzack and Bisca.

In those documents, there was information about the previously mentioned experiment that killed so many people on Tatsumi Port Island in the past. There was also proof that Shuji intended to continue the research for his personal gain. Even worse, there was proof that Shuji had been embezzling funds and resources from the Kirijo Group for exactly that.

There were even notes that explained a kidnapping and assassination plan Shuji was readying to get rid of Takeharu, Mitsuru, and any future members of S.E.E.S.

"Is this real?" Bisca asked with her eyes open wide in shock. "But he seemed like such a nice man. It's hard to believe he would do anything like this."

"It's all true." Elicia said with a nod. "I got it after sneaking into his house and several hideouts he visited over the last few days."

"But why?" Bisca asked. "What made you suspect him?"

"Like you said, Bisca, he seemed like such a nice man." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "Too nice. So nice, in fact, that it seemed unreal."

"But that's not---" Bisca started to argue back.

However, before she could finish voicing her opinion, Alzack's hand landed on her shoulder. And when she looked back, she saw Alzack smiling at her.

"Bisca, I know it doesn't seem reasonable to you." Alzack said with a smile. "But Alfonzo and Lici have scary good intuitions. Remember the Tenrou Island Incident from a few years ago? With nothing other than a hunch, Alfonzo set up surveillance instruments and the [Fairy Sphere] spell. And if he hadn't, we would have lost a lot of our friends."

Hearing that, Bisca slowly calmed down. However, she was still a little unsettled. Then, she realized it was not because of the fact that Elicia killed Shuji. Instead, it was because they did not tell her about it before hand. Instead, they did their investigations without telling anyone, then things just happened out of nowhere.

"*Sigh* It wouldn't have killed you to tell us about your suspicions beforehand, though." Alzack said as he turned his gaze to his longtime friends.

"Yeah, You're probably right." Alfonzo replied with a solemn nod.

"We actually considered it." Elicia replied. "But until today, Bisca wasn't dealing with the fatigue from the Dark Hour very well. So, we didn't want to burden either of you with anything else."

"I guess I can understand that." Alzack replied with a nod of his own. "But now I understand why Ur got so upset when you had prepared before the Acnologia attack. Just having things sprung on you like this..."

"Well, that situation was totally different, though." Alfonzo said with a wry smile. "I mean, that was me preparing for a what if scenario after having the Etherion fired at us. But we're definitely in the wrong for not telling you guys, our teammates about this when we started working on it."

With that the room fell into silence. A few moments later, Alzack was the one to break the silence.

"Well, we understand why the two of you did things the way you did." Alzack said. "I mean, you were just looking out for Bisca, making sure she only had to focus on getting used to the pressure from the Dark Hour."

In response, Alfonzo and Elicia nodded their heads once again.

"But now that we know, let us know what you plan to do next." Alzack continued.

Alfonzo and Elicia exchanged glances. Then, they both smiled. After that, they explained their plan to Alzack and Bisca, who opened their eyes in surprise before smiling, thinking this was something that Alfonzo and Elicia would do.

Several hours later, as the people of Tatsumi Port Island started their days, Shuji's body was discovered by a man heading to the shop he owned to open it up.

Quickly, the news of a man dying overnight spread through the town. And that naturally led to the local authorities, a branch of the kingdom's knights, getting the information, as well. However, the knights did not act the way most people thought they would.

Instead of looking for suspects, they actually treated Shuji like a criminal that committed suicide because his evil deeds were exposed. And the reason for that was simple, a copy of the information Alzack and Bisca read through last night was found on the captain's desk when he entered his office this morning.

However, the captain of the knights was not the only one who received that information packet, as there was an identical information package on Takeharu Kirijo's desk as well. And needless to say, he was both furious and in disbelief when he read it. However, with the information being so clear, he could only investigate before making any decisions.

Unfortunately, because the information made it onto the desk of the knight captain, which meant the secret about the Shadows and the Dark Hour spread to the higher-ups in the kingdom. So, the Kirijo Group would have quite a few questions to answer from not only the kingdom, but the Magic Council, as well.

On the other hand, because of that, they would more than likely get more support to investigate Tartarus from both organizations in the future. Meaning, although there still would not be many people who could operate during the Dark Hour, those who could, would receive all the resources they needed to do something about it.

The only real issue was if the people in power would try to weaponize the Shadows like the former Head of the Kirijo Group had done in the past. Even so, the kingdom sent over a squad of knights to do what they could to help with the investigation as quickly as they could. Meanwhile, Takeharu requested that Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca meet him in his office for a discussion that afternoon.

Chapter 605: The Flag Was Raised

Around noon of the day Shuji Ikutsuki was found dead at the foot of a tall building, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca arrived in the office of the Kirijo Group's head, Takeharu Kirijo. And like the last time they were here, Mitsuru was also present. Though, she was unaware why she was called away from school for this.

That was not to say that Mitsuru was unaware of Shuji's death. However, she just could not see why that would involve her.

"Honestly, I did not think you would be so willing to meet me today." Takeharu said from his seat behind his desk.

"Well, we were pretty sure we know why you called us here." Alfonzo said casually in his capacity as the leader of the party of Fairy Tail wizards.

"Indeed." Takeharu replied. Then, he placed his hand on a stack of documents that were placed on his desk. "Then, I'll skip straight to the point. Were you responsible for these mysteriously appearing on my desk at some point last night?"

Immediately, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca knew those documents were the evidence on Shuji's wrong doings that Elicia found over the last few days. So, they nodded their heads.

"Yup! I put them there." Elicia confessed cheerfully.

Alfonzo, Alzack, and Bisca could only look at Elicia exasperatedly. Takeharu, on the other hand, narrowed his visible eye while he lightly glared at her. As for Mitsuru, although her expression had not changed ever since this conversation started, she was thoroughly confused by the conversation.

"Excuse me, Father." Mitsuru said politely. "If I may, what are those documents?"

Hearing that, Takeharu continued to glare at the smiling Elicia for a few more moments. However, he eventually retracted his glare before glancing at Mitsuru. Then, without a word, he handed the stack of documents to his daughter and gestured for her to start reading.

Still confused by the entire situation, Mitsuru glanced at her father once again after receiving the documents. However, after not receiving any kind of explanation, she pulled out a pair of Gale Force Reading Glasses and began reading with a solemn expression on her face. And as time went by, that expression became more and more solemn.

"Can you tell me, why did you start investigating Ikutsuki?" Takeharu asked in a calm, yet authoritative, tone. "I've known him for years and never seen anything that would make me suspect him of anything that could be found in those documents. Yet, you've only been here for a few days and found so much."

"Unfortunately, we don't have any grand reason for it." Alfonzo, completely unaffected by Takeharu's aura, replied with a shrug. "He never gave himself away, either. Well, other than the fact that he watched us every time we entered and exited Tartarus. Still, that was not enough to make us so suspicious of him."

"That wouldn't have been enough time to find so much evidence, either." Elicia added.

Glancing at Elicia, Alfonzo nodded in response. Then, he returned his attention to Takeharu.

"If anything, it was just our intuitions as wizards."

While Alfonzo's reason sounded preposterous, Takeharu, as a businessman, believed in following one's intuition. So, he only nodded his head. In fact, if Alfonzo had said that he could see through the mask of civility Shuji must have always been wearing, he would not have believed him in the slightest.

"Is this really true?" Mitsuru, who had been immersed in reading the documents Takeharu handed to her, exclaimed in both fury and disbelief. "He's been syphoning funds from our company for years? And he was plotting to kill Father and me? Yet, we never saw any inkling of it?"

Mitsuru's outburst caused the conversation to stop abruptly. Then, everyone looked in her direction just in time to see her take off her Gale Force Reading Glasses.

"If he hadn't committed suicide after being found out, I would have killed him myself." Mitsuru said in an ice cold tone.

That statement only caused the wizards from Fairy Tail to look at her with awkward smiles on their faces. Meanwhile, Takeharu began massaging his temples while shaking his head.

A few moments later, after taking a moment to calm down, Mitsuru noticed all the odd gazes she was receiving. She then tilted her head in confusion, looking much cuter than anyone with such a murderous aura around them had any right to.

"Is there something wrong with what I said?" Mitsuru asked coldly.

"*Sigh* Mitsuru, do you really think Ikutsuki knew he had been found out?" Takeharu asked.

Hearing that, Mitsuru looked at her father in shock. Then, she stopped to think about it. And she realized, if he had been acting so secretly for so many years, there was no way Shuji would have suspected that he had been found out.

"I see, I let my emotions get the better of my judgement." Mitsuru said as she forcefully calmed herself down. "Then, that would mean he was more than likely murdered by someone when they found out about his plans, correct."

"That's right." Takeharu replied. "And the person who did it is definitely in this room with us."

With that, Takeharu and Mitsuru both turned their gazes towards the Fairy Tail quartet.

"Yeah, I did that, too." Elicia said cheerfully while waving at the father-daughter pair. A moment later, however, her expression turned solemn. "I'm sure you read it in the report, but that guy had been experimenting on how Shadows affected people outside of Tartarus. For example, if they attacked someone's coffin during the Dark Hour."

Hearing that, both Takeharu's and Mitsuru's expressions darkened. They had both read that part of the report. So, they were aware of what happened to people in those situations.

Basically, the Shadows, without harming the victims physically, would destroy their emotions and desires, leaving them completely apathetic. Although these phenomena were not too widespread, yet. Rumors were already starting to spread. In fact, after a few months, there would have probably been a quest issued to find the cause of this "Apathy Syndrome," as it had been named in the rumors.

"Doing things like that makes him no better than a dark wizard." Elicia continued after receiving stiff nods from Takeharu and Mitsuru. "And as wizards from legal guilds, we are authorized to kill people like that."

The room fell into a tense silence after Elicia's explanation. However, neither Takeharu nor Mitsuru had any intention of reprimanding her for it. Instead, Takeharu nodded his head.

"Even if he had been brought in alive, I doubt he would have lived past the end of the month based on his crimes." Takeharu said. "Anyway, that's all I wanted. I just wanted to ask you those questions to clear up my doubts about the situation."

"Cool." Alfonzo replied as he stood up. "Then, we'll get going. It's still better to rest when we can before heading into Tartarus. Even though the monsters aren't particularly strong for us, the Dark Hour really saps your stamina."

"I understand." Takeharu replied while nodding his head. Then, he turned to Mitsuru. "Mitsuru, would you show them out? Then, you can return to school."

"Understood." Mitsuru replied as she started walking towards the office's door.

"By the way, Mitsuru, are there any hotels with kitchen's in the rooms?" Elicia asked.

Hearing that, Mitsuru paused and looked at Elicia weirdly. Alzack and Bisca, on the other hand, had their eyes light up brightly.

Because they were on a quest, they did not really think about it. But it had been quite some time since Alzack or Bisca had Alfonzo's cooking. And Elicia was actually in the same boat. Although Alfonzo cooked every time he came back from the Village Hidden in the Leaves, he had not cooked at all since he got back this time. And that was because of the wedding and the honeymoon. Then, he immediately took a quest after all that.

"Actually, the hotel you're staying in has kitchens in the suites." Mitsuru replied. "But most people, even if they book those rooms, never use them. Since the chefs in our hotels are quite skilled. Just below those working in the Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge in quality, I would say."

Elicia's, Alzack's, and Bisca's eyes began shining like torch lights. Then, they all exchanged glances. After that, Alzack and Bisca took off, running through the Kirijo Group's headquarters to get outside and return to their hotel as quickly as possible.

"We'll go book the best suite in the hotel!" Alzack shouted. "We'll see you when you get back."

"Oh, and don't forget to check out of your old rooms when you get back, okay?" Bisca added as she ran alongside Alzack.

"Don't worry, we won't." Elicia said as she wrapped her arms around Alfonzo's left arm. Then, she continued as she started pulling him down the hall. "Come on, Fonzie, we gotta go buy some groceries."

Mitsuru was left standing on the spot with a dumbfounded expression on her face. Meanwhile, Alfonzo could not help but smile wryly as he was dragged away by Elicia.

"Oh, you, Aki, and Yukari should come over after you get out of school." Elicia said to Mitsuru from over her shoulder. "Fonzie's cooking is the best in the world. And I guarantee you'll regret it if you miss this chance."

After speaking her piece, Elicia sped up. She and Alfonzo then disappeared from Mitsuru's line of sight.

Meanwhile, Mitsuru was thoroughly confused. However, since she was invited over for dinner, she decided she would do the polite thing and go. At the worst, the food just would not suit her pallet, and she would politely decline any future offers.

Time passed quickly after that. And before anyone knew it, it was almost midnight once again. So, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, Bisca, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari were all on their way to Gekkokan High School.

"O.M.G., I don't think I've ever eaten something so delicious before." Yukari said while the group walked down the empty streets of Tatsumi Port Island. "I wonder if it's as good as the Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge? I heard they have the best food in Fiore. The queen of the culinary world, Erina Nakiri, even works at the restaurant in Crocus, right?"

Hearing that, Elicia puffed out her chest as if she was the one who was just praised. At the same time, Alzack and Bisca smiled at Yukari's enthusiasm.

"Yes, we all know it was good." Akihiko said. "And there's no way we would ever be able to forget, either. I mean, you've said that fourteen times since the meal ended three hours ago."

Hearing that, Yukari blushed slightly in embarrassment. Even so, she was still excited about the meal she had earlier in the evening.

"Well, to answer your question, that was indeed more delectable than the food that can be purchased at the Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge." Mitsuru said. "At least from my experience. But I have yet to eat at the restaurant in Crocus. So, I don't know how it compares to Erina Nakiri's cooking."

After saying that, Mitsuru glanced at Alfonzo, who was chatting in a lively manner with his guild mates, with suspicion. As she alluded to, she had been to the Sixth Sense Restaurant and Lounge before. So, she knew that the dishes Alfonzo served for dinner were those that could be found on their menu. However, she had never seen them anywhere else.

Unlike her father, Mitsuru had no idea that Alfonzo was the owner of Sixth Sense Holdings. So, she only had suspicions about his connection to the restaurant. She eventually pushed her suspicions to the back of her mind, however, as the group was about to reach Gekkokan High School. On top of that, the Dark Hour would begin in a matter of seconds.

June 22, x788.

A few seconds later, the atmosphere on Tatsumi Port Island changed just as the group of seven walked through the school's gates. Then, as soon as Tartarus had finished its transformation, the group walked into the lobby. Shortly after that, Mitsuru summoned Penthesilea and handed out the communication devices.

A moment after that, Alfonzo led the other wizards from Fairy Tail onto the teleporter platform and headed up to the seventeenth floor. Meanwhile, Akihiko was trying to help Yukari get over the natural aversion to putting a pistol shaped object to her head and pulling the trigger.

"*Sigh* We've already climbed up to the seventeenth floor." Alzack said once the group appeared on the seventeenth floor. "But we haven't seen anything that could be called a 'Reaper'. Does this Shadow even exist?"

"I'm starting to wonder about that, too." Bisca added. "What makes it even more suspicious is the fact that even Mitsuru doesn't have a record of it in Penthesilea's database."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia exchanged glances. They both knew the Reaper existed. However, they had no way to convey that to the others without looking crazy or suspicious themselves. They already did something that made Alzack and Bisca uneasy on this trip, even though they collected sufficient

evidence to justify their actions beforehand. So, they did not want to do anything that could strain their relationships any further.

"Unfortunately, the only thing we can do is keep climbing." Elicia said. "And if we make it to the top of the tower and don't find it, we can only go back to the bottom and start climbing again."

"*Sigh* I really hope it doesn't come to that." Alfonzo said in an annoyed tone. "It's already the twenty-second, and I need to be back in the Leaf Village by the twenty-ninth. I really don't wanna miss those kids during one of the biggest days in their careers as shinobi. But on the upside, Alzack just raised a flag. So, we'll probably find it really soon."

Alzack and Bisca looked at Alfonzo with curiosity after hearing about the shinobi kids, while consciously ignoring the bit about Alzack raising a flag. They had heard about the Hidden Leaf Village ever since Alfonzo and Elicia came back from the first trip to the village. And they would be lying if they said they weren't curious to know about the culture and strength of those living in such a village.

"Well, if we're lucky, we'll run into the Reaper on the next floor." Alzack said, trying to console Alfonzo, who was worried about being late to his appointment.

"He just raised it even higher." Alfonzo muttered.

"If you can call running into a monster called 'the Reaper' getting lucky." Bisca said with a smile while ignoring Alfonzo again. "Either way, let's just keep going. We haven't found the Old Document 01, either."

Receiving nods in return, Bisca nodded back. Then, the group started climbing the long flight of stairs. Then, they checked the room with the treasure chests. And like before, there was a chest they could not open and a chest they could. However, the one they could open did not have anything useful to them. So, they continued up to the eighteenth floor.

Not long after entering the eighteenth floor, the group had explored a two rooms. However, they did not run into any Shadows. But that was not that strange.

Just when the group stepped into the third room, they all went on high alert. At that moment, the atmosphere on the floor changed. Not only that, but they could feel an extremely sinister and powerful magic power signature appear in the place where they entered the floor.

"What the hell is that?" Alzack asked as he tightened his grip on his pistols.

"I don't know, but it's making my skin crawl." Bisca said in a shaky tone. "Do you think this could be the..."

"Oh, do you two remember that flag I was talking about?" Alfonzo said solemnly as he drew Riot and Bedlam from the strap on his back. "Well, I'm sure there's no doubt..."

"This can't be anything other than..." Elicia said, continuing from where Alfonzo left off as she pulled a few of Scylla's needles from the wristband on her left arm.

"The Reaper." Alfonzo and Elicia said in unison while they could feel the powerful and sinister magic power signature drawing nearer.

Rattle! *Rattle!*

After a few moments, on top of the approaching magic power signature, the group could hear the sound of chains rattling. And the sound was getting louder as time passed.

Chapter 606: Vs. The Reaper

Rattle! *Rattle!*

Listening to the sound of the chains rattling draw nearer, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca readied themselves for battle.

"Does something of this level even belong in this tower?" Alzack asked as he watched the entrance they used to enter the last room like a hawk. "I mean, what if those kids ran into something like this? They wouldn't even be able to move, would they?"

"Instead of thinking about how those kids would survive, we should be thinking about how we're going to survive." Alfonzo reminded solemnly. Then, he swept his gaze over his teammates. "Alzack, Bisca, as soon as it is in your sight, I want you two to light it up with as many elements as you can. We have to find its weakness."

'But if it's anything like the one in the game, that will probably be useless.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'If I remember correctly, it was neither weak nor resistant to anything. But it had a shit-ton of health and hit like a fucking truck.'

Unaware of Alfonzo's thoughts, Alzack and Bisca nodded their heads as they readied the magazines they would be using for their initial barrages. Meanwhile, Alfonzo turned his attention to Elicia.

"I think we're gonna have to use Riot, Bedlam, and Scylla for this." Alfonzo said solemnly.

"I know." Elicia replied. "This thing is almost as strong as Irene back when you and Master Unohana fought her. So, it's not gonna be easy."

"I know, but we have no choice but to fight." Alfonzo said with a daring grin. "Fairy Tail wizards don't fail quests, after all."

Elicia smiled back in response.

Meanwhile, Mitsuru was once again stunned by the level of power she was sensing. At the same time, Akihiko and Yukari stopped their training after hearing the conversation over the comms.

"It looks like they're about to face something dangerous." Akihiko said in a serious tone. "I kinda wish I was there, too."

"No, you don't, Akihiko." Mitsuru said in a shaky tone. "The thing they are about to face is like nothing I've ever felt before. It's so dark and sinister."

"If it's as bad as you say, why aren't they running away?" Yukari asked in a worried tone.

"You heard them already, didn't you?" Mitsuru asked as she glanced at Yukari. "It's because of their pride as wizards of Fiore's strongest guild."

"But is pride worth risking their lives for?" Yukari asked.

"Only the individuals involved in the situation can answer that." Akihiko said.

Back on the eighteenth floor, the wizards from Fairy Tail were finally able to see the approaching calamity. Stepping into the room they just left was a 12' tall humanoid figure wearing a long, black hooded robe with red accents and a pair of black gloves carrying a scythe over its left shoulder and an extremely long barreled revolver in its right. And based on the small part of its lower face that was not covered by the shadows from the hood, its head was more than likely nothing but a skull.

"Alright, guys, let's do it." Alfonzo said as he flared his magic power. "[Run Wild with Destruction on your fingertips. Usher in Pandemonium with Creation in your hands. Riot, Bedlam]."

"[Mend the Seams of Reality, Scylla]." Elicia chanted at the same time as Alfonzo.

Bang! *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!* *Bang!*

Meanwhile, Alzack and Bisca fired as many magic bullets of as many magic elements as they had. As a result, the room they just exited was lit up with the colors of all sorts of magic spells. And had it not happened in such a desperate situation, it would have been quite the sight to admire.

"Mitsuru, was there any luck?" Alzack asked over the comms while he changed the magazines in his pistols. "With all the magical explosions, we can't see if it was knocked down or not."

{"Unfortunately, nothing has changed from what I can see."} Mitsuru replied.

"Does that mean it's not weak to any elements?" Bisca asked as she continued to shoot.

{"That's correct."} Mitsuru replied. {"But it doesn't seem to be resisting any, either."}

Rattle! *Rattle!*

Eventually, the gunfire came to an end and all the magical explosions died down, as well. However, as soon as they did, the sound of rattling chains was still continuing at the same pace. On top of that, it was even closer than before.

"We didn't even slow it down." Alzack said in a shocked tone.

At that moment, the Reaper came to a stop. Then, it took its scythe off its shoulder and slammed the butt of the shaft onto the floor. In the next instant, a wave of [Darkness Magic] spread towards Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca from the point of contact.

'Shit!' Alfonzo exclaimed internally as he sprung forward before slamming his palms onto the floor. 'That's definitely this world's version of [Mamudoon]. That's a fucking insta-kill spell. Even if it's accuracy is low, I can't chance anyone getting hit by it.'

"[Metal Magic: Anti-Magic Barrier]." Alfonzo chanted just as his hands came into contact with the floor.

In the next instant, an adamantite shield inscribed with anti-magic sigils sprung up from the floor in front of Alfonzo and covered everyone from being hit with the wave of [Darkness Magic]. However, before Alfonzo could breathe a sigh of relief, the Reaper, in a burst of speed, disappeared from where it stood. When it reappeared, it was standing behind Bisca with its scythe raised and ready to cut her in half.

"Shit!" Alfonzo exclaimed as he was covered in violet lightning.

"Bisca!" Alzack shouted in a terrified tone as he aimed his pistols at the Reaper.

Unfortunately, before Alzack could pull the triggers or Alfonzo could close the short distance, the Reaper swung its scythe.

Meanwhile, Bisca, despite her impending death, [Requipped] her sniper rifle, Last Kiss, and aimed at the Reaper's head with resolve burning in her eyes.

Lucky for Bisca, she, Alfonzo, and Alzack were not the only ones present. Because the Reaper's scythe was forced to a stop by a large number of threads wrapping around its handle just before it cut through Bisca's waist.

"Hurry up!" Elicia said as he used all her might to pull the threads that were wrapped around the shaft of the Reaper's scythe. "This thing is too strong! My threads are about to break."

Bang!

As soon as Elicia's words fell, Bisca pulled Last Kiss's trigger. An instant later, the high-caliber bullet was flattened when it struck the Reaper's skull. Even so, it caused the Reaper's head to jerk back as it stumbled a step backwards.

Then, just as the reaper's foot touched the floor, a pair of short swords flowing with violet electricity were stabbed into its chest. Then, in a flash of violent lightning, it disappeared from where it stood.

Boom!

A moment later, the sound of something powerfully impacting a wall echoed through the surroundings. On top of that, a dust cloud was formed from the impact. However, it was dispersed quickly enough.

Bang!

And the force from the Reaper's long-barreled revolver was the reason for that. However, when everyone saw the scene behind the dust cloud, they only saw the Reaper with a pair of short sword hilts sticking out of its chest while a high-temperature swirling flame dissipated in front of it.

However, there was a strange point about the swords sticking out of the Reapers chest. And that was the fact that they were slowly melting. However, instead of falling to the floor, the liquid metal was seeping into the wounds.

"[Zig Zag Stitching]." Elicia chanted as she fired several of the golden scales on her hand towards the Reaper.

Along the way, the golden scales turned into golden needles with dragon motifs. On top of that, all the needles were threaded with Elicia's threads. And because this enemy was so powerful, she did not use her normal threads. Instead, She expended the extra magic power to create Vibranium Threads.

Then, all the needles shot through the Reapers robes and penetrated the wall behind it. After that, Elicia flicked her fingers repeatedly to sew the Reaper to the wall, as if she were sewing a patch onto a shirt.

"Hopefully, that will hold him for a while." Elicia said as she wiped a bead of sweat from her forehead. "You guys can go all out now."

Immediately upon hearing that, Alzack switched the magazines in his pistols. Then, he fired several shots at the Reaper.

"[Guns Magic: Thunder Fire Shots]." Alzack said with some venom in his tone. "You'll pay for trying to take my Bisca away from me."

Boom! *Boom!* *Boom!*

Every time Alzack pulled the triggers of his pistols, a bolt of lightning was fired from his left pistol while a fire tornado was shot from his right. And when they collided with each other and the center of the Reaper's chest, they would explode into a flaming thunder storm. And every successive shot that landed would increase the scale and intensity of the storm.

Despite all the firepower landing on it, the Reaper was still capable of fighting. However, it was incapable of freeing itself from Elicia's stitching so quickly. So, it gave up on closing the distance with the Fairy Tail wizards. Instead, it flexed its wrist and pointed its long-barreled revolver at Alzack, who was still firing at it. Then, it pulled the trigger.

Despite firing its revolver, no bullet came flying. Instead, the ethernano around Alzack began to move and heat up.

"Damn it..." Alzack muttered as he realized he did not have enough time to evade the coming attack.

"Alzack! No!" Bisca shouted in a panicked tone.

However, just as the moving ethernano was converted into a swirl of [Fire Magic], Alzack was knocked to the side by Alfonzo, who appeared from a purple flash. Unfortunately, there was not enough time for him to move away before the spell activated.

"*Boom!*

The swirling flames immediately engulfed Alfonzo and a small area around him.

"Damn it! Alfonzo, are you okay?" Alzack asked frantically.

"Calm down, Fonzie is fine." Elicia said calmly. "Just focus on getting rid of this thing. [Running Stitch]."

With her latest chant, Elicia once again shot dragon motif needles and threads from her hands. And those threads quickly wrapped around the barrel of the revolver before the needles penetrated the wall and pinned the gun to it.

"Lici's right." Alfonzo said calmly. "It takes a lot more than that to take me out."

With that said, Alfonzo swept his left arm to the side, dispersing the swirling flames to reveal that he was mostly unscathed. And the reason for that was because he was wearing armor that looked remarkably similar to Erza's [Flame Empress Armor]. Though, the design was clearly meant for a male.

"I guess I can call this [Flame Emperor Armor], huh?" Alfonzo asked with a smile. "That son of a bitch burned my hair, though."

Just as Alfonzo said, his dreads, which were pulled into a ponytail and hung down to the middle of his back, had been burned away to the point that it only reached his shoulders.

"I just hope little man isn't too disappointed when he sees how short Daddy's hair is." Alfonzo said as his smile turned blood thirsty.

In the next instant, Alfonzo vanished from his spot in a burst of speed. When he reappeared, he was kneeling in front of the Reaper with his right palm facing the reapers chest while his right arm was sparking with arcs of violent electricity.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Linear Cannon]." Alfonzo chanted as a basketball-sized chunk of orichalcum materialized between his palm and the Reaper's chest.

"Uh oh! Brace for impact again!" Elicia shouted as she used her threads to pull Alzack and Bisca to her side.

In the next instant, Elicia created a cocoon of Vibranium Threads around herself, Alzack, and Bisca. At the same time, Alfonzo slammed his palm onto the surface of the basketball-sized chunk of orichalcum.

Boom~~~~~!

If one were to look from the outside of Tartarus, they would see a line of superheated air connecting a wall of the tower with the sky. However, they would be quite surprised by the fact that there were so many cracks in the side of the tower, yet no rubble fell to the ground.

However, things inside the tower were quite different. The impact that destroyed a good portion of one of Tartarus' walls caused large pieces of rubble to fall from both the walls and ceiling of the eighteenth floor. At the same time, the entire tower shook as if it was going to collapse at any moment.

Luckily for those inside, that did not happen.

"I think I went a little overboard." Alfonzo muttered as he looked at the hole he created in Tartarus' wall, as well as all the debris that fell from the ceiling. "At least I got him, though."

"Fonzie, you call this 'a little overboard'?" Elicia asked as her threads burrowed out of the debris covering her cocoon. "Would it take bringing down the entire tower before you thought you went truly overboard?"

Alfonzo could only smile sheepishly without trying to defend himself.

"Anyway, I'm pretty tired." Alfonzo said in a blatant attempt to change the subject. "Using that much magic power at one time during the Dark Hour really tired me out. Let's find a teleporter and end the exploration early."

As he spoke, Alfonzo created construction tools to help Elicia dig herself, Alzack, and Bisca out of the pile of rubble. And after only about five minutes, they were able to clear a path for the three.

When Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca were freed, Elicia rolled her eyes at Alfonzo while Alzack and Bisca smiled awkwardly. Even so, neither of the three objected to Alfonzo's suggestion. So, Alfonzo and Elicia resealed their [Soul Armaments] and they did their best to navigate the floor with Mitsuru's assistance.

On a side note, when Elicia saw how much of Alfonzo's hair was burned away, she almost started crying. And it was not because his hair got shorter. Instead, it was because of how much work she had done over the years to keep Alfonzo's dreads looking as good as they did.

Unfortunately, there were no teleporters on the eighteenth floor. So, they had to climb up to the nineteenth floor. However, there was no teleporter on the nineteenth floor either. Nor was there one on the twentieth.

They did manage to find one on the twenty-first floor, though. And when they saw that it was one of the two-way teleporter platforms to the right of a long flight of stairs, they decisively climbed on.

"Nope, not dealing with one of those guardians today." Alfonzo said. "I'm just too tired for that shit."

In response, the other three only nodded their heads. A moment later, Alfonzo activated the platform and the three were teleported back to the first floor.

Unfortunately, if they had not been so exhausted from fighting their way up the last three floors after fighting the Reaper, they would have noticed that there were no magic power signatures, other than a treasure chest that could not be opened on the twenty-first floor.

"Do you guys have to almost destroy the tower every time you fight something strong?" Yukari asked in a tone that let everyone know she was still shaken from the earlier episode.

"Sorry, but if I didn't go all out, I don't know how long we would have been fighting that thing." Alfonzo replied. "But at least we killed it."

"Are you sure that was the Reaper, though?" Akihiko asked. "Maybe it was just a strong Shadow that gave off that impression."

"I'm sure." Mitsuru said, replying to Akihiko's question in place of the Fairy Tail wizards. "Penthesilea relayed the information to me."

"Well, if Mitsuru says so, then I guess it's true." Akihiko replied with a shrug.

"Anyway, *Yawn~~~~~* I wanna go back, take a shower, and go to bed." Elicia said in a sleepy tone. Then she turned to Alfonzo and jumped on his back. "Fonzie, carry me."

"You act like you're the only one who's tired." Alfonzo said grumpily.

Even so, Alfonzo did not make Elicia get off his back. Instead, he piggy-backed her while everyone left Tartarus and headed back for the night.

Chapter 607: Ten Years Quest - Completed

The sun hung high in the sky over Tatsumi Port Island. However, the scene in the most luxurious suite in the most luxurious hotel on the island was uncommonly quiet. Alfonzo was not moving around or cooking lunch, Elicia was not laughing or designing new clothing, and Alzack and Bisca were not maintaining their guns or chatting happily.

Instead, the four wizards from Fairy Tail were still lying in their beds and enjoying the final remnants of their trips to dream land.

Apparently, fighting the Reaper during the Dark Hour was much more tiring than any of their other excursions into Tartarus. However, at this moment, Alfonzo, the earliest riser of the four, finally started to stir.

"Damn... I've never been so exhausted after a battle before." Alfonzo muttered as he wiped away the sleepiness in his eyes. "Going all out like that during the Dark Hour is something else."

After speaking his thoughts, Alfonzo looked at his other arm, where Elicia was hugging his arm while sleeping peacefully. Though, the look on her face made him a bit worried.

And he had every right to be worried. Currently, Elicia was drooling and she looked quite impatient.

"Is she dreaming about food again?" Alfonzo asked himself in a daze.

A moment later, Alfonzo's eyes widened and he quickly pulled the arm Elicia was hugging away from her.

Click!

In the next instant, Elicia opened her mouth and bit down where Alfonzo's arm used to be. In fact, she bit down so hard that the sound of her teeth colliding could be heard clearly. Then, she frowned from the apparent pain before her eye lashes started to quiver.

"Fonzie... Why did you take the chicken away?" Elicia asked sleepily.

Alfonzo could only look on at his first wife dumbfoundedly.

"She tried to eat me in her sleep again." Alfonzo said in a daze. "This is the first time this has happened in a while."

"Huh?" Elicia exclaimed in confusion. Then, she looked around in a daze as she continued. "Where did the chicken go?"

Alfonzo maintained his dumbfounded expression while he watched Elicia wake up slowly.

"Huh? Fonzie? Where am I?" Elicia said after she recognized that she was not in the place where she thought she was. "What happened?"

"Nothing." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "Good morning, Lici."

Elicia smiled brightly after hearing Alfonzo's greeting. Then, she hugged him tightly once again.

"Good morning, Fonzie!" Elicia said happily.

Seeing Elicia's happy smile, Alfonzo's dumbfounded expression relaxed. Then, he started combing his fingers through her hair, causing her eyes to narrow like those of a cat.

"Fonzie, I'm hungry." Elicia said. "What's for breakfast? If you haven't decided, I want pancakes with strawberries and whipped cream."

Seeing Elicia's expression and hearing what she just said, Alfonzo's smile widened.

'I remember, back in the day, I wondered if she would be able to stay the person she is after being transported to this world.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'And although she's more resolute about solving problems with violence, overall, her personality is still the same.'

"Okay, I'll go cook breakfast." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I think we should have the ingredients to make some pancakes. But I don't think we bought any strawberries yesterday."

At first, Elicia smiled happily when she heard there were pancake ingredients. But she looked like her world was ending when Alfonzo pointed out that there were no strawberries.

"We have bananas and I can make a syrup to go with them, though." Alfonzo said in a consoling tone. "So, don't worry too much, okay?"

In response, Elicia nodded her head. Though, it was obvious she was still a bit disappointed.

Then, Alfonzo got up and prepared breakfast for himself, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca. After that, the day went by in a rather lazy fashion. Until it was time to go out and make their way into Tartarus again, that is.

June 23, x788.

As soon as the Dark Hour began, the wizards from Fairy Tail, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari stepped into Tartarus' lobby. However, the three students were looking at Alfonzo and the others with a bit of worry in their expressions.

Well, Mitsuru and Yukari looked a bit worried. Akihiko, on the other hand, looked rather excited.

"Are you four really okay?" Yukari asked in a concerned tone. "You still look so exhausted. Maybe you should wait until tomorrow night to continue climbing the tower."

"Indeed." Mitsuru added while nodding her head. "I don't want to see any of you get hurt because you are too fatigued"

"Don't worry about us." Alfonzo said while waving his hand dismissively. "We've been doing this for a long time. Trust me, if we weren't up to it, then we wouldn't be here."

Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca nodded along with Alfonzo's words. However, Mitsuru and Yukari continued to look at them with concern. Akihiko, on the other hand, stepped forward with his fists clenched.

"Since the four of you look so tired, why don't you take me along?" Akihiko asked excitedly. "At the very least, I can provide some support in a battle."

Hearing that, Yukari rolled her eyes. Over the past few days, although she had not known Akihiko for long, she realized that he was the type that looked for any reason to have a fight. Meanwhile, Mitsuru stared at Akihiko coldly.

"Akihiko." Mitsuru said in a frigid tone. "Do you want to be executed?"

Hearing that, Akihiko's excited expression froze immediately. Then, he began to shudder.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo and Elicia smiled at this interaction. In all the iterations of Persona 3 that they had played, Mitsuru was able to scare everyone with the word, "execute." Though, it was never depicted how she would punish them after using it. It was kinda like "that" punishment that Makarov used to threaten the members of fairy Tail.

"Haha... I was just kidding Mitsuru." Akihiko said nervously. "You know me better than that. I would never jump into something so dangerous without your permission."

While Akihiko spoke, his eyes swam around the room, not making eye contact with Mitsuru, who was standing there with her arms crossed.

"Anyway, we should get going." Alzack said, though he was amused by the interactions of the three kids. "We only have so much time to climb the tower each night. We don't want to waste it."

"Yeah, let's go." Bisca said with a smile. "We still have a guardian to fight when we first head up."

Alfonzo and Elicia nodded in response. Then, the group of four wizards drew nearer to Mitsuru to get the communication devices. Mitsuru, on the other hand, continued to glare at Akihiko for a moment longer. However, she eventually sighed in exasperation, handed out the communication devices, and summoned Penthesilea while the Fairy Tail wizards got on the teleporter device and headed up to the twenty-first floor.

"Alright, let's go take care of that guard... ian." Alzack said.

However, when he finally took the chance to examine what his [Magic Power Detection] was showing him, Alzack trailed off at the end of his sentence.

Not only Alzack, but the other three were confused by what they were detecting, as well.

"Wait... where is the guardian?" Bisca asked with a confused expression on her face.

"Maybe this floor... doesn't have one?" Elicia asked unsurely.

"That's what it looks like." Alfonzo replied. "But this has never happened before."

"Well, I guess the only thing we can do is go up and take a look, right?" Alzack asked.

In response, the other three nodded their heads.

Meanwhile, back on the first floor, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari were confused.

"Did they just say there was no Guardian on the twenty-first floor?" Akihiko asked.

"But wasn't the Guardian the reason they didn't keep going last night?" Yukari asked. "If so, where did it go?"

"Actually, there was no Guardian from the beginning." Mitsuru replied.

Akihiko and Yukari looked at Mitsuru dumbfoundedly after hearing that. Even Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca paused their steps while climbing the long flight of stairs on the twenty-first floor.

{"Are you serious?"} Alfonzo asked.

{"If you already knew there was no Guardian, why didn't you tell us last night, Mitsuru?"} Bisca asked in a tone filled with disbelief.

"Because you all seemed so exhausted after your fight with the Reaper." Mitsuru replied. "I thought it would be better if you called it a night. Then, we could continue the exploration tonight when you were well-rested."

Everyone in the tower fell silent after that.

"Besides, we had no idea if there was anything even more dangerous on the floors above the twenty-first." Mitsuru continued.

Back on the twenty-first floor, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca were stunned into inaction. Mitsuru's reason for not telling them made so much sense that they could not retort. At the same time, however, they were frustrated that they did not realize it for themselves the night before.

"*Sigh* We really must have been tired." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "We didn't even notice, despite the fact that we all had our [Magic Power Detection] active."

"That means Mitsuru did the right thing." Elicia said with a smile. "Thanks, Mitsuru."

{"You don't have to thank me."} Mitsuru replied. {"As the one assigned to act as your support during the exploration, it's my duty."}

"I think it has to do with the fact that we've been part of Fairy Tail for so long." Alzack said while smiling wryly. "We're so used to just charging forward that we don't always think about what's going on around us."

"*Sigh* I really wanna deny that." Bisca said while sporting a similar smile to her husband. "But I'm not such a liar."

With that, the group of four started to chuckle at themselves. They all could not help thinking that they really were Fairy Tail wizards.

"Anyway, we can think about that later." Alfonzo said. "For now, let's just see what's up ahead on this floor. After that, we'll head up to the twenty-second."

Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca nodded in response. Then, the team started climbing the stairs again. However, after only a few steps, Alfonzo stopped and looked back at the others sternly.

"Don't let this get back to anyone at the guild, especially Master Mavis." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone. "They would never let us hear the end of this."

The three nodded with expressions that were just as serious as Alfonzo's. Then, Alfonzo, Alzack, and Bisca all glared at Elicia.

"What? Why are you all looking at me like that?" Elicia asked in a confused tone.

["It's because you're the most likely to let the secret slip."] Scylla said.

"It's because you don't always think about what you're saying beforehand." Alfonzo said, mirroring Scylla's thoughts.

In response, Elicia pouted as visibly as she could, to show that she was not happy to hear that. However, she did not argue. Because she, too, knew that she was the most likely to say something about what happened here.

The group did not dwell on the topic for much longer, though. Instead, they started climbing the stairs once again. And what they found when they made it to a break in the staircase was a room with two chests, one they could open that held a magic power recovery medicine, and one they could not open because it required Twilight Fragments to do so.

"Alright, let's head up to the twenty-second floor." Alfonzo said after they left the room with the treasure chests. "There's nothing left to see here."

The rest of the party nodded in response. Then, they headed up to the next floor. However, when they arrived, they were surprised to see that the floor was completely different from the floors below.

Instead of a maze-like floor, there was only one room. The side opposite the place where they entered the room was considerably higher than the place where they entered, as well. On top of that, there was a large gap separating the two sides of the room.

"This is weird." Alzack said as he approached the gap. He then looked down into the darkness below as he continued. "What's up with this room? And why is it divided like this? And this gap looks so deep. But shouldn't it just lead down to a lower floor?"

"I doubt it." Bisca said as she came next to Alzack and looked down, as well. "This tower is so strange. Common sense just doesn't apply here."

A moment later, Bisca giggled.

"A Fairy Tail wizard talking about common sense." Bisca chortled. "This tower really is something else if it can make one of us do something like that."

The others could not help but laugh at that thought, as well. A few moments later, Alzack turned to Alfonzo, who was looking around the half of the room they were in with Elicia.

"Hey, Alfonzo, can you fly us across this chasm?" Alzack asked.

"I don't think so." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "The movement of the ethernano in this room is really strange. It feels like it's all flowing down into that gap. If I tried to fly over it, it would probably suck me down there."

After saying that, Alfonzo giggled at his own words.

"Suck me down there. Haha..." Alfonzo said while laughing to himself.

In response, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca looked at Alfonzo blankly while rolling their eyes.

"Anyway, it looks like our exploration is going to end here." Elicia said.

"But we still didn't find Old Document 01." Alzack said in a forlorn tone.

"That might not be the case." Alfonzo said as a grin spread across his face.

At that moment, Alfonzo had just approached a treasure chest. This treasure chest looked like the ones that needed Twilight Fragments to open. However, there were no slots for Twilight Fragments. So, he tried to open it. And without much effort, the chest opened.

Lying in the chest was a document. And at the top of the document, the title read: "Old Document 01."

"Fonzie! This is it." Elicia cheered happily.

Alfonzo's grin turned into a wide smile as he reached into the chest and picked up the document. Meanwhile, Alzack and Bisca hurried over to the chest to see what Alfonzo found, as well. Then, Alfonzo started reading the document out loud once it was in his hands.

"The electricity's hooked up. But, why do they need so much? There's only a school on this island..."
Alfonzo read aloud.

Reaching that point, Alfonzo's narration stopped.

"What else does it say?" Bisca asked in a curious tone.

Alfonzo's upper lip started twitching when he heard Bisca's question. And Alzack noticed that. And because he had known Alfonzo for so long, he knew what that small gesture meant. Alfonzo was annoyed.

"Alfonzo, what's wrong?" Alzack asked.

In response, Alfonzo's hand that was holding the document dropped to his side.

"That's all it says." Alfonzo said in an annoyed tone.

'I forgot how little information each of these damned Old Documents gives.' Alfonzo thought to himself frustratedly. 'And until you have enough of them, none of the information makes a fucking lick of sense.'

["Well, you should have extracted that information with [Archive Magic], if you were really curious to know."] Bedlam said from Alfonzo's inner world with a tone of schadenfreude.

'I never thought I would need that information.' Alfonzo replied. 'Besides, I couldn't really see back then. So, all the memories of Persona 3 are covered in a foggy haze.'

["I guess that's true."] Bedlam replied.

["Who fucking cares?"] Impatiently. ["Now that you have the damn document, we can go home. I'm fucking sick of the Dark Hour."]

["Yeah, but the longer we stay here, the closer Fonzie is to materializing us, right?"] Bedlam asked with a grin. ["and when he can do that, he'll finally be able to start training to achieve our full releases."]

'Did you just fucking call me "Fonzie"?' Alfonzo asked in an irritated tone.

["He would have to be able to kick our asses first, though."] Riot replied to Bedlam's comment with a sneer while completely ignoring Alfonzo. ["And we both know he doesn't have what it takes to do that."]

Hearing that both Riot and Bedlam was talking trash, Alfonzo's upper lip started to twitch again. At that moment, he started thinking that he would make a device like the one Kiske Urahara created in Bleach so he would be able to kick their asses earlier. However, he quickly dismissed that idea. If he did that, he would only have one chance to achieve full release. And if he failed, it would be locked to him forever.

"Anyway, we got what we came here for." Alfonzo said in a perturbed tone. "so, let's get the hell outta here."

The other three nodded their heads. Then, they looked around to see if there was a teleporter on this floor. And as it so happened, there was. However, it was only a one-way teleporter. Meaning, if they wanted to come here again, they would only be able to climb up from the twenty-first floor.

A few minutes later, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, Biska, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari left Tartarus. However, there were still more than forty minutes left until the Dark Hour ended. But they had completed all their objectives. So, there was no reason to stay any longer.

Chapter 608: No Rest for the Weary

The next morning, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, Biska, Takeharu, Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari were gathered at the island's port in front of Sixth Sense.. Currently, the four Fairy Tail wizards were ready to go back to the mainland and the others were there to send them off.

The night before, Mitsuru had finished summarizing the experiences of the Tartarus exploration to Takeharu. And with her meticulous personality, Takeharu did not feel it necessary to hear the story from the Fairy Tail wizards. So...

"Just as Mitsuru promised, here is the letter of completion and the payment for your services." Takeharu said as he handed a rather thick envelope to Alfonzo. "we truly appreciate everything you've done for the Kirijo Group. There's even a bonus for all of you for dealing with Ikutsuki."

"Don't worry about it." Alfonzo said with a smile while accepting the envelope. "It's our job. As for that Ikutsuki guy..."

"We can't let bad guys like that do whatever they want." Elicia added, finishing Alfonzo's sentence for him.

"Yeah, it's even worse because he was pretending to be such a good person." Alzack said with a slight frown.,

"Yeah, even with all our experience dealing with people, Alzack and I didn't even notice." Bisca said with a nod. "If it wasn't for Alfonzo and Lici, he would have been free to do whatever he wanted."

"I'm just glad you were able to find out what he was planning before it's too late." Takeharu said solemnly. "Every time I think about what he had in store for me and the others, I can't help but get nervous."

Mitsuru, Akihiko, and Yukari nodded in response. A moment later, Akihiko's expression turned into one filled with disappointment.

"*Sigh* It's too bad I didn't get a chance to fight any of you." Akihiko said in a disappointed tone.

"Akihiko, just let it go." Mitsuru said exasperatedly.

"But this would have been a great chance to see just how strong I am." Akihiko protested.

Yukari could only shake her head at Akihiko's antics. Meanwhile, Mitsuru glared at Akihiko with a hint of helplessness.

"By the way, will Fairy Tail be participating in this year's Grand Magic Games?" Yukari asked in an attempt to change the subject.

"Of course." Elicia replied with a nod. "We've got a championship to defend, after all."

"Sigh* I really wish I could go." Yukari said disappointedly. "but school won't be stopping just because the Grand Magic Games is going on."

"Will any of you be on Fairy Tail's team this year?" Akihiko asked curiously.

"No, not this year." Alfonzo replied while shaking his head. "Lexus can handle it."

"Oh, that's right." Akihiko replied. "He uses lightning, doesn't he? I wonder how it compares to Polydeuces' lightning."

"Don't be foolish, Akihiko." Mitsuru said sternly. "Lexus Dreyar, the grandson of the third master of Fairy Tail, is a Lightning Dragon Slayer. Your lightning won't even be able to touch him."

"But Polydeuces was the son of a Sky God who wielded lightning in the old myths." Akihiko countered. "So, maybe his lightning could be special, right?"

"That's only a legend." Mitsuru said. "Stop acting so childish."

Hearing that, Alfonzo and Elicia each raised an eyebrow. Then, they exchanged glances.

The reason for their behavior was the fact that a myth from Greek Mythology back on Earth was told in earth Land in some form. But they had no idea how true it was in this world. Even so, they were both thinking that it might be possible that because of Akihiko's Persona, he might have the chance to wield special lightning, like God Slayer lightning, or something.

"Well, I've attended the Grand Magic Games every year since its inception." Takeharu said. "So, I'll be going again this year. And if you three would like, I can take you with me. I can even have a conversation with the school so that you won't be punished for missing class."

Akihiko's and Yukari's eyes lit up when they heard that, before nodding excitedly. Mitsuru, on the other hand, only nodded calmly. Her father had made this offer to her in the past, as well. However, she did not accept. But since she now knew a few members of one of the participating guilds, she decided to accept the offer this year.

"Then, I guess we'll see you in Crocus in a few days." Bisca said with a smile. "If you have some free time, you can come to the hotel we'll be staying at to say hi."

Then, they told the four Tatsumi Port Island natives about the hotel, which was actually owned by Sixth Sense Holdings, and welcomed them to come over to see. They even promised to introduce them to the other members of the guild, which included the team participating in the Games.

"I'll introduce you to my Mar'e, too!" Elicia said excitedly. "I'm sure he'll be happy to meet you, too."

"Mar'e?" Yukari asked curiously. "is that a pet, or something?"

"No, he's me and Lici's son, Amar'e." Alfonzo replied with a smile.

"And he's super cute!" Elicia added excitedly.

Bisca immediately nodded along. Then, she stared at Alzack with an intense gaze. And Alzack knew exactly what that gaze meant. However, there was nothing he could say. He had been trying extremely hard recently. And only the heavens could grant their wish now.

After that, the group said their farewells and promised to meet at the Grand Magic Games in Crocus. Then, Alfonzo, Elicia, Alzack, and Bisca boarded Sixth Sense before setting sail.

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

June 27, x788.

"*Sigh* I'm here again." Alfonzo said as he landed in front of the Leaf Village's gate. "But I can't even stop to rest. After talking to Hiruzen, I have to run back to Magnolia, gather up all the people coming with me to see the Chunin Exam Finals, and rush right the fuck back. God damn it, I just wanna get some fucking rest."

As Alfonzo said, ever since he left Tatsumi Port Island with the others, he has not had a chance to rest for more than a few hours. First, he spent a day on the ocean. Then, he immediately drove back to Magnolia after docking the ship at his villa in Akane Beach. Arriving in Magnolia around noon on the twenty-fourth, He then had to report on the quest to Ur, which took longer than he expected because of the strangeness of the quest.

Still, he would have had enough time to go home and rest after that... If Mavis had not been present when he gave his report. As interested as she is in most magic phenomena, getting her to let him rest was a quest in and of itself.

So, because of Mavis' enthusiasm, Alfonzo made it home around two in the morning. Then, he was forced to wake up at just after sunrise because Amar'e was being fussy and would not calm down until Alfonzo held him.

Then, after putting Amar'e down for his nap, Alfonzo had to rush to Crocus to make sure all the Sixth Sense Holding Shops were adequately prepared for the Grand Magic Games. And after that, on the morning of the twenty-seventh, today, he flew from Crocus to the Village Hidden in the Leaves for his last errand before the Chunin Exam Finals.

As Alfonzo grumbled, he walked through the gates of the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And when he did, the gate guards, a pair of Chunin named Izumo Kamizuki and Kotetsu Hagane overheard him. And because Alfonzo had been coming and going from the village for so long, they recognized his voice immediately.

"Alfonzo, haven't seen you for a while." Kotetsu, a man of slightly below-average height with long, spiky black hair and black eyes with a bandage wrapped across the bridge of his nose and wearing the Hidden Leaf's standard Chunin attire, said with a smile after recognizing Alfonzo. "I didn't think you were gonna make it for the Chunin Exam Finals."

Hearing Kotetsu's voice, Alfonzo was pulled out of his thoughts. Then, he looked up with a smile.

"Nah, no way in hell I'm missing that." Alfonzo replied. "If I did, Naruto and the others would be pissed way the hell off at me."

"Hahaha! You really take good care of those kids, huh?" Izumo, a man of average height with brown hair combed down and covering the right side of his face and black eyes wearing the standard Leaf Chunin attire with a turtleneck that reaches his chin and his forehead protector worn like a bandana, said with a smile. However, he frowned slightly as he continued. "Even Naruto... Honestly, I don't know why you waste so much time on that kid. Haven't you heard the rumors about him?"

Kotetsu seemed to agree with what Izumo said. And that caused Alfonzo to shake his head at their ignorance.

"It's because my first wife and I were orphans, too." Alfonzo explained. "In fact, most of my wives were orphaned, as well. So, if we can help someone in a similar situation to ours, we will."

Hearing that, Izumo and Kotetsu opened their eyes wide in shock. Then, they tried to stammer out an apology. However, Alfonzo was not looking for one. So, he told them not to worry about it as he walked deeper into the village.

Not long after Alfonzo passed the guard station, Yamato appeared next to him in a whirl of leaves.

"Welcome back, Alfonzo." Yamato said with a smile. "How have you been? And congratulations on your marriage."

"Oh, hey, Yamato." Alfonzo said with a smile of his own. "Long time, no see. And thanks. I'm sure my wives would appreciate your congratulations, too. It's just too bad you couldn't come to attend."

When Yamato heard Alfonzo mention his wives, his eye brow started to twitch violently. While Alfonzo was marrying multiple women at the same time, he was single, and had been since the day he was born. Life just seemed so unfair.

"Anyway, are you going to be here until the Chunin Exam ends?" Yamato asked, changing the subject before his jealousy made him say something he would regret.

"*Sigh* No, I'll be heading back out as soon as I talk to the Hokage." Alfonzo said in a tired tone. "I'll be stopping by to see Wendy and Carla before I go, though."

"Oh, does that mean you're gonna miss the Chunin Exam Finals?" Yamato asked.

Alfonzo then explained the reason for his short visit. Meanwhile, Yamato accompanied him to the Hokage's office while they chatted casually about things that have been happening in their daily lives.

"Seriously, you did a quest on an island where time stops for an hour every night at midnight?" Yamato asked with his eyes opened wide in chock. "I would like to see something like that."

"Unfortunately, most people wouldn't even be aware of the change." Alfonzo replied with a shrug. "Unless you can use a special kind of magic, you'll be stopped with the rest of the island."

"Oh, that's too bad." Yamato replied in a slightly disappointed tone. "Not that I could just go because I wanted to, anyway. I'd have to get permission, or have a mission on the island for me to go there."

In response, Alfonzo patted Yamato on the shoulder.

"Honestly, it's a lot more trouble than you think." Alfonzo said consolingly. "Just operating during that time put some serious strain on your stamina. I mean, I only had to fight at full power once for about five minutes on that quest. But I couldn't even get out of bed until past noon the next day."

"Is it really that bad?" Yamato asked in a tone filled with disbelief. "Actually, now that you mention it, I'm kinda curious to see how strong you are at full power. I've heard Guy and Kakashi talk about sparring with you. But none of you ever used full power when you did."

"Oh, we're here." Alfonzo said as the two arrived outside of Hiruzen's office. Then, Alfonzo turned to Hiruzen's secretary and continued. "Hey, can you let Lord Hokage know that Alfonzo Marcus is here to see him?"

Nodding in reply, the man sitting at the secretary's desk stood up and politely knocked on the door. Then, when Hiruzen replied, he entered the office and closed the door behind him.

Not long later, the door to Hiruzen's office opened once again and the secretary came out.

"Lord Hokage has agreed to see you." The secretary said politely as he held the door open for Alfonzo and Yamato to enter.

"Thanks." Alfonzo said with a smile as he and Yamato entered the office.

After that, the secretary closed the door and returned to his desk to continue his work.

"Alfonzo, it's good to see you." Hiruzen said with a grandfatherly smile on his face. "Congratulations on your marriage, as well. If it wasn't for the Chunin Exams and needing to be careful while all these representatives from the other villages were here, I would have come in person to witness your unions."

When Hiruzen said the word, "unions," like Yamato, his eyebrow started twitching. Although he was not a single dog like Yamato, as he had been married in the past, he only had one wife. And there was no way she would have let him marry another woman, let alone eight.

"Thanks." Alfonzo replied with an amused smile on his face after seeing Hiruzen holding in his envy. "but I have a question to ask you. After that, I have to head back to Magnolia right away."

Hearing that, Hiruzen as surprised. Even so, he gestured for Alfonzo to ask his question.

"So, it's like this..." Alfonzo said as he leaned forward, rested his elbows on Hiruzen's desk, and crossed his fingers below his chin. "You originally told me that I could only bring three people with me into the village. But since it's time for the Chunin Exam Finals, I was wondering if I could bring some more. I mean, there were other people that helped train those kids. And they all wanna see them perform on their big day. So, I was wondering if I could bring them along, too."

At first, Hiruzen was worried that Alfonzo would ask for something hard to do. However, when he heard that he only wanted to bring more people to watch the Chunin Exam Finals, he breathed easy.

"That's not a problem." Hiruzen replied with a laugh. "During the Chunin Exams, the restrictions on outsiders visiting are lightened considerably. So, as long as they aren't criminals to the kingdom or the village, I don't see why they can't come."

"Great. There will be a lot of happy people back in Magnolia." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "In that case, we'll be back tomorrow afternoon. I don't know if you'll have to arrange an escort for us. But I'll leave that up to you."

"I will." Hiruzen replied with a nod. "About what time in the afternoon do you think you'll show up?"

"Around three or four, I guess." Alfonzo replied.

"Then, I'll tell them to wait for you around that time at the Valley of the End." Hiruzen replied. "But if you're late, you'll have to come into the village and get them. Then, you'll have to go back to the valley and do the usual."

"Got it." Alfonzo replied as he got ready to leave. "Then, I'll go see Wendy and Carla before heading out to get the ones coming with me tomorrow."

"Alright." Hiruzen replied. "Then, I'll see you again when you come back. At the Chunin Exam Finals, at the very least."

Alfonzo nodded his head before turning to leave, with Yamato following him. After that, Alfonzo went to the market to buy some ingredients. Then, he headed to the residence where he always stayed and cooked a couple of meals for Wendy and Carla before bringing one of them to the hospital.

After giving Wendy and Carla the food, letting them know there was more at the house, and chatting with them for a while to see how they've been since he left, Alfonzo finally left the Village Hidden in the Leaves before flying back to Magnolia so he could let those who planned on coming with him know to start getting ready.

"Damn it, I'm only gonna be able to get a few hours of sleep before I have to leave again if I wanna make it to the Valley of the end on time to meet the escort team." Alfonzo grumbled while flying through the skies of Fiore. "I'm so fucking tired."

Chapter 609: Back Like He Never Left

In the afternoon of the day following Alfonzo's departure from the Village Hidden in the Leaves, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi were waiting in the Valley of the end for the mission targets.

"To think we would be assigned the same mission for the second time in two years." Genma said while twisting the senbon he held between his lips with his right hand. "Doesn't Alfonzo usually come and go without an escort? Why does he need a team of Jōnin to escort him."

"Weren't you paying attention during the mission briefing?" Raidō asked. "He'll be coming with people other than himself this time. And some of them have never been to the village before."

"Plus, he'll be coming with a lot more people than previously." Iwashii added. "So, it's only natural."

"Yeah, I heard all that." Genma replied. "But Alfonzo is basically a shinobi of the Leaf at this point, isn't he? I don't know why we're on guard against him like this. We should just form a cooperative relationship with them. That way, missions like these will be unnecessary. I mean, it's not like you all haven't heard of Fairy Tail's reputation before, right?"

"I get where you're coming from, Genma." Raidō said while patting Genma on his shoulder. "But that's not for---"

"Hey, someone is coming!" Iwashii shouted while pointing towards the direction of Karakura Town.

Immediately, Genma and Raidō turned their heads in the direction of Iwashii's pointing finger. And when they did, they could barely see a small dot on the horizon. However, it was approaching at very high speed.

"Is that them?" Raidō asked while raising his hand over his eyes to shield them from the sun.

"I don't think so, it looks like there is only one vehicle." Genma replied while channeling magic power into his eyes to improve his vision temporarily. "And it's way too small for all the people that should be coming."

Vroom!

Not long later, the trio could hear the sound of a loud, high-pitched engine coming closer. Shortly after that, they could hear the sound of a woman screaming in a panicked tone.

"Master Retsu~~~~! Slow down~~~~!"

Hearing that voice, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashii exchanged glances. They all thought the voice sounded rather familiar. Unfortunately, neither of them could put their fingers on where they had heard it before.

About a minute later, the trio could finally make out the approaching figure. It was a black two-wheeled magic vehicle with white accents. Sitting atop the vehicle was a woman wearing a black kimono, a white haori, and a black helmet with a white diamond and the kanji for four drawn in the middle of the diamond. There also seemed to be someone sitting behind that woman, who also wore a helmet. However, because of the rider in front, they could not make out anything else about the second rider.

A few moments later, it seemed as if the driver of the two-wheeled magic vehicle saw the three shinobi. Then, she increased her speed even further.

"Master Retsu~~~~! You're going to kill us~~~~!"

Ignoring the screaming woman behind her, the woman wearing the black kimono, Retsu Unohana, turned the motorcycle and skidded to a stop in front of Genma, Raidō, and Iwashii, scaring them half to death. However, there was no need to worry, as the motorcycle came to a stop about three feet away from them.

In the next instant, the large-breasted woman riding behind Retsu, who wore a leaf green haori with a red circle on the back and the kanji for gamble in the middle of that circle, a sleeveless, grey kimono top, dark blue pants, and a matching obi, hopped off the back of the motorcycle, flung off her helmet, revealing her blond hair, hazel eyes, gorgeous face, and a blue diamond on her forehead, and started emptying the contents of her stomach all over the ground.

"Lady Tsunade!" x 3

Seeing that the screaming woman was Tsunade, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashii were shocked. Then, they rushed over to check on her condition. Meanwhile, Retsu relaxedly took off her helmet, revealing a refreshed smile on her beautiful face.

"*Sigh* Nowadays, nothing relaxes me quite like taking a joyride on my motorcycle." Retsu said in a happy tone. "I really should thank Alfonzo for introducing me to such a fun thing."

Hearing that, Tsunade did her best to glare at Retsu. However, her glare was far from threatening thanks to all the dry heaving she was doing after there was nothing left in her stomach to throw up. On top of that, she already knew that her glare would have no effect on Retsu. So, she decided to stop. Besides, if

it went on for too long, Retsu might punish her. And she's died enough times in the last two years to last her a life time.

'I'm gonna make that kid pay for this.' Tsunade thought as she used her [Medical Ninjutsu] to soothe her nausea. 'If it wasn't for him showing Master Retsu such a demonic magic vehicle, I wouldn't be dragged to go on her joyrides so often.'

"Lady Tsunade, who is this, if we may ask?" Raidō asked after Tsunade finally stood up.

"*Cough* *Cough* This is the fourth master of the Mermaid Heel Guild, Master Retsu Unohana." Tsunade said begrudgingly. "She came with me to watch the Chunin Exam Finals. And if possible, to scout some talents like Anko to join the guild."

"I see." Iwashii replied. "but we were not made aware of your visit. Does Lord Hokage know?"

Hearing that, Tsunade glared at Iwashii, causing him to shrink back in fear.

Everyone in the village over a certain age was completely aware of the fact that Tsunade was rather quick to anger, and even quicker to resort to violence. So, Iwashii was genuinely scared for his well-being.

"Since when do I, granddaughter of the First Hokage have to notify anyone that I'm returning to my home?" Tsunade asked as she turned her nose up.

"Is that what your grandmother taught you, Tsuna?" Retsu asked calmly from the side.

Immediately, Tsunade froze. Between thinking about making Alfonzo pay for the motorcycle and Iwashii's question, not to mention trying to not think about Retsu in fear of being punished for looking at her the wrong way, Tsunade had completely forgotten she was right there.

"*Sigh* Mito would be so disappointed if she could see you now." Retsu continued in a forlorn tone. "As an old friend of hers, I really should have tried to educate you better."

Tsunade could only remain silent in response. However, she did eventually turn her menacing glare towards the three Jōnin.

"That's' right, you three must be the escort squad for that brat, right?" Tsunade asked.

"Pardon my asking, Lady Tsunade." Genma said hesitantly. "But by 'that brat', are you referring to Alfonzo Marcus from Fairy Tail?"

"Who else could I be talking about?" Tsunade asked sharply, causing the three Jōnin to shiver once again. "Anyway, he should be here in a few minutes. We passed him on the way here. And He's got a few people with him spread over a few cars."

"Understood." X 3

Genma, Raidō, and Iwashii replied simultaneously while straightening their backs.

"Anyway, take care of them properly." Tsunade said. "We'll head into the village in the meantime."

With that, Tsunade walked past the three and started moving towards the forest outside of the village. However, before she could get very far, Retsu's voice stopped her in her tracks. And she almost tripped over her own feet.

"Actually, I think I'd like to stay here." Retsu said with a gentle smile. "It's been a while since I've seen that young man. And I wasn't able to attend his last wedding thanks to business I had to take care of. So, I can congratulate him, as well."

'Damn it.' Tsunade thought to herself. 'I just want to go home, lay down, and have a drink. I really need one to get over that ride from hell. And Shizune should have already gone to my house and cleaned up. So, I wouldn't even have anything to worry about after getting home. Why does Master Retsu like to torture me so much'

A moment later, Tsunade turned around with a smile on her face that was only a step away from crying.

"If that's what you want, Master Retsu." Tsunade said. Then, her eyes lit up as a bright idea formed in her mind. "In that case, I'll head home and prepare a room for you. That way, you'll be able to relax once you get there."

"Although I'm thankful for the thought." Retsu said in a gentle tone. "Did you forget, we have to go see that kid, Hiruzen when we get there. It would be inefficient if you went home just to have to come back not long afterwards, wouldn't it?"

While Tsunade gritted her teeth at the fact that her plan was foiled so quickly, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi stared at Retsu with their eyes wide open in surprise. To think she would call the respected Third Hokage not only by his name, but a kid, as well.

In the end, Tsunade stayed with Retsu to wait for Alfonzo and the rest of his entourage. Meanwhile, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi stood to the side feeling rather awkward.

Luckily, that awkwardness did not last for too long, as a convoy of three magic vehicles approached from the Direction of Karakura Town. And when the three Jōnin could clearly see the person driving the frontmost vehicle, they sighed in relief.

Eventually, the three magic vehicles pulled up in front of the three. Then, after only a moment, people started climbing out of them.

From the first vehicle, Alfonzo, Elicia, Ikaruga, Grayfia, and Miyuki stepped out. From the second, it was Cana, Laki, and Saeko. And from the third, Lucy, Mavis, Shizuka, and Rika hopped down from Lucy's hot pink, metallic 1500.

"Hey everyone, how are you guys?" Alfonzo said in a clearly exhausted tone.

"Kid, why do you seem so tired?" Tsunade asked in a tone filled with Schadenfreude.

"Oh, you know, the usual." Alfonzo replied with a tired smile. "Completed a Ten Years Quest, sailed for a day, drove for another day, reported on the quest and talked about magic with the first master for a day, spent two days making sure all my businesses in Crocus were ready for the Grand Magic Games, flew to the Leaf Village, spent a few hours here, flew back to Magnolia, then drove nonstop from Magnolia back to the Valley of the End. You know, nothing special when you live a life like mine."

Hearing everything Alfonzo had done over the last ten days, or so, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashii looked at him like he was inhuman. Even Tsunade, who intended on teasing him about having too much fun with his wives at night, could not say anything. Only Retsu nodded in understanding after hearing all that.

"It sounds like it's truly been hard on you, Alfonzo." Retsu said with a gentle smile. "Therefore, I'll wait until tomorrow morning to enjoy one of your wonderful home cooked meals."

Hearing that, Alfonzo's upper lip started twitching violently. Even so, he had no intention of declining. It's not like making food for one more would be an effort. And Retsu was even considerate enough to push back her visit to the next day.

"Anyway, now that the kid is here, let's head into the village." Tsunade said, sounding a bit impatient. "Oh, and I'll be there for breakfast tomorrow, too."

After that, and without giving anyone a chance to reply, Tsunade turned around and started walking towards the Village Hidden in the Leaves. Meanwhile, Retsu shook her head. Then, she looked at Alfonzo with her, trademark, gentle smile.

"Alfonzo, would you mind bringing this along for me?" Retsu asked while gesturing towards her motorcycle.

Alfonzo could only look at Retsu's smiling face with a helpless expression before using his [Metal Magic] to lift the four vehicles. At the same time, he used his [Electromagnetism Magic] to bend the visible light around them before floating them high in the air and following behind Tsunade with the rest of the group.

Chapter 610: Before the Chunin Exam Finals

It did not take long for the group to reach the Village after leaving the Valley of the End. When they did, they quickly split up to go to their own destinations. After registering at the gate, Tsunade led Retsu to meet Hiruzen. Meanwhile, Genma, Raidō, and Iwashi led the people from Magnolia to the temporary residence they had been lent.

Along the way, Yamato met up with the group, and they chatted while walking through the streets of the village.

Due to the Chunin Exam Finals that would start tomorrow, seeing so many outsiders in the village did not surprise anyone. However, almost all of them were women. Add that to the fact that most people recognized Alfonzo after he had stayed in the village for so long, a few rumors about Alfonzo collecting women started circling around the village.

"Hey, Fonzie." Elicia said with a grin while nudging Alfonzo with her elbow after overhearing the citizens of the Leaf talking about their group. "They're saying you're collecting women, what do you think about that?"

In response, Alfonzo only rolled his eyes, too tired to even retort. However, the other ladies had no intention of letting go of the topic.

"Yeah, I wanna know what you think about that, too." Cana said after taking a swig from a bottle of whiskey. "How does it feel to be recognized for your efforts."

"My efforts?" Alfonzo asked with an eyebrow raised. "Don't you mean Lici's efforts?"

Cana's eyes widened momentarily at Alfonzo's question. Then, she stopped to think for a moment. After that, she gazed at Elicia while in deep thought.

"Cana? What's wrong?" Elicia asked curiously.

"Now that I think about it, wasn't it you who picked me up for Fonzie's harem, Lici?" Cana asked.

"Was it?" Elicia asked, acting rather innocent. "I don't remember. It's been so long. Are you sure you're remembering correctly?"

Both Alfonzo and Cana rolled their eyes at Elicia's shamelessness.

"Lici didn't pick me up, though." Lucy said, poking her head out from between Alfonzo and Cana with a smile on her face. "Alfonzo pursued me on his own. Does that make me special?"

"Of course not." Cana said as he placed her hand on top of Lucy's head before pushing her back. "You were just lucky enough to show up after Fonzie accepted that he could fit more girls in his heart."

"I still think that makes me special." Lucy said after standing up straight. "I mean, with these looks plus my beautiful personality, it's no wonder that Alfonzo accepted everything, right?"

"Sigh Lulu's vain side is coming out again." Elicia said in a dramatic way while theatrically placing the back of her right hand on her forehead. "Fonzie, I think you'll need to discipline her tonight."

Immediately, Lucy's face blushed in embarrassment. Though, the thought of sex wasn't enough to embarrass her at this point, the fact that Elicia said something about it in public was enough to do the job.

"Lici, you're getting as bad as Erza." Lucy whined.

"Nope, not even close." x 5

Elicia, Cana, Laki, Saeko, and Rika refuted in unison. Erza's ability to not mind the time or place when she was talking about her nightlife was unparalleled, after all.

"By the way, Fonzie." Shizuka said while walking with her arm linked with Rika's. "Since you're collecting girls, how about picking up Rika, too?"

The whole group, minus the maids and Rika, turned dumbfounded looks in Shizuka's direction after hearing her proposal. However, when they saw Shizuka's bright and innocent smile, they quickly looked away, feeling that they may end up blind if they stared at it for too long.

Rika, on the other hand, wore a smile filled with amusement. However, the glint of desire and curiosity in her eyes could not be hidden. Unfortunately, everyone was too focused on Shizuka's surprising statement to notice.

"*Cough* Why don't we wait until we get to the house to talk about this?" Alfonzo said with a rarely seen blush on his face.

'Are these women crazy?' Alfonzo asked himself. 'There are so many hostile glares on me right now. I can even feel Yamato's, Genma's, Raidō's and Iwashi's gazes starting to sting. Not to mention all the civilians. If this conversation continues like this, at such a volume, I may have to fight every man in this god damn village.'

Although he was thinking that, the smug smile Alfonzo was throwing at all the jealous gazes was not making the situation any better. However, he did not really notice that as he just wanted to get to the house and go to sleep for a while. It seemed that sleep deprivation was really starting to get to him.

Not long after that, the group finally left the crowded areas of the village. However, they were definitely the talk of the village for the rest of the day. Though, they were quickly forgotten when the Chunin Exam Finals started.

As soon as the group reached the temporary residence, Genma, Raidō, Iwashi, and Yamato bid their farewells. They would have to make some final preparations for the Chunin Exam Finals, after all. Meanwhile, the visitors from Magnolia made their ways inside.

However, before anyone could sit down and relax, Grayfia stepped forward with an even more solemn expression on her face as she scanned the house from top to bottom. A few moments later, she returned to the group, who was curious to see what she would do. Then, she started giving out orders.

"Ikaruga." Grayfia said authoritatively. "Although it would seem that Miss Wendy and Miss Carla have been trying to keep the place tidy while they were here alone, they are not professionals. Please take care of the dust that has accumulated since Miyuki was last here."

"Understood." Ikaruga replied with a nod.

In the next instant, Ikaruga, using her super speed, disappeared from where she stood, found a cloth to wipe everything down, and started dusting the surfaces in the house. At the same time, Grayfia turned to Miyuki, who was waiting patiently to receive orders from the head maid.

"Miyuki, please head to the room where Master Alfonzo usually rests." Grayfia said calmly. "Also, as he has mentioned that he is quite exhausted, prepare the room for him to sleep. Also, draw a bath, as well. It should help him relax after working so hard for so long."

"Yes, Ma'am." Miyuki replied with a nod.

With that, Miyuki quickly made her way towards the large bath in the house and started filling it with water. Then, she quickly moved to the room where Alfonzo usually slept to tidy it up while the bathtub was being filled.

When Miyuki left, Grayfia turned to the others.

"If you don't mind, you can leave your luggage here." Grayfia said as she bowed to Alfonzo and the ladies. "I'll make sure to put them in the other rooms for you. Then, I will inform you of which room has your belongings. After that, I'll start working on dinner."

"Sure." "No problem." "thanks, Grayfia."

Many thanks of acknowledgement followed Grayfia's arrangements. So, as everyone put their luggage down and took off their shoes, Grayfia began transporting everyone's things to the rooms they would be sleeping in during their stay.

A few moments later, Alfonzo, Elicia, Cana, Laki, Lucy, Mavis, Saeko, Shizuka, and Rika were seated in the residence's living room and relaxing.

"it feels like it's been a while since I've been here." Elicia said as she curled up on the couch next to Alfonzo.

"Well, it has been a year, right?" Alfonzo asked. "I mean, we left to go see the Grand Magic Games last year. And you haven't come back since then, right?"

"Yeah, I guess that's true." Elicia replied. "If Mar'e was older, I would have come back with you after he was born. I miss you so much when you're gone."

"She's not the only one, you know." Cana said as she hugged Alfonzo from the other side. "That big mansion on the lake feels empty when you're not there. But it's not quite so bad now that Mar'e is there."

"Yeah, Amar'e makes the whole house feel more alive." Lucy said with a smile.

"I miss my Amar'e already." Shizuka added.

At that moment, Miyuki entered the living room and bowed politely.

"Master Alfonzo, the bath is ready should you wish to take one." Miyuki said.

"That sounds like a great idea." Alfonzo said as he separated himself from the ladies and stood up.

"You go have a nice bath, Fonzie." Elicia said with a smile. "We'll be here when you get back."

"Actually, I would like to look around the village." Mavis said with a smile as her ahoge swayed from side to side. "Can anyone accompany me?"

"Sure." Saeko said with a smile. "I would be honored to guide you around, Master Mavis."

"Ooh, I wanna look around the village, too." Shizuka said with a smile. "Rika, wanna come with me?"

"Okay." Rika said. "I still know my way around here."

That led to all those who were visiting for the first time wanting to check out the village. Naturally, those who had visited before became their guides. In the end, Alfonzo ended up staying in the house with Grayfia and Miyuki while everyone else went out to tour the village.

"Fonzie, we'll be back by dinner time, okay?" Elicia said as she and the others left the house. "Don't miss us too much."

Alfonzo only smiled at that. Then, once everyone was gone, he took that bath he was looking forward to.

After his bath, Alfonzo went into his room to get dressed. Before he did, however, with only a towel wrapped around his waist, he sat on the bed. Then, he layed back to relax for a moment. Unfortunately, before he even realized, as soon as he was lying down, he fell into a very needed, deep sleep.

Alfonzo would only wake up well after everyone returned home and they all fell asleep. Though, he would not be the only one that woke up, as Elicia would wake up for the same reason.

Other than that, the rest of the day and evening passed peacefully.

June 29, x788.

The next morning, the entirety of the Village Hidden in the Leaves was pulsing with excitement. Today was the day that the eight Genin who qualified for the Chunin Exam Finals would show the world what they were capable of.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

However, that atmosphere seemed to be absent from a certain residence in the village. That was not to say that the occupants of this residence were not excited. Rather, they had witnessed far bigger spectacles. So, their excitement was on a lower level than the residents of the Hidden Leaf.

Even so, that morning, a knock on the door could be heard at the temporary residence of the visitors from Magnolia.

"I do hope that Alfonzo was able to get enough rest." Retsu, the one who knocked on the door said in a gentle tone. "He seemed quite exhausted yesterday."

"You're only hoping that he's well-rested so he will give it everything he has when he cooks breakfast this morning." Tsunade muttered under her breath.

Aside from Tsunade, Shizune, and even Sakura, had come to visit the house with Retsu this morning, as well. And although Sakura seemed out of place with the other three, there was a reason she was traveling with them first thing in the morning.

Yesterday, after visiting Hiruzen, Tsunade did not go straight home. Instead, because of what she heard, she went to visit Wendy at the hospital. And during their conversation, Wendy mentioned that she had been training a girl from the village, Sakura Haruno, in [Medical Ninjutsu].

When Tsunade heard about that, she questioned Wendy about Sakura's talent and disposition. And what she heard made Tsunade rather satisfied. So, after finding out that Wendy had not taken the girl as a disciple, she rushed over to the Haruno residence and took her as her newest disciple on the spot.

As a result, Sakura would be leaving with Tsunade whenever she went back to Mermaid Heel to continue her training.

"I'm sorry, did you say something, Tsuna?" Retsu asked as she turned her gentle, yet menacing, smile towards Tsunade. "I don't think I heard you properly because of all the hustle and bustle in the village."

Seeing Retsu's exceptionally gentle smile, Tsunade began to shiver involuntarily. Then, she put on an ugly smile as she replied.

"Huh? What are you talking about, Master Retsu?" Tsunade asked in a confused tone. "I didn't say anything. Perhaps there's someone with a voice that sounds like mine somewhere in the village. As you said, there is quite a lot of noise from the hustle and bustle, after all."

"I see." Retsu replied without losing her smile. Though, she did narrow her eyes.

At that moment, the front door of the residence opened. When it did, Grayfia was standing there.

"Good morning, Master Unohana, Master Tsunade, Miss Shizune, and this must be Miss Sakura." Grayfia said politely while bowing to the guests. "Please, come in. Master Alfonzo has almost finished cooking breakfast. It will be ready in a few minutes at most."

"Thank you Grayfia." Tsunade said quickly as she was the first to rush into the house, if only to get away from Retsu's gentle stare.

Seeing that, Retsu continued to smile while Shizune shook her head. Sakura, on the other hand, was dumbfounded to see one of the three legendary ninja of the village acting like that. She then discreetly made a [Ram Seal] before disturbing her magic power and saying, "Kai."

Seeing Sakura's actions, Retsu and Shizune could understand her feelings. Still, they could not help but laugh.

"You're not under a [Genjutsu], Sakura." Retsu said. "You'll get used to sights like this in the future. Just don't think about it too much and you'll be fine."

With that, Retsu was the next to enter the house. Following Retsu, Shizune also started walking forward.

"Lady Tsunade can be a bit unreliable at times." Shizune said. "But she really is a great kunoichi. So, just learn as much as you can without picking up her bad habits, and you should be fine."

"I... See..." Sakura replied as she stiffly followed the other three ladies into the house.

Once all the guests were inside, Grayfia quietly closed the door before returning to her duties. Not long after that, breakfast was served. Then, after breakfast, the entire group made their way to the arena where the Chunin Exam Finals would be held.