

Fairy Tail 611

Chapter 611: The Chunin Exam Finals Begin

Currently, Tsunade was leading Retsu and the visitors from Magnolia to the arena where the Chunin Exam Finals would be held. Along the way, many people were happy to see Tsunade, who was acting quite dignified under the admiring gazes of the people.

On top of acting rather dignified, Tsunade was also feeling pretty good about herself. Ever since she left the village so long ago, she never felt respect like this. Not even from her guild members. Unfortunately, there was someone in the group who would not let her bask in this feeling for too long.

"*Sigh* If only you were like this all the time, Tsuna." Retsu said in a forlorn tone. "Then, I would have nothing to worry about. On top of that, Mermaid Heel would have a much better reputation."

Hearing that, Tsunade almost tripped over her next step. Then, she quickly turned to glare at the Fairy Tail wizards who started snickering at Retsu's words.

"What are you brats laughing at?" Tsunade hissed out.

"Hey, Master Tsunade, have you finished paying off your debt to Master Unohana and the guild?" Alfonzo asked with a wide smile on his face. "If not, I could lend you some money. And I promise, the interest rates will be reasonable."

Immediately, Tsunade's angry glare froze on her face. Because she knew exactly what Alfonzo was referring to.

Back when Alfonzo installed the training chambers in the Mermaid Heel guild hall, she had gone out on one of her gambling trips. And she naturally lost all the money she had taken with her. Then, in order to get her money back, she also bet the money that had been put aside by the guild as Alfonzo's payment. However, to no one's surprise, she ended up losing that, too.

And when Retsu found out, she ended up fronting the money for Alfonzo's payment. Then, she put Tsunade through a grueling training regimen to correct her behavior. On top of that, she made Tsunade pay back both her and the guild. And Tsunade has been in debt ever since.

But what really surprised her about that was the fact that Alfonzo even knew about that in the first place. Since, the whole matter with her gambling the money away was never mentioned.

"Huh?" Tsunade exclaimed while putting on a feigned expression of confusion. "I have no idea what you're---"

"She's finished paying back the guild, but she still owes me money." Retsu said, interrupting Tsunade's lie. "But she should be done paying me back soon. So, I don't think there is a need for a loan."

Tsunade's feigned expression of confusion turned pale as soon as Retsu exposed her. Then, she looked at Retsu with an expression that asked: "You know he was just tricking us, right? You don't really think he knew about that, do you?"

Able to read the unasked question in Tsunade's expression, Retsu's smile turned even more gentle.

"Tsuna, you know how intelligent he is, don't you?" Retsu asked. "I suspect he's known ever since then."

Hearing that, Tsunade's expression turned into one filled with shock. Then, she slowly turned her head towards Alfonzo. When she finally made eye contact with him, she recoiled. The look in his eyes was saying: "Yup, I already knew everything."

Immediately, Tsunade's shoulders slumped. She even seemed to get even smaller, as her 5'4" frame seemed to visibly shrink.

["Wow! Her boobs shrunk by at least a cup size."] x 8

Riot, Bedlam, Scylla, Hoyle, Zodiac, Minazuki, Sylphid, the [Armament Spirit] of Wendy's [Soul Armament], and [Dryad], Laki's [Armament Spirit], exclaimed in unison. If they could all interact freely with each other, they would all be exchanging astonished gazes like Riot and Bedlam were doing right now.

"Anyway, we should get going." Alfonzo said while smiling brightly. "If we don't, all the good seats will be gone by the time we get there."

Everyone other than Tsunade nodded their heads in agreement. Then, they all started moving towards the arena again, leaving Tsunade standing there with a despondent expression on her face.

Eventually, Tsunade came back to her senses and looked around. When she realized everyone had left her behind, she stomped her foot in frustration. Then, she hurried to catch up with them.

Not long later, the group reached the arena's entrance. When they did, they found Guy, Tenten, and Rock Lee, whose left arm and leg were wrapped in casts due to the injuries he received during the prelims for the Chunin Exam Finals, speaking to a tall man with long, spiky white hair.

"Huh? Jiraiya is here?" Tsunade muttered when she recognized the tall, white-haired man.

Hearing a familiar voice, the white-haired man, Jiraiya, one of the three legendary ninja of the Leaf, turned his head in its direction.

"Huh? Who called my name?" Jiraiya, a tall man with white hair tied into a pony tail that reached his waist and side bangs that reached his shoulders and framed his face, black eyes, red lines under his eyes that reached down to his jawline, and a wart on the left side of his nose wearing a short sleeved green kimono with matching pants, a black belt, wooden sandals, a red haori with yellow circles on either side, a forehead protector with the word "Study" in the center, and a large scroll hanging at his lower back, asked as he turned around with a big smile on his face.

When Jiraiya noticed that the person who called him was Tsunade, his eyes lit up. Then, he abandoned his conversation with Guy and his disciples, and ran over to Tsunade.

"Tsunade! It's been so long since I've seen you in the village." Jiraiya exclaimed excitedly.

At first, Jiraiya intended to rush over and give Tsunade a hug. However, when he saw her start to frown with her hands clenched into fists, he stopped. He had been beaten up by Tsunade so many times in the past that he already knew what would happen if he actually tried to hug her.

After that, he noticed that Tsunade was not alone. And when he saw Retsu and all the pretty girls and beautiful women from Magnolia, his eyes almost popped out of their sockets. A moment later, he was shaken back to his senses when he felt two dangerous gazes fall onto him.

Scanning his surroundings, he saw that Tsunade was glaring at him with a promise of pain, which was expected. However, when he saw that the second gaze was coming from a brown-skinned young man who could not be more than twenty-five, he almost dismissed it. However, his instincts honed over several decades and two wars told him that was a bad idea.

At this point, Guy, Tenten, and Rock Lee caught up to Jiraiya. They had already noticed all the guests and they all wore smiles.

"Alfonzo! My friend! You made it back for the finals!" Guy shouted as he rushed past Jiraiya and wrapped Alfonzo in a hug.

Alfonzo could only smile awkwardly as he patted Guy's back while trying, unsuccessfully, to make him let go. Luckily, Guy's hug did not last too long. Instead, he pulled away and turned to Elicia with a big smile on his face.

"And Elicia, it's good to see you again." Guy said cheerfully. "Alas, I see you did not bring your son with you. I would have loved to meet him."

"It's good to see you, too, Guy." Elicia said with a smile. "And I'm sure Mar'e would have loved to meet you, too."

While Guy engaged Alfonzo and the women from Magnolia that he was acquainted with in conversation and Jiraiya spoke with Tsunade and Shizune,, Lee approached Wendy and started a lively conversation with her. All the while, a slight blush was on Wendy's face. Even so, she chatted happily.

Meanwhile, Tenten stared at Tsunade with a starstruck expression on her face. She, like most kunoichi basically worshipped Tsunade as an idol. However, when she saw Sakura walking with Tsunade, she was confused.

"You're name is Sakura, right?" Tenten asked quietly so that she would not disturb Tsunade and Jiraiya's conversation.

"Yes, that's right." Sakura replied, unsure why Tenten was asking.

"Um... You're here because you know Alfonzo and the others, right?" Tenten asked nervously while stealing glances at Tsunade.

"Well, sort of." Sakura replied while scratching the side of her head. "but I'm Lady Tsunade's apprentice now, as well."

Immediately Tenten's expression froze. Then, that frozen expression turned lifeless. At the same time, she somehow looked at Sakura with envy.

Tenten already knew there was no chance that she would ever become Tsunade's apprentice, as she had absolutely no talent for [Medical Ninjutsu]. Still, that did not stop her from envying Sakura with every fiber of her being.

Meanwhile, Sakura was confused by the look she was getting from Tenten. However, she thought it would be better if she did not ask. At least, that's what her instincts were telling her.

"Anyway, let's continue this conversation inside the arena." Alfonzo said, breaking up the atmosphere.
"All the good seats are gonna be gone if we wait too long to go in."

With that, the group headed into the arena while talking along the way. Eventually, they found a group of open seats that was enough to seat all of them over three rows. These seats were positioned in the middle of the stands on the side of the arena opposite the VIP seats.

"Alright, you guys enjoy yourselves." Tsunade said after the group arrived at their seats. "I have to go and talk to Sensei. I doubt I'll be able to come back before the tournament is over."

"I'll be going, too." Jiraiya added. "Sensei has special seats arranged for us. But hopefully, I'll get to see all you lovely--- Urgh! Hey! Tsunade, what was that for? Wait! You don't have to pull me. I can walk on my own."

Before Jiraiya had the chance to lay on his, so-called, charm and provoked Alfonzo to beat him within an inch of his life, Tsunade elbowed him in the stomach before dragging him away.

"Just shut up and come on." Tsunade said impatiently.

Like that, Tsunade and Jiraiya eventually disappeared from everyone's sights.

"That kinda reminded me of the stories Gildarts used to tell about how my mom would stop him from flirting with every woman he saw." Alfonzo said with an amused smile on his face.

"Yeah, same here." Cana replied "At least Ur doesn't have to do stuff like that. I'm just glad that he's changed. Having a reformed man-whore for a dad is much better than having a functioning one."

"But didn't it seem like there was more than just annoyance mixed in to that?" Lucy asked. "Like.. I don't know..."

"Jealousy." Laki said, finishing Lucy's sentence.

"Yeah, that's it." Lucy said while nodding her head.

While the ladies discussed the possibility of Tsunade having feelings for Jiraiya, a young man wearing the standard Leaf Jōnin attire with an unhealthy complexion and dark circles under his eyes, as if he had not slept in a while, appeared in the middle of the arena.

When Alfonzo and Elicia saw this shinobi, they were both surprised. Especially since in the Naruto's canon, he, Hayate Gekko, who proctored the preliminaries of the Chunin Exam Finals, was killed while he was investigating Kabuto's movements before the finals. Yet, he happened to live through the month leading up to the finals in this world.

"Oh, are you guys surprised by his complexion?" Wendy asked after noticing Alfonzo and Elicia's expressions.

When Wendy asked her question, everyone else finally paid attention to the shinobi in the middle of the arena. And when they saw him, they all wore surprised expressions, as well.

"He looks like he hasn't slept in weeks." Rika said.

"He should really check himself into a hospital." Shizuka said seriously. "From what I can sense, his health really isn't too good."

"You're right, Miss Shizuka." Wendy said. "he's had a chronic illness since he was young. However, no one seems to know what it is. But since Master Tsunade is here, she might be able to diagnose it."

Hearing that, everyone nodded in agreement. Tsunade was the, publicly recognized, best doctor on Ishgar, after all.

"In fact, I had to heal him only a few days ago." Wendy continued.

"You didn't just have to heal him, you had to save his life." Carla interjected. "If it wasn't for you, he wouldn't even be alive to participate as a proctor for this part of the exam."

That caused everyone to widen their eyes. Then, they all looked at Wendy for an explanation.

"Well, I guess that's true." Wendy said quietly. "Apparently, he was investigating that guy you told me to keep an eye on, Alfonzo. But he got found out. And that guy, what was his name again? Um...?"

"Kabuto Yakushi." Alfonzo said in a solemn tone.

"Yes, that's it." Wendy replied. "Anyway, after I noticed that they were fighting, I came over and stopped Kabuto just in time. But..."

"Did he get really badly injured by the time you arrived?" Saeko asked.

"Well, yes." Wendy replied. "but that's not what the problem is."

"Huh? Then what happened?" Rika asked curiously.

"I... Um... Kinda destroyed a whole row of shops when I fought him." Wendy said in an embarrassed tone. "I mean, he just kept getting up after I beat him up. So, I had to keep using more and more power. And when I hit him with my full strength, well..."

After hearing that, all the wizards from Fairy Tail only smiled at Wendy warmly. Though, that made her even more embarrassed.

"She really is a Fairy Tail wizard, isn't she?" Cana said with a smile while raising a bottle of liquor in a toast. "She's so well-mannered that it's hard to tell sometimes. But things like this make it obvious."

Wendy's blush deepened after hearing Cana's words.

"*Cough* Ladies and Gentleman, the Chunin Exam Finals *Cough* are about to begin." Hayate, who was standing in the middle of the arena said while amplifying his voice with his magic power. "Now, I ask that all the participants *Cough* come to the ring."

Chapter 612: The Chunin Exam Finals

As the seats in the Chunin Exam arena filled up, two men wearing similar robes stepped into the VIP area that was meant for the highest-profile viewers.

The first man was an elderly man with a goatee and liver spots on his face wearing a red and white robe and a wide brimmed red hat with the kanji for fire on its front. This was the current Hokage of the village Hidden in the Leaves, Hiruzen Sarutobi.

Walking beside Hiruzen was a man wearing a robe in the same style as Hiruzen's. Though, his was blue. On top of that, he wore a mask that covered the bottom half of his face. This man was Raza, the fourth Kazekage of the Village Hidden in the Sand.

Or, it should have been Raza. However, the real Raza was killed near the end of last year, the last act of Junko Enoshima and her cohort. Though, no one was aware until now. Instead, the one dawning the guise of the Kazekage as Orochimaru, a traitor of the Village Hidden in the Leaves, as well as Hiruzen's most talented disciple.

"Lord Kazekage, I'm really looking forward to seeing just how much these young shinobi will show us." Hiruzen said as he walked alongside the disguised Orochimaru. Then, as they both took their seats at the center of the viewing platform, he continued. "Our villages' futures will be in the hands of these youngsters, after all."

"Indeed." Orochimaru replied in Raza's voice. "Talents like these should be treasured."

'This old fool is talking about the future, yet he doesn't know that his village will cease to exist after today.' Orochimaru said while sneering internally. A moment later, he frowned under his mask as his thoughts continued. 'I haven't heard from Kabuto lately, though. I suppose he ran into some trouble before today. No matter. With his skill, there should be nothing to worry about.'

'I have to stay vigilant.' Hiruzen thought to himself as he scanned the crowd. 'Kabuto was captured only two days ago. And he almost killed Hayate. Luckily Wendy was there to save him. Otherwise, we would not have been able to find out that Orochimaru was planning to attack the village during the finals. Unfortunately, Hayate was discovered before he could hear all the concrete plans. We don't even know where Orochimaru is right now. And Kabuto's mental defenses were too strong for us to get any results before the finals began.'

If Hiruzen had known that the man he was most wary against was sitting less than five feet away from him, he would be mortified.

"It's starting." Hiruzen said quietly as he looked at the center of the ring.

Naturally, when Orochimaru heard that, he also turned his attention to the center of the arena.

At that moment, Hayate Gekko appeared in the middle of the arena. Then, he raised his right hand in front of his face and coughed a few times. A moment later, he circulated his magic power and projected his voice throughout the arena.

"*Cough* Ladies and Gentlemen, the Chunin Exam Finals *Cough* are about to begin." Hayate announced. "Now, I ask that all the participants *Cough* come to the ring."

Shortly after Hayate's words fell, seven young shinobi appeared in the ring, standing in a line in front of Hayate. However, it did not take long for the crowd to start murmuring amongst themselves when they noticed that one of the participants was missing.

Alfonzo's group was no exception to those talking about the missing contestant.

"*Sigh* Sasuke was training with Kakashi this month, right?" Alfonzo asked as he turned to look at Sakura.

"Yes." Sakura replied with a nod. "Naruto wasn't happy about that. But I heard he got a pretty good teacher, too. So, he stopped complaining after a day, or so."

"Thought so." Alfonzo said, replying to Sakura's answer to his question. "I hope he's not gonna end up always being late like Kakashi after spending all that time alone with him."

"Sasuke would never do that." Sakura said in Sasuke's defense. Though, if one judged by her tone, she was not completely confident in that statement.

Meanwhile, Hayate swept his gaze over the seven Genin standing in front of him.

"It would seem that Sasuke Uchiha isn't *Cough* here yet." Hayate said. "Well, as long as he is here in time for his match, he won't be disqualified."

After saying that, Hayate raised his head and swept the crowd with his gaze.

"Now, I'll *cough* announce the match order. *Cough*" Hayate continued. "The first match will be between Naruto Uzumaki and Neji Hyuga. The second match: Sasuke *Cough* Uchiha Vs. Gaara of the Sand. Match three: Temari Vs. Shikamaru Nara. And the fourth match will be *Cough* between Shino Aburame and Kankuro. Now all those other than the two fighting *Cough* in the first match may leave the ring."

Immediately, Shikamaru, Shino, Gaara, Temari, and Kankuro left the arena. At the same time, Naruto and Neji took their distance from each other. Then, Hayate backed up, raised his right hand above his head, then swung it down.

"Begin!" Hayate ordered.

The match between Naruto and Neji was a one-sided affair, which everyone expected. However, the fan favorite, Neji, was on the losing end of the match from beginning to end. Unlike in the canon material, Naruto already had a relationship with Kurama. And because of that, he was able to use his magic power to cloak himself. As a result, the Hyuga Clan's [Gentle Fist Art] was completely ineffective. On top of that, Naruto's increased speed made it impossible for Neji to keep up, despite using the Byakugan, as well.

On a side note, the Hyuga Clan's fighting style, the [Gentle Fist Art], takes advantage of the Byakugan's X-ray ability. In doing so, with their palms and fingers as a medium, they inject their magic power into their opponents, completely disrupting their magic power flow.

In the second match... Nothing happened. Or rather, it had to be postponed... Because Sasuke was late. However, because Orochimaru was acting as the Kazekage, and wanted to see his future vessel in action, he was the one who made the request to have the match postponed. So, Sasuke got lucky in this regard because of the Pedo-Snake's interest in him.

The third match was between Shikamaru and Temari. And this was perhaps the most impressive match between Shinobi thus far. Although it was not particularly showy or flashy, both fighters put their wit and strategic thinking on full display. However, Shikamaru came out victorious in the end. And unlike in the source material, he did not forfeit after cornering Tamari.

But the fact that he was almost crying when he was announced the victor was quite funny to the crowd. It was clear to anyone watching that he would have rather given up after showing his capabilities so he could be lazy for the rest of the day. But now, he would have to fight in another round.

The reason for Shikamaru not giving up on his own was simple, just as he raised his hand to do so, he felt a dense killing intent fall on him from the crowd. And that killing intent was so controlled that no one else in the arena could even detect it.

When Shikamaru eventually found the source of the killing intent, he saw Alfonzo, Laki, Ikaruga, and Rika, the four people responsible for training him outside of his family and the academy, glaring at him with promises of the most intense training sessions he had ever taken part in if he gave up.

Seeing those glares, Shikamaru weighed his options, muttered "What a drag...", and accepted his victory forlornly.

After that, nothing happened in the third match, either. Because Kankuro forfeited before even entering the ring.

And that brought things back to the second match, which had been postponed. Gaara had entered the ring once again. However, Sasuke was still nowhere in sight. And just as Hayate was about to disqualify Sasuke, he appeared in the ring with Kakashi.

"We're not late, are we?" Kakashi asked quietly in a sheepish tone.

"Yes, you are." Hayate replied bluntly. "and quite so."

"Oh... Oops." Kakashi replied before bursting into a cloud of smoke.

When the smoke cleared, Kakashi was no longer in the ring. Instead, he had appeared in an empty seat next to Laki. With that, the first round of the tournament could finally start its last match.

"Kakashi, welcome." Laki said happily once Kakashi was sitting next to her. Though, her smile gave off quite a bit of pressure. "So, why were you so late?"

"*Sigh* I pushed Sasuke a little two hard in training this month." Kakashi replied. "And because he was only able to learn the [Chidori] to an acceptable degree last night, when he ended up passing out, I couldn't wake him up on time."

Instead of replying, Laki only continued to smile at Kakashi, putting him under immense pressure. It was clear she could see through Kakashi's half-truth. But she was giving him the chance to tell her the whole truth on his own.

"*Sigh* Fine..." Kakashi said in a dejected tone. "Because I couldn't wake him up this morning, I decided I would go visit the Memorial Stone. But I lost track of time. On top of that, Sasuke had no idea how to get back to the village from where I took him to train. So, he couldn't even come on his own to the beginning of the finals."

The Memorial Stone is a monument in the Leaf Village's cemetery that pays homage to all the shinobi who lost their lives in battle in service to the village. Naturally, every experienced shinobi was close to a few of the names on that monument, and Kakashi was no exception.

In unison, all those who knew him, excluding Laki, who continued to smile, sighed at Kakashi's carelessness.

Meanwhile, the battle in the ring was in full swing. Using the [Soaring Heaven's Sword-Style], Sasuke zipped around the ring at high speed. However, he was unable to get past Gaara's automatic sand defense. Though, Gaara was unable to harm Sasuke with any of his [Sand Jutsu] either.

Eventually, Sasuke took his distance after Gaara got fed up and wrapped himself in a [Sand Cocoon] and watched him with his [Sand Eye Ninjutsu]. All the while, his magic power began to increase to an absurd level while taking on a sinister quality.

Finding this a good opportunity to use his new [Ninjutsu], Sasuke scaled a wall of the arena before going through several hand signs.

A moment later, Sasuke's katana was lit up with arcs of blue lightning. At the same time, a high-pitched squealing sound that sounded like birds chirping echoed over the whole arena.

"That noise is why Kakashi named his signature technique, [Chidori]." Guy said excitedly. "Because [Chidori] in our ancient language means, One Thousand Birds."

After saying that, Guy turned to Kakashi.

"So, that's why he took so long to learn it, huh?" Guy asked. "You taught him how to use it with his weapon. That's probably why he only learned it to an acceptable degree last night, too, isn't it?"

In response, Kakashi shook his head.

"Although it's true that he only perfected the use of [Chidori] with his sword last night..." Kakashi explained. "I didn't teach him that. He devised that all on his own. He actually learned the [Chidori] with his hands as the medium quite quickly. And thanks to his training with Saeko, he was able to handle the speed boost it provided. But he was not satisfied with just that. So, he worked quite hard to incorporate it into his swordplay, as well."

Hearing that, everyone was impressed. And Sakura's eyes were shining with love and admiration while she carefully watched Sasuke's every move.

Then, the moment Sasuke was ready, he dashed down the wall and quickly closed the distance with Gaara. Along the way, he avoided the [Sand Blades] and [Sand Whips] Gaara launched at him. Then, once he was in range, Sasuke swung his sword as he dashed past Gaara.

A moment later, Gaara's [Sand Cocoon] collapsed, revealing Gaara with a gash that stretched from his left shoulder to his right waist. Though, the cut was not particularly deep, it was gushing blood.

Gaara then slowly turned around to glare at Sasuke with a crazed expression on his face.

"Kill! I'll kill you!" Gaara shouted at the top of his lungs. "I'll let mother drink your blood!"

At that moment, what appeared to be white dove feathers started falling from the sky. And when they fell on the civilians and weaker shinobi, they all fell into a [Genjutsu] induced sleep. At the same time, many of the shinobi from the sand village stood up with murderous intent shining in their eyes.

Orochimaru's plan had finally begun.

Chapter 613: Alfonzo's Mistake

While Hiruzen was surprised to see the [Genjutsu] falling from the sky in the form of dove feathers, he was not overly so. After Wendy helped to apprehend Kabuto, Hiruzen was expecting an attack from Orochimaru in the near future. Admittedly, he was not expecting it to come during the Chunin Exam finals, though.

Still, Hiruzen reacted calmly. Turning towards the Kazekage to ask him and his village to leave the attack to the Leaf, as he was confident that his shinobi could handle anything the enemy could throw at them.

However, when he made eye contact with the Kazekage and saw that familiar glint in his eyes, Hiruzen was completely taken aback. Then, before he could react, the Kazekage dropped a smoke bomb that covered the entire viewing area, as well as the part of the arena's roof behind it in smoke.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the stands, Alfonzo, Elicia, and the others looked around at the falling feathers. Though, their gazes were much sharper.

"[Genjutsu]." Kakashi said as he watched the shinobi from the Sand stand up with murderous expressions. "Is the Sand really so confident they can defeat us."

"Maybe not alone." Elicia said as she pointed at another shinobi who stood up. "but what if they have help?"

Hearing that, everyone followed Elicia's pointing finger. When they did, they saw a shinobi with a different symbol on their headband.

"The Village Hidden in the Sound." Guy said solemnly. "But why would they attack us? They're a relatively new village and we've never had any conflict with them."

"Probably because of him." Alfonzo said as he pointed at the Kage's viewing platform.

This time, everyone followed the direction where Alfonzo pointed with their gazes. And what they saw surprised them all greatly.

Around the Kage's viewing platform, the smoke had almost completely dissipated. So, everyone could see two figures standing on the roof behind the platform. While they were expecting Hiruzen's figure, the fact that Orochimaru was standing opposite him was a shock.

"Orochimaru? But how?" Kakashi asked.

"*Sigh* Look at the robes on the ground next to him." Alfonzo said in an exasperated tone. "He was disguised as the Kazekage. He was even able to mask his magic power signature. So, I didn't even notice it was him."

'Yeah, I'm definitely gonna have to kill him for good.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'I don't know how he did it, but he would be able to sneak up on even me with a disguise skill like that. And I don't like that.'

["Good, let's go kill the creepy snake fucker."] Riot said.

["I agree."] Bedlam said. ["The world is better off without him."]

Alfonzo nodded his head to his [Armament Spirits'] words. However, just before he could start issuing orders to the wizards from Fairy Tail...

"Hahahaha! You're strong!" Gaara, who had seemingly lost the last shreds of his rationality, shouted excitedly while attacking Sasuke. "You were actually able to make me bleed. Killing you will prove my existence."

... Gaara's shouting drew their attention to the ring.

In the ring, Sasuke was avoiding [Sand Ninjutsu] while simultaneously fending off Gaara's physical attacks, which should have been an easy feat. However, Gaara had changed by quite a bit in the short time everyone's attention was drawn away from the ring.

Now, one of Gaara's arms had been transformed into that of a monsters by all the sand that had gathered around it. On top of that, his movement speed was much faster than anyone had expected. So fast, in fact, that Sasuke was having trouble dealing with it while avoiding all his sand projectiles.

"What happened to that kid" Cana asked.

"The thing inside of him is influencing his actions." Elicia said solemnly. "He's one of the Jinchuriki."

After saying that, Elicia turned to Laki.

"Laki, you learned how to use [Wood-Style Ninjutsu], right?" Elicia asked.

In response, Laki nodded her head while watching Gaara.

"Then, can you go help Sasuke?" Elicia asked. "You're best suited for stopping that kid. Just restrain him for now. Then, Fonzie can put a proper seal on his Tailed Beast. After that, he shouldn't lose control like this anymore."

Once again, Laki nodded her head. Then, in a burst of speed, she disappeared from the stands.

"I usually forget how good you are as a leader because of the way you usually act, Lici." Cana said while casually taking a swig from her bottle of liquor before putting it into her [Storage Card]. "But moments like this make me remember why you're one of the guild's strongest."

"We can talk about that later." Alfonzo said sternly. "We've got more important things to worry about. Saeko, Rika, go with Wendy and Shizuka to the hospital. Then, I want the two of you to protect the hospital while Wendy and Shizuka treat any injured people that show up there."

"Got it." Rika said as she [Requipped] her Mechashift bladed pistols into her hands.

"Understood." Saeko said as her katana appeared on her left hip.

After that, Rika grabbed Shizuka and Wendy held onto Rock Lee.

"See you later, Fonzie." Shizuka said with a smile while waving a hand. "Everyone, be careful, okay?"

With that, Wendy, Saeko, Shizuka, Rika, and Lee all disappeared in bursts of speed. Then, without delay, Alfonzo continued giving out orders.

"Lici, Cana, Lucy, you three can feel those big magic power signatures on the village's outskirts, right?" Alfonzo asked.

The three ladies nodded their heads in response.

"Deal with them." Alfonzo ordered.

Without even a nod, Elicia, Cana, and Lucy all vanished in bursts of speed, as well.

"Grayfia, Ikaruga, Miyuki, I want the three of you to help as many civilians as you can outside of the arena." Alfonzo said. "But you have to be careful. These are trained killers."

"Don't worry, Master Alfonzo." Grayfia said while bowing elegantly. "I've been through my fair share of battles."

"Did you forget, I'm a trained killer, too." Ikaruga Said with a smile.

The only one who seemed nervous was Miyuki. But that was natural. She was only sixteen, after all. On top of that, even though she was about as strong as any C-Class wizard, she had never actually used any of the skills she trained in live combat.

"I want the two of you to make sure to protect Miyuki, as well." Alfonzo said after glancing at the three maids. "She's not as experienced as the two of you."

Ikaruga and Grayfia bowed in acknowledgement. Then, they led the clearly nervous Miyuki out of the arena.

"Sakura, Tenten, I know I'm not a member of your village, but I have an important task for you two, as well." Alfonzo continued. Though, he did not simply order them to move.

Sakura and Tenten, who were already looking at Alfonzo, focused even harder when they heard his words.

"Go find the rest of the Leaf Genin, form teams, and help evacuate the civilians." Alfonzo said.

"But they're only Genin." Guy said.

"No, they're shinobi." Kakashi said, stopping Guy's protest. "Shinobi of the Hidden Leaf. They can handle this."

"Kakashi-Sensei is right." Sakura said. "Plus, I can help treat anyone who got hurt during this attack, too."

"Yeah, we can handle this, Guy-Sensei." Tenten said with determination burning in her eyes.

Seeing the resolve in their students' eyes, Kakashi and Guy nodded. Then, the two young kunoichi left to find the other Genin.

"I'm sure I don't' need to tell you two what to do, right?" Alfonzo asked with a smile.

"Of course not." Kakashi replied in a bored tone.

"Indeed." Guy said while making a nice guy pose. "We'll let our youths explode."

"Right..." Alfonzo said dryly.

"What will you be doing?" Kakashi asked.

"I'll go help the old man." Alfonzo said with a smile. "Orochimaru needs to be dealt with once and for all. And I'm afraid the Hokage's sentimentality won't allow him to finish the job."

Kakashi sighed in response. Despite that, he knew Alfonzo was right. So, he only nodded his head in the end. After that, he also disappeared in a burst of speed before engaging an enemy Jōnin.

"Be careful, my friend." Guy said. "When all this is over, we can compete."

After that, Guy also dashed off to engage the enemy.

"Don't you have any instructions for me, Alfonzo?" Retsu, who had been standing by quietly, asked in a gentle tone.

"Like I could instruct someone of your stature, Master Unohana." Alfonzo replied. "I trust your experience and wisdom. I know you'll make the best decision in any given situation."

In response, Retsu covered her mouth with her right hand and kimono sleeve before she giggled.

"Very well, I suppose I'll help heal people at the hospital." Retsu said.

After that, Retsu used the [Flash Step] to disappear from the stands.

"Alright, now it's time to get to work." Alfonzo said while tilting his head from side to side, causing crisp popping sounds to echo around the area. "But first, I guess I should deal with these pests."

As he spoke his last sentence, about a dozen shinobi from the Sand and the Sound appeared around Alfonzo. However, before they could even move, Alfonzo's image flickered. Then, all twelve shinobi fell to the ground with small holes in their throats oozing blood.

"I guess I should go take care of those shinobi surrounding Master Tsunade, too." Alfonzo said as he looked towards another part of the arena. "If I don't, she might end up collapsing part of the arena in annoyance."

Just as his words fell, a Sound shinobi came flying from the direction where Alfonzo sensed Tsunade's magic power signature. Not before he smashed through a wall, though. On top of that, when he slammed into the seats on the other side of the arena, he burst into flying body parts on impact.

"Yeah, she's definitely capable of bringing down the whole arena if she gets pissed off." Alfonzo said as he started moving in that direction.

A few moments later, Alfonzo arrived in the seating area where Tsunade and Jiraiya had been seated originally. However, Jiraiya was nowhere in sight. Instead, all Alfonzo could see was a few dozen shinobi from the Sand and the Sound surrounding Tsunade.

The weird thing about what Alfonzo was seeing was the fact that all the enemy shinobi appeared to be scared. Scared of stepping forward to attack. And the reason for that was easy to see. Lying at Tsunade's feet were the bodies of several of those enemy shinobi's comrades. And none of them were complete corpses. On top of that, at least one part of their body was thoroughly crushed.

"Well, I guess you don't need my help." Alfonzo said from behind the group of enemy shinobi.

Alfonzo's voice caused everyone to shift their attention to him quickly. And when Tsunade saw him, her clearly annoyed frown eased a little.

"Stop playing around, Kid." Tsunade said. "Just hurry up and take care of these pests. They only know how to run away. And they're quite fast, too."

"Hey! Who is this guy?" One of the Sound shinobi asked anxiously.

"It doesn't matter." A Sand shinobi replied. "Just hurry up and kill him. We don't need another distraction while we deal with the Slug Princess."

Immediately upon hearing that, a vein on Tsunade's forehead bulged. Then, she clenched her fists and rotated her magic power around them. In fact, she rotated so much magic power that the air around her fists looked as if it were distorted.

'Oh shit!' Alfonzo exclaimed internally after feeling all the magic power gathering around Tsunade's fists. 'She really might collapse this entire side of the arena if I don't do something.'

In the next instant, Alfonzo flickered. Then he reappeared next to Tsunade, his body arching with violet electricity. He then discharged bolts of electricity in all directions. Despite that, Tsunade, who was standing right next to him, was not even touched.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Spider Lightning]." Alfonzo chanted.

In the next instant, the sound of thunder echoed around the arena while a bright flash temporarily blinded everyone in the vicinity. Then, all those enemy shinobi fell to the floor while smoke rose from their corpses and parts of their body were badly charred.

"Hmph!" Alfonzo snorted disdainfully. "To think he would have the nerve to call Master Tsunade a Slug Princess. He and his friends got what they deserved."

'I just need to calm her down.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'As long as she's calm enough, I won't have to worry about the people lying unconscious thanks to the [Genjutsu] becoming part of the collateral damage when she loses her shit.'

"Master Tsunade, we should go and--- Pfft!" Alfonzo started to say before he had to forcefully stop himself from laughing out loud.

Currently, although she was unharmed, Tsunade was still affected by Alfonzo's electricity. Standing next to Alfonzo with a deep frown on her face, Tsunade's straight, shiny, blonde hair had puffed up as though she had been electrocuted.

As a matter of fact, the electrical charge in the air was the reason for this. And Alfonzo knew it. So, he was rather wary of the princess of the Hidden Leaf at the moment.

"*Cough* Uh... I mean... I'm gonna get going." Alfonzo said hurriedly while trying to hold in his laughter. "The Hokage is facing off against Orochimaru alone. Plus, it looks like four of Orochimaru's flunkies have set up a barrier around them. So, I don't have any time to waste."

As soon as he finished speaking, Alfonzo flashed in violet lightning before disappearing from the spot. Even so, Tsunade's angry roar echoed over the area only a moment later.

"Don't think this is over, you damn brat!" Tsunade roared after Alfonzo could no longer be seen.

Chapter 614: Fairy Tail's Might

While Alfonzo was dealing with the shinobi surrounding Tsunade, Laki had jumped into the ring, right next to Hayate, where Gaara was Chasing Sasuke in an attempt to kill him.

"What's wrong?" Gaara asked in an unhinged tone. "Why don't you make me bleed again? Come on! That will make killing you prove my existence even further."

"Man, does this guy ever shut up?" Sasuke muttered to himself as he stepped back to avoid a claw strike from the monster-like arm made of sand on Gaara's right arm. Then, once the arm passed, Sasuke stepped forward with his katana sheathed. "[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: Sōryūsen]."

In the next instant, Sasuke unsheathed his sword, cutting through the sand arm and opening Gaara's body up to an attack. Then, without giving Gaara any time to react or recreate his giant sand arm, as he had done a few times before, Sasuke pulled his sheath from his hip and slammed it into Gaara's torso.

Bang!

As a result, Gaara was sent flying backwards before slamming into the ground. And because he was not used to being hit, let alone sent flying, Gaara made no effort to break his fall. So, he was sent rolling across the ground without being able to stop himself.

Taking advantage of Gaara's current state, Sasuke then raised his sword over his head.

"[Flying Heavens Sword-Style: Doryūsen]." Sasuke chanted as he slammed his sword downward, striking the ground in front of him with his blade.

As Sasuke's blade struck the ground, debris shot towards Gaara with great force, enough to knock out most shinobi of the same rank with ease. Unfortunately, despite being barely conscious at this point, Gaara's sand defense needed no input from him. So, all the debris that would have struck him was easily defended against.

"Not fast enough *Pant*" Sasuke muttered through ragged breaths caused by his waning magic power.

Meanwhile, Laki and Hayate watched all this happen without interference.

"So, why are you just standing here?" Laki asked. "Dislike Sasuke?"

"*Cough* No, not at all." Hayate replied. "But I don't have the power to do any serious damage, either. So, I'm waiting for Sasuke to get winded before I step in for him. Then, we'll switch when I get tired, as well."

"I see." Laki replied. "I'll take care of this, then."

With that, Laki stepped forward and flared her magic power, drawing both Sasuke's and Gaara's attention. Then without weaving a single hand sign, she slammed her hands onto the ground and used a [Ninjutsu].

"[Wood-Style: Wood Dragon Jutsu]." Laki chanted.

A moment later, the ground in front of Laki exploded outwards. From the center of the explosion, the head of a serpentine dragon with long whiskers shot out of the ground. On top of that, it was made completely of wood with glowing yellow eyes.

Then, after surveying the surroundings, the dragon head shot towards Gaara, locking onto his left arm, that had just been turned into a monster arm like the right. On top of that, sand had also rebuilt the right arm that Sasuke had severed.

At this moment, Gaara noticed the incoming dragon that was over a hundred feet long. However, because he was under the violent influence of the One-Tailed Beast, he only swatted at it with his newly grown arm. However, that would turn out to be a mistake.

The [Wood Dragon] did not even try to avoid Gaara's swipe. Instead, it opened its mouth and bit down on the attacking arm.

As soon as the [Wood Dragon] had a secure hold on the sand arm, it quickly wrapped its long, serpentine body around Gaara, quickly immobilizing him. At the same time, the One-Tailed Beast's magic power was being absorbed into the wood making up the dragon.

"What is this?" Gaara asked in an angry, yet frightened, tone as he struggled to free himself.

Unfortunately, all of Gaara's struggles were in vain and he was slowly sapped of all the magic power he could use to struggle.

Meanwhile, Sasuke looked on in shock and awe. The foe he was putting his life on the line to defend against was so easily taken down by a technique he had never seen before. On top of that, because [Wood-Style] is a Kekkei Genkai, he was unable to copy it using his Sharingan.

"I had no idea she was really that strong." Sasuke muttered to himself after tracing the [Wood Dragon] back to its source. "I've never seen her use anything like that in training before."

At that point, Sasuke had a new found respect for the wizards from Fairy Tail, who had only helped most of them with their physical training before they graduated from the academy.

"Now, we wait for Alfonzo." Laki said as she stood up and checked her handy work. "he said he would seal the One-Tailed Beast properly."

Meanwhile, at the southern outskirts of the village, a squad of Leaf shinobi were facing off against a giant snake that was attacking the village's walls in order to let the five hundred or so enemy shinobi who summoned it into the village. And it looked like they were on the losing end of this confrontation.

"Everyone, just hold on!" The leader of the squad of Leaf shinobi shouted. "We only have to hold on until reinforcements arrive! Lord Jiraiya is in the village. Once he summons his toads, we'll be able to focus on stopping the shinobi while he deals with the snake!"

Having faith in Jiraiya, the shinobi on the defensive line roared, showing their determination to protect their home.

At that moment, a large magic power approached rapidly. And since the shinobi of the Hidden Leaf only knew a few people with that much magic power, they automatically assumed it was Jiraiya. The enemy shinobi were thinking the same thing, as well. But when they saw the relatively short blonde woman land on the battlefield, both sides were confused.

"Of course it would be a big snake." Lucy, the blonde woman who just made her appearance on the battlefield, said as she surveyed the situation. "*Sigh* I really don't like snakes. But I guess I have to fight it, don't I?"

Reaching that point, Lucy reached into her Celestial Key pouch. Then, she pulled out a pair of Golden Celestial Keys.

"[Star Dress: Taurus]." Lucy said as she held the first of the keys up before plunging it into the center of her chest.

Immediately, Lucy was covered in golden light. Then, when the light reseeded, she was dressed in a cow-patterned bikini top and matching sleeves, a pair of pants with no right leg, leaving her entire right leg exposed, a pair of gloves and boots, as well as a belt with the symbol for Taurus on the belt buckle.

"Alright, this is where things really get started." Lucy said as she held up the second Golden Celestial Key and her [Soul Armament], Zodiac, which took the form of a whip with a purple handle, a dark blue body, and had a four cornered star at its tip, before inserting the key into the keyhole at the base of the whip's handle. "[Open the Door to the stars, Zodiac]."

Once the Golden Celestial Key was inserted into the whip and Lucy finished her release command, Zodiac glowed in golden light. Then, the four-cornered star changed its shape to that of a lion's head, making it clear that the key Lucy inserted into its keyhole was Leo's.

"What is that?" A shinobi from the Sound Village asked.

"It doesn't matter!" A Sand shinobi shouted. "Stop her!"

"It's too late for that." Lucy said confidently. Then, she swung her whip at the ground using all the strength her [Star Dress] afforded her. "[Regulus Wave]."

As Lucy's whip slapped against the ground, the ground in front of her fissured. On top of that, large pieces of debris were shot towards the snake and the shinobi behind it. Plus, all those pieces of debris were glowing in Regulus' light, significantly increasing their destructive force.

Seeing the incoming wave of glowing earth projectiles, the snake widened its eyes. Then, it showed everyone present exactly how loyal it was.

Poof!

By unsummoning itself, leaving all the shinobi behind it exposed to the incoming attack.

After that, the sound of people screaming in fear, groaning in pain, and bodies being slammed into by rocks and soil at high speed echoed around the surroundings. Meanwhile, the shinobi on the defensive line only watched on in disbelief.

"One move." The captain of the defensive line said in a shaky tone. "She defeated them all with just one move. Just who is that woman?"

"I think she was brought in by Alfonzo Marcus." Another shinobi said.

"I know that." The captain replied. "But I've never heard of a wizard from Fairy Tail with powers like that."

"Phew!" Lucy said while breathing out tiredly. Then, she dispelled Zodiac's released state as she continued. "Using the [Star Dress] and your release at the same time really is tiring, Zodiac."

["Hmph!"] Zodiac snorted from Lucy's inner world. She then continued in a haughty tone. ["You just don't train enough. If your body was stronger, you wouldn't have such a low capacity for magic power."]

"Yeah, yeah, I know." Lucy replied. "Anyway, let's get back inside the village. There are still a lot of enemies in there."

["Well, at least it's easy to tell friend from foe with these ninjas."] Zodiac replied. ["I mean, they all wear ID markers. It's like they work in rival companies, or something."]

In response, Lucy giggled as she rushed back into the village.

At the same time, Elicia and Cana also dealt with the snakes on the northeast and northwest of the village and did the same.

A moment later, Jiraya appeared on the battlefield Lucy just left.

"Don't worry, the Great Toad Sage of Mt. Myabōku is here!" Jiraiya shouted to raise the troops morale.

However, the response Jiraiya received was much different than he expected. Instead of cheers that showed their determination, he only received an awkward silence.

Jiraiya then took the time to survey his surroundings. And he noticed that there was no snake summon on the battlefield. On top of that, all the hostile shinobi were either dead or severely injured.

"Just what happened here?" Jiraiya asked while scratching his head in confusion.

While all of this was going on, Saeko was standing outside the hospital's entrance with her katana drawn. Around her, the bodies of more than a dozen shinobi were on the ground, their fates unknown. Meanwhile, Rika, who had taken up a position on the hospital's roof, was picking off shinobi around the village with her MechaShift weapon.

And with these two guarding the hospital, no one from the Sand or Sound could get close.

"These shinobi are rather weak. Saeko said. "I thought there would be more of a challenge to be had."

Despite saying that, the sadism in Saeko's smile was evident for everyone to see. Anyone who knew her would know that she was truly enjoying the violence she was inflicting on her enemies.

"I know you're having fun." Rika shouted down to Saeko from the hospital's roof after picking off a shinobi that was about to ambush Naruto's rescue team in the distance. "But don't forget why we're here."

"I'm well aware." Saeko replied. "but who said a girl can't enjoy her job, right?"

Rika could only shake her head as she watched the hospital's surroundings through the scope of her rifle.

"We got more incoming." Rika said as she started shooting.

"I'm ready." Saeko replied as her lips curled into dangerously breath taking smile.

A moment later, the nine shinobi remaining after Rika stopped shooting approached the hospital.

"[Flying Heaven's Sword-Style: KuzuRyūsen]." Saeko chanted as she dashed towards the crowd of enemy shinobi.

In the next instant, Saeko appeared behind the crowd of Shinobi as she sheathed her katana.

Click!

Just as the sound of the handguard making contact with the mouth of the sheath sounded out, stab wounds appeared in the center of the nine shinobi's foreheads, piercing straight through their forehead protectors.

"Hey! Wasn't that move supposed to only attack the nine vital spots on one target?" Rika asked from the hospital's roof.

"That's right." Saeko replied with a nod as she returned to her position in front of the hospital's entrance. "But I modified it to have an area of effect, so to speak. Unfortunately, because I have to constantly change positions in such a short time, it drains stamina rather quickly."

"*Sigh* You're really scary, girl." Rika said while shaking her head. "You basically made a melee version of my [Multiscope] spell. Anyway, I wonder how the others are doing? Especially Alfonzo. He went to fight that creepy guy attacking the Hokage on the roof, right?"

With that, Rika took a moment to look in the direction of the barrier on top of the Chunin Exam arena before getting back to her duty of protecting the hospital. Looking through her scope to survey the

village, she saw Ikaruga cutting down a group of Sand and Sound Shinobi while Grayfia froze any that she missed. Even Miyuki, who's combat style was no were near as flashy, defeated a similarly ranked opponent in hand-to-hand combat.

"Well, this should be over before too long." Rika muttered as she lined up a shot on a shinobi who was trying to sneak attack Miyuki. "We just have to wait for Alfonzo to take down the ring leader. Then, we can go back home. By the way, I wonder how this will affect the results of the Chunin Exam."

Chapter 615: The End of an Era in Shinobi History

While all the girls from Magnolia were moving to protect the people of the Village Hidden the Leaves, Alfonzo made his way up to the barrier set up by the four shinobi that came with Orochimaru. When he arrived, he found a pair of Anbu standing outside. Even though he could not see their faces thanks to their masks, it was obvious they were quite anxious for Hiruzen's safety.

"what's the situation inside?" Alfonzo asked. "How's the Hokage doing?"

"For now, he is evenly matched with Orochimaru." The captain of Hiruzen's security detail replied. "Had this been only ten years earlier, Orochimaru, that traitor, would have no chance of even standing up in front of Lord Hokage."

"Well, he was called the God of Shinobi in the past." Alfonzo said casually while examining the [Sealing Barrier] around Hiruzen's battlefield.

'Even if that title is a bit of a stretch.' Alfonzo thought. 'Hell, there's no way in hell he could ever match up to Hashirama. Or even Tobirama for that matter. I bet Minato could even take him at their primes.'

At that moment Alfonzo sensed Tsunade, filled with anger, rushing over to this location.

'Oh shit!' Alfonzo exclaimed internally. 'I need to hurry. She's probably coming here to kick my ass.'

At the same time, the first clash between Hiruzen and Orochimaru ended. Shortly after that, Alfonzo and the two Anbu saw Orochimaru go through a long series of hand signs before slamming his hands onto the roof of the arena.

"Damn, he's using the [Edo Tensei]." Alfonzo said as the tips of his fingers lit up with magic power.

The [Edo Tensei], or [Impure World Reincarnation], is a [Summoning Jutsu] created by the Second Hokage, Tobirama Senju, that allows the summoner to summon the soul of a shinobi that has passed on to the afterlife, or the Pure Lands as the shinobi call it, into a living sacrifice. After that, the summoner will have control of the summoned individual, able to wipe away all of their thought process, leaving nothing but their fighting instincts, should they desire to.

On top of that, the ones summoned will have an unlimited amount of magic power at their disposal while being unable to be killed. Instead, any injuries will heal automatically.

The only downside to this technique is the fact that the summoner would be unable to control anyone who outclasses them by too much in power. Though, that side effect can be mitigated by summoning them at a level that is lower than their own. Though, the summoned individual would lose some of their fighting prowess as a result.

"Well, aren't you well informed?" A man with six arms asked from one corner of the [Sealing Barrier]. "But even if you are, what can you do about it? This [Four Violet Flames Barrier], though I would not say

it's impenetrable, breaking it from the outside requires quite the fire power. Even so, if you were somehow able to do that, you'd end up killing your beloved Hokage, as well."

Rolling his eyes at the taunt, Alfonzo raised his hands that were glowing with magic power. Then, he pressed his fingers on several points on the barrier. As a result, a passage large enough for one person to walk through opened in the barrier.

When the six-armed man saw that, his eyes widened, and his mouth fell open in surprise. The red-haired woman on the other side of the barrier had a similar reaction. And although no one could see the Anbu's faces, they probably had a similar expression, as well.

"You two stay here." Alfonzo said to the Anbu. "Master Tsunade is on her way here. Don't let her do anything reckless and attack the barrier. She'll either end up hurting herself if she uses too little force or killing most of the people inside if she uses too much."

At first, the Anbu wanted to protest when Alfonzo told them to stay outside. They were Hiruzen's protection detail, after all. But when they heard Tsunade was coming and Alfonzo wanted them to stop her from trying to barge into the barrier, they wanted to go inside with Alfonzo even more. Neither of them wanted to be the ones to tell Tsunade that she could not do something. That was dangerous for one's health.

Unfortunately, before either of them could voice their opinions, Alfonzo walked into the barrier. Then, it quickly closed behind him.

'With that, hopefully Tsunade's anger will be diverted to those two Anbu.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'And if I'm lucky, she'll forget about me by the time all this is over.'

["That was pretty evil."] Bedlam said with a chuckle. ["but better them than you, as the saying goes."]

Once again, Alfonzo rolled his eyes. Then, he stepped forward. As it turned out, this was a double-layered barrier. So, he had to make an opening into this one, as well.

When Alfonzo finally appeared on the battlefield, Orochimaru had completed his casting of the [Edo Tensei]. So, there were three wooden coffins standing up on their ends in front of him, between him and Hiruzen.

"Tch! Only two worked." Orochimaru said as the third coffin sank into the roof. "But this should be more than enough to deal with you, Sensei."

At this moment, Hiruzen was gritting his teeth while wearing a black body suit with metal plates covering the vital areas. This was the battle attire he had worn for years. On top of that, he was carrying a long black staff that had the ability to change size at will.

This staff was no ordinary weapon, however. Instead, it was created from Hiruzen's summoned beast, the Monkey King, Enma.

A moment later, the two remaining coffins opened. Out from them, two men wearing armor from the Shinobi's warring states period emerged.

"Hmm? This is the world of the living." The first man, standing at 6'1" with waist-length, straight black hair with center parted bangs, black eyes, and tanned skin wearing a black body suit with red warring states armor, said while looking around. "Ankhseram isn't going to be happy about this."

"I know." The second man, a fair skinned man with shaggy, silver hair and red eyes standing at roughly 6' tall wearing attire similar to the first with blue armor instead of red and a furry collar, said while looking around. "That's why I stopped using the [Edo Tensei] back then."

One thing to take note of about these two men was the fact that there were cracks all over their exposed skin. On top of that, their sclerae were pitch-black. These were both signs that they were not alive. Rather, they were here thanks to the [Edo Tensei].

"Cucucu... How does it feel to be back in the world of the living Lords First and Second Hokage?" Orochimaru asked as the two coffins sank into the roof.

Hearing that voice, the two men, the First and Second Hokage, Hashirama Senju and Tobirama Senju, turned their heads back to see who was speaking. And when they saw Orochimaru, both of them frowned.

"You, I seem to have an impression of you." The black-haired man, Hashirama Senju, said with a contemplative expression on his face.

"You're Orochimaru, Saru's student, am I right?" The silver-haired man, Tobirama Senju asked.

"That's right." Orochimaru replied. "And I've taken the liberty of reuniting you with your student, using the very Jutsu you developed."

Hearing that, both Hashirama and Tobirama turned to look at Hiruzen.

"Saru, is that you?" Tobirama asked. "You've gotten old."

Despite wanting to greet his teacher, Hiruzen was in no mood to do so. Fighting Orochimaru was hard enough. But adding the first two Hokage would make that next to impossible.

"*Sigh* I guess we were summoned here to fight against the Leaf, weren't we?" Hashirama asked. "Will the village I built be destroyed by my own hands?"

"No, it most likely won't be. Hiruzen replied while shaking his head after finally finding his voice. "Although I will more than likely die here, we have some rather powerful guests in the village. One of which is Retsu Unohana of the Mermaid Heel guild."

Hearing the name Retsu Unohana, both Hiruzen and Tobirama shuddered, undoubtedly from remembering some unpleasant memories. Even Orochimaru, who had lost his best source of information when Kabuto was captured, shivered at the mention of Retsu's name.

"That woman is still alive?" Tobirama asked in a forlorn tone. "She almost killed me once because I proposed a marriage to strengthen both the village and Mermaid Heel."

"She almost killed me, too." Hashirama added. "Because I let my younger brother go out and speak so much nonsense."

"Wow! It looks like Master Unohana has scared quite a few men back in the day." Alfonzo, who overheard this conversation after entering the barrier, said while leisurely approaching the four shinobi. "She even scares the hell outta Gramps. And he's one of the Ten Wizard Saints."

Alfonzo's voice caused all eyes to look in his direction. And when they saw him, Hashirama and Tobirama looked at him with interest while Hiruzen breathed a sigh of relief. Meanwhile, Orochimaru looked at him with a healthy amount of shock.

"Alfonzo Marcus, why are you here?" Orochimaru asked in a panicked tone.

"Well, I was here to watch the Chunin Exam Finals, which you ruined." Alfonzo replied in an annoyed tone. "Some of the kids I helped train were doing pretty good, too. Sasuke would have probably even beaten Gaara. Though, that would have opened up a whole other can of worms."

"Wait! You've been training shinobi from the Leaf?" Orochimaru asked.

"You're not a shinobi, are you?" Tobirama asked. "Why would you be training shinobi from the village?"

"Well, because I was an orphan, and I took a liking to two kids who lost their families in the village." Alfonzo replied. "And while I was at it, I helped train some of their friends, too."

"I see." Tobirama said with an understanding nod. "but why were you in the village in the first place?"

"I was hired to upgrade the training facilities in the village." Alfonzo said. "Master Tsunade was the one who introduced me to the village."

"Master Tsunade?" Hashirama asked in a curious tone. "You wouldn't be referring to my granddaughter, would you?"

"Yeah, that's right." Alfonzo said.

"But why would you call her Master?" Hashirama asked. "Is she the master of the guild you belong to?"

"Nope." Alfonzo replied. "I couldn't join her guild even if I wanted to. I have a few of... the wrong parts for that."

"So, she's a member of Mermaid Heel, then." Tobirama said. "That would explain why that woman is here."

"She's not just a member, but she's the guild master." Alfonzo said.

"Tsuna? A guild master?" Hashirama and Tobirama exclaimed simultaneously.

Like that, the three, Alfonzo, Hashirama, and Tobirama continued to chat as if they weren't on a battlefield. Meanwhile, Orochimaru and Hiruzen watched, not sure what to say or how to interrupt.

Eventually, Orochimaru reached the limits of his patience.

"Enough!" Orochimaru shouted while making a [Ram Seal].

In that instant, Hashirama and Tobirama stopped talking as their eyes lost their luster. Then, both men started going through a string of hand signs.

"*Sigh* You could have lived a little longer if you just let us keep talking." Alfonzo said in a disappointed tone. "But I guess you're ready to kick your oxygen habit, huh?"

Orochimaru did not reply. Instead, he also started weaving hand signs.

"Fine." Alfonzo said as he turned to look at Hiruzen. "I'll take care of this. I know you don't' have it in you to kill your student. So, I'll take care of that, too."

Hiruzen had no words to say to that. Instead, he just let out a resigned sigh.

"I'm getting to old for this shit." Hiruzen said in a tired tone. "I guess it's time to pass on this burden to someone else."

Even though he said that, Hiruzen did take up a fighting stance to protect himself during the battle.

In the next instant, the roof in front of Hashirama exploded. Through the debris, an eastern dragon made of wood shot towards Alfonzo.

"[Metal Magic: Circular Cutter]." Alfonzo chanted as a pair of circular saws spinning at high-speed materialized on his forearms.

Then, Alfonzo dashed forward, almost too fast for the eye to follow and swung his arms at the incoming [Wood Dragon]. Then, while swinging his arms, he cut the [Wood Dragon] into several logs.

At the same time, Tobirama finished his hand signs, as well. Then, he took a deep breath before spewing out a large volume of water that took the form of an eastern dragon, as well, as it shot towards Alfonzo.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Zap Cannon]." Alfonzo chanted as he held up his left palm towards the [Water Dragon].

Not long afterwards, a sparking orb of electricity formed on Alfonzo's outstretched palm before it was fired at the [Water Dragon]

When the [Water Dragon] was struck, it did not explode, as the orb of electricity had. Instead, the current traveled down the dragon's body towards Tobirama. At the same time, Alfonzo swung his right arm, which was also sparking with electricity, in Orochimaru's direction.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Supersonic Dismemberment]." Alfonzo chanted.

In the next instant, just before Orochimaru completed his Jutsu, his left arm was cut off at the shoulder and the wound was cauterized by the heat from the circular saw that just passed by him.

Boom!

Along with the sonic boom caused by the saw breaking the sound barrier several times over, the entire arena shook when the electrified saw blade slammed into the [Four violet Flames barrier].

Despite the force with which the interior barrier was hit, it did not shatter. Though, it did crack quite badly. Plus, the four sound shinobi maintaining it all coughed up a mouthful of blood from the backlash.

"Impossible! You weren't this powerful when we fought four years ago!" Orochimaru exclaimed while holding his shoulder.

"Yeah, that was four years ago." Alfonzo said while ducking a beam of pressurized water shot by Tobirama. "Did you think I stopped training after that?"

A moment later, after Hashirama weaved a series of hand signs, a large number of trees grew from the roof towards Alfonzo. However, Alfonzo did not even bother with them as he flashed in violet light before disappearing from where he stood.

Meanwhile, Orochimaru had tipped his head back and his mouth opened far too wide for a human. Then, a pair of hands reached out and grabbed the sides of his mouth. However, before he could pull his head out of the husk's mouth, Alfonzo appeared above him.

"That technique is so fucking disgusting." Alfonzo said as he placed his hand on Orochimaru's head that was just emerging from the mouth of his shed skin. "So, stop using it."

With that, he pressed down, forcing Orochimaru face first onto the roof. At the same time, a small needle of Techno Organic Metal grew from his palm and pierced into Orochimaru's scalp. A moment later, Alfonzo flashed away from Orochimaru, just in time to avoid a volley of [Wood Shuriken] fired by Hashirama.

Not long after that, Orochimaru climbed out of his husk while glaring at Alfonzo with a murderous glint in his eyes.

"Don't look at me like that." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"What did you do to me, Boy?" Orochimaru asked angrily. "It feels like there's something moving around just under my scalp."

"Oh, that's because there is." Alfonzo said after flashing to avoid a [Watter Bullet]. "Do you remember how I made Kurotsuchi talk about his project? Well, I basically did the same thing to you. Except, instead of attacking your heart, I went straight for your brain."

Alfonzo then went on to explain about the Techno Organic Metal and its properties.

"I'd wager you have about ten minutes." Alfonzo said casually. "Actually, five would probably be enough. After that, you'll be brain dead."

Orochimaru visibly panicked when he heard that. And after realizing that the metal was made with Alfonzo's magic, he, Hashirama, and Tobirama went all out to kill him before the Techno Organic metal could turn his brain metallic.

"I guess I should do something about those two, too." Alfonzo muttered as he finally drew Riot and bedlam from his lower back. "[Run Wild with Destruction at Your Fingertips. Usher in Pandemonium with Creation in Your Hands. Riot, Bedlam]."

Alfonzo's hands and forearms were quickly coated with liquid metal. Along with his hands being covered, Alfonzo's magic power shot up by five times, terrifying Orochimaru and greatly surprising Hiruzen, who had become a bystander by now.

In the next instant, Alfonzo once again flashed in violet light before appearing in front of Hashirama. Then, he thrust his right hand through the First Hokage's chest. And as Alfonzo's hand penetrated through his back, Hashirama smiled.

"Thanks for sending me back." Hashirama said happily. "I wonder what Mito will think when I tell her about you. She'll probably be surprised that there's such a strong young man in the world today."

"Enjoy the after life." Alfonzo said with a smile. "Hopefully, you won't be back any time soon. Not until you reincarnate, anyway."

With that, Alfonzo flashed away and Hashirama's outer appearance flaked away, revealing Zaku Abumi's, one of the Genin from the Village Hidden in the Sounds, corpse with an arm sized hole in its chest.

In the next instant, Alfonzo repeated his action by piercing an arm through Tobirama's chest, as well. And after a short farewell, Tobirama's appearance also flaked away, revealing the corpse of the Sound Genin, Kin Tsuchi.

"Alright, your helpers are gone, little Pedo-Snake." Alfonzo said as he turned around to face Orochimaru. "Oh, and just so you can die in piece, I was the one who killed your clone in the Forst of Death."

By now, Orochimaru was completely despondent. Despite all his experience, he did not know how to get out of this situation. Sure, he could run away with his forces, but that would not solve the issue of the metal in his head. In fact, he would die before he even had a chance to leave the Kingdom of Fiore.

Sure, he could revive himself with the [Cursed Seal of Heaven] that he placed on the shinobi maintaining the barrier. But that would take time. Time that Orochimaru knew he did not have. Based on the way Alfonzo was able to enter the [Four Violet flames Barrier], he had also deduced that it was Alfonzo who removed Anko's [Seal]. And although the improved [Cursed Seal of Heaven] was much more complex than the one on Anko, he still did not have enough time before Alfonzo undoubtedly removed it from the ones he placed it on.

As a result of giving up his struggle, Orochimaru collapsed onto the roof of the arena.

"Well, I'll leave you a little time to say your last words, Old Man." Alfonzo said as he glanced at Hiruzen. "But I'm gonna make sure his lackies don't get away."

With that said, Alfonzo flashed towards the barrier, made a hole in it, and captured the five people maintaining the barrier.

Although it seemed like there were only four shinobi maintaining the barrier, one of them actually had two separate bodies, a pair of twins who could assimilate into each other.

Meanwhile, Hiruzen approached Orochimaru and looked down at him with a complicated expression on his face.

"*Sigh* For what it's worth, I never wanted things to come to this." Hiruzen said. "But you can't be forgiven for all the wrong you've done. I just wish I had the resolve to take your life myself. Alas, I'm simply too soft-hearted to be the leader of a shinobi village. I recognize that even more clearly now than when Danzo died."

Orochimaru did not reply. Instead, he just stared into space, waiting for his life to end as his brain was destroyed.

Chapter 616: End of the Invasion

After Alfonzo defeated Orochimaru, Hashirama, and Tobirama, he quickly rounded up the Sound 4 from the Village Hidden in the Sound. Then, after knocking them all unconscious, he left them with Hiruzen, who was staring blankly at his former student's lifeless body.

"*Sigh* If you wanna hate me for this, I understand." Alfonzo said as he dropped off the five Sound Village Shinobi. "But can that wait 'til later? There's still an invasion going on."

Alfonzo's voice snapped Hiruzen out of his daze. Then, he looked at him with a complicated gaze. Eventually he could only shake his head.

"I have no right to hate you." Hiruzen said as he returned his gaze to Orochimaru's corpse. "Even though you killed my best friend and my favorite student, they would have destroyed the village before long."

Reaching that point, Hiruzen raised his head and stared int the blue sky.

"But it's time for me to retire." Hiruzen muttered. "In the next few days, I'll pick a successor while trying to clean up the aftermath of this attack.'

In response, Alfonzo could only shrug his shoulders.

"Well, the village's internal affairs are none of my business." Alfonzo said. "Even so, my deal with the village won't change. And since I'm' here, I'll help it through this trouble. So, I'm gonna go fuck up some Sand and Sound ninjas."

With that, Alfonzo disappeared from in front of Hiruzen in a flash of violet light.

Though it was true that Alfonzo left to help put down the invasion, there was another reason why he left so quickly.

"Damn it! Don't run from me you brat!" Tsunade shouted as she rushed over to where Hiruzen stood.

Hearing Tsunade's angry roar, Hiruzen subconsciously looked in her direction. And when he did, he could not help but stifle a laugh.

Although she had tried to smooth down her hair, it was clear that Tsunade failed at it. As a result, when she appeared in front of Hiruzen, although it wasn't as puffed up as before, Tsunade's hair still looked crazy.

Hearing Hiruzen's stifled laughter, Tsunade's angry glare snapped away from the direction in which Alfonzo disappeared and landed on Hiruzen.

"*Cough* Tsuna, I'm glad you're here." Hiruzen said after almost choking when he saw Tsunade's glare. "I'll need you to do an autopsy on Orochimaru before you go back to the Mermaid Heel HQ. Although we probably won't use any of his more extreme methods, if we can find out how he strengthened his body by so much, it could make the shinobi of the Leaf much stronger."

"Like I have time to do an autopsy." Tsunade said angrily. "I have to rush to Crocus tomorrow for the Grand Magic Games. So what if the person you want me to do an autopsy on is Orochi---"

Reaching that point, Tsunade's words came to a sudden halt. Then, her eyes opened wide while she stared at Hiruzen in disbelief.

"That's right, it's Orochimaru." Hiruzen said sadly. "Alfonzo killed him after he used your great uncle's forbidden Jutsu, [Edo Tensei] to bring back your grandfather and great uncle to kill me."

Hearing that, Tsunade gritted her teeth as her glare landed on Orochimaru's corpse. Currently, she wanted to smash his body into blood mist for desecrating her grandfather's and great uncle's graves to perform that Jutsu. However, she was able to calm herself down before she did so.

"I understand." Tsunade said solemnly. "But it will have to wait until after the Grand Magic Games. I really can't miss it. Otherwise, the girls will be heartbroken that their guild master isn't there."

"*Sigh* I understand." Hiruzen replied. "You have a duty as a leader. And although you are still a shinobi of the Hidden Leaf, I can't keep you from that."

'Tsuna would probably be the best candidate to be the next Hokage.' Hiruzen thought to himself. 'She's about on par with Jiraiya in power, but she has experience as a leader. And that is necessary in the role as Hokage. The only question is how to get her to agree. I'll have to put some thought into this. Perhaps her going to attend the Grand Magic Games is a blessing. I'll have more time to think of a way to manipula--- *Cough* convince her to become the Hokage.'

"Anyway, I'll take him to the hospital and preserve his body." Tsunade said as she picked up Orochimaru's body and slung it over her shoulder like a sack of potatoes. "What do you wanna do with his lackies, though?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure." Hiruzen replied. "But Alfonzo left them alive, despite the fact that he could have killed them easily. He must have some plans for them."

"I'll just take them down to the T&I Department then." Tsunade said casually as she started flinging the five shinobi over her shoulder as well. "I'll let Anko see what she can get out of them before--- Damn it, Anko will be participating in the Grand Magic Games this year, too. Whatever, just tell Inoichi to do it."

"I understand." Hiruzen replied with a nod. "Orochimaru probably put some strong mental defenses on them. I just hope their heads don't explode if he tries looking through their minds."

After that conversation, Tsunade left with Orochimaru's corpse and the prisoners. Meanwhile, Hiruzen returned to the Hokage Tower to give orders to his shinobi. After that, the invasion did not last much longer. With the wizards from Fairy Tail helping out, none of the invading shinobi stood a chance.

A few hours later, all the invading Sand and Sound Shinobi who survived the day were imprisoned, and that included Gaara, Temari, and Kankuro, the Fourth Kazekage's children, and a ransom letter was sent to the Village Hidden in the Sand in Desierto.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, Elicia, and most of the girls had returned to the temporary residence to rest.

"Well, I wasn't expecting something like that to happen when I finally got the chance to come to the Village Hidden in the Leaves." Lucy said as she flopped down on a sofa in the living room.

"Yeah, I just wanted to see the kids I helped train show off." Rika said. "Instead, I had to kill a bunch of crazy ninjas."

"I don't know, I had fun." Saeko said.

"You know, sometimes you talk like a dark wizard." Rika said dryly.

Hearing that, Saeko put on a shocked expression. However, when she thought about it, that did sound like something a dark wizard would say. So, she just shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't hurt innocent people, so it's fine." Saeko said with a smile. Then, she snuggled up to Alfonzo, who was sitting next to her on another couch. "Besides, Alfonzo likes me just the way I am."

"Anyway, how long do you think Shizuka and Wendy will be at the hospital?" Elicia asked while smiling at Rika, who showed a hint of jealousy when she saw Saeko cuddling with Alfonzo. "Because we gotta get going pretty early tomorrow if we're gonna make it in time for the prelims of the Grand Magic Games."

"Seriously, why do they have to do it at midnight every time?" Lucy grumbled.

"Oh, stop complaining." Cana said before taking a swig from a bottle of liquor. "You can just sleep in the car, right?"

"The only reason you can say that is because you aren't driving ." Lucy said while pouting deeply. "You'll be riding with Laki, after all."

"Speaking of which, where is Laki?" Rika asked curiously.

"Oh, she went running to find Kakashi as soon as the fighting ended." Alfonzo said with a smile. "She's with him right now, in fact."

"Oh, is that girl finally getting her some?" Cana asked. "it's about time."

"Not right now." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "Right now, they're at Yakiniku Q. If I had to guess, they're probably on a date."

Hearing that, Cana's, Lucy's, Saeko's, and Rika's eyes lit up. It was clear they wanted to get a scoop on the latest gossip.

"Anyway, since you're worried about being so tired, Lucy, you should go to bed early tonight." Elicia said, cutting into the conversation.

"*Sigh* You're probably right." Lucy said. "I'll go take a bath and do that."

With that, Lucy stood up and started to leave the living room. However, just before she reached the exit, she looked over her shoulder and swept her hair out of her face.

"You're welcome to join me, Alfonzo." Lucy said while batting her eyes and speaking in a coquettish tone.

"Actually, I think I'll take you up on that offer." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I need to wash some of the dust and wood ships out of my hair."

"Okay, I'll help you." Lucy replied with a smile as she waited for Alfonzo to arrive next to her.

Once Alfonzo was next to her, Lucy wrapped her arms around one of Alfonzo's then, she pulled him towards the large bathroom, leaving the other girls to relax in the living room.

"I'm surprised none of you wanted to go with them." Rika said with a smile. "Shizuka has told me about how wild all of you can be when you're together with him."

"Nothing like what you're thinking will happen in the bathroom this time." Elicia said while shaking her head. "Alfonzo is more tired than any one of us, you know."

"Yeah, even though he fell asleep early last night, he had to fight again today." Cana added. "That's just not enough time for him to rest."

"I guess you're right." Rika replied with a nod.

"Hey, I just thought about it, but where is master Mavis?" Saeko asked. "I remember her coming to the arena with us. But once the fighting started, she disappeared."

"*Sigh* You really should get into the habit of keeping [Magic Power Detection] active whenever you're outside of magnolia." Elicia said in the tone of an elder teaching their junior. "Right now, she's at the hospital with Shizuka and Wendy. She uses [healing Magic], too, after all."

"And before you ask, Alfonzo did not assign her a task because she was the first guild master." Cana added. "Just like he didn't assign a task to Master Unohana."

"Speaking of Master Unohana." Rika said. "I heard she was from Master Makarov's generation. Meaning, she should be at least ninety, right? So, how does she look so young?"

Rika's question caused the ladies to exchange glances for a while. Eventually, three pairs of eyes fell on Elicia, as she seemed to know a lot.

"Why are all of you looking at me" Elicia asked with eyebrows twitching. "I'm only twenty-three. There's no way I'd have any experience looking young when I'm in my nineties."

Naturally everyone knew that. So, they rolled their eyes at Elicia's inability to think before she spoke. Then, they decided to ask Alfonzo what he thought about Retsu looking so young despite her age later. And for the rest of the night, they all relaxed.

Eventually, Wendy, Carla, Mavis, and Shizuka returned from the hospital. And Retsu was accompanying them in the hopes that Alfonzo would be cooking dinner when she arrived. Unfortunately, Alfonzo had fallen asleep early once again. So, she ended up having dinner made by Grayfia, which was a wonderful consolation.

June 30, x788.

Two hours before sunrise, the visitors from Magnolia, Tsunade, Retsu, and Anko were gathered at the Leaf Village's gate bidding their farewells to Hiruzen and the Leaf Genin.

"Thank you again for all your help during this crisis." Hiruzen said solemnly. "The Village hidden in the Leaves will always remember your help in our time of need."

"Well, we're hoping to be more than just business partners." Alfonzo said as the leader of the group of wizards from magnolia. "If you're open to the idea, Fairy Tail is willing to be allies with the Village Hidden in the Leaves. And you would be able to call on us whenever you needed help with anything. Though, it would still cost you. But at least you would get a discount."

"You're always so business minded." Hiruzen said while letting a smile creep onto his face. "Oh, and the Jōnin Council will be discussing the results of the Chunin Exam, despite the fact that it was interrupted. So, you'll find out if any of the kids were promoted when you get back."

"Yeah, look forward to me being a Chunin when you get back, you know?" Naruto said energetically.

"I'm definitely looking forward to seeing your results." Alfonzo said.

"If you're not a Chunin when I get back, I'll be training you even harder, Sasuke." Saeko said with a dangerous glint in her eyes.

"I don't have any say in that." Sasuke said under his breath.

"Anyway, it's about time that we get going." Alfonzo said. "It's a pretty long drive to Crocus from here, after all."

"Have a safe trip." Hiruzen said in response.

With that, Alfonzo turned around and led the group away from the village and made their way to Crocus for the x788 Grand Magic Games.

Chapter 617: Bacchus Groh Is Back

Just before the sun completely sank below the horizon, a group of three four-wheeled magic vehicles and a two-wheel magic vehicle drove through the gates of Crocus. Shortly afterwards the four vehicles came to a stop on the side of the road, drawing the attention of nearby pedestrians.

Not long after the vehicles came to a stop, the two women riding the two-wheeled magic vehicle took off their helmets, revealing their identities as the current and former guild masters of Mermaid Heel, Tsunade and Retsu.

Shortly after that, the doors of the three other magic vehicles opened. From them, a total of fifteen people, one man, thirteen women, and one talking cat stepped out of them. The fifteen then approached Tsunade and Retsu.

"We're finally here." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I'm so tired. It seems like all I've done for the last two weeks is travel and/or fight."

"Yeah, that was a pretty long ride." Elicia added as she hugged Alfonzo from his left. "We've been on the road since before the sun even came up."

"Well, we'd like to thank you all for giving Anko a ride from the village." Retsu said in a gentle tone. "Otherwise, she would have had to take the train, and she would have gotten here a little later. Still, she should have made it to the hotel before midnight."

"But I would have been too tired to help during the preliminary round." Anko said.

"Do you think the others wouldn't have been able to handle it?" Tsunade asked. "You have to trust your guild mates more. Look at Alfonzo and Elicia, they aren't even participating in the Grand Magic Games. Yet, Fairy Tail still wins."

After saying that, Tsunade turned to Alfonzo and Elicia.

"But that won't last too much longer." Tsunade said while smiling challengingly. "Our girls are getting stronger quickly. It won't be long before they surpass you and Mermaid Heel is named the strongest guild in Fiore."

"Do your best." Alfonzo said with a smile. "We believe in you."

"Go, you!" Elicia cheered happily. "We're rooting for you!"

Seeing how dismissive Alfonzo and Elicia seemed, Tsunade could not help gritting her teeth. However, if she only knew how serious they were when they cheered for her, she would be dumbfounded.

After Laxus and his team won the first Grand Magic Games, Ur spoke to Alfonzo and Elicia. And she made a request.

Ur's request was simple. Yet, it caused Alfonzo and Elicia to pout at her in discontentment. The request Ur made was to not participate in the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament, which was used to determine the team that would participate in the Grand Magic Games until Laxus and his team lost.

To Alfonzo and Elicia, that meant that they would, possibly, never get to join the Grand Magic Games. Because even though everyone was using the gravity chambers to train, the wizards of Fairy Tail had been doing it for at least a year longer than the other guilds, giving them a big advantage.

The group chatted casually for a little longer before they split up. While Tsunade, Retsu, while walking her motorcycle through the streets, and Anko headed to the hotel that housed the Mermaid Heel guild, Alfonzo, Elicia, and the others climbed back into their cars and made their way to the hotel where Fairy Tail was staying.

After arriving at the hotel, the group checked in before gathering with the members of Fairy Tail who were at the hotel. Though, most of the members were out touring the city of Crocus.

"Alright, I'm going to sleep." Alfonzo, who drove all the way from the Valley of the End to Crocus, said as he stretched after talking with Ur and Gildarts for a while.

"Okay, you've been working really hard since you got back from the village at the beginning of the month." Ur replied while patting Alfonzo on the shoulder. "Go get some rest, you've earned it. In fact, just take this week as a vacation. Don't work too hard while you're in Crocus."

"Oh, I'll be relaxing for the next two months." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I already told the Hokage. Little Man's birthday is in August. So, I won't be going back to work until it's passed."

"Good." Gildarts replied. "Then, when we get back to Magnolia, we'll have to spar. I've got a surprise for you."

"I wanna spar with Lici, too." Ur added with a crafty glint in her eyes.

"Sure." Alfonzo said.

"No problem." Elicia added.

After that, Alfonzo said his goodbyes and made his way to his room. Meanwhile, Elicia went to find Maria and Mey-Rin, who came to Crocus with Amar'e. Elicia hadn't seen her baby in a few days and missed him terribly, after all.

After that, time passed quickly. And midnight came quickly.

July 1, x788.

Buzz~~~~~!~

{"Hello, hello, good night, and good morning!"} A high-pitched voice shouted, the voice reaching every corner of Crocus. {"Everyone's favorite Grand Magic Games host, Mato here! And it's time for the preliminaries to begin!"}

That voice was accompanied by a gong that sounded loud enough to wake up all but the heaviest sleepers, Shizuka. At the same time, a projection of the Grand Magic Games' mascot, Mato, appeared in the sky and was visible from every corner of the city.

{"This year's preliminary event to bring down the number of competing guilds in the Grand Magic Games' main event to eight will be different this year!"} Mato shouted excitedly. {"Last year, we had a simple little race, remember? Well this year, it will be a scavenger hunt!"}

A collective groan could be heard all over the city. However, Mato seemed to either not notice or not care about the reactions to his news.

At the same time, a white light shot up from the central plaza of the city.

{"Do you see that light in the center of the city?"} Mato asked while pointing downwards. {"That's where you'll find your search items. Don't worry, if that sounded confusing, I'll explain more clearly. There are several tables set up there. On those tables, there are little pieces of paper where you'll find what you have to find. Simple, isn't it?"}

By now, all the participating teams were looking towards the column of light in the center of the city.

{"Now, don't get too excited."} Mato said cheerfully. {"No one is allowed to start moving until I give the signal in... Three... Two... One... Go~~~~~!"}

With that, all the teams, who were not prepared for the event to start so abruptly, started moving from their hotels. And the team from Fairy Tail, with Laxus' speed, was the first to arrive at the central plaza.

"After choosing a slip, you can search the city for what it says on the slip." A Grand Magic Games staff member explained after the Thunder God Tribe arrived. "After you find the item on the paper, just bring it back here for verification. And if your item is deemed acceptable and you're one of the first eight teams to complete the task, you'll move on to the main event."

As soon as the staff member finished his explanation, Laxus stepped forward and grabbed a slip from the nearest table. Then, he opened it and read what it says.

"What does it say?" Saya asked while adjusting her glasses. "Is it something hard to find?"

"Don't worry, Saya." Laxus said confidently. "I got this. I'll be back in a second."

Then, without waiting for a reply, Laxus, with a confident smile on his face, turned into a bolt of yellow lightning and flew off in the direction of the hotel where the members of Fairy Tail were staying.

"So, what do you think it said?" Bickslow asked curiously.

"What did it say? What did it say?" Bickslow's dolls chorused a moment later.

"Who knows?" Evergreen replied with a shrug. "I just hope this doesn't take too long. This event interrupted my beauty sleep again."

Meanwhile, Fried remained silent as he looked in the direction where Laxus disappeared with a complicated look in his eyes.

'Why does Laxus have to get married?' Fried asked himself. 'I really don't like this. But I want Laxus to be happy. What should I do?'

Thoughts like these had been running through Fried's head ever since Laxus told him that he would be marrying Saya and Chico. And deep down, he was happy that Laxus had found the people he wanted to spend his life with. In fact, even if Laxus had told him that he wanted to be with him, Fried would not have felt much different.

Because contrary to popular belief, Fried was not interested in Laxus romantically. Rather, his obsession was a form of idol worship. And in Fried's mind, his idol, Laxus was meant for everyone. And monopolizing him was as close to blasphemy as one could get.

While Bickslow, Evergreen, and Saya speculated on what could have been written on the slip Laxus picked up, and Fried contemplated life, members of the other guilds started showing up at the central plaza. And to no one's surprise, Lamia Scale was the first to arrive. Following them was Mermaid Heel and Blue Pegasus. And the fifth team to arrive was the last of the most well-known guilds in Fiore, Quatro Cerberus. However, what surprised everyone was the man leading the team.

"So, he's finally back." Fried, who was pulled out of his contemplations when Quatro Cerberus arrived, said with his eyes narrowed. "And he's gotten a lot stronger."

"On top of that, is he... sober?" Bickslow asked in a confused tone.

"Sober? Sober?" Bickslow's dolls chorused.

Naturally, the person Fried and Bickslow were talking about was the Ace of Quatro Cerberus who had disappeared for almost two years, Bacchus Groh. And he was leading a group of four wizards, Ikaku Madarame, Yumichika Ayasegawa, Might Guy, and Genma Shiranui.

"Alright, boys!" Bacchus, not paying attention to the gazes he received, shouted energetically. "Let's show Fiore just how Wild Quatro Cerberus can be!"

After shouting that, he rushed towards the nearest table, swiped a slip of paper, read what it said, and rushed off with his team after informing them about the slip.

"I think he really was sober." Evergreen said while watching the members of Quatro Cerberus run off. "And he didn't ogle me at all. That's definitely a first."

"Who was that, exactly?" Saya asked in a confused tone. "I don't remember seeing him or those two guys wearing flak jackets last year."

"Oh, that's right, you weren't a member of the guild before he disappeared from the public eye." Bickslow said in a tone of realization.

Bickslow, Fried, and Evergreen then went on to explain Bacchus', Guy's, and Genma's identities to Saya. While they were doing so, a bolt of yellow lightning fell from the sky. A moment later, it turned into Laxus. However, he was not alone.

Standing next to Laxus was Alfonzo, only wearing a pair of underwear, with an annoyed scowl on his face.

"Laxus, I'm going to kick your ass when we get back to magnolia." Alfonzo said in a pissed off tone. "And if I'm not verified as the item you needed, I'm going to make it ten times worse."

Hearing that, Laxus could not help but shudder. He knew Alfonzo was really pissed off right now. And he had not seen Alfonzo this angry since that time he sneak attacked him and almost hit him in the eye with a small lightning bolt. So, he knew he was in for a world of pain when they got back to Magnolia.

Meanwhile, Evergreen, Saya, and all the female staff members were staring at Alfonzo's perfectly chiseled body. Saya was even slightly ashamed because her fiancé was standing right there. Still, she could not pull her gaze away.

"Hahaha.... Don't worry, Alfonzo." Laxus said after a hollow chuckle. "I promise this will get verification without a problem."

After saying that, Laxus dragged Alfonzo towards the table. Then, he handed over the slip in his hands.

"A man with a unique hairstyle." The staff member read aloud. Then she looked at Alfonzo to verify.

Unfortunately, her gaze was drawn by Alfonzo's body, rather than his hair. So, she did not make the call right away.

"*Cough*" Laxus coughed loudly to bring the staff member back to her senses.

"Oh... Um... Sorry." The staff member stammered as her face reddened in embarrassment. "Um... that hair style is... Um... *Gulp* unique, indeed."

The verification process took longer than it should have, as the staff member kept stealing glances at Alfonzo's body. But she eventually finished her assessment.

"Team Fairy Tail has passed the preliminaries." The staff member said while smiling awkwardly.
"Congratulations on advancing to the main event of the Grand Magic Games."

"Finally." Alfonzo said in a perturbed tone. "I'm going back to sleep. If anything other than Little Man wakes me up before morning, no matter what it is, I'm gonna kick your ass, Laxus."

After saying that, Alfonzo turned around as he was covered in arcs of violent electricity.

"Wait, before you go, Alfonzo." Bickslow said. "You should probably know that Bacchus is back. He's leading the team from Quatro Cerberus."

Hearing that, Alfonzo's eyes narrowed slightly.

"Noted." Alfonzo said before he vanished in a flash of violet light.

After that, the other seven teams who qualified for the Grand Magic Games arrived one after another. And just as expected, Lamia Scale, Mermaid Heel, Quatro Cerberus, and Blue Pegasus, in that order, were the next to arrive. And they were followed by three less well known teams. But even if they were not well known guilds, they undoubtedly showed their guild's strength and ingenuity to make it into the top eight.

Chapter 618: Bacchus' Change

Not long after leaving the central plaza, Alfonzo returned to the hotel. And when he returned to his room, the first things he heard were Amar'e crying and Elicia trying to comfort him.

In fact, the reason Alfonzo was so annoyed was not because he was dragged out of his room by Laxus, nor was it because the loud buzzer and Mato's voice woke him up. Rather, it was because Amar'e was scared by the loud noise. And because of that, he wanted to beat someone up. Unfortunately, he could not beat up Mato. So, when Laxus showed up at his room, he became the target for Alfonzo's ire.

On a side note, because Alfonzo wanted to spend as much time with Amar'e as he could on this trip, Amar'e's crib was set up in Alfonzo's room. So, there was no nighttime fun between him and the girls.

"So, did Laxus get first place?" Elicia asked with a smile after she saw Alfonzo.

"Yeah." Alfonzo replied briefly.

"Well, that's good." Elicia said as she continued to rock Amar'e.

"That's good news, but what I heard after that isn't." Alfonzo said as he sat down next to Elicia and started making funny faces at his son. "Come on, Little Man, don't cry. Daddy's here."

That actually seemed to calm Amar'e down, as the volume of his cries lowered while he reached out for Alfonzo from Elicia's arms.

Seeing how ready to leave her Amar'e was, Elicia could not help pouting a little bit. Even so, she asked about the last thing Alfonzo said to her.

"What do you mean?" Elicia asked curiously. "What's not so good about the Grand Magic Games this year?"

"Bacchus is leading Quattro Cerberus' team." Alfonzo said as he took Amar'e into his arms.

Immediately, Elicia froze. However, that only lasted for a moment, as she frowned shortly afterwards.

"I hope he learned his lesson." Elicia said in a slightly dark tone. "Because if he hasn't, I might have to finish the job."

"*Sigh* Stop saying stuff like that." Alfonzo said as he poked Elicia on the nose while holding Amar'e, who was now happily playing with his hair, in the other arm. "It makes you a little scary. Besides, if he really wants a piece of me for something so stupid, I don't mind kicking his... *cough* Putting him in his place."

Naturally, Alfonzo had to correct himself, as he was about to start swearing in front of his son. And the fact that Elicia was glaring at him had nothing to do with it.

"Anyway, we can deal with Bacchus depending on the way he behaves if we meet him." Alfonzo said to change Elicia's focus. "for now, let's just get Little Man back to bed and get back to sleep ourselves, okay?"

"Yeah, I guess you're right." Elicia said while shaking her head. "I just really hope he's changed."

July 7, x788.

The Grand Magic Games went by in a flash. And once again, Fairy Tail was crowned the champion and defended their title as the strongest guild in Fiore. But what really surprised Alfonzo and Elicia was the fact that they did not run into Bacchus even once during the Grand Magic Games.

Despite that, Bacchus surprised the people of Fiore greatly during the Grand Magic Games. For one, there were no sightings of him drinking, at all, during the festival. Secondly, He put on a phenomenal display during the games themselves, winning an event for Quatro Cerberus and tying in a battle round with Kagura of Mermaid Heel.

In fact, if he did not run into Kagura during the Grand Magic Game battle royale event on the last day, there was a chance that he could have led Quatro Cerberus to victory. However, because he was tied up with her for too long, they were unable to overtake Fairy Tail.

"Maybe Bacchus has changed." Alfonzo said while packing his luggage for the trip back to magnolia. "I mean, no one saw him drinking or flirting with women during the whole Grand Magic Games festival period."

"Maybe." Elicia replied while sketching a design for this year's fall collection. "but I won't believe it until I see it with my own eyes."

In response, Alfonzo only shook his head as he continued to pack.

On a side note, Amar'e was currently out with Shizuka and Rika as they walked around the capital for the last time before the guild headed back to Magnolia.

"*Sigh* I guess I spoke him up." Alfonzo muttered.

Knock! *Knock!* *Knock!*

Not long after Alfonzo muttered to himself, there was a knock on the hotel room's door. And Alfonzo stood up to answer it after realizing that Elicia had no intention of doing so.

"What is it, Bacchus?" Alfonzo asked as he opened the door. "Did you come here to start shit? Because if Lici tries to kill you this time, I'm not gonna stop her. I'm just gonna get rid of the body and erase the evidence."

Hearing that, Bacchus, who was standing on the other side of the door, could not help but smile embarrassedly while scratching the side of his head.

"Um... Can I come in?" Bacchus asked.

Hearing Bacchus' question, Alfonzo did not answer immediately. Instead, he scrutinized his expression. And when he noticed genuine embarrassment and remorse, he stepped aside and allowed the man into the room.

In response, Bacchus nodded in gratitude before entering the room.

"*Sigh* Why are you here, Bacchus?" Elicia, who had finally put down her pencil after Bacchus was allowed entry, asked in a tone devoid of emotion.

"I... Uh... Actually came to... apologize." Bacchus said. "to the two of you.'

By now, Alfonzo had closed the door and moved to stand next to Elicia. And they were both looking at him with unfriendly gazes.

"And what exactly are you apologizing for?" Elicia asked as she raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms.

"For everything." Bacchus replied quickly. "for imposing my misguided beliefs. For all the bad things I said about Alfonzo. For those threats I made even when you told me in no uncertain terms how you really felt about me.... Everything. I'm sincerely sorry for all the stuff I said and did to the two of you over the years."

As he reached the end of his apology, Bacchus actually dropped to his knees and bowed so deeply that his head was pressed on the floor. Despite his show of sincerity, neither Alfonzo nor Elicia said anything. And that situation lasted for nearly a minute.

"*Sigh* Get up." Alfonzo eventually said.

Hearing that, Bacchus raised his head to look at Alfonzo and Elicia, though he did not stand up.

"Look, I'm not gonna say I forgive you." Alfonzo said. "I mean, for years, you had been saying my fiancée come wife was in love with you and that I was forcing her to stay with me. You don't just get over that so quick, you know. But... I can at least say that I won't bring it up in the future. And if you actually continue to keep your shit together, then I might forgive you one day."

"I, on the other hand, don't forgive you and never will" Elicia said bluntly. "If possible, I never want to see you again. But if I do, I don't ever want you to talk to me again. So, if that's all you had to say, you can leave."

"*Sigh* I understand." Bacchus said as he stood up from the floor. Then, he turned around and started walking towards the door as he continued. "Well, I guess I deserved that. Anyway, I apologized. And that was all I could do. Thanks for hearing me out, at least."

Just before Bacchus reached the door, Alfonzo called out to him from behind.

"Oh yeah, before you go." Alfonzo said, causing Bacchus to come to a stop. "What's the name of your new martial art. It was pretty interesting."

"[Water Stream Rock Smashing Fist]." Bacchus replied without turning around. "I learned it from an old man named Bang who teaches martial arts in a dojo on a mountain in Seven. He was the one who helped correct my attitude, too. I did have to make quite a few modifications to make it fit with my [Palm Magic], though."

After that, Bacchus opened the door and left while closing the door behind him. Unfortunately, because he never turned around, he never saw the completely amazed and dumbfounded expressions on Alfonzo's and Elicia's faces.

"Seriously, just what doesn't exist in this world?" Alfonzo asked after a few moments of silence.

"At this point, I really don't know." Elicia muttered in reply. "I kinda wonder if we'll ever run into Saitama, though. I mean, what would his catch phrase be in this world. 'I'm just a wizard for fun'?"

"Wouldn't that just make him an independent wizard?" Alfonzo asked. "Besides, I get the feeling he would be the only person on the continent that the Magic Council hated more than Fairy Tail."

"Yeah, you're probably right." Elicia replied with a nod.

A few moments later, Cana, Ultear, and Lucy, who had been out shopping, rushed into the room.

"Hey, we just saw Bacchus coming out of the hotel." Lucy said in a somewhat concerned tone. "He didn't try anything, did he?"

"Was he walking when you saw him?" Alfonzo asked with a smile, putting the thought of Saitama existing in this world out of his mind.

"Of course he was." Cana replied while rolling her eyes as she took a bottle of liquor out of her [Storage Card].

"Oh, I get it." Ultear said with a smile. "If he had done anything, there was no way he would have been able to walk out of the hotel, right?"

"Exactly." Elicia replied with a nod of her own.

"Yeah, they probably would have had to carry him out in a body bag if it were left up to Lici." Alfonzo said with a smile.

"Fonzie~~~!" Elicia whined.

"So, why was he here?" Cana asked curiously.

"To apologize." Alfonzo replied.

"Yeah, it looks like he really has cleaned up his act." Elicia added. "Still, I want nothing to do with him. And I told him that without mincing my words."

"Well, I guess that makes sense." Lucy said in an understanding tone. "I mean, he was a real pain in the butt, for a long time."

"Good for you, Girl.' Cana said as she walked over to Elicia's side and slung an arm over her shoulders. "Then, we should celebrate with a drink. Say Ahh!"

"Why are you acting like you need a reason to drink, Cana?" Ultear asked.

"I know, ri--- Mmph!" Elicia started to agree with Ultear. However, once her mouth was open wide enough, Cana shoved the bottle into her mouth.

"You mean how you always have to give Alfonzo a reason to ravage you, Tear?" Cana asked cheekily while continuing to pour the contents of her bottle into Elicia's mouth.

"*Sigh* Cana, if you don't stop, you're gonna choke Lici to death." Alfonzo said as he stepped forward to stop Ultear from starting a fight.

"Huh?" Cana exclaimed in confusion before looking down at Elicia, who was struggling to take the bottle out of her mouth while liquor was spilling from the sides of her lips and tears were forming in her eyes.
"Oops..."

Cana then pulled the bottle out of Elicia's mouth before taking a swig.

"Sorry about that, Lici." Cana said.

However, instead of getting a reply, Elicia threw a punch that sent her flying and the bottle in her hand falling to the floor.

Luckily, Alfonzo reacted quickly, catching the bottle with a hand he made of metal before it could fall to the floor and shatter. Meanwhile, Elicia and Cana started to fight like the Fairy Tail wizards they were. They even managed to pull Ultear and Lucy into it.

Alfonzo, on the other hand, just watched from the bed. He did remember to coat the whole room in shock absorbing metal before anything got damaged, though. Because if Fairy Tail caused any property damage during the Grand Magic Games, they would never hear the end of it. On top of that, all the hard work they had done to raise their reputation would go down the drain.

"Well, they'll probably be at it for a while." Alfonzo muttered as he created a small metal coin in his right palm. "S-Class wizards have stamina in spades. For now, I'll just start researching that mysterious metal we got from killing those Wealth Hands in Tartarus. And if I'm quick, I might be finished before they're done."

Chapter 619: Baby Steps

After Bacchus left and the girls had their fight, all the guilds who participated in the main event of the Grand Magic Games were invited to a banquet at Mercurius, the Flower Light Palace, to celebrate another successful Grand Magic Games.

"You girls did well this year." Elicia said to Kagura during the banquet. "You all got third place, pushing Lamia Scale all the way down to fourth. I bet Old Man Jura is wondering what happened."

"Still, we only got third place again." Kagura said in her usual emotionless tone.

"Yeah, but who would have thought that just Bacchus coming back would have been such a big push for Quattro Cerberus?" Araña said while shaking his head. "I wonder how he got so strong."

"I'm sure being sober had something to do with it." Lucy said. "I mean, it's kinda hard to go through so many complicated events when you're basically floating along with the alcohol, right?"

"Although I hate to admit it, he probably would have done well even if he were still that same drunkard." Elicia grumbled begrudgingly. "I mean, he was able to make S-Class even while he was always drunk, right? So, he would have been able to handle it."

"Then what do you think the reason was?" Risley asked curiously.

"It's probably his new martial art." Elicia replied. "Fonzie asked him about it when he came to apologize last night. And he told us that he learned it from a master martial artist in Seven."

"That must be it, Meow!" Millianna exclaimed. "He would have to learn a super-powerful martial art to fight so evenly with Kagura, right?"

"Definitely." Beth added with an emphatic nod. "Kagura is so strong, someone like Bacchus wouldn't be able to fight with her like that otherwise."

It should be mentioned, during Mermaid Heel's S-Class promotion Exam in x786, Kagura was promoted to S-Class, becoming Mermaid Heel's ace in Yoruichi's absence.

While this conversation was going on, Alfonzo was sitting with a few of the guys from the various guilds and talking about the Grand Magic Games, as well.

"Damn, Guy, you'd been holding out on me when we sparred back at the Leaf Village, hadn't you?" Alfonzo asked. "You actually opened [Seven Gates] during the Games. You never opened more than six whenever we fought."

"That's because those were only friendly spars." Guy said with his usual smile on his face. "Although I intended to let my youth burn brightly, the time for it to explode passionately was on a stage like the Grand Magic Games."

"Still, If I had been in that event, you wouldn't have won." Laxus said proudly. "When it comes to speed, not even Alfonzo can keep up with me."

"Even if that's true, Guy won." Ikaku said with a grin. "And because of that, you almost lost the whole Grand Magic Games. If Bacchus hadn't gotten tied up with that woman from Mermaid Heel in the last event, that title would have been ours."

"Almost only counts with horse shoes and magic hand grenades." Laxus replied cheekily. "Like you said, we still won in the end. And that's what counts."

That statement led to a fierce discussion about who would be the winning guild in next year's games. However, despite the fierceness of the discussion, it was still kept rather friendly. Until Alfonzo spoke up to add his two jewels, that is.

"You guys really need to try harder." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I'm really waiting for someone to bring us down from our lofty perch."

Naturally, this caused all those participating in the conversation to look at Alfonzo with displeasure. While Laxus, Fried, and Bickslow all looked at Alfonzo as if he were a traitor for encouraging their competitors, the guys from the other guilds looked at him with fighting spirit burning in their eyes because they thought he was taunting them.

However, none of them were aware that Alfonzo, Elicia, and the rest of his team were not allowed to participate in the Grand Magic Games until Laxus and his team, or whoever managed to get the right to compete during the Battle of Fairy Tail Tournament, lost the title of Fiore's strongest guild. And by now, Alfonzo was already tired of being a spectator.

Despite the change in atmosphere in that part of the hall, the banquet continued and all the members of the guild got along in a relatively harmonious manner until Toma E. Fiore declared the end of the banquet and wished everyone well for the coming year.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

July 8, x788.

The next day, all the guilds left Crocus to return to their own guild headquarters. And Fairy Tail was no exception, arriving in Magnolia sometime in the afternoon.

"Finally home." Alfonzo said as he walked into the mansion on the lake with Amar'e in his arms. "It feels like it's been such a long time since I was back home."

"It hasn't even been that long, though." Mirajane said. "I mean, you were home right before you went to the Leaf Village, right?"

"That's true." Alfonzo replied with a smile. "Still, it feels like it's been a long time because of how busy I've been."

"When are you going back to the Leaf?" Marin asked.

"Some time after Little Man's birthday." Alfonzo replied. "Until then, I'm not taking any quests or doing any jobs for anyone. I'm just gonna stay at home, relax, spend time with Little Man, and enjoy my beautiful life with all of you."

When Alfonzo mentioned all of you, he was naturally talking about his nine wives and Saeko, who was not one of his wives yet, but was also a member of his harem.

"Well then, why don't I help you relax." Shizuka asked with a sweet smile. "If I give you a massage with my [Healing Magic], it should loosen up your muscles by quite a bit."

"Huh?" Alfonzo exclaimed as he turned his head towards Shizuka, inadvertently pulling his hair out of Amar'e's hands and making him laugh as he tried to catch it again. "You can do that?"

As he asked his question, Alfonzo turned back to Amar'e with a smile on his face and gently shook his head to make catching his hair a little harder. And that made Amar'e laugh happily as he constantly reached out for Alfonzo's dreads.

"Oh, yeah!" Sun cheered happily. "Shizuka's massages are amazing. I've had one, too. And my mom gets them whenever she can."

"You're not doing all that for free, are you?" Alfonzo asked in a concerned tone. "I mean, it's fine to give freebees to the family, but anyone outside of our family should definitely pay."

"Don't worry." Shizuka said as her sweet smile turned into one that was very merchant-like. "I charge properly. And I've made the most from Evergreen and Saya, the two who enjoy the finer things the most."

"Good girl." Alfonzo said as he reached out and combed his fingers through Shizuka's hair.

"I feel like Shizuka is being corrupted." Ultear muttered. "When she first showed up, she would have never thought of charging the members of the guild."

"Hey, you can't say it like that, Tear." Cana said with a smile. "She's not being corrupted. Instead, she's being enlightened."

"Cana's right." Elicia said in a firm tone. "Wizards don't work for free, never forget that."

"Whoa!" Marin exclaimed with a playful smile. "Look at Lici being all... Um... What's the word I'm looking for?"

"I think decisive fits in this situation." Lucy chimed in.

"Yeah, that's sit!" Marin exclaimed once again as she pulled Elicia into a hug. "Look at Lici being all decisive."

"What can I say?" Elicia said in a slightly smug tone. "Auntie Bianca and my daddy drilled that notion into me when I was little. And Fonzie made sure that I would never forget it."

"So, you're just using the wisdom of others, huh?" Erza added. "That's quite admirable."

"Exactly." Elicia said as she puffed out her chest with pride.

While the group was talking, they had been walking through the house. Meanwhile, Grayfia, maria, Mey-Rin, and Miyuki took all their luggage to the laundry room to be washed.

Eventually, Alfonzo, Amar'e, and the girls reached the living room, where they all sat down to relax after sitting in the cars all morning long. And when Alfonzo sat down, he put Amar'e on the floor so that he could play with the innumerable number of toys he had received since the day he was born.

And just like that, the group continued to chat while watching Amar'e entertain himself.

About half an hour later, Maria walked into the living room and bowed to all those present.

"Master, Madams, it's almost time for lunch." Maria said politely. "Before we start cooking, we wanted to know if master Alfonzo wanted to cook today or would you be leaving it to us?"

Hearing Maria's question, Elicia's, Cana's, Ultear's, Erza's, Mirajane's, Marin's, Sun's, Lucy's, Saeko's, and Shizuka's eyes all focused on Alfonzo. And the anticipation in their eyes was so great that he realized that saying no was not an option.

"I'll cook." Alfonzo replied. "What ingredients are prepared?"

Hearing that, all the ladies cheered excitedly. Just as Alfonzo felt as though it had been a long time since he was home, they felt that it had been a long time since they tasted Alfonzo's cooking.

"Ai went shopping this morning in preparation for our return." Maria said, beginning her explanation. "And she said she managed to buy a rather large Indigo Salmon as well as an assortment of vegetables."

"Hmm..." Alfonzo hummed as he stopped to think about what he could make.

However, before he could think for too long, his eyes happened to fall on Amar'e. And what he saw made him open his eyes wide. Then, he quickly stood up and pulled his iPhone out of his pocket.

Alfonzo's movements naturally confused the other women in the room. However, when they saw Alfonzo take out his iPhone, they noticed that he was looking towards where Amar'e had been playing. So, they looked in that direction as well. And they, too, widened their eyes in shock.

Currently, Amar'e was next to a toy fort built in the living room for him to crawl around in. However, instead of just crawling around, he had pulled himself up to a standing position while reaching for a toy that was placed on top of the fort.

Unfortunately, Amar'e's arms were a little too short to reach the toy from where he was standing. So, he lifted his little left foot to take a step closer. On top of that, he was not holding onto the fort, as his hands were still stretching towards the toy.

Then, with total concentration, Amar'e put his left foot down and pushed himself a little closer to the toy before raising his right foot to do the same. And with those two shaky, unstable steps, Amar'e was able to reach the toy that he wanted to play with, while being completely unaware of the significance of what he had just done.

Then, with a radiant smile on his face, Amar'e laughed happily while holding the toy. Unfortunately, that broke his concentration and he started to tumble over backwards. But before he could fall to the floor, or properly register what was happening, he felt a familiar sensation, as he was scooped up and held in his father's arms.

"Ahahahahaha!" Amar'e's laughter got even happier when he realized Alfonzo was holding him.

Then, he immediately dropped the toy he just worked so hard to get and started playing with Alfonzo's hair.

"Mar'e~~~~~!" Elicia squealed as she instantly appeared next to Alfonzo in a burst of speed. "Ooh~~~~~! You're getting to be such a big boy. Already walking at a few days less than eleven months old!"

As she spoke, Elicia wrapped both Alfonzo and Amar'e in a hug, making Amar'e laugh even more happily while he held on tightly to Alfonzo's hair.

Shortly afterwards, all the other girls crowded around Alfonzo, Elicia, and Amar'e while gushing over how smart and talented Amar'e was, even though they had no idea if walking before the age of one was all that impressive. But showering a child with praise when they did something good was never a bad thing, right?

Meanwhile, Maria smiled at the atmosphere while she took her own iPhone out from behind her apron and sent a text message to Grayfia, Mey-Rin, Ai, and Miyuki. And that text radiated smugness and pride, despite being only text.

Maria: Young Master Amar'e just took his first steps

Maria: And I was there to see it in person

After sending those two text messages, Maria smiled extremely brightly as she imagined the expression on the other four maids faces while putting her iPhone away.

'Ah! Today is a good day.' Maria thought to herself. 'We're finally back from the capital and I got to see Young Master Amar'e take his first steps. And best of all, I got to brag to the others about it. Oh, even

better, Master Alfonzo has decided to cook lunch. And he'll definitely make shares for us, too. Oh, I can't wait to see the others when we all take a break for lunch.'

Chapter 620: Spreading the Happiness

After witnessing Amar'e's first steps, Alfonzo went to the kitchen to start cooking. However, because he was in such a good mood after seeing one of the big moments in his son's life, he asked Maria to go out and buy more ingredients. He intended to cook a feast for the occasion.

Accepting the orders. Maria quickly left with the shopping list Alfonzo wrote for her. Meanwhile, Alfonzo started preparing the Indigo Salmon. Then, once all the preparations were done and he put the Indigo Salmon in the oven, he took out his iPhone and started making calls.

"Hey, Ur. Come over for dinner tonight. We're celebrating Amar'e taking his first steps."

"Yo, Natsu. Bring Lisanna over to have dinner tonight. I'm cooking a feast."

"Gray. Are you and Juvia busy tonight? No? Well then, come over for dinner. I'm cooking up a feast."

Like that, Alfonzo invited the members of the guild he was closest to. Not only Alfonzo, however, all the ladies invited the people they were close to, as well.

Eventually Maria returned with all the ingredients Alfonzo requested. Then, she and Grayfia assisted Alfonzo, who was smiling brightly the entire time, in cooking tonight's feast.

A few hours later, Ur, Gildarts, Wendy, and Carla arrived at the mansion on the lake.

"Hey, Ur." Elicia said with a smile. "I guess Fonzie called you, huh?"

"That's right." Ur replied with a smile as she patted Elicia on the shoulder. "I remember when Tear took her first step, I was just as excited as you all are."

"*Sigh* I'm jealous." Gildarts said with his head lowered. "I didn't get to see my Cana take her first step."

"Where's Amar'e?" Carla asked, flying past the other three and stopping right in front of Elicia's face.

"Carla acts so different whenever Mar'e is involved." Elicia said with a giggle. "He's in the play area in the living room. But don't be disappointed if he starts getting sleepy soon. He's been up all day."

Without a word, Carla flew past Elicia to find Amar'e.

"I bet Carla really wants a baby, too." Wendy said.

"And what about you?" Elicia asked in a mischievous tone. "I saw how close you were to Lee when we were in the Leaf Village."

Immediately, Wendy turned as red as an apple. Then, she lowered her head in embarrassment and started poking her index fingers together.

"Ooh! Wendy, you're still so cute, even though you're already sixteen." Elicia squealed and pulled Wendy into a hug.

Wendy did not struggle. Though, her neck and ears turned as red as the rest of her face.

"Alright, that's enough teasing Wendy." Ur said with a chuckle. "Let's just go inside."

"Okay." Elicia replied with a smile. Though, she did not release Wendy.

With that, the four entered the house and moved to the living room to chat with everyone else.

Over the next hour, quite a few more members of Fairy Tail came over. And the most excited of all the guests was little Elicia, who, as soon as she entered the living room, started teaching Amar'e how to do things that involved walking.

Shortly after all the guests arrived, Grayfia entered the living room and let everyone know dinner was ready. So, everyone moved to the dining room. And when they arrived, they realized that when Alfonzo mentioned a big feast, he really meant big.

The dining room table was filled with dishes. Fish, Pork, Chicken, Beef, all sorts of vegetables, etc. However, that was not all. On either side of the dining room table, there were tables pushed up against the walls. And there were even more of the same foods lined up on those, as well. Their purpose was for the maids to refill any of the dishes on the table that were emptied during the meal.

On top of that, Alfonzo had taken out quite a few bottles of liquor from his private collection. The really private collection. The one that even Cana had not found a way to get into. Something that has left her quite depressed.

When everyone sat down to eat, Alfonzo instructed the maids to pour a glass of champagne for everyone. Then, when everyone's glasses were full, he stood up with his own glass in hand.

"I'm sure you all know why I asked you here." Alfonzo said while smiling brightly. "Today, my Little Man took his first steps. And to show how proud of him I am, I organized this feast on the spur of the moment. So, please, everyone eat to your heart's content to celebrate this occasion with us. Cheers!"

"Cheers!" Everyone at the table shouted happily, as well.

After that, the meal unfolded in true Fairy Tail fashion with lots of laughter, several people gorging themselves until they could not eat anymore, and a few fights. Though, Alfonzo settled these fights rather quickly. Especially when it looked like the combatants would damage his house.

After dinner, Amar'e was the first to call it a night, as he just could not stay awake any longer. As for the others, they broke into smaller groups to enjoy the leisure facilities in Alfonzo's mansion. And during that time, a few interesting conversations took place.

"Erza, what exactly did you want to talk to me about?" Irene asked while wearing a black and red bikini and relaxing under an artificial sun lamp at the grotto.

"Don't you think it's time for you to try out love again, Mother?" Erza asked in a serious tone while wearing a blue and silver bikini.

It was a good thing that Irene was not drinking the cocktail that was placed on a table next to her sun chair at the moment. Otherwise, she would have undoubtedly spewed it all over herself and Erza after hearing that question.

"And why in the world would you ask me a question like that?" Irene asked with her eyes wide open and a dumbfounded expression on her face.

"Mother, you've been alone for over four hundred years." Erza continued in the same tone. "Aren't you tired of living that way."

"Alone? What are you talking about?" Irene asked while looking away from Erza's piercing gaze. "I have Heine and Juliet, I'm not alone. Plus, I have you back in my life now. How could I possibly be considered alone."

Although she said that, Irene was not willing to make eye contact with Erza, who was currently staring a hole in the side of her head.

"You know what I meant, Mother." Erza said without changing her expression. "You missed the chance to raise me. But don't get me wrong, I'm not blaming you for it. But don't you wish to see your child grow?"

"If that's all you want for me, I can use an [Enchantment] to return you to the age of an infant." Irene said without turning to look in Erza's direction. "then, I'll be able to watch my child grow up."

Erza did not respond. Yet, Irene could feel her gaze boring into her soul.

"*Sigh* Do you really want me to find a man?" Irene asked after she could no longer handle Erza's gaze. "But who could even match my stature? More importantly, who wouldn't view me as a monster after finding out about my past?"

"There is one man that I can think of..." Erza replied. Then, she stopped to think about it for a while. "Actually, I can think of three. But one looks even older than you and Ur might kill the other one if he even suggested having another woman by his side."

"Please don't tell me you were just suggesting Makarov and Gildarts." Irene said as she finally turned towards Erza with a deadpan expression.

"I was just letting you know there were people who would accept you as you are." Erza said bluntly. "Naturally, I was not suggesting them. Besides, I said there were three, remember?"

"And let me guess, the third is Alfonzo, right?" Irene asked.

"Is there a man better than him in this world?" Erza asked in a confident tone.

"*Sigh* You really have a progressive way of thinking." Irene said while shaking her head in exasperation. "It must be those books you, Brandish, and Marin are always reading. They've warped your values."

"I assure you, my values have been warped in no way." Erza said righteously. "I still abhor injustice and I will not tolerate anyone harming my family, no matter who they may be."

After saying that, Erza reached out and took Irene's hand into her own.

"I just want you to be happy, Mother." Erza said in a gentle, sincere tone. "And I believe Alfonzo would make you happy. Happier than you are now, at the very least."

By now, Irene's expression was quite complicated. It's not to say that she did not see Alfonzo in a favorable light. In fact, she saw him quite favorably. However, the thought of her, a former queen, being in a harem with women who were all centuries younger than her was a bit off putting. However, she could probably get past that. But being harem sisters with her own daughter was more than she was ready for.

"I'll... think about it." Irene said as she turned away from Erza. "I'm just not sure about sharing a man with my own daughter."

"I understand." Erza said with a nod. "but I assure you, it won't be as awkward as you think."

Although there was no basis for Erza's statement, the amount of confidence contained in her words was awe inspiring. So much, in fact, that Irene almost agreed on the spot.

At the same time, Shizuka and Rika were taking a dip in the large bath on the mansion's first basement floor. And they were having a similar conversation.

"Why are you still waiting, Rika?" Shizuka asked while shaking Rika's arm.

With every one of Shizuka's movements, her breasts, which were floating on the water's surface, would jiggle that much more vigorously. It was a shame that there were no men... Scratch that. It was a shame that Alfonzo was not present to see such a glorious jiggle.

"*Sigh* I'm waiting for him to make a move." Rika said. "Although I like him, I don't want to seem desperate."

"You're being silly, Rika." Shizuka said with a pout. "Fonzie is so busy. Do you think he has time to make a move on you? You told me to be bold and go for what I wanted. But you're acting like this. Are you really the Rika I know?"

Shizuka was being abnormally assertive on this matter. And the reason was simple. Rika was her best friend. And she wanted her to be happy, just like she was. But Rika was making all sorts of excuses.

"It's because I'm breaking the rule I set for myself." Rika said while shaking her head. "I've been saying for years that I wouldn't even consider a man if he wasn't a better shot than me. But now I'm actually considering a man who doesn't even use a gun. I feel like all the things I've said in the past were a joke."

"So, you're saying you want to be single forever, then?" Shizuka asked. "Because that's what will happen if you stick to that rule you set for yourself. Rika, you're the best shot in the world. And that's not going to change."

Hearing that, Rika smiled despite herself. But hearing Shizuka compliment her always made her happy. Especially because there was never any falsehood or envy in Shizuka's tone when she did so.

"*Sigh* I know you're right, Shizuka." Rika said in a dramatic tone. "It really is lonely when you're at the top."

Shizuka giggled in response as she wrapped her arms around her best friend.

"Oh, stop it." Shizuka said while smiling brightly. "Just stop being silly and go after what you want. That's what the Rika I know would do."

"Yeah, I guess I am being silly, aren't I?" Rika said with a smile of her own. "Besides, with Alfonzo's help, I'll probably be an even better shot than I am now. So, why am I even hesitating?"

"Exactly!" Shizuka cheered. "So, let's go!"

Reaching that point, Shizuka stood up explosively, putting her dripping wet, bombastic body on full display.

"Huh? Go where?" Rika asked curiously as her arm was grabbed. "Wait.... You don't mean to find Alfonzo, right?"

"Of course, I do." Shizuka said while nodding her head. "Why wait? You've already made your decision, right?"

With that, Shizuka pulled Rika up and out of the bath. Then, she started dragging her towards the dressing room.

"Wait! Shizuka, I said wait." Rika said while struggling against Shizuka to no avail. "I'm not ready for this yet. Damn it, I said wait. Why the hell are you so strong? Someone! Help! Shizuka is kidnapping me!"

When struggling did not work, Rika resorted to screaming for help. Unfortunately, they were the only ones on this floor. So, there was no one to hear her cries. Then again, even if there was someone to hear her, they would only think the two best friends were playing around.