

Fairy Tail 681

Chapter 681: Grand Magic Games, Day Two; Part 1: A Special Guest Commentator

{"Ladies and gentlemen, we're back for the second day of the Grand Magic Games!"} Loli shouted enthusiastically. {"I, Loli Chapati, am here once again with my co-host, Yajima!"}

{"Good morning, everyone."} Yajima said in a calm tone.

After Yajima's greeting, Loli's enthusiasm died down by quite a bit.

{"And today, we have a guest in the booth with us today."} Loli continued in a much more subdued, and somewhat fearful, tone. {"Ladies and gentlemen, join us in welcoming one of the captains of the Fiore's Knights, Lady Lalatina Ford Dustiness."}

With Loli's announcement, the crowd fell silent. Though they were impressed to know that a knight from the kingdom's knights was present, they were unsure of who the knight in question was. However, that would change momentarily.

{"Mr. Chapati, please..."} A seemingly embarrassed female voice that was familiar to most of the wizards in attendance rang out over the venue. {"... just call me Darkness. That is a much more comfortable term of address for me."}

Hearing the name Darkness, the crowd took a deep breath in unison. They were surprised that anyone would let the knight rumored to be a pervert on a level that no one has ever seen before was allowed into the broadcasting booth for such a big event.

Meanwhile, the wizards, after receiving confirmation of the guest, almost all face palmed in unison. Because, they had seen how Darkness could be from just watching acts of violence, they knew things would be troublesome today.

"Did they seriously let her be a guest commentator for today's events?" Alfonzo asked in a dumbfounded tone.

"It looks like it." Marin replied while looking at Elicia with a teasing smile on her face. "Well, at least it's Lici who will be participating in today's event."

"Ugh! All the sudden, I don't wanna go up anymore." Elicia said in a mortified tone. She then looked at Alfonzo with puppy dog eyes. "Fonzie, can you go today, please?"

"Not a chance in hell." Alfonzo replied without even looking at his first wife.

That response only made Elicia's puppy dog eyed expression turn into a pout while she tried her best to convince Alfonzo to take her place.

In fact, after the feast thrown for Final Fantasy's visit to meet the Fairy Tail guild, Alfonzo, Elicia, Marin, Sun, and Brandish, after Alfonzo discussed making new weapons for Squall, Tifa, Terra, and a few other members of the Final Fantasy guild who used melee weapons ended, discussed who would go up for today's event. And Elicia, after seeing Sun's performance the day before, was excited to go up today.

On a side note, many of the female members of Final Fantasy were quite conflicted about Alfonzo's cooking. While they readily acknowledged that it was the best food they had ever eaten, they were also quite embarrassed by all the involuntary moaning, writhing, and leaking they did while eating it. The male members of the guild, however, all gave Alfonzo a thumbs up and praised him for the two amazing feasts his food provided.

But after hearing that Darkness would be the guest commentator, she was quite reluctant.

On another note, During the feast, Edea and her husband Cid, took the opportunity to talk to Ur, with Gildarts by her side, and talked about magic and the possibility of an alliance between the two guilds. Ur even told Edea that she should come to Magnolia to see their training facilities.

Ur did make sure not to make any promises that Alfonzo would install them in the Final Fantasy guild hall, though. She did remember Alfonzo's displeasure at being volunteered to do the work for the other guilds without getting his approval first, after all. So, she told Edea that if she liked what she saw, she could discuss with Alfonzo about possibly getting a set of training chambers for her guild, as well.

Naturally, Edea accepted the proposal. She then let Ur know that she would come to Magnolia with some of her wizards around the time for the Harvest Festival. After that, the feast went without a hitch. Though, Final Fantasy's wizards did get to witness one of the famous Fairy Tail brawls during the evening. Some of them even participated after being drawn into the atmosphere.

While Team Fairy Tail was remembering the events of the previous knight, the introduction in the broadcast booth continued.

{"Alright, I'm sure no one is here to listen to us talk."} Loli said, his enthusiasm returning. {"So, before we get to the event for today, let's take another look at the scores after the first day."}

{Overall Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

Fairy Tail 20 Pts. Mermaid Heel 16 Pts. Final Fantasy 13 Pts. Blue Pegasus 11 Pts. Sabertooth 8 Pts. Quattro Cerberus 4 Pts. Lamia Scale 2 Pts. Twilight Ogre 0 Pts.}

{"Now, let's send it to Mato for details on the second day's event."} Loli said after reading out the scores.

{"Thanks, Loli."} Mato said, his image appearing on all the screens around the Domus Flau. {"Today's event is called..."}

Reaching that point, the screens in the arena changed to show the name of the event at the same time Mato announced it.

{"Assault Course"} Mato said, finishing his sentence. {"Now, each team, please send up one participant to compete in this event."}

"Well, go on, Lici." Alfonzo said as he patted Elicia on her back.

"Ugh! Do I really have to?" Elicia asked in a whiny tone.

{"*Pant* *Pant*"}

At that moment, the sound of a woman excited panting echoed throughout the Domus Flau.

{"Um... Darkness.... are you okay?"} Loli asked in a tone mixed with confusion and concern.

{"Oh, I'm fine."] Darkness said, regaining her composure quickly. Though, that did not last long. {"I just got the feeling that someone was thinking something bad about me. And I was wondering what it could have been. *Pant* Were they thinking that I would do something to ruin the broadcast? *Pant* Something so terrible that I would be kicked out of the knights? *Pant* And if that were to happen, my family would probably disown me. *Pant* Then, I would be forced to live on the streets *Pant* Maybe having to sell myself for a stale loaf of bread *Pant* Oh! What kind of depraved acts would I have to engage---"}

Static!

{"Um... it looks like there was a problem with Darkness' microphone."} Loli said, sounding quite nervous while wiping off the sweat that was streaming down his forehead. Meanwhile, Darkness' continued rant could be heard in the background. {"We'll do our best to get that fixed as soon as possible."}

By now, the entire audience had fallen silent with uncomfortable expressions on their faces. Meanwhile, concerned parents could be seen covering the ears of their younger children all over the Domus Flau.

At the same time, Elicia looked at Alfonzo, her puppy dog eyes back with a vengeance, while tears began to pool in her eyes.

"Please, Fonzie, don't make me go." Elicia said, while almost crying.

Seeing the expression on Elicia's face, Alfonzo was about to give in. However, before he could open his mouth, Marin, with a mischievous grin on her face, interrupted.

"No way, Lici." Marin said, her expression turning stern as soon as she started talking. "You basically strong-armed your way into participating in this event last night. Even when both Brandish and I said we wanted to do it. So, don't back out now that things are awkward."

After saying that, Marin's mischievous expression re-emerged.

"Besides, if you go up, at least you'll be participating with someone you're familiar with, right?" Marin continued. "Because I'm sure that Karen will come up, too, even if they had already decided who would participate today, when she sees you."

Immediately, Elicia paled at the thought. Not only would she have to deal with Darkness' commentary, but she would also have to deal with Karen's desire to be her pet. Unfortunately, just as she thought things could not get any worse, she heard Lucy's voice from behind her in the stands with the rest of the guild.

"Virgo, what are you doing here?" Lucy asked in a confused tone.

"Good morning, Princess." Virgo replied while bowing politely to Lucy. "Please punish me for showing up without being summoned."

"No, that's not what I meant." Lucy shouted in annoyance. "I'm asking why you summoned yourself in the first place."

"Oh, I see." Virgo replied with a hint of disappointment in her tone. "I came to support my best friend. I'm sure she'll be great as a guest commentator."

"Seriously?" Lucy asked in a tone filled with disbelief. "Are you hearing the same things I am?"

Meanwhile, back in Team Fairy Tail's seating area...

"Oh, damn..." Alfonzo said in a tone filled with astonishment. "The whole unholy trinity is here. Today is really going to be something, isn't it?"

"Fonzie~~~!" Elicia whined loudly.

"Just get it over with, Lici." Alfonzo said in a sympathetic tone. "There's no way Marin is gonna let you get out of this."

In response, not only Marin, but Brandish, who also did not want to compete with Darkness, who was prone to outbursts, commentating, nodded vigorously. The only one who would not have minded taking Lici's place because of how miserable she looked, Sun, was unable to do so because she had already taken part in yesterday's event.

"Fine, I'll go." Elicia said with her head hanging low. "And I thought you were my sister, Marin. But I don't even know you anymore."

Elicia then stood up and leapt into the arena while Marin could not help laughing at Elicia's melodrama. Then, when Elicia landed on the arena floor, Marin turned to look at Alfonzo.

"By the way, Fonzie, I've been thinking about this for a while, but..." Marin said while raising her right index finger and placing it on her chin. "Yesterday, you said something about not having material to research the God Slayer property when you beat up that guy from Sabertooth, right? But didn't you collect that from Romeo?"

"It was just a humiliation tactic." Alfonzo replied nonchalantly. "I wanted to show them exactly how little I thought of them. And making their magic seem more like research material than an actual threat seemed like a good way to do it."

Hearing that, Marin, Sun, and Brandish all nodded in understanding.

{"Oh, we have our first competitor!"} Loli shouted after noticing Elicia jump into the arena. {"And just like for yesterday's event, it's a wizard from Fairy Tail. And today, it's the Magic Seamstress, Elicia Marcus Taylor!"}

Cheer~~~~~!~

And just as expected, the crowd, most of whom owned at least one piece of clothing from the Taylor Shop, cheered loudly.

At the same time, the other guilds also started choosing their participants. From Mermaid Heel, Sui-Feng jumped into the arena with a determined expression on her face. From Lamia Scale, it was Yuka. From Quattro Cerberus, Ikkaku, looking like he really wanted a rematch, leapt into the arena. Aerith participated on behalf of Final Fantasy while Rufus took the spot for Sabertooth, and another random guy jumped in from Twilight Ogre.

As for Blue Pegasus, Ichiya was standing in front of his team and giving a peptalk before he jumped into the arena to join the other competitors.

"Don't worry, everyone." Ichiya said while making a handsome pose and smiling with a rose stem held between his teeth. "I'll do my best to bring our score up. Then, the kingdom will under----
Men~~~~~!"

Bang!

However, before he could finish, Ichiya was shoved to the side, slamming into the wall separating the Blue Pegasus' seating area from Lamia Scale's stands with great force.

"Well, we should have seen this coming." Sorano said while shaking her head. "As soon as Elicia was involved, there was no way that Karen would have been able to contain herself."

"Karen really likes Lici, huh?" Jenny asked with a smile. "They must be really good friends."

Sorano only looked at Jenny out of the corner of her eye for a moment. Then, she returned her attention back to the arena.

'That girl's cutesy act is really good.' Sorano thought to herself. 'She's just as fanatical about Alfonzo as Karen is about Elicia. But at least she's not as... fervent about her desires, though. Plus, after the last time she went to Magnolia, she doesn't act quite as much. So, I guess he had a good effect on her.'

After her thoughts reached that point, Sorano looked over to the Fairy Tail seating area. And when Alfonzo felt her gaze, he turned to look at her, too. Then, he shrugged his shoulders with a helpless expression on his face before looking back into the arena with an amused expression on his face.

'He's getting a kick out of this, huh?' Sorano thought to herself as she turned to look at Karen pestering Elicia. She then, like Alfonzo, shrugged her shoulders helplessly.

Meanwhile, in the arena...

"Please, Elicia, you really should punish me." Karen said in a serious tone. "I broke my promise to you, after all. You made me promise not to let any more of the outfits you made for me get damaged during battle, and I was unable to keep that promise."

While Karen continued trying to convince Elicia to punish her, Elicia wore an uncomfortable expression. On top of being done with Karen's solicitations to make the green haired woman her pet, she could also feel Darkness' anticipatory gaze on her, as well.

'Why do I have to go through this?' Elicia asked herself.

["You brought this on yourself because you never think through your actions."] Scylla said with no sympathy in her tone. ["Even worse, you're not into either of them. So, you can't even turn this into something kinky like you enjoy. Oh well, you'll just have to live with it."]

'*Sigh* I've never envied James and Tatsuo more than I do right now.' Elicia said to herself.

After having that thought, Elicia remembered what Alfonzo said about dealing with Karen's actions from the day before. So, she schooled her expression and looked at Karen with an air of solemnity.

"**Sigh* Karen, I'm really disappointed in you." Elicia said in a thoroughly disappointed tone. "I never thought you were the type to break promises like that. In fact, I'm so disappointed that I don't even know what to do.'

Karen's eyes widened immediately upon hearing that. Then, she lowered her head with tears welling up in her eyes.

'Seeing her like that, I kinda feel bad for her.' Elicia thought to herself, her resolve faltering for a moment.

"I'm sorry, Elicia." Karen said in a genuinely heartfelt tone. "I never meant to disappoint you. So, please, punish me for my failure."

'And it's gone.' Elicia thought to herself while her expression turned deadpan.

Luckily, Karen's focus was pulled away from her when Sui-Feng approached to say something to Elicia.

"Elicia Marcus Taylor." Sui-Feng said in a serious tone.

"Oh, hey, Sui-Feng." Elicia said with a smile. "What's up?"

"I won't lose to you again." Sui-Feng said sternly. "I'll prove that you're not stronger than Lady Yoruichi, let alone someone like me."

Sui-Feng then turned around and walked away without giving Elicia a chance to respond. And while Elicia was completely unbothered by Sui-Feng's declaration, Karen found herself quite angry.

"Just who does that midget think she is?" Karen shouted, enraged at Sui-Feng's challenge to Elicia.

{"Alright, now that the eight competitors have been decided, let me explain the rules of 'Assault Course.'"} Mato said, interrupting Karen's rant.

Chapter 682: Grand Magic Games, Day Two; Part 2: Assault Course

{"Alright, now that the eight competitors have been decided, let me explain the rules of 'Assault Course.'"} Mato said, drawing the attention of everyone in the arena onto himself. {"Assault Course is, for all intents and purposes, a race. A race through an obstacle course. One filled with flying projectiles, traps, and different terrains for you to traverse.'}

As Mato reached that point, all the screens in the Domus Flau changed their images. Now, instead of Mato, there was a model of the obstacle course Mato mentioned. However, instead of being built on the ground, the entire obstacle course was built atop a series of differently sized buildings.

On top of that, there were different arrows with descriptions pointed at different parts of the diagram that showed the arena what the course looked like. For example, one of the arrows pointed at a section set up between two sky scrapers that said, "Tight Rope." Then, there was another that pointed at a couple of buildings on either side of the course that read, "Magic Concussion Cannons."

{"As you can see, there are many things you need to be wary of while traversing the course."} Mato continued in his overly cheerful tone. {"But you don't have to worry about falling from the rooftops. Because there is a magic circle set up that will teleport anyone who falls past a certain point to less than a foot from the ground. However, anyone who needs to be saved in this way will be disqualified, resulting in immediately ending up in last place and receiving a 0 for their score."}

"What if more than one person falls off, though?" The guy from Twilight Ogre asked.

The other seven participants, Elicia, Karen, Yuka, Sui-Feng, Ikkaku, Rufus, and Aerith, looked at the one from Twilight Ogre as if he were an idiot. Even Mato, who was usually quite cheerful, was at a loss for words.

"Seriously, what would happen then?" Natsu shouted from the audience. "They can't all get last place, right?"

"*Sigh* Natsu, you're lucky you're cute." Lisanna said while looking at her husband with worry in her eyes.

{"*Cough* Well, if more than one person has to be saved by the magic circle, then, their scores will go up from last place in reverse order of when they fell."} Mato explained while scratching the side of his pumpkin mask. He then lowered his voice and grumbled in his true voice at a volume so low that only the most powerful people in the arena could hear him. {"I think we should start implementing a simple I.Q. test for wizards who want to join guilds."}

While most of the people in the audience were confused by what Mato mumbled, those with the strength to make out his words could not help but chuckle to themselves while glancing at the less intellectually inclined wizards in the arena.

{"*Cough* Excuse me."} Mato said, realizing that there were a few people who heard him. {"Anyway, back to the explanation. You are obviously allowed to use your magic during the event. However, you are not allowed to attack any of the other competitors directly. Meaning, you can attack the course itself to cause even more obstacles for the others. But shooting a fireball at the others will be met with disqualification. Understood?"}

As soon as the eight competitors acknowledged their understanding, the entire arena area of the Domus Flau was covered by a magic circle. Then, a full scale replica of the Assault Course from the screens rose from the ground. At the same time, the eight wizards were teleported to the starting line of the course.

{"Good!"} Mato exclaimed as the magical construct was completed. {"Oh, and I want to thank Sixth Sense Holdings for providing their new technology, Hard Light Projection Technology, for this event. Now, is everyone ready? Well, it doesn't matter if you are. On your marks! Get set!"}

The eight wizards, some more than others, scrambled to get ready to run when they heard Mato reach that point. All the while, Sui-Feng was staring at Elicia with flames burning in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Ur was glaring at Alfonzo. And Alfonzo did not need to be as intelligent as he was to know why.

"What?" Alfonzo asked without looking behind him. "You know why. They won't break it by doing something stupid. But our group of stupids is totally different."

{"Go~~~~~!"} Mato shouted before Ur could retort.

Meanwhile, back in the arena...

As soon as the signal was given, Sui-Feng, in a burst of speed with the use of the [Flash Step] vanished from the starting line. An instant later, she appeared and reappeared at the beginning of the first obstacle, a steep incline with little friction and only ropes the climbers can use to aid them.

However, instead of grabbing the ropes to steady herself, Sui-Feng ran atop the ropes with great agility, causing the crowd to be extremely impressed.

"Not bad." Elicia said while running up the rope next to Sui-Feng. "This really tests your balance, doesn't it?"

{"Look at that, ladies and gentlemen!"} Loli shouted excitedly. {"Contestants Elicia and Sui-Feng have broken away from the pack and are already climbing the first obstacle. They both have such astonishing speed."}

{"Yes, but the others look like they have no intention of giving up, either."} Yajima added.

And just as Yajima said, the other six wizards were all charging forward as quickly as they could to catch up to the front runners.

"[Haste]." Aerith chanted while running.

In the next instant, a magic circle resembling a clock appeared at Aerith's feet. Then, the hands started spinning quickly. And as the hands spun forward, Aerith's speed increased.

At the same time, Ikkaku, coming from Soul Continent like Sui-Feng, also used the [Flash Step] to increase his speed. However, he wore quite the dissatisfied expression while doing so.

"Yumichika got to fight in his event." Ikkaku grumbled while flashing forward. "But all I get to do is run. How unfair is this. I was really looking forward to fighting Elicia again. It was so much fun."

The others employed all their means to increase their speeds, as well. For example, Yuka, used his [Wave Magic] to propel himself forward while extending both arms behind him as he ran. Karen did something similar, using her magic ring imbued with [Wind Magic] to shoot herself forward in bursts.

Rufus actually seemed to be at a disadvantage in this event. His magic, [Memory-Make Magic], allowed him to utilize any magic he had seen before as his own. However, it seemed that he had no prior contact with any movement-type spells that could keep up at this level. But that was not enough to stop him.

"[Memory-Make: Iron Rock Wall]." Rufus chanted after raising the index and middle fingers of both hands to his temples.

In the next instant, a solid rock wall sprung up from the edge of the building where the steep incline started. As a result, Aerith, Yuka, Karen, and the guy from Twilight Ogre were stopped just before they reached the first obstacle. Meanwhile, Ikkaku, who was also behind Elicia and Sui-Feng was fast enough to not be caught by this distraction.

At the same time, Elicia and Sui-Feng had both reached the next obstacle, the tight rope portion of the course.

"How are you possibly keeping up with me?" Sui-Feng, frustrated by the fact that she could not shake off Elicia, asked while running effortlessly across the tight rope.

"Oh, you're not the only one with a movement technique, you know." Elicia replied with a smile while running just as effortlessly across the tight rope. "Fonzie came up with it a few years ago. He wanted to bridge the gap in speed with Yoruichi. It's pretty good, right?"

In response, Sui-Feng could only grit her teeth as her frustration continued to mount.

"But I'm gonna go ahead, okay?" Elicia asked cheerfully, causing Sui-Feng to snap her head in Elicia's direction. "Fonzie said not to hold back. So, I'll see you at the finish line."

Before Sui-Feng could rage at Elicia's perceived arrogance, she was forced to leap sideways. The reason for that was that Elicia, using her [Thread Magic], started shaking the tight rope Sui-Feng was on. And although it was not enough to cause the assassin to fall from the tight rope, it definitely slowed her progress.

"Damn it." Sui-Feng cursed as she drew Suzumebach, her Zanpakuto, from the sheath on her lower back.

Then, Sui-Feng slashed all of Elicia's threads that she could reach. Unfortunately, Elicia was shaking the tight ropes from more than just the places close to Sui-Feng. So, no matter how many of Elicia's threads she cut, the ropes never stopped shaking.

Sui-Feng even tried crossing on the same rope Elicia was using. However, Elicia used her threads to hold the stretch in front of her steady while shaking everything behind her, making that plan useless.

Eventually, Elicia crossed the tight rope. And as soon as she did, she gave all the ropes the largest shake so far, making Sui-Feng, who was still crossing, and Ikkaku, who just reached the tight ropes, hold onto the ropes tightly so they would not be disqualified.

Elicia, on the other hand, as soon as she stepped onto solid ground, kicked her right foot against the roof close to fifty times in the blink of an eye. Then, she disappeared in a burst of speed, heading for the next

obstacle, which happened to be a number of small pillars that rose high into the air. Yet, crossing this forest of pillars was not what made this obstacle difficult. Rather, it was the Magic Concussion Cannons that were firing compressed balls of magic power meant to send anyone who was hit flying off to the side.

"Well, I can't let them hit me now, can I?"

With that, Elicia spread her hands to either side while ejecting her magic threads from her fingertips. Then, using those threads, which she wrapped around the barrels of all the Magic Concussion Cannons, Elicia made it so that none of the weapons would be able to target her by pointing them all into the sky.

Then, when Elicia passed the obstacle, she released her threads from around all the cannon barrels while she continued forward.

"Alright, the rest of you can have fun with those." Elicia said with a giggle as she once again used [Shave] to rush forward.

{"Amazing! Contestant Elicia is speeding through the obstacle course completely unhindered!"} Loli shouted excitedly. {"And from the lead she's built up, it would take a true disaster for her to not end up in first place!"}

{"Yes, she's shown exquisite mastery of her magic."} Yajima added. {"The way she used it to disrupt Sui-Feng or to clear the way for herself both show creativity. On top of that, her speed is incredible. And though I'm not completely sure, her movement technique looks to be completely physical rather than being a spell. Quite remarkable."}

{"Indeed, it is."} Loli replied. {"Darkness, what do you think of the event so far?"}

Though Loli asked the question, he was extremely nervous to hear the answer. He had no idea what Darkness, who was prone to getting lost in her own thoughts, would say. So, he was ready to cut her microphone once again if she went too far off the rails.

{"Yes, Elicia is quite skilled with her magic."} Darkness said, sounding just as noble as a knight should. {"In fact, I've had the opportunity to experience her magic in the past once before. *Pant* And it was magnificent. *Pant* *Cough* Ah! Excuse me. But I was looking forward to seeing what effects those cannons would have should someone be hit by them. *Pant* Just imagine, being caught between several volleys... *Pant* Getting rag dolled in the sky... *Pant* And then, there would be a malfunction... *Pant* And I would be left to endure--- *Status!*"}}

{"Sorry, folks."} Loli said with cold sweat dripping down his forehead. In fact, he was so worried that he started wiping the sweat with his wig instead of a handkerchief. {"It looks like our guest's, Darkness', microphone is experiencing technical difficulties again. We'll try to get her back to the rest of you as soon as we can. Oh! It looks like Contestant Elicia has made it to the final obstacle, a bridge between two buildings. However, the entire bridge is covered with magical landmines. Just how will she handle this?"}

By now, all the contestants had crossed the tight rope and were rushing towards the forest of pillars. Meanwhile, Sui-Feng was rushing as fast as she could to catch up to Elicia and Ikkaku had just reached the other side of the group of pillars. Aerith and Yuka were neck-and-neck, a little more than halfway through the pillars while Karen was not far behind them. And Rufus was hot on Karen's tail. However, he was catching up quickly, as he was using his [Memory-Make Magic] to use Elicia's [Thread Magic] to copy her tactic for this part of the course. Instead of pointing the cannons into the air, however, he was aiming them at his competitors. Unfortunately for the guy from Twilight Ogre, that tactic resulted in the first disqualification of the event.

{"And Twilight Ogre has officially received last place for this event."} Loli said in a tone filled with regret.
{"And Rufus has just caught up to Aerith, Yuka, and Karen. Which among them will pull away to take fourth place?"}

While Loli spoke, the sound of Darkness excitement could be heard in the background. Apparently, she was euphoric from imagining the pain of getting hit by the magic Concussion Cannons based on how the guy from Twilight Ogre went flying away from the obstacle.

{"I think you should look at Elicia, Loli."} Yajima said, interrupting Loli's impassioned commentary.
{"She's reached the minefield. And it looks like she's about to employ her tactic to pass it right now."}

And just as Yajima said, Elicia was nearing the minefield. As she did, she extended her hands forward before ejecting a number of threads towards the other side of the minefield. More importantly, towards the buildings on either side of the course. Then, once the threads were stuck to the buildings, she contracted all the threads at high speed.

"[Thread Magic: Thread Catapult]." Elicia chanted as she was thrown through the air.

{"Oh, my goodness!"} Loli shouted excitedly. {"Instead of navigating the minefield, Contestant Elicia has decided to bypass it completely by launching herself through the air!"}

{"That's an ingenious tactic on two levels, Loli."} Yajima said. {"First, she does not waste time trying to avoid the mines. And second, she leaves all the mines for the others to deal with. And with that, if there was a chance for the others to catch up before, this solidifies her first place in this event for sure."}

And just as Yajima said, Elicia, while still flying through the air, crossed the finish line before landing gracefully and posing as if she had just finished a gymnastics routine.

Cheer~~~~~!~

{"And Contestant Elicia takes first place."} Loli announced enthusiastically. {"Let's see how the rest of the contestants will finish."}

Not long after Elicia, Sui-Feng, covered in soot with a few tears in her clothing, was the next to finish. After her, Ikkaku crossed the finish line in third place. After Ikkaku, Aerith was the next to finish, as she used a [Time Magic] spell called [Slow] to gain the upper hand over the other three contestants in the final stretch.

Rufus took fifth place, copying Aerith's [Slow] spell shortly after Aerith's ended to gain an advantage over Karen and Yuka. As for Karen and Yuka, it was a photo finish, with Karen just barely squeaking out the victory over the Lamia Scale wizard.

{"And that's the end of the 'Assault Course' event."} Loli shouted. {"Now, let's take a look at the current scores before we move onto the Battle Round for Day Two of the x790 Grand Magic Games."}

{Overall Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

Fairy Tail 30 Pts. Mermaid Heel 24 Pts. Final Fantasy17 Pts. Blue Pegasus13 Pts. Sabertooth 11 Pts. Quatro Cerberus 10 Pts. Lamia Scale 3 Pts. Twilight Ogre 0 Pts.}

Chapter 683: Grand Magic Games, Day Two; Part 3: Brandish Shocks the Crowd

{"And now it's time for the Battle Round."} Loli said as he received the envelope with the day's match-ups. {"Which wizards will be facing off in this round. The anticipation is killing me."}

{"Well, you could just open the envelope."} Yajima said in a snarky tone. {"Then, the anticipation wouldn't be a problem, right?"}

{"Well... You're not wrong."} Loli said, sounding as if he did not know what to say exactly.

{"This should be quite the show."} Darkness added. {"With such powerful wizards facing each other, *Pant* the collisions will definitely be incredible."}

When Darkness stopped there, both Lali and Yajima sighed in relief. Being in the booth felt like they were rolling the dice. And every time Darkness opened her mouth, it was like a crap shoot. Unfortunately, the house was more likely to win than the player.

{"Yes, the impacts brought on by these heavyweights should be quite impressive."} Loli said as he opened the envelope as quickly as possible. {"So, without further ado, let's see who will be matching up for today's battles. And the first match will be between... Squall Leonhart of Final Fantasy and Sting Eucliffe of Sabertooth."}

With Loli's announcement of the upcoming match, both Squall and Sting leapt into the arena from the spectator stands. And when the signal to start was given, neither wasted time, dashing towards each other and exchanging a flurry of sword strikes, punches and kicks. However, there was a noticeable sound of explosion with every swing of Squall's sword, the gunblade, which increased the power of each strike. Yet, Sting was able to hold his own with little effort. And as the match went on, both competitors began employing more than just melee combat, as fire and ice spells were cast by Squall and [Dragon Slayer magic] was employed by Sting.

In the end, however, neither combatant was able to take the victory before the thirty-minute time limit, resulting in a draw.

The next match was between Thibault of Twilight Ogre and Jenny of Blue Pegasus. And that match did not last very long at all. In fact, Jenny did not even have to use any of her armaments. Instead, she only used her [Machina Soul: Battle Suit] to augment her abilities before taking Thibault out in one attack.

After that, was a match between Sui-Feng of Mermaid Heel and Might Guy of Quatro Cerberus. And judging by the difference in magic power at the beginning of the match, everyone expected the match to end just as quickly as the one between Jenny and Thibault. However, when Guy opened the [Sixth Inner Gate, the Gate of View], the match was even.

That stalemate lasted for most of the match. And just when the timer ticked down to five minutes, Sui-Feng activated one of her trump card techniques, [Shunkō]. However, unlike Yoruichi's version of the technique, Sui-Feng did not employ [Lightning Magic]. Rather, she used [Wind Magic].

As soon as Sui-Feng activated [Shunkō], she took control of the match, immediately. She even managed to end the match before Guy could open the [Seventh Gate: Gate of Wonder], by striking several pressure points, leaving Guy completely immobile. Though, she was certain a tactic like that would never work a second time on such an accomplished martial artist.

{"Now, we come to the last Battle of Day Two."} Loli said once Guy and Sui-Feng vacated the arena.
{"Brandish of Fairy Tail, Jura Neekis of Lamia Scale, please come to the arena.}

{"Oh, this could be quite the match."} Yajima said in an interested tone. {"From what I know, Brandish is quite the powerful wizard. As for Jura, I think everyone knows him. As one of the Ten Wizard Saints, he is one of the ten most powerful wizards on the continent. I'm really looking forward to this match, Loli."}

{"So, you have some insider news about this Brandish, Yajima?"} Loli asked, the interest in his tone noticeable. {"Now I'm even more excited about this match than I was before."}

{"*Pant* So am I, Loli and Yajima."} Darkness excited tone rang out over the Domus Flau. {"With such powerful wizards, I can only imagine how much damage they can inflict with their spells. *Pant* The thought is exhilarating."}

Although Darkness had not said anything inappropriate, stopping Loli from cutting her microphone once again. For some reason, he felt like he should have. And judging by the look he was receiving from Yajima, the ex-Magic Councilman was thinking the same thing.

Meanwhile, Jura and Brandish had both jumped down into the arena. As they stood across from each other, they locked gazes, though they did not speak. While waiting for the match to begin.

{"And now, let the Battle begin."} Loli said once he realized that both fighters were ready.

Despite Loli's signal, neither fighter moved. Instead, Jura found now a good time to speak.

"I'll admit, I'm looking forward to this." Jura said in his always peaceful tone. "I know nothing about your magic. So, this could be quite the interesting experience."

"If you say so." Brandish replied, sounding slightly bored. "Can we just get this over with? I really wanna go back to the hotel to curl up in my room and read a good book."

As she mentioned reading a book, Brandish's cheeks reddened slightly, letting those who knew her know exactly what kind of book she was talking about.

"Don't be embarrassed, Brandi!" Marin shouted from the stands. "Just because no one understands that level of art, doesn't make it any less valuable!"

"Marin is right!" Erza shouted, as well. "Once this is all done, let us come together to discuss the newest release!"

Instead of becoming more comfortable, Brandish's face reddened even further after hearing the members of her "book club" adding their two Jewels.

"I understand." Jura, completely unaware of the type of book Brandish was referring to, said while nodding his head. "Well, as I wouldn't want to keep you from your passion of reading, let's begin. [Iron Rock Fist]."

With Jura's chant, he stretched his right hand forward with its index and middle fingers pointing at Brandish. Then, in the next instant, the ground in front of Jura rose before forming into a gauntlet made of rock with its fingers clenched into a fist.

Swoosh!

The rock fist then rushed forward, the arm it was attached to extending at high-speed, towards Brandish. Meanwhile, Brandish, still looking slightly bored, did not even move to avoid the incoming attack. Instead, she only spun Hecatoncheires between the fingers of her right hand.

Seeing this, the crowd was shocked. Then, that shock turned into disappointment, thinking that Brandish was not as powerful as Yajima had hinted at. Especially since she seemed incapable of reacting to Jura's attack.

"[Command T: Reduction]." Brandish chanted as she reached her free hand forward before tapping the incoming rock fist with her index finger.

The result of such an action left all those who were unaware of Brandish's magic gaping in disbelief. Because as soon as Brandish's finger came in contact with the rock fist, it shrank to the size of a model that could fit in Brandish's hand. And that did not just apply to the fist itself. Rather, the entire elongated arm had shrunk. Then, before it could fall to the arena floor and break, Brandish caught it before holding it up to her face to examine it.

"The gauntlet and fist are quite exquisitely made." Brandish said after finishing her inspection. "But this elongated arm takes quite a bit from the overall aesthetic appeal. So, I'll give it back."

With that said, Brandish drew her arm back into a throwing motion. Then she threw the arm towards Jura with force.

"[Command T: Expansion]." Brandish chanted.

An instant later, the stone arm Brandish threw at Jura increased in size. However, instead of stopping at its original size, it grew to three times the size of Jura's original attack, making the audience gape in shock once again.

Jura, on the other hand, widened his eyes in surprise. Even so, thanks to his years of experience as a wizard, he reacted in time to defend himself from the incoming, gigantic, projectile.

"[Iron Rock Wall]." Jura chanted while pointing the, still, outstretched index and middle fingers of his right hand at the ground before raising them to point at the sky.

Crack!

With Jura's chant and hand gesture, a thick rock wall sprang up from the ground in the giant rock fist's flight path. However, feeling that just one wall would not be enough, Jura chanted once again while performing the same rock gesture a few more times.

Crack! *Crack!* *Crack!*

This time, a few more walls popped up between Jura and the first wall he erected. And they as just in time for the fist to strike the first wall.

Boom!

And that collision proved that Jura was correct to raise extra defenses, as the fist, without losing much momentum and only taking minimum damage, burst through the wall with little resistance.

Boom! *Boom!* *Crack!*

And the fist continued forward, bursting through the second and third wall, as well. However, by the time it struck the fourth wall, its momentum had been greatly reduced. As a result, instead of bursting through, it only cracked the last defensive wall heavily.

Seeing that his defenses were enough, Jura stepped forward and struck the, now, cracked wall several times in rapid succession.

"[Iron Rock Avalanche]" Jura chanted while striking the wall.

With that, every damaged piece of the rock wall Jura struck was sent flying forward to where he remembered Brandish was standing.

Boom! *Boom!* *Boom!* *Boom!*

Gasp!

However, when Jura heard the collective gasps from the crowd, despite the sounds of devastation accompanying them, he realized something was off about the situation. And since he had lost sight of Brandish after raising the rock walls, he figured that he was attacking an empty space instead of his opponent.

And Jura's suspicions were actually true. Brandish, who did not intend to let this match drag on, started moving as soon as the first rock wall was raised. Then, by the time Jura used his [Iron Rock Avalanche], she was already standing to his left.

"[Resize the World, Hecatoncheires]." Brandish said, chanting her [Soul Armament's] release command as she pointed it's tip at Jura's neck. "[Expand]."

In the next instant, as Brandish's magic power spiked, Hecatoncheires' blade, originally a simple double-edged dagger, extended at high-speed. However, this was different from Brandish's [Command T] spells, as when she uses [Command T], not only the size of the object she chose to resize would increase or decrease, but it's mass would increase or decrease proportionally.

But with Hecatoncheires' ability upon being released, Brandish could control an object's size and mass independently. For example, in this case, Brandish resized Hecatoncheires, which now had bloodletting grooves on its blade and several hooks pointing towards the handguard extending from the sides of the blade to deal more damage when the blade was extracted from a foe's body, to the length of two greatswords. Yet, the weapon's mass had not changed in the slightest.

On a side note, Brandish would usually increase the mass of Hecatoncheires' when she extended it like that. However, as she felt that she would not have to fight any longer after cornering Jura in this competition, she decided to just make handling the blade easier by leaving its mass unchanged.

By the time Jura realized that something was wrong, Hecatoncheires' blade was less than an inch from his throat. Jura then looked down at the blade before tracing his gaze towards the one holding it. However, he was surprised to see that the blade was at least twelve feet long. Even more surprising was how effortlessly Brandish seemed to be holding it with only one hand.

"Well, it would seem that I've lost." Jura said with a chuckle. "It looks like Alfonzo is not the only one I need to find a way to catch up to in Fairy Tail."

{"Ladies and gentlemen, Jura has surrendered!"} Loli shouted in a tone mixed with disbelief and excitement. {"And with this unexpected turn of events, Brandish has secured another victory for Fairy Tail, adding ten more points to their overall score. In fact, why don't we take a look at the scores now that all the activities for the second day have come to an end?"}

And with that, all the screens in the Domus Flau chanted to show the overall scoreboard.

{Overall Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

Fairy Tail 40 Pts. Mermaid Heel 34 Pts.

3 Blue Pegasus 23 Pts.

4.. Final Fantasy 22 Pts.

Sabertooth 16 Pts. Quattro Cerberus 10 Pts. Lamia Scale 3 Pts. Twilight Ogre 0 Pts.}

{"Oh my. Looking at these results..."} Loli said, unsure of what to say.

{"I know what you mean, Loli."} Yajima said. In the last two Grand Magic Games, Quattro Cerberus and Lamia Scale have finished in second place once each. Yet, after only two days, their scores don't make victory for them seem very hopeful."

{"Mr. Yajima is right."} Darkness added in a solemn tone. {"I just hope they don't lose hope after today's events. *Click!*}

Seeing the expression on Darkness' face, Loli could tell she was about to go off on another one of her special tangents. So, he decisively cut off her microphone before she could start making the audience feel uncomfortable.

{"Well, that'll do it for the second day of the x790 Grand Magic Games."} Loli said while once again wiping the sweat off his forehead with his wig while Darkness' perverted ramblings could be heard in the background. {"We'll be back to with more action tomorrow. And there's a good chance we'll have a new guest joining us."}

Those with good hearing were able to hear Loli speak under his breath. And when they heard the words, "Thank goodness," they could not help chuckling good naturedly.

{"But until then, everyone please stay safe and make sure to enjoy the festival."} Loli continued, as if he had not said anything. {"And we'll see you tomorrow at the same time."}

Chapter 684: Grand Magic Games, Day Three; Part 1: The Flame Alchemist is in the Booth

While Loli was making the closing remarks for the Grand Magic Games' second day, Jiemma, the master of the Sabertooth guild was struggling to keep his magic power in check due to his anger. Currently, despite witnessing Alfonzo's display of power the previous day, he still believed that his guild was the strongest.

It was not like everyone in the guild could be as strong as Alfonzo, after all. And so, what if Brandish defeated Jura, a member of the Ten Wizard Saints with little effort on her part? He was sure that at least two of his wizards would be able to do the same, maybe even easier.

And that was the reason why Jiemma was so angry. Out of four opportunities to get points, his guild had yet to get the full 10 points. Even though Alfonzo Marcus of Fairy Tail had only opposed them once. Yet, Rogue and Rufus had both lost to his wives while Sting lost to a nobody, in Jiemma's opinion, from a newcomer to the Grand Magic Games.

Yes, Jiemma was well aware that Sting had tied with Squall of Final Fantasy. However, not winning was the same as losing in Jiemma's book. And both Sting and Rufus would have to be punished. Rogue, on the other hand, had already been punished the day before for his defeat. As for Orga, he was still recovering when he was to be punished. So, Jiemma let him off the hook... for now.

"That guy's gonna do something stupid, isn't he?" Marin asked while watching Jiemma's magic power roiling in his body.

"Probably." Alfonzo replied nonchalantly. "His unfounded belief that he is the strongest is gonna be the reason for it, too. I was hoping that my little statement at the end of my battle yesterday would kick start is brain. But I guess that was just too fucking much to expect."

"We should just get rid of him before he can do anything." Brandish, after returning to the stands, said in her usual tone.

"You know why we can't do that, Brandi." Elicia said with a smile. Then, while maintaining her smile, her voice took on a more serious tone as she continued. "But we'll do what needs to be done if it comes to it."

Hearing that, Alfonzo, Marin, and Sun nodded their heads in agreement. Meanwhile, Brandish, who really wanted to just get the whole issue over and done with, rolled her eyes.

"Anyway, let's go back." Sun said with a smile. "I'm a little hungry."

After saying that, Sun blinked her eyes at Alfonzo innocently. And Alfonzo, knowing exactly what Sun wanted, sighed audibly.

"Fine, I'll cook again." Alfonzo said. "But I'm not cooking a banquet for everyone again."

"Besides, if we have another party at the hotel, there's no guarantee that it will be standing this time tomorrow." Elicia added. "I mean, it amazes me that it's never been demolished during any of the Grand Magic Games."

"Well, if it were, they wouldn't like the consequences." Alfonzo said while cracking his knuckles.
'Anyway, let's go.'

With that, Team Fairy Tail, the last to leave the stands, left to catch up with their guild mates.

July 3, x790.

{"And we're back with the third day of the Grand Magic Games."} Loli said as the broadcast for the day's events started. {"And like always, I'm with ex-Magic Councilman, Yajima."}

{"Good morning, everyone."} Yajima said with a smile. {"And remember, if you're ever in Hargeon, don't forget to stop by 8-Island, we'll make sure you leave satisfied."}

{"Shameless plug aside, we have yet another guest commentator with us today."} Loli said, ignoring the slightly open-eyed glare he was receiving from Yajima. {"And like yesterday, it is a knight from the kingdom's Knight Corps."}

Hearing that, everyone who was present for Darkness' guest appearance the day before recoiled slightly. Meanwhile, Darkness, who had taken the day off, blushed heavily after feeling all the disgust from everyone simply thinking about her.

{"So, Col. Roy Mustang, why don't you greet the audience."} Loli continued.

{"Well, hello, ladies and gentlemen."} Roy said in a somewhat frivolous tone. {"And that's especially for the ladies. I'm Col. Roy Mustang of the Fiore Alchemist Knight Order. But you can call me Col. Mustang, or just Colonel. Flame Alchemist works too, if that's what you're into."}

"Seriously?" Edward Elric asked aloud to no one in particular from the Fairy Tail seating area. "They actually let him into the booth. Great... With how much he likes to hear himself talk, we're not even gonna be able to pay attention to the event."

"Come on, Brother." Alphonse said while smiling wryly. "The Colonel isn't that bad."

"No one, not even you, believes that, Al." Edward said, sounding exasperated while Roy continued to talk over the broadcast system.

Instead of replying, Alphonse only looked at another member of the guild. A certain middle-aged doting father who was cheering happily for Roy.

"Well, no one other than Hughes, anyway." Edward said while shaking his head.

At the same time, in an audience seat near the broadcast booth, a blond woman wearing a blue military uniform was rubbing the space between her eyebrows while thinking something similar to Edward.

"He's at it again." The blonde woman, Riza Hawkeye, said in a tired tone. "Why can't he take this more seriously?"

A few minutes passed with the three in the broadcasting booth chatting, Roy doing most of the talking, before Loli finally moved the day's events forward.

{"Alright, now that we've taken the time to get to know our guest, let's give the floor to Mato."} Loli said while wondering just how much he would be able to do his job with a talkative knight like Roy in the booth. {"Mato, take it away."}

{"Thanks, Loli."} Mato said as his face showed up on all the screens around the Domus Flau. {"Then, without further ado, today's event is called 'Battle Board.' Like always, I will explain the rules of the event once each team has chosen a representative to participate."}

As soon as Mato finished speaking, the eight teams all started discussing who would go up for the day's event, and Fairy Tail was no exception. However, Alfonzo and Elicia exchanged glances after hearing the name of the event, thinking it sounded rather familiar.

"Well, you two never came to a decision." Alfonzo said to Marin and Brandish after breaking eye contact with Elicia. "So, which of you is going to go up for this one."

"Why can't you go up?" Marin asked curiously.

"Because if I go up, then the leaders of all the other teams will go up, too." Alfonzo replied. "And to be honest, I just wanna wait until tomorrow's event for that. You know, since it will be the last of the individual events."

"Basically, he just wants to show off." Elicia pointed out.

"Exactly." Alfonzo said without an ounce of shame. "Then, after I show everyone what I can do again, we'll do what Fairy Tail does best and fuck shit up in the Grand Magic Game event on the last day."

"That's so like you, Fonzie." Marin said. She then turned to look at Brandish. "So, do you wanna go, Brandi?"

"I'm fine." Brandish replied. "I fought in the battle yesterday, after all."

"If you say so." Marin replied with a shrug of her shoulders. "Well then, I'll see you when I get back."

"Good luck." Sun said cheerfully as Marin jumped into the arena.

{"And it looks like Fairy Tail is the first to choose again."} Loli said. {"I wonder how they've managed to be first in every event. Do you think they had a predetermined order before the Grand Magic Games started?"}

{"Actually, I think that might be part of it Loli."} Roy said, still speaking in that same frivolous tone. {"But there's probably more to it, as well."}

{"The Colonel is probably right."} Yajima added. {"Alfonzo, the newest of the Wizard Saints has yet to participate in an event. And I think the leaders of the other teams are waiting to see if he'll be going up each day before deciding to go up themselves."}

{"That's exactly what I was thinking, Yajima."} Roy said. {"It seems great minds truly do think alike."}

The sound of a certain blonde lieutenant groaning from a seat near the broadcasting booth could be heard faintly through the broadcast at that very moment.

{"But I don't understand."} Loli said, sounding genuinely confused. {"Why wouldn't they send up their aces in events they know Alfonzo isn't participating in? Wouldn't that make claiming the victory easier?"}

{"It's because of pride."} Yajima replied.

{"Exactly."} Roy added. {"Their pride won't allow them to win without beating who they are aiming to defeat. And although I'm not sure why Jura isn't a higher priority target, it seems everyone is looking forward to defeating Alfonzo this year. Then again, I've met the young man before. And he really is quite impressive."}

{"Oh, you've met him before, too?"} Loli asked, starting another conversation while the teams chose their contestants.

Meanwhile, both Yajima and Roy, who were privy to more information regarding the Magic Council than Loli, knew that Alfonzo was named one of the Four Gods of Ishgar when he became a Wizard Saint. However, for some reason it was kept secret from the public. So, they had to pretend they did not know why Alfonzo was the target of all the guild's aces in this year's Grand Magic Games.

And while Roy talked about his meeting with Alfonzo a few years ago, the other guilds made their decisions on who would be participating in the Battle Board event.

Cheer~~~~~!

The first to jump down to the arena was Jenny from Blue Pegasus. And with her entrance, the crowd, mostly the men, cheered loudly. And that was to be expected, as the second most popular model in Fiore, just after Mirajane and in front of Karen, Jenny's popularity was undebatable.

Following Jenny, Genma of Quattro Cerberus jumped into the ring. He was closely followed by Lyon from Lamia Scale and Tifa from Final Fantasy, who jumped into the arena at virtually the same time.

Next was a random guy from Twilight Ogre. Then, to everyone from Sabertooth's surprise, Minerva, after stopping Sting, jumped down into the arena. And the final contestant, Anko from Mermaid Heel was the last to jump down.

{"The eight contestants have been chosen, huh?"} Mato asked while seemingly looking over the eight wizards. {"Well then, let me tell you about 'Battle Board'."}

With that, the images of Mato all around the arena were changed to a model like they did for yesterday's event. However, instead of an obstacle course, this time, the image was a waterway. And this waterway seemed to be the course for the next event.

{"During the Battle Board event, each contestant will have to stand on a board provided to them by the GMG Operating Committee."} Mato said as the image of the course was replaced by the image of the aforementioned board, which looked like a surf board. {"Then, with the use of their magic power, they are to propel the board and navigate the course you all just saw. The first to complete three laps, ten thousand feet per lap, will be the winner."}

As soon as they heard Mato's explanation, both Minerva and Sting breathed sighs of relief. Originally, Sting was supposed to compete in today's event, hoping to get a win while Alfonzo was not on the field, as their guild master, Jiemma was getting more and more irritable with every event they failed to win. Yet, just before Sting could jump down into the arena, Minerva stepped forward, forbidding Sting and Rogue from participating in the event because her instincts were telling her it would have been a bad idea.

And because of her status as Jiemma's daughter, Sting and Rogue both listened, though Sting was disappointed that he would not be able to compete. However, as a Dragon Slayer, Sting's participation would have been catastrophic for Sabertooth's score, since riding the board would have activated a Dragon Slayer's motion sickness.

{"As for the rules of this event..."} Mato continued, unaware of the relief the members of Sabertooth were feeling. {"First of all, you can use your magic to interfere with the water on the course. However, you are not allowed to attack the riders. Also, if someone were to fall off their board, it would result in their disqualification."}

Mato then turned to look at the guy from Twilight Ogre from yesterday's event and Natsu, which was impressive, since both wizards felt like every screen in the arena glanced at them simultaneously.

{"And every disqualification will result in the later contestants ranked one place higher than the one before."} Mato said in a teasing tone. He then turned to look at the crowd as a whole while he continued. {"Now, everyone, we'll take a short break. I'm sure that the contestants would like to change into something they would be more comfortable getting wet in. When everyone has changed, we'll get the event started. Until then, why don't you all take the time to stop by the concession stands and get some snacks and drinks."}

With that, the screens in the Domus Flau were turned off. At the same time, the eight contestants made their way out of the arena to get changed into something better suited for the upcoming event. Meanwhile, the people in the audience decided to take Mato's advice and left their seats to get refreshments.

Chapter 685: Grand Magic Games, Day Three; Part 2: Battle Board

{"Well, well, well..."} Roy said while leaning back in his chair in the broadcasting booth. {"I think I'm looking forward to this event more than any other event in Grand Magic Games history."}

{"And why is that?"} Loli asked, trying to minimize any dead air while the contestants were changing clothes.

{"I think that's obvious."} Yajima said while wearing a knowing smile.

{"Is it?"} Loli asked in a tone filled with genuine confusion.

{"*Sigh* Sometimes I wonder about you, man."} Roy said, shaking his head in exasperation while he did so. {"The swimsuits, man! It's the swimsuits!"}

Cheer~~~~~|

Smack!

With Roy's exclamation, the men in the crowd, as well as a few women, cheered loudly. At the same time, the faint sound of a face palm could also be heard from the booth, causing Roy to smile in amusement.

{"Although this is not the first water based event in the Grand Magic Games, it is the first one where one of the three most popular female models will be participating."} Roy continued, explaining the situation to Loli to enlighten him. {"On top of that, from what I know, many of the participants are, if not friends with, acquainted with the Magic Seamstress. In other words, their swimsuits will probably be quite the sight to see, as well."}

Hearing that, Loli finally understood why Roy and Yajima seemed to be so excited. However, since none of the women participating in the event were his type, his excitement never reached the same level as theirs. Now, if someone like Wendy Marvell of Fairy Tail or Sherria Blendy of Lamia Scale were competing, he would have a completely different reaction.

{"Oh, it looks like the first participant to finish changing is coming out."} Yajima said excitedly when he saw a shadow appear in the doors leading to the arena's waiting area. However, when the person's identity became clear, he audibly deflated. {"And it's the guy from Twilight Ogre. Well, I guess we'll keep waiting."}

The wizard from Twilight Ogre, insulted by Yajima's lack of interest and inability to remember his name raged indignantly. However, no one in the audience was paying attention.

The next to emerge was Lyon wearing a pair of ice blue swimming trunks. Following him was Genma wearing a pair of black trunks.

{"Alright, all of the men have come out."} Roy said, sounding much more excited than anyone expected. However, his next words made everyone understand why. {"Now, we can look forward to the ladies entrances."}

Cheer~~~~~!

And it was clear that the men were on board with Roy's thought process.

Not long after that, the first of the ladies made their way back into the arena.

{"Anko Mitarashi is the first of the ladies to re-emerge."} Yajima said excitedly.

And Yajima's excitement was not misplaced. Walking into the arena, Anko smiled confidently while wearing a predominantly orange one-piece swimsuit with purple accents and carrying her Battle Board under her arm.

After Anko, Minerva, wearing a green, qipao-inspired swimsuit with red accents was the next to make her appearance. And the disdainful sneer on her lips let everyone know what she thought of her competition for the event.

Tifa came out shortly after Minerva. With her hair tied in a ponytail and her buxom figure clad in a sporty, white bikini with a fluttery little skirt wrapped around her waist, and leather straps on her tights, Tifa mesmerized the crowd

Next was Marin. With a cheerful grin on her lips and confident steps, she took the crowds breath away when they saw her black bikini with dark pink floral patterns.

{"Jenny Realight is the only one left now!"} Roy shouted excitedly. {"And I know we won't be disappointed."}

In actuality, Roy wanted to say something along the lines of saving the best for last. However, he was savvy enough to know that if he said something like that, he would have four pissed off, at least A-Class female wizards looking for him to have a little conversation after the day's events ended were he to do so.

*Cheer~~~~~! *

The crowd seemed to be just as excited as Roy. And not only the men, as Jenny was universally well-liked by all the people of Fiore.

When Jenny entered the arena, the crowd fell silent. Though her swimsuit, a lavender bikini top with a sky-blue skirt was not overly revealing, the way she commanded the attention of the crowd was on another level from the rest.

"Tch!" Mirajane clicked her tongue from the Fairy Tail view area. "Look how confident she looks."

Everyone who heard Mirajane's comment only rolled their eyes.

{"Alright, everyone is here!"} Mato's voice sounded over the Domus Flau. {"Now, let's get the Battle Board event started."}

With that, the entire arena area was engulfed in light. When the light faded, the flat arena was changed completely. Now, there was a winding waterway with trees and rock formations present for everyone to see. Meanwhile, the eight contestants were standing about three quarters of the way down the course's longest straight path where there was a gate signifying the starting line.

{"Racers, take your positions!"} Mato shouted enthusiastically.

As Mato's words ended, the eight contestants approached the waterway. Then, they all put their Battle Boards in the water and carefully stepped onto them. Once they were all stable, they each inserted their magic power into the board and directed them to the starting line.

{"Now, you all know the rules."} Mato said. {"so, we won't waste any time. On your marks! Get set!"}

When Mato reached that point, everyone bent their knees and lowered their centers of gravity.

{"Go~~~~~!"} Mato shouted, starting the event.

"[Ice-Make: Floor]." Lyon chanted as soon as the race started.

In the next instant, the water under all eight contestants froze over, stopping all the others from even getting started. At the same time, using his mastery over ice, Lyon pushed himself across the surface of the ice, taking the early lead.

"I don't think so!" Tifa shouted as she threw an uppercut at the empty air. "[Dolphin Blow]."

Crash!

In the next instant, Tifa was engulfed by water-blue magic power. Then, to everyone in the audience's surprise, a dolphin-type magical beast broke through the ice in front of Tifa. However, it not only broke the ice in front of her but cracked all the ice Lyon's spell made at the same time. Tifa then pushed her magic power into the Battle Board under her feet and shot forward before anyone else regained their senses.

Splash!

Unfortunately, having not expected what happened, the wizard from Twilight Ogre lost his balance and fell into the water.

{"*Sigh* And it looks like Twilight Ogre will be receiving 0 points for this event, as well."} Loli commented in an exasperated tone.

Despite Twilight Ogre's disqualification, the contestants all shot forward following Tifa. And they all used their magic to speed up. Unfortunately, with no direct spells that would aid him, Genma quickly fell into last place. However, the others raced around the course at high-speed using their magic to continuously increase their speed.

While Lyon, who was still in first place, froze the water in front of him and used it to propel himself forward, Tifa used another of her spells, [Waterkick] to constantly throw kicks behind her that expelled water, the force of her kicks keeping her firmly in second place.

Meanwhile, using her [Transformation Magic], Marin transformed her kodachi, Nova, into a pair of speed boat propellers and dashed through the water after lowering Nova to the water's surface. Jenny did something similar, using her [Machina Soul] to turn her arms into Blue Pegasus' airship's thrusters. However, with such high speed, she was finding it difficult to control herself. As a result, she was only one place in front of Genma. Though, she was able to catch up significantly on any straight stretches of water.

Anko, on the other hand, used [Summoning Magic] to summon snakes which would lunge forward and bite onto objects such as trees or rocks on the side of the course. Then, she would pull herself forward while dispelling the summoning, before repeating the process.

Yet, it was Minerva, who was currently in fifth place, who seemed to be the most at ease. Her magic, [Territory], a type of [Spatial Magic], allowed her to control the space in her line of sight. Meaning, instead of propelling herself forward, she was simply teleporting from place to place.

Seeing all the spells on display, the crowd was clearly excited while the three in the broadcasting booth continuously commented on the techniques the wizards were using. However, it was the wizards in the audience who were the least excited out of everyone watching the event.

"It looks like Marin is going to lose this one." Alfonzo said in a downcast tone. "Honestly, I didn't expect Minerva to come out for this event."

"Yeah, with her [Territory Magic], she's the only one who doesn't have to propel herself forward." Elicia added. "In fact, as long as she stays close, there's no way she could lose this event."

"Because she can just teleport to the finish line?" Sun asked.

"That's right." Elicia replied. "Unless she gets disqualified, there's no way she should lose."

"That's not fair." Sun complained with a pout. "Everyone is working so hard."

"that's just the way it is." Alfonzo said.

'♪Things will never be the same~♪' Alfonzo and Elicia thought simultaneously.

"Anyway, don't count Marin out just yet." Elicia said. "She's still got a few tricks."

As Elicia said that, Lyon and Tifa were ending the first lap. However, just at that moment, Marin, who had surpassed Anko on the straight, flared her magic power. Then, using her [Transformation Magic], she raised the density of the water, temporarily giving it the consistency of syrup, making Tifa's [Waterkicks] less effective in propelling herself forward. As a result, she was able to pass her just before the first turn.

Minerva then teleported past Tifa, as well, while Jenny managed to also shoot past Anko on the straight. However, she almost slammed into the side of the course at the turn, being quickly overtaken shortly after she frantically came to a stop.

By the time the second lap ended, the positions were more or less the same, the only difference was that Jenny had gotten control of her immense speed and overtaken Anko for good. However, this was when Marin made her move.

"I probably wouldn't have been able to do this back when I fought Lust." Marin mumbled to herself as she approached the ice path Lyon had been traveling on for the whole race. "Or I would have been able to do it, but I would have been completely spent after I finished... If I didn't release Nova, that is."

The ice path referred to a moment ago was the way Lyon had been traveling ever since the race started. And thanks to his exquisite control of his magic, which convinced Ur that she could reduce the intensity, not cancel, the training she had planned for him, was still present, making all the other contestants slow down to avoid it.

But that was how Marin intended to cause Lyon to lose.

Pulling Nova from the water's surface and reverting the two kodachi to their original forms, Marin then stabbed them into the ice. And with her magic power coating them, they cut right into the ice with no issue. Marin then used her [Transformation Magic].

In the next instant, all the ice, including the ice under Lyon's Battle Board changed into stone. As a result, Lyon's Battle Board came to a sudden halt, almost throwing him off the board and into the water. Luckily, Lyon was able to create an ice block in front of him, stopping him from splashing into the water, and being disqualified.

When Lyon finally got his senses back, he was just in time to see Marin sail past him while holding up her right hand in a peace sign.

"See you at the finish line." Marin said cheerfully, causing Lyon to scowl as he pushed himself off the rocks to try and catch up.

Unfortunately, with all the stone paths in the waterway, Lyon was unable to gain enough speed to catch up with Marin. Even worse, he was even passed by Tifa and Minerva a few moments later. However, he was still able to hold the fourth position.

yet, Lyon, who fell all the way to fourth place was not the most affected by Marin's move. Instead, that was Jenny, who had been using the ice to jump over certain parts of the track, as the speed she was traveling at allowed her to partially destroy some of the ice, turning it into a ramp.

"Kya~~~~~!" Jenny screamed while flying through the air and flailing her arms wildly, the thrusters she manifested with her magic making her flight even more erratic.

Splash!

But when the ice turned into stone, she slammed straight into one of the stone paths and was flung off her Battle Board before crashing into the water, causing her to be disqualified and end up taking seventh place.

"Hahahahahaha!" Mirajane laughed uproariously after seeing Jenny's outcome.

"Hahaha!" Bianca, sitting in her mother's lap, also laughed with her mother while clapping her hands happily, despite not knowing why Mirajane was laughing.

Meanwhile, the event continued, and it was reaching the very end with Marin coming down the final stretch in first place with Tifa not far behind her. Next was Minerva, who still looked as leisurely as she had since the race started. Following Minerva was Lyon, who was still trying his best to catch up to the front runners. A little way behind Lyon was Anko, who had taken back fifth place thanks to Jenny's accident. And bringing up the rear was Genma, who, despite never coming out of last place, would be guaranteed sixth place, no matter what happened next.

And at that moment, Minerva finally made her move. With the finish line in her sights, she activated her [Territory Magic]. Then, she vanished from her third place position before reappearing in front of Marin... Just in front of the finish line.

"Are you serious?" Marin exclaimed in confusion and disbelief as Minerva crossed the finish line only seconds in front of her.

{"Incredible!"} Loli shouted into his microphone. {"IN a stunning turn of events, Contestant Minerva overtook Contestant Marin to claim first place. And for the first time in this year's Grand Magic Games, Fairy Tail has not received a 10 point score!"}

Not only Marin and Loli, but everyone else, other than the members of Sabertooth and Team Fairy Tail were completely dumbfounded by the outcome of the event.

Meanwhile, Minerva, after securing first place, glanced at Alfonzo challengingly. However, Alfonzo only smiled brightly and waved at her, causing her to frown. She then looked away with a huff. Though, no one knew exactly what she was thinking other than her.

Following Minerva and Marin, Tifa, Lyon, Anko, and Genma finished in that order, bringing the Battle Board event to an end.

{"That certainly was incredible."} Roy said in his usual tone. {"But it's not completely unexpected."}

{"The Colonel is right."} Yajima added. {"With a magic like [Territory], Minerva could be where ever she wanted. And there was really nothing Marin could do about it."}

{"Right."} Roy continued. {"If she had some kind of area of effect spell, she probably could have stopped Minerva. But unfortunately, from what I know, Marin is more suited to infiltration, unlike the rest of her guild mates, who specialize in wide-range destruction."}

{"Either way, the Battle Board event is over."} Loli said, still excited by the unexpected conclusion to the event. {"So, why don't we take a look at the scores so far?"}

{Overall Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

1. Fairy Tail 48 Pts.

2. Mermaid Heel 37 Pts.

3 Final Fantasy 28 Pts.

4.. Sabertooth 26 Pts.

5. Blue Pegasus 24 Pts.

6. Quattro Cerberus 12 Pts.

7. Lamia Scale 7 Pts.

8. Twilight Ogre 0 Pts.}

{"It looks like some of the middle placements have changed drastically."} Loli said after reading out the overall scores. {"and with today's Battles, things could change even more significantly. I'm really looking forward to this. Now, I just received the envelope. So, let's see who will be up first for today's Battle Round!"}

Chapter 686: Grand Magic Games, Day Three; Part 3: He's Just too Much to Deal With

{"The first match of today's Battle Round will be between Bacchus of Quatro Cerberus and Flamer of Twilight Ogre." Loli said, reading from the card in the envelope. {"Would both fighters please come to the arena to begin the match?"}}

"Flamer?" Alfonzo asked from the seating area. "Do you think he uses [Fire Magic]?"

"I hope so." Elicia said with a grin. "Otherwise, his name would seem a bit silly."

"What does it matter?" Brandish asked nonchalantly. "It's not like anyone will remember his name five seconds later, anyway."

In response, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Marin, who was still a little confused after losing the Battle Board event in the way she did, shrugged their shoulders, having no words to retort.

Meanwhile, Bacchus and Flamer jumped down into the arena. And just as quickly as the match started, it ended. Bacchus only needed one palm strike to send Flamer flying and imbed him into the arena's wall.

{"Well, that certainly was quick."} Roy said, a hint of a smile in his tone. {"Things really aren't looking good for Twilight Ogre."}

{"Indeed."} Yajima added. {"This is the end of the third day for them. Yet, they are still sitting at 0 points. I really don't see how they could climb out of this."}

{"You're both right."} Loli said while looking down at the match card. {"But let's move on to the second match. This time, Elicia Marcus Taylor of Fairy Tail and Ichiya Vandalay Kotobuki of Blue Pegasus, please make your way to the arena."}

At the same time, Elicia grimaced, not wanting to deal with someone like Ichiya. Even so, she jumped into the arena after pecking Alfonzo on the cheek with a forlorn expression on her face.

"Why does she look like that?" Brandish asked curiously. "I mean, Elicia should have no problem dealing with a guy like him, right?""

"You've never had to deal with Ichiya, have you?" Sun asked while looking at Elicia empathetically.

"No, I haven't." Brandish replied.

"Well, just watch." Sun said while shaking her head.

Although she was still confused, Brandish turned her attention to the arena to see why Elicia looked down before jumping into the arena. However, when she saw what happened next, she understood immediately.

"Men~~~~~!" Ichiya shouted energetically as he jumped from the stands into the arena with a rose between his teeth.

"Listen up, Ichiya." Karen said in a stern tone. "If you hurt my Elicia, I'll make you wish you'd never been born. And being whatever you consider a gentleman will be the least of your concerns."

Bang!

While on the way down to the arena floor, Karen's words startled Ichiya. As a result, he missed his footing when he landed and fell to the ground before rolling forward in a comical fashion. Yet, when he came to a stop, the rose, completely undamaged, was still in his mouth and he lay on his right side while supporting his head with his right hand and smiling the most charming smile he could muster.

"Men~~." Ichiya said in his most seductive tone while shooting a finger pistol at Elicia, making her shudder in disgust.

"Ugh!" Elicia groaned at Ichiya's actions. She then looked up towards the broadcasting booth and continued. "Please, just start the match already. Dealing with this guy is just too much for me."

"Miss Elicia, I can understand why dealing with someone as ruggedly charming as myself is a bit much, but do you really have to rush?" Ichiya asked as he picked himself up from the ground. "Instead, why don't we have a cup of tea and talk about life. Then, once we're both comfortable, we can start the match."

Hearing that, Elicia shuddered violently. She then turned around to look at Alfonzo with pleading eyes.

"Can you just use a [Railgun] to get rid of him, Fonzie?" Elicia begged.

"*Sigh* If I could, I would." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "But you know that would get us disqualified. Plus, I don't wanna become a dark wizard."

With Alfonzo's words, Elicia dropped her head. Then, she slowly turned back to Ichiya with determination burning in her eyes.

'I'll just end this as quickly as possible so that I don't have to deal with this for too long.' Elicia thought to herself.

"Now, now, now." Ichiya said after seeing the look in Elicia's eyes. "Please, don't look at me with such passionate eyes, Miss Elicia. You have a husband. And I wouldn't want him to get the wrong idea. Although Alfonzo and I have not always seen eye to eye, I still consider him a friend, you know?"

"Please, just start the match." Elicia pleaded once more.

{"Uh... Begin!"} Loli said, taken aback by the distress in Elicia's tone.

As soon as Loli gave the signal, Ichiya reached into his suit's inner pocket and pulled a pair of small bottles of perfume. He then held them to his nostrils and inhaled deeply.

"[Perfume Magic: Power Perfume, Fleet-Foot Perfume]." Ichiya chanted after inhaling his perfumes.

In the next instant, Ichiya, a short, stout man, grew in size. As he grew, and became more muscular, his suit tore, leaving only part of his pants intact, covering his nether region. At the same time, he became a hulking mass of muscle.

"Since the match has started, I won't go easy on you, Miss Elicia." Ichiya said while posing with his new muscular build. "So, please forgive me if you get hurt."

"If you hurt her, I'll end you, Ichiya!" Karen shouted from the Blue Pegasus seating area. However, she was completely ignored.

Instead, Ichiya ran forward at blinding speed, his speed augmented by his [Fleet-Foot Perfume]. Along his way to Elicia, who had not moved in the slightest, he began to spin, yet he somehow did not lose any momentum while doing so.

"[Sparkle to Infinity]. Men~~~~!" Ichiya chanted while spinning. "Huh? Men?"

However, when he stopped spinning and prepared to throw a devastating punch at Elicia, Ichiya found himself unable to move. Then, when he looked down, he saw that he was wrapped from his neck to the soles of his feet in magical threads.

{"Spinning like that when dealing with someone who uses [Thread Magic] really isn't a good idea."} Roy said with a hint of amusement in his tone. {"Still, it seems like that attack would have been rather powerful had it been delivered."}

{"That it would."} Yajima replied. {"From what I've heard, Ichiya's attack is strong enough to destroy an entire tower. He once used it to bring down a dark wizard's tower during a Dark Guild subjugation quest."}

{"That's rather impressive."} Loli said. {"Unfortunately, it seems rather ineffective against someone like Contestant Elicia. Instead, he's been wrapped up like a spool of thread."}

Meanwhile, Ichiya was struggling to free himself from Elicia's threads with all the additional strength afforded to him by the [Power Perfume]. Yet, there was no visible effect. And when he noticed that, he looked up to meet eyes with Elicia.

"How bout we sit down and talk about this?" Ichiya asked while wearing what he considered a charming smile. "I'm sure there's a way other than violence to settle this, ri--- Men~~~~~!"

Unfortunately for Ichiya, Elicia had no interest in talking to him. Instead, she spun on her heels. And as she spun, Ichiya was pulled along with her. Over time, Elicia's rotation got faster and faster. Meanwhile, Ichiya's screams began to doppler as he was spun along with her.

Then, once Elicia was spinning as fast as she could, she flicked her arms upwards, sending Ichiya high into the air.

"[Thread Magic: Thread Catapult]." Elicia chanted once Ichiya was high enough up in the air.

In the next instant, Elicia was pulled upwards, as well as her threads contracted. However, instead of flying into Ichiya, she flew past him. And when she did, she let the threads lengthen once again.

"["Thread Magic: Meteor Hammer]." Elicia chanted once she was high enough in the air.

Elicia then summersaulted forward, causing Ichiya to be flung through the air with her rotation. Then, after making a full rotation, Elicia disconnected the threads from the cocoon wrapped around Ichiya.

"Men~~~~~!" Ichiya screamed as he was sent rocketing down towards the arena floor.

Boom!

Ichiya's shout was cut off when he slammed into the arena floor. And upon impact, a cloud of dust and debris was kicked up into the air. Meanwhile, Elicia used her threads to weave a glider so that she could slowly circle the dust cloud, eventually landing just outside the cloud before walking back towards the stands.

Seeing the power behind Elicia's attack, the crowd was in awe. Other than Ur, Erza had been publicly considered the strongest woman in Fairy Tail. However, after seeing Elicia's feats in her fight with Ichiya, that notion came into question.

{"Wow..."} Loli muttered in dumbfounded amazement as the dust settled. {"All I can say is... Wow... Oh, I think I can see Contestant Ichiya. Will he be able to rise and continue the fight? OR is this the end of the match?"}

As Loli said that, the crowd was also able to see Ichiya. However, when they did, they all shook their heads. Currently, Ichiya's body was still enlarged thanks to his [Power Perfume], his hair was a mess, he was smiling in his usual fashion, making it look as if he would stand up at any moment. However, when looking into Ichiya's eyes, it was clear that he had lost consciousness.

{"I think it's pretty obvious."} Roy said. {"I don't think Ichiya will be getting up anytime soon."}

{"Indeed."} Yajima said while nodding in agreement. {"From what I know, Ichiya is quite durable. However, after taking an impact like that, I don't know many wizards who could maintain consciousness."}

Shortly after that, Elicia was declared the winner. At the same time, Elicia leapt back into the stands while the Trimens jumped down in to the arena to move Ichiya to the medical station to get his injuries taken care of.

After that, Loli announced the next match, Terra of Final Fantasy versus Yoruichi of Mermaid Heel. Unfortunately, Terra was no match for Yoruichi. Although she put up a good fight with her array of support magic such as [Protect], [Shell], and [Reflect], Yoruichi was just too fast for Terra to land a hit on. Even after stacking [Slow] on her opponent three times.

And the last match of the day was between Yuka of Lamia Scale and Rufus of Sabertooth. And like two of the three previous matches, this one did not last long, as Rufus completely overwhelmed Yuka with his [Memory-Make Magic] and the vast number of spells he had memorized.

{"And that will bring an end to the third day's events."} Loli said once the final match of the Battle Round ended. {"Now, why don't we thank our guest commentator, Colonel Roy Mustang. Colonel, thanks for coming today. We really appreciate it."}

{"No problem, Loli."} Roy said in a charismatic tone. {"It was a great experience. I hope I get to do this again next year."}

{"We might be able to arrange that."} Yajima replied.

{"I'll hold you to that."} Roy said with a chuckle.

{"Well, before we end today's broadcast, why don't we take one more look at the scoreboard?"} Loli said.

{Overall Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

Fairy Tail 58 Pts. Mermaid Heel 47 Pts.

3 Sabertooth 36 Pts.

4.. Final Fantasy 28 Pts.

Blue Pegasus 24 Pts. Quatro Cerberus 22 Pts. Lamia Scale 7 Pts. Twilight Ogre 0 Pts.}

While Loli announced the scores for the end of the day, the crowd made its way to the exits. Meanwhile, Jiemma, whose guild received 20 points for the day, was in a much better mood than he was at the end of yesterday's events.

On top of that, two men wearing black cloaks with red cloud patterns and straw hats were also leaving the arena. However, they seemingly went unnoticed by anyone in the arena as they made their way out. Though, there were more than a few wizards in the audience who noticed their presences. Those wizards just did not do anything about them.

"What do you think we should do, Itachi?" Kisame asked while he and Itachi ran towards the city outskirts by jumping from roof to roof. "It seems the members of Fairy Tail are stronger than we expected."

"Yes, they are." Itachi replied. "But I don't think they're too much for Pain to handle. Still, we should let him know what we've found out about the wizards in the Grand Magic Games. He may want to

reconsider attacking Crocus to retrieve him. There are just too many strong wizards in the city right now."

"Yeah, there are quite a few." Kisame replied. "And that Magic Seamstress, she's much stronger than I expected, too. If she weren't protecting the Nine-Tailed Brat last time, things would have been much more difficult, wouldn't they?"

Hearing that, Itachi, with his Sharingan active, glanced back at Kisame to see if he had been replaced by someone using the [Transformation Jutsu]. Although his expression did not change, he was thoroughly surprised that Kisame would say something like that.

'I have to find a way to get Pain to give up on attacking during the rest day like he wanted to.' Itachi thought to himself after looking away from Kisame. 'Although I have no doubt that he would still end up defeated, the collateral damage would be much worse if he were to attack in Crocus rather than Magnolia. Luckily, Kisame, who has more muscle than brains, is wary of all the strong wizards in the capital right now, too. Otherwise, I don't think he would listen to me. Well, we'll just have to wait and see.'

While those thoughts ran through Itachi's head, he and Kisame left the city. However, they were unaware of the scarlet-haired former dragon who followed them from the air with a curious smile on her face.

Chapter 687: Plans Brewing in the Background

Having left Crocus at the end of the conclusion of the Grand Magic Games' third day, Itachi and Kisame continued to run until just before sunset. While making sure they were not being tracked, unfortunately, they were unable to detect the wizard following them from the sky. So, once they reached their destination, they checked one more time that no one was following them before entering a shallow cave.

"How do you think Pain will react to our information, Itachi?" Kisame asked curiously while taking a seat on a stone bed that had been carved out of the cave's wall.

"I'm not sure." Itachi replied while shaking his head lightly. "But with the disappearances of both Zetsu and Toby, I would think he'll be cautious."

"Yeah, we haven't seen either of them since they left to investigate the Nine-Tails' situation in Magnolia.

"There's no point speculating." Itachi said. "Let's just give him our report and see what happens."

With Kisame nodding in agreement, he and Itachi began to circulate their magic power into the rings they wore. Then, they both fell into a trance, as their consciousnesses had been sent elsewhere. Unfortunately, that meant that they were unaware of the person who walked into the cave.

"Interesting form of communication." The newcomer, Irene, said as she approached the bed Itachi was sitting on. She then leaned forward to get a better look at the ring where his magic power was flowing. "The [Enchantments] on these rings are rather interesting, as well. I'd like to get a hold of one of them to look at them in more detail. But I can't blow this kid's cover. Alfonzo said he was a spy. And until the rest of his group, the Akatsuki, I think, is dealt with, he shouldn't be exposed."

Irene then leaned back and tapped Belserion, her [Soul Armament], onto Itachi's ring. She then used her extensive magical knowledge to tap into the ongoing communication without giving herself away.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Undisclosed Location.

A few moments earlier, Itachi's and Kisame's [Projections] appeared on the tips of the fingers of the massive Gedo Mazo statue. However, they were not the only one's present, as there were six other [Projections] standing on the tips of the statues other fingers.

"What took the two of you so long?" A hunched over figure asked in an impatient tone. "You kept me waiting, and I hate waiting."

"Come on, Sasori, my man." A blond man with hair covering the right side of his face said in a mocking tone. "Don't let these two bother you. They're just not as good as everyone thinks."

While he spoke, although his words sounded like they were targeting both Itachi and Kisame, the blond man was staring directly into Itachi's Sharingan. Luckily, because these were only [Projections], he did not have to fear falling prey to Itachi's [Genjutsu].

Instead of rising to the blond man's provocation, Itachi turned his gaze towards the orange-haired man with purple eyes who stood at the center of the group, the leader of the Akatsuki, Pain. At the same time, Irene succeeded in tapping into this meeting, completely undetected by any of the eight rogue shinobi.

"Hey! Don't you ignore me!" The blond man shouted agitatedly. "Or do you want me to give you a personal demonstration of my art?"

"Such an idiot." A green-eyed man with red sclerae muttered in an annoyed tone. "And I thought you were the dumbest one here, Hidan."

"What did you say?" A silver-haired man, Hidan, asked angrily. "I'll sacrifice you to Lord Jashin."

'They aren't particularly cohesive, are they?' Irene thought to herself while listening to the bickering between the members of Akatsuki. 'Well, that would make defeating them much easier if they ever decided to attack us. Still, knowing when or where they will attack would be nice to set up some preparations.'

"Enough!" Pain said in an authoritative tone. Then, when all the bickering stopped, he turned his gaze to meet eyes with Itachi. "What have you found out, Itachi?"

"It would seem the wizards of the Legal Guilds have gotten much stronger than we projected. "I have yet to understand why that is, though."

'Oh, that probably has something to do with Alfonzo's upgrades to their training facilities.' Irene thought to herself. 'But they have no way of knowing that. Unless they intend to break into their guild halls. But from what I can tell so far, they're too arrogant to even consider that. And that's weird for a bunch of supposed ninjas.'

In fact, Irene was wrong about that. The Akatsuki was quite familiar with infiltration missions. However, that was usually left to Zetsu. But since he disappeared over a year ago, their infiltrations have rendered much less information than they were used to receiving.

"Then, you would suggest not attacking on the rest day of the Grand Magic Games, correct?" Pain asked, though it sounded more like a statement.

"That's right." Itachi replied. "I wouldn't try to attack after the Games have ended, either. At least, not while the other wizards are around."

"OH! It sounds like Itachi is afraid." The blond man said in a mocking tone. "I guess you're not as much of a genius as everyone thought, huh?"

"I'd rather not lose any more members." Itachi said coldly as he cut his eyes in the blond's direction.

"That sounds like an excuse from a weakling to me." The blond said arrogantly.

"And you lost to and still lose to this weakling." Itachi shot back without changing his expression or tone.

"What did you say!?" The blond asked in an enraged tone.

"I said this once before, enough!" Pain said, cutting off the bickering between Itachi and the blond man. "As for Itachi's suggestion. I can understand where he is coming from. Even if we are all quite powerful, there are dozens of wizards in the capital at the moment with S-Class power. It would be fool-hardy to rush in head first. We will set the attack to retrieve the Nine-Tails from Fairy Tail shortly after they return to Magnolia. I expect everyone to be ready to move out when I give the order."

"Understood." x 7

"Dismissed." Pain said before cutting off his [Projection].

At the same time, Irene also cut off her connection with the magic Akatsuki was using to communicate. Then, she quickly left the cave where Itachi and Kisame were hiding before returning to Crocus to share what she learned with the guild.

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Crocus.

Meanwhile, in one of the most luxurious hotels in the city, other than the Sixth Sense Hotel, the members of Sabertooth, having kicked out all the hotel staff, were gathered in the hotel's lobby.

At the back of the lobby, where a staircase led to a landing before splitting to either side and continuing up to the second floor, Jiemma, sitting on a throne on said landing, was looking down at the five members of Team Sabertooth.

Jiemma was a tall, elderly man with an extremely muscular physique with long grey hair pulled back and neatly tied into a braid that ended below the middle of his back. He also had a mustache and beard of matching color. And while the mustache was styled neatly, the beard and sideburns connected to his hair were rather unkempt, with spiky strands jutting out in all directions. Jiemma also had a strange set of eyes, which had white irises, no pupils, and black sclerae.

As for his attire, Jiemma's clothing, like his daughter's, had an eastern feel to it. However, instead of Chinese inspired, Jiemma's clothing was Japanese inspired, as his clothing consisted of what appeared to be a red kimono with white trim that ended just below his hips, a pair of brown pants, and black boots. Also, his Sabertooth guild mark was located in the center of his forehead.

"Minerva, Rufus." Jiemma said. "The two of you have done well today. This is what I expect from members of my guild, the strongest guild."

"Thank you, Father/Master." Minerva and Rufus replied in unison while bowing their heads deferentially.

Jiemma then shifted his gaze from Rufus and his daughter to Sting and Orga.

"As for the two of you, I am choosing Sting to participate in tomorrow's event." Jiemma continued. "Failure will not be tolerated, understood?"

"I Understand, Master." Sting replied while straightening his back.

"Very well." Jiemma said as he let his gaze sweep over the rest of Team Sabertooth. "Then, prepare yourselves for tomorrow. Dismissed."

With that, Jiemma stood from his seat. Then, he walked up the stairs to his left without looking at anyone or speaking another word. Shortly afterwards, the other members of Sabertooth also began to disperse, leaving the members of Team Sabertooth standing in the center of the hotel lobby.

"Hey, Sting, are you okay?" An Exceed with mostly dark red fur, except for on his snout, belly, paws, and the tip of his tail, which were pink in color, and black eyes wearing a blue vest asked while flying over to join with Sting. "You gotta be under a lot of pressure right now."

"Frosch thinks so, too." A green Exceed with large, round black eyes wearing a black-spotted, pink suit that resembled a poison dart frog added while flying towards Rogue. "Do you think you can win, Sting?"

"Of course he can, Frosch." the red Exceed shot back before landing on Sting's right shoulder. "Tell 'em, Sting."

"That's right, Lector." Sting replied with a wide smile. "Sabertooth is the strongest, and I'll prove it tomorrow."

"See, I told you, Frosch." The red Exceed, Lector, said with his arms crossed while looking at the green Exceed, Frosch, with a hint of smugness in his gaze.

"Frosch thinks so, too." Frosch said with a happy-go-lucky smile.

"I think you should be careful tomorrow, Sting." Rufus said cautiously.

"Why, do you know something about tomorrow's event, Rufus?" Rogue asked in a flat tone. "There won't be any more vehicles tomorrow, will there?"

When the word vehicle was mentioned, Sting paled visibly.

"No, I doubt it." Rufus replied. His expression then turned solemn as he continued in an equally solemn tone. "But I think there is a good chance that Alfonzo Marcus and the other aces of the guilds will enter tomorrow's event."

Hearing that, Sting, Rogue, Minerva, and Lector put on solemn expressions. Meanwhile, Orga began to shudder from the phantom pain left behind by the healed injuries from his match with Alfonzo. Frosch, on the other hand, only tilted his head in confusion.

Smack!

"Good!" Sting said, punching his right fist into his left palm after getting himself together. "I'll take revenge for Orga."

"No, you won't." Minerva cut in quickly. "You will focus on winning tomorrow's event. That's the only thing that matters."

Hearing that, not only Sting, but Rogue, Rufus, Orga, and Lector looked at Minerva with shock. Frosch, on the other hand, kept his lightly confused and happy-go-lucky expression while tilting his head to the other side.

"What do you mean, Princess?" Sting asked in disbelief.

"I mean exactly what I said." Minerva replied in a no-nonsense tone. "We can worry about avenging Orga during the Grand Magic Game event on the last day. But if we don't win tomorrow's event, it won't matter even if we do."

'Not that there's a chance you'd be able to take him on alone.' Minerva thought to herself.

Meanwhile, Sting clenched his fists and gritted his teeth, causing Lector to look at him with a worried gaze. A few moments later, however, he relaxed. Then, he took a deep breath before making eye contact with Minerva.

"I understand." Sting said in a solemn tone. "I'll win tomorrow's event. That way, we should be able to get enough points to win the whole competition if we win the Battle Round and get enough points during the Grand Magic Game."

"Good." Minerva said with a nod of her head. "I'm glad you understand. Now, go and get some rest. You'll need to be well-rested to win against that monster tomorrow."

Nodding in response, Sting and the others were surprised when Minerva turned around and walked towards the hotel's front entrance.

"Hey, where are you going, Princess?" Rogue asked curiously.

"Just to take a walk." Minerva replied without stopping or turning around. "I need to clear my head a bit. There's a lot to think about if we want to win, after all."

While Minerva continued to walk away and eventually left the hotel, Sting, Rogue, Rufus, and Orga exchanged glances, not knowing what to do or say before they eventually went off to get some rest.

Chapter 688: Grand Magic Games, Day Four; Part 1: The Aces Take the Stage

After leaving her guild's lodgings, Minerva found herself walking aimlessly through the streets of Crocus. All the while, she was contemplating what she could do to help her team win the Grand Magic Games.

Coming up with various plans while discarding those plans just as quickly, Minerva found herself getting more and more frustrated as time passed. Until she saw the members of Team Natsu sitting outside of a food stall and enjoying the food they just bought. More specifically, when she saw Wendy of Team Natsu.

"She may very well be my breakthrough point. I've heard that members of Fairy Tail are very protective of their guild mates. If I can take her hostage, making that monster give up would be quite likely." Minerva thought to herself while staring at Wendy. She then let her gaze roam over Gray, Erza, Natsu, Happy, Carla, and Juvia, who was clinging to Gray happily, before she continued with a slight frown. "The others will be an issue, though. I'm not sure if I'll be able to pull it off by myself and I don't wanna implicate the rest of the guild."

"Then, you should give up."

Hearing that voice from so close behind her, Minerva spun around quickly while preparing to cast her spell, [Territory Nihility], by coating her hands in spatial waves.

When Minerva was able to see the one who spoke to her, she was looking at a tall, crimson-haired woman wearing a modified witch's outfit with a fur-brimmed pointy hat buying a drink from a vendor. Immediately, she recognized the woman as Irene Belserion, rumored to be an even more powerful wizard than Alfonzo. Though, without seeing Irene's prowess for herself, she would not believe that rumor so easily.

"You should give up on that, too." Irene said without even turning around while paying the vendor. "Trust me, it won't end well for you. Unlike the rest of my guild mates, I'm not really opposed to killing should someone attack me."

Hearing that, Minerva frowned deeply. Still, she did not lower her guard. A moment later, Irene turned around and smiled at Minerva before taking a sip of her drink.

"Anyway, like I was saying, you should probably give up on that plan of yours." Irene said after lowering her cup. "Because I wouldn't even have to get involved before your entire guild ceased to exist. My daughter would either slaughter every member of your guild or send them all to prison for touching one of her friends. And if Alfonzo were to get involved, he wouldn't give a damn about the Grand Magic Games. Instead, he would just storm into wherever you were holding her and kill everyone standing in his way. He doesn't take too kindly to people threatening his loved ones, you know."

Hearing that, Minerva glanced back at Erza, who was currently slapping Natsu upside the head for doing something stupid. Then, she thought back to a rumor she heard about Alfonzo and Elicia from a few years ago.

"Does that mean that Jose Porla, the former master of the Phantom Lord Guild and ex-member of the Ten Wizard Saints, didn't die of natural causes after his magic power was crippled?" Minerva asked in a stern tone.

"Who knows?" Irene replied with a grin and a shrug. "But if you plan to use that against him, I suggest you find some evidence first."

Being seen through so quickly, Minerva frowned even deeper. However, she had nothing to say.

"But if you want to checkmate him, then rack your brains." Irene continued. "Try with all your might. But you should know, on top of being one of the most powerful wizards in the world, he's also one of the smartest. So, trapping him won't be easy."

With that said, Irene stepped forward, completely unbothered by the [Spatial Magic] still swirling around Minerva's hand. Then, as she passed the younger wizard, Irene patted her on the shoulder with a smile.

"But don't let my words deter you." Irene said without looking back. "Try your best."

"Are you encouraging me to scheme on a member of your guild?" Minerva asked while considering attacking Irene from behind. "Why would you do something like that?"

"Because this competition has been incredibly dull." Irene replied nonchalantly. "No one is strong enough to give his team a challenge. And if it weren't for that relatively interesting form of [Spatial Magic] you use, you would have only come in second place at best in today's event. Because you had yet to see exactly what Marin was capable of since she did not need to show it up until the point you appeared in front of her. And by then, it was too late."

After speaking her piece, Irene continued walking forward to greet Erza and the rest of Team Natsu. Meanwhile, Minerva could only stand there while staring at Irene's back with disbelief. She then watched Irene leave after a brief greeting and burying Natsu up to his neck in the street with an [enchantment] after he challenged her to a fight.

"Maybe we aren't really the strongest as Father has always said." Minerva said as she let her [Space Magic] dissipate from around her hand. "Still, I can't disobey his orders."

Not knowing what to do after her conversation with Irene, Minerva continued to wander aimlessly, returning to her lodgings just before midnight. Irene, on the other hand, returned to the Sixth Sense Hotel shortly after greeting Erza. She then went to find Alfonzo, who she found playing with his kids in their suite.

"How'd it go, Irene?" Alfonzo asked with a smile while holding Calvin over his head.

"I managed to tap into Akatsuki's communications network." Irene said as she sat down near Alfonzo and scooped Bianca into her arms. "The way they communicate is quite interesting. But the mechanism is simple. You could probably create a magic item to spy on them with relative ease."

"Yeah, if I had the magical frequency they used, it probably wouldn't be that hard." Alfonzo replied while making it easier for Amar'e to climb onto his lap to play with his little brother."

"If that's the case, perhaps you would accompany me to Magnolia on the rest day to work on it?" Irene asked with a smile. "I have the frequency. But I'd need some specialized materials to inscribe them into an [Enchantment] that could be mounted on a magic item. And those materials are, unfortunately, in my workshop at home."

"Sure, it won't be a problem." Alfonzo replied. "If we go early enough, we should be back before it's too late. I promised to go with everyone to Ryuzetsu Land this year on the rest day."

"Yes, barring any issues, we should be back by noon if we take the Blackbird." Irene replied.

"Good." Alfonzo replied. "You can tell me what you heard during the flight, too. Being ready for them will be a good thing."

"I agree." Irene replied.

With that, the conversation ended and the two focused on playing with the children. Not long after that, Alfonzo's ladies, except for Erza and Lucy, returned from the hot spring bath in the hotel. Then, they joined Alfonzo and Irene in playing with the children until the three youngsters got sleepy. Shortly after that, Erza and Lucy also returned to the room before they all decided to call it a night.

July 4, x790.

{"Welcome back for Day Four of the x790 Grand Magic Games."} Loli said once the broadcast started.
{"And I'm your host, Loli Chapati and I'm here once again with Yajima, bringing you the color commentary."}

{"Hello, everyone."} Yajima added. {"It's another fine day, isn't it? I hope you're all ready for more feats of magic by the finest wizards the kingdom has to offer."}

{"Well, I know I am."} Loli said with a big smile. {"Unfortunately, we don't have a guest commentator with us today. Even so, Yajima and I will do our best to keep things interesting. So, without further ado, let's send it to Mato for today's event."}

{"Thanks, Loli."} Mato said as his face appeared on all the Lacrima-Vision screens in the Domus Flau.
{"Today's event is called 'Super Balls.' I know I don't need to tell you all by this point, but I'll explain the rules once each team has selected a wizard to participate in the event."}

Like they had every other day before the event's rules were explained, the other teams began discussing who would participate in the match. However, there was one exception.

"Well, that's my cue." Alfonzo said as he stood up.

"Break a leg." Marin said cheerfully.

"Whose?" Alfonzo asked with a smirk. "Just tell me and I'll get it done for you."

In response, Marin only rolled her eyes before standing up to give Alfonzo a quick peck on the cheek for good luck. And Elicia and Sun quickly followed her example. Then, the three ladies all looked at Brandish in unison.

"What?" Brandish asked with a blush creeping up to her cheeks.

"You're not gonna do it to?" Sun asked while tilting her head in curiosity.

"Why should I?" Brandish asked, her cheeks turning even redder. "I'm not one of his wives."

"Yeah, but it's just for good luck." Elicia said while nudging Brandish. "You're not scared of a little peck on the cheek, are you?"

"Come on, Brandi." Marin said cheerfully as she grabbed Brandish's arm. "It's not so bad."

"Alright, that's enough." Alfonzo said while shaking his head. "If she doesn't wanna do it, don't force her."

"We know." Elicia said with a smile. "We were just teasing her."

Shaking his head at his wives' antics, Alfonzo turned around and leapt down into the arena.

{"And this is the fourth time!"} Loli shouted in an excited tone. {"Fairy Tail has been the first to choose their wizard."}

{"Yes, and look, the aces of each guild are rushing down into the arena right after him."} Yajima added, drawing attention to the seven other guilds' representatives for this event.

And just as Yajima said, Bacchus of Quattro Cerberus, Ichiya of Blue Pegasus, Jura of Lamia Scale, Yoruichi of Mermaid Heel, Sting of Sabertooth, Squall of Final Fantasy, and Thibault of Twilight Ogre all jumped into the ring shortly after Alfonzo.

"Oh, look at this." Alfonzo said while looking at the rest of the competitors. "You're all throwing the best you have to offer for little old me? I'm honored."

"Ha! When I beat you, the people of Magnolia will understand that we should have been the guild set up in the town!" Thibault shouted.

Alfonzo only glanced at Thibault like he was looking at a mentally ill child. Then, he turned back to look at all the wizards who actually had some skill. However, as his eyes roamed across the other six wizards, they eventually landed on Sting.

"You remember what I said last time, right?" Alfonzo asked in a casual tone.

"So what?" Sting asked.

"You all really pissed me off." Alfonzo continued. "So, you should be ready to come in seventh place. Because as much as I want to make you come in last, I don't think I'm good enough to make you do worse than that guy."

As he spoke, Alfonzo pointed at Thibault, who was enraged.

"You're really looking down on us, aren't you, Alfonzo?" Yoruichi asked with a grin on her face that hid the competitive thoughts she was holding onto.

"Of course not." Alfonzo replied. "But you're about to see exactly what I'm capable of. And that's something that no one has seen for a while."

'I just hope this doesn't set off Retsu.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Without my [Soul Armaments'] full release, I don't think I'm ready to fight her yet. Not in a life and death battle, anyway.'

"I have a fairly decent idea of what you are capable of." Jura said peacefully. "But that won't stop me from giving it all I have."

"And if it did, I really would start looking down on you, Jura." Alfonzo replied with a smile. He then shifted his gaze to the others slowly. "And that goes for all of you. Still, that doesn't mean that just because you give it your all, I'll stop trying to show Sabertooth their place."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo stared at Sting for a moment. Then, he turned to stare into Jiemma's eyes with a mocking smile on his face.

Immediately, Jiemma's magic power put pressure on all those around him. Namely, the members of his guild not participating in the Grand Magic Games. However, before things could escalate any further, Mato's face reappeared on the screens.

{"Good, everyone has decided."} Mato said in that cheerful tone he has come to be known for. {"Now, let me explain how 'Super Balls' works."}

With that, the images on the screens changed once again. Now, instead of Mato's face, there was a large, eight-sided room being displayed. In fact, the room was so large that it would comfortably fit four or five hundred people inside. And on each wall, there was a large hole with a guild's name above them. There were also many small holes on the ceiling, as well.

{"Do you see those holes with the names of your guilds over them?" Mato asked loudly. {"well, you'll need to defend them. From what? You may ask. Well, from these."}}

Once again, the images on the screens changed. Now, there were five colored balls on the screen. Each of a different size, as well. The largest of the balls was red, and there was a small sign that read five points next to it. Next that, there was a purple ball with a four point sign. The next ball was a blue ball with a three point sign next to it. Then, there was a green ball worth two points, and finally, a yellow ball worth one point. And the yellow ball was the smallest of the five.

{"Balls like these will be dropped into the court from the holes in the ceiling. And you'll be trying to get them to go into any of the teams' goals while stopping any from going into your own. Simple right?"} Mato explained. {"As you get balls into your opponents' goals, your score will rise by the value of the ball you managed to get into your opponent's goal. However, whenever an opponent manages to get a ball into your goal, you'll lose points worth the value of the ball. Is everyone following me?"}

With his question, Mato glanced pointedly at Thibault, whose guild members seemed to have the lowest IQs. However, when he saw the Twilight Ogre ace nodding along, he turned back to the explanation.

{"On top of that, it is prohibited to hold the balls." Mato continued. {"You will only be able to hit them with your bodies or magic. Also, the more magic power injected into the balls, the faster they will move, with the smaller balls moving faster than the larger ones."}}

{"The event will last for thirty minutes and the team with the highest score at the end will be the winner and receive 10 points."} Mato said, continuing his explanation. {"And like in every other event, the scores each team will receive after the winner will be reduced like the other events, with each subsequent team receiving few points. So, is everyone ready?"}

Chapter 689: Grand Magic Games, Day Four; Part 2: Super Balls

{"The event will last for thirty minutes and the team with the highest score at the end will be the winner and receive 10 points."} Mato said, continuing his explanation. {"And like in every other event, the scores each team will receive after the winner will go like the other events, with each subsequent team receiving few points. So, is everyone ready?"}

Cheer~~~~~!

In response to Mato's question, the crowd went wild. However, it was not only for the start of a new event that the crowd was in an uproar. Rather, it was because they would get to see all the strongest members of each team in one event. Though, they were a bit unsure if Thibault should really be mentioned in the same sentence as the others.

{"Then~~~, let's get started~~~!"} Mato shouted excitedly.

At the same time, the arena was covered in a blinding flash. And when the light faded, none of the eight wizards could be seen. Instead, there was only a large octagonal structure in the center of the arena. And on each side of this eight-sided structure was a guild symbol denoting which side belonged to which competitor.

Not only that, but all the screens in the arena had changed, as well. They were now showing the inside of the Super Balls court from different angles. And the only thing anyone could see at the moment were the eight guild wizards looking around, clearly trying to get a sense of the dimensions of the court.

{"Alright then!"} Mato shouted once again. {"Let's start the event! The first ball will be dropping..."}

Mato's dramatic pause put everyone in the arena on the edges of their seats, anticipating what would happen in the last individual event of this year's Grand Magic Games. And after a few seconds of tense silence, all recording lacrima in the Super Balls court pointed at a particular hole in the ceiling. Then, everyone watched as a yellow ball fell through it.

{"Now~~~~~!"} Mato shouted, his shout lasting until the ball had fallen halfway to the court's floor.

"Electromagnetism Magic: Lightning Enhancement]."

"[Shunko]."

"[Perfume Magic: Fleet-Foot Perfume, Power Perfume]."

"[Iron Rock Wall]."

"[White Drive]."

"[Haste]."

As soon as Mato gave the official starting signal, nearly all the wizards cast spells simultaneously. The only exceptions being Bacchus and Thibault. And the reason for those two abstaining from casting anything was simple. Bacchus knew that no matter what he cast, he would be no match in a test of speed with the likes of Alfonzo and Yoruichi, having worked with them in the past. As for Thibault, he simply did not know any support spells. The only thing he was any good at was imbuing his kanabō with magic power.

Bang! x 3

An instant later, Yoruichi was the first to arrive next to the ball. However, she was surprised to see that Alfonzo was not the next closest. So, she looked around to see where he was, as she did not think there was anyone fast enough to keep up with him. Yet, she quickly understood the situation when she saw several thick rock walls that had sprouted from the floor between Alfonzo's goal and the center point of the court, which caused her to shake her head.

It should be noted that Yoruichi was not shaking her head at the fact that Jura tried to obstruct Alfonzo from reaching the ball. Instead, she was shaking her head at the fact that he thought a trick like that would work in the first place, as by the time she looked in the direction of the [Iron Rock Walls], there were already holes in all of them. Yet, Alfonzo was nowhere to be seen.

'This could be bad.' Yoruichi thought to herself. 'Losing track of someone as powerful as Alfonzo never ends well.'

"[White Dragon's Roar]." Sting Chanted after realizing that even with [White Drive], a spell that increased all his magical and physical parameters, he was still no match for Yoruichi's speed.

Without even looking in the direction of Stings [Dragon Roar], Yoruichi struck the ball with her knee, sending it higher into the air before casually side stepping the attack. Then, as the [Roar] ended, she leapt into the air and kicked the ball in the direction where Sting's attack went flying, which happened to be where Thibault should have been standing... In front of his goal.

Bang!

"The first point is mine." Yoruichi said with a smile as her foot collided with the ball.

And just as expected, when the ball was sent flying towards the Twilight Ogre goal, there was no one defending it. And the reason was easy enough to understand. When Sting's [Roar] missed the ball, it slammed into Thibault, who to his credit, was able to get his weapon up to defend himself.

Unfortunately, the force behind Sting's attack was much more than Thibault could handle. And in the end, he was knocked unconscious when his own weapons slammed into his forehead.

"I don't think so." Alfonzo said as he appeared right behind Yoruichi with his right arm extended over her shoulder. ["Metal Magic: Vibranium Shield]."

Although Alfonzo did not speak it very loudly, because of how close he was to Yoruichi, she could hear the name of his spell. And when she heard it, her eyes opened wide in dumbfounded amazement, as she knew that she was the reason he could even use the metal he called Vibranium, as she had given it to him on his birthday a little more than five years ago.

At the same time, while Yoruichi's eyes widened in surprise, a round metal shield with red and blue concentric circles and a white star in the center appeared in the path of the ball.

{"OH, Wow!"} Loli exclaimed, finally able to catch up to the action after the event started. "Contestant Alfonzo, after being hindered at the start by Contestant Jura, was able to stop what I'm sure many of us was sure to be the first score of this event."}

{"Yes, that was quite impressive."} Yajima added. {"But something seems off about this."}

{"What do you mean, Yajima?"} Loli asked in a curious tone. "Oh, wait! Alfonzo is on the move again!"

And just as Loli said, Alfonzo had disappeared from behind Yoruichi, bringing her out of her daze. Though, many of the people in the audience missed how happily she smiled before she put her game face back on and chased after Alfonzo.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo appeared behind the shield, which the ball was resting against, about to lose to gravity and fall to the floor. However, before that could happen, he grabbed the shield, which, thanks to his [Metal Magic], transformed into a rather large, metallic pool stick.

"Carom, corner pocket." Alfonzo said with a grin.

Then, Alfonzo drew is pool cue back before striking the ball, sending it flying at high speed.

Boom!

For those who forgot, the metal Alfonzo called Vibranium, something native to the Soul Continent that Yoruichi originated from, had the ability to absorb kinetic energy. And with Alfonzo's magic, it is able to expel that absorbed kinetic energy, as well.

So, as a result of adding the already formidable amount of kinetic energy that was absorbed when Yoruichi kicked the ball and the power of Alfonzo's strike, the sound of impact was so loud that some safety protocols built into the recording lacrimas were activated, dulling the sound. Significantly, to not harm the ordinary civilians in the crowd.

At the same time, Yoruichi, who was forced chasing after Alfonzo to regain control of the ball realized she would not make it in time. Then, when she saw the somewhat sinister smile on Alfonzo's face, she wisely decided to get out of the way of Alfonzo's shot at Sabertooth's goal. Though, it would be more accurate to say his shot at Sting, who was standing in front of Sabertooth's goal.

"Bring it on! I'm all fired up!" Sting shouted, pumping himself up for the upcoming confrontation. "White Dragon's Iron Fist]!"

"Hey, he stole my line!" Natsu shouted from Fairy Tail's seating area.

In the next instant, Sting threw his punch forward, his fist meeting the ball with great force.

Bang!

Unfortunately, though Sting's punch would have been more than enough to destroy a large, three-story house with one blow, it was nowhere near enough to cancel the force behind Alfonzo's shot on his goal.

"Gah~~~~~!" Sting shouted an instant after his fist met the ball.

As a result, Sting was sent flying into his goal while the ball ricocheted to Sting's right, thanks to the spin Alfonzo put on the ball when he struck it, towards Final Fantasy's goal.

The majority of the audience was dumbfounded when they saw Sting fly off like that. Yet, Squall, the ace of Final Fantasy remained focused. And thanks to the [Haste] spell he cast at the beginning of the event, he was able to keep up with the speed at which the ball was moving. However, unlike Sting, he knew he was incapable of stopping it head on. So, he had every intention of deflecting it. And if possible, towards one of the two undefended goals.

"[Limit Break: Renzokuken]." Squall chanted as he flared his magic power to its limit... Then, right past it.

With Squall's chant, Squall's magic power became visible to the entire arena for a brief moment while waves of air were pushed outwards with him at their center. Then, he held his gunblade to his right and dashed forward to meet the incoming ball a little further away from his goal.

An instant later, Squall stood just to the right of the ball's path with his gunblade raised, ready to send the ball flying in a different direction. Yet, as he exerted force to swing his gunblade down, his finger resting on the trigger to add some additional striking force, he found that he was completely incapable of moving it, as if it had frozen in the air.

Unfortunately, that also meant that Squall lost the timing to deflect the ball. As a result, it sailed into his goal with no resistance. And as intelligent as Squall was, he understood immediately what caused his

gunblade to be stuck. And when he glanced in the culprit's direction, he was greeted by a wide smile and a thumbs up from Alfonzo.

"Fucking Master of Metals." Squall muttered under his breath.

{"The first point of the event has been scored!"} Loli shouted. {"And Fairy Tail takes an early lead!"}

{"Are you sure, Loli?"} Yajima asked with his eyes opening slightly. {"Although it seems obvious to all of us, Alfonzo was not the last one to touch the ball before it went into Team Final Fantasy's goal."}

{"Ah! Now that you mention it, that's true."} Loli replied while scratching the side of his head, causing his wig to shift with every scratch. {"I guess we'll have to ask the judges for their judgement on this one. Well, what do you say, judges?"}

With Loli bringing the judges into this ruling, the event came to a temporary stop, giving both Sting and Thibault the opportunity to regain their senses. And when they did, they both ended up glaring at the one who left them unable to continue for a short time. Meaning, Sting was glaring at Alfonzo while Thibault was glaring at Sting.

Meanwhile, Loli and Yajima were discussing the event so far. And although there was not much to see, all of it was rather intense.

{"I'd really like to see what kind of reading the MPF would have been able to get on that shot Contestant Alfonzo took."} Loli said excitedly while watching the replay of the first score on the Lacrima-Vision screen with the rest of the audience.

{"Although it was powerful, I don't think the numbers would be as high as you expect, Loli."} Yajima said while examining the footage with the critical eye of a former Magic Councilman.

{"What makes you say that?"} Loli asked in a curious tone, though he was not the only curious one.

{"This is why."} Yajima said while controlling the video to play from the moment Alfonzo struck the ball with his metal pool stick. "Alright, now slow it down as much as you can. Now look at that, instead of just brute force, Alfonzo added a spin to the ball, which made the ball react differently when it came in contact with Sting's fist. In fact, he looks to be using a high-level technique from that game Sixth Sense Holdings introduced a few years ago."}

{"Now that you mention it..."} Loli said while looking at Alfonzo's form. {"You're right. He even called his shot."}

{"That's right."} Yajima replied with a nod. {"And that spin is what made the ball go towards Final Fantasy's goal."}

{"That part finally makes sense."} Loli said in a tone filled with understanding. {"But that doesn't explain why Contestant Squall did not defend his goal when he was so close to the ball."}

{"*Sigh* Did you forget what Alfonzo Marcus' title is, Loli?"} Yajima asked in an exasperated tone.

{"Of course not."} Loli replied energetically. {"He's the Master of Metals."}

{"And what do you think Squall's weapon is made of?"} Yajima asked as if he were dealing with someone with a learning disability.

{"Metal, probab--- Ooh~~~~~! I get it!"} Loli exclaimed.

"*Sigh* Sometimes I hate this job." Yajima muttered quiet enough that the microphones would not be able to pick it up.

{"Ah! It looks like the judges have made their judgement."} Loli said excitedly, having not heard Yajima's grumbling. {"And the verdict is... The point goes to Team Fairy Tail, as there was clearly no intent from the contestant of Team Sabertooth."}

Cheer~~~~~!

The decision by the judges received a loud round of applause from the audience. Well, not the entirety of the audience, as the members of Sabertooth, with their unfounded confidence felt as if Sting must have knocked the ball towards Squall's goal on purpose.

Luckily, Sting was unable to hear his guild mates. Because despite being brash and arrogant, not even he, in good conscience, could take credit for the way things ended in that exchange.

{"Well, now that the decision has been made, why don't we get back to the Super Balls event?"} Loli asked excitedly. {"And according to the judges, the action will commence again in thirty seconds. So, I hope you're all ready."}

Chapter 690: Grand Magic Games, Day Four; Part 3: I'm Better than I Thought I Was

{"Alright, it looks like all the contestants are ready for the resumption of the game!"} Loli shouted. {"Then, let's go~~~~~!"}

With Loli's shout, the game resumed. However, instead of only one yellow ball, two of them fell into the court from the ceiling. And just like last time, everyone moved to secure points. Needless to say, Alfonzo and Yoruichi, who decided to go for different balls, were the ones to take control of the balls.

Both cloaked in lightning, Alfonzo in violet and Yoruichi in white, the two sent the balls flying in opposite directions. And that led to the absolute bedlam called Super Balls.

"Don't think I'll be caught off guard again!" Thibault shouted as the ball kicked by Yoruichi rocketed towards him at blistering speeds. "I'll show you the true power of Twilight Ogre!"

Bang!

With his shout, Thibault imbued as much of his magic power as he could into his Kanabō as he could. All the while he was standing in position as if he were playing baseball. Then, with perfect timing, he swung the kanabō. However, things did not go as he expected them to.

Instead of sending the ball away, it shot straight upwards. And because of the amount of magic power Yoruichi used combined with Thibault's own magic power, it rose at an extreme speed. Then, it bounced off the ceiling and came back down just as quickly.

*Argh!" Thibault shouted in pain.

Bang!

The reason for Thibault's scream was because the ball, after rebounding off the ceiling, slammed into the top of his head, slamming him face first into the ground. At the same time, because of the angle that it struck Thibault's head, the ball went flying off in a random direction.

"[Iron Rock Fist]." Jura chanted, having given up on trying to stop Alfonzo's movement, instead trying to capitalize on the ricochet.

Bang!

In the next moment, a rock fist grew from the ground and threw a punch at the ball that rebounded off of Thibault's head. However, before it could even strike the ball, it was lifted from its course before the ball was struck by another.

Moving like a flowing stream, Bacchus moved across the court gracefully. Then, just before Jura's [Iron Rock Fist] could strike the ball, he placed his left palm against the underside of the rock fist's thumb. Finally, he pushed upwards, redirecting the force.

"[Palm Magic: Whirlwind]." Bacchus chanted as he struck the ball with his palm while putting a spin at the end of his strike.

Bang!

The ball was then sent back towards Twilight Ogre's undefended goal with some added spin to it.

"No way you're taking advantage of my hard work like that!" Yoruichi shouted as she appeared above the ball with her right leg raised high into the air.

"Shit!" Bacchus shouted as Yoruichi lowered her foot with great force.

Bang!

A moment later, the ball was slammed into the ground. However, thanks to the spin Bacchus put on the ball, it did not shoot straight up like one would expect. Instead, it went flying off in the direction of Quatro Cerberus' goal. And unfortunately for Bacchus, there was no one there to defend it.

{And the second score goes to Team Mermaid Heel!"} Loli shouted excitedly, which led to another round of cheering from the audience.

{"And look at that, now two yellow balls and a green one have fallen from the ceiling."} Yajima added.
{"Meaning, with the ball from the last time, there are five points worth of balls on the court. Never mind, there are only four for the time being."}

The reason for Yajima retracting his statement so quickly was because Alfonzo, after tormenting Sting for a while by causing the ball to be rebounded towards him with different [Metal Magic] constructs whenever he defended his goal, decided to get his lead back after Yoruichi scored. So, he simply used his speed to completely overwhelm Sting before shooting the ball into Sting's goal.

{And that's another point for Team Fairy Tail!."} Loli shouted.

{"And there are more balls falling from the ceiling again."} Yajima added once again. {"This time, there are three yellow balls and a green one. This is going to be one hectic game after a while, isn't it?"}

{"Yes, it is, Yajima!"} Loli replied enthusiastically. {"And it's sure going to be fun to watch. I'm really looking forward to it."}

And every time one of the competing wizards scored a point, the number of balls, as well as the value of the balls would increase. AS a result, there were dozens of multi-colored balls flying around at any time after only five or six minutes. And with those balls, spells, flashes of lights, and bodies flew around the court, as well.

By the time the game was over, nearly all of the wizards had bruises from being hit by balls, spells, or a combination of the two. The exceptions were Alfonzo and Yoruichi, who were simply too fast for anyone to hit. And those who left the court the worst off were Sting and Thibault. Surprisingly, however, Thibault had fewer bruises than Sting.

But that was a bit misleading, because Thibault was not conscious by the time the game ended. On top of that, Alfonzo targeted Sting almost exclusively. At least, every time he struck a ball for the first time, he sent it in Sting's direction. And every time Sting would deflect it with a punch, a kick, or a spell of some kind, a shield would materialize and send the ball back at Sting faster than he could react.

Buzz~~~~~!

{"Ladies and gentlemen, that's the end."} Loli shouted as his wig flew off of his head due to his excitement. {"and I gotta say, that was one of the most action-packed, high-intensity events in Grand Magic Games history. What do you think, Yajima?"}

{"I have to agree."} Yajima replied with a nod. {"And it's rare to see so many spells used in such a small area in such a short period of time. It was truly a sight to be seen."}

{"Yes!"} Loli shouted excitedly.

Meanwhile, as the commentators continued to talk about the event that just ended, the audience was just as excited. Well, most of the audience was just as excited. However, there was one portion of the audience that was not very happy. And needless to say, that was where the members of Sabertooth sat.

Seeing the way that Alfonzo targeted Sting over and over, they were furious. To make things even worse, because of how relentless Alfonzo was, Sting did not score even once, putting him on the same level as Thibault in this game. However, because of Alfonzo's efforts, Sting ended up with an even lower score than Thibault thanks to all the times Alfonzo targeted his goal as well.

Thibault, on the other hand, although he also had a negative score, as well, the other five wizards defended his goal for him many times, as they all realized that he was not strong enough to do it himself in most cases. As a result, the goals were spread out pretty evenly among the rest of the teams.

In fact, the only one who did not have the goal scored upon them was Alfonzo, who kept the entire court in his [Magic Power Detection]. Meaning, every time a ball approached his goal, a Vibranium shield would appear in front of it and send it in another direction. And if the force behind it was strong enough, it would go flying towards Sting to add even more pressure, not that he needed it.

{"Now, let's take a look at the scores for the event."} Loli said once he and Yajima were done discussing some of the more interesting points of the event.

And with that, the scores showed up on the Lacrima-Vision screens. And they went a little something like this.

{Super Balls Event Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

Fairy Tail 158 Pts. Mermaid Heel 97 Pts. Lamia Scale 87 Pts. Quatro Cerberus 87 Pts. Blue Pegasus 78 Pts. Final Fantasy 75 Pts. Twilight Ogre 0 Pts. Sabertooth -100 Pts.}

"Well damn... I guess I'm better than I thought I was." Alfonzo said with a laugh while leaving the arena and looking at the screens showing the score for the event. He then jumped into the stands without even looking at Sting.

Meanwhile, Sting finally understood the difference between him and Alfonzo. Unfortunately, that would not save him from the punishment he was sure to receive for losing in today's event.

"What kind of crap is this?" Sting muttered while making his way back to his seating area. "He's gonna punish me for not being able to do something he couldn't do either. This is so unfair."

{"I wanna say this was unexpected."} Yajima said while shaking his head. {"But after hearing Alfonzo's declaration at the after his battle with Sabertooth's Orga Nanagear, I could not see this ending any other way."}

{"Well, this should definitely shake up the overall scoreboard."} Loli added. {"As a matter of fact, why don't we take a look at that right now?"}

{Overall Scoreboard

Rank Team Score

Fairy Tail 68 Pts. Mermaid Heel 55 Pts. Sabertooth 36 Pts. Final Fantasy 30 Pts. Quattro Cerberus 28 Pts. Blue Pegasus 27 Pts. Lamia Scale 13 Pts. Twilight Ogre 1 Pts.}

{"Now, it's time to move on to the final Battle Round of the x790 Magic Games."} Loli said with a smile. {"And since I just got the envelope with the day's matchups, let's get right to it! First up, Anko Mitarashi of Mermaid Heel versus Rogue Cheney of Sabertooth."}

"If you lose, be ready for severe punishment, Rogue!" Jiemma shouted from his seat in the stands.

Hearing that, Rogue's expression hardened as he jumped down into the arena. Meanwhile, Anko shook her head before doing the same. And when the match started, though it was interesting and rather flashy with Rogue controlling shadows and Anko using fire and snakes. In the end, the match was called a draw because neither wizard was able to land a hit on the other, thanks to Rogue's intangibility and Anko's [Substitution Jutsu]. As a result, both teams received 5 Points. But that did not seem to be good enough for Jiemma.

The next match was between Sherry Blendy from Lamia Scale and another random guy from Twilight Ogre. And unfortunately, by the end of this match, Twilight Ogre had fallen back into their habit of not scoring any points, as Sherry took the victory when she used her [doll Attack Magic] to create a [Rock Doll] that had no issue pummeling her opponent into unconsciousness.

After that was a match between Vivi Ornitier of Final Fantasy and Sorano Agria of Blue Pegasus. Unfortunately, this match did not go in Final Fantasy's favor, despite having just climbed up to fourth place. Sorano was just too much for Vivi to handle. In fact, she did not even use her signature magic, [Angel Magic], to defeat him. Instead, she only used her hand-to-hand combat skills to deal with him. Because for all intents and purposes, Vivi was only a glass cannon with extreme firepower.

{"And the last match of the day will be between..."} Loli read, pausing for dramatic effect. {"Ikkaku Madarame of Quatro Cerberus...”}

"Yes~~~~~!" Ikkaku shouted as he instantly started doing his happy dance.

{"... and Sun Seto of Fairy Tail."} Loli continued without minding Ikkaku's exclamation.

"It's your turn, Sun." Alfonzo said with a smile while combing his fingers through Sun's hair. "Go have fun. Ikkaku is gonna make things as hard as possible for you out there."

"Okay!" Sun said excitedly in response.

"Just look out for his Shikai." Elicia added. "I won't tell you what it does exactly, but it can be tricky if you're not careful."

"Oh... I remember that one." Marin said with a nod. "Yeah, it can be tricky. But it's not that bad."

"Okay, I'll be careful." Sun replied happily. "I'll see you when I get back."

Then, without waiting for anyone to say another word, Sun picked up Kanade and jumped into the arena where Ikkaku was already waiting and dancing around on the tips of his toes.

"You know, ever since I saw you fight on the first day, I was hoping I would get a chance to fight you." Ikkaku said as he brought his happy dance to an end. "So, I must really be lucky to get this opportunity."

"But you know we could have fought in a couple days during the last event, right?" Sun asked while tilting her head cutely.

"And that would have been good, too." Ikkaku replied. "But there's always a chance that someone could interrupt us while we're fighting in that event. But this..."

Reaching that, Ikkaku raised his arms and spread them wide while spinning around.

"... this has no chance of being interrupted." Ikkaku said with a happy, child-like smile on his face.
"Meaning, today, our wonderful duel won't be interrupted by anything."

"Unless we reach the time limit." Sun added, trying to be helpful.

Unfortunately, that only caused Ikkaku to lower his arms and slump his shoulders.

"*Sigh* That's right." Ikkaku replied in a disappointed tone. "There's that."

"Well, don't worry." Sun continued in a cheerful tone. "I didn't intend to let the match go on that long, anyway. So, are you ready to fight?"

Hearing Sun's declaration, Ikkaku raised his head and saw her take an iaido stance. At the same time, his disappointed expression also disappeared as he smiled happily once again before drawing his Zanpakuto, Hōzukimaru, and taking his fighting stance.

{"Well, it looks like both contestants are ready."} Loli said excitedly. {"Then, whenever you're ready, you can... Begin!"}