

Fairy Tail 80

Chapter 80: The Difference Between Confidence and Arrogance

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Akane Beach.

January, x781.

Two days have passed since the battle with the Leviathan. Just as planned, its corpse was hauled back to the shore. Unfortunately, Alfonzo was not conscious to see it. Therefore, he was unable to magnetize the body so it could be towed easily. Instead, Elicia, though she was also running low on magic power, used her threads to pull it back.

Luckily, Alfonzo was saved from drowning by an unexpected savior, Sun Seto. However, when she surfaced with the unconscious Alfonzo, Elicia and Erza, who had both started shedding tears with Erza holding Elicia back from jumping into the sea, were able to see the same thing Alfonzo did before he lost consciousness.

Sun... had a fish tail.

After seeing Sun's secret, Elicia and Erza were immediately surrounded by the entire crew of the flagship. And considering how much magic power they had used up in the battle, they had no illusions that they would win if they were attacked.

Luckily, Sun made it clear that no one was to attack. And although they were loyal to Gozaburo, Sun, as his daughter did have some clout among their ranks.

With that taken care of, Sun, while carrying Alfonzo, boarded the flag ship and ordered the ship's doctor to tend to Alfonzo's wounds. At the same time, to Stop Fujishiro from trying to eat the three Fairy Tail wizards, Masa sent him back to the pier by himself to report to Gozaburo.

About an hour and a half later, the trip taking longer due to the extra weight, the fleet arrived at the pier where Gozaburo, Ren, and the rest of the Seto Group were waiting for them. While Gozaburo wanted to kill Alfonzo, Elicia, and Erza for learning their secret, Ren put a stop to that with a cold glare.

In the end, they were brought back to the Seto Group HQ and confined to a room in the medical wing. With Sun's insistence and Ren's support, it was one of the more luxurious ones. It even had a couple of extra beds for the people who would accompany the patient.

"Hey, Erza.." Elicia said in a depressed tone while sitting next to Alfonzo's bed and holding his remaining right hand.

"Yes?" Erza asked in an equally depressed tone from her seat on the other side of Alfonzo's bed.

"Thanks for stopping me from jumping in after Fonzie." Elicia said, her eyes glued to Alfonzo's face. "If I had, things would probably be even worse than they are now."

"Think nothing of it." Erza said, gently shaking her head. "If I had not seen you panic, I probably would have tried jumping in after him myself."

"I guess I panicked enough for the both of us." Elicia said with a sad smile. "So, you were able to stay calm."

"So it would seem." Erza replied.

"You know, I had a bad feeling about this quest from the moment I found out that the Seto Group was the requester." Elicia said, maintaining her sad smile.

"What do you mean?" Erza asked, curiosity replacing a bit of her depression.

"After hearing about them, I thought it would be much worse than we thought." Elicia continued. "I mean, they are a sea trading group, right? That means they should have some strong guards, especially on the open seas."

"One would think so." Erza said with a nod.

"Yet, they commissioned an S-Class quest." Elicia said, squeezing Alfonzo's hand a bit tighter. "That should have been a red flag. But Fonzie treated it like nothing was wrong. He let his pride get the better of him."

Instead of responding this time, Erza simply listened. However, with Elicia's eyes focused on Alfonzo, she missed the moment when Erza narrowed her eyes.

"A long time ago, he wouldn't listen to anyone." Elicia continued. "He thought he could do anything. And since he had never failed at anything he wanted to do, it got to his head. It stopped when he lost his vision, though."

Although Erza did not like the direction Elicia was going, she listened with rapt attention. She had never heard anything about Alfonzo beyond a certain point, after all.

"But he got his sight back." Elicia said, hanging her head in sadness. "And ever since that day, he's started to get arrogant again. He doesn't think he'll ever fail. And what did that lead to? This."

Elicia!" Erza shouted, causing Elicia to look up at her in surprise.

Smack!

However, as soon as Elicia raised her head, Erza reached over the bed and slapped her across the face. The slap was so strong that it forced Elicia's head to turn and left a red handprint on her cheek.

Naturally, this completely stunned Elicia. Eventually, as her mind rebooted, she slowly turned her head to look at Erza with the question, "Why?" in her eyes.

However, when she saw Erza's expression, and expression filled with anger, she froze.

"Erza? What's wrong?" Elicia asked after a few moments.

"You may have known him the longest, but that gives you no right to say something like that about him." Erza said with righteous anger. "Arrogant? Just what about what he did was arrogant? You say he never listens to anyone? When has that ever happened? You never even said anything to him."

"That's because I knew he wouldn't listen!" Elicia shouted, tears flowing from her eyes. "He never did back then! I always tried to tell him when something was a bad idea but---"

"Elicia!" Erza shouted once again, stopping Elicia's explanation. "That's the problem, you are no longer living in that time. You are in the present, the here and now."

In response to Erza's words filled with righteous fury, Elicia could only lower her head.

"Yes, Alfonzo is proud of his accomplishments. And he has no issue letting anyone who cares to listen know that. But why shouldn't he?" Erza asked. "He trains harder than anyone I've ever met. Gildarts and Master Goldstein make sure of that. But he never complained. Everything he has accomplished, he has earned with blood, sweat, and tears."

Elicia lowered her head even lower. She wanted to retort, but she could not find the words to do so.

"And as far as not listening to anyone goes..." Erza continued. "That is simply your fear of the past. He takes advice from everyone around him. He has accepted the aid of many. Not to mention, he gives in to your whims... All the time."

That last statement caused Elicia to jerk her head up and stare at Erza with shock.

"It would seem you never noticed." Erza said while shaking her head in disappointment. "Every time you ask for something, anything, Alfonzo agrees immediately. And when he does so, guilt flashes in his eyes. Undoubtedly, he feels guilty about the way he acted in the past. There's a difference between confidence and arrogance. And I think you need to understand that."

With that, Elicia began to think back. Not only to the day she and Alfonzo awakened in Earth Land, but even further back. In her mind, she replayed every interaction with Alfonzo that she could remember since he lost his sight in their first life.. And she was horrified to see that Erza was right. Alfonzo gave into her every reasonable demand and whim with guilt in his eyes. But if something she wanted was overboard or foolish, he would put his foot down. No doubt, that was for her well-being.

At that realization, Elicia realized that Alfonzo had changed, for the better. Sure, he was still proud. But he had managed to rebuilt his life from its lowest point. He had the right to be proud. He never neglected her. He even went out of his way to accommodate her. And although Elicia thought he swore too much, she knew that no one was perfect.

With that, Elicia broke down completely. Like Erza said, she was still stuck in the past. She was holding Alfonzo to the standards he had when he was a successful teenager going through puberty, not realizing that he had grown up. And that thought caused her to break down.

Crying loudly, Elicia flung herself on Alfonzo's chest and hugged him tightly.

"Fonzie! I'm so~~~~ sorry." Elicia said through her tears.

Erza, having finally calmed down from her anger, looked at Elicia with a small smile on her face. Although she felt guilty for slapping her friend, seeing Elicia's self-reflection alleviated that feeling by quite a bit. Still, she planned to make it up to her in the future.

Meanwhile, standing outside the medical room's door, Gozaburo, Ren, with Sun in her arms, Masa, and ten elite members of the Seto group had all heard the entire conversation.

"That was so beautiful." Sun said quietly, crying in her mother's embrace.

"Miss Sun is right." The ten elite members of the Seto Group said in unison.

"That girl's words were quite impactful." Masa said, looking up at the ceiling. "Man, I think I got some dust in my eyes."

"Yeah, if she were one of us, I would recruit her into the Seto Group." Gozaburo added.

"And you used to say there were no good humans in the world." Ren replied.

Back in the medical room, Elicia was squeezing Alfonzo, forgetting that he was injured due to the guilt she was feeling.

"You know, I wish I had told you I was awake earlier." Alfonzo said in a raspy voice. "Lici, I'm really glad that you're hugging me... But this really fucking hurts."

Upon hearing Alfonzo's voice, both Elicia and Erza froze. Then, Elicia released her hug and pulled back so she could see Alfonzo's face. Meanwhile, Erza stared at him without blinking. Then, after they both took a good, long look at him, as if they had planned it in advance, they simultaneously lunged at him and wrapped him in a hug.

"Argh~~~~~!" Alfonzo screamed at the top of his lungs. "God damn it, Erza! You're on my left side! Stop hugging me so fucking tight. And take off your fucking chest plate!"

Alfonzo's loud, expletive-filled exclamation startled not only Elicia and Erza, but even the Seto family and their men outside the room. An instant later, both Elicia and Erza, who [Requipped] out of her armor, jumped back, giving Alfonzo some space.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm Sorry!" Erza said, apologizing repeatedly with her head lowered. "Please forgive me."

"Sorry Fonzie..." Elicia said, gently grasping his hand. "We were just happy that you finally woke up."

"I'm not mad. And there's no need to apologize." Alfonzo said with a grimace. "But that really hurt like a bitch. Just be more careful, alright?"

"I understand." Erza replied in a serious tone.

"So, how are you feeling, Fonzie?" Elicia asked, holding his hand tenderly.

"Well, other than being in pain, I'm hungry as hell." Alfonzo replied. "How long have I been out?"

At that moment, the door to the medical room opened. And through the open door, everyone who had been eavesdropping on the conversation walked in. While Gozaburo, Ren, and Sun stood at the foot of the bed and looked at Alfonzo, Elicia, and Erza, Masa led the ten elites to surround the bed with Masa standing just behind Gozaburo.

"You've been out for two days, Brat." Gozaburo said with a sheathed katana in his hand.

Seeing the formation the members of the Seto Group took upon entering the room, Erza [Requipped] back into her armor. Alfonzo and Elicia, on the other hand, remained calm. They already had a good idea where this conversation would go.

"I'm guessing you didn't bring all these people here to tell me that, right?" Alfonzo asked calmly. Though his voice was still a bit hoarse.

"That's right." Gozaburo replied with a nod. "First of all, I came to thank you for completing our request. With that serpent---""

"That wasn't just a sea serpent, that was a fucking Leviathan." Alfonzo interrupted.

"Right, Masa mentioned that." Gozaburo said, nodding once again. "We'll throw in a bonus for that and make sure it gets to your guild. WE had no intention of giving bad intel. Anyway, Thanks for making it so my men can do their jobs safely."

"Don't worry about it." Alfonzo replied. "That's what we do. But you said that was the first reason. So, what's the next one?"

"Well, the second reason is a bit regrettable." Gozaburo replied. "Unfortunately, you saw Sun's true form, ya see. And according to merfolk law, either you or the one you saw, Sun, must be killed to keep the secret."

As Gozaburo spoke, he raised the katana, holding it by its sheath, to his chest. Then, he turned it horizontally. A moment later, he placed his free hand on its hilt.

"And there's no way that I will allow my precious daughter to die." Gozaburo said, starting to pull on the hilt of his sword. "So, for my daughter's sake, you'll have to--- Huh? Why the hell can't I pull this thing out?"

While he was speaking,, Gozaburo had been trying to unsheathe his katana. However, no matter how much force he put into it, he could not draw the sword from its sheath.

Naturally, this was Alfonzo's doing. Using his [Metal Magic], he simply controlled the sword to stay in place. Even when Gozaburo tried pulling the sheath off the blade, Alfonzo made the sword follow the sheath, resulting in the same outcome.

Seeing Gozaburo struggle, Masa and the other elites of the Seto group also tried to draw their own weapons. Unfortunately, they were all made of metal. So, they faced an outcome similar to their boss.

Smack!

"Knock it off already!" Ren shouted as she smacked Gozaburo upside the head.

"Yeah!" Sun shouted as well. "I saved him so he wouldn't have to die!"

"But Sun, that means you---" Gozaburo said with tears in his eyes.

"Oh, don't play dumb." Ren said, rolling her eyes at Gozaburo's pitiful act. "We all know there is another way. A way where no one has to die."

'So, it's the same here too, huh?' Alfonzo and Elicia thought simultaneously.

"All you have to do is..." Ren began to say.

"No! Don't tell him!" Gozaburo said, trying to interrupt his wife.

"... marry Sun." Ren continued, ignoring Gozaburo. "That rule about keeping our true form a secret doesn't apply to family."

"Alfonzo, please take me as your bride!" Sun Shouted while bowing her head politely.

At that moment, Gozaburo's eyes glazed over. Then, he began foaming at the mouth and swaying unsteadily.

"So, what do ya say, Handsome?" Ren asked with a smile.