

Fairy Tail 831

Chapter 831: The Phantom Troupe Has Their Own Elicia... Just, You Know... A Lot More Murder-Happy

"This should be it." Alfonzo said to himself while looking down at the address displayed on his iPhone. "*sigh* If I could get a satellite or two up in the air, I could add GPS to the list of iPhone apps. But like computers, I just can't seem to get the shit to work."

Shaking off the thoughts of his many failures, Alfonzo put his iPhone away and stepped up to the front door of the inn where he was set to meet with the quest's client, Kurapika.

"Hmm... I don't like the vibe in this place." Alfonzo muttered to himself while looking around the inn's lobby. "Kinda feels like I'm being watched. But nothing is showing up with [Magic Power Detection]."

Though the inn itself was nothing special, Alfonzo could not shake the feeling that he was being watched. And because of that, he could not let his guard down. As a result, he used his [Electromagnetism Magic] to cycle through several different EM wavelengths to get a better feel of the building, its layout, and all the people inside.

And just as he expected, there was more to the building than could be seen at first glance.

'What the hell?' Alfonzo asked himself while [Archiving] the building's layout. 'Was this place built by a clan of fucking ninjas? There are more hidden rooms in this little inn than should be possible.'

Though Alfonzo called them hidden rooms, they were more like crawl spaces used for surveillance. Even so, Alfonzo did his best not to show his surprise in his expression as he stepped up to the front desk.

"Good afternoon, Sir." A pretty young woman with an olive skin tone, green eyes, and wavy black hair said with a professional smile as Alfonzo approached. "Would you like to book a room for the evening?"

"Nah, I'm here to meet someone." Alfonzo replied casually. He then leaned on the desk with a smile on his face as he continued. "There's a guy staying here. His name is Kurapika. Can you tell me his room number?"

When Alfonzo leaned forward, he noticed that the woman flinched ever so slightly. At the same time, he saw that her right hand dropped down to her thigh, resting a little higher than what would be natural had her hand just hung loosely.

'There's definitely more to this inn than meets the eye.' Alfonzo thought to himself while not changing his expression. 'This woman isn't a wizard. But she's carrying several weapons. They're all hidden pretty well, too. In fact, if it wasn't for my [Metal Magic], I wouldn't have noticed them, either.'

While Alfonzo was thinking, the woman, with her hand resting atop the hilt of a concealed dagger, did not show that she was wary of him at all. However, when she realized that Alfonzo did not intend to do anything, she relaxed slightly. Though, she did not move her hand away from the dagger.

The woman was not the only one who tensed at Alfonzo's movement. All the people who had been watching Alfonzo since he neared the inn tensed, as well. But just like the women behind the desk, they did not make any hostile moves, either.

"Oh, is someone looking for me?" A male voice, sounding as if its owner was only in his mid-teens, said, breaking the tense atmosphere.

At the sound of the voice, both Alfonzo and the woman turned to look in the voice's direction. When they did, their eyes fell on a young man standing at about 5'7": tall with medium-length blond hair and dark grey eyes wearing a blue tabard with red hems over a white training outfit and black Chinese-style flats stepping through the inn's front doors.

At the same time, the young man, Kurapika's eyes fell on the two at the front desk. When he saw Alfonzo, he noticed Alfonzo slightly raising his shirt, revealing the Fairy Tail emblem on the right side of his lower abdomen. He immediately understood why Alfonzo mentioned his name. And that caused his eyes to glow in an intense scarlet red color for a moment.

"Ah! I've been waiting for you." Kurapika said calmly. He then nodded to the woman manning the front desk and continued. "Don't worry, Amelia. He's a guest of mine from out of town."

Receiving a nod from the woman at the front desk, Amelia, Kurapika gestured for Alfonzo to follow him as he started walking through the inn's main hall and making his way towards the stairs.

Alfonzo, on the other hand, nodded at Amelia with a smile before turning to follow Kurapika. Though, he did notice that she did not lower her guard by much after Kurapika's reassurance.

'Hmm... I guess they don't like wizards too much here.' Alfonzo thought to himself while ignoring all the gazes on him. 'Well, I don't blame them. I mean, even though wizards aren't so bad in Fiore, there are a lot of them all over the continent that think they are superior to civilians.'

Alfonzo then turned his attention back to Kurapika, who was just reaching the top of the stairs.

'And his eyes flickered red when he noticed my guild mark.' Alfonzo continued thinking to himself. 'The question is, why can't I sense any magic power from him? Doesn't Aura translate to magic power in this world?'

As that thought ran through his head, Alfonzo focused his [Magic Power Detection] more closely, making sure that he did not miss anything. A moment later, after checking Kurapika's magic power more precisely, he noticed that he did, in fact, miss something.

'Damn... He's got a lot of magic power, actually.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'But it's not awakened yet. But that's weird. With something as traumatic as losing his whole clan, it should have awakened on its own.'

"Please, come in." Kurapika said while holding the door to a room open. "We can talk inside."

While Alfonzo was lost in his thoughts, Kurapika had reached his room. Then, with a nod, Alfonzo stepped inside with Kurapika following behind him and closing the door behind them.

Entering the room, Alfonzo saw that it was a standard inn room containing a double bed, a small table with a pair of chairs on either side, a small, two person couch, and a wooden wardrobe for the guests to store their clothing.

Once inside, before doing anything, Alfonzo produced the quest sheet and held it out to Kurapika.

"There's no need for that." Kurapika said while shaking his head lightly. "As soon as I saw your guild emblem, I knew exactly who you were. The leader of the Grand Magic Games championship team and one of the Ten Wizard Saints, Alfonzo Marcus. Otherwise known as the Master of Metal."

"Yeah, that's me." Alfonzo replied with a shrug before putting the quest sheet away.

"I don't mean to doubt you, Mr. Marcus." Kurapika said after taking a seat at the table. "But you didn't come alone to complete this quest, did you?"

"No, I brought nine more." Alfonzo said with a shrug as he took a seat cross from Kurapika. "All S-Classes. Though, if I went all out, this quest wouldn't be much of a challenge. Oh, yeah. There's one more on teh way. But he travelled separte from the rest of us."

Though he did not show it, Kurapika was skeptical about what Alfonzo said. In fact, he even thought that a total of eleven S-Class wizards were not enough to complete such a quest. But it was none of his business if Alfonzo got his group killed by being over confident. He had a plan to get his revenge if they failed anyway.

However, if Kurapika had any idea just how strong Alfonzo and the other ten were when they released their [soul Armaments], his thoughts would be completely different. But since he was only a civilian at the moment, even though he had heard about their feats in the Grand Magic Games, Kurapika had no way of knowing just how strong the wizards of Fairy Tail were.

"Anyway..." Alfonzo said, noticing that Kurapika was unconvinced. "In the request, it said that the exchange for the Curta Clan's eyes would take place in two days."

"That's right." Kurapika replied in a cool tone.

"Any idea where?' Alfonzo asked as he leaned back in his chair. "Also, are you sure your source is trustworthy?"

In response, Kurapika did not show any dissatisfaction that his intel was being doubted. Instead, he shook his head lightly.

"To be honest, I'm not." Kurapika replied. "Getting the information was far too easy. There's a good chance that it could be a trap. But..."

"But?" Alfonzo asked curiously with one eyebrow raised.

"There is some other information that make me think the lead is true." Kurapika said. A moment later, he continued after Alfonzo gestured for him to go on. "I got information that a certain minister of this country was the one who hired the Spiders for the job."

As he mentioned the Phantom Troupe's nickname, Kurapika's eyes once again glowed red. However, the red color did not fade like it had back in the main hall.

"And doo you have a name for this minister?" Alfonzo asked as his eyes narrowed while remembering a certain minister who defected from Fiore a few years ago.

"It's exactly who you're thinking it is." Kurapika replied, his tone filled with bloodlust. "All the evidence points to the Minister of State, Zash Caine."

"I see." Alfonzo said with a grin on his face. "Looks like we'll get two rewards when we're done with this quest."

Once again, Kurapika felt that Alfonzo was being over confident. However, this time, he could not keep it to himself, as he shook his head in slight disappointment at Alfonzo's declaration. Even so, Alfonzo decided to ignore him completely. He had a few calls to make to the Fiore Royal Family, after all.

"Well, we'll handle recon." Alfonzo said as he stood up from his chair. "You just wait for the good news. You should hear from us the day after the supposed exchange. If your intel was correct, that is. If not, there's not really anything we can do about it."

"I understand." Kurapika replied calmly. "Well then, I hope that it was. But even if it wasn't, I'll find a way to get my own revenge."

Instead of replying, Alfonzo simply turned towards the door and made his way out of the room before heading back to his hotel.

Meanwhile, Elicia was walking around the city looking at all the clothing stores she came across. However, that was only a front for her actual operation. While looking to be simply enjoying herself, Elicia's [Magic Power Detection] was spread to its limit. On top of that, she was using [Thread Detection] to track things that she could not sense with [Magic Power Detection]

And thanks to her magic power control, Elicia's threads were so thin that they were invisible to the naked eye. Thanks to that, she could spread them throughout the entire city without anyone being the wiser. She could even pick up conversations if the person speaking was close enough to the threads to make them vibrate.

Even so, Elicia had yet to pick up anything about the Phantom Troupe, whether it be strong magic power signatures or snippets of conversations.

That did not seem to bother her too much, though.

"Ooh!" Elicia squealed as she ran up to a store front and looked at a dress in the window. "That is so~ cute!"

'Someone cut my threads.' Elicia thought to herself while continuing to outwardly gush over the dresses in the window. 'But I don't sense anyone with [MPD]. Looks like there's someone with stealth moving around the city.'

["You're not going to check it out?"] Scylla asked curiously. ["Usually, you would run in without a plan."]

'If we were facing anyone other than the Phantom Troupe, I would.' Elicia replied internally. 'But I have a pretty good idea of who did it. And she's kind of a murder machine. Plus, her magic should be similar to mine.'

["So, you think it's her?"] Scylla asked. ["Yeah, she would probably be a good match for you if you don't use me. But if you unseal me, she shouldn't even be a warm up."]

'I know that.' Elicia replied. 'But it's not the fight that I'm worried about. Instead, I'm worried about falling into a trap. Or even worse, being spotted. Because I have no doubt that they would recognize me.'

["I see."] Scylla replied, sounding a bit shocked. ["If you get caught, your [Camouflage Magic] won't mean anything."]

'Exactly.' Elicia said.

["Still, I can't believe you're actually thinking before saying or doing something."] Scylla muttered in a disbelieving tone. ["Kinda feels like I'm gonna see three suns rising from the north tomorrow morning."]

Elicia's excited expression immediately turned into a pout. Meanwhile, Scylla's laughter echoed throughout Elicia's inner world.

At the same time, a short, blue-eyed young woman with messy, mid-back-length pink hair wearing a short sleeved, white uwagi, a black obi, tight black shorts, fingerless black gloves, with a pin cushion strapped to the back of her left hand, white tabi, and pink leg warmers around her lower legs was inspecting the almost invisible threads she just severed with her own [Thread Magic]. Yet, before she could start tracing them to their source, the threads were dispelled.

"Someone is keeping tabs on the city." The young woman said in a nearly emotionless tone. "I don't have any proof, but they are more than likely looking for the Troupe. I should report this to the leader."

With that, the young woman shot threads toward the nearest rooftop before bounding up the side of the building and dashing towards the outskirts of the city to report what she found to the rest of the Troupe.

Chapter 832: The Last Member of the Team Arrives in Altair

"Damn that kid." Gildarts grumbled while walking through Stella's countryside. "I can't believe he made me find my own way to Stella. He even made me leave a week earlier than the rest."

Just like Ur suggested the day Alfonzo was cleared to return to wizarding work, Alfonzo included Gildarts in the group that would be taking the quest. However, because of the destructive quality of Gildarts' magic power, he refused to let him ride in his magic vehicle. And that went for Ur and Evergreen, as well.

On a side note, Alfonzo, Elicia, and Cana found the look on Gildarts' face when Ur refused to let him ride with her priceless.

As a result, Gildarts was forced to find his own way to Altair. However, thanks to his reputation, Gildarts was not allowed on the trains in Fiore. So, he had to walk to a border town in Bosco so that he could catch the train.

Yet, when he arrived in the town, he found that his reputation for destroying everything he came in contact with had spread further than just Fiore's borders. As a result, he was forced to cross Bosco on foot, as well. Then, by the time he reached Stella's border, he completely gave up on trying to take the train, walking the rest of the way, as well.

"I don't understand why they had to drive in the first place." Gildarts continued to grumble. "Wouldn't taking the Blackbird or the Fairy's Tail be faster, anyway? So, what if those little thieves noticed us? It's not like they could do anything once we found them."

Bang!

Reaching that pint, Gildarts kicked a stone on the side of the road. And thanks to his [Crash Magic], it was separated into many smaller pieces on impact. As a result, the small pieces of stone flew through the air like buckshot before peppering the side of a boulder half a mile away.

"Damn it!" Gildarts shouted as the rock in the distance collapsed into rubble.

Sneeze!

Meanwhile, Alfonzo, while heading back to the hotel, sneezed out of nowhere.

"Hmm..." Alfonzo hummed while wiping his nose with a handkerchief. "I bet that old man is talking shit about me. Hmph! It's not my fault he can't control his magic power to not destroy everything he touches. And I know he doesn't want me to kick his ass if he destroys my car. Especially not in front of Cana."

Before Alfonzo could continue his rant, however, he snapped his head up towards the roof of a nearby building. When he did, he did not see anything. However, because of his [Magic Power Detection], he sensed something rushing past at high-speed.

"What the hell was that?" Alfonzo asked himself while continuing to track the signature he just picked up. "It's such a weak signature. And that speed doesn't match a signature that small. What's going on?"

Despite having many questions, Alfonzo quickly cast his [Electromagnetism Magic] to both make himself invisible by manipulating the visible light around him and increase his speed before flying after the signature.

"Damn... Whoever this is, they're fast." Alfonzo muttered to himself while following the signal. "On top of that, their concealment is crazy. Maybe on the same level as Lici. The further away they are, the harder it is to sense them."

Reaching that point, Alfonzo grinned.

"Looks like I found a lead." Alfonzo said to himself as he followed the signal, keeping it at the edge of the range he could detect it.

It did not take long for the signal to start moving erratically, however. And when Alfonzo noticed that, he realized that whoever this signal was had noticed that they were being followed.

'Damn... I've suppressed my magic power as much as I can.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'How the hell did they notice me? I mean, I've snuck into Fiore's most heavily guarded prison like this. This has got to be one of the Spiders.'

And Alfonzo was correct. The person he was following was the same pink-haired young woman who detected and cut Elicia's threads. And thanks to her preternatural senses, she felt it when Alfonzo was focused on her. Though, she had no way to tell where he was watching her from.

If she had known, she would have set a trap for him to fall into. That way, she would have been able to identify her pursuer before killing him and reporting to the head of the Spiders, Chrollo Lucifer.

"This is annoying." The pink-haired young woman said while hopping from roof to roof while using her [Stealth Magic]. "It looks like another foolish guild wizard is trying to complete our subjugation request. Not that it matters. As soon as we find out who they are, the leader will probably order their guild's destruction."

Like that, the game of cat and mouse continued. And neither Alfonzo nor the pink-haired young woman was able to gain any ground. Because Alfonzo had no way to track her to her base if she did not go that way. Nor did the pink-haired young woman have the ability to either shake off Alfonzo or lead him into a trap, especially because she had no idea that he was following her through the air rather than on the ground.

'Is this ever going to end?' Alfonzo and the pink-haired young woman thought at the same time.

'If I could just swoop down and capture them, this would be so much easier.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'But if I do that, that will only alert the rest of the Spiders... If she's actually one of them, that is. And if I tried to attach a piece of metal to them, I have no doubt they would notice it immediately. What the hell am I supposed to--- Wait a minute...'

Though it was subtle like the signal he could sense from the pink-haired young woman, after thinking about putting a piece of metal on her, Alfonzo thought he felt the presence of metal. But since it was so faint, he could not be sure.

So, Alfonzo chanced getting a little closer to get a better sense of what he was feeling.

'Those feel like needles.' Alfonzo thought to himself. 'Sewing needles, to be exact. And they're only on the left side of the signature. Hmm... I think I have an idea of who this is. And if I'm right, it makes sense that girl, Machi Komacine, would be able to sense that she was being followed. Well, that doesn't matter anymore. I've got a way to track her without having to follow her, now.'

With that, Alfonzo's magic power flared, uncaring whether the pink-haired young woman, Machi, would be able to feel his presence or not.

"[Electromagnetism Magic: Lightning Enhancement]." Alfonzo chanted before he vanished in a burst of speed.

In the next instant, Alfonzo reappeared next to Machi. However, instead of trying to stop her from escaping, he gently, very gently, touched the needles sticking out of the pin cushion on her left hand. In fact, his touch was so gentle that Machi, even with her heightened senses, was unable to feel any pressure on her arm. He then pushed a miniscule amount of his magic power into each one. Then, just as quickly as he appeared next to her, he vanished once again while suppressing his magic power to the point that Machi could no longer sense it.

At the same time, Machi, sensing a presence just to her left, flung her left arm to the side while casting her [Thread Magic] in an attempt to either bind or cut the presence that appeared next to her. Yet, before her arm even started to move, the presence disappeared, resulting in her threads only cutting through the corner of the building she just leapt from.

"What was that?" Machi asked herself in an emotionless tone as she came to a stop on the next building. "That surge of magic power was so big. It even passed right by me. But now... It's just... gone. What in the world is going on?"

However, Machi did not stay in the same place for long. Like before, she had no way of knowing where the person who had been following her was. But at the same time, she could no longer sense the gaze of the person that had been following her, either.

Even so, Machi still felt like something was off. So, she had no intention of returning to the Phantom Troupe's hideout for now. Because of that, she continued to run circles around Altair for the next several hours, only reluctantly returning to the hideout long after night fell on the city.

Meanwhile, as Machi ran around like a chicken with its head cut off, Alfonzo found an inconspicuous place to dispel his invisibility. Then, he walked out onto Altair's main street as if nothing happened. All the while, he had a smile on his face.

"Now, I just need to keep track of her location." Alfonzo thought to himself as he walked. "It will probably be a while before she meets up with the rest of the Spiders. But we can wait. Plus, I'll have Lici start keeping tabs on Caine tomorrow. If he's supposed to be the buyer for the Curta Clan's eyes, then there's a good chance that if not him, one of his close aids will show up to complete the deal with the Phantom Troupe."

Nodding in satisfaction at the plan he came up with, Alfonzo started humming to himself as he leisurely walked through the streets. However, he was not walking randomly. Instead, he was making his way towards the part of the city where most of the clothing stores could be found.

"Just because we're on a quest, that doesn't mean we can't go on a little date, does it?" Alfonzo asked himself as his smile widened. "I'll make sure to go on dates with Cana Tear, and Sun before we head back to Magnolia, too. I don't need either of them calling me unfair. Plus, Sun's disappointed puppy eyes are dangerous."

It didn't take long for Alfonzo to find Elicia, who was once again gushing over a dress in a store front's window. However, instead of doing so from outside of the store, she was inside the store this time. On top of that, she was inspecting the dress's material by touch while inspecting every stitch.

Ring!

The bell hanging over the shop's door rang as Alfonzo pushed it open and stepped inside.

"No matter where we go, you always need your shopping fix, huh, Lici?" Alfonzo asked in a teasing tone.

"Huh?" Elicia intoned, Alfonzo's voice surprising her as she was completely focused on watching over the web of threads she laid out over the city while also paying close attention to the dress. When she looked up from the dress and saw Alfonzo walking towards her, she smiled brightly. "Fonzie! What are you doing here? Did you already meet with the client?"

"Yeah, I did." Alfonzo replied as his smile widened, as well. "But we can talk about that once we get back to the hotel. For now, I was thinking maybe we could go on a little date."

Now, not only was Elicia's smile wide enough to see from the moon, but her eyes were shining brightly enough to illuminate the moon's dark side, as well. She then skipped away from the dress she was inspecting, deeming it wholly unimportant when compared to the prospect of going on a date with Alfonzo.

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!" Elicia repeatedly called out as she clung to Alfonzo's arm. "Let's go on a date."

Seeing how excited Elicia was, Alfonzo could not help feeling excited, as well. He then led Elicia out of the shop, disappointing the staff, as they were expecting Elicia to buy something. The couple then strolled around the city, enjoying each other's company, before having dinner at a relatively upscale restaurant that did not have a dress code. Then, once they finished their meal, they returned to their hotel to report what they found throughout the day to the rest of the team, minus Gildarts, of course.

Around the same time that Alfonzo and Elicia returned to their hotel, two other things happened near Altair's outskirts.

First, Machi finally returned to the Phantom Troupe's hideout. And the first thing she did was report her encounter with Alfonzo. Though, she had no idea that she had a run in with Alfonzo Marcus of Fairy Tail.

And second, Gildarts finally arrived at the city. However, he was not the only one to arrive at Altair, as he crossed paths with a hulking man standing at 8'6" tall who looked to be four hundred pounds of muscle, at the very least, with an unruly mane of grey hair, sideburns, thick eyebrows, green eyes, and hair on his shoulders, arms, and chest. On top of that, he had a large, twelve-legged spider tattooed on his lower back with the number "11" written on its body.

"*Whistle* That guy must have grew up eating well." Gildarts said when he saw the large man.

Despite Gildarts' laid-back attitude, the large man reacted in a completely opposite manner, as he showed hostility as soon as he turned around and laid his eyes on Gildarts.

"The leader said no one was supposed to see us." The large man said as his expression widened into a bloodthirsty smile. "But you saw me. And that's not good. Unfortunately, that means you're going to have to die tonight, Old Man."

"*Sigh* Of course..." Gildarts muttered to himself after hearing what the large man had to say. He then looked into the man's eyes and continued at a normal volume. "Look, Kid, I walked all the way here from Fiore. So, I'm really tired. I'm really not in the mood for this shit. So, let's just pretend we didn't meet each other, alright?"

"Oh, if you're so tired, I can help you get to sleep, Old Man." The large man said as his smile widened. "Of course, when I'm done, you'll never wake up again, though."

"*Sigh* No one can say I didn't try..." Gildarts muttered while shaking his head. "I just hope this doesn't mess up whatever plans they've come up with."

With that, Gildarts threw his bag to the side, making sure his luggage would not get caught up in the coming fight. He then started walking towards the large man with a grumpy expression on his face.

"I just wanted to get some sleep before dealing with all this shit." Gildarts continued to mutter as he flared his magic power higher with every step. "But no~~. I have to run into one of the subjugation targets as soon as I get to the city. Seriously, what kind of luck is this?"

Chapter 833: Gildarts' Overwhelming Power

On the outskirts of Altair, Gildarts stood facing a shirtless man built from massive amounts of muscle. And the tension between the two made it clear that a fight was imminent.

"Hahahaha!" The massive man laughed loudly as he glared at Gildarts. "You're really unlucky to run into me at a time like this. If it had been any other time, you would have had a chance to survive. But since I was ordered to not be seen, I have no choice but to kill you, Old Man."

"*Sigh*" Gildarts only exhaled a tired sigh in response as he walked towards the mountain of a man.

"But I'm not completely heartless." The massive man said while grinning ferociously. "I'll at least tell you my name. See, I'm really kind, aren't I? This way, you'll know who it was that sent you to hell."

Gildarts did not respond to the man's rambling. Instead, he just continued to walk forward as his magic power flared higher and higher.

Meanwhile, having not received a response, the massive man frowned.

Boom!

In the next instant, the massive man discarded the idea of giving his name. He then stomped the ground, the force of the impact causing the ground beneath him to crack and crater. He then bent down and picked up several fist-sized pieces of stone and cocked his right arm back to throw.

Swoosh! *Swoosh!* *Swoosh!*

The man then launched the stones in his hands at Gildarts. Yet, Gildarts did not even try to dodge, allowing the stones to approach unimpeded.

Fizzle! *Fizzle!* *Fizzle!*

Yet, when the stones came within three feet of Gildarts, they just... disintegrated...

"What the...?" The massive man exclaimed in shock.

"*Sigh* You don't even know how outclassed you are, do you?" Gildarts asked, speaking for the first time since his earlier rant. "You're just like Natsu in that regard. Also, I don't need to know your name. I'll figure it out after I take you down, after all."

As he spoke, Gildarts continued walking forward with his expression not changing at all from the tired expression he had shown ever since he ran into the massive man.

"Damn you!" The man shouted as he vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed.

"Oh, you're pretty quick." Gildarts said as he slightly turned his head to the left.

Bang!

A moment later, the massive man appeared to Gildarts left and threw a punch. However, his massive fist never made contact with Gildarts' head. Instead, it was stopped dead in its tracks when Gildarts casually raised his left hand, stopping the punch with an open palm. Though, the impact did cause a loud sound that was comparable to that of a high-caliber sniper rifle shot.

On a side note, Gildarts would have grasped the man's fist to stop him from getting away. However, the fist was simply too large for him to close his fingers around it.

"Not bad." Gildarts said, still speaking in that casual, yet tired, tone. "You're pretty strong, too. And your magic power is dense enough to not be broken down into little pieces by my passively released magic power. It's a shame you're part of a Dark Guild. Otherwise, you could have done a lot of good for the people with strength like this."

"Shut the fuck up!" The man shouted angrily as he once again vanished from where he stood.

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

Sigh Youngsters now-a-days are so rude." Gildarts said while shaking his head lightly. "They can't even accept a compliment."

While speaking, Gildarts continued blocking punches as the massive man circled him at high speed while attacking with magic power focused on his fists.

"Okay, can we stop this?" Gildarts asked, still sounding just as tired. "It's obvious this isn't working, isn't it? Why don't you just give up so I can capture you and turn you in?"

"Hmph!" The massive man snorted disdainfully at Gildarts' suggestion.

Despite his obvious disdain, the massive man stopped his attack. He then sped away from Gildarts, stopping near the crater he created with his stomp. However, if one were to judge things by the expression on his face, it would be clear that he had no intention of giving up or letting himself be taken in.

And when Gildarts saw the massive man lower his stance, cock his arm back to throw a punch, and concentrate his magic power into his fist once again, that thought was solidified.

"I guess that's a no, huh?" Gildarts asked while once again shaking his head. "Fine... Just get it over with. Just hit me with your best attack. Then, I'll end it, so you don't feel slighted."

"I'm going to kill you, Old Man." The massive man growled in rage. "No one looks down on me, Uvagin the eleventh leg of the Phantom Troupe, like that. [Enhancer Magic: Big Bang Impact]."

With that, the massive man, Uvagin, dashed forward. As he did, the magic power concentrated in his fist began to increase in power and density. IN fact, the increase was so massive that the air around his fist began to look distorted.

"Oh, that's pretty impressive." Gildarts said with a nod. "Still, it's not enough. [Crash Magic: Crushing Evil, Spreading the Truth: Emptyrean]."

Before Uvagin's fist could even make contact, all the magic power concentrated into it was negated. Then, Gildarts once again stopped his punch with his left hand. Next, while Uvagin was gaping in shock at what just happened, Gildarts pulled his right hand back and made a fist near his waist.

"You should shut your mouth and grit your teeth." Gildarts said, the sound of his fist clenching sounded along with his words. "Otherwise, you might just bite off your tongue."

Boom~~~~~!

In the next instant, Gildarts right hand shot upwards, before landing a devastating uppercut on Uvagin's chin, the impact so loud that the people living in the outskirts of Altair thought a magic explosive went off nearby.

An instant later, Gildarts was standing alone. However, the contrail leading straight up into the sky made it quite clear what happened to Uvagin. His uppercut had been so powerful that the mountain of a man was sent flying up into the cloud layer.

Luckily, because this fight happened after the sun went down, most people did not even notice how the clouds were so violently dispersed.

"Hmm... I think I overdid it a little." Gildarts muttered while looking up while shading his eyes with his right hand. "He's gonna come back down, right?"

A moment later, Gildarts saw a violet flash of light shooting up into the sky from the city. He then breathed a sigh of relief.

"Well, I guess I don't have to worry about that anymore." Gildarts said as he lowered his head. "Looks like the Kid's got him. Anyway, I'm really tired. I should head into the city and find Ur. She should have already booked a room, right?"

With that, Gildarts flexed his neck for a moment. Then, he started walking towards the city again.

When Gildarts eventually reached the walls surrounding Altair, he realized that he had somehow veered away from the city gate. However, Gildarts had no intention of letting that delay his entry into the city. And unfortunately for Altair, the city did not have something like the Gildarts Shift in Magnolia.

Meaning, in a few minutes, there was more than likely going to be a blocky, man-shaped hole in the city wall if nothing happened soon.

Luckily for the residents of Altair, something did happen.

"Stop right there!" A woman shouted from atop the city wall.

Hearing that voice, Gildarts came to a sudden halt. He then raised his head with a doting smile on his face.

"Cana! Daddy missed you!" Gildarts shouted loudly.

"Don't give me that, Dad!" Cana shouted angrily. "Just what the hell were you about to do?"

"Huh? I was about to go find Ur." Gildarts replied, sounding somewhat confused. "Is there something wrong with that?"

Cana's exasperated sigh echoed over the area shortly afterwards. And the reason for that was simple.

The hotel where Ur was staying was clear on the other side of the town. Meaning, Gildarts would have ended up walking straight through most of the city, as well as the buildings along the path, while on his way to Ur. And that doesn't even account for the fact that Gildarts probably had no idea which hotel Ur was staying at.

"Why did they make it my responsibility to deal with Dad when he got here?" Cana grumbled in an annoyed tone. She then glared down at Gildarts, causing her father to flinch. "You're not destroying this city, Dad. Or do you want Alfonzo to beat you up for messing up his perfect record?"

Then, without giving Gildarts a chance to respond while also ignoring the flinch that came with her question, Cana pointed towards the closest city gate.

"You are going to enter the city like a normal person." Cana said sternly. "Then, you are going to walk through the streets without destroying any of the buildings. Do. I. Make. Myself. Clear. Dad?"

Gildarts could not help letting his shoulders sag when he heard Cana's tone.

"Yes, Sweetheart." Gildarts mumbled, sounding like he just got scolded for misbehaving. "But... That's gonna take so long~."

Cana felt one of her eyebrows twitch at the sound of her father whining. Then, she gritted her teeth because she knew what her next words would cause.

'Damn it... There's no way he's not going to be an embarrassment after this.' Cana thought to herself.

"And to make sure you don't cause any trouble, I'll be coming with you to find Ur." Cana said through her gritted teeth.

Immediately, Gildarts' head popped up to look at Cana. And when Cana looked into her father's eyes, she squinted involuntarily at how brightly they were shining.

'Yeah, he's definitely gonna embarrass me.' Cana muttered internally.

["Yeah... There's no point in even gambling about this."] Hoyle added from Cana's inner world.

'Ugh! I need a drink.' Cana thought to herself with resignation as she started walking towards the city gate atop the wall.

When he saw Cana start walking, Gildarts followed her eagerly. Then, when Cana jumped down to the street after he entered through the gate, he held out his elbow for her to take like he was the one escorting her, instead of the other way around.

However, Cana did not accept the offered arm. Instead, she started walking towards the hotel where Levy, Ur, and Ultear were staying at a brisk pace.

'*Sigh* At least Tear will be coming back with me after Gildarts gets there.' Cana thought to herself. 'Having us all back together again will be nice. It won't substitute for the alcohol, though.'

Meanwhile, in an abandoned warehouse on the opposite side of Altair, several people were gathered. While most of the people in the warehouse were gathered on the ground floor of the warehouse, there was one man sitting on a ledge above the rest.

"Does anyone have an idea where Machi is?" The man sitting on the ledge, looking to be about 5'10" tall with black hair, grey eyes, and a cross-shaped tattoo in the center of his forehead and wearing an unbuttoned, long black coat with white fur on its collar and cuffs that showed off his muscular torso, asked calmly. "It's not like her to be late."

This man was the leader of the Phantom Troupe, the Spider's head, Chrollo Lucifer.

"No, she's still not here yet." A man wearing a Japanese-style robe, a pair of black shorts, and a sarashi wrapped around his midsection with a sword strapped to his waist and his long black hair styled into a topknot replied calmly. "Then again, neither is that idiot Uvagin."

"We expected Uvogin to be late." Chrollo replied, his tone making it clear he was unbothered by Uvogin's tardiness. "But Machi was only supposed to be out scouting."

"Do you think someone discovered her?" A tall, slender woman with neck-length, straight blonde hair who wore a black business suit with purple lapels and a matching skirt asked in an apathetic tone. "If so, she's probably taking her time to throw them off."

A moment later, the blonde woman's expression sharpened.

"Because if she were to lead anyone to our hideout, I would kill her myself for endangering the Troupe." The woman continued in a sharp tone.

"That would never happen, Pakunoda." Machi said as she entered the warehouse through a broken window. "Though, I may have been discovered. But after running around the city for hours, I believe I lost them."

Hearing that Machi may have been discovered, all the members of the Phantom Troupe present in the warehouse tensed.

"You may have been discovered?" Chrollo asked, his tone unchanged. Though, his narrowed eyes made it clear that he was taking Machi's words seriously.

"Yes." Machi replied with a nod. "First, I found a number of threads made with thread magic laid out over the city..."

From there, Machi explained everything that happened from the time she cut Elicia's [Thread Detection] spell, to how she felt as though someone was watching her for a time, to the strange feeling she got before the surveillance ended, and finally how she spent a long time making sure that she was not being followed.

"I see." Chrollo said after a moment spent considering Machi's report. He then thought back to the faint sound of explosion he heard not too long ago. "Well then, we'll move to the secondary hideout once Uvagin gets here. And if he's not here by midnight, we'll leave a message and make the move anyway."

The Spider's legs all nodded in understanding. Yet, Chrollo was not done just yet.

"By the way, Machi." Chrollo continued. "Since you were outside, do you have any idea what that sound was earlier?"

"No, I'm not sure." Machi replied. "But after I heard it, I saw a flash of light shooting up into the sky. They're probably related."

"I see." Chrollo replied. "Well, after we move, I want you to see if you can find anything about it. I don't want any surprises that could ruin the deal."

"Understood." Machi replied with another nod.

With that, the members of the Phantom Troupe prepared to change hideouts while waiting for Uvogin to arrive. However, when midnight struck, they left as Chrollo ordered, leaving a message that only Uvogin would be able to understand behind.

Unfortunately for them, they had no idea that they would never see Uvogin again. Because unbeknownst to even Gildarts, that uppercut had broken Uvogin's neck, and he died before even reaching the clouds.

Chapter 834: We're Fairy Tail, Remember That

"Look who I brought back~!" Cana sing-songed as she entered the hotel room she shared with Alfonzo, Elicia, and Sun. "Are Fonzie and Lici back yet?"

"Nope." Sun replied cheerfully. "They're probably on a date."

"That's what I thought, as well." Ultear said as she followed Cana into the room. "*Sigh* I wouldn't mind a date, too."

"None of us would." Cana added as she flopped down next to Sun on the couch. "I'd love to go out for a night on the town with Fonzie. We could hit every bar in the city and try their best alcohol."

"Do you really need to go on a date with Alfonzo for that?" Ultear asked as she, too, took a seat on the couch. "I mean, you do stuff like that by yourself all the time.""

"Besides, you're not even allowed to drink until the quest is over, remember?" Sun asked while tilting her head cutely.

"Ugh! Don't remind me." Cana groaned as she slouched against the couch's back rest. She then turned her head in Ultear's direction as she continued. "And you're missing the point, Tear. I just like spending time alone with Fonzie. Going out for drinks, which I also enjoy, is just a bonus."

Bang!

"Cana is right." Elicia said energetically as she slammed the door open and dashed through the door, headed straight towards Cana. "Spending time with Fonzie is the goal!"

"Oof!" Cana exhaled painfully as Elicia leapt into her lap, the shorter woman's hip slamming straight into her abdomen.

"I'm glad we were on a quest when you decided to do that." Ultear said as she leaned away from her harem-sisters. "Because if Cana had spit out a mouthful of alcohol, this hotel might have been leveled in her rage."

"I only did it because I knew she wouldn't be drinking on a quest." Elicia said as she energetically bounced on Cana's lap.

"By the way, where is Alfonzo, Lici?" Sun asked curiously.

"Oh, he took the guy Gildarts beat up to see the client." Elicia said with a shrug. "*Sigh* It's too bad Cana's dad over did it. We might have been able to get the eyes' location out of him. But... What can ya do?"

"Yeah, I could feel his magic power draining away while he was flying up to the sky." Ultear said with a nod. "I guess the apple didn't fall from the tree. Neither the father nor the daughter knows how to hold back."

"Shut up, Tear!" Cana said while playfully shoving Ultear.

From there, the four women began to play around like the longtime friends they were. And by the time Alfonzo returned to the room, it looked like a group of girls had just had a pillow fight at a slumber party rather than being one of the three bases for a guild trying to complete a high-profile quest.

But in the meantime, Alfonzo was doing exactly what Elicia said. After plucking Uvogin's corpse out of the air, he used his [Metal Magic] to create a metal coffin for the deceased member of the Phantom Troupe, concealed the box with is [Electromagnetism Magic's] ability to manipulate visible light, and returned to the inn where he met with Kurapika.

"Hey, I'm back." Alfonzo said casually with a wide smile spread across his face. He then waved at the woman behind the inn's front desk as he continued. "I guess... What was her name? Amelia, I think? Anyway, I guess her shift is over. Anyway, do you know if Kurapika is in his room, Miss?"

As Alfonzo said, instead of the pretty young woman he saw earlier in the day, the woman behind the desk at this hour was a middle-aged blonde woman with her hair styled into a bun. However, the one thing they had in common was that as soon as they saw Alfonzo, they went on alert.

'Yeah, they really don't like wizards here.' Alfonzo thought to himself while shrugging internally. 'Well, not my problem. That might change a little if we can actually take down Caine in connection with this

quest. Actually, now that I think about it, I know Zash Caine is the antagonist in Dragon Cry, but I never saw it. So, I wonder what else that mother fucker is actually up to. I mean, there had to be a reason why he betrayed Fiore, right?'

As it turned out, neither Alfonzo nor Elicia liked watching the movies associated with the anime they liked. The reason for that was simple. Most movies aren't canon. So, they did not like mixing up their canon knowledge with the extra stuff.

"He should be up in his room." The blonde woman said while wearing a professional smile.

"Thanks." Alfonzo replied, deciding he could think about movie plots showing up in this weird, AU world later. "Well then, I'll just head up. I just hope he's not the type to go to bed early. I'd hate to wake him up. I know I hate being woken up, anyway."

With that, Alfonzo waved at the woman behind the desk and made his way up the stairs to where Kurapika's room was located. All the while, the woman watched him warily.

It did not take long for Alfonzo to reach Kurapika's room. When he did, he wasted no time raising his hand and knocking on the door.

Knock! *Knock!*

"Coming." Kurapika's voice sounded through the door.

A moment later, the door opened. When it did, Kurapika looked at Alfonzo with a confused expression. Alfonzo said that he would come back after the quest was complete. So, seeing him only a few hours later left him wondering if something had gone wrong.

Yet, when Kurapika noticed the metal coffin floating leisurely behind Alfonzo, his confused expression deepened.

"What is that?" Kurapika asked as his eyes focused on the coffin.

"Oh, this?" Alfonzo asked in a teasing tone. "Just a little something to make sure that you never underestimate Fairy Tail again. Because... We don't fail quests. But before I open it, let's head inside the room. Opening this out here wouldn't really be a good look."

With both curiosity and skepticism showing in his expression, Kurapika, after a moment of hesitation, stepped away from the door, allowing Alfonzo to enter with the metal coffin. Then, once Alfonzo was inside, Kurapika closed the door and latched it to make sure that no one could come in without notice.

At the same time, Alfonzo placed the metal coffin on the floor in the center of the room. Then, with a tap of his right heel on the floor, he coated the floor, walls, and ceiling in thin sheets of Orichalcum etched with silencing sigils.

"What is---" Kurapika asked in a wary tone.

"It's just a silencing barrier." Alfonzo said, cutting off Kurapika's question. "There are too many people hiding in this building and watching the people staying here. There's no way to know if any of them are in league with the Troupe."

"Watching?" Kurapika asked, his brows furrowing in both disbelief and caution.

"Well, it wouldn't surprise me if you didn't notice." Alfonzo said with a shrug as he placed his left hand on the lid of the metal coffin. "But I'm not really here to convince you. Honestly, as long as you don't do anything stupid, they probably won't bother you. Besides, you seem to be cool with at least one of them."

Kurapika's frown deepened when Alfonzo so casually decided that explaining everything was not his concern. However, when he saw the lid of the coffin start to rise as Alfonzo lifted his left hand, his attention was drawn to what was inside.

When the lid was finally opened completely, Kurapika was surprised to see a corpse. However, when he remembered what Alfonzo said about underestimating Fairy Tail, his eyes widened in disbelief.

"Is that...?" Kurapika asked in dumbfounded amazement. "A member of the Phantom Troupe...?"

"You can decide that for yourself." Alfonzo replied as he used [Metal Magic] to carefully flip Uvagin's corpse over so that it was laying facedown. "Do you recognize that?"

The "that" Alfonzo was referring to was the twelve-legged spider tattoo on Uvagin's lower back. And when Kurapika saw it, his eyes glowed an intense shade of red.

"That is..." Kurapika muttered as he subconsciously leaned closer to the coffin. "A member of the Phantom Troupe... That tattoo... No one would ever think to fake it."

"Yeah, pretty much." Alfonzo replied casually with a shrug. "From what I heard, his name is Uvogin. One of my guildmates ran into him while he was entering the city."

In reality, Alfonzo had not even spoken to Gildarts, who defeated Uvogin not long ago. Rather, the only reason he knew the man's identity was because of his meta-knowledge.

Meanwhile, Kurapika could only stare at Uvogin with his mouth hanging open in disbelief. Thanks to his trauma, he believed the Phantom Troupe to be nearly unbeatable. So much, in fact, that he did not think that anyone would, or could, complete his quest. Instead, he planned to train in magic at some point and face the Spiders on his own when he thought he was strong enough.

"Well... Dude... Uh... There you have it." Alfonzo said, not really knowing where else to go with this conversation. "I only came here to show you that you shouldn't underestimate us. Fairy Tail will complete your quest. So, just sit here and wait for the good news, okay?"

In response, Kurapika could only nod his head while staring blankly at Uvogin's corpse, his eyes never leaving the deceased Spider until Alfonzo closed the coffin lid once again.

"There are still two days until the deal goes down." Alfonzo said as he once again levitated the coffin. "We'll try to take out as many of them as we can before it happens. We'll put Caine in his place, too. I'm pretty sure the Fiore Royal Family will be happy with that, too."

Then, without giving Kurapika a chance to respond, Alfonzo left the room, taking the coffin with him as he went. And Kurapika was left to reconsider everything he thought he knew about wizards and just how powerful they really could be.

Not long later, after burying the coffin containing Uvagin's body outside of the city, Alfonzo returned to the hotel where he was staying with Elicia and the others. And just as previously mentioned, when he arrived, the room was a mess, covered in feathers from an epic pillow fight while the ladies were all giggling and talking about how much fun they had just now.

Unfortunately, because the ladies all tired themselves out playing around, which Alfonzo found strange when considering just how powerful they all were, he ended up having to stay up all night to watch over the city with his [Magic Power Detection], just in case the Phantom Troupe decided to make any moves during the night.

On the bright side, thanks to the magic power he injected into Machi's needles earlier in the day, Alfonzo was able to find the Phantom Troupe's hideout, as well as their back up hideout after the Troupe left at midnight.

October 9, x791.

"Mmm... Good morning." Elicia said groggily as she stretched and sat up in the large bed in the hotel room. She then took a quick look around and continued when her eyes landed on Alfonzo. "Didn't you get any sleep last night, Fonzie?"

While Elicia, Cana, Ultear, and Sun were currently sharing the room's bed, Alfonzo was sitting at a desk with several documents laid out on top of it. And from what Elicia could tell, he was going over revenue reports for Sixth Sense Holdings.

"Nope, not a wink." Alfonzo replied as he placed a document on the table, picked up a pen, and quickly signed off on it. "Because a certain quartet tired themselves out so badly last night, I had to stay up and keep watch all night."

Hearing that, Elicia smiled apologetically. She then stretched once more before climbing out of the bed while trying not to wake up the other three. Then, she made her way over to the back of the chair Alfonzo was sitting in and hugged him around his neck.

"Sorry, Fonzie." Elicia said sweetly. "We got a little carried away last night. But if it makes you feel any better, we all had our [MPD] up the whole time. And if something had happened, we would have jumped into action immediately."

"Oh, I have no doubt about that." Alfonzo replied with a smile as he let his head lean back into Elicia's embrace. "Still, you four kinda threw off the lookout rotation."

Elicia only smiled apologetically once again as she slightly tightened her hug.

"Anyway, you should wake up the girls and get cleaned up." Alfonzo said as he nuzzled his head against Elicia's cheek. "We can have breakfast after that. Then, I've got something to report to the whole team."

"Got it." Elicia said with a nod before pecking Alfonzo on the cheek. She then let go of Alfonzo, took a running start, and jumped onto the bed, the shaking disturbing the other three women's sleep. "Hey! It's time to get up, girls!"

"Ugh!"

"Five more minutes, ya see?"

"Go away, Lici..."

In response, Ultear, Sun, and Cana gave their half-asleep responses in that order. Then, they all tried to roll over and go back to sleep.

"Nope!" Elicia said as she started shaking, tickling, and poking Ultear, Sun, and Cana, respectively, to wake them up. "We've got a job to do. Stop being lazy."

Like that, the morning began in what could be considered normal for members of Fairy Tail and the Marcus Family. Before long, the five were ready to head down to the hotel's dining room for breakfast.

Chapter 835: The Spiders Start to Move

After breakfast, Alfonzo led Elicia, Cana, Ultear, and Sun back to their room in the hotel. He then focused on his [Magic Power Detection] to find the other members of Fairy Tail scattered throughout the city. Then, once he found the other six members of the guild, he initiated a [Telepathic Link] with his [Archive Magic].

{"Yo! Is everyone awake?"} Alfonzo asked, projecting his thoughts loudly through the [Telepathic Link].

{"Damn it, Kid!"} Gildarts barked back immediately. {"You just startled the hell out of me. I fell out of bed because of you!"}

{"Not only that. *Sigh*" } Ur added in an exasperated tone. {"He fell through the floor... And the three below us. Ugh! The guild is gonna have to pay for this later."}

{"Dad is such a menace."} Cana said, sounding just as exasperated as Ur.

{"You know, of all the people on this quest, you are the only one who has no right to say that, Cana."} Ultear pointed out. {"I mean, on our last quest, you destroyed an entire central plaza, remember?"}

{"That wasn't my fault."} Cana protested. {"That Thunderbird fell there after I shot it down. How was I supposed to know that it would land in the middle of that plaza?"}

{"Would you all shut up?"} Evergreen asked angrily. {"It's bad enough that you woke me up just after I got back to sleep after Elfman and I... *Cough* I mean after I finished my lookout shift. But now you're making me listen to you argue, too?"}

{"Yeah, I just got to sleep, too."} Bickslow added. {"Ever and Elfman were so loud last night... My room isn't even on the same floor as theirs."}

{"Bickslow~~~~~!"} Evergreen squealed in embarrassment.

{"OH, looks like Elfman was putting it down like a real man."} Alfonzo said in a teasing tone. {"Good work, little brother-in-law. Does that mean Amar'e, Bianca, Calvin, and Miyako are gonna have another cousin soon?"}

{"That's right, I'm a real man!"} Elfman bellowed through the [Telepathic Link]. {"And I'm doing my best, brother-in-law!"}

{"Elfman, you shut up, too!"} Evergreen shouted once again.

{"Okay, okay."} Elicia said, a hint of a giggle in her tone. {"As much fun as it is to embarrass Ever..."}

{"Don't call me Ever!"} Evergreen shouted.

{"... we have something serious to take care of."} Elicia continued while ignoring Evergreen's outburst.

{"Lici's right."} Sun said, sounding much more solemn than usual. {"Alfonzo said he was able to put a tracker on the girl he found yesterday. So, what are we gonna do about the Phantom Troupe?"}

{"What do we actually know about the Phantom Troupe?"} Ur asked, her tone turning solemn, as well.

{"Honestly, not much."} Alfonzo said. {"But does it really matter?" Their circumstances really don't matter to us. Even if they all have some kind of tragic backstory. The fact of the matter is they've been killing people and ruining lives for a long time. And we've been hired to put an end to that."}

{ "It sounds like you have a permanent solution in mind." } Bickslow said, though his tone did not suggest that he was uncomfortable with that arrangement.

{ "Although I'd rather not kill, I don't think we really have a choice this time." } Alfonzo replied solemnly. { "The quest sheet clearly says that the client wants the Phantom Troupe eliminated. Meaning, just bringing them to the authorities isn't enough." }

{ "*Sigh* I don't like jobs like this one, either." } Sun said, sounding a little sad. { "But they've done so many bad things. If they were to get out of prison, they would keep doing bad things." }

{ "On top of that, if they ever got out, they would definitely come after the guild for revenge." } Ur pointed out, her tone much harsher than earlier. { "So, I'd rather put them down now than let them get the jump on some of the members of the guild in the future." }

{ "I agree." } Ultear said, her tone just as harsh as her mothers.

{ "Oh, um... Then, did I go too easy on that guy from last night?" } Gildarts asked, the image of him scratching his head sheepishly appearing in everyone's minds based on his tone.

{ "You don't have to worry about that, Old Man." } Alfonzo said in a somewhat helpless tone. { "By the time I plucked the guy out of the air, he was dead with his neck broken. *Sigh* If you could control the destructive nature of your magic power, you would have been able to use [Magic Power Detection] to see that." }

{"Hahaha... Oh..."} Gildarts said in an awkward tone. {"Although I don't' really feel bad about killing that young man based on what I know about the Phantom Troupe, I do feel bad about doing it on accident."}

{"That's not like you, Gildarts."} Ur said, a hint of worry in her tone. {"Although you usually destroy everything you come in touch with, that's usually limited to inanimate objects. I've never heard of you killing someone by accident before."}

{"There are actually two reasons for that."} Gildarts said. {"First, the guy wasn't as strong as I thought. I mean, he could hit me so hard, I thought he would be tougher than that."}

{"Seriously, Dad?"} Cana asked in an exasperated tone. {"You're one of the strongest wizards on the continent. Why would you think someone could take a hit from you when you're going all-out?"}

{"That's the thing."} Gildarts said, sounding a bit unsure of himself. {"I did hold back. Quite a bit, in fact. Even so, that guy ended up like that. It's almost like I've gotten stronger without realizing it."}

That statement brought everyone on the [Telepathic Link] up a little short. However, there were two people who had an idea of what was going on.

{"Hey, Gildarts."} Elicia said in a curious toen. {"Have you been training with your [Soul Armament] a lot lately?"}

{"Not as much as I'd like."} Gildarts said. {"Calamity is too destructive. If I use it all willy-nilly, I could destroy a whole mountain if I'm not careful."}

{"But you have been training it, right?"} Elicia asked pointedly.

{"Yeah, I have."} Gildarts replied.

{"Well then, you have your answer."} Alfonzo said. {"It looks like you're getting closer to the next level. And as you get closer, your power will keep on increasing."}

{"I see..."} Gildarts said in a contemplative tone.

From that point, the conversation transitioned to making plans for taking down the Phantom Troupe. Meanwhile, the Dark Guild they were discussing was gathered in a cave outside of Altair.

"Is there still no word from Uvogin?" Chrollo asked calmly.

"No, we still haven't heard from him." The man with the topknot, Nobunaga Hazama, replied while sitting against a cave wall with his sword leaning against his shoulder.

"Hmm..." Chrollo hummed contemplatively.

After a few moments of thought, Chrollo turned his attention to Machi.

"I'll see if I can find any news about Uvogin." Machi replied in her usual emotionless tone before Chrollo could speak.

"Mhmm." Chrollo hummed in acknowledgement.

In the next moment, Machi vanished from sight, quickly leaving the cave without making a sound, leaving the other eleven members of the Troupe to continue their discussion.

"What if Uvogin was killed, Leader?" The blonde woman, Pakunoda, asked, her tone filled with confidence and protective feelings for the Phantom Troupe.

"Need you even ask?" Chrollo asked, a small, chilling, smile spreading across his face. "If anyone was foolish enough to cut off one of the Spider's legs, then they won't live long to regret it."

As he spoke, an enormous amount of killing intent flowed out of Chrollo, causing the other members of the Phantom Troupe to tense momentarily. However, instead of fear, all their expressions were ruthless.

Well... Most of them showed ruthless expressions. There was one man, however, whose expression was filled with a perverted level of excitement and bloodlust.

Feeling the one different emotion in the cave, Chrollo turned to look in its direction. When he did, he was not surprised to see a tall, muscular, fair-skinned man with white face paint, a blue star painted on

his right cheek, a yellow teardrop painted on his left cheek, yellow eyes, and red hair staring at him with enough fervor that one might think the man was in love.

Chrollo was not the only one who noticed the red-haired man's gaze, either. And his obvious desire for battle caused many of the other members to show signs of anger.

"Hisoka!" A short, pale-skinned man with black hair and grey eyes barked. He then launched into a tirade in an unknown language. And although no one could understand what he was saying, the fact that he was threatening the red-haired man, Hisoka Morow, was definitely clear to everyone.

"Hisoka, I suggest you don't do anything stupid." Pakunoda said sternly. "You'll never leave here alive if you even think about it."

"You misunderstand me." Hisoka replied after reeling in his bloodlust. "I was just wondering, if someone actually did kill Uvagin, they must be a ripe enough fruit to pick, right?"

"Do you think anyone would believe that?" Nobunaga asked disdainfully. "We all know what kind of person you are, Hisoka. And we all know you've been waiting for the chance to fight the leader to death."

"I am not denying that." Hisoka replied with a sly smile. "But do you really think I would jeopardize this mission for my own selfish desire?"

Though no one answered Hisoka's question, the way they continued to glare at him while tightening their grips on their weapons and tools made it obvious what the answer to his question was.

"Enough." Chrollo said after a few moments of tense silence. He then continued while looking straight into Hisoka's eyes. "If you are really looking forward to a fight with me so badly, Hisoka. Then, I have a deal for you."

This time, it was Hisoka's turn to remain silent. Though, the glint in his eyes made it clear that he was fully invested in what Chrollo had to say.

"If Machi finds evidence that Uvogin had indeed been killed on his way to the hideout, you'll take the frontline in killing the Troupe's enemies. And should you find and kill the one responsible for Uvogin's death, I will grant your wish after we're done with this job."

While Hisoka's eyes began to shine with anticipation, the rest of the Phantom Troupe began to clamor in protest. However, without even paying any mind to his subordinates' complaints, Chrollo simply raised his right hand, causing all the complaints to halt.

"But know this, Hisoka." Chrollo said, his tone turning much sterner than before. "Should you get the fight you've been wanting, you should be prepared to give up your life in the attempt."

"As it should be." Hisoka replied, a wide, manic, and anticipatory smile spreading across his face. "But just remember, you should be prepared for the same, Leader."

With his smile thinning into a smirk, Hisoka ignored the complaints of the other members of the Troupe. Then, under all of their gazes, he slowly walked over to an unoccupied area of the cave, took a seat, pulled out a deck of playing cards, and began performing magic tricks using the cards.

"That's enough." Chrollo said, putting an end to the complaints. "Pakunoda, Nobunaga, Shizuku, you three head to the deal site and secure the location. Feitan, Hisoka, Shalnark, Phinks, Franklin, and Bonolenov, you six split into groups of three and scout the city. Although I trust Machi, having more eyes will make finding out if there are any enemies nearby much easier."

After receiving Chrollo's orders, Pakunoda, Nobunaga, and Shizuku, full name: Shizuku Murasaki, a short girl with a large bust, slim waist, wide hips, short, layered black hair, and plum-colored eyes wearing a long-sleeved black turtleneck, blue jeans, a necklace with a cross with horns hanging from it, and a pair of earrings that usually remain hidden by her hair, made their way towards the cave's exit to carry out their mission.

Meanwhile, Feitan, the slim, black-haired young man, Shalnark, a tall, lean young man with blond hair and bright green eyes wearing a lavender-colored martial arts outfit, Franklin, a giant of a man with scars on his face, sewn-up wounds around his mouth, short, messy violet-colored hair, and brown eyes wearing blue overalls, a white jacket, and brown shoes, Phinks, a fairly tall, and muscular, man with blond hair and piercing black eyes dressed in a way that made him look like a modern-day pharaoh, and Bonolenov, a man wrapped head-to-toe in white bandages with brown eyes wearing red boxing gloves and boots, as well as a pair of orange boxing trunks, glared at Hisoka.

As for Hisoka, he only chuckled at the hostility coming from his teammates for this mission. He then put away the playing cards, stood up, dusted off the back of his pants, and made his way towards the cave's exit, the other five following him a few moments later.

Once the other nine left, Chrollo turned his attention to the remaining member of the Phantom Troupe who was still in the cave.

"Kortopi, use your magic to make copies of the eyes." Chrollo said calmly. "Depending on what the others find, we may have to accidentally let the Minister have a set of fakes. We wouldn't want the genuine article to be lost in a scuffle, after all. Of course, should we have to make such a sacrifice, we

can only apologize to the Minister in the future. Though, since all sales are final, he'll never again see the payment for our services... Unless he pays to have the job completed again, that is."

"Understood." Kortopi, an exceptionally short man with long, messy, bluish-grey hair that covered his entire head, save one, bulbous, navy blue eye, wearing a light blue tunic, a light blue pair of pants, and a pair of black shoes, replied simply before making his way towards the case where the eyes of the Curta Clan were stored to start his work.

Chapter 836: Zash Caine Seems to Be Up to More than Expected

Like the members of the Phantom Troupe, all the members of Fairy Tail present in Altair also began to move after the telepathic conference call.

The first one to move out was Elicia. However, unlike the others, she was not sent to find the members of the Phantom Troupe. Instead, Alfonzo had her go to Zash Caine's mansion to find proof that he was involved in the Phantom Troupe's genocidal actions against the Curta Clan.

Meanwhile, Cana, Ultear, and Sun formed one group to find members of the Phantom Troupe on the east side of the city. And because they were not as well-versed in stealth as Machi, they would not have an issue doing so.

At the same time, Bickslow, Evergreen, and Elfman were doing the same on the west side of the city. And like Cana's group, no one anticipated their group having any trouble finding members of the Phantom Troupe in the area they were in charge of.

Next were Gildarts, Levy, and Ur. Instead of staying in the city, they would be searching the area outside of the city. According to Alfonzo just before the plan was finalized, he could sense a group of fairly powerful magic power signatures heading to a remote location outside of the city. So, Gildarts and the other two were tasked with seeing what they were up to.

That left Alfonzo to act alone. And like Gildarts, Ur, and Levy, his target was outside of the city. In fact, it was the cave the Phantom Troupe was using as their secondary hideout. Unfortunately, thanks to her stealth, Alfonzo was unable to find Machi since the magic power he injected into her needles had dispersed after so long. Taking out the one with the best stealth would make the whole operation easier, in his opinion, at least.

"Alright, this is the noble district." Elicia said as she stood atop the wall separating the noble district from the rest of the city. "Caine is a minister. So, he should have a manor closer to the castle than the others, right?"

["Makes sense to me."] Scylla replied. ["Still, just how many ministers are there in Stella? This might take a while."]

"Well, as long as we can find it today, things should be alright." Elicia replied as she leapt off the wall, shot out a line of thread, and swung towards a wall surrounding a villa. "We don't need to catch him today, after all. Still, getting inside of his mansion and taking a look around would be a good idea."

["Agreed."] Scylla replied. ["If we can find the reason why he defected from Fiore, that would look even better when we drag him back."]

"Wouldn't it, though?" Elicia said with a giggle. "It certainly would make Princess Hisui happy. Did you hear the way she squealed when Fonzie called her last night?"

["Yeah, she was a lot happier than a princess would be to hear from any other merchant or wizard."] Scylla said with a giggle of her own. ["Do you think you're gonna have a royal sister sometime in the future?"]

"Who knows." Elicia replied with a shrug as she pulled herself to another noble home's wall. "Would that even be allowed?"

["Good question."] Scylla replied. ["Hold on, look over there. Those guys don't look like nobles, do they?"]

In response to Scylla's question, Elicia swung to the roof of a noble's mansion. Then, she looked in the direction Scylla was directing her to. And when she did, she saw a three-person group walking towards one of the large mansions in the noble's district. Yet, just as Scylla said, they did not look like the nobles Elicia had seen. Nor did they look like the guards that usually protected those nobles.

"Not just nobles." Elicia muttered as she tried to look even closer. "I'm not even sure they're humans. I mean, look at the way they move. It's too perfect. Plus, that level of magic power... It's so high."

["At the same time, look at the way it moves around their bodies."] Scylla added.

And just as Scylla pointed out, the magic power flowing through the three people walking on the street did not seem natural. To Elicia, instead of a magic power container, it seemed more like a power supply.

"Yeah, there's definitely something wrong with them." Elicia muttered as she watched the unnatural-looking group of three make their way down the street. "If we had more time, I'd really wanna see just what's going on with them. But for now, I have more important things to do."

With one final look at the three unnatural beings, Elicia, still under her [Camouflage magic's] effects, leapt from the rooftop she was perched on and continued her search for Zash Caine's residence. However, despite the fact that she had abandoned looking into those three, she continued to come across them during her search.

Finally, when Elicia reached a large villa whose gate contained a sign that read "Caine," she was even more surprised to see not only the three unnatural beings she had been running into all over the noble district, but two more of the same kind of beings standing outside the gate, acting as guards.

"Well, look at that." Elicia said as she crouched on a nearby rooftop. "It looks like I can look into both Caine and those weird things at the same time."

["This may be even more dangerous than we thought, Elicia."] Scylla said in a warning tone. ["You can't just jump into this without a plan. Those things, though not as strong as the top-tier members of Fairy Tail, are pretty strong. And there's no guarantee that those five are the only ones."]

"I know, I know." Elicia said while waving off Scylla's concern. "I'm not an amateur, you know. I've done more infiltration quests than I can remember since I learned [Camouflage Magic]."

Reaching that point, Elicia smiled mischievously as she prepared to jump down into Zash Caine's courtyard.

"In fact, I've been doing this longer than you were even a glint in Fonzie's eye." Elicia said with a giggle as she leapt off the roof. Then, while soaring through the air, Elicia could not help continuing to giggle as she carried on. "Hehehe... I've always wanted to say something like that. The better line would have been something like, 'I've been doing this since you were still in nappies.' But you were never an infant. So, that won't work."

Scylla's groans from Elicia's inner world only made Elicia giggle even harder.

["Anyway, you're deep in enemy territory, now."] Scylla said while trying to purge such a dumb joke from her mind. ["It would be better if you stayed quiet and just got the job done. We don't want your mouth to make things harder than they need to be."]

At that moment, both Elicia and Scylla would have sworn they heard Alfonzo chuckling at Scylla's choice of words. But they both decided to ignore it while rolling their eyes simultaneously.

From that moment on, Elicia's playful nature took a backseat to her wizard nature as she circled to the villa to find a good entry point. Yet, no matter how long she looked, Elicia could not find a point of entree in the mansion's exterior that would not necessitate her using her own magic to break in.

"Yeah, there's definitely something suspicious going on in there." Elicia whispered to herself while using her threads to stick to the exterior wall just above the mansion's front door. "Otherwise, there's no reason to have such high security."

["well, he is the Minister of State."] Scylla pointed out. ["so, there, kinda, is a reason for such tight security."]

"Small details." Elicia said quietly.

"["I wouldn't call that small."] Scylla replied in an exasperated tone.

~That's what she said.~

"But seriously, why aren't those things going inside? Don't they have to report, or something?" Elicia continued while ignoring both Scylla and Alfonzo's disembodied voice she was hearing for the second time.

["Who knows."] Scylla replied with a shrug. ["Still, you need to find a way inside."]

"Yeah, I know." Elicia replied with a nod. "Well then, looks like I'll have to do this the hard--- Huh?"

As Elicia spoke, she was slowly spreading her threads towards the front door's keyhole. However, before the threads came in contact with the lock's mechanisms, she noticed that all five of the unnatural beings, the two acting as guards, and the three standing in the mansion's yard, began to move towards the back of the mansion at the same time.

"Hmm... What are those things up to?" Elicia asked rhetorically as she retracted her threads. "I smell a conspiracy."

["Right~."] Scylla drawled. ["Stop talking. Just go follow them."]

Nodding in response, Elicia quickly made her way around to the back of the mansion, following the five unnatural beings. When she arrived, she was just in time to see two of the unnatural beings placing their hands on a spot on the ground at the corner of the mansion. Yet, when she saw what happened next, Elicia could not help widening her eyes.

"Seriously?" Elicia whispered. "I couldn't even sense that."

The thing that surprised Elicia so much was the fact that, after circulating a bit of their magic power, the two unnatural beings touching the ground revealed a hidden door, one that clearly led underground.

["You can gawk at it later."] Scylla barked, pulling Elicia back to her senses. ["For now, you need to get inside before they close it back up."]

"Right." Elicia said with a vigorous nod.

Elicia then leapt off the mansion's wall, landing silently as a cat. Then, she quickly made her way to the newly revealed door just in time for the two unnatural beings to open it. And just as the door swung open, Elicia, with her hands covered in her sticky threads, crawled down into the passage way and stuck to the ceiling without the notice of the unnatural beings.

Meanwhile, the other three unnatural beings walked down into the passage, climbing down the stairway. Then, when the other three were inside, the two who opened the door also entered, closing the door behind them. However, as soon as the door was secured, Elicia, who was crawling along the passageway's ceiling, frowned.

'I can't sense the outside anymore.' Elicia thought to herself while turning her head back towards the passage's entrance.

["So~, what was that about not making things harder with what you say?"] Scylla asked in a bland tone.

'It's just a coincidence.' Elicia shot back. 'Anyway, let's see what's going on in there. I get some real evil mastermind vibes from this place.'

["Agreed."] Scylla replied as Elicia started moving through the underground passage.

At the same time, the other members of Fairy Tail who were still inside the city, namely Evergreen, Bickslow, Cana, Ultear, Elfman, and Sun, all turned their head in the direction of the noble district after they could no longer feel Elicia's magic power signature through their [Magic Power Detection].

'Hmm...?' Machi, who was leaping from rooftop to rooftop to try and find information about the explosion last night, noticed Cana's group when they stopped and looked toward the noble district in unison. 'Why would they all look in the same direction at the same time? On top of that, I think I recognize them. They're all members of Fairy Tail. But why would they be in Stella? They're supposed to be in Magnolia.'

After having that thought, Machi remembered the quest that was put out not too long ago that requested the complete elimination of the Phantom Troupe. When she did, her gaze on the three Fairy Tail wizards within her line of sight hardened as threads began to extend from her fingertips.

'I see.' Machi thought to herself as her killing intent spiked for a moment. 'So, they're the ones who took that quest. Well then, I'll just get rid of them.'

However, before she attacked, Machi forcefully stopped herself as she remembered the feeling that someone had been following her the day before. On top of that, she remembered the directive Chrollo had given the group about not being seen and drawing attention to the Phantom Troupe.

'No, they can wait.' Machi said as she settled down. 'For now, I need to head back... The leader will want to know about this. Such powerful wizards could put the whole deal at stake.'

With that, Machi turned and headed back towards the Phantom Troupe's secondary hideout.

Meanwhile, as Machi left the area, Cana, Ultear, and Sun all turned to look at the rooftop where Machi had been watching them from.

"Well, that was a pretty intense spike of killing intent." Ultear said with a smile spreading slowly across her face. "Honestly, I thought they would attack us right here."

"Me, too, ya see?" Sun said as she loosened the grip on her shirasaya's hilt. "But she just ran away."

"Well, that makes sense, doesn't it?" Cana asked casually. "I mean, if all the Spiders were as impulsive as the guy who fought dad last night, they would have never lasted as long as they have. Nor would they have gained such infamy."

Ultear and Sun could not help but nod in agreement. A moment later, the three turned their gazes back in the direction of the noble district.

"Still, do you think Lici is okay?" Sun asked, a hint of worry in her tone.

"Don't worry about Lici." Cana said while waving away Sun's concern. "Other than Fonzie, she's the strongest one of us on this quest. She'll be just fine."

"Are you saying Lici is stronger than your dad, Cana?" Ultear asked curiously.

Like Cana, Ultear was not worried about Elicia's well-being, either. Having seen what she was capable of for over a decade, she knew there was no reason to worry.

Sun knew what Elicia was capable of, as well. However, she had a softer nature than either Cana or Ultear. So, she simply could not help but worry.

"Yeah." Cana replied with a nod. "Although she's not nearly as destructive as Dad, Lici would never lose to him. Because he would never be able to hit her."

Once again, Ultear and Sun nodded in agreement.

"Anyway, I just sensed three fairly powerful, unfamiliar, magic power signatures." Cana said as she turned away from the noble district. "I'd bet a hundred barrels of booze that they're members of the Phantom Troupe."

"Yeah, I'm not taking that bet." Ultear said in a deadpan tone. "Betting against you when you put booze on the line is a sure-fire way to lose money."

Cana only giggled in response before she led Ultear and Sun towards the three powerful magic power signatures.

Chapter 837: The Calm Before the Storm

While Elicia entered the underground area of Zash Caine's mansion, Cana, Ultear, and Sun continued walking around the city. While it did not look as if they were searching for members of the Phantom Troupe from the outside, as they were window shopping, buying snacks from streetside stalls, and looking at the stock in liquor stores, they kept their [Magic Power Detections] active the whole time.

And as it turned out, they caught the magic power signatures of three rather powerful wizards while doing so. However, they did not make their way over to those signatures immediately. Instead, they made sure to keep an eye on them while slowly making their way in order to not spook them and cause them to start a massacre of something of the sort.

"That's them, right?" Sun asked as she, Cana, and Ultear finally reached the vicinity of the three magic power signatures they found.

At the end of their line of sight, Cana, Ultear, and Sun glimpsed three people, all with strange appearances. At least, they were strange for the citizens of Altair. One was dressed like a modern-day pharaoh, one like a boxer wrapped from head-to-toe in bandages, and the last was dressed like the cross between a clown and a stage magician.

On another note, it seemed as if the trio did not get along, as the pharaoh and the boxer seemed to be giving the clown/magician the cold shoulder. Though, neither Cana, Ultear, nor Sun could tell if that was just an act as part of their cover.

"Well, I wouldn't be surprised if that was them." Cana muttered quietly enough that only Ultear and Sun would be able to hear her. "I mean, dressing like that makes them look unhinged enough to be those kinds of psychotic homicidal maniacs described by the client."

"Yeah, because you're one to talk about dressing properly for the occasion." Ultear snarked as she looked Cana up and down.

Naturally, Cana wore a variation of her signature attire, a purple bikini top, a pair of black, hip-hugging capri pants, and a pair of high-heeled sandals. This time, however, she added a little extra to her outfit in the form of a pair of flowy, detached sleeves that ran from her mid-biceps to her wrists.

"Huh? Is there something wrong with my outfit?" Cana asked in a confused tone. "Lici made this for me, you know?"

"*Sigh* Never mind." Ultear replied in a tired tone, clearly not in the mood to debate with Cana about how a bikini top is not all-occasion attire.

"Well, I think it looks cute." Sun said in a cheerful tone.

"I know, right?" Cana replied happily. "Your outfit is cute, too. I think you could stand to show off a little more of your figure, though."

Ultear rolled her eyes in response to Cana's critique of Sun's outfit. The pink shirt, white jacket, and yellow pleated skirt Sun was wearing was perfectly suited for the occasion. There was no way to add a bikini top into the mix. Meanwhile, Sun only smiled wryly at Cana's clear insinuation.

"I don't know why we're even talking about this." Cana said as she glanced at the white and blue short dress with a train Ultear was wearing. "I mean, seriously... Everything Lici makes looks great."

Ultear and Sun could only nod along with Cana's statement. And as that happened, the three walked past the people of interest they detected not long ago.

However, just as Cana, Ultear, and Sun were paying attention to the three people of interest, those three, Hisoka, Phinks, and Bonolenov were paying attention to them, as well.

"Those three, they're from Fairy Tail." Phinks said in an irritated tone as he watched the three ladies walk down the street.

"Oh, how did you figure that out?" Hisoka asked in a mocking tone. "I'm sure the guild emblem on that woman's abdomen didn't give it away, did it?"

As he said that, Hisoka gestured towards Cana, who, as he mentioned, had her guild emblem on full display thanks to her outfit. And his mocking tone made it clear that he was trying to get under the wannabe pharaoh's skin.

"What did you say?" Phinks asked angrily.

"Now is not the time to fight amongst ourselves." Bonolenov said calmly as he placed a hand on Phinks' shoulder. "Instead, we should see if we can get some information about why they are here. Perhaps, they may even have information about why Uvogin is so late."

"Hmm... Not a bad idea." Hisoka said before licking his lips while looking in the three Fairy Tail wizards' direction. "But they seem pretty strong. S-Class, I'd wager. What if they refuse to tell us what we want to know?"

Though Hisoka posed it as a question, he, Phinks, and Bonolenov already knew the answer.

"Then we force them to tell us." Phinks said in a brash tone filled with bloodlust.

"And because no one is supposed to know we're here, we silence them afterwards." Bonolenov added calmly while leaking bloodlust that made the nearby people walk away as quickly as they could.

"Hehehe! Good." Hisoka said while giggling in a creepy manner. "It seems we're all on the same page."

With that, the three members of the Phantom Troupe began to follow Cana, Ultear, and Sun. And the three Fairy Tail wizards naturally noticed. Because of that, they started moving towards a less populated area of the city, as they knew that a battle was inevitable once the three caught up.

At the same time, Pakunoda, Nobunaga, and Shizuku arrived at the place where the Phantom Troupe intended to make the exchange of Curta Clan's eyes with Zash Caine. However, instead of surveying the

area in the open, they all used their own detection skills to see if there was anyone lurking around the area.

"Looks like the coast is clear." Nobunaga said after doing a sweep of the area.

"Don't let your guard down." Pakunoda replied sharply. "I have a bad feeling about this. Especially since Uvugin still hasn't arrived. No matter how much of an idiot he may be, he's never been this late before."

"Then, you're severely underestimating how much of an idiot he is." Nobunaga replied with a smirk.

Pakunoda only shook her head in response. She has known both Uvugin and Nobunaga to know that they were the definition of frenemies. When there was no outside source of danger, they could be seen constantly arguing with each other and fighting when words were not enough to settle the argument, which was more often than not. Yet, when someone threatened either, they would be the first to come to the other's aid.

With that, Pakunoda started ignoring Nobunaga because she knew that he could go on for ages about Uvugin. Meanwhile, Shizuku continued to watch the area. Because of that, she was the first to notice people approaching.

"I don't know why you're talking about Uvugin, but there are people incoming." Shizuku said in a calm, almost soulless, tone. "What were we supposed to do about that again?"

Immediately upon hearing Shizuku speak, Pakunoda and Nobunaga turned their heads to look in the direction Shizuku was looking. When they did, they saw the silhouettes of three people, two women and a man, approaching.

"*Sigh* Your forgetfulness grates on the nerves at times, Shizuku." Pakunoda said in a somewhat tired tone.

"Besides, is there really a reason to ask that question?" Nobunaga asked as he rested his right hand on his sword's hilt. "We kill 'em. Even if we didn't have orders to keep the area clear, just running into us is their bad luck."

"I see." Shizuku said as she adjusted her glasses. "I suppose I should not have expected anything different from such a simple-minded brute."

Shizuku's blunt comment made Nobunaga grit his teeth in anger. And that anger only fueled his desire to kill the approaching people to vent that feeling. So, without waiting for Pakunoda or Shizuku, he gripped his sword tightly and began walking towards the trio approaching the area.

"Well, this is probably going to get messy." Pakunoda said while shaking her head. "With his temper, he probably won't stop until pieces of those three are all over the area. We'll be counting on you to clean it up with [Blinky], Shizuku."

"Huh?" Shizuku intoned while adjusting her glasses once again. "What are you talking about? Where is Nobunaga going?"

Pakunoda only sighed in response. She then gestured for Shizuku to follow her as she followed Nobunaga to confront the three new arrivals.

At the same time, those three new arrivals, Gildarts, Ur, and Levy, approached the area Pakunoda, Nobunaga, and Shizuku had been investigating.

"No one's here." Gildarts said while looking around. "I thought you two said there were people here."

"Don't doubt us." Ur replied while rolling her eyes. "Just because you can't search with anything other than your eyes doesn't mean we can't."

"Do you always have to poke my sore spot, Honey?" Gildarts asked in a downtrodden tone.

"Of course not." Ur replied with a sweet smile as she reached up to pinch Gildarts' pouting cheeks. "But that sad look on your face is just so~ cute."

Ur's actions made Gildarts smile like a fool. Meanwhile, Levy, who was walking along with them, wore a somewhat perturbed expression on her face. A moment later, however, Levy turned to look towards the three members of the Phantom Troupe who were approaching.

"I don't mean to interrupt your flirting, but they're coming this way." Levy said quietly as she pulled a Light pen out of the small bag on her waist. "And they all have S-Class levels of magic power."

Levy's warning pulled Gildarts and Ur back to the here and now. And just as she said, the two older wizards saw a man, followed by two women, approaching.

"Oh, are you that big guy's friends?" Gildarts asked in a friendly tone while smiling at the three approaching Dark Wizards. "I think his name was Uvagin. Then again... I wasn't really paying attention. He was too weak for me to take seriously."

"You don't have to antagonize them, Gildarts." Ur said while rolling her eyes.

"Huh? But I'm not." Gildarts replied in a confused tone. "I was just telling the truth."

With that, Gildarts and Ur started bickering again. Meanwhile, Levy watched the reactions of the three members of the Phantom Troupe. And just as expected, as soon as Gildarts mentioned Uvagin's name, two of the three's expressions turned cold. As for the woman wearing glasses, her expression did not change in the slightest. Though, Levy could feel her flare her magic power minutely.

"What have you done to Uvagin?" Nobunaga asked in a cold, demanding tone.

"Huh?" Gildarts, pulled out of his little squabble with Ur, intoned in confusion. A moment later, his expression turned sheepish. "Oh, about that. Yeah, I kinda... um... accidentally broke his neck. Sorry to say, he didn't make it after that..."

Swish!

In the next instant, Nobunaga vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed. Then, once he was in front of Gildarts, now standing in an iaido stance, he drew his sword faster than weaker S-Class wizards would be able to follow with their eyes and slashed at Gildarts' neck.

However, Nobunaga's slash was no normal slash. Instead, it was coated in an extremely dense layer of magic power that, like the blade, sharpened on one side. As a result, the cutting power of his blade was greatly increased.

Clang!

Yet, before the sharpened layer of magic power could reach Gildarts' neck, it was stopped in its tracks. On top of that, Gildarts had not even moved a muscle to stop it. And that was made even more obvious by the fact that a whip, also strengthened with magic power, was wrapped around the blade.

Following the whip back to its origin, Nobunaga noticed that it was firmly held in the hand of the woman standing next to Gildarts. Namely, Ur. On top of that, despite holding Nobunaga's sword in place, he could not see any indication that Ur was straining to do so.

"Well, after finding the three of you, we were gonna ask some questions." Ur said in a relaxed tone while glancing at Nobunaga, Pakunoda, and Shizuku. "But this reaction to what my idiot said makes that a bit unnecessary. So, we'll just take you down. Unfortunately for you, thanks to the contents of our quest, we can't let you live. But we'll at least make it as painless as possible."

Just before Nobunaga attacked, Alfonzo was approaching the cave the Phantom Troupe was using as their secondary hideout. However, just before entering, he suddenly stopped.

"Hmm... I couldn't feel these from only a few steps back." Alfonzo said as he knelt to get a better look at the nearly invisible threads laid out at the cave's entrance. "If I hadn't been paying close attention, I might have walked into some kind of trap."

Alfonzo then stood up and turned his head to the left before continuing.

"You're pretty good." Alfonzo said with a smile. "Almost as good as Lici. But even she can't hide her threads from me. So, are you gonna come out and fight? Or do I have to destroy all these traps and walk right inside? Your leader should be in there, right?"

Alfonzo did not receive a verbal response to his inquiry. Instead, he was washed over by a very potent killing intent that seemed to originate from all directions. However, after bathing in Acnologia's killing intent twice, this felt like little more than a gentle breeze.

"*Sigh* I guess we're doing this the hard way." Alfonzo said while shaking his head in mild disappointment. "Then again, you Dark Wizard types never do things the easy way."

Zap!

After speaking, Alfonzo stepped forward. As his foot touched the ground, an arc of electricity shot along the ground into the cave's entrance, frying the threads that acted as both a trap and an early warning system. And as soon as the threads were dispelled, Alfonzo felt the presences in the cave go on high alert.

Swish! *Swish!* *Swish!* *Swish!* *Swish!*

At the same time, several dozen needles, each threaded by a magical thread, streaked towards Alfonzo's vital points from all directions. On top of that, both the threads, which were under the effects of some kind of [Stealth Magic], and the needles, which did not have a magic power signature of their own, would have been nearly impossible to detect for almost anyone else.

"Hmm... I guess I'm not as famous as I thought." Alfonzo said as he casually reached out and plucked one of the needles, which he had brought to a complete halt with his [Metal Magic], out of the air. "Most people who see me know better than to use metal weapons against me. Or is it that you think your shit don't stink? Either way, that was a bad move."

Chapter 838: Take Control, Yaldabaoth

"Oh, it looks like the other team in the city ran into a group of suspicious individuals." Bickslow said with a grin spreading across his face.

"Suspicious individuals! Suspicious individuals!" Bickslow's dolls parroted a moment later.

"*Sigh* But we haven't come across anything yet." Bickslow added in a somber tone.

"Nothing Yet! Nothing Yet!" The dolls chorused, their tones sounding just as down as Bickslow's.

"Stop whining." Evergreen ordered in her usual haughty, imperious tone. "I'm sure we'll find our own prey. And when we do, we'll be the first ones to take them down."

"That's right, a real man doesn't let hardships get him down!" Elfman shouted energetically.

"Exactly." Evergreen said sweetly as she hugged Elfman's massive arm and leaned into him coquettishly.

Elfman returned Evergreen's smile. He then pulled his arm out of her grasp and wrapped it around her waist as the two continued walking through the streets of Altair. Meanwhile, Bickslow, who was usually filled with manic energy, could only look at the couple with half-lidded eyes as the area around Evergreen and Elfman seemed to turn pink in his field of vision.

"I hate working with those two." Bickslow muttered as he slowly followed after the other two. "*Sigh* Why do I have to work with them alone? It's so much better when Laxus or Fried are here."

"Better with Laxus and Fried! Better with Laxus and Fried!" The dolls chorused.

"That's right, you're the only ones who really understand me, my babies." Bickslow said as he stroked one of the wooden dolls floating around him.

A moment later, Bickslow turned to look in the direction of the noble district, a longing expression on his face.

"Still, I can't help but wonder what would have happened if Lici had actually given me a chance." Bickslow muttered quietly before turning his head back to the front to continue following his companions.

"I don't think it would matter." A male voice said from just behind Bickslow as a hand fell on his shoulder. "But I've got some questions for you. Like, why are members of Fairy Tail so far away from home? If you give me the answer, I'll make sure you die a painless death. But if you resist... Let's just say you won't like the lengths I'm willing to go to for answers."

'Who is this guy?' Bickslow asked himself as he whipped a kick at the man who touched his shoulder. 'And how the hell did he get so close without me noticing him? Damn it... I already know the answer to that question. I gotta stop thinking about Lici. She's not going to be mine.'

Bickslow's kick served several purposes in that moment. First of all, it forced the man dressed in black with a half face mask, Feitan of the Phantom Troupe, to take some distance. Second, while Feitan was airborne after dodging the kick, Bickslow's dolls had the time to fire several blasts of magic power at his landing point. And thirdly, it allowed Bickslow to get a good look at his assailant.

For the most part, Bickslow did not find Feitan's appearance strange. He had hunted more than his fair share of Dark Guilds with Laxus and the Thunder God Tribe over the years. So, Feitan's appearance was about par for the course. However, what did draw his attention was the maroon umbrella whose handle was wrapped in dark purple cloth that the man was carrying.

'Yeah, that's not suspicious at all.' Bickslow thought while glancing at the umbrella.

On top of that, Bickslow's sudden attack startled the other people on the street. And when the dolls began firing off magic blasts, the people began to panic and run away in all directions.

Unsurprisingly, Evergreen and Elfman were both alerted, as well. However, before they could rush in to help Bickslow, two more assailants, Shalnark and Franklin, appeared to stop them.

"I wouldn't resist if I were you." Shalnark said. "It will only make things worse for you. Instead, you should just answer our questions and receive a quick death."

"I swear." Evergreen said as she adjusted her glasses. "All you Dark Wizards say the same stuff. It gets pretty old, you know?"

"A real man never gives up!" Elfman shouted as his magic power flared. "[Take Over Magic: Beast Soul: Weretiger]!"

As Elfman was engulfed in the light of his magic power, Evergreen released a large amount of [Fairy Dust] from all over her body. Meanwhile, Shalnark and Franklin readied themselves for a fight. They were tasked with finding out what could have happened to Uvagin. And a group of Fairy Tail wizards seemed like the perfect place to start.

But Bickslow had no time to pay attention to the fleeing civilians. Because Feitan, as if he could hear Bickslow's thoughts, opened the umbrella, which was large enough to conceal his entire body, and pointed its tip at Bickslow's chest.

Click!

Bang!

A moment later, after hearing a click, something like a gunshot sounded, causing the fleeing civilians to try their best to run even faster. At the same time, the pointy tip of Feitan's umbrella shot towards Bickslow at the speed of a bullet.

"Shit..." Bickslow groaned as he put his acrobatic talents to work and backflipped out of the umbrella tip's path. Yet, just as he reached the peak of his flip, Feitan, now holding a thin, double-edged sword, appeared next to him in the air.

'Damn... He's fast.' Bickslow thought to himself.

Even so, Bickslow was expecting Feitan's attack, as he never lost track of the Dark Wizard after first noticing him. So, just as quickly as Feitan approached, Bickslow willed one of his dolls to move above him. And just before Feitan slashed his sword, aiming to sever his spine and paralyze him, Bickslow kicked off the doll, launching himself down towards the ground before the slash could land.

"Tch! Better than expected." Feitan said coldly.

"And you're not as good as advertised." Bickslow replied in a taunting tone.

Feitan's expression did not change outwardly. However, the flaring of his magic power made it clear that he was irritated by Bickslow's remark. On top of that, Bickslow could see his mouth moving. Though, even through lip reading, he was unable to tell what the man opposite him was saying.

'That's definitely not Ishgar's common language.' Bickslow thought to himself as his dolls gathered behind him. 'Still, I'm pretty sure he's throwing every curse he knows at me under his breath.'

Before that thought even finished, Bickslow back flipped. However, he did not land on the ground. Instead, he landed atop one of his dolls. Meanwhile, Feitan faded into nothingness. Or... That was what it looked like. In reality, Feitan, with his sword slashing through the space that Bickslow's neck used to

occupy, reappeared to the left of Bickslow's former position as Feitan's after-image faded away from where he stood originally.

"[Line Formation], Babies!" Bickslow shouted, his tone making him sound slightly unhinged.

In the next instant, Bickslow's other four dolls stacked themselves under the one he was standing on. Then, they all fired a blast of magic power in unison. However, instead of firing five separate blasts, they all combined into what appeared to be an energy slash aimed at Feitan's location.

Boom!

However, just like before, Feitan's speed easily let him avoid Bickslow's attack. As a result, the [Line formation] only left a gash in the street.

However, even before Feitan came to a stop, another volley of magic power blasts was already in his face.

"Argh!" Feitan growled in pain as the five magic power blasts slammed into his body and threw him down the street.

Boom!

Feitan's flight was only stopped when he slammed into a building, cratering the wall on impact.

Meanwhile, Bickslow watched Feitan intently while listening to the sounds of combat and destruction in the background. Though he wanted to check on Evergreen and Elfman in the interval, he knew that he could not afford to take his eyes off Feitan. Especially with his speed. Missing any preparatory movements could prove detrimental.

"Looks like Alfonzo isn't going to be happy." Bickslow muttered while looking at the damage caused from his missed attacks. "But this time it's not our fault. These three started the fight in the city, after all."

While Bickslow muttered to himself, Feitan slowly climbed to his feet. All the while, he checked the state of his injuries.

"Not enough." Feitan muttered as he turned his attention back to Bickslow. He then smiled viciously under his mask as he continued at a volume that Bickslow could hear. "If that's all you have, you should have just answered my questions and let me kill you afterwards. At least it would have been mostly painless. But now..."

Reaching that point, it was clear to see that Feitan had grown beyond just being angry. And the fact that he began speaking in his incomprehensible language only cemented that notion.

"You talk big for someone who can't even touch me." Bickslow taunted before sticking out his tongue and showing off his guild mark. "Besides, do you really think this is all I got? If so, you really don't know anything about Fairy Tail, do you?"

"The only thing I need to know is that your entire guild will be wiped out for messing with us." Feitan growled as he vanished from where he stood in a burst of speed.

With that, the battle continued. Feitan's speed proved annoying for Bickslow. Though, as time went by, he began to notice patterns in Feitan's movements. And as the patterns became clearer in Bickslow's mind, he landed more and more of his blasts.

Unfortunately, the damage the area was taking thanks to Bickslow's magic power blasts, and Feitan's sword swings grew in scale as time passed, as well.

"Yeah!" Bickslow said as he ducked under another slash from Feitan's sword. "Alfonzo's definitely gonna be pissed when he sees this."

"I doubt he'll live long enough to care." Feitan shot backwards as he leapt to avoid Bickslow's kick that flew towards his chin in counterattack.

"Huh? Ahahahahaha!" Bickslow began to laugh so hard that his body leaned back. "Are you serious? No, you can't be."

While in midair, Feitan, while waiting for gravity to pull him back to the ground, was not only surprised by Bickslow's laughter, but also by the fact that no follow up magic power blasts were coming his way.

'What's going on?' Feitan asked himself. A moment later, however, his eyes widened as he realized something. 'No, he didn't reel back from laughter, that block he's standing on is tilting back. On top of that, the other blocks are forming an "X" with the one he's standing on at the center. Damn it...'

"Oh, it looks like you finally noticed." Bickslow said as his laughter stopped abruptly. "Well, it's too late. Anyway, this was fun. But it's time to end it. [X Formation]"

With Bickslow's chant, the five dolls lit up with magic power as they minutely adjusted their angles to keep Feitan in the crosshairs. Then, before Feitan fell to the ground, they fired an X-Shaped blast of magic power that was aimed directly at Feitan's chest.

Swish!

Clang!

Naturally, Feitan had no intention of allowing that attack to land. However, with no footholds to push off, the only thing he could do was swing his sword at it to hopefully deflect or at least divert some of its destructive force.

With is sword flooded with magic power, Feitan timed his vertical slash precisely. And to no one's surprise, he cut through the X-Shaped blast with little effort. Unfortunately, things did not play out as he expected.

Shatter!

"Ahh~~~~!" Feitan shouted painfully as the two sides of the bisected "X" slammed into his torso while the rest of his body was peppered by shards of his shattered sword. As a result, an X-shaped burn was

seared into his chest as his upper garments were burned away, and numerous cuts opened up all over his body.

"*Boom!*

A moment later, after being sent flying by Bickslow's attack, Feitan slammed into a store front, collapsing the entire front wall of the store on top of himself. Meanwhile, Bickslow finally took a chance to look in the direction of Evergreen's and Elfman's fight. However, thanks to how much the fight had moved since the beginning, he could only try to piece together his guild mates' situations based on their magic power signatures.

"Looks like they're alright for now." Bickslow said as he slowly floated towards the store Feitan slammed into atop one of his dolls. "I'll see if they need my help after I finish this guy off. He should be close to his limit by now. Taking the [X Formation] like that, even if he managed to cut down some of its power, should have left him on the verge of consciousness, at the very least."

Crumble!

"*Cough* *Cough* You would think so." Feitan said as he climbed out of the rubble. "And you would be right."

Seeing Feitan's state, Bickslow almost felt bad for him. But when he remembered the Phantom Troupe's reputation and their suspected deeds, that feeling vanished just as quickly as it came.

Currently, Feitan was barely standing while gripping his sword hilt tightly. On top of that, numerous gashes were leaking blood all over his body. Even so, his eyes were still shining ferociously.

"Die." Feitan said quietly as his magic power flared. "Die in both pain and despair. [Pain Packer Magic: Negation Armor]."

With his chant, Feitan was immediately engulfed in the light of his magic power. A moment later, the magic power surrounding him began to transmute itself into a set of white armor with black accents that covered everything except his eyes and nose.

On top of that, Bickslow could tell that the armor was amplifying Feitan's magic power, despite the fact that it was draining Feitan's magic power to keep it active.

"You have no chance now." Feitan rasped out. "With this armor, your magic will no longer have an effect on me. Meaning..."

Bang!

In the next instant, Bickslow was sent flying from atop his doll and slammed into the store front across the street. However, unlike Feitan, he did not smash through it. Instead, he put his acrobatics to use and flipped around, landing feet first against the wall before rebounding off of it and landing on top of another one of his dolls.

Meanwhile, Feitan slowly fell to the ground with his arm extended after throwing the punch that sent Bickslow flying.

At the same time, the four remaining dolls circled Feitan at high speed. All the while, they fired blasts of magic power that all landed on his armor.

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

Yet, no matter how many blasts landed on him, Feitan was completely unaffected. There were no burns or scuffs on the armor, either.

"I told you it's useless." Feitan said as he landed on the street. "But I'm sure you won't be satisfied unless you try everything. So, go on, use your most powerful spell. I'll stand here and wait."

"Don't regret it later." Bickslow replied as he hopped off his doll. He then raised his right arm and pointed at Feitan while the doll moved forward to join the other five. "Baryon Formation] my babies."

Just as Feitan said, he did not move, allowing Bickslow to set up his attack. All the while, he stared into Bickslow's eyes with a glint of cruelty shining deep in his eyes.

Eventually, Bickslow's dolls formed a pentagon in the air in front of Feitan. Then, they began to spin around each other at high-speed. At the same time, a spinning ball of magic power formed at the center of the circle their movements created.

Boom~~~~~!

A few moments later, that spinning ball of magic power fired a beam of magic power at Feitan, who just as he said, did not move to dodge or block the attack. As a result, the collision caused an explosion that raised a cloud of dust and debris into the air.

Yet, when the dust settled, although a crater had been blown into the street, Feitan, who stood at the bottom of the crater, had not sustained any new injuries. In fact, the armor did not even look as if it had been damaged at all.

"Like I said... Pointless." Feitan said as he started walking out of the crater. "Now, it's time for you to experience a pain and fear like nothing you've ever experienced before. Then, when you're nothing more than a broken man, I'll finally put you out of your misery."

"You talk too much." Bickslow said while shaking his head. "But You were right about something, it's time to end this. [Take Control, Yaldabaoth]."

As Bickslow spoke, he raised his left hand and touched the visor he usually wears with the tips of his index and middle fingers. At the same time, his magic power spiked while the visor turned from a silvery color to gun metal black while red crystal materialized in the gaps.

"It's over." Bickslow said as he willed his dolls forward to surround Feitan.

"It is." Feitan replied, his expression morphing into a terrifying grin. "Despair in the heat of a burning sun. [Pain Packer Magic: Rising sun]."

As he chanted his spell, Feitan lowly raised his arms. Yet, contrary to what he expected to happen, his magic power did not mobilize. And because of that, the scorching heat he expected to begin engulfing the surroundings never manifested either.

"What happened?" Feitan asked, confusion evident in his tone.

On top of his spell not being cast, Feitan noticed that his armor was also beginning to break down into motes of magic power. And that only caused his confusion to turn into horror as the beautiful sight of firefly-like motes dissipating into the air marked the end of his invulnerability against Bickslow's attacks.

"Alfonzo and Lici always got on us about explaining our abilities to our enemies." Bickslow said calmly, a stark difference from his usual manic demeanor during fights. "But I don't like leaving my opponents with such big regrets. Especially when they are about to meet their ends."

As he spoke, Bickslow's dolls formed a pyramid around Feitan, with four forming a square on the ground while the last one floated above his head. Then, all the faces angled themselves so that they were smiling at the location of his heart.

"You know what? never mind." Bickslow said while shaking his head. "There really is no point in telling a dead man. On top of that, you don't really deserve the closure that an explanation would give you. Instead, I'll just say this. Try not to make so many bad decisions in your next life. [Pyramid Formation]."

With his last command, Bickslow's dolls all fired a beam of magic power aimed at Feitan's heart. And without his [Negation Armor], Feitan had no way to defend himself.

Boom!

An instant later, the five beams collided, burning through Feitan's body before detonating when they struck each other upon reaching his heart. As a result, Feitan's body was blown apart, flesh, blood, and bone fragments splattering around the area.

And to both Bickslow's relief and disgust, the two things he needed as proof of subjugation, the Spider tattoo and Feitan's head, somehow survived the explosion.

"Yeah, that's disgusting." Bickslow said as he sealed his [Soul Armament] and gingerly picked up the piece of skin where Feitan's tattoo was inked. He then continued as he picked up Feitan's head and stuffed into a bag hanging from his belt. "But a job is a job. I'll just try not to think about it and go see if Ever and Elfman need my help."

'Actually, the real reason I didn't explain my ability to that guy is because I didn't know if that one with the powerful stealth was around.' Bickslow thought to himself as he rushed in the direction where he could sense Evergreen and Elfman fighting the other two members of the Phantom Troupe. 'If they found out that I could control someone's magic power just by making eye contact, as long as they have less magic power than I do while Yaldabaoth is released, if any of them got away, that little tidbit could make its way around the continent. And I would be at a serious disadvantage if someone found out ahead of time.'

Chapter 839: Going All-Out

While things were starting to heat up in Altair, Elicia, who had been cut off from the perceptions of her guild mates, was moving stealthily through the hidden underground area of Zash Caine's manor.

'How in the world did Caine manage to build all of this under his mansion?' Elicia asked herself while swiveling her head from side to side while creeping along the ceiling of the underground corridor. 'I mean, building something this expansive under the capital of the country should have made a whole lot of noise, right?'

["You would think so."] Scylla replied. ["I mean, from what I can tell, you've already traveled far enough to cover the whole block above. ["And it's not like you've gone hundreds of feet underground or anything. You and those things have only walked down two flights of steps so far."]

'I know, right?' Elicia said while nodding emphatically. 'Either those people above are completely deaf, or Caine has some really good magic technology.'

["I'm betting on the latter."] Scylla replied. ["You should probably try to find that, too. I'm sure Fonzie would love to play around with it if you can get your hands on it."]

'Yeah.' Elicia replied with another nod. 'He'll probably be able to improve it, too. He always---'

Rumble!

Before Elicia could finish the thought, the entire underground facility shook, causing the five beings Elicia was following to stumble slightly. The shaking was bad enough that Elicia almost lost her grip on the ceiling, as well.

'Hmm... Looks like things are getting serious outside.' Elicia said making sure her grip on the ceiling was still secure. '*Sigh* I knew splitting up was a bad idea. There definitely gonna destroy a huge part of the city.'

["Yup!"] Scylla replied while popping the "P." "And Fonzie's going to lose it. He's the leader of this quest, and the property damage is going to go on his record."]

'*Sigh* I kinda feel bad for whoever caused this. 'Fonzie's gonna really let them have it.'

["Yeah, he really is."] Scylla added with genuine pity in her tone. ["Anyway, let's keep moving. We don't have all day."]

'You're right... No time to think about that now.' Elicia replied while suppressing a giggle. A moment later, after getting her expression under control, she continued. 'For now, we need to figure out what Zash Caine is up to. We can just enjoy the show later.'

["Agreed."] Scylla said with a nod.

Like that, Elicia and Scylla dropped the topic and continued to explore the underground facility.

Meanwhile, the battles in the city and on its outskirts continued.

Going back about ten minutes...

"I wouldn't resist if I were you." Shalnark said. "It will only make things worse for you. Instead, you should just answer our questions and receive a quick death."

"I swear." Evergreen said as she adjusted her glasses. "All you Dark Wizards say the same stuff. It gets pretty old, you know?"

"A real man never gives up!" Elfman shouted as his magic power flared. "[Take Over Magic: Beast Soul: Weretiger]!"

As Elfman was engulfed in the light of his magic power, Evergreen released a large amount of [Fairy Dust] from all over her body. Meanwhile, Shalnark and Franklin readied themselves for a fight. They were tasked with finding out what could have happened to Uvagin. And a group of Fairy Tail wizards seemed like the perfect place to start.

As the fight between Bickslow and Feitan began, Shalnark and Franklin appeared in front of Evergreen and Elfman, not letting them interfere with Feitan's fight. Naturally, this did not sit well with either of the two Fairy Tail wizards.

"We only need to get information from one of them, Franklin." Shalnark said without turning to look at his teammate. "And the one that Feitan is fighting will be enough for us to get information from. So, you don't have to worry about keeping either of these two alive."

"Hmph!" Franklin grunted in response as a battle hungry grin spread across his face.

Bang!

In the next instant, Franklin's head was snapped to the right as Elfman, now in his [Weretiger] form, blitzed towards him and landed a powerful hook on his left jaw.

However, this result surprised both Evergreen and Elfman, as they were expecting the large man Elfman just attacked to be sent flying. Instead, the only reaction Elfman's punch received was Franklin slowly turning his head back towards Elfman while his smile widened.

"Elfman, move!" Evergreen shouted when she saw Franklin begin to reel his fist back for a counter attack. "[Fairy Magic: Fairy Bomb: Gremlin]."

Not even thinking about it, Elfman leapt away from Franklin just before the punch came flying towards the side of his head. At the same time, thanks to his [Magic Power Detection], Elfman just barely noticed the invisible [Fairy Dust] that had saturated the area. He also noticed that thanks to Evergreen's control, not even a speck of [Fairy Dust] had attached itself to Elfman, the fur that came with his [Take Over], or his clothing, which had been shredded after his transformation.

Boom~~~~~!

In the next instant, before Franklin could react, the area where he and Shalnark stood erupted in an explosion that covered that entire stretch of road. A few moments later, when the explosion died down and the smoke cleared, the street was left with a rather large crater.

"Did we get him?" Evergreen asked curiously. A moment later, after her magic power that saturated the explosion site dissipated, she continued in an annoyed tone. "*Sigh* Never mind. I can feel his magic power signature clear as day. And the other one never even got caught in the explosion. Hell, he completely avoided my [Fairy Dust]."

"It takes a real man to survive an explosion like that." Elfman said loudly.

"Stop complimenting the enemy, you big oaf." Evergreen shot back without taking her eyes off the smoke from her explosion.

Stomp! *Stomp!* *Stomp!*

A moment later, Franklin, now covered in burn marks and torn clothing, stepped out of the crater. And based on his expression, he definitely was not happy. Though, he did not seem to be all that injured from the explosion.

And the reason for that was rather simple. Although he was unable to sense Evergreen's [Fairy Dust], his preternatural senses warned of the incoming danger just in time. As a result, he flared his magic power to its limit, using the magic power to create a defensive barrier around himself before the explosion hit.

A moment later, Shalnark, who, like most members of the Phantom Troupe, had preternatural senses for danger and being seen, made his way back to Franklin's side just as the large man stepped out of the crater fully.

"That was closer than I would have liked." Shalnark said in a solemn tone. "It looks like we'll have to take these two seriously.

"Hmph! I'll kill them." Franklin said as he raised his arms in Evergreen's and Elfman's direction. As he did, he spread his fingers, pointing the tips of all ten fingers at the two Fairy Tail wizards. "[Bullet Magic: Double Machine Gun]."

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

In the next instant, small magic power bullets fired from Franklin's fingertips at high speed.

Yet, before the bullets even began to fly, Elfman had already leapt away from Evergreen. Meanwhile, Evergreen once again ejected a large amount of [Fairy Dust] from all over her body. However, instead of dispersing it like she had earlier, she gathered it into a number of clusters that floated around her.

"[Fairy Magic: Fairy Machine Gun: Leprechaun]." Evergreen chanted as the clumps of [Fairy Dust] transformed into highly condensed needles and were fired to intercept Franklin's [Double Machine Gun] fire.

At the same time, Elfman, using the speed boost that came with his [Weretiger Take Over], vanished from where he stood before reappearing in front of Shalnark with his left hand raised, fingers formed into claws, and slashed at Shalnark's torso.

Yet, Elfman's speed did not seem to bother Shalnark in the slightest as he raised his right arm to parry Elfman's claw strike before throwing a front kick that landed on the Fairy Tail wizard's abdomen.

Bang!

As a result of Shalnark's kick, Elfman was forced backwards, his feet digging a pair of shallow trenches in the street.

"Not bad." Elfman said while rubbing his stomach. "That hurt a little. You hit like a real man!"

"Please, don't insult me like that." Shalnark said, his tone still solemn. "I don't hit like a man, a woman. Or a child..."

Reaching that point, Shalnark took his fighting stance as his expression sharpened.

"I'm not a warrior, or a wizard." Shalnark continued. "I'm a killer."

In the next instant, Shalnark vanished in a burst of speed. At the same time, Elfman narrowed his eyes and prepared for Shalnark to attack.

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

A moment later, the sound of flesh impacting flesh echoed around the battlefield as Elfman blocked, parried, and dodged an onslaught of close quarters attacks from Shalnark.

'He's good.' Elfman thought to himself. 'Most of the attacks he's using are meant to either kill in one strike or incapacitate. He doesn't leave many openings, either. Still...'

With his thoughts reaching that point, Elfman's eyes narrowed a little further. Then, when he felt a punch aimed at his temple, he ducked his head while simultaneously stepping in closer to Shalnark.

Bang!

Then, with a powerful stomp, Elfman threw his left elbow into Shalnark's solar plexus. And that impact was so powerful that all of Shalnark's momentum came to a stop as his body folded around Elfman's elbow.

However, he did not get much time to recover, as his head was snapped backwards while his body was shot upwards by a right uppercut that closely followed the elbow.

bang!

However, before Shalnark could fly too high, Elfman unfolded his left arm and caught Shalnark's right ankle. Then, he was covered in the light of his [Take Over Magic] once again.

"[Take Over Magic: Beast Arm: Black Bull]." Elfman chanted.

A moment later, the glow faded, and Elfman was back in his base state. Though, his shirt was no longer present, as it had been shredded by his earlier [Take over]. However, there was one thing that was different than before.

While he was still gripping Shalnark's ankle with his left hand, said left arm was no longer that of a human. Instead, the entire arm was that of a black beast with even more exaggerated musculature than Elfman's usual arm.

Bang!

Then, using the added strength this new arm granted, Elfman pulled down with all his might, slamming Shalnark, back first, into the street, dense spiderweb cracks spreading from the point of impact.

"*Cough* *Cough*" Shalnark sprayed a mouthful of blood with each cough after being slammed into the ground.

In most situations like this, Elfman would usually talk to his enemy, trying to make them give up. However, this subjugation request called for the Phantom troupe's total elimination. So, there was no room for talking. Instead, Elfman was once again covered in the light of his [Take Over Magic].

"[Take Over: Beast Soul: Blade Liger]." Elfman chanted as the light of his magic power faded. "[Strike Claw]."

When Elfman reappeared, he had once again changed. Now wearing a pair of baggy black pants with red diamond patterns stitched near the bottoms, his muscular body had slimmed down slightly while he was covered in red fur. On top of that, a long, slim red tail with a golden tuft of hair at its tip grew from his

back side. Also, the nails on his hands and feet were replaced with golden claws, a pair of appendages grew from his ribcage, folded around to his back and connected to a pair of golden blades that rested against his back and pointed upwards. And lastly, his face was adorned with long white whiskers, a pair of red ears that looked like a cross between those of a tiger and a lion sat atop his head, and a pair of long, golden fangs stuck out of his mouth while his hair lengthened into a long mane.

(A/N: I still say the red Blade Liger piloted by Leon in Zoids: New Century/ZERO looks the coolest of all the Blade Ligers.)

On top of all that, Elfman's arms were raised. And based on the way his golden claws were shining, it was easy to see that he was channeling magic power into them for his [Shock Claw] attack.

"Tch!"

However, before Elfman could bring his arms down to end the fight, he clicked his tongue before jumping away.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

Less than a second later, the building nearest to Elfman was peppered with small holes from what looked to be gun fire.

Looking in the opposite direction, Elfman was afraid of what he might see. Because if Franklin, who had been exchanging fire with Evergreen had the space to fire at him... Elfman did not even want to think about what that meant for Evergreen.

Yet, when Elfman finally caught sight of Franklin, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Currently, Franklin was covered in blood from taking more than a few shots from Evergreen's [Fairy Machine Gun: Leprechaun] after he diverted his attention to save Shalnark. Even so, the massive Dark Wizard did not look as though the numerous holes in his body bothered him all that much. In fact, based on his expression, it looked like he considered those injuries little more than an annoyance.

After seeing the state Franklin was in, Elfman turned to look at Evergreen. And just as he had expected, she was completely unharmed. Though, she was breathing slightly heavier than usual due to the rapid use of her magic power.

"I'm glad you're okay." Elfman said, his tone carrying both relief and gentleness uncharacteristic for him.

"Of course, I'm fine." Evergreen replied haughtily as she flipped some of her hair over her shoulder. "He may be S-Class, but he's no match for someone as powerful and beautiful as me."

Despite her tone, the gaze she sent Elfman's way would let anyone who saw it know just how much she loved him and how much his concern meant to her.

A moment later, Shalnark, who, like Franklin, was blessed with preternatural senses and perception, walked up to Franklin, his expression grim. On top of that, also like Franklin, he was covered in blood. Though, he had no open wounds, he had coughed up a rather large amount of blood when he was slammed onto the ground.

"It looks like we might have underestimated them." Shalnark said coldly. "We'll have to go all out from now on, Franklin."

Franklin only grunted in return as he once again raised his arms, fingertips pointed at Evergreen and Elfman in preparation to use his [Double Machine Gun] once again.

Meanwhile, Shalnark also flared his magic power while ignoring his internal injuries. He then held out his hand, palm up.

"[Manipulation magic: Black Voice]." Shalnark chanted solemnly.

"I don't think so." Evergreen barked as she materialized a new volley of needles from her [Fairy Dust].

However, before Evergreen could fire, intending to interrupt Shalnark's spell, Franklin cast his [Double Machine Gun]. However, his target was neither Evergreen nor Elfman. Instead, all his shots were aimed at the quickly condensing [Fairy Dust Needles].

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

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

And as each of Franklin's shots landed on one of Evergreen's needles, a small explosion was triggered. Though, because the needles were not fully formed when they exploded, the explosions were far from powerful enough to even damage the street below them. Though, Evergreen was unable to cast her spell before Shalnark completed his.

"Based on what I've seen so far, I won't be able to use [Black Voice] the way it was originally intended to be used." Shalnark said as he raised the antenna in his hand. "But that's fine. Either way, you're going to die today. It's just a shame I won't remember how you met your ends."

With that said, Shalnark forcefully jammed the antenna into the back of his own head. Then, as soon as the antenna was inserted securely, the little bit of emotion on Shalnark's face vanished, only to be replaced by an expression that screamed: "Ruthless efficiency."

On top of that, thanks to their [Magic Power Detection], Evergreen and Elfman noticed that Shalnark's magic power output was rising sharply. Though, it did not rise in quality. Meaning, Shalnark's reserves would drop at a higher pace than before.

Still, neither Evergreen nor Elfman dropped their guard. A higher output meant higher attack power. Plus, Shalnark was an S-Class Dark Wizard. So, even if his magic power would empty faster than before, he still had enough to fight like this for several hours, at least.

At the same time, Franklin also flared his magic power to its limit as he adjusted his aim once again.

"*Sigh* I guess we're not gonna get out of this without going all out, are we?" Evergreen asked.

Though her question made it seem like she was unwilling to show her trump card, the smile on Evergreen's face as she raised her left hand to press her middle and index fingers against the bridge of her glasses told the opposite story.

"A real man always goes all-out.!" Elfman shouted as he touched the belt buckle on his waist. "And I'm a real man! [Amalgamate, Echidna]. [Blade Liger: Blades, Fangs, and Claws. Weretiger: Speed. Beast: Strength.]"

Elfman was once again covered in the light of his [Take Over magic]. Yet, when he became visible once again. His form was not that of a single humanoid monster. Instead, he was an amalgamation of the three he named.

Now, Elfman's upper body was that of the Beast. Yet, from his mouth, on his fingers, and growing from his rib cage were the golden fangs, claws, and blades of the Blade Liger. Then, his lower body was that of the Weretiger, with the exception of the claws on his feet, which were also golden like those of the Blade Liger.

As one might be able to guess, the release of Elfman's [soul Armament], Echidna, allowed him to mix and match traits from the different [Beast Souls] he possessed, increasing his combat effectiveness to another level.

"I knew you would say that." Evergreen said with a smile. "Well then, I guess I'll go all-out, too. [Petrify, Medusa]."

In the next instant, Evergreen's glasses glowed. Then, they transformed into a blindfold that covered her eyes. On top of that, a pair of nail-shaped daggers extended from what used to be the arms of her glasses, attached by chains. Then, those daggers began to float as the chains extended.

"Alright, let's start round two." Evergreen said as the chains connecting the daggers to her blindfold extended, and the tips of the daggers flew towards Shalnark at high-speed.

Chapter 840: Elicia's Fury 4

Seeing the transformations Evergreen and Elfman went through, Franklin showed an expression filled with confusion. Even so, he was still ready to fight and kill the targets.

As for Shalnark, his expression did not change in the slightest. And that was due to his spell, [Autopilot]. Without any conscious thought on his part, he was only programmed to defeat his enemies. In fact, it was so bad that he would not even remember the fight after he implanted the antenna in the back of his head.

"Well, let's finish this, Elfman." Evergreen said as she used her magic power to manipulate the two daggers attached to her blindfold by chains. "Unfortunately, I won't be able to use my [Petrifying Eye] during this fight. It's just too powerful during Medusa's release. I could end up turning the entire street to solid stone, after all."

"Right!" Elfman shouted energetically. "I'll end this like areal man."

"Right... You do that..." Evergreen said, sounding slightly exasperated at her man's overused catch phrase.

However, before Evergreen could say anything else, she was forced to tilt her head to avoid a flying kick from Shalnark. A moment later, a pair of [Fairy Wings] appeared on her back and she flew into the air.

"I'll leave the big guy to you, Elfman." Evergreen said while staring at Shalnark.

"Got it!" Elfman said as he lowered himself into a three-point stance. "Finish that guy like a real man!"

"*Sigh* No wonder Mirajane beats you up so often." Evergreen said while shaking her head.

Shunk! *Shunk!*

A moment later, the two daggers shot towards Shalnark. However, the blond Dark Wizard's automated response made dodging look easy. Even so, Evergreen had no intention of stopping there.

While she constantly extended and retracted the daggers to strike down Shalnark, Evergreen also released a large amount of [Fairy Dust], making half of it blend in with the surrounding Ethernano. At the same time, she condensed the other half into needles for her [Fairy Machine Gun: Leprechaun].

"[Fairy Magic: Fairy Machine Gun: Leprechaun]." Evergreen chanted as she released volley after volley of [Fairy Dust] needles at Shalnark.

However, thanks to [Autopilot], Shalnark's dodging movements were extremely efficient, avoiding every attack sent his way. Unfortunately, although he, or rather the [Autopilot], was aware that he was being herded in a certain direction, there was nothing he could do about it. Otherwise, he would take serious damage from the [Fairy Machine Gun] and the flying daggers.

Even so, with Evergreen's aerial superiority, Shalnark was completely unable to mount an effective counterattack. And thanks to Elfman taking care of Franklin, he could not count on any help from his teammate, either.

Not to mention, if he were to be hit by the daggers, there was a good chance that he would end up bound by the chains connecting them to Evergreen's blindfold. And if that were to happen, there would be no need to worry about whatever trap that was being set up.

Even so, Shalnark eventually found himself chased into an alley between two relatively tall buildings. On top of that, he found himself reaching a dead end. Even worse, although he could neither see it or sense it with his magic power, Shalnark could tell that there was something dangerous saturating the alleyway.

In most situations like this, Shalnark would be able to use the walls to escape to the rooftops of the buildings on either side of the alley. But his preternatural senses were telling him that there was no way to get to the top before the trap was sprung.

"Well, it looks like we've finally reached the end of the road." Evergreen said as she looked down at Shalnark from the air near the alleyway's entrance. "I just hope there's enough of you left to identify you as a member of the Phantom Troupe after I'm done. [Fairy Magic: Fairy Bomb: Gremlin]."

Boom~~~~~!

Realizing that Shalnark was not in the proper state of mind after casting [Autopilot], Evergreen did not give him a chance to say any final words. Instead, she triggered an explosion big enough to destroy the three buildings that formed the dead end, sending chunks of building debris flying in all directions and damaging many more of the surrounding buildings.

And along with that debris, a charred body was also sent flying through the air, trailing smoke behind it as it soared through the air in a devastating parabola.

Thud!

The heavy thud when the body hit the ground was enough to make weaker-minded wizards flinch and recoil at the image. Yet, Evergreen, who had spent most of her wizarding career hunting down Dark Wizards, barely even registered the impact. Instead, she was more concerned with checking the body and making sure the proofs of subjugation were intact enough to present them to the client.

"Well, although his head and face are pretty burnt, you can still recognize him." Evergreen said as she crouched over Shalnark's corpse. "And the tattoo is still there, too. It's pretty badly damaged, too, though. I hope seeing three quarters of it will be enough for that Kurapika guy. At least the number is still there."

After analyzing the corpse, Evergreen stood up and dusted off her hands with a look of disgust on her face. She then reached into a pouch she wore at her waist and pulled out a scroll.

"*Sigh* These things are really handy." Evergreen said as she unrolled the scroll. "To think, ninjas have been using stuff like this for so long. It's a good thing Alfonzo learned how to make them. Carrying bodies was so much more disgusting before he started selling them to the guild."

As she spoke, Evergreen laid the unrolled scroll on the ground next to Shalnark's corpse. She then, still with that same disgusted expression on her face, kicked the body on top of the scroll before crouching down and channeling her magic power into the scroll.

Poof!

A moment later, after a puff of smoke covered Shalnark's corpse, the body had disappeared, stored into the scroll.

"Okay, I'm done here." Evergreen said as she picked up the scroll and began rolling it back up. "Elfman should be done soon, too. When he is, I guess we should check on Bickslow. But I doubt he had any issues, either."

Going back a few minutes, while Evergreen was shepherding Shalnark towards her trap, Elfman had charged towards Franklin, who once again used his [Double Machine Gun] to try and gun him down.

"[Strike Claw]." Elfman chanted as he channeled magic power into his claws, causing them to glow with a brilliant gold shine.

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

With the stacked speed and agility boosts allotted to him by the [Weretiger] and [Blade Liger Take Overs], Elfman dashed and dodged between the [Double Machine Gun] fire. And for the magic bullets he was unable to avoid, he lashed his claws at high-speed to deflect them.

Unfortunately for the surroundings, every magic bullet that Elfman deflected exploded on either the street, the trees decorating the street, or the buildings on either side of the street, raising the destruction to normal Fairy Tail levels.

Even so, Elfman had no time to pay attention to that. Not that he would have in the first place.

Eventually, however, Elfman was able to close the distance with Franklin, making his ranged attacks useless. Though, that was not to say that Franklin was useless when fighting up close. Thanks to his strong magic power and his skill at channeling it through his body, he was a formidable hand-to-hand combatant, as well.

Bang! *Bang!* Swish!* Bang!* *Swish!* Bang!* *Bang!*

And that could be seen in the way Franklin did more than just punch and kick when Elfman got close. Despite his size, he dodged nimbly, and deflected Elfman's claw strikes with precision. On top of that, whenever the opportunity presented itself, Franklin would deliver a devastating counterattack.

"Yeah! This is how a real man fights!" Elfman shouted as he raised the intensity of his onslaught while completely ignoring the attacks that landed on his body and head. "But if you wanna beat me, you'll have to do better than this! Natsu hits harder than this!"

"*Roar* I'll kill you!" Franklin bellowed at the perceived mockery.

Little did Franklin know, however, Elfman was not mocking him at all. In fact, he was completely sincere. Natsu, even without releasing Igneel, really did hit harder than Franklin. And that was the reason why Elfman could shrug off the big man's punches and kicks as he was.

Like that, the two large men stood in the middle of the street exchanging punches, kicks, elbow strikes, knee strikes, and claw slashes. All the while, the damage to their surroundings only increased, and the force behind their strikes was causing the ground around them to crack and crater repeatedly.

Finally, after a few minutes, Elfman's expression changed, a pleasant smile spreading across his face.

"Oh, it looks like Ever--- Urgh!" Elfman began to say before he was interrupted by a punch that landed on his nose. He then shot an annoyed glare at Franklin. "A real man doesn't interrupt someone when they're talking!"

Franklin only grunted in response as he threw another punch.

Bang!

In response, Elfman tilted his head, allowing the punch to land on his shoulder. He then reached up and grabbed Franklin's arm.

"Anyway, Ever is done with your partner." Elfman said as he unfolded the blades on his sides. "So, I'll end this, too. I don't wanna keep her waiting, after all. [Blade Rush]."

In the next instant, Elfman channeled magic power into his claws and the blades growing from his ribs. As a result, the blade, like his claw began glowing with the same golden shine. On top of that, the claws wrapped around Franklin's right forearm dug into the giant man's flesh.

"Argh!" Franklin growled in pain while trying to free himself from Elfman's grasp.

However, before he could make any progress in freeing himself, Franklin's eyes widened in horror as he saw Elfman begin to twist at the waist.

Then, with a burst of power, Elfman flung Franklin up into the air. At the same time, while using the momentum from twisting to throw Franklin, Elfman leapt up after him, his body spinning with the action.

Then, using the claws on his hands and feet, the blades growing from his sides, and, surprisingly, the golden tuft on his tail, he carved up Franklin's airborne body, despite the Spider's attempt to defend himself with his arms, as he soared past him.

Swoosh!

Splatter!

As Elfman ascended, his claws, blades, and tail tore through Franklin's defenses with little effort. As a result, by the time Elfman reached the peak of his leap and stopped spinning, Franklin was no longer in one piece, as his arm, legs, and parts of his torso had been torn away from his body, splattering blood and body parts all over the street below.

Thump!

A moment later, Elfman, also covered in Franklin's blood, landed near the majority of Franklin's body. Shortly afterwards, Evergreen, having already dealt with Shalnark, arrived next to him.

"That was far too inelegant, Elfman." Evergreen said while frowning at the mess covering Elfman all over. She then pointed a finger directly at Elfman's nose as she continued. "You're not allowed to touch me until you get cleaned up. And you'd better wash yourself at least five times before even thinking that you're clean. Do. I. Make. Myself. Clear?"

Elfman only laughed loudly as he listened to Evergreen's scolding. Then, he playfully opened his arms and lunged at his girlfriend to give her a hug.

"Eek~~~~~!" Evergreen shrieked as she created her [Fairy Wings] and propelled herself away from Elfman's grasp.

Meanwhile, as those two played around, Bickslow, with Feitan's corpse being carried by his dolls, approached the duo. And when he saw the damage to the surroundings, he could not help but let out an exhausted sigh.

"Alfonzo's gonna be pissed when he sees or hears about this." Bickslow said in a tired tone.

"Pissed off! Pissed off!" Bickslow's dolls chorused.

"Hopefully he won't hold us too responsible, though." Bickslow continued. "I mean, it's not like those guys gave us much of a choice, right? They started it in the middle of the city. And it's not like they would have just followed us if we asked them to relocate the fight outside the town, would they?"

After asking himself that question, Bickslow could only sigh in resignation. Then, he walked over to join Evergreen and Elfman to break them out of their little, pink world. At least he could remind them of the hell Alfonzo would make them pay for the collateral damage. Seeing their lovey-dovey atmosphere morph into one filled with terror would make him feel better, at least.

Meanwhile, back in the Caine Manor's underground facility, Elicia had been following the five unnatural beings while mentally cataloging the layout. At least, that was the plan until she found Zash Caine, who she figured was down there, somewhere.

"Was" being the operative word.

Because all Elicia's plans went out the window when she came across a certain room.

"What the hell is this?" Elicia asked with her voice trembling, her choice of words making it clear that she was enraged.

["Elicia, you have to calm down."] Scylla,, her tone also shaking with rage, said in response. ["Your magic power control is slipping. If you keep this up, your [Camouflage Magic] is going to fail and you'll alert them of your presence."]

"That doesn't sound so bad right now." Elicia replied, her rage building with every second she looked in to the room. "If they find me, I'll have a good reason to beat them all within an inch of their lives."

["*sigh* Although I agree, now isn't the time."] Scylla said. ["We still need to find proof that Zash Caine was the one who hired the Phantom Troupe to annihilate the Curta Clan. On top of that, we need to find out why he betrayed the Kingdom of Fiore, remember?"]

Unfortunately, thanks to her anger, Elicia was finding it harder and harder to listen to what Scylla had to say as time passed.

And the reason for that was simple. At least, it was easy to understand from a woman's perspective. Hell, from any decent human being's perspective.

In the room Elicia came across, from wall to wall, the only things Elicia could see were women, cages, torture devices, and dried, suspicious-looking liquids. Oh, and there were no small number of blood stains splattered around the room, as well.

And Elicia was not naïve enough to think that all that blood came from just the barely treated wounds she could see on the bodies of the women trapped in the cages around the room.

"Scylla, some of these girls are barely old enough to be considered adults." Elicia forced out through gritted teeth. "And I doubt they've only been here since they were old enough."

["I know, Lici. I know."] Scylla replied. ["But since we're here, those girls won't have to worry about going through any more of this. But for now, we've got a job to do. Once we have the evidence we need, we'll be able to save them all."]

'Though, I'm not sure if they'll all fully recover from this.' Scylla continued in her mind.

In response, Elicia growled quietly as she turned away from the room. Because she knew that if she didn't get the state of those women out of her line of sight, she would not be able to hold back from hunting down Zash Caine at that very instant to make him pay for what he had done.

"Fine... I'll stick to the mission Fonzie gave me." Elicia said through gritted teeth. "But If I come across him before I find the proof we're looking for, I can't make any promises that I'll prioritize the mission first."

["I wouldn't blame you if you couldn't."] Scylla replied. ["Hell, if I could get out, I'd wanna go make him pay, too."]

Nodding in understanding, Elicia began moving in the direction where the unnatural presences had gone before she found the room. Yet, before he could travel too far, she felt the five presences coming back towards her. On top of that, she could feel the presence of a fairly unremarkable wizard approaching her.

And when she heard the faint sound of a male voice carrying down the corridor, her expression turned from anger into a vindictive smile that promised untold amounts of pain for the one approaching.

"Sorry, Scylla." Elicia muttered in a dangerous tone. "Looks like the mission comes later. At least I'll try to keep the destruction to a minimum. That way, the world outside of the facility won't know that anything is going on down here."

["Well, I guess that's the most I can ask for."] Scylla said, her tone filled with mock disappointment. Though, the similarly vindictive smile she wore on her face made it obvious that she liked this outcome

more than just completing the mission. ["Just don't let anyone get outside. If you do, things will get complicated. Attacking a minister unprovoked won't look good, after all."]

"Oh, I promise..." Elicia said as she strengthened her [Camouflage magic]. "No one is getting out of here until I've done what needs to be done."

With that said, a deluge of nearly invisible threads shot in all directions from Elicia's hands.

Those threads, under Elicia's control, quickly covered every wall, ceiling, and floor of the underground facility. As a result, even if she could not sense all the exits, hidden or in the open, she blocked them from being accessed.

Elicia then began moving quietly towards her prey. A promise to make him, Zash Caine, feel all the suffering he inflicted on the women she found caged up in that room glinting in her eyes.