

Fairy Tail 97

Chapter 97: The Cause of the Disease

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Resenbool.

September, x781.

After the conversation with Winry, Alfonzo, Sun, and Winry followed Pinako to the table. Waiting for them was a pot of vegetable stew, enough white bread for everyone, and glasses of milk.

Sigh If Ed were here; he would be complaining about the milk." Winry said in an exasperated tone.

"Well, he's not here." Pinako said. "And that's a good thing, now I don't need to get the step stool for him to climb into his seat."

Hearing Pinako's jab at this "Ed" that neither Alfonzo nor Sun had met, the couple could not help but look at her with a weird gaze.

"I know what you're thinking, and I'm fully aware of the hypocrisy in my statement." Pinako said calmly after noticing the gazes directed at her. Then, she took her seat as she continued. "It's just an old lady's way of showing affection to a child I helped raise."

If you say so." Alfonzo replied with a shrug as he pulled Sun's chair out for her.

"Thank you." Sun said with a shy smile as Alfonzo helped push her chair back in after she sat down.

"Don't mention it." Alfonzo replied with a smile and took his own seat.

"Aww... That was so cute." Winry said with a smile that hid a hint of envy.

'*Sigh* Ed never treats me like that.' Winry thought to herself.

"So, when's the wedding?" Winry asked, shaking off the envious feeling.

"Not sure yet, honestly." Sun replied. "We got engaged as sort of a political thing. We're still getting to know each other."

"Oh, I see." Winry replied with a nod.

With that, the dinner continued. While the group of four ate, Pinako told Alfonzo and Sun everything she knew about the disease that was afflicting the town's miners. She also gave them a map of the mines and marked the spots where the people who have been affected usually worked.

Then, after dinner, Pinako went to bed, leaving Alfonzo, who offered to do so, to wash the dishes. Meanwhile, Winry and Sun chatted about anything, everything, and nothing at all until he was finished.

When Alfonzo was done washing dishes, without the girls noticing, he went to the Vanquish and retrieved his and Sun's luggage from the trunk. Then, as soon as he returned, Winry, finally noticing his presence again, led the two upstairs to the guest room. However, she pulled Sun away.

"Come on, Sun, sleep in my room." Winry said to the younger girl. "You can sleep with me, and we can talk some more."

"Okay." Sun replied with a smile, picking up a change of clothes from her luggage. "We'll have lots of fun."

"well, I'll see you two in the morning." Alfonzo said, lightly waving at the excited girls.

With that, Sun and Winry walked toward Winry's bedroom as Alfonzo closed the door to the guest room and went to sleep, not before performing the regular maintenance on his arm, though.

The next morning, shortly after sunrise, Alfonzo and Sun, despite staying up late to talk with Winry, woke up to do a bit of light training. A few hours later, in front of the Rockbell residence, they were just finishing up. While Alfonzo was doing handstand push-ups with only his organic arm, Sun was a little ways over practicing her sword forms with the flicker of [Water Magic] around her blade.

"596... 597... 598... 599... 600." Alfonzo counted as he finished his last set. A moment later, he pushed off the ground with his right hand and performed a flip before landing on his feet. "Alright, Sun, we don't wanna over do it while we're on a quest."

"Okay!" Sun replied, performing one more sword swing before sheathing her shirasaya. (A/N: Thanks keyblade_master.)

"So, how's the new sword?" Alfonzo asked as he walked over to Sun's side.

"It's great!" Sun replied happily. "It's so easy to flow my magic power into it."

"I'm glad you like it." Alfonzo said with a smile.

During his recovery, Alfonzo made quite a few things for his friends and lovers. On top of making the [Sea Empress Armor] set for Erza from the Leviathan's remains, a pair of magic pistols he modeled after Ebony and Ivory from Devil May Cry for Alzack, and a high-caliber magic sniper rifle he made for Bisca, he also crafted Sun's current magic sword out of an alloyed combination of orichalcum and mithril.

Although it was almost three times as heavy as her old sword, Sun's merfolk constitution made the difference in weight inconsequential.

"You kids sure work hard." Pinako said from the house's front porch with a cup of coffee in her hands and Den standing next to her. "Anyway, you should get cleaned up. We'll be having breakfast soon."

"Okay!" Sun shouted energetically. Then, she started running toward the house. "I was just getting hungry, anyway."

Watching Sun run off, Alfonzo only shook his head with a gentle smile on his face. Then, he started walking toward the house as well.

"You know, I would have helped you make breakfast, Miss Pinako." Alfonzo said politely.

"How could I ask a guest to help with the cooking?" Pinako replied. "Besides, I already let you help by doing the dishes last night."

"Yeah, but cooking is a hobby of mine." Alfonzo said as he walked past the old lady. "I really love cooking, so it's not something you need to worry about."

"Well..." Pinako muttered as she considered Alfonzo's words.

"Anyway, after breakfast, we'll go check on the people afflicted with the disease." Alfonzo said. "I use [Metal Magic], so I'll see if there is anything I can do for them."

"Thank you." Pinako said, following Alonzo into the house.

"*Bark*" Den barked shortly afterward as if she were saying her own thanks.

Just like that, Alfonzo and Sun got themselves cleaned up before joining Pinako at the table for breakfast. Then, just before they started eating, Winry, who had clearly just woken up, sleepily joined the group.

After breakfast, While Winry went back upstairs to get a little more sleep and Pinako washed the dishes, Alfonzo and Sun hopped in the Vanquish and followed Pinako's directions to the town's hospital.

After showing their guild marks and the quest sheet, they were allowed to see the still living victims of the disease.

"Have you noticed if the virus is contagious yet?" Alfonzo asked as he and Sun followed a doctor through the halls of the hospital.

"From what we've seen, the disease can only be contracted inside the mines." The doctor, an old man in a white lab coat, replied. "But, we don't know if contact with the infected area's insides could also pass the disease on to others."

"Why not, wouldn't that be something you'd find out in an autopsy?" Sun asked curiously.

"Well... The thing is..." The doctor said awkwardly.

"You don't have the proper tools to cut into the infected areas, huh?" Alfonzo asked.

"That's exactly right." The doctor said with a nod.

"*Sigh* This sounds like real trouble." Alfonzo muttered. "But at least the chances of it becoming an epidemic are low."

"That's one of the few things we have to be happy about ever since this disease started affecting the town's people." The doctor said as he stopped in front of a particular door. "We're here. This is the wing where all the patients have been isolated."

"Alright, then I guess we'll go inside and take a look." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

A moment later, the doctor led Alfonzo and Sun into the hospital wing. Shortly afterward, they entered the first patient's room. When they did, they found a sedated man lying in a hospital bed.

"Considering no one has survived this disease as of yet, I guess the people who contract it are prone to panicking, right?" Alfonzo asked as he, Sun, and the doctor approached the patient's bed.

"*Sigh* Unfortunately." The doctor replied. "We really have no solutions."

"Well, I'll take a look." Alfonzo said with a solemn expression on his face.

"Does your magic have anything to do with recovery?" The doctor asked hopefully.

"Nope." Alfonzo replied while placing his hand on the infected man's arm.

'Hmm... his skin is hard.. But it still moves like regular skin.' Alfonzo thought to himself after feeling the infected area. 'It's almost like the tissues are being replaced with an organic metal. '

"Then, how do you plan to help them?" The doctor asked.

"I use [Metal Magic]." Alfonzo replied. "So, I'll see if I can extract whatever is causing the disease. Hopefully, that will be enough to eliminate the symptoms, as well."

"I see." The doctor replied with a nod. "Well, good luck."

While Sun looked on in curiosity and concern for the people of the town, Alfonzo injected his magic power into the infected area on the patient's arm. A moment later, he raised an eyebrow.

'There really is a living metal inside of this man.' Alfonzo thought to himself as he examined the situation. 'And it looks like it is actively healing any injuries it comes across while changing everything into an organic metal.'

After making that analysis, Alfonzo frowned.

'It also looks like it is leeching off the magic power of the body.' Alfonzo continued his thoughts. 'Even though they can't actively use it, even normal civilians have a small amount of magic power, but they definitely don't have enough to sustain such a living metal. So, that's probably what kills them in the end.'

With that, Alfonzo exerted his will on the sliver of living metal that was moving through the patient's body. Then, he forced it toward the patient's pinky finger. A moment later, a small incision opened up at the tip of the finger in question. Then, a thin, silvery liquid poured out of the incision, before the cut was quickly closed.

"What in the world is that?" The doctor asked while recoiling away from the slithering, silvery mass.

"This..." Alfonzo said, raising the strange metallic organism with his magic power. "Is the cause of the disease."

"Really?" Sun asked, drawing her face near to the thing wrapped in Alfonzo's magic.

Before Alfonzo could reply, however, the silvery mass lunged at Sun's face, causing her to jump back in fright.

"Is it alive?" Sun asked, her face paler than usual.

"From what I can tell, yes." Alfonzo replied. "But it's more like avirus than a creature. A virus that seems to seek out the nearest living thing. Then, it begins to integrate with the first organism it comes in contact with, living off the host's magic power while changing its constitution."

"Then, it's a parasite?" The doctor asked.

"Sort of." Alfonzo said. "But this is a metal... A never-before-seen metal. By the way, have you named the disease yet?"

"No, we haven't." The doctor replied.

"Then, do you mind if I do the honors?" Alfonzo asked.

"Sure.. You're the one who found the cause, after all." The doctor answered.

"Ooh, what are you gonna call it, Alfonzo?" Sun asked with sparkling eyes.

"I'll call it... The Techno Organic Virus." Alfonzo said, remembering one of his favorite comic book characters from his past life as he named the disease.

With that out of the way, Alfonzo, along with Sun, went around to all the occupied rooms in that wing of the hospital removing the organic metal from each of the patients.

Though the cause of the disease had been found and removed, the symptoms were still present. So, Alfonzo and Sun would definitely be staying in Resenbool for a little while longer after all the patients were treated to check on their progress.

Nearly eight hours later, after Alfonzo treated the rest of the patients in the hospital, he and Sun were once again in the Vanquish and heading to the Rockbell residence. While driving, Alfonzo happened to glance at Sun while checking the side mirror. And he was a little surprised at what he saw.

On Sun's face, her usual innocent smile was nowhere to be seen. Instead, she wore a somewhat depressed expression. However, before he could ask about it, Sun spoke up.

"Hey, Alfonzo." Sun said in a down tone. "Was there any point in bringing me along on this quest?"

Considering that Sun could not do much more than simply follow Alfonzo around the hospital all day, Alfonzo was not surprised that she would ask a question like that. Luckily, Alfonzo already had an answer prepared for such a question.

"There was." Alfonzo replied with a nod.

"But... I didn't, no, couldn't do anything to help." Sun said, hanging her head frustratedly. "We were supposed to go on this adventure together. But you did everything by yourself."

"Let me correct you, Sun." Alfonzo said sternly. "I brought you along on this quest to teach you something."

"Huh?" Sun exclaimed in confusion while quickly turning her head to face Alfonzo.

"There's no denying that you're a strong wizard." Alfonzo said. "And considering your lineage as a mermaid, you have a much higher growth curve than anyone else."

Hearing Alfonzo's stern tone, Sun focused on his every word.

"And because of that, everything has been smooth sailing for you... If you don't count you're dad's overprotective nature." Alfonzo continued, adding a chuckle to that last part. "But that's the problem, because of the environment you grew up in, you only had to deal with trials you could overcome with brute strength. And as a professional wizard, that won't cut it."

Contemplating Alfonzo's words, Sun could understand what he meant. In the months since becoming a Fairy Tail wizard, she had taken magical beast extermination quests almost exclusively. And for the few quests that were different, unbeknownst to her, Gozaburo and Masa followed her, taking care of anything they deemed outside of her skill set without letting her know.

"I wanted you to see that being a wizard needs more than just the ability to fight." Alfonzo said with a smile. "At the same time, though, the ability to fight can never be neglected."

Hearing that, Sun fell deep into contemplation. However, instead of feeling inadequate due to her lack of support skills, she started thinking of skills that would help her become a well-rounded wizard. And in

the future, she would find that taking this quest with Alfonzo benefited her greatly in her career as a wizard.