Canon is my plaything. That is all.

This has been edited by both *Justlovereadin’* and *Hiryo*, but that means there are no doubt small mistakes throughout, hopefully not enough to harm your enjoyment of the chapter.

**Chapter 1#{Deliberate, no jinx here LOL}: Picking Your Poison Poorly**

 Despite his and Wendy’s discomfort, the train continued on through the night. The group arrived in Magnolia evening the next day. The previous night’s scare forgotten for now, Bisca giggled as the two Dragon Slayers leaped out the train’s window to get off the train that much quicker. When they both threw their arms up and shouted, “Freedom!” she and Alzack both laughed aloud.

 “Are you sure all of you Dragon Slayers aren’t related somehow?” Alzack said as he and Bisca joined them more sedately, even using the door and the small stepping ladder to exit the train. “A family-based motion sickness problem would make much more sense than it being some kind of byproduct of your magic.”

 “Ha, ha,” Ranma said, glaring at the Gun’s Magic mage, while Wendy shook her head at the very idea of all of them being related like that. One combat junkie for an Onii-chan was enough in her mind, whatever fun times they’d had together. “That’s like saying all Guns Magic users come from the same clan.”

Then he smirked, reaching out to thump Alzack on the shoulder. “Although, I have seen a Guns Magic user that dressed the same as you do with the whole poncho thing. If that’s what you’ve got to look forward to in the future man, all I’ll say is you better watch what you eat.”

Alzack spluttered at that, while Bisca rolled her eyes and moved to stand with Wendy and Carla. “Come on, let’s head to the guild.”

As they moved through the town the Fairy Tail mages noticed the stares and looks they were getting, just like Erza and the others had the day before. They exchanged a worried glance, while Carla and the two Dragon Slayers followed, not noticing the looks as Wendy speculated on what kind of apartment they could get for the rest of autumn and winter. Ranma on the other hand was wondering if Erza would be up for a spar, and if Natsu had finished recovering from his magic poisoning.

This attitude abruptly changed as they came within sight of the Fairy Tail guildhall. Despite the efforts of some of the guild, there were still two large iron spears sticking through the building like it was a shishkabob. “What happened!?” Bisca asked, as she and Alzack raced forward followed by the others.

Bursting in, they calmed down somewhat as they saw the usual crowd of guild members, talking and laughing like normal, simply moving around the metal pillars stuck through the guild hall. That let Ranma get the first word in edge-wise as he entered after them smirking at the old man. “Can't say I approve of your decorations old man, what’s up with that, or is this some kind of hint to your guild that they need more iron in their diets.”

“That was lame,” Laxus said with a roll of the eyes, not moving from where he sat at the bar, going drink for drink with Cana. Turning in his stool he watched as Ranma talked to his grandfather.

Bisca rolled her eyes and ignored Laxus, moving quickly into the guild and heading towards several of her friends to talk to them. She tapped Ranma on the shoulder as she left, getting a wink back before Ranma turned his attention to Makarov, who was sitting just back of the point of one of the spikes near the bar, holding a stein of half his own size. Behind him, Ranma could see Lucy and a few of the others he knew including the stripper, who he glared at until he began to pull on a shirt, but not Erza, Mira or Natsu.

“Bah, it’s just a young brat flexing his muscles. Phantom Lord has always had issues with Fairy Tail, thinking they are stronger than us larger than us, bah as if such things matter,” Makarov slurred form where he

“Oh, Phantom Lord huh?” Ranma said, looking around and nodding. “Don’t they have their own Dragon Slayer? A metal Dragon Slayer? I might have to look him up sometime, see if he knows anymore about where the Dragons went than anyone else. That, and I got some business to talk to their guild master with.”

Makarov’s eyebrows rose and when he talked next there was no sign of the copious amount of alcohol he had taken in. “What kind of business would that be?”

“Nothing much, just following up on some rumor’s that’ve reached my ears.” Ranma said, waving that off, still looking around for a pink haired woman. But he didn’t see any pink hair, and he sighed. *Oh well, Bisca did say she wasn’t a regular guild member.* “Say, Bisca and Alzack mentioned a healer that’s part of your guild, said she might be able to give me a handle on a little issue I have.”

“Having performance issues are ya?” Laxus quipped before his grandfather could respond.

“Hah, you wish, maybe then you could actually beat me!” Ranma retorted, causing Laxus to glare at him angrily. “But no, it’s about removing a certain handicap I’ve run into.” From there, Ranma explained about the issue he was running into with his Dragon Slayer magic fighting his own body’s ki, likening ki to another type of body enhancement magic.

Neither listener believed that. Certainly many magics had nasty side effects, but two magics actually fighting for supremacy in your body that was highly unusual. No, Ranma’s original magic was something else. Still, Makarov wasn’t going to press the young Ranger on it. “Well, while I think Porlyusica could help you I’m afraid even if you traveled to her house in the woods she wouldn’t be there now. She’s gone on a herb hunt, which she does at this time every month. She’ll be gone for several days more.

“GRRRR,” Ranma growled, smashing his hands together with a speed to ruffle the hair of those nearby. “Any chance I could somehow hunt her down in the woods? I hate waiting, and I’ve got my Dragon Slayer given sense of smell to consider.”

“You might be able to find her, but it certainly wouldn’t put Porlyusica-chan in the right frame of mind to assist you.” Makarov replied dryly. ‘You’re human, not dealing with a life threatening injury, and not from Fairy Tail. That’s three strikes against you right there, you certainly wouldn’t need any-more points taken away if you really want to get her cooperation. While she’s good at what she does, Porlyusica-chan hates people, and she’ll have no concern about your desires to get stronger.”

Just then, they were interrupted by twin shouts from nearby as several other people came in from the back of the hall, including Erza, but it wasn’t Erza who had shouted, instead it was two of her companions, Natsu and Happy. Happy leaped upright from where he had been laying on top of Natsu’s head. “Carla!” He shouted then leaped off Natsu’s head, activating his magic and flying forward like a bullet, his enthusiasm only slightly dimmed by the fact Carla was in her human form at the moment.

Natsu however had also caught sight of the guest and he raced forward, bulldozing through some of the other guild members, magic flaring around his hands into a conflagration. “Ranma! Fight me!”

“Oh god no!” Carla groaned, ducking down behind Wendy, as the male cat closed. “Put some clothes on at least!” Without Carla around, Happy had gone back to just wearing his small pack as his only clothing.

This exclamation didn’t stop Happy however, who actually alighted on Wendy’s head before leaning in abruptly. It was with a certain sense of shock and dawning horror that Carla realized the blue-furred cat was going for a kiss. With a startled yelp she leaped away, her hand flashing out in a textbook right punch that smacked into Happy right on the lips. This knocked him off Wendy’s head ass over tea-kettle as she shrieked, “What the heck were you trying to do you buffoon!?”

“Bu, but isn’t that what girlfriends and boyfriends do?” Happy blubbered, shaking his head from where he had hit the ground. “That’s what Natsu, Lisanna and Anna are doing!”

“That would assume you are my boyfriend you dolt!” Carla shouted, while Wendy waved her hands, trying to calm her down and play peacemaker.

Ranma nodded in approval of how Carla had used some of her training to deal with the foolish tomcat, before turning his attention to his own issue. By this time Natsu had burst through the crowd of guild members and reached them too, throwing out a punch without any further ado at Ranma. Ranma sighed and dodged it kicking out lightly to trip Natsu, but the boy adroitly hopped over it, nearly muffing the landing thanks to his haste, but it was a decent sign of his basic reflexes. “Have you finished those exercises I gave you?”

“Ha!” Natsu roared, sharing forward the fires on his hands now covering his arms up past the elbow. “Like I need to! I’ve leveled up in power thanks to surviving that Tower fight!”

“You mean surviving your own stupidity,” Laxus drawled from one side.

Sighing theatrically, Ranma gathered water around his hand, slamming it into the side of Natsu’s arm, right on his funny bone. No matter who you were, that stung, and Natsu yelped, his magic actually canceling out as he wrung his hand out before he found himself flipped over Ranma’s back and slammed face-first into the ground of the guild hall. “Strength is not the same as being stronger, and being strong is not the same as skilled.” Ranma said, stepping around the younger boy and over to one of the mages who was holding a pen. “Hey, you mind if I borrow that?”

The rather obese mage, who Ranma felt he might have introduced to but who name he couldn’t remember, cocked his head but handed over the pen. With it in hand Ranma turned grinning over at Erza as Natsu slowly got to his feet, growling, his magic flaring up again. “Hey Erza, wanted to ask ya if you were up for a spar later today. Don’t worry, this won’t take long.”

“I am afraid I’m heading into town to spend most of the day with the local armorer, I’ve lost too many of my armors of late to be at one hundred percent. If you wanted it to be limited spar perhaps, just hand to hand, I would be quite happy to cut my time there short though,” Erza replied as Natsu, angry at being looked down on like that, charged forward.

Ranma simply slid aside from the Charge, slipping around the punch like it was in slow motion, which to Ranma it rather was. He could sense that Natsu had indeed gotten stronger, incorporating the magic he’d taken in, but that hadn’t effected his speed or skill, which was still far less than Ranma’s own. “Hmm, grappling sounds like fun,” he quipped, winking at her while tapping Natsu’s punch down then around with the pen in his hand, flipping the boy like a top before flinging Natsu into the air to slam into the roof.

Blushing at the implications of Ranma’s words, Erza grabbed her courage and nodded, ignoring Natsu pushing off the roof and roaring back down towards Ranma, one of his magical attacks roaring out of his lips. “Ahem, yes, that does sound fun, though you might wish to wait for tomorrow. It is getting rather late today after all.”

Nearby, Cana was watching this with one eyebrow raised in interest before smirking at the sounds of many a guildmate moaning about their losses. *Huh, well wasn’t that interesting. Someone’s trying to get our Titania out of her armor, and she seems to actually understand it and isn’t violently rejecting the idea either.*

“Damn it, take me seriously!” Natsu roared, really losing his temper now. “I get enough of being treated like I’m just a distraction from Gildarts!”

“Then ya should be used to it,” Ranma retorted before his pen flashed out thwacking down so hard on Natsu’s wrist it actually deadened the hand for a moment before thrusting to thwack into Natsu’s forehead, sending Natsu backwards to land right on top of Lucy who had been sitting at a nearby table.

They both sprawled to the ground with Natsu nearly out of it from the point-blank hit to his head, which found itself lodged between Lucy’s large breasts. “Ooogh, what, where, huh, this is a nice soft cushion.”

She shook her head pushing hair out of her eye before glaring down at the pink-haired Dragon Slayer currently using her chest as a pillow. “Get off me NatsuuUU!”

She suddenly squeaked as Natsu pushed off her by using one hand on her hip and the other pressing down into her chest somewhat painfully. He grinned at her not even noticing what he was doing. “Oh hi Lucy, sorry about that.”

Nearby Lisanna and Anna had been moving through the crowd, hopping to convince Natsu to stop the fight before the guildhall was further damaged, or before he suffered further brain damage, which ever came first. Now they paused as one, staring from the scene with Natsu then down to their own far more modest chests before sniffling and turning away.

Despite being somewhat denser than the heart of a black hole, Natsu knew that sniffling-about-to-cry girls was not a good thing, and he had seen them both looking his way before they started. Even Natsu could do that math and he hurriedly stood up, racing after them, his desire to fight Ranma gone. “Lisanna, Anna, wait, what’s wrong what’d I do!?”

Blinking at that, Ranma shrugged. “Huh, that worked out a lot better than I expected, I just thought Lucy would kick him in the fork.” With that, he turned back to Erza. “So, sometime next morning then.”

“You are evil,” Erza said, almost admiringly. “And yes, that would be fine.”

Sauntering over, Cana reached down and helped Lucy to her feet, then over to the booth she’d been sitting at, sidling in next to her. “You okay there Lucy?”

“Ugh, yeah I’ll be fine,” Lucy muttered reaching to her chest and attempting the impossible: touch her own chest to check for bruises while in public.

In retrospect, Lucy realized that had been a pretty obvious mistake given the girl sitting next to her. Cana grinned, looping one arm around Lucy’s back, grabbing at her chest with gentle hands even as she went to work. “Here, let me help, pain, pain go away!” she giggled, her fingers flexing and kneading before flicking off Lucy’s chest for a moment, like a parent doing a ‘spell’ on a small child’s wounds.

“That’s not how Ahh, that works!” Lucy moaned, before trying to push Cana away feebly.

While that was going on and Natsu had actually connived the Strauss twins that he hadn’t meant to fondle Lucy and that their chests were just fine, Ranma blushed then deliberately turned his back on Cana and Lucy… *Are they flirting or is Cana just molesting her? But she’s not really trying to move away or hit her or anything. Weird.*

“…And we are not, dating you foolish tomcat!” Carla growled down at Happy before turning away in a huff, evidently having been in full on tirade mode for a few minutes before Ranma bothered actually listening. “Try to kiss me again and I’ll fillet you.”

“…So does that mean I should go back to giving you fish?” Happy asked, looking confused and scratching at his head.

“GRAHhh!” Carla growled turning and making to leap at Happy only to be picked up and carried away from him by Wendy.

 “Remember what you’re always trying to tell me Carla,” Wendy soothed.

 “What, that whole, ‘use words not violence to solve problems’?” Ranma asked, waving a hand. “Tell me how often that’s worked out for us Wendy-chan.”

 “No, I was thinking about how she’s always told me you can’t cure stupidity by hitting people,” Wendy said innocently, save for a glint in her eye as she moved to the bar. Happy had after all used her head as a pedestal to try to steal Carla’s first kiss.”

 Ranma began to laugh at that while the others looked at the young girl in shock at the burn she’d just dealt out, before Carla interjected with, “Indeed, if that worked, we would have long cured you of that particular illness.”

 Staggering and holding his heart Ranma drew several laughs before he sat down next to Laxus, with Erza sitting on his other side and Wendy perched on the bar between them, Carla sitting rather primly nearby. When the laughs had died down though, Ranma turned to his other, less personal reason to come to Fairy Tail. “Hey, you get my message?” he asked Laxus. When the lightning user nodded, sitting up on his stool and looking at Ranma intently, Ranma began to explain his new mission in low tones, ending with, “So I want to put a team of heavies together, and I figured you’d want to be involved.”

“Oh that sounds awesome!” Natsu exclaimed little fires coming from his mouth as he did. “You’re talking about me right, you have to be talking about me! I so want in on this!”

“Please runt, you wouldn't even be mentioned, he means me, Mira and Erza,” Laxus grunted, waving him off. “But hell yeah Ranma I’m in.”

“As am I, if you do want me?” Erza asked.

Natsu scowled while Ranma chuckled. Man, you’re still kind of an asshole aren’t ya Laxus?”

“Meh, never claimed to be anything more.” Laxus grunted.

At that, Ranma turned to Erza. “Heh, and boy, could I take that line the wrong way, you know that right?” Erza blushed and Ranma laughed until she dumped a glass of cold water over his head, turning him into her. Growling, Ranma was about to launch herself at Erza, but then twitched away as Makarov suddenly appeared on the bar next to her, feeling her back and then down to her rear before Ranma’s elbow nearly caught Makarov in the side of the head. “Die pervert!”

“Heheh, so firm, so bouncy!” Makarov shouted, and bounding away to the hilarity of much of the guild.

“And you say he’s evil?” Laxus asked dryly to the blinking Erza, who watched on, bemused at what she had unintentionally caused.

This was exacerbated a second later when Natsu grinned and raced after the aquatransexual. “Oh yeah! Let me in on this! You smack her rear Gramps, I’ll burn it!”

Ranma kicked off the table she’d just landed on in an effort to catch Makarov, who had leaped away, launching herself backwards and her leg flashing back into a spear that caught Natsu in the chest and hurled him backwards. She even did so in such a way that Natsu was flung back into Grey, who had just been about to strip off his pants in his normal absent-minded fashion. “Stay out of this pinkie! And You, stripper, what’ve I told you about doing that in front of Wendy-chan, huh!?”

The two rivals attempted to push to their feet, but got tangle in one another, and began to roll around, smashing into several other mages, who joined the fight, led by Elfman’s roar of “Real Men fight on their feet you bastards!” What had been simply a chase between Ranma and Makarov quickly became a full-bore brawl in traditional Fairy Tail fashion. Ranma however simply used the chaos to close the distance on Makarov, who yelped, and began to dodge in earnest, sweat starting to bead his brow and the alcohol working through his system faster.

 **Ignoring the chaos Wendy looked around then up to Erza and Laxus. “Ano, I don’t see Mira-san anywhere. Didn’t she beat us back?”**

 **“Mira was here yes, but she had to leave this morning for a modeling job. She’ll also be taking an S-class quest on the way back.” Erza replied, turning her head away from the chaos to look down at Wendy. “I believe it was something to do with tracking down and returning a stolen coin template.” When Wendy cocked her head quizzically, Erza explained. “Coin templates are what the Royal Reserve uses to create the countries coinage. It magically controls the amount of gold and other, lesser metals that goes into each coin and stamps them with the crest of the country and the amount.”**

 **“The thief could somehow change the formula or print their money. Its theft is a major black mark for that branch of the Royal Reserve, though I doubt that they’ve got anything that would stop an S-class mage.” Laxus interjected, standing up and moving towards where Makarov had just gotten smashed into and through a table by a lucky shot from Ranma. “Now Ranma’s job, that sounds much more interesting. Still, I suppose it’s getting dark out, and I should show you and Ranma the apartment I found for you and my bill for putting down a down payment.”**

 **He looked over at Erza and gestured at the chaos. “Would you?”**

 **Erza had started to growl under her breath when Natsu and Gray instigated a general melee. She had no problem with punishing a pervert, even if the punisher was a man turned woman and the punished her Guild Master. A general melee though, especially started by two good friends, that was something she would not stand. Resolutely the armor-clad knight marched forward, her gauntleted hands smashing mages left and right.**

 **Ranma stomped down, hissing angrily as Makarov somehow dodged at the last instant, then leaped away, landing on the balcony nearby. *What is it with little perverts being so damn fast!?* Ranma actually wasn’t holding back much of her speed at the moment, though he had yet to go full Amaguriken. Still, Ranma knew it was only a matter of time, and he crouched down, her hands and arms slowly flickering with magic.**

 **He was interrupted in his leap though by Laxus grabbing him by the back of his shirt and halting him in midair. “Alright, that’s enough playtime Ranma, come on. I want to show you the apartment I found you and Wendy.”**

 **Ranma tilted his head to look over her shoulder at Laxus. “Laxus, yer my friend, but if you don’t drop me right this minute I’m going to kick you in the junk so hard you’ll never even be able to pee properly ever again, let alone do anything else.”**

 **Shivering at the cold way the redhead had spoken that threat, Laxus dropped her then backed away slightly, but made no other move, glaring down at the redhead. “Them’s fighting words bitch!”**

 **Growling irritably Ranma grunted, moving away and grabbing at a glass of water Wendy held out to her, already steaming. Dumping it over her head, Ranma breathed a sigh of relief. “Yeah, sorry about that man, my time in my female form must be adding up again, I always get emotional in that form right before and during that time.”**

 **“Gah, too much freaking information,” Laxus grunted, turning away, though his lips did quirk when he noticed several nearby mages shivering and subtly putting down their bear mugs from where they might have been thinking about dousing Ranma again. “Now come on.”**

**He stopped and looked at Erza where she was standing over the bruised, unconscious forms of Gray and Natsu. Nearby Lisanna and Anna were already dragging the tables upright and generally trying to clear away the debris, including the downed mages. “You want to come with?”**

**Erza nodded, smacking her hands and making a clanging noise before she stepped over the downed bodies of her friends. “Yes, I’m done here. Besides, I need to head down to the blacksmith, they should have at least my normal everyday chest-plate done by this point.”**

**With Carla coming along, even in her human body, Happy came along, leaving Natsu behind to wallow in his pains. He tried to land on Ranma’s head, but Ranma wouldn’t allow it, and he was forced to instead use Wendy’s head. “If you pull out a smelly fish though, I won’t be responsible for my actions,” Wendy said, scrunching up her little nose.**

 **“Aye sir,” Happy replied, settling in on top of her head to look at Carla.**

 **Carla on the other hand quickly moved so that Ranma was between the two of them. “Ugh, when will that tomcat learn?”**

 **Chuckling at her misery, Ranma ruffled her hair before pulling his hand away before the white-furred catgirl could slash at his hand. “I think you need to figure out a way to get through his head before you lose it utterly Carla. I don’t think you actually want his blood on your paws after all.”**

 **“Bah, shows what you know you cretin,” Carla grunted in reply. “If he tries to kiss me out of the blue again I’ll have his guts for garters!”**

 **Laxus led the way, commenting to Erza, “So, when do you think the Old Man will go through with…That for Lucy, Natsu and Gray?”**

 **“EEEE!!!!” Happy shuddered, his tiny body going stiff, his blue fur on end. “No, I completely forgot about… That!!!”**

 **“And what’s this now?”**

 **Erza harrumphed. “You might not know, but Gray took the mission slip for Galuna Island before we reached the guild. He then convinced first Lucy, then Natsu and Happy, to come with him, breaking numerous guild rules. As punishment, Master Makarov will be doing…That to them.”**

 **Before Ranma could ask the obvious question there, Wendy did it for him. “What is That? It’s not something painful is it? I don’t think it sounds like something they should be really punished badly for.”**

 **“No it isn’t painful, merely intensely humiliating.”**

 **“Meh, I don’t know, you and Mira certainly…” Laxus shut up as a dark haze of red magic appeared around Erza, and he turned to glare at the older S-class mage. Laxus smirked back at her then shrugged and turned away looking at Ranma. “Guild tradition says we’re not allowed to actually explain what…That is. That is a punishment which has to be seen to be believed, just like your curse.”**

 **Eyes widening as he made the connection Ranma began to cackle, causing everyone but Laxus to back away from him. “Oh hell yes! I have to see this!”**

 **“That’s what I said,” Laxus said with a smirk.**

 **“Well, I’m afraid that’s not going to happen anytime soon.” Erza said, calming down slightly from her reaction to Ranma’s bout of madness. “I doubt that he will do anything until we are certain that Phantom Lord has calmed down and backed away from its aggressive actions towards us. Then we’ll repair the guildhall and probably hold the normal ceremony to appreciate… That.”**

 **By that point, Laxus had led them down a street in one of the more affluent sections of the city. There they found an apartment complex and Laxus led them to the rooftop, which turned out to be an apartment too. It was an odd little thing** with a huge balcony taking up most of the roof, and a large kitchen but two small bedrooms and no actual sitting room. The balcony was also taken up by a large garden of some kind, with several trees here and there. While Lacus was showing Ranma around, Wendy instantly went outside, looking from this to that plant, while Carla followed her, also looking around with interest.

“Huh…” Ranma mused, looking around and then nodded. “It looks good. We can change that second small bedroom into a sitting room and set up the tent in the smaller room. Laxus looked affronted by that, but Ranma chuckled waving him off. “Don’t worry, that ain’t a knock on the apartment Laxus, it’s just our tent can give us both enough space for bedrooms in a small tent. So, how much do I owe you?”

Laxus named a figure, and Ranma winced, but pulled out his bank card and transferred the amount to Laxus’. Laxus left then, saying he was going to go train and he would see Ranma tomorrow. “I might go with you when you go to recruit Jura. I’d love to fight that man again.”

Then, with Wendy and Carla setting up the tent, Ranma went out and did some shopping with Erza for a time before she broke off to head to the blacksmiths. Later, using the kitchen to cook them up some dinner (a large one since neither Dragon Slayer had eaten from the time when they got on the train) Ranma asked, “So what do you think about Fairy Tail?”

“Hmm… I like them. They’re fun, kind of crazy, but I like how happy and energetic they are.” Wendy replied then giggled. “And I think they are funny too. Mira-san, Bisca-san, Erza-san, Laxus-san, even Natsu-san are friendly, and I thought the chaos earlier was fun!”

“So you’ve no objection to spending the rest of autumn and winter here?” While Ranma was fine travelling even in the deep of winter, Carla and Wendy didn’t like it, even with all their special gear.

“Nope! I even like the apartment.” Wendy replied.

Nodding, Ranma smiled and thought that maybe Wendy would make the decision to join Fairy Tail. But that was for the future. Right now, he wanted to get them settled in.

**OOOOOOO**

With a long-drawn out sigh of relief Lucy closed the door to her apartment complex, shaking her head as Cana walked off. The two of them had left the guild pretty promptly after the fight started, thinking to get home while it was still daylight. She refused to think that Phantom Lord would cause trouble during the day. Nor did Lucy think that they would break normal citizens’ property, which considering that she rented her apartment, also included that apartment, making her safe enough to refuse Cana’s offer to stay with her despite Makarov’s suggestion on how they should be staying in groups.  *Besides, I bet it'll all blow over soon. Ultear will deal with it at the moment she gets back to the Council, and they won't be allowed to bother us anymore.*

With that said and no evidence to the contrary, Lucy relaxed now, laying down on her sofa, looking down at her chest as it wobbled slightly with the movement then shook her head irritably. *Why the heck does Cana always do that! I mean it's not like*, she blushed, *I mean if I only…* she blushed even harder, her mind sputtering to a halt.

Frankly, Cana was beginning to worry her a little. It was like she couldn't keep her hands off of Lucy's chest, and while sometimes it felt good (**really** good), Lucy wondered if there was well really anything else to it. And she was really wondering if she wanted there to be anything more to it. Lucy knew that she was still somewhat bisexual, possibly even tilting towards the girly side of the spectrum. A few experiences with men that her father had thought were worth her getting to know had pushed her in that direction, and the way Cana touched her sometimes, did make Lucy think along those lines.

Shaking her head, Lucy leaped to her feet. “Right, that's enough of that! Bath, then something to eat I think. Then maybe I can work on my book a bit.”

With that she entered the bathroom, and began to strip out of her clothing one piece at a time and was surprised to see that there was water already in the bathtub. Cocking her head she thought to herself, didn't I remember to drain that last night? With a growl of irritation, she finished stripping and moved towards the bathtub. Then as she pushed a hand through the water, Lucy looked down and realized that the cap had indeed been removed, but somehow the water wasn’t draining away. “What the?”

That was the last thing Lucy could say before the water reared up, covering her upper body and pulling Lucy down inexorably. She flailed, panicking at the water closed around her head her body being pulled down further and further until her entire body was wrapped in it. Lucy continued to thrash trying to get away, not stopping when she heard a voice say through the water “Juvia is sorry, but Juvia has been commanded to capture you by Juvia’s guild master Lucy-san, and Juvia cannot disobey.”

The water mage Juvia held Lucy in her grip until the blonde woman stopped moving, then quickly unwrapped Lucy’s head to allow her to breathe, keeping the rest of her body locked into the water. She waited a few more seconds, then nodded, and stepped out of the top, her body fully reforming into its human form complete with clothing. To one side, a large column of water held Lucy in captivity, but looking at her Juvia sighed then laid the other woman down on the ground. “Juvia might have been forced to capture you, but Juvia can at least let you retain some of your dignity,” she said, moving over and picking up the clothing the blonde had discarded, wrinkling her nose a little at how disorganized the woman was, simply stripping from one step to the next as she entered the bathroom.

She took a moment to glance down at Lucy's breasts and nodded complacently. *They are quite large, but Juvia has at least an inch on her*. With that, she began to dress the blonde, who did not stir from her unconscious state.

Once that was done, another geyser of water erupted around Lucy, picking her up and carrying her after Juvia as she exited the bathroom. Out in the sitting area of Lucy's apartment she found Sol and Totomaru. Sol was sitting down on the sofa enjoying a cup of tea, while shaking his head and looking at a pair of underwear he had found somewhere. Totomaru was over by a desktop settings one corner, his back to her as she entered, but he looked up as she did so. “You two should come and read this. Apparently the blonde girl’s a bit of a writer and its pretty good.”

Sol looked over at him. “Truly? You do know that I have a very high standard for such things.”

Totomaru scoffed at that waving the manuscript as he turned fully to face the others. “Really. The plot is decent, the action is okay, and the characters, at least the lead one, seems interesting enough. Can't comment on the romance, that kind of things a little sappy, frankly, far too much ‘eye’s meeting across a crowded room’ kind of thing.”

Juvia rolled her eyes, coughing lightly to regain the men’s attention. “As you can see, Juvia has captured the target,” she said tiredly. “Perhaps we can leave now before the Fairy Tail guild realizes we have been here, and taken one of their number prisoner?” With Sol to bypass the door, and Juvia to do the capturing, this had been far too easy. Totomaru didn't have to come along at all, but he had just in case they needed some extra muscle.

“Non. It is still too early yet to get out of the city without being spotted,” Sol said. “We will wait until nightfall, and then leave the town while Gajeel is causing issues elsewhere.”

“Juvia still does not agree to that part of the plan,” Juvia said, thoughtfully as she leaned against the doorway. “It will no doubt incense the entire guild.” That her friend Anna might be caught up in that activity was also a major concern to Juvia.

“Of course it will,” Totomaru said bluntly. “You should know by now that’s part of the plan. Capturing Lucy and the money that she'll bring when we turn her over to her father is just one part of it, Master Jose needs to prove that our guild is better than the Fairy Tail, and what better way to do that than through fighting and beating the entire guild down? ”

Juvia sighed once more, a melancholy, depressed sound but she nodded and turned away, still carrying Lucy in her Water Lock. “In that case, Juvia will take a rest.” *And get Lucy another pair of panties. Juvia doesn't think she would want them back after someone like Sol has been holding them.*

The two men looked at one another as Juvia very purposefully closed the door to the bedroom, the only inner door in the apartment. “What's wrong with her?” Totomaru asked. Sol just shrugged unconcern then went back to looking at the panties in his hand.

**OOOOOOO**

“Bring, Bring!”

Ranma looked up from the meal when the doorbell to the apartment rang, cocking his head to one side. “Huh, now who could that be?”

“I'll get it,” Wendy said, hopping up from where she had been looking over a few books on advanced magic and meditation alone, Carla having headed out a few moments ago to a nearby clothing store. Wendy’s reading level wasn't quite up to where she could read them easily, but Ranma figured that straining to read them would also help in her understanding them, and he wanted to help Wendy increase her magical reserves. The fact she had nearly completely collapsed after using Dragon Force meant she needed work in that area. *Then again, I can't even use it at all, so what do I know,* he groused to himself, chopping just a little too viciously at a piece of carrot, hacking through it and the chopping block underneath.

“Now what did that thing ever do to you?” Bisca asked, moving over and into the kitchen to sniff at some of the things Ranma was making. They smelled interesting but not quite like anything she recognized.

Ranma blinked, looked up and smiled at her. “Ah, Sorry, I was someplace else I suppose. What are you up to?” He really meant just to ask what she was doing there, but figured she'd tell them that eventually. Besides, it wasn't like he didn't like the pretty green haired woman’s company.

Bisca held up a bottle in one hand, setting it down on the kitchen counter. “It's traditional for friends to come over with a bottle of wine to celebrate someone moving in.”

“I thought that was supposed to be for houses, or is that launching ship where you smash a bottle over them or something?” Ranma asked, his brows furrowing in confusion.

“Ships for the bottle smashing for certain,” Bisca said now also looking quizzical. “Though why they do that I have no idea.” They both looked at one another shrugged, and Bisca quickly changed the subject, pointing at some kind of sauce sizzling away on the stove. “It smells good, but what is it?”

“Orange sauce.”

“What is orange sauce? I mean, I can see the color, but it doesn’t smell very like oranges.” Bisca asked interestedly.

You're not going to comment on the pork bits?” Wendy asked, having followed Bisca from the doorway. When Bisca looked at her the youngest Dragon Slayer said, “well, I thought with all those animal friends of yours you'd be a vegetarian.”

Bisca laughed. “Not a bit of it. And even if I was, I probably would make a special exception for pork. Pigs are disgusting.”

Ranma chuckled at that but answered Bisca’s original question. “It's a sauce that comes from Minstrel.” Ranma found it ironic that the first country he’d reached had been the one that was most like the countries he was most used to at home, and indeed was one of the few that had a real Asian flair at all to it.

“It's good,” Wendy supplied. “Ranma-nii is really good at making food like that. Although the first time he tried to make a waffle, he nearly burned our tent down!”

Ranma twisted around to glare mockingly at Wendy. “I thought we agreed never to talk about that!”

“I don't remember making any such promise.” Wendy sniffed, her nose in the air.

Bisca laughed then pulled out another bottle from a large pouch she was carrying, holding it up. “And this is something for Wendy. It's magnolia fruit punch. It’s one of our most popular exports, made from oranges, cherries, and something we call passionfruit around here.”

Wendy gleefully moved over to grab some glasses from inside their tent, coming out quickly.

“Are you going to want to eat with us, is that part of the tradition too?” Ranma teased, realizing there was more to this than just tradition.

“If I'm not a bother,” Bisca said with a chuckle.

Ranma looked at her thoughtfully out of the corner of his eye, and noticed Bisca looked quite a bit more nervous than her tone and conversation would have implied. Still remembering the time he'd sort of kind of flirted with Bisca when she was watching him exercise, Ranma realized this was her attempt to set up some more flirting at the least. “Sure, we’ve got enough food for one more.”

“So,” Bisca said as she moved to help Wendy pull out a table from the tent to set up in the kitchen area. It wasn’t very heavy to the young girl, but she was having trouble balancing it. “How long do you think you see yourself staying here and Magnolia?”

“The rest of autumn and winter for certain,” Ranma said promptly. “Wendy here doesn't like traveling during the winter and given a choice, neither do I. I also want to talk to this Porlyusica you told me about. Hopefully she'll get back soon.”

“We can only hope,” Bisca said with a chuckle. “But here's a question for you that I don't think any of the others have asked, or if they have, they didn't share your reply to it. Why don't you join Fairy Tail? I understand you like traveling, but it isn't like you wouldn't travel as a Fairy Tail mage. And you'd have a lot more support.”

Wendy stayed silent, letting Ranma answer this question first. “I like Fairy Tail,” he said at last, setting down the orange glazed pork pieces on shish kebabs. Most of them are fun, and I like your take no shi… um guff attitude for the most part. Mira, Erza, Laxus, Nathan, Elfman, they're all great.”

“No Gray?” Bisca asked.

“I'll mention Gray among the guild member’s I’ve met and liked the moment he stops trying to strip in front of Wendy,” Ranma replied tartly.

At that Wendy blushed, looking down at her hands and suddenly finding them very interesting. *How do I tell Ranma-nii that it wasn't anything I haven't seen before?*  After all, she and Ranma had been basically living in the same tent for years now, and accidents were sure to happen occasionally.

Most of the time Ranma didn't even notice, since Wendy would squeak, blush, and then hide, but she had seen Ranma in his birthday suit more than once in both forms. His female form made Wendy a little jealous for a time until she remembered that there was an age difference between them. But his male form had weirded her out quite a lot the first few times she’d seen him. But in the last year or so, those feelings had sort of shifted, though Wendy didn’t really understand why. It was almost like when she was around the prince from Bosco, but not quite.

Bisca laughed, nodding at that. “So?”

“But… I do have a job, as long as I have that, I can't really be stuck to one place.” Ranma said with a shrug.

“And what is your job” Bisca asked, now leaning forward, giving Ranma an easy view down her shirt, but that wasn't the intent and he tried manfully to keep looking her in the eyes. “Both Erza and Mira seem to know something about that, and so does Laxus. Why keep it a secret?”

“Because we’re supposed to,” Ranma said with a shrug, though he couldn’t stop his eyes from darting down to see the nice, light pink and rather enticing flesh on display. “But I suppose so long as you promise not to say anything?” When Bisca nodded, Ranma went on. “I'm a sort of… troubleshooter… for various governments.”

“That sounds almost like… but those are supposed to be,” Bisca began then stopped then started again staring at him. “Really?”

“Really,” Ranma said, tapping the brooch on his shirt and canceling the illusion.

“That’s amazing,” Bisca muttered, staring at the brooch in awe.

“You don't know the half of it,” Wendy muttered, staring at the brooch too. She had started to research further enchantments lately to help her spell work evolve. Even with the Song Silk dress and cloak, she and Ranma had respectively and some of the weapons Ranma used, that brooch was easily the most enchanted object she'd ever seen. “It's got so many functions on it! And they're all tied to the person that it was given to too. It's really impressive.”

“I see,” Bisca said now leaning back, still staring at the brooch thoughtfully before Ranma’s reaching for the food reminded the other two that it was there. “So that is why you don't want to settle down.”

“Part of it. Part of it is because of…” Ranma pause thinking about how to put it. “I hate my old man these days,” he said bluntly,” my father was a pustule on the universe in a lot of ways. But he instilled in me a drive to be the best, to be the best fighter that I can be. And there's only so much growth you can do while being in one place. You have to go out, to experience other places, to see new things, new ways of magic, new ways of fighting, new weapons. Then learn them, add them to your style or how or figure out how to overcome them, becoming stronger. It's why I keep training Wendy and Carla, it's why I keep looking around for different types of magic that I could add to my style. It's why I have such a big bag of tricks.”

Bisca nodded, flushing slightly as she looks down at her food, shaking her head at how passionate Ranma was when he spoke like that. *Damn! I wonder what he would sound like if he were speaking about girls like that!* The idea caused her blush to increase dramatically, and she chomped down on the first pork piece, before blinking, the sensation and taste driving her earlier thoughts out of her head. “Yum! That **is** really good.”

“Told you,” Wendy said triumphantly, popping a bite into her own mouth.

For a moment, all was silent except for the sound of eating, with Bisca praising Ranma's cooking every third bite. One thing Bisca knew she wasn't was a cook. She routinely relied on the others who lived at Fairy Hills just like Erza, although she was actually good at creating different types of salads and dressings. Mentioning this, Bisca ended up and promised to show Wendy some of them since Ranma wasn’t a big salad person.

The orange glaze really interested her, and she tried to wheedle the secret out of Ranma, which turned into a bit of flirting, before Wendy starting to get uncomfortable interrupted them. “Ano, where you come from Bisca-san? You said once you came from Desierto, where in Desierto? We've been there, and a lot of the places are a little…” she paused trying not to sound like she was saying something bad about someone.

“Close-minded, very much against outsiders? Yep, I know those kind of places. Don't get me started on what they think about magic users who can do more than their little cantrips, especially if the individual in question is a woman. My Guns Magic got me in big trouble a few times down there.”

“Tell us about it,” Ranma said, leaning over to grab the fruit punch and pour Wendy another glassful, before looking at Bisca and the wine.

Bisca nodded, and as Ranma poured her a glass, started one of her own stories. Ranma replied with a few of their own, with Wendy interjecting a time or two as Carla finally returned, joining them at the table.

Eventually though, the conversation shifted back into simply traveling. When Ranma listed the places they'd been and the things they’d seen, Bisca was in awe. They had really been everywhere in Ishgar really, and she said so but Ranma disagreed. “Nope, there’s one place I haven't been yet, and it’s big, bigger than all of Ishgar.”

It took a moment for Bisca to get it, and when she did she gasped. “The Continent?! Are you **insane**?! Not even Gildarts goes there! It's too dangerous.”

“Gildarts isn't as good at sneaking around as I am,” Ranma said stubbornly while Carla nodded agreement with Bisca and added her own ‘listen to her you foolish lout’ which Ranma ignored. “I bet I could do it, figure out what's out there. I'd really like to too. That’d be the ultimate challenge.”

“And would you take Wendy into it too?” Bisca asked sternly.

“No Bisca I wouldn’t,” Ranma said with a sigh.

Bisca nodded triumphantly that, before going on. “Well, outside of that crazy notion, traveling sounds like a lot of fun. Especially with the amount of equipment you've got. Though if I was doing it, I’d probably have to get a separate tent for my friends.”

“That’d still be better than Erza though,” Ranma said with a laugh. “She takes an entire cart just for luggage from what I saw during the job against Eisenwald.”

Bisca giggled. “I know! It isn’t as if she couldn't carry it in her Requip space, it's more like she's never even thought about it. It's like a big blind spot for some reason, like she can’t make the connection between her Requip space and using it for things other than armor and weapons.”

“Then perhaps someone should point it out to the poor girl. Especially now that she's going to have to spend so much money on replacing her armor sets.” Carla said with a sigh.

Bisca smirked, then looked around conspiratorially before leaning toward Ranma, whispering into his ear, causing a shudder to go through Ranma’s body. “Actually she does use it for something else: she keeps some dirty novels Levy finds for her in her Requip space too. You’d think Erza’d be a bit of a prude given how she usually acts, but underneath the armored exterior of hers, well some of the stuff I’ve seen her read made me blush.”

As Ranma laughed, Carla, who had of course overheard that, shook her head, waving off Wendy’s quizzical look. *There goes the idea of using Erza as a role model for Wendy. And Mira also ruled herself out with that stunt with Mermaid Heal. Why ever couldn’t just one woman in Fairy Tail be normal?*

**OOOOOOO**

Lisanna and Anna and had stayed late at the Guildhall cleaning up after the earlier fight. All of them were going around in groups now thanks to the Master’s suggestions except for Laxus, Natsu, and of course the Master himself and Erza, but the two girls felt they could make it home on their own, where Elfman would be waiting for them. They stood outside the Guildhall for a moment, with Lisanna locking the doors as Anna stared up at the building, shaking her head at the large steel pillars sticking out of it. “I wonder why a Phantom Lord Mage would do such a thing.”

“It's not Phantom Lord you wonder about, it's Juvia isn't it,” Lisanna asked her twin, linking arms with her and pulling her away from the guild towards the street that would lead them to the house where the two of them lived with their siblings.

But Anna broke away from Lisanna, waving her arms stick hysterically. “I just can't believe she's still with them! Phantom Lord is such a dark place at times. I mean I know there are a legitimate guild, and I know that they act a bit like us in some ways, but surely they're not as welcoming as Fairy Tail! And it isn't like one person changing from a one Guild to another is all that unusual!”

“But it isn't usual either, and usually they have to list the reason why. Besides we know that she is at least friends with someone else there. The same mage who probably was behind the attack on the guild too,” Lisanna said reasonably.

“Yeah but even so, I was slowly talking Juvia around, but then Gildarts left and it sort of fizzled out. In fact, I haven't even talked to her since then! That's depressing.” Anna said with a sigh.

“Wait, she was talking to you when Gildarts was around but stopped after he left again? Then she must've thought that Gildarts was enough of a deterrent to stop anyone from trying to stop her.” Lisanna mused. “And that also means that she doesn't think anyone else is.”

“Never let Laxus hear you say that,” Anna retorted. “He’d start a war just to prove he’s as strong as Gildarts. And Natsu too.” For a moment, they looked at one another, then a giggled as one, remembering the numerous times Natsu had attempted to start a fight with Gildarts or Laxus only to get blasted away with no apparent effort.

Their good humor remained until they heard the sound of something metal he having something solid and a scream nearby. “What!?”

Without a word both girls turned in that direction, racing down the street, and found Team Shadow Gear fighting the Iron Dragon Slayer Gajeel. Jet and Droy were down, and Levy was high in the sky on a cloud, seemingly dropping Fire Spears- made out of the words and stretched in such a way as to look like a thick spear of fire - and other things down on Gajeel, who was shielding and dodging easily, smirking up at her. “You're better than the other two,” he commented as the Strauss twins arrived on the scene “but not good enough!”

Taking in the scene at a glance, Anna wasted no time pulling out one of her larger staves from her expanded pouch and pointing it directly at the man. “Lightning Magic stun bolt!” She shouted, thrusting the staff forward in an intricate pattern of tip movements and activating the magic within.

Anna couldn't use magic. She had no internal magical source unlike every other mage. However, she could use magical items so long as they were routinely charged after use by someone else. It wasn’t the most efficient, but it allowed her to use her staffs more quickly than she would have been able to, if she relied on the Ethernano of the word to do the same thing. Erza had proved a big help there, pointing her in the right direction, and getting her an expanded bag to carry all of her staves in. The other Strauss siblings of course agree to charge them up whenever she needed them.

The lightning blast from this stave was akin to one of Laxus’ low tier spells. With the element of surprise the attack struck, slamming into Gajeel and sending him skidding sideways.

At the same time, Lisanna had shifted into one of her Take Over forms. “Take Over: Rhino!”

What appeared an instant later was perhaps the most feminine and cutesy-looking version of a rhino that anyone there had ever seen. It was pinkish gray, had lipstick on its mouth in red, long eyelashes and was noticeably a little overweight. But it also had a large horn, and rhino Lisanna had a very aggressive disposition. “Here I come!”

With that she charged forward, her horn down and slamming into Gajeel with enough force to pierce a normal man’s body straight through. While her horn didn’t penetrate Gajeel’s body, her rush did slam him into a building on the other side of the small park where the fight had begun.

To her surprise though, Gajeel simply chuckled evilly, and grabbed her around the head, flipping her to the side to land on her side before bringing down a punch. She gasped in pain, then was kicked away, skidding along the cobblestones and then the ground of the park.

Wincing, Lisanna canceled the Take Over spell as another blast from Levy turned Gajeel's head into a flaming ball. He growled, shaking his head and throwing the fire off, before hurling a piece of debris up at Levy, hitting her directly in the chest and throwing her off of her cloud with a cry of pain. “That’s enough out of you!”

Anna charged forward, brandishing another weapon, this time a small forearm sized spear, which she thrust forward in different directions, and suddenly there were more than one of them, and she stopped, putting it over her shoulder and hurling it forward “go! Multiply Hurler!”

Gajeel grunted in pain as the first one nearly took him in the eye, slicing a long cut along his face. But then he activated his Tetsuryu no Uroko (Iron Dragons Scales), and smashed the other attacks out of the way.

But this had bought Lisanna enough time to get her feet under her, and launch into the air shouting, “Take Over: Harpy!”

Unlike most of Lisanna’s Take Over spells only the coloration of this form could be described as childish: in the main it looked more like something her older sister would be willing to use. Lisanna’s legs were replaced by large talons like a birds, her clothing disappeared to be replaced by downy looking feathers, barely covering her chest to right above her nipples, leaving her shoulders and a goodly portion of her chest bare. Her arms too had changed, becoming large, colorful wings.

Swooping up from the ground, harpy-Lisanna quickly twisted a little, grabbing at the back of Levy’s shirt. She then flipped again so that she Levy was below her before flapping her wings mightily over towards a rooftop. There, Lisanna put Levy down, and leapt into the air again diving down shouting “egg barrage!!”

These were small explosives in the form of eggs, but they didn't do any damage to Gajeel. Laughing he gestured to the side with one hand, which suddenly shifted into a shiny blade with serrated edges. He waved it in the air, nearly hitting her when it elongated suddenly. But then Gajeel was forced to dodge away hissing in pain as a blast of some kind of greenish energy nearly ate into his arm.

He looked back at Anna who had taken cover behind a tree, and then stuck out at him with another staff. This one looking green almost, with several large curling out bits here and there along its length. “Acid magic, Deadly Stream!”

“Well, aren't you a dangerous little bitch!” Gajeel roared, dodging that attack and closing, ignoring Lisanna but then was hit but from behind as Lisanna shouted “Take Over: Anaconda!”

From midair, Lisanna had shifted into the third form she had taken during this fight dropping down quickly. Anaconda was a giant snake, nearly as large around as the central-most tree in the park. It was also slightly green and pink, and looked like a sort of girly kind of snake with long eyelashes and scales around its mouth that looked like red lipstick. But despite its cutesy looks it could still be deadly, and it wrapped around Gajeel, constricting tighter and tighter. “You won't let you hurt anymore of our family!”

Anna hopped up on to her sister's coils, pointing another smaller wand straight at Gajeel's head. “This is rust magic! I don't know what it will do to you, but I don't think it'll be good. Surrender Gajeel!”

This close, Gajeel could smell them, and paused, before growling further, wrenching this way and that before sending out a blast of energy from his entire body at once, wrenching his arms up and hurling Lisanna away her Take Over magic canceling in order to save her life. If she had stayed in Anaconda form, Gajeel might well have ripped her body in half.

Anna leaped away but before her fit hit the ground, Gajeel grabbed her by the leg, and then twisted, slamming her down face first into the dirt with enough force to break her nose, and maybe give her a concussion too. Regardless, Anna was unconscious when she's bounced off the ground, and Gajeel huffed irritably, looking around. He could literally smell another Dragon Slayer on them, and he knew this was probably a very bad idea, but it wasn't as if he had a choice.

“That was fun,” he said, as he conjured up a spike. “But I suppose all good things come to an end. I don't want to do this to girls, especially claimed girls, but orders are orders, and I bet this'll get that flame fool of a fairy and all the rest riled up and even more than just beating up the Shadow Weaklings would have.”

Then his instincts screamed at him and he ducked to the side as a flame that was so hot it looked almost white flashed through the space he'd just exited, burning through a tree and then the same damaged house that he had been crashed into earlier without even slowing. The fire was so hot it turned the portions of the tree it touched to ash, searing past and through the side of the building so hot that it slagged the concrete of its construction.

“I'm already so fired up, I'm liable to turn you to slag!” A voice roared, so much like a furious dragon it almost gave Gajeel flashbacks to Metalicana. He had just a second to turn to face the direction the attack had come from before Natsu was on him.

Natsu had been worried, and had woken up and left the house he lived in on the far outskirts of Magnolia to find a Lisanna and Anna, and even maybe spend the night at their house whatever Elfman said. Thinking to catch the twins before they left, he left Happy behind still sleeping and had gone first to the guild and then headed towards her house, only to hear the sound of fighting in the distance, and shifting in that direction. Happy to have found some action Natsu raced in that direction.

When he came upon though banished his normal happy feelings at the idea of a fight instead making him see red, and he was no longer really in control of himself. His fire Dragon Slayer instincts were roused to a fever pitch at this attack on his mates, and they wouldn't slow down until the enemy dragon who had dared to do it was lying dead in his feet.

Fire versus steel should have given Gajeel feel a natural advantage, but the heat Natsu was giving off was so intense, Gajeel felt it even through his Dragon scale armor. The blows they exchanged, quickly began to hurt. Natsu was stronger, a lot stronger than he should've been, his fury and rage and urge to defend boiling within him, and he began to finally show signs of fully amalgamating the magic he had taken in when he ate the magically infused lacrima of the Tower of Heaven.

As one of his punches was sent to the side by Gajeel’s defense Natsu headbutted Gajeel, sending him rocking backwards. Then Natsu once more threw his head back again, but this time instead of going for another headbutt, Natsu gathered his magic into his mouth.

Gajeel did the same, shouting out “Tetsuryu no Hoko (Iron Dragon's Roar)!”

At the same time, Natsu shouted “Karyu no Doku Honoo Hoko! (Fire dragon’s Poison Flame Roar)”

The poison magic-infused flame attack struck. But Gajeel had concentrated his, more than Natsu had, and the more condensed, and also elementally heavier attack drilled through Natsu’s. Hitting the Fire Dragon Slayer, it hurled Natsu backwards, slamming him into another building and through it. But the poison aspect of the attack hovered in the air, and Gajeel had to breathe in despite the fact that he was now completely covered in steel scales.

An instant later Gajeel gasped, shuddering and nearly going to his knees as the poison began to do its work. It was weak, since Natsu’s fire magic and the poison were not really able to work well together, but it was enough to weaken him. Then Natsu was back, slamming into him faster than he could move. “Blast magic and Dragon Slayer combination art, Volcanic Fist!”

 Unlike the poison fire breath attack, the magic the lacrima had taken from Jiemma simply added to the base destructiveness of Natsu’s attack, making his fire cause minor explosions at the same time it hit. The blow hammered into Gajeel, and his steel scales exploded, the impact hurling Gajeel through the tree behind him shattering it. He groaned and tried to get to his feet, but Natsu was on him, leaping on him like an animal, holding him down with one hand and pummeling him with the other.

Gajeel couldn't throw him off for a second and tried to defend himself but each blow was stronger than the last, infused with more of Natsu's magical power. Then Gajeel, now bleeding and with several broken bones he could feel through his adrenaline, grabbed at Natsu hurling him to the side.

But Natsu went with it, and rolled on the ground for a second before blasting out another breath attack. “Karyu no Hoko (Fire Dragon’s Roar)!”

This caught Gajeel on the leg, the fire so hot it melted his iron scales and burned the skin beneath badly, sending him crashing to the ground holding his knee and thigh in agony for a moment. That moment cost him, and another punch slammed into his face like a runaway train sending him flying backwards.

He groaned again in agony, pushing himself to his feet to stare at Natsu, who was now stalking towards him his face twisted into an almost inhuman rage. *This, this is the strength of a Fire Dragon Slayer?* As he watched, the aura of a dragon made almost entirely of fire slowly began to dissipate as Natsu concentrated more and more of his magic power into his mouth.

Desperately Gajeel did the same, but before they could launch their attacks, Laxus showed up, alighting nearby as flash of lightning magic. He then charged forward again, and a chop to the back of the neck sent Gajeel down, the straw that broke the camel’s back to send him into unconsciousness. Then, as Natsu showed no sign of stopping his attack, Laxus was in his face, a chop to the front of the neck this time causing Natsu to gag, his magic attacks ceasing as he grabbed his throat, coughing and spluttering. “Enough,” Laxus said. “He's beaten. Good job midget.”

“G, get out of my way Laxus!” Natsu growled, getting to his feet and rubbing at his throat while glaring at the other Dragon Slayer. He hurt Lisanna and Anna! He's mine.”

“No. He's another Dragon Slayer and there aren't enough of us around to just go around killing one another. Besides,” he said, grasping Natsu by the shoulder, shaking him, his voice and face both stern and oddly gentler than Natsu had ever seen it. “You’re no killer Natsu. Don't start now. Besides,” he went on his face shifting back to its normal arrogant and aloof look. “Letting him live knowing that you beat him so badly will be a blow to his pride this Phantom asshole will never recover from. Just like the rest of his guild won’t recover from the beating they’re going to take soon.”

The fight between the Strauss siblings and Gajeel hadn't exactly been quiet, although the proceeding combat against Shadow Gear had been. All around them in the streets people had been woken up, staying put as they heard the sound of magical combat, but now that it sounded like it was over with they were coming out of the houses, and in the distance a few other Fairy Tail mages were also headed in their direction quickly.

Natsu seemed to shudder for a moment, shaking his head this way and that, but finally got control of himself. “All right, I… you're right. I really, that was…”

The younger man now looked a little distraught at how much he had lost control, but Laxus was still holding him by the shoulder and shook him hard. “Don't! Yes, you might've lost control there at the end, but your heart was in the right place, and you protected your ladies and guildmates. Concentrate on that. Don't give in to hate, but don't give into self-pity either.”

“When did you become so wise,” Natsu groused, pushing the older boy's hand away.

“Asshole I've always been wise! It's just you've never listened before,” Laxus said with smirk. Natsu looked at him deadpan, and Laxus smirked back arrogantly at him. Come on he said, gesturing. “I’ll get Droy, Levy and Jet, you see to your girls.”

The way he said that for some reason set Natsu to blushing. “Somehow, you just made that sound really dirty!”

“It's a talent. You'll learn eventually I suppose. Once your relationship gets to that point anyway, there's no going back,” Laxus replied with a smirk.

Rolling his eyes, Natsu moved in the other direction as several other guild members arrived to help with the wounded.

**OOOOOOO**

Stopping at the entrance to Fairy Hills, Ranma looked out over the city, turning away from Bisca. After eating, Bisca and Wendy had roped Ranma and Carla into playing a board game with them, and it had been pushing midnight by the time Wendy had decided they’d played enough and retired for the evening, letting Ranma and Bisca say the same thing. After that, Ranma had offered to walk her home, which Bisca had accepted.

They had kept talking as they moved along, this time Bisca dominating the discussion with tales of Fairy Tail, and in particular giving Ranma a better idea of Porlyusica’s personality than he had before. That personality was best described as hedgehog level prickly, but Ranma was determined to have the woman’s help to fix the issue between his Dragon Slayer powers and ki.

 “What is it?” Bisca asked noticing that Ranma had turned away. Then she looked out over the city, trying to strain her merely human senses to hear whatever it was Ranma had just heard.

“Lightning, some kind of discharge. Before that I thought I heard something like explosions.” So saying Ranma shrugged and turned back to her. “Still, if Laxus is there, he’ll handle it, whatever’s going on.”

Nodding at that, Bisca smiled at him. “Well, I had fun time tonight with you and the others. I hope you had fun too?”

Lips quirking Ranma smiled back, then asked, “Bisca, what exactly do you want here? I mean between us. I’m not so naïve as to think you just wanted to celebrate my moving in, y’know? But I thought that guy Alzack was interested in you, and Mira mentioned the two of you dancing around one another. Is this, are you…”

He trailed off, not wanting to finish the accusation, but Bisca understood and merely nodded, stepping forward and, feeling both daring and rather turned on, put her arms around Ranma’s waist. “No, I’m not using you to try and make Alzack jealous. He and I, we tried to kiss in Crocus. It wasn’t, well there was no spark there. And I’ve been getting frustrated and annoyed by how much he and I were dancing around one another.”

Sighing she looked down at her feet not backing away but exulting as Ranma’s arms went around her in turn. “I’d sort of decided after you and I first met to try and push things between Alzack and I, and he, well he didn’t respond well to put it bluntly. Since then, I’ve come to the realization that what was between us was based on all our similarities pushing us together rather than real romantic interest. So I’ve moved on.”

“Okay,” Ranma said slowly, his hands moving up and down Bisca’s back almost of their own accord, twitching to explore elsewhere. *Hormones are the fucking devil man!* That, and Ranma found himself eager to see what it was like to go beyond kissing with a girl, which was the extent of his experience of this particular art. Thanks to the ladies of Melona’s he had a lot of knowledge, but no hand’s on experience. “So what do you want from me? A relationship, something enduring, or something short term?”

“I just want to see where it goes Ranma. I’m interested in you, and I can tell that you’re interested in me too.” Bisca said, blushing now as she could indeed tell - physically - that Ranma was interested in her. *Oh my word, that is certainly flattering, makes those comments I made about his rifle when we first met seem much more on target!* “I’m not going to make demands, I’m not going to try to change you or force myself into your little family, I just want to see if the two of us could be fun, okay?”

“Heh, well, I think I can get behind that,” Ranma said, then leaned down startling Bisca with a kiss. Though startled, she quickly returned it, her hands going up Ranma’s back to grip at the back of his neck as Ranma crushed her against him, feeling her chest flatten slightly against his own.

Eventually Bisca began to pull away, and Ranma let her, a small, warm smirk on his face that set Bisca’s already racing pulse to rev further. “Mmm, yeah, I think I can definitely get behind that idea. You?”

Now with a blush on her face at how quickly that had escalated Bisca nodded, feeling a little giggly. “Heheh, yep, um, oh my word yes, I’d like some more of that later. Just um, nothing to quick okay?” When Ranma nodded, she smirked and leaned up quickly to kiss him again for a brief second then turned and opened the door to the girl’s only dorms. “See you later Ranma.” she said coquettishly, winking at him over her shoulder as she entered.

Chuckling Ranma stood and watched her go until the door closed behind her rather biteable tush, then, with a jaunty bounce to his step turned and made his way down the small hill back into Magnolia proper. *Huh, that certainly didn’t go where I thought it might, but who am I to complain?*

**OOOOOOO**

Elsewhere Erza too looked up, hearing the sound of distant lightning and staring at the sky. *It doesn't look like we’re going to get rain. That must've been Laxus I suppose.*  In actuality, that was the first attack Anna has launched at Gajeel, but Erza, like Ranma, could be forgiven for not recognizing from the sound of something so far away that Anna’s attack was different from Laxus’.

With a shrug of her shoulders, she continued on her way believing that whatever it was, Laxus would be able to handle it. Lucy on the other hand lived alone, and with the issues between Phantom Lord and Fairy Tail at the moment, that just wasn't safe despite what Lucy might think. *I know that Cana said she was going to stay with her, but Lucy and I have gone on two missions, albeit only one legally, and that means checking up on her is my responsibility*.

She turned onto the streets where Lucy's apartment sat, only to stare as three people she recognized from pictures of their descriptions exit the apartment followed by a moving geyser of water carrying Lucy within its watery depths. Her head was outside of it, but lolling in unconsciousness.

Seeing her guildmate trussed up in her watery prison, Erza bellowed in fury and boosted forward, her speed armor on for a moment, as she lashed out with a spear. “Get away from Lucy!”

Totomaru barley had a second to duck away before he would have been skewered by Erza’s spear, but he replied with a blast of fire magic as Sol disappeared into a wall, sending out his magic into the cobblestones of the street rising in a wave. “Roche Concerto!”

Erza ducked aside, the butt of her spear smashing pieces of the cobbles into the path of the spike of fire before she was forced to duck away again as Juvia launched a Water slicer. But instead of ducking away, Erza closed the distance, and once more Totomaru had to dodge by the skin of his teeth as the spear nearly took his throat out.

*Holy shit! She is not playing around!* He thought, backpedaling and throwing up a firewall between them, which at least for a moment caused Erza to stumble to a halt.

Instead she twisted to one side and in a flash, her spear disappeared to be replaced by an equally large sword that cut through the Water Lock around Lucy. The magic in the water attack disappeared and dumped Lucy, still unconscious to the ground. Then Erza charged, her sword lashing out and destroying several Earth Statues which Sol had just created, sending them crashing back into the ground even as they rose from it.

“Salut Erza the Scarlet! You are as skilled as the tales claim, but surely mademoiselle you cannot think you can fight all three of us, non?” Sol said, his head briefly sticking out from the arch of a bridge to one side of the battle.

“If you had brought along all four of the Element Four, perhaps I would be worried.” Erza replied, scowling as she straightened up facing them in front of the still comatose Lucy. “I will give you this one chance to walk away, as fellow mages. Then I will make you pay for the temerity of attacking a guild member with your bodies!”

“Juvia respects Erza-san greatly, and knows well your strength, but this fight is beyond you. Let us take the rich girl, and then depart, or we will be forced to hurt you.” Juvia reposted. “You are skilled, Erza-san, but Juvia and her allies know you have lost several important armors in recent fights.”

“Ma, my compatriot is correct Mademoiselle Scarlet.” Sol said mock-regretfully. “You cannot hope to stand against element magic wielders in such a state.

For a moment, the street fell silent and then there started to be heard a deep almost thrumming sound in the background as a red aura built up around Erza. Her hands clenched, and she growled. “I am getting very tired of people thinking that it is only my armors that make me strong!”

There was a bright flare of Requip magic, and Erza’s armor disappeared, to be replaced by the same outfit she had ended the battle with Jellal in, her hand the same sword she had been using then too. She glared at the trio of Phantom Lord S-class mages, and gestured with the sword. “If you think you’re so much stronger than me, come and prove it.”

Sol sighed and made to wipe a fake tear away from the eye that didn’t have a monocle in it, before lashing out with an attack. “Then Farewell, my rose. Platre Sonata!” A giant fist of earth rose out of the ground and shot forward towards Erza.

Still simmering in anger Erza waited, then lashed out with her own attack, following through immediately on its assault by running forward. The attack was simply a forward slash of magical energy, the sword in her hand converting Erza’s magical power into cutting force. The attack sliced neatly through Sol’s earth fist and would have continued to slice into him, but he ducked down into the earth at the last instant. Totomaru blasted out am magical attack but Erza dodged at the last instant, closing and thrusting out. The sword cut into Totomaru’s upper arm, and he walked right into a kick that caught him in the face hurling him backwards.

“Water Nebula!” Two large torrents of water flashed towards Erza, rotating around one another in an effort to enhance their destructive power, but Erza’s sword again flashed out, slicing through the attack and dissipating it. Juvia however then created a shield of water, catching much of the end of Erza’s attack. She then twisted aside from another attack turning into water to avoid damage from a punch, hammering a geyser of water into Erza’s legs, tripping her.

Sol attempted to get around Erza, appearing out of the ground by Lucy, reaching for her. “EEEH!!” but then Erza was there, her sword flashing down and slicing into the ground right in front of his head. “Non, non, non! Sables Dance!”

Both Lucy and Erza were caught in the tornado of sand and Lucy woke up with a cry of pain while Erza gritted her teeth. Her earlier moment of ego, forgoing armor to use her magical reserves solely to attack, worked against her now, and she took several hundred small slashes scattered around her body before she could fling her sword around in an attack to break the sand tornado.

Landing lightly however, she charged Sol, slicing forward along the ground sending a blast of magic forward before zooming to the side, dodging three different attacks from the element mages, bouncing off the wall of a house to one side to close. Sol was somehow able to twist his body out of the way of her first attack, but Erza spun, sending another kick into the already wounded Tototmaru, kicking through his desperate fire shield to catch him in the stomach sending him flying.

Having been woken up from the pain of the sand attack, Lucy shook her head groggily as she pushed to her feet. Grasping at a small medallion on her wrist, which Juvia hadn’t noticed before, she flared her magic into it, turning it into a whip which flared white and gold. “Celestial Whip extend!” she shouted, turning and flicking the whip out towards the window she knew led into her bathroom. Closing her eyes even as an attack came towards her from one of the attacking mages she concentrated on the feel of the end of her whip, twisting it this way and that magically to grab at the special pouch that contained her keys.

With a gasp she took a blast of water from Juvia, which sent her sprawling, but it wasn’t enough to dislodge her hold on her emergency weapon, a whip of Celestial magic that her teacher Capricorn had given her. “Come on!” she gasped out, pulling it backwards. Out of the window came the whip, flinging out the pouch.

Rolling away Lucy pushed off of the ground and leaped into the air, grabbing at the pouch, her hand flaring with Celestial Spirit magic. “Open, gate of anyone!”

Lucy regretted that decision almost immediately since the outward-most key turned out to be Aquarius. Despite her powers as a celestial mage having grown in leaps and bounds since Capricorn had begun to train her, she still had a few… issues with Aquarius, the only woman among her keys, and one who was very opinionated and aggressive. This was shown an instant later as the spirit, a blue-haired mermaid carrying a large run in one hand, appeared in the air above her. “You stupid blonde, I was getting ready for a date!!!” she roared, lashing out all around with a wave of water.

This monstrous wave smashed several lampposts, hurled sol off his feet, and finished off Totomaru hurling him to slam into a building before carrying his unconscious body into the river and away. Sol was luckier, a desperate attempt to sink into the ground working but still taking a lot out of him. Juvia was unharmed, simply turning into water herself and going along with the attack for a moment before it halted, reforming after.

Erza and Lucy both were also flung around, with Lucy winding up stuck in a chimney head first, her feet kicking and wriggling as she tried to free herself. Erza was simply smashed bodily into a building, leaving a dent in the concrete as she nearly lost her grip on her sword. She leaped up and attacked Juvia and Sol, intent on finishing this fight. *I will deal with that overly aggressive spirit later…*

However, she wasn’t the only friendly fire. Having been roof-hopping back to his new apartment Ranma had heard the fight going on to the north of the city away from the first disturbance and decided to go and investigate. He had been just about to leap over the small river wending through the town by Lucy’s apartment when the attack from Aquarius took him by surprise, flinging him backwards.

The hit from the tsunami wasn’t much, even being crushed against the side of a building wasn’t anything Ranma would complain about. But being turned into his female form after having realized earlier that day that she was close to her monthly monster, which bothered Ranma big time.

Ignoring the fight still raging at the far end of the street the furious and drenched redhead marched up to the mermaid growling, “What the fuck is wrong with you, you up-jumped fish attacking both your allies and enemies at the same time!!”

 “Ha!!?” Aquarius snarled back, leaning down and thrusting her face aggressively into Ranma’s. What’s that huh? All women are my enemies! Don’t think just because you’re a little bit pretty that you can get anywhere in life!”

 “Bitch I will freaking break you!” Ranma roared.

 “Oh yeah!” Aquarius growled in return leaning back and then sending another tsunami wave of water at Ranma. “Take this!”

 “Don’t mind if I do!” Ranma said with a grin, opening her mouth and inhaling the water entirely to Aquarius’s surprise, not having realized what sort of mage she was dealing with. Surprisingly the water was somewhat tasty Ranma, pure almost, with a hint of vanilla.

That didn’t stop Ranma though from leaping up and grabbing at the urn Aquarius had been using to create her water attack. The blue-haired mermaid’s eyes widened when she felt the urn leaving her hands but she had no time to react as Ranma kicked out catching Aquarius in the face so hard as to fling her backwards and then back into the Celestial realm, her physical form having just taken too much damage with that one hit to remain in Ishgar.

Sniffing Ranma flung her hair back over her shoulder looking at Lucy almost irritably holding up the urn almost indolently as she looked into the blonde’s wide, shocked eyes. “The bitch can get this back when she learns some damn manners.”

 ‘H, hai!” Lucy replied, stiffening. *Oh my god she’s scarier than Aquarius! Is this a redhead thing?!*

Ranma then began to heat up her hand, conjuring water in her other before dumping the then hot water over her head and once more breathed a sigh of relief. *Although given how fucking cranky I get I think I’m not going to be the only one who’ll be relieved by that before this all ends.*

By this point Sol had fallen to join Totomaru, his shoulder and collarbone shattered by a blow from the back of Erza’s sword, which would have killed him if she had wished it. The pain finally knocked him out, and then Era turned her attention on Juvia. Juvia, now knowing that they had lost tried to escape flaring a wide-angle attack all around her, but she watched in astonishment as a ponytailed man you already had him turn back up above at the far end of the street crossed the distance between there and where Juvia had been fighting Erza, her astonishment increasing as all the water she’d just created was sucked into the man’s mouth as he moved to join Erza. Indeed, she could almost feel her own water form being sucked towards the man.

Ranma skidded to a halt next to Erza, looking as the blue-haired girl raised her hands. “You still want to fight?”

 “NO!” Juvia said, shaking and shifting form into her fully human body. “You’ll eat Juvia!”

 Ranma and Erza both blinked at that, then looked at one another and then back to Juvia. “Lewd,” they both stated in a deadpan tone.

 Juvia blinked then attempted to glare at them through a blush that covered her entire face. “Juvia doesn’t mean like that!” With a huff, she raised her hands above her head. “Juvia surrenders.”

 “Juvia, why were you doing this!?” Erza said, leaning down to grab Sol by his unbroken shoulder lifting up and shaking him at Juvia. “What in the world is going on?! You three targeted Lucy purposefully, not just our guild as a whole.”

 As Ranma moved over to staunch the fire user’s wounds, Lucy moved to join them and Juvia began to explain, much to her horror.

**OOOOOOO**

 When he heard about the real reason behind the attack, Makarov was furious, along with everyone else in the guild. It was only Juvia’s long-standing friendship with Anna that allowed him to rein in his temper in front of the girl, and astonishingly Natsu standing up for her, that kept the rest of the guild from blaming Juvia for what had nearly happened. The Fire Dragon Slayer stood in front of her glaring at a few guild members who wanted to string her up and hand her over to the Rune Knights.

 Makarov waved them away. “Enough you idiots! Phantom Lord isn’t the kind of guild where someone can get away with ignoring or even arguing with the guild master. Jose’s a far different sort than me.” Turning back to Juvia, he sighed. “You attempted to argue with Jose didn’t you?”

 “Of course she did! No way would someone who’s a friend of Anna’s would ever do something like this without being forced into it!” Natsu said stoutly, followed by a sleepy ‘Aye sir’ From Happy. He turned to her and crouched to grin into her face, a bright, almost welcoming smile on his face as he faced Juvia. “That’s right isn’t it? Those bastards threatened you?”

 “H, hai!” Juvia replied, stuttering and backing away, blushing slightly. Her friendship with Anna had been a godsend in many ways, helping her to become more emotionally centered, yet she still wasn’t used to being smiled at like that. Even Gajeel, who was the only mage in Phantom Lord she would count a real friend, didn’t smile like that. “Juvia didn’t want to do it, but the master, Master Makarov is correct, one does not argue with Master Jose. And he hates your guild. Master Jose could not stand the idea of you having access to the Heartfilia money. Master Jose is obsessed with proving that Phantom Lord is stronger than Fairy Tail.”

 The blue-haired girl shivered, still looking at the ground. “The, the last time Juvia did not perform a task well, Master Jose punished Juvia. And his magical pressure, Juvia could not fight it.” then she turned her head back up to them, a fierce glare on her face as she looked first to Makarov, then to the crowd around her, and then to Natsu. “Juvia thought that if Juvia went along with things, then Juvia could free Lucy-san after she was handed over to her father. After all, then Phantom Lord would have accomplished its mission and Lucy would once more be free.”

 “See! I told you,” Natsu said turning around even while one hand rested on Juvia’s hair, ruffling it messily. “Anna’s a really good judge of character you know.”

“Then why the hell is she going out with you?” shouted one mage, possibly Loke though he had tried to disguise his voice.

“Oy, come ‘ere and say that to my face you bastard!” Natsu roared back, removing his hand from Juvia’s head, much to her blushing disappointment. Then he turned back to her while Makarov was still shaking his head at Jose punishing one of his guild’s members like that. “But what do you mean Lucy’s money? Lucy’s always complaining about having enough money to get by, and she yells about needing more whenever we’re looking over missions at the guild.”

Juvia blinked, but it was Makarov who answered. “She ran away from home of course.” Makarov smiled down at Juvia somewhat sadly. “She ran away from home with only her Celestial Spirit keys and the clothes on her back. Lucy’s never been back there, and wouldn’t have anything to do with her father if she could help it.”

“Juvia had thought that after seeing her apartment, but there would have been other ways to use Lucy-san to get money if, like Master Jose, you are unscrupulous.” Juvia replied.

Makarova growled angrily turning away from her to look around at his guild. Cana stood by Lucy, who seemed shocked, but the rest of the guild had already begun to support her, making her realize they didn’t care about her past or her money or anything: she was a Fairy Tail mage, and that was all that mattered. To one side Gajeel and the other two members of the Element Four which had come into Magnolia were tied up already.

But the fact that Phantom Lord had lost four of its five aces didn’t matter. Makarov would have ignored the attack on the guildhall. He would have laughed at any attack on his dignity or person. He would have waited for the Magic Council to intercede if the attacks on the hall continued. But this, actually hunting down his children, hurting them, nearly killing five of them, trying to kidnap another, that was too much for him to ignore.

He was about to bellow that this meant war and rally his guild to march on Phantom Lord’s main guildhall in Oak Town, but then he paused. “Wait, I don’t see Laxus anywhere. And where is Ranma? I know he was here a few minutes ago.”

Lucy also began to look around, somewhat reluctantly removing herself from Cana’s hug to do it. When Cana wasn’t attempting to grope Lucy the lush could be a surprisingly good listener and her hugs were nice too. She tried not to think about that at the moment though as she looked around, frowning as she realized someone else was missing too. “And where’s Levy-chan? She was hurt too right?”

Sitting nearby and being seen to by Wendy, Jet heard this and leaped to his feet to look around wildly, as did Droy nearby, though he collapsed right after, not having been treated yet. “What!? Levy-chan’s missing! Where’d she-UUrk!”

Wendy’s little fist had just thumped into his stomach lightly right above his privates, causing him to double over, whereupon Wendy grabbed his head and pulled it down to stare at it. She was rather irritable, since she had only gotten about an hour of sleep, and healing the wounded had taken it out of her for. “Sit down! I am not done healing you yet, and if you wreck all my good work I will not heal you again!”

As Jet obeyed Wendy went on, pouting as she channeled her magic into healing spells. “Ranma-Nii, Uncle Laxus and Elfman-san took Levy-san with them, they said they needed her cloud magic.”

Immediately understanding what this meant Makarov rolled his eyes as Natsu shouted about being left behind. “Damn brats, jumping the gun like that. Still, that doesn’t mean the rest of us are going to let them do all the work.” With that, Makarov turned to the crowd of mages around him. “Fairy Tail! We are not going to allow this assault on our mages to stand! If Phantom Lord wants a war, we’ll give them one!”

 After the resultant roar ended, Makarov had to simply assume everyone could hear his orders to head to the train, to take it to as close to Oak Town as possible, because he had just become deaf.

**OOOOOOO**

 “Why did I let you talk me into this!?” Levy moaned, thumping her head against the cloud below her, ignoring the fact her face was covered by a few black and blue marks now. Since, despite the fact it was carrying her, Ranma, Elfman and Laxus all comfortably, it was still cloud, this didn’t actually do anything.

 “Because even a bookish girl like you wants some payback?” Laxus grunted.

 “It was most manly of you to agree to help us get to Oak Town quickly. I would never have been able to keep up with Ranma on land, and Laxus would have tired himself out before he arrived.” Elfman said, to which Laxus just scoffed, as if the idea he would tire himself out was unthinkable.

 Levy twitched. Of all the girls, she was the one who most took those comments about being a man to mean more than they really did given her figure. “I’m a girl darn it!” Then she sighed, putting Elman’s oddities to one side. It was true after all that once Ranma had asked, she had agreed to helping the three mages easily. While Levy had fought back as best she could, that hadn’t been enough to do anything but inconvenience Gajeel.

 So she too wanted some payback, it was just… “Why the heck did we not wait for everyone else?!”

 “Because this was faster, and because the fights last night will have brought the Magic Council running,” Ranma replied. “This way we don’t have to share.”

 While Levy sweatdropped at that, Elfman nodded and Laxus grunted, which she took as agreement with Ranma’s statement.

But then Ranma went on and this time he actually said something she agreed with. “And besides, when you have an advantage over an opponent of equal skill you don’t let them get their feet under them again. You keep the pressure on. “And you’re a lot faster than one of those damn death traps on wheels anyway.”

*Okay, so maybe I agreed with some of that.* Levy thought ruefully.

“On top of that," Ranma went on, “we can't assume that Master Jose doesn’t have some way to figure out what's happened to his strike team. If he does, what he will do with that information is too unpredictable to allow him time to be the one to react.”

Levy looked at him quizzically. “How can you sound so smart at times and yet be so stupid too?”

“Combat junkie doesn't equal stupid girly,” Ranma said with a grin.

For a few moments, the large cloud flew through the air in peace. They covered several hundred miles, proving that yes, Levy’s cloud was indeed faster than the train. But when they crested a mountain Levy gasped and canceled her wind technique, the current word of ‘Air’ dropping from her hands as she gawked at what was revealed on the other side of the mountain.

In front of them, striding on two large, yet somehow gangly legs, was a robot. It was simply in design, a monstrous square that almost looked like a castle or guild, from which the robot’s legs sprouted, along with large heavy shoulders. Each joint was a ball shape of various sizes, and its hands were also ball-shaped for the most part, with stubby fingers sticking out. Here and there pipes jutted out of the robot in places, and steam came from a large backpack-like structure. On top there was an odd helmet shape, with three large, spike-like structures sticking out here and there.

The three young men also stared at what was coming towards them in awe and Ranma suddenly started to cackle. “A mech, a freaking giant mechaform robot is marching towards Magnolia. I wish I could say ‘now I've seen everything’, but I’d bet Lady Luck would take that as a challenge.” Inside Ranma was leaping for joy.  *Oh hell yeah! Magic versus robot or martial artist versus giant robot, I don't care what you want to call it! This is* ***awesome!***

“How is it moving?” Laxus asked, stroking his chin thoughtfully, though his eyes too were alight with amusement.

“And how do we break it?” Elfman asked contemplatively crossing his arms over his chest. “As manly as a giant robot is, this one happens to be in the hands of our enemies after all.”

“They must have some kind of magical power source, probably in its main body or head I'd wage look out!” Ranma shouted interrupting himself as from the face of the giant robot suddenly appeared a large magical circle out of which a beam of power flashed, searing through the sky toward them.

Levy yelped but then Ranma grabbed her up in his arms and leaped off the side of the cloud, with Laxus grabbing Elfman and teleporting them down to the ground in a flash of lightning. The cloud was utterly destroyed a second later the beam of magical power then going on to cut into the mountainside they'd just passed over, blasting it into chunks of debris, which scattered everywhere.

Landing lightly on the ground, after using a Water Dragon’s Boosted Step to slow his descent, Ranma let Levy down, then stared up as the giant robot made its way towards them, clanking forward on heavy feet. From it came a loud voice, angry and wrathful. “You may have defeated my Element Four, Fairies, but you are no match for the true might of my guild! Behold, Super Mage Giant Phantom and our mighty weapon, the Jupiter Cannon! Once I am within range of Magnolia, your guild will be destroyed! Not even Makarov could stop this power!”

Laxus growled, and dropped Elfman on the ground disappearing an instant later. Ranma watched as a beam of lightning traveled towards the mech, to crash into its side, smashing a hole through its armor. “Laxus has the right idea,” he said to the others, cracking his neck and shoulders. “We have to get in there and stop that thing.

*And I'll be damned if I let Laxus find Jose before I do.* Ranma thought then turned, gathering his magic under his feet again. “Soryu no Takameru Ho (Water dragons Boosted Step)!” he shouted, and pushed off of the ground explosively, flinging himself towards the giant robot. The robot tried to punch him out of the air, but that served Ranma's purposes very well. He lightly tapped the fist coming towards him, flipping his body up and over to land on its wrist, where he raced forward.

“They are real men!” Elfman muttered, transforming into his single flying Take Over form, Roc. He nodded to Levy then gestured back towards the woods, which had settled down after the attack from Abyss Break. “You might want to hide in… what is it?”

Levy shook her head and kept pointing over his shoulder and Elfman turned. Coming out of the giant robot were hundreds, thousands of odd-looking flying things. They looked almost like shades, dark purple and black shapes with no legs to speak of, but claws for hands. Grumbling, he canceled his transformation, and then shifted into his most versatile combat form, the Beast.

It'd taken Elfman years to get over the fact that this was the form that had nearly taking his sisters’ lives. But with their help, he had done so, and had eventually mastered a full body Take Over of the Beast’s soul.

Once transformed, Elfman looked back at Levy about to order her away but found her using her Solid Script magic to send blasts of fire and magical energy at the enemy. Each of them were of course created from written out words, twisted and shaped into attacks made of the elements the word described, but they were no less dangerous for all of that.

The extremely short blue-haired girl glared at him defiantly, and Elfman nodded. “What a man!” he bellowed as he charged towards the incoming flight of shades.

“I am a woman, darn it!” Levy shouted after him, even as she sent more Solid Script projectiles towards the incoming shades.

Ranma paused as he reached the robot’s shoulder, staring down at the shades to trying to attack Elfman and Levy, then almost negligently destroyed a few of them coming towards him, before bringing a foot down hard on the steel plate under him and shattering it. With that done, he dropped inside the robot. *The two of them seem to be handling themselves okay, I need to stop this thing and find Master Jose.*

Elsewhere in the giant robot Laxus had much the same idea, but he thought the power for the robot, and thus Jose, would be somewhere in the chest, considering it was the largest part of the robot and he couldn’t think the power source they were using could be small. He was soon proven somewhat correct in that, and Laxus soon found himself in a room containing practically every guild member of Phantom Lord, including all of the smaller subsidiary branches. There were literally over a thousand mages in one huge room, working together in groups of ten to push magical power into lacrima set into the walls around the room.

In the center of the room was a far larger spherical lacrima, but rather than being a solid crystal it was a container created from lacrima in that shape. Laxus took a single glance and could see the magical energies roiling within it. *Yep, destroy that thing, and I’d bet the robot stops moving.*

An instant later Laxus came under attack from several hundred mages. But he simply ignored most of them, or lashing out with a little barely formed lightning attacks, shouting “Small fry should know their place!”

The next instant he was next to the giant lacrima construct, his fist lashing out with a purely physical punch that shattered it, sending the magic within exploding in every direction an instant after he had flashed to the side of the room. Around him, the mages of Phantom Lord were flung about smashed into the floor or sides of the room by the explosion. Most of them fell unconscious, though several hundred were far enough halfway to avoid that fate. Others were closer and embraced unconsciousness to get away from the burns and broken bones they sustained in that explosion.

But instead of feeling the robot judder to a halt, Laxus heard a voice shout, “The Jupiter Cannon is offline! Repeat, Jupiter Cannon is down! Gun room, what are you doing?!”

Hearing that, Laxus tsked as around him the mages who remained conscious attacked him with a roar. “Fuck. That didn’t work.”

**OOOOOOO**

Wendy and a few other Fairy Tail mages who had volunteered to help her with the wounded looked up as Juvia gasped from where she had been sitting between Anna and Lisanna, hunching forward. Wendy rushed over to her, noticing at the same time that Sol and Totomaru had both grimaced, as had Gajeel, the only one of the three men to be awake at this point. They were the only ones in the guild at the moment, “What’s wrong?”

“SS…the guild, the Phantom has awoken.” Juvia replied with a grimace, before explaining what she meant. “Our guild can transform under Master Jose’s directions into a mobile battery in the shape of a human. Its movement and main weapon takes a tremendous amount of magic however, and Juvia and the other Element Four had to create pacts with Master Jose and the main Phantom Heart to power its movement, as did Gajeel.”

Her listeners had various reactions. The girls simply gasped in shock, realizing what this meant for Juvia’s health. Most of the others were just wondering what kind of magic could draining their magic away like this when they all, even Juvia, had anti-magic bracers on. Gajeel though set them straight. “Idiots, these things just stop us from using our magic, it doesn’t do anything about our magical cores, the spell isn’t coming from us, it’s coming from Master Jose.”

Jet and Droy had the loudest reactions, both amazed and horrified: amazed at the idea of a mech being real and horrified at the idea of Levy facing it. They shouted and screamed about how Levy might die until Carla rounded on them, hissing angrily. “Enough of that you two male sissies! As much as I hate to say it, Levy is probably safe as long as she is around Ranma or that other idiot Laxus. We’ll just have to trust they can do something about this before the magical drain becomes too much for Juvia and these three louts.”

**OOOOOOO**

High above where Laxus was stuck dealing with the small fry, Ranma found the entrance to the head of the robot, where he figured he’d find the control room. He too had heard the earlier announcement and smiled at how much damage Laxus seemed to be dealing and the fact that it was him who found the control room first. Still smiling he raised a fist and brought it forward to smash into the hatch in front of him, smashing it off its hinges.

Inside, he found what looked like a bridge of a sci-fi ship, with about eight mages scattered around controlling the robot and a tall man in a wannabe-vampire kind of outfit only done in purple and black instead of just black. Ranma looked at him and decided this must be Jose, though he’d never gotten a description of the man before this. *That look of smug superiority and affronted rage though, that’s the look of a leader who’s day has not gone the way he wanted it to.*

Stepping over the Threshold Ranma took up his normal lazy stance in order to further infuriate his opponents, his hands in his pockets as he looked around with a wide dangerous grin on his face. “A giant robot, transformed from your Guildhall I suppose? That definitely gives you some point for style my man. Seems a little fragile though.”

“The robot is simply a container for the attack spell within,” Master Jose admitted. “Its outer armor cannot be all that effective or else it would weigh the robot itself down and it would be even harder to move. But who are you? You are no Fairy Tail mage I know. I know all their more powerful members and you are not among them.”

“Ahh, I suppose I should tell ya who I am before I beat you down.” Still smirking Ranma tapped his broach causing the illusion over it to disappear for a moment. “I am Ranger Ranma, and I arrest you in the name of the King of Fiore and the King’s Conclave. Please resist,” he added with an even more dangerous glint in his eye, resembling more the look of a shark than any human’s and he moved forward on light feet, still smirking at Master Jose.

Jose's eyes widened at that then narrowed. “So, the rumors that weakling Juvia heard about there being a Ranger in Fiore were real. Still, this seems to be more happenstance than anything else is. Why are you interfering with a guild versus guild issue? Do you have specific orders to do so?”

“No,” Ranma said with a shake of his head. “But I was going to stop by and talk to you… well more punch you really,” Ranma said correcting himself. “Your guild’s made quite a nasty name for itself in other countries you now. You can't really have expected to get away with some of the extortion and other things you've been doing for so long did you?”

“Those were simply business arrangements. Phantom Lord prides itself on always giving the client what he or she wants, and we demand no more than they can afford.”

“That is a laugh,” Ranma shot back, starting forward another few steps, as his hands began to glow with magic. “And then there's this latest escapade. Starting a fight between guilds is forbidden, it has been forbidden throughout all of Ishgar for years, centuries even! And you thought you could get away with it somehow? You’re both insane and stupid then!”

Master Jose growled and stood up, his magical aura flaring. Some of it was sucked into the magic lacrima beside him, which seems to protect his bridge crew members. The rest of it reached out for Ranma in a black miasma. “You dare! You might be a Ranger, but all that means is that you are good at sneaking around, and possibly a decent fighter. I am a **Wizard Saint**! You think you can fight me?! You think I will go with you quietly!? Dead men tell no tales Ranger!”

“We won't know what’ll happen until we try,” Ranma said, and then disappeared flashing forward faster than most could track. Claws of water magic energy covered his hands up to his elbow as he slashed at Jose.

Jose dodged back, shouting out a spell and lashing out with a beam of dark energy that Ranma had to duck away from, almost getting hit by a second but he blocked that one with one of his water covered fists, redirecting the energy. Several dozen shades appeared all around Ranma and began to attack as well, but he battered his way through them, then launched a long-range attack at Jose, forcing him to Dodge.

Jose returned a punch landing on Ranma’s jaw staggering him backwards, but Jose was astonished that the boy was even still upright and then even more astonished when Ranma simply moved with the blow, and returned one that caught Jose in the chest. He blocked it with some of his magical power, but even so, it sent him skidding backwards. The boy was good, Jose had to admit. Despite that though, he knew he would win.

He raised his magical energies further, his eyes going entirely black as he did. An instant later he lashed out with a wide-angle beam that smashed Ranma back out through the doorway and into the corridor beyond before the younger man could dodge. Once the boy had disappeared for a second, Master Jose nodded to a corner, and then raced out the door after him.

Behind him, his bridge crew breathed a sigh of relief and pushed themselves back up from where they had collapsed under the pressure of his magical aura, shaking their heads in looking at one another. But then they went back to controlling the mech against the two mages on the ground, smashing Elfman out of the sky with a punch, and then nearly stepping on the other one before she could get out of the way.

Ranma rolled with the magical attack, ignoring the fact it had flash-fried the front of his shirt, shaking his head a little. “Okay, that one rang my bell a bit.” Launching forward, Ranma caught Jose just as he exited the bridge room. “Soryu no Taitan Panchi! (Water Dragon's Titan Punch)!”

“Darkness stream!” the Wizard Saint shouted, gathering his magical aura around him and creating a huge gout of energy that cut through the fist, as he continued on, landing on the ceiling and then launching himself downwards along with several dozen attacks. It almost looked as if his magical aura had suddenly shifted into some kind of jellyfish shape with nasty looking hooks on the end of its tentacles, but Ranma blocked, dodged or dissipated them as he could.

He was nearly caught though a second later by another spell called Dead Wave. This one was a large purple beam of energy that came from Master Jose’s other hand, and when Ranma dodged it drilled straight through the side of the mech and out into the air.

And then hundreds of smaller shades appeared which attacked Ranma from all sides. He dealt with them but he couldn’t close with Master Jose, and was forced to rely on another long-range attack to try to dissipate Master Jose's assault. This worked when he aimed at Jose’s foot rather than his body, sending Jose stumbling backwards. His type of magic wasn't very good at shielding, and Ranma was faster than he was, able to catch Jose on the bounce despite his own movement if he was tricky about it.

But when Ranma closed, Master Jose grabbed his arm in a decent arm lock, before bringing him close and hammering a punch into Ranma’s face. To Jose surprised however Ranma just blinked, rocking his head backwards for a second. Then he kicked out hard, sending Jose back into a wall with a grunt of pain.

“Now Aria!” Jose shouted, and suddenly, two of the shades Rama had thought he had dealt with shifted form into an entirely different mage. He was a large man, almost as tall as Master Jose was, and wider in the shoulders, with a blindfold over his eyes. He cupped his hands to either side of Ranma, thumbs facing inwards as a magic circle appeared around them both. “Metsu!”

The magical attack flared and suddenly, Ranma could feel his magical energy draining away.

Both the newcomer and Jose began to laugh, staring as Ranma stumbled. “Airspace magic, Metsu! How tragic, you have been caught in a space I have created, which will drain you of all your magic, how sad!”

The magic around Ranma began to drain upwards, and the newcomer gasped at the sheer amount of it.  *That is, that is more than I have ever seen before! It is almost as much as I would have expected from a Guild Master!*

Fearing what would happen if the magic kept on accumulating above the now shuddering Ranma, Aria began to dissipate it quickly, thrusting forward another hand and creating a second air space, with which he funneled the magic out into one of the cracks in the mech’s hull nearby.

But Ranma hadn't stumbled because he was feeling weaker. No, he was feeling something all together different because thanks to Aria, the conflict within his body had finally been resolved. And indeed after Aria dissipated the magic he had siphoned off of Ranma, both he and Jose felt it, like a heavy thrum in the air.

It was as if the floodgates had been opened, or rather as if two competing forces that had been fighting for so long, pressing together with all of their might. Now one of them had disappeared and the other was left to roar on, full of power. Ranma’s ki burst out of his reservoir, and flooded his entire body with energy. His body began to glow like a blue sun his eyes even more so as he pushed himself to his feet, the plate underneath him buckling as if under some great weight.

Looking down at his hands and body Ranma began to chuckle shaking his head as he felt the amount of power roaring through him.

Covering his eyes from the blue light Jose stared in shock. “Aria you fool, did you perform that spell accurately!?”

“I, I did!” Aria said, frowning and staring at Ranma. “But…could he have somehow discovered his Second Origin? I could not have drained that ifFFF!!”

Before he could finish speaking Ranma disappeared. Not even Jose could follow his movement, until he suddenly appeared in front of Arias face, his punch a bare centimeter away from connecting. With no time to even set himself Aria found his body being flung backwards, his jaw not so much broken as simply destroyed, his teeth and jawbones almost completely shattered into a million pieces as he was flung backwards.

The pain caused Aria to scream, which caused them even more pain, and then Ranma’s foot came down slamming into his chest in a stomp kick as Ranma flipped in the air, shattering ribs and sending Aria straight through the floor they had been fighting on and through several dozen more below.

Staring in shock, Jose barely dodged a punch that would've done the same thing to him as Ranma came back at him, laughing evilly.

Everything was so… so **weak**! *It was as if I was fighting for so long at less than fifty percent, I can barely understand what a hundred percent is anymore! Somehow, that guy must've used some kind of magic to drain my magical core away from me. And without it, the Dragon Slayer poison or whatever you want to call it is no longer fighting my ki.*

All that Ranma had known before this, but now, standing in a cascading nimbus of blue power he understood something else. It wasn’t exactly a moment of clarity since it was kind of obvious at this point, but it was no less world shaking for all of that. *But the fight between them, between my Dragon Slayer magic and my ki, has caused my ki to grow! To grow a lot more than I thought it had, or ever really imagined it ever could have!*

With a laugh somewhere between a guffaw and a mad, power-drunk cackle, Ranma launched himself towards his opponent. Jose could barely even see him disappear before Ranma was in his face, coming so fast he could only bring up his magic in an effort to block it.

The wind of the punch coming from Ranma was so fast it created a shockwave that broke through even Master Jose’s defenses. This dissipating Jose’s magic and then breaking his nose so badly it looked as if it had been crushed, and he stared at the Ranger, as he dodged backwards out of a hole in the side of the mech, hovering in the air outside. Once he had some distance, he shouted “Dead wave!”

This attack caught Ranma, but he smashed it to one side, his upper body glowing with blue energy, which seemed to shake off the attack easily and prepared to leap out after them.

But Laxus suddenly appeared behind Master Jose, a Rairyu No Hoko (Lightning Dragon’s Roar) slamming into the man's back and sending Jose plummeting to the ground. He glared at Ranma, ignoring the fact his old frival was glowing bright blue and then gesturing to the robot. “You deal with that, I'll deal with Jose! He attacked **my** guild after all, it should be a Fairy Tail mage who deals with him.”

Ranma growled, but nodded. “Fine, just don't blame me if the Magic Council complains about how much damage I do to the surrounding area when I do it!”

Both Elfman and Levy were hurting now. Levy had protected herself by using solid script to create a barrier of steel around her, but it had still been battered near flat on top of her, and she was out of the fight for now, trapped under her own construction. Elfman had taken by far the worst of it, unable to change from one form to another quickly enough to use his more defensive form. Elfman had been planted into the dirt several times, and then kicked like a ball to roll away a time or two.

Ranma took all this in at a glance, and then flipped himself up and out of the robot, racing up the side of it as if it was solid ground, his hands thrust out to either side as he began to gather ki. “Massive Moko Takabisha!” He shouted, thrusting out to either side as one of the fists came in.

The beams of power seared through the fist the robot attempted to smash him with, almost as if it had been like a plasma torch causing the fist itself to drop to the ground below them. The other fist disappeared entirely, along with a large portion of the arm, up to its elbow.

Then Ranma was leaping up and facing the robot head. Another blast of ki flashed out, and the people there barely had an instant to duck into cover behind their control stations before the head of the mech disappeared.

With that Ranma flipped himself backwards through the air, and then plummeted down, landing so hard he created a crater, but not even noticing it, stepping out of it and staring up at the robot before staring out over to the East, where Master Jose had been running , with Laxus in hot pursuit. “Dammit! I think I got jipped there!”

Then a shadow loomed over him, and he stared up at the foot coming down towards him. “Oh, it can still move. Awesome!”

The control point Ranma had found actually wasn't in the head, rather it was in the neck, which was now wide open to the sky, and filled with terrified but also very angry people who wanted to punish the mage who had just nearly killed them a second ago.

Ranma flung his hands up, and caught the thousand ton plus mech foot, and held it there for a moment before slowly bending his legs and arms, then thrusting them both upwards, hurling the giant mech not just off its feet but into the air for a few seconds before it plummeted down onto the foot which hadn’t been trying to step on him, which began to buckle. Ranma laughed, then dashed forward, and punched the side of that leg, sending it skidding out under the main body of the mech and the mech collapsed onto its side.

He then grabbed the foot, and with barely any effort tore it loose in a flash of magical energies and to the sound of tortured metal and stone, tossing it to the side and cackling as he began to dismantle the mech uncaring that most of the wizards inside had now begun to run away.

Freed by Elfman from her self-made prison Levy did notice this, and quickly conjured up her cloud. Once aboard her cloud Levy raced forward and created a barrier around the area to corral the Phantom Lord Mage, with Elfman helping by pummeling any mage who attempted to attack her into the dirt. “Ranma, they’re getting away!” Levy shouted.

At that, Ranma turned from his destructive fun and saw the escaping mages. “Make a corral not a barrier Levy. I’ll get them,” he shouted gleefully, still quite power-drunk at the moment.

With that, Ranma leaped from the rubble that had formerly been the Phantom Lord guildhall mecha. Landing he then concentrated and flashed forward. He moved so fast it was almost as if he created afterimages, each image grabbing a different mage and tossing them backwards towards Elfman or to where Levy had created a cage for them.

Once they were all in a pile, Ranma wagged a finger at them, and then said “stay put!” before leaping up onto the giant mech as it feebly tried to raise the stump of its arm. He grabbed that and then with a roar tore it out of its socket, hurling it over the cowering mages heads. He then turned to them and shouted “Or else!” Needless to say they all sat quietly, even putting their hands under their rears.

 With that the final few mages in the control center surrendered, and Ranma quickly captured them too, tossing them over to join their fellows.

**OOOOOOO**

Master Jose might have felt great pride in Phantom Lord, but it was a pride that he had held up to a mirror. Master Jose believed that he, personally, was Phantom Lord. *As long as I survive I can rebuild Phantom Lord, I can rebuild my guild, dark or not, and come back and have my revenge!* He thought, stanching the blood flowing from his flattened nose as he flew through the air. But before that he thought, finally satisfied with the distance he had put between himself and Ranma and the fight going on back there*, I will kill Laxus! Sending his grandson's body back to Makarov will be a good start to reclaiming my pride from this humiliation!*

“You finally stopped running I see,” Laxus said dryly as he came out of one of his teleportation lightning spells to land across from Jose in a small clearing in the forest. Cocking his head, he listened to the sound of the fight going on in the distance and smirked at Jose. “I don't think Ranma’s going to leave you much of a guild, either in its members being conscious, or your guild itself being in one piece.”

“Guild halls can be rebuilt, mages can be recruited. Perhaps this time after I am forced to be a dark mage, I will find mages strong enough not to fail me. But you won't be alive to see it boy.” Once more Jose’s eyes slowly shifted to a solid black, and even more magical power began to roll away from him than there had been previously. “Your corpse will be my final parting gift to your grandfather!”

Laxus cracked his neck, then for the first time today flung off his large fur coat along with his headphones. With that done he brought his hands in front of him, in a traditional martial arts stance as his own power began to thrum from all around him in a widening nimbus of crackling electrical energies. “If you think you can take it bring it on, you pansy-faced gothic bitch!”

The two of them roared towards one another, exchanging magical assaults and then physical ones, punching kicking, lashing out with lightning and darkness magic. Jose conjured shades around them to attack Laxus from different angles, but Laxus dissipated them with almost lazy blasts of lightning from the rest of his body concentrating on taking the fight to Jose in no uncertain terms. Jose landed the first real blow, Laxus losing a tooth to the punch, but Laxus returned it with a kick that sent Jose stumbling backwards.

“Shade entangle!” Jose shouted, conjuring up a far more solid shade out of the ground grab at Laxus’ lower body. “Pain overflow!”

 Laxus gritted his teeth at the pain, this cost him, their touches seeming to flare along his nerve endings like someone had set them on fire. But that wasn't enough, and Laxus pushed out his power from his body again, in a wide Nimbus that destroyed the shades. This opened him up to an attack from Jose, a Dead Wave that caught him in the center of his chest flinging him backward. But he rolled with it, smashing the attack into pieces with his own magic, and launching a “Rairyu No Hoko (Lightning Dragon's roar)!” back at Jose.

Jose barely dodged in turn, and then lashed out with another attack, which Laxus leaped away from, creating another spell that attacked Jose from multiple angles. “Rairyu no Gyomou (Lightning Dragon’s Fishing Net)!”

This time Jose couldn’t block or dissipate all of the attacks coming at him, and his body suffered. Several portions of his clothing were fried away by the lightning, taking damage.

After the attacks dissipated the two of them slowly circled one another, at a distance as they readied their next spells. “Such admirable strength of magic, yes, you are truly a man worth killing! All of you fairy mages, all of your willpower, I want to break it all, I want to force you to see sorrow and despair as I crush everything around you!” Jose said, nearly ranting. The fact he had been brought so low, his entire guild broken by so few mages had finally started to get to him mentally.

“I hear a lot of talking,” Laxus said, thrusting his hands out to either side as lightning magic appeared around them, little tiny scales appearing on his face and arms. “If you think you are strong enough, to overcome my will, think again!”

The two of them continued the exchange with fervor sending smashing blows one another that shook the very air around them, but to Jose’s astonishment and growing rage, Laxus seemed to be his equal. His lightning magic was an excellent foil for Jose's Shade-based magic, as well as his Death based Dead Wave school of spells. A Dark Pulse nearly got Laxus, burning his shoulder and arm somewhat but he kept on fighting, ignoring the wounds and staring at Jose with the same grim, determined gaze that he’d had the entire flight.

The two of them disengaged again and Laxus stood across from Jose, who was now breathing hard, glaring at him, while Laxus stared back resolutely. “One chance!” he said, the first words he’d spoken since the second engagement had started. “I will give you one chance to surrender. After that, I will deal with you as a Fairy Tail mage should.” With that, he kept his hands one above the other in front of his chest and began to concentrate his magical energies into creating a spell he had learned from his grandfather.

Jose’s finally snapped at that, the twitching vein on his forehead nearly bursting as his magical power, which had begun to fade, flared up once more around him, fueled by his rage and fury. This dark miasma filled the clearing pressing down towards Laxus. “You think, you think you have the right to judge me! You, a mere fairy! Die in the abyss of despair!!”

Laxus didn't budge, his magical aura defending him from the attack of the other’s magic, as she continued to concentrate more magic into the spell forming between his hands.  *Concentrate* he thought, *concentrate, create the image in your mind, and let the magic fill it, fill the reserve until you are brimming with it, until you can't take anymore.* “One.”

“Very well, let's see which is stronger! Your so-called will, or my power!” Jose shouted back. Gathering his own power again, that the miasma disappearing from around Laxus, as he to concentrated all of his magical energies into his palms, crossing them in front of his face as he did so. The darkness in his hand becoming so black it seemed to suck in the light.

“Two.” Laxus growled, gritting his teeth at the power of the spell he was creating.

Jose snarled, and lashed out with his own attack. “Shade style Secret Art, Well of Darkness!” This spell took the form of hundreds of tentacle like beams of power each of them so solid with purple and black energy they looked as if they were almost tangible rather than simply magical energy. They all lashed forward like whips, coming towards Laxus so fast that even at he wanted to, Laxus couldn’t have dodged them.

But before it could hit, Laxus finished his own attack. “Fairy Tail Secret Art: Fairy Law!” he intoned slamming his hands together and crushing the golden sphere between them.

The golden light lashed out in every direction, burning away Jose’s attack and not even stopping before it slammed into him and all around him, destroying the shadows around Jose. Jose flinched, holding up his hands in front of his face, but this didn't save him, and he screamed as his body was inundated by light.

When the attack finally finished dissipating several minutes later, Jose was unconscious, his eyes lolling back in his face, his chest barely moving. His skin had been turned into a pasty white color, his hair had been flash-fried off his head, along with much of his clothing, and the pressure of the attack had shattered his arms and numerous ribs from what Laxus could see. On his pasty chest, lay his Wizard Saint broach. The man was still alive, but Laxus doubted he'd ever be able to use magic again.

Laxus grunted, and took a step forward before shaking his head tiredly. That had taken a lot out of him, and he growled. “More training I suppose.” Laxus knew he could have won that fight without resorting to the guild’s secret magic, but he had learned about why Phantom Lord had been started from his grandfather. After that, he’d wanted to rub their guilds primacy into the body of the fool. With a grunt he reached down and grabbed Jose by his belt, which had miraculously survived, and began to drag him away, too tired to use his normal teleportation spells. He also pocketed the Wizard Saint badge. *I figure I’ve earned this now.*

Arriving back where the main fight had occurred, he was not surprised to find the rest of Phantom Lord already captured, with Ranma sitting on the remains of the former Guildhall. He looked at Ranma, cocking his head thoughtfully as he took in the sight of his still blazing blue friend. “Can you do something about that? You’re kind of conspicuous.”

Ranma Looked down at himself, then closed his eyes for a second and concentrated. It was hard, like trying to push down on a spring the size of a city that had finally unwound after thousands of years. But he was eventually able to push it back into his reservoir, the glow around him disappearing though his eyes still glimmered a little. “So it turns out that if you drain my Dragon Slayer Magic away, it acts like releasing a spring on my other magic without so much of an issue as the other way around.”

Giving him a deadpan look Laxus shook his head before smirking. “That makes no sense at all. But then again a lot of shit around you doesn't, so I'm not going to comment. Are you calling this in?”

Ranma nodded. “I kind of have to,” he said apologetically. “Phantom Lord started this, but this,” he gestured around at the destruction of the area around him. Luckily, the mech and Levy had both been traveling on the straight line from their opposite starting points, and had met well away from any human habitation. “This is too big for just me to deal with. The Magic Council will have to come in and take possession of these guys, and disposition from us and those back in Fiore.”

Laxus nodded, then grunted and threw Master Jose over towards his fellows, who began to mutter in shock, staring at Jose’s unconscious form. Ranma also looked at him, one eyebrow rising at the odd damage done, and the fact he felt like a barely alive baby in terms of strength. “What the fuck did you do to that guy?”

“Used one of my old man’s spells,” Laxus said with a shrug, then looked over at one of the mages he hadn't seen before a large man, whose face looked as if it had been stepped on by the mech, to say nothing of the fact his chest had been literally caved in to one side. Several of the other Phantom Lord mages were around him trying to keep him alive. “What did you do to that one?”

“Hit him twice once the idiot draining My Dragon Slayer magic away. One punch to the face, one kick to the chest.” Ranma supplied.

Hearing this Laxus slowly nodded, while internally cursing angrily. It looked as if once Ranma was able to freely use both of his internal magics that he would gain a massive power up, to say nothing of his weapons, which he hadn’t used at all in this fight. That was not good for Laxus, who still thought of himself as Ranma's rival.  *Still, there are a few ways to gain more strength, and I bet my grandfather knows about more*.

The two of them moved over to Elfman and Levy, who both threw the two of them thumbs up from where they had been standing guard over the rest of the mages. The four of them talked for a time while watching the prisoners until a squadron of Rune Knights arrived, double marching from the nearest town after taking a train there.

As the Rune Knights were taking charge of the prisoners handcuffing them using anti-magic locks and loading them into carts, Natsu and several other Fairy Tail mages arrived from the same town having taken a different train to there as best they could until they saw a few Rune Knights who had been left behind to organize that end of things. Makarov had questioned their commander, and then he and the others had followed after the other Rune Knights.

Makarov used his magical aura somehow to fly through the air almost as fast as Natsu could with Happy on his back. Carla and Wendy were also there. Wendy immediately went to work seeing to Levy, Laxus and Elfman first and then healing the Phantom Lord Mages while Carla guarded her back just in case.

To her surprise, Ranma was uninjured. In fact, he was almost obscenely healthy, and he’d spent the time waiting for the Rune Knights in constant movement, never once standing still. Indeed even now he was moving around doing jumps, push-ups, anything to get rid of some of the energy he was feeling.

Makarov scowled, looking around and in particular Jose’s comatose form and the shattered remains of the mecha. “Tsk, you brats didn’t leave anything for the rest of us huh?”

“Yeah man! Kicking Rusty the studded maiden’s ass wasn’t enough for me!” Natsu whined, staring at the mech then actually pouting over at Ranma and the others. “I mean come on, how often are you going to be able to say you got to fight a mech! And you four hogged it!”

While Levy sweatdropped and just shook her head in total incomprehension and Elfman nodded commiseratingly, Laxus rolled his eyes and Ranma shrugged. “Sorry, you snooze you lose. And it really was an awesome fight,” he said, rubbing it in a little. Despite not being so much of a social incompetent anymore, Ranma was still little bit of it an asshole to some people, and occasionally Natsu rubbed him the wrong way. “I mean, what man wouldn’t want to fight a giant robot?”

As Natsu growled angrily at that Levy was nearly bowled over by Jet then an instant later Droy too plowed into her, the two boys hugging her tightly. “Levy! Oh my god we’re so happy you’re okay! Why’d you go off with those combat junkies?! Were you hurt at all, if any of those bastards hurt you point ‘em out and we’ll take care of them!”

Their words were so jumbled together and further distorted by their tears Levy could barely make them out, but she could get the gist of it, and rolled her eyes. She liked her teammates, but sometimes their desire to treat her like a glass doll bothering the heck out of her. *Especially since I’ve started to realize Laxus was right all those years ago: I really was selling my magic short by thinking it couldn’t be used well in combat.*

Minutes later the rest of the guild arrived, and Levy found herself happy that none of the others were in a rush to join the group hug. “Darn it you two, let go already, I can’t breathe!”

Staring at her bookish friend, Lucy breathed a sigh of relief. “I’ll still have to apologize though,” she said to herself morosely, not noticing that Cana had moved to her side and heard this. “It was my fault that Phantom Lord decided to attack Fairy Tail.”

“Oh no you don’t babe!” Cana said, startling Lucy out of her funk. “Phantom Lord hated Fairy Tail practically since its creation and Master Jose hated the old man since they got into it at a guild master meeting once. You can’t blame yourself for that, and even if your presence was the final straw, it wasn’t you who put a target on your back, but your asshole father.”

Not part of this minor drama, Ranma turned to Makarov, holding Natsu away with one hand on the younger boy’s head, ignoring the boy’s attempts to light his hand on fire. “Did you bring the other prisoners?”

“No, we left them with some Knights in Magnolia,” Makarov replied, looking bemused, staring at Natsu and the fact he’d lit his head on fire in an effort to get Ranma to let go, achieving nothing.

Both Ranma and the Guild Knight Commander nodded at that and went back to talking, staring into a communication Lacrima as they waited for the Magic Council to tell them what to do with the prisoners.

Makarov shook his head and grabbed Natsu in a Titan fist, pulling him away from Ranma so he could do his work in peace. Then he stared around the carnage the fight against the mecha had created of this once pristine area before shouting, “All right you idiots, enough sitting around. Let's clean up this mess a bit. The more we do now, the less blame we’ll fall on our shoulders for all of this.”

In actuality, thanks to Ultear having warned the Magic Council that Phantom Lord was looking to provoke Fairy Tail, Fairy Tail got off scot-free, much to their detractors on the council’s annoyance. But with Ranma there giving a statement on what had happened and why, as well as the attempted kidnapping of another Guild’s mage, Phantom Lord was swiftly labelled a dark guild and officially disbanded.

All of the Guild mages would be imprisoned. For many of them it would only amount to a few months in jail and then they would be forced to do some civil service. But for others, including the majority of the elements Four, Master Jose and Gajeel, it would amount to more than several year’s worth of jail time. Aria and Master Jose in particular would be staying in jail for the rest of their lives, not that either man was in a position to complain. Ranma had stopped Wendy from healing them, and it would be many months, perhaps years before either of them was up to eating solid food, let alone doing anything more strenuous.

Gajeel would serve out a year in jail before being released. He and Totomaru had no other charges against them beyond what they had done during the attack on Fairy Tail, and both had professed they performed the attack out of loyalty to the guild. Sol was somewhere between them and Jose and Aria, having many other crimes that could be linked back to him and his actions as a Phantom Lord mage, and having a sadistic streak a mile wide.

The only one not getting any jail time was Juvia Lockser, who at the request of Anna and with Master Makarov also pleading her case, was released to Fairy Tail for observation. Ranma supposed that the girl would soon join the guild and was happy for her. Even if they hadn't interacted much she had seemed like someone who had been stuck with a bad crowd.

All this talking of course took several days. Ranma had to give statements in front of the Magic Council and had to do a professional write-up for them and for the king. He’d even had to get Laxus to do the same thing about his own fight with Jose, given Jose’s Wizard Saint Status. Whether or not Laxus had earned his own Saint title in that fight against the original one, what's up in the air, but Ranma rather thought he had.

Finally though they were let go, and allowed to return to Magnolia. There, Ranma turned Juvia over to Anna. The silver haired girl gleefully hugged her friend, who hugged back just as tightly, actually weeping happily.

“What is it with happy tears anyway?” Ranma asked as an aside to Laxus as the two of them moved around the two girls, Laxus taking a moment to ruffle Anna’s hair before following Ranma.

“Dude, you're a girl half the time,” Laxus said with a smirk and an eye-roll as he fiddled with his headphones. “If you don't understand how the hell am I supposed to know?”

“You have a lot more experience with girls in a dating sense than I do,” Ranma said dryly.

Laxus just shook his head at that, and the two Dragon Slayers moved through the town, heading towards the Guild Hall. The damage from the two fights had been repaired relatively quickly thanks to Fairy Tail mages.

Even their Guild Hall had been repaired and work was going on to expand it slightly. A pool would be added to one side of it, and an enlarged second floor with wraparound balcony, sticking out over half of the backyard and housing the pool along the left side of the hall. A third floor would then be added to be a sort of S-class hangout/sitting area, smaller and more richly accoutered than the rest. Makarov had been thinking about making these changes to the hall for a while, and had used the damages done by Gajeel's attack on it as an excuse to get it done.

Pushing the door to the Guild Hall open Laxus shouted, “Hey old man, we’re done with the Council.”

“I heard over the lacrima,” Makarov shouted from his familiar perch on one of the bars, waving a tankard as large as his own head. The rest of the hall however had been reorganized slightly, with a stage set up to one side in front of the small hospital and office wing, with the tables replaced by lines of seats. “And you're just in time! Gray and the others still have to be punished for taking an S class mission without permission and we’re just about ready for the ceremony!”

“Oh yes!” Ranma said slapping her hands together. Ranma had decided to bite the bullet and get his female body over her monthly during the enforced downtime spent doing reports. She was still somewhat overly emotional, but had gotten a handle on it. “I have been waiting for this moment.”

“Given how we had to wait to punish them I decided to make it even worse,” Makarov said to the two Dragon Slayers as they sat near him at the back of the crowd. I got Mirajane and her two sisters involved in choosing outfits for them all! This is going to be epic!”

“I should've bought a camera,” Laxus said with a smile, leaning back against the side of the bar, nodding thanks to Reedus, who had seemingly taken over the bar duties for the moment. Everyone was talking, chuckling quietly, and staring at this stage and the curtain closing off the back hall.

“I take it Mira’s calmed down from missing the action?” Ranma asked, wincing. Mira’s initial response to Gajeel’s attack on her sisters while she had been on a modeling gig - which had turned out to be bogus, set up by Jose to get one of Fairy Tail’s S-class mages out of the way - had been practically apocalyptic. Makarov had needed to physically restrain her from breaking into the prison housing the Dragon Slayer for the express purpose of killing him.

“Yes, Anna and Lisanna were eventually able to talk her down,” Makarov replied dryly, looking down at his palm with a rueful look where Mira’s magic had actually singed his hand when he grabbed her in his Titan-sized fist.

Wendy moved out of the crowd with Carla in her human guise next to her moving over to Ranma, who had moved to sit a table in the back of the crowd, whereupon Ranma pulled the younger girl up into her lap, looking at Carla quizzically. “You look like you’re looking forward to this nearly as much as I am Carla.”

“Oh you had better believe I am Ranma! Hehe, let that idiot tomcat see how it’s like to be on the other side of things for once!” Carla said, actually rubbing her hands together.

“Mou, that’s not very nice,” Wendy said and then smiled somewhat sheepishly. “Although, I am kind of interested in seeing what they all look like.”

Bisca, Cana, Erza and Alzack moved to join the Dragon Slayer siblings, flushing out the table as Cana set down a few drinks around for the others. “”You’re not the only one short and cutey.” The lush said.

“Oh?” Bisca asked, smiling as she sat next to Ranma and felt Ranma’s hand find hers under the table, squeezing once before moving away. But her main attention was on Cana as she went on teasingly. “I think I can guess who you’re interested in seeing in a new form~,” she trilled.

Cana surprised the others by not replying instead simply raising a keg to her lips from beside her, resolutely turning away from the others to look at the stage. The others then turned to look at Bisca, who shook her head winking at them.

Setting that minor mystery to one side, Erza looked over at Ranma. “Since Porlyusica hasn’t returned yet, will you go ahead with your idea of clandestinely recruiting from other guilds?”

“Yeah, I might, after, well, you know…” Ranma gestured down at herself. “After this wears off. I don’t exactly have a problem with my female body anymore, but this time of the month, that I’ve got a major issue with.”

The women around the table nodded commiseration while Alzack looked a little uncomfortable.

“Although I seem to be putting off a smell that’s keeping Natsu away from me, so there’s that.” Natsu had attempted to fight Ranma the other day before he left for the Council’s meeting that day, only to take one sniff and back off, his face so pale it was like he’d seen a ghost.

“Ha! I wonder why?” Cana said, slapping her keg back down on the ground and waving a finger at Erza. “Could it have anything to do with someone at this table having taken her first womanly time very badly and nearly beating every boy in the guild into a coma?”

Erza huffed while Ranma threw an arm over her shoulder. “Don’t worry about it Erza, it’s perfectly understandable. The first time it happened to me I spent about an hour screaming and running around shouting about…”

“Yes well!” Alzack interrupted, looking very green while the girls at the table smirked at him. “So, did the council tell you more about how the interrogations of that dark guild we captured were going?” He asked, desperate to change the subject.

“Nope, not yet. They are taking it slowly, questioning them one at a time, and of course most of that work was interrupted by this pile o’ crap with Phantom Lord.” Ranma replied, moving away slightly from her fellow redhead though Erza had seemed to have no objection to the contact, something Ranma noticed, just as he had earlier noticed Bisca giving Ranma’s hand a squeeze despite his current female form.

At that moment one of the many guildmates Ranma hadn’t been introduced to yet hopped up onto the stage and began to speak into a microphone. “Hey everyone, this Max Alors, and I welcome you to the show! As you all know, the Master instituted a special kind of punishment a few years back for infractions against Guild rules. Today, we have not one, but four people who broke Guild rules Harshly enough to be punished with… **That!”**

This cause many hoots and hollers as side conversations ended or shifted in focus and everyone looked to the stage. Max nodded at that response and then waved grandly at the sheet covering the entrance to the hallway beyond. “Now, without further ado may I present our first guilty party, Happy!”

“No!” shouted Happy, in a far more feminine, almost pure alto, voice than normal. “This is not cool! Carla’s out there, she’ll laugh at me!”

“Good gracious yes I’m going to laugh at you! Now get out here and give me my entertainment tomcat!” Carla shouted, causing further gaiety amongst the crowd, especially from those who knew the female Exceed. Most of the guild was still coming to terms with how much more mellow Carla since having left the guild so many years ago.

Despite Happy’s protests, he was pushed out by a laughing Lisanna to show the Guild his new form. In point of fact, Happy was now a she: a blue-furred little female Exceed rather than a male. She was dressed in a dress that must've been loaned them from Carla, had some pearls dangling around her chest, and a bluebonnet on top of her head. “This itches and isn't comfortable!” Happy shouted at the top of her lungs. “You’re all meanies!”

“You knew the rules!” Makarov shouted, over the guffaws of the crowd. And Carla was indeed among those laughing, a sight that caused Happy to moan in despair. “You can't then turn around and say you don't want to be punished for it.”

Slouching to one side, fem-Happy crossed her arms and stared out over the crowd.

As the announcer talked up the crowd for Happy, Ranma leaned in and asked Erza, “Do you know where Makarov found that potion?”

“According to Master Makarov there was an old member of Fairy Tail who specialized in odd potions like that, and the two of them hit on this idea years before Master Makarov became guild Master.”

Ranma nodded, then turned her attention back to the stage, where Natsu had just been pushed out. He too into had been turned into a woman, momentarily anyway the potion according to Makarov would only last about two hours.

Unlike how Natsu normally dressed Fem-Natsu was dressed in a tight fitting shirt and jeans, showing off a rather impressive chest, which made Ranma wonder if there was maybe something inherent in the male to female transformation that caused female bodies to grow like that. Natsu’s hair had also been tamed, into some kind of girly bowl-cut that reminded Ranma of Nabiki, which was all they could do with it given its length. She even wore lipstick, and rouge on her cheeks.

Despite all that though, Natsu made for an **ugly** looking girl. There was just something un-feminine about his face that carried over, and the way he moved was still that of a guy. This was made worse by the snarl on her face, showing outsized incisors.

While many of the boys in the Guild clapped or jeered, Ranma shouted, “Know my pain and feel my suffering!” Then he and Laxus from his position at the bar began to take pictures.

“Why you!” Natsu made to leap off the stage, but Makarov had moved into the crowd when Natsu had come out, and grabbed him with a large Titan-sized fist, holding him still and then pushing him to one side.

“Right, let’s keep it going folks!” Max said, sweatdropping as Natsu growled and Happy began to make dire threats to do with fish and where they could be thrust. *Where the hell did Happy learn to speak like that!?* “Here’s our first originally female victim everyone. Lock up your daughter’s people, because here comes Male Lucy!”

Lucy stepped out from behind the cover, stalking forward confidently and smiling out over the crowd and a lot of the girls watching went crazy, hooting and shouting in amusement. Much to the dismay of several of the members of the Guild, Lucy made for a rather handsome man. He was dressed in jeans, a loose blazer, and a good undershirt, which showed off some muscles that were normally hidden under her large chest. Her legs were long and tight with muscle, and even his face looked good, almost as pretty as Loke’s. Lucy had his hair also down in a long braid that fell down her back.

Smiling around Lucy took it like a trooper, having decided that this was recompense not just for breaking the rules but also for putting the guild in danger. Lucy even posed a bit, smiling at the crowd this way and that. “I don't know what the fuss is about,” he said, “this is kind of interesting. So long as I don't have to go to the bathroom anyway. My back doesn't hurt me in this form anyway, which is nice too.”

There are a lot of laughter at that and claps for Lucy being a good sport, while Cana promised herself that the two of them would be talking in a few moments. The sight of Lucy as a guy was… interesting. But not as interesting as Lucy as a girl.

The final one to come out was Gray, and he had to be pushed out by Mirajane. Despite his protests though, Gray was easily the best looking in his alternate form. While his hair was just as short as Natsu's, it had been combed back into a rather nice short style, which parted to one side, with a little bow placed there. Fem-Gray didn't wear rouge on her cheeks, though her lips were slightly pink with an understated amount of lipstick, and her face had shifted into a quite cute female version of Gray’s normal face. Gray also wore a cocktail dress, which showed she didn’t have as much up top as Natsu, but also showed a lot more of her leg than Natsu’s clothing had.

At the sight, the whole guild fell silent for a moment before one wag said “Damn, where’s Gray’s stripping habit when you need it?”

“Yeah Gray!” shouted Wakaba. “This time when you show your pale ass we might enjoy it rather than be sick at the sight!”

Ranma and the others at his table joined in the laughter at that while Gray catapulted herself off the stage and into Wakaba, baring the older man to the floor with a scream of feminine fury. Swiftly another full scale brawl had developed, while Ranma leaned back watching in amusement reflecting that Fairy Tail was one hell of a fun place to be. *Maybe, just maybe I might have found a place to come back to from my wanderings.*

At that, the unnatural redhead’s gaze flicked from side to side as he watched Bisca and Erza laughing and clapping along Wendy, Erza in too good a mood to bother with ending the fight. *Yeah this place, place could be a lot of fun.*

**End Chapter**

Hmm… I feel as if Ranma really didn’t have much of a chance to shine in this, but that was due to the power up he got all of a sudden, making the fight rather anticlimactic. Hope everyone enjoyed the chapter regardless, and can see that Ranma might be changing his mind slowly about settling down.