This has been edited by myself, *Justlovereadin’* and *Hiryo*. There will no doubt be more small mistakes than usual, but I hope that there aren’t enough to take away from the enjoyment of the chapter.

**Chapter 20: Twisted Mirrors**

The group from Fairy Tail came out of the odd portal at a run, the cloud construction that made up the tunnel between the dimensions falling to pieces behind them, coupled with weird blasts of energy that came far too close for comfort. Later, Happy, who was the only one of them who was in a position to look back thanks to being carried on Natsu’s head, said that, “The clouds came apart and there was just this endless number of weird colors all going everywhere like the world’s biggest ball of yarn with all the colors of the rainbow… Natsu, can I get some yarn when we get home? Or should I just make a ball out of all of Lucy’s panties?”

At the time of their escape out into this new world however, that bit of information would not have mattered in the slightest. Instead, everyone but Ranma, Wendy and Carla were busy being surprised at the fact that Ranma’s prediction had turned out to be all too accurate, they had indeed come out in midair.

This caused much screaming, with the two girls on Ranma’s back being among the loudest, and that in turn caused him to nearly drop them in his pain. “God dammit!” He shouted at the top of his lungs, “**Stop screaming**!”

The volume of his roar actually caused the two of them to bite down their screams, and he breathed a sigh of relief before going on in a much calmer tone. “I was ready for this, remember? This is my and Wendy’s natural domain. Just don’t scream in my ear like that, or I **will** drop you, okay?”

Even as he was speaking to them, Ranma had been flaring out his legs and arms to either side of them and back, slowing them down. Now he looked around, confused that he couldn’t spot the others anywhere nearby. They had after all come through the ever-decreasing window to this new world in a group, barely separated by a few steps, if that. Finally, to one side nearly out of sight he could see Wendy and Carla, way further apart than they should have been, if still behind him in terms of the direction they had been running when they came out of the hole.

From where he was falling, Ranma could see Wendy and Carla working together to try and fly Anna down to the ground, while Happy was doing the same for Natsu and Lisanna, a barely visible blue and pink dot beyond them. Seilah also came into view quickly from Ranma’s other side, carrying Lucy as she had been when they breached dimensional wall or whatever it was.

Even as they fell though, many of the Fairy Tail mages were also trying to use their magic to slow their descent or take over flying for themselves, as Lisanna could with her Harpy Animal Soul. Ranma, who was simply using all of his knowledge as a master of midair combats to control his dissent, didn’t notice anything wrong at first, until Cana shouted in his ear again. “Shit, my Card Magic isn’t working for some reason!”

“How the heck would that have helped here?” Ranma asked quizzically, that grabbing his attention more than her actual point for some reason.

“I have a card that acts like a mini Requip space, it’s able to carry things I might need, including a parachute,” Cana replied.

By this point Carla had flown her extremely heavy burden towards where Ranma was falling and Ranma cocked an ear as Wendy shouted at the top of her lungs, “My magic isn’t working Ranma-nii! We’re falling too fast with just Carla trying to carry both Anna and me without my magic helping!”

Seilah swooped into speaking range at that point, looking calm and cool-headed as she stared around them. “The Ethernano here is remarkably thin and given that and what we know about what that anima assault was meant to do, I do not doubt that many of you who use magic will be unable to do so.” She looked at Ranma, who was still controlling his fall easily, and smiled, “Although some of you do not seem to need it, whereas others…” she shifted her gaze to her blonde burden, “are helpless even with magic.”

“Well excuse me for not having a spirit that can fly!” Lucy retorted. “Besides, once we get close to the ground, I bet I can help us make a soft landing at least.”

“I could still drop you, you know,” Seilah shot back. “That would make my own landing much easier for certain and let me free to help those whose stories actually interest me.”

“Gahhh, that soooo doesn’t sound like a joke when you say it,” Lucy whimpered. “I’ll be good.”

“Your general morality is of no interest to me. I would simply prefer you stay quiet. Honestly, human stories are full of such irritating dialogue at times,” Seilah muttered.

“Um, hello!” Carla grunted, her small wings straining, her voice caught by the wind of their descent but still carrying. “I, I don’t know how long I’ll be able to keep this up!”

“Leave it to me!” With that Anna pulled out from one of her pouches a large staff, shouting, “Air Magic: Flying Broom!” activating it. The instant she did, Wendy let go of her and she zoomed away moving towards a distant dot that turned out to be Natsu, Happy and Lisanna. An instant later she was pulling her sister onto her broom, and then zooming over to do the same with Cana from Ranma’s back.

There was only room for the three of them though, and the ground was quickly approaching at that point.

She zoomed down to the distant ground, making for a spot in front of Ranma and his group, considering that they were the center of their scattered formation. Then she zoomed back up towards Happy and Natsu, forgetting Ranma and Juvia in her haste to help her lover and his partner. Although they were doing pretty well, just like Carla and Wendy were now that the white-furred girl cat was no longer burdened by Anna’s weigh.

“What’s up with this!?” Natsu said, sounding a little panicky. “None of my magic is working, I tried to slow us down with a Karyu no Takameru Ho (Fire Dragon’s Boosted Step) and nothing happened! I tried to just ignite my hands even a little bit and nothing happened! What the heck!?”

Anna shrugged her shoulders at him looking around and frowning as she hovered on her broomstick next to Natsu and Happy, gesturing them to where she had let the others down. “And I think I know where we are now,” she finished, her face turning grim. But if it’s all the same to you, I’d only like to explain this once.”

Natsu nodded at her, still looking a little out of it, but Happy’s magic was working well enough and the little cat flapped his wings behind Natsu’s head. “Don’t worry Natsu, I’ll get you down.”

“You’re doing a great job Happy,” Anna said, before turning her attention over towards Ranma only to realize that she had spent too much time talking to Happy and Natsu. Ranma was already nearing the ground, and she quickly zoomed in that direction as fast as her magic broom could go, knowing she would be too late to reach him before Ranma reached the top of the trees.

“Juvia, have you tried to turn into water?” Ranma asked calmly. Ranma had already shifted her into a firmer position on his back after Anna took Cana off his hands.

“Juvia has not and would rather not try to do so this high up. Juvia feels that Seilah’s comment on the Ethernano in the air being too thin to use is spot on and would rather not exchange the possibility of death with the certainty,” she said grimly.

He replied to this by bonking his head against the side of hers. “Oh well, then you better hold on tight.”

She complied, her arms and legs tightening around him in such a way that a normal man might well have been choking, but Ranma was made of sterner stuff. He simply grinned, keeping a blush off his face with difficulty. *Damn, this feels incredible! I knew Juvia had amazing curves, but this is… right, Ranma concentrate, let’s get this done!*

Nearby, Seilah touched down, dropping Lucy the moment her feet touched the ground. “How come you’re all right?” Lucy grumbled, staring up at her and fighting the urge to start a fight with the devil girl since she knew she’d lose, and badly at that, even if her magic could work here as it had between the dimensions*. She didn’t have to drop me like a sack of wheat like that!*

Seilah ignored her question turning her head upwards to where Ranma had just hit the tree canopy above them.

Ranma flipped himself in midair, halting much of his forward momentum before reaching forward and grabbing at a tree limb, using its to halt his fall further, then kicking off of a tree in front of him, noticing that the tree looked more like a giant mushroom then a real tree, and then from that tree to another one and then down to the ground where he landed easily, his legs barely flexing. He looked over his shoulder at Juvia. “There, that wasn’t so tough now was it?”

“That was the scariest thing Juvia has ever had to do!” a flushing Juvia retorted, pushing off his back to stand on shaky limbs, moving over to where Cana and Lucy were standing together, staring around them into the strange forest.

The two of them agreed her statement, with even Lisanna and Anna nodding rueful agreement despite the fact both of them were somewhat used to flying.

Wendy blinked at that, as Carla’s wings gave out and she dropped down, grabbing onto Ranma’s outstretched arm and flipping herself around like it was a monkey bar before crouching on it, cocking her head to one side and staring at the girls. “Really? That wasn’t actually all that bad in comparison to some of the other things we’ve done.”

“Please don’t say things like that,” Cana said dryly. It really puts in mind who actually raised you a little too much thanks.”

“Everyone here?” Ranma asked looking around then looked over to where Natsu and Happy were finally touching down. They had for some reason been the farthest away of them all after escaping from the tunnel or whatever you wanted to call it that it brought them here. “You all right?” Ranma asked the younger Dragon Slayer.

Natsu grumbled, glaring around him. “My magic doesn’t work, how about anyone else’s?”

Everyone else bar Anna immediately tried to use their magic again. The first to achieve anything was unsurprisingly Lucy, who summoned and then canceled her gate of the Nikora, a silver key that manifested a small, extremely bizarre looking creature Ranma hadn’t seen the like of before.

This was followed by Juvia gasping in shock as her hand shifted to her water form for a second before returning back to normal. “That was the oddest sensation. Juvia cannot create any attacks, but Juvia can seemingly shift parts of her body into water, but not the whole thing at the same time. Useful, but limited. And the sensation of it is… not unpleasant, but very strange, like being disconnected from the limb in question yet also still retaining some sensation through it?”

None of the others could make their magic work. Lisanna couldn’t bring up any of her Animal Souls while Natsu couldn’t create even a flicker of a flame. And even Ranma, who hadn’t bothered to try to use his magic before this, tried a small-scale attack, only to have nothing happen.

*Weird, I can feel my magical core still within me, and some of the magic there, but not a lot. Still, I should be able to do something, unlike when it was sucked out like with that asshole from Phantom Lord who ambushed me in their robo-guild. It just isn’t reacting as it should. I can’t push it out past my skin…* “Ethernano,” he mused, looking over at Seilah. “You were saying something about that before?”

At that, Cana paused in her own attempts at activating her magic, joining the others to stare expectantly at Seilah. The twins and Natsu had gotten over the Demon girl’s appearance quickly. None of them had been present in during the demon’s ambush in Seven, Natsu having left to rescue Laxus with Gajeel and were all generally speaking live and let live sorts. They were a little leery about her, but that was all.

For her part the Demon girl simply ignored the others as she nodded at Ranma, crossing her arms under her prodigious chest. She smiled very slightly as Ranma’s eyes flicked down in that direction. *Perhaps without Belserion present and with his breaking off things with Mulan I might be able to see if he and I can entwine our stories.*

Putting that thought to one side for further reflection, she replied to his question. “Yes, the Ethernano here is incredibly weak in comparison to what we are used to. But I believe that is only part of the problem facing you all. I think that during the initial attack the majority of you were drained of your magic. If that was not the case, the younger Take Over mage would still be able to use her magic, though given the lack of Ethernano in the air the rest of you would still have trouble expressing magic out past your body in the first place. And now that your cores are empty, you will face great difficulty drawing in more magic from the world around you as you would back home.”

Now that the initial horror of their descent was over with, the lack of magic came to the fore of all their minds and Natsu put their thoughts into words with his usual eloquence. “If we don’t have magic, were screwed!”

Ranma rolled his eyes then marched up to Natsu and thumped him one hard in the chest, sending him backwards several feet. He grinned at the other Dragon Slayer who was glaring at him now. “That’s funny, it looks as if you still have your durability. I know I do. You’ll just have to punch people out the old-fashioned way instead of the flaming hand way from now on.”

While Natsu cackled at the fact that yes, he could still punch people out it would just be harder, Wendy pouted at that, looking at her brother. “What about you Ranma-nii? How is your ki?” she asked in a low voice.

“My ki is still there little one,” he said, reaching up to ruffle her hair and pulling her off his shoulder into a brief hug before setting her down the ground in front of them. “And fully charged too,” he added dryly shaking his head.

*All that time spent fighting that bloody dragon in my mind, in order to get my Dragon Slayer and ki powers to work nicely together, and suddenly I’m in another situation where I only have access to one of them. All that time, wasted! Fuck you god, just fuck you. It would’ve been nicer if it was the my ki being blocked, that would’ve been more difficult to deal with. On the other hand, it’s not like this really hampers me all that much, heh.*

“What about you?” he asked aloud. Unknown to any of the others bar Carla, Wendy had begun to exhibit ki herself a few years back. She couldn’t project it, but she was easily faster stronger and tougher than even a Dragon Slayer of her age should be, even with all his extra training.

She shrugged, moved over to a nearby tree and thumped it hard with fist. The mushroom-like tree cracked where she had hit it, and she nodded resolutely holding up an uninjured fist. “I’m fine I think,” she said with a chirp in her voice as she moved back to her big brother, leaning into his side and smiling as he put a hand on her head.

Cana stared at Wendy shaking her head and leaning into Lucy. “Is it just me or is that one scary little girl?”

Lucy just nodded wide-eyed, pointing at Ranma. “Considering who her role model has been for most of her life, are you really surprised?”

At that, Cana could only shake her head with a chuckle.

But then her attention and everyone else’s was brought to Anna, who coughed delicately, looking a little sheepish as she stared around them then back to her lovers and friends. Her family really, because that was what Fairy Tail was, a giant family. Only, that thought was rather more poignant here than it should’ve been to Anna, if they really were where she thought they were. “Um, excuse me,” she said delicately. “But I, I think I know where we are, and, and I might have an idea of what happened to bring us here.”

Ranma blinked. “You didn’t say anything before.”

“That is because I didn’t know how I got to Earth Land in the first place. But now that we’re hear, this is my home world,” Anna replied, her tone matter of fact as she dropped that bombshell. “I’ve told Lisanna and Natsu this, and I think you’ve heard some of this before Ranma, but it’s probably going to be new for everyone else. I originally came from a world like Earth Land, a sort of mirror image, called Edolas. The biggest difference between the two worlds is that there is little to no magical particles in the air or the ground, like Seilah said. All magic in this world comes from artifacts, lacrimas for the most part, worked into different items, weapons, devices and other things.”

Anna waved her flying broom, pointing to the top of it with her free hand where a long strip of leather had changed color from green to red. “On Earth Land If I just left this out somewhere it would charge itself or if I had Mira charge it, it would be good to go again in a few seconds if that, considering this broom is supposed to take magic from the air it’s flying through. But, here, there is so little magical energy in the air, it can’t find any. Magic here, once it’s used up, it’s gone, permanently.”

Ranma groaned with Cana joining him an instant later. “Let me guess,” the last of the cynics, Carla, said, growling angrily, “someone here devised a method to reach over to Earth Land and steal the magic there?”

“I don’t know I haven’t been here in more than 4 ½ years now, remember?” Anna said with a shrug. “Though maybe it at first had been a natural phenomenon, that someone just learned how to enlarge and harness the process.”

“And eventually aim it,” Ranma said grimly. “Before the attack on Fairy Tail, I heard rumors of this kind of thing: magic, mages, magical devices even the magic in the air of a certain area disappearing, never to return.” Ranma wasn’t about to trust Happy or Natsu with his Ranger status, knowing their ability to keep secrets was suspect at best. “But the attack on Fairy Tail, that was aimed! Not only that, but the attack was a lot larger than any other I’d heard of. They took the entire town, along with the guild remember?”

Anna gulped at that, looking a little sick that someone in her home world would be willing to just suck the magic out from another planet like that. “But if that’s the case, what about the mages?” she asked hesitantly. “I, I mean, surely our guild’s not the first mages to be caught up in this?”

“While there haven’t been many mages caught up in these things, not a one of them has been seen since,” Ranma said, trying to let her down gently, and mostly failing.

Seeing her twin pale at that Lisanna moved over and gave her a tight hug, interrupting whatever she was going to say, and even Natsu came over to give her a hug around the middle. “Whatever the idiots here have been doing, it’s got nothing to do with you, okay?” he said grinning at her.

She smiled back at him, then gave him a quick kiss on the cheek, before turning back to the others. “Thanks, Natsu. But I think I know who was behind this. When I was in this world, the mage guilds like Fairy Tail had just been outlawed for overuse of magic. People said we were hording it, misusing it, abusing magic when it could’ve been doing better for everyone in the hands of the government, who could then dole it out to the people.”

“…That never ends well,” Ranma said shaking his head. Ranma didn’t really like politics all that much, (obviously, after all, who did?) but he had seen a hell of a lot more politics as a Ranger than he ever had back in his own previous life. But that didn’t mean that he couldn’t see which way the wind was blowing.

Anna nodded grimly. “The King, his name is Faust, he wanted all the magic under his control where he could give it out to his generals, his army, and the people who supported him. In the year leading up to my disappearance, the mage guilds were all hunted down save Fairy Tail.”

Lucy and Cana hadn’t been told any of this before and were looking shocked. Cana had, having been there when she first showed up, learned about Anna’s otherworldly origins but hadn’t been told any more than that and that she couldn’t get back. Lucy had never been told anything, while Juvia had also not been told much when they had first become friends, only that she reminded Anna of a friend she once knew. “And Juvia here is part of Fairy Tail?” she asked, though she figured she knew the answer.

Anna nodded, but quickly reached over, pulling the water mage into a hug. “But don’t think for one instant I was only reaching out for you for that reason. Yes, that started my interest in getting to know you, but I became your friend, Juvia Lockser, because I like you, as a singular person not because I thought you were just a mirror image of my former guildmate.”

Juvia smiled, hugging the other girl back tenderly. “Thank you. Anna’s friendship has come to mean a lot to Juvia over time and would have not enjoyed learning it was based on such as that.” She turned, still holding the hug and looked over at Ranma, “Although if that is the case, could the blue-haired man from before this event took place be the Jellal of this world? If so, and if he has been going around Juvia feels rather bad about our treatment of him.”

“Meh, I’m not,” Ranma said with a shrug. “If the idiot was actually trying to help he didn’t have to be all mysterious about it like he was. Jellal was only well known in Fiore after all, and even I might have let him go do his thing if he talked fast enough. Seilah, what about you?” he asked, gesturing around them. “Have you heard anything about this?”

Seilah shook her head, staring around them in scientific interest. “No. I have never heard of anything like this barring your own story Ranma. I have read books set in alternate dimensions obviously, but the fact that one is honestly real, and so like yet so unlike our own world, that is new and highly unusual. In fact, I would go so far as to say that no demon knows anything about this.”

“There seems to be something missing from your and Seilah’s explanation though,” Cana stated, pointing to the two cat-people. “What about them? Both Carla and Happy were able to use their Aero magic earlier, or else we’d have had a much harder landing than we did. And what about Lucy’s magic?”

“Celestial Spirit Keys are made of crystallized particles, which open a dimensional gateway to a spiritual realm, allowing spirits through.” Lucy explained slowly, working it out as she did, “As spirits, they are able to take in Ethernano at a far far finer degree than any human could manage. So pretty much like what Ranma said in that cloudscape, dimensional magic like the key will still work here and let me access my friends. As for the little moron and Carla, I’ve no idea.” To say that Lucy did not like Happy and the weird comments he often made at her expense was an understatement.

Anna frowned a little staring at Carla and Happy. “Actually, I think I have an idea about them too. There is a species here called the Exceed, because they exceed human understanding and knowledge. They live on their own floating island. They are supposed to fly and are smaller than humans but that was the only description of them I’ve ever heard before. That and they are supposed to be very mysterious and aloof from human affairs.” She giggled, pulling Happy up into her arms ad nuzzling into his blue fur, “Maybe that’s why I never thought of them when I looked at the two of you.”

“I, I think that is correct,” Carla said, frowning heavily. “This discussion has sparked bits of some old memories. I’m uncertain why, but I believe that myself Happy, and possibly others were, were somehow sent across dimensions, on some kind of mission to find Dragon Slayers perhaps. I can’t remember more than that, I am afraid. But if our people had some nefarious purpose to send us to you all, they will be in for a rude awakening.”

Under Ranma’s tutelage in return for her help in beating the Neko-ken madness, Carla had developed an entirely new kind of magic to emulate what his Neko-ken techniques could do, and she showed it now in the only way she could. She held up a tiny paw and flexed, while Happy and the others backed away rapidly fearful of the inch-long glowing blue claws. “I will have a great deal of pleasure showing them what I think of them in no uncertain terms!”

“That’s a cool trick,” Cana said, staring at claws and amazement. “Can you do something like that Happy?”

Happy pouted a little but was very thankful that for all the fact that he had seemingly bothered her worst times, Carla decided to not use that technique on him. “Nope, I can’t do that or transform like Carla can. Though why anyone would want to be human is beyond me, you’re all so tall and slow.”

“What can we expect here?” Ranma asked Carla and Anna, since the two of them were the only ones who seem to have any idea of what they could be running into. Happy, he just ignored as he was coming to understand was something of a mental survival trait.

“I don’t know, those fragments of memories, they deal with finding a Dragon Slayer, and perhaps a palace of some kind? And eggs, lots of eggs. Eggs like the one myself and Happy came out of I suppose,” Carla replied with a shrug.

“Anna?” Ranma turned to the local Strauss sibling. “What about you?”

“Well like I said, most of the mage guilds here are all gone, disbanded, rounded up and imprisoned,” she said bluntly. “The only mage Guild that was still around when I was thrown off that cliff was Fairy Tail. And there are going to be a lot of differences in both the people and in who is a part of the guild,” she said, glancing towards for some reason, fighting back a smirk. If you ever run into your opposite numbers, they won’t be like you, they’ll be different.”

“That’s what I’ve never gotten,” Natsu said shaking his head. “You’ve mentioned that a time or two before, especially at first around Elfman and me for some reason, but you and Lisanna are about as alike as twins can be, I mean you’re a little, um a little more outgoing.” He flushed a little, gesturing towards her clothing, which consisted of something that Bisca would wear short shorts, and a cowgirl top, with a lot of cleavage showing. Whereas Lisanna was dressed in a dress, a full-body skirt that fell to just below her knees. It was formfitting up top certainly, and loose enough below that she could move in, but it was nothing like the outfit Anna was wearing.

“So perhaps the phrase should be alike in emotions, but different in attitude and how you express yourselves?” Seilah said thoughtfully.

“Maybe, in some cases anyway,” Anna said with a shrug. “Or maybe Lisanna and I are just an exception to the rule. Big sis Mira became a lot more like this universe’s Mary Jane after I met her. But in a lot of other cases, the differences are waaaay more profound. Heh let’s just say that Lucy, you’re going to be astonished.”

*And you, Cana, I’m not even going to warn you because I want a picture of your face when you meet your double!* Anna thought evilly.

“Is there a double of Ranma here?” Seilah asked in some interest and Wendy perked up, as did Ranma although he was also shaking his head.

“No,” Anna replied looking at the water Dragon Slayer thoughtfully. “Or if there was, I certainly never saw him, either as a guy or as a girl. At first, I was a little too astonished to notice when I arrived here to realize that even after Mira gave us a description of you, what with meeting Laxus and the others.”

“What was so astonishing about meeting the Lightning douche?” Ranma asked, smirking as he thought of his best male friend. *Oh yeah dude, you and I are gonna rumble when I meet you next. Heheheheh…*

Anna winced looking away. “Um…Laxus and Gildarts are both dead here,” she said at last, flinching a little as she said it.

There was a stony silence from everyone, even Ranma and Wendy, who were not as close to Gildarts as they were to Laxus and Ranma took it upon himself to speak first. “What? How did that happen? This King and his army?”

“Gildarts was our guild master when I was just hitting my preteen years. When the king began to call for the disbanding of the mage guilds, he took out his opposite number here, a mage called Bluenote, who was the reigning supreme commander of Faust’s forces. But he died doing it. Laxus then became our Guild master after that.”

“Wait!” Lucy shouted, “Laxus was Guild master!? But what about Master Makarov?”

“I’ve never met Master Makarov before. I don’t think he has an equivalent here, just like Ranma,” Anna said with a shrug.

“That’s a little weird, but I suppose not everyone would have a double,” Ranma said shaking his head. “What if his double was born a woman or something like that or, considering how interested in magic he is, and the fact he’s a wizard saints and all perhaps here his double just never got into magic.”

At that more than one person there among the Fairy Tail mages paused, thinking about what a female Makarov would look like. This was instantly followed by much gagging and groaning as Cana shouted, “Oh god, the image won’t go away, brain bleach, please, someone get me brain bleach! She’s worse looking than Babasaama!”

“Ugh, well, well, \*ahem\*, in any event, Laxus was our guild master for the next few years,” Anna said, getting everyone’s attention back on her rather than their own thoughts, something all of them were happy for. “We were on the run for a year after that, but, while we couldn’t stay in one place for very long, life was actually okay since most of the army didn’t care to pursue us too hard. But then the army brought in a new Fairy Hunter, and then they really started to hunt us down in earnest. Her name was Knightwalker, and she was a nightmare, always hounding us wherever we went, then bringing in reinforcements. That was the end of the good times I guess.”

She winced, looking away now. “It was Knightwalker who was leading the assault on the guild when Laxus fell. He died fighting the oldest of the remaining generals, a man named Sugarboy, and Knightwalker killed Reedus then too. They died holding the Royal Army off to give the rest of the guild time to escape in our then experimental emergency teleport system. The Natsu here in Edolas, Natsu Dragion, led the rest of our fighters away from us at the same time leading them on a wild goose chase in his magic racing car. With that, we got most of the guild away, but the price was high.”

“Magic car! My double uses a magic car?” Natsu said looking sick at the very idea of transportation, putting aside everything else that Anna had just shared to concentrate on the more personal information. Yes, all that sucked, but seriously, someone looking like him but actually being at home in a moving vehicle? That was just wrong.

“I honestly can’t see that at all either. But what about me though?” Wendy asked, pointing at her own face. In her case however, it was because she wanted to move away from the sad stuff.

Anna shrugged. “If you have a double here, they weren’t part of Fairy Tail by the time I fell through the magic hole thing. Same for Bisca, Alzack and a few others I’ve met in our own world. I’ve no doubt though that we kept on recruiting from the remains of other mage guilds.”

Ranma was looking at her strangely. “Who’s Knightwalker? You said that name with a quite a bit of hate and fear there.”

“Wouldn’t you, if you knew she was the one always at your heels, hounding your friends, killing them when there was no need, just, just because she enjoyed it!?” Anna replied, nearly shouting her words now. “That time when she led the army right to us, that wasn’t the last time I saw her in action, just the first. I, I saw her kill Freed too a few months later. He had been one of our strongest at that point, having taken up Laxus’ lightning imbued sword. She took him apart. He just couldn’t face the number of different abilities of her magic spear, and her speed and strength surpassed his utterly despite the age gap. She, she freaking toyed with him, cutting him to pieces and taunting him and just…”

She stopped, scowling and looking away, her fists clenched. That memory was one of the worst she had of her life here in Edolas, right up there with the bits and pieces she could remember of the fight that caused her to fall off that cliff before she arrived in Earth Land and was saved by Ranma.

“Okay, but who is she?” Ranma asked insistently, his eyes narrowing. “Is she someone who has a double in Earth Land? You’re being awfully evasive there, Anna.”

Anna winced again. This was not going to go over well, considering Ranma’s relationship with the woman in question. “Her double back in Earth Land is, is Erza Scarlet.”

Ranma’s eyes widened and then narrowed dangerously. “One, her last name is Belserion now, she found out quite a bit about her ancestor and decided to take their name rather than the name she was given as a slave. Point two…” he went on, cracking his knuckles and baring his teeth. “Do you mean to tell me that there is someone here going around with Erza’s face and killing her friends?!”

“Well the body doubles of Erza Belserion’s friends, yes,” Anna said before backing away quickly as Ranma began to glow blue for a moment.

Wendy touched Ranma’s hand, and he looked down at her, before slowly regaining control of himself. He smiled at his sister, ruffling her hair before looking back up at Anna. “Sorry,” he said not sounding all that sorry. “That idea bothers the hell out of me for some reason.”

“Gee, I wonder why,” said every single female there, causing Ranma to laugh a little sheepishly and Natsu to look at them all as if he had just been creeped out.

He too had been a little freaked at the idea of a person out there with Erza’s face acting so ruthlessly to friends and family though. Even at her law-abiding, rule-enforcing worst, that was well beyond anything Erza would ever condone. He couldn’t even see an Erza who had joined up with the government and who didn’t know the people in question as more than lawbreakers doing that. But it looked as if this Knightwalker version of Erza had gone off the deep end.

“At any rate, I think that’s enough background for now,” Ranma said shaking his head and staring around them. “Do you have any idea of where to go from here?”

“I have no idea,” Anna said.

Cana on the other hand was looking down at her cards. She concentrated, holding them up to her and then blinked one out to the side. What should’ve happened was it should have turn into a cascade of fire, which would have burned the weird mushroom tree she’d aimed at into ash. What actually happened, was the card flying through the air to smack into the tree and fall to the ground. Sighing, she moved over to pick it up before looking over to the others, shrugging her shoulders. “I had to try. After all, technically most of the magic is in the card.”

“But you have to be able to use your own magic to activate the spell,” Seilah said analytically. “Hmm… perhaps if you smeared your cards with a bit of your blood it might work, if you have gathered in enough Ethernano to rebuild your reserves.”

“Right, going to put that under creepy as hell last resort,” Cana replied, shaking her head.

“Do you have enough staffs to go around?” Lucy asked hesitantly. “I’m not exactly all that happy about most of us being so defenseless. I mean, I have my spirits, but I’d still like something like my Celestial whip.” She had left that item in her apartment before the sleep over, a fact she was now bitterly regretting. *Still, I suppose I should be happy Horologium brought my keys along, not bitter he didn’t grab my weapon on top of that.*

Anna frowned, but then nodded reluctantly and began to pull out staffs of all sizes and shapes, handing them to her sister who assigned them to the others one after another.

Natsu grabbed his eagerly, holding it above his head and twirling in place. “I’ve always wanted to try one of these!

Wendy shook her head, when offered one. “Ranma-nii has been training me to fight without my magic. And like Natsu and Ranma-nii, I’ve got my Dragon Slayer durability.”

At those words Anna smiled at her before turning and handing two staffs to Juvia, who took them with a nod of thanks, slipping the shorter one into her belt and holding the other one like a walking stick, its top coming to about her chest.

Ranma too forewent a staff, waving Anna away. “Trust me I’ll be alright too.” *Heh, you could say that anyone who runs into me is in for one hell of a shock.*

To everyone’s surprise Cana also waved off the staffs, giving Anna, Lisanna, Happy, Juvia, Carla and two magical weapons apiece, with Lucy being given one, since she still had her magic. Happy was given tiny magic daggers, a series of holdout weapons Anna always wore on her person, especially when on modeling gigs. They were simple shock-type weapons, but they gave Happy some offensive ability. Carla received a small staff, about the same height of her body, which shot out tiny acid balls about the size of her paw. Juvia got an ice and water attack staffs, Lisanna a small magic mace, which caused tremors when it hit someone.

Lucy received a whip Anna had gotten as a gag gift from Mira. Like Happy’s daggers, it contained a small lightning lacrima, giving it the ability to shock people. But while the blonde was grateful to have a weapon, her expression was complicated as she understood both the implications of being given this weapon, and why Mira had given it to Anna after the twins had finally gotten together with Natsu…

But instead of being given one of Anna’s weapons, Cana pulled out several odd-looking cards, before testing the edge of one of them with a smirk. “I’m no slouch when it comes to hand to hand,” she said, reaching into a pocket of her skirt before pulling out a glove, fitting it over the hand that still had all of its fingers, clenching her hand into a fist. This revealed that the knuckles of the glove had been reinforced by steel, as had her palm.

The cards she held in her hand, the right one, which had two magical fingers replacing the fingers she’d lost in Seven in the ambush were also wickedly sharp, making them oddly shaped throwing knives. Those fingers were not working very well in this magicless environment and with her internal energy drained. But despite that, Cana thought she could still throw the playing cards accurately with that hand.

Once everyone was sufficiently well armed, Ranma and Wendy climbed a nearby tree, and from the top Ranma hurled Wendy up into the sky, where the little girl shouted, “Whhhhheeee!!” As serious as their friends being captured was, the Dragon Slayers knew they couldn’t effect that just yet, so were willing to take moments of fun like this when they could find it, as was normal for them.

Watching this, Seilah rolled her eyes. “They could’ve just asked me to fly up and have a look around,” she said, and with a gesture floated up and then further up, reaching Wendy as she was about to start her descent from an admittedly incredibly high position.

She grabbed the little girl and hugged Wendy against her bosom, staring around while the little girl flushed at the contact, but also smiled happily and turned to let Seilah see it. Seilah smiled in return, murmuring into the little girl’s ear, “I wonder if we will have time to find any bookstores here. They could have their equivalent of Girl Genius after all.”

“Oh, that would be fun,” Wendy said with a nod, while both of them were staring all around them, trying to make out any landmarks or anything of interest.

But the weird mushroom forest continued for a while in every direction, beginning to be interspersed with more regular looking trees here and there, sticking above the mushroom trees with ease. “I don’t see anything, do you, Seilah?” Wendy asked.

“While I would probably admit to having slightly better eyesight than most humans, I too cannot see anything pertinent or relevant to head towards. It seems to me that we would be best served to simply pick a random direction and go that way, never deviating. But I will say that my woodcraft is sparse at best,” Seilah admitted. “The books I tend to read do not include the description of any wood crafting of that nature.”

“I think wood crafting is just working with wood,” Wendy said, thoughtfully. “Not certain about the term used to being able to find your way through a forest. Camping skills perhaps, or trail blazing skills?”

Seilah shrugged unconcern, leaning the side of her head against the top of Wendy’s hair, breathing in the girl’s scent as they dropped slowly back to the group below them. “It matters not at his point. Come, let us return.”

When he heard the report, Ranma simply sighed. “I’ll remember that you still have your curse from now on Seilah, sorry about forgetting like that. But I kind of figured you wouldn’t find anything.”

“That’s strange though, isn’t it?” Lucy asked. “Shouldn’t we be near the device that caused that whatever it was?”

“Not really. Think about it, we weren’t taken in by the actual weapon that caused that connection between Earth Land and Edolas. We were sort of using the hole the weapon created and it was giving out as we were running through it. Think of it like following a drill run after the drill’s already passed by and picked up all the dirt or whatever. Who knows how far away we are from where the weapon took our friends,” Ranma replied, having thought about that very thing since first seeing how far they’d been scattered.

“That’s a sad thought,” Juvia said with a scowl. “Then again we don’t even know how this Faust guy is doing this magic draining thing, what it looks like on this end of things or if we can even help our friends at all.”

“True,” Ranma’s sighed. “All too true. Still, if they are bringing in mages and knocking them out or something during the trip, doesn’t it just warm your hearts to imagine the chaos Erza and the others are currently causing? Even without magic, most of our friends are strong enough to cause headaches for anyone trying to keep them in line.”

“Not Gildarts,” Natsu said, frowning a little and looking away. “Not with his arm and leg missing.”

There were some shocked shouts at that from the other Fairy Tail members who hadn’t heard that story just yet, but Ranma shrugged. “I wouldn’t put it past that old man to take his own peg leg and beat people to death with it. He is one tough son of a dog.”

Cana looked a little miffed and a little pleased at that for some reason, before shrugging her shoulders, pulling out a deck of cards, and rifling it quickly, then flinging it up into the air. To the astonishment of the others, the cards separated in midair and came down in an arrow formation, pointing out through the woods. “That was pure skill, not magic,” she said with a smug little smile. “We go that way.”

“That’s as good a way of deciding a direction as I can think of,” Ranma said with a laugh, bowing grandly to Cana. “After you, my lady. You chose the direction; you get to lead.”

**OOOOOOO**

Elsewhere in Edolas, an elderly man was making his way up a long flight of steps set into the middle of a room that was so massive and ostentatious, any observer would have been forgiven to think it was a place of worship. To start with, there were the five large statues coming out of the walls, one to a corner and then a fifth directly facing the ziggurat from the wall beyond, their faces hooded, their arms out in supplication. The flight of steps the old man was currently walking up was set in a small ziggurat that rose from the center of the cavernous room, abutting the side of a large square-sided ditch of some kind.

And in the center of that ditch, filling it from one end to the other and then growing out of the ditch so much it towered over the top of the ziggurat was a crystal. It looked like a lacrima, a mix of quartz and diamond almost, with different sized striations sticking out here and there, all of them glowing with potential*. It astonishes me to think that this giant edifice of seeming stone is actually magic. Condensed, crystallized magic, the end result of our Anima Project.*

“Magnificent. Utterly exquisite,” the man said aloud, chuckling exultantly. He was dressed in a long flowing robe of light and dark brown lined with white fur. On top of his head he wore a large crown, that looked more like that of a pope than a king and his hair and beard were both long and lank, if cared for. His eyes were coal black and harsh beyond measure at times, deep-set in his craggy face. This was King Faust, and he ruled the land of Edolas with an iron fist. “This is simply excellent, well done Byro. This is the largest Lacrima yet, by a rather immense margin, is it not?”

“It is indeed Your Grace,” said another elderly man to one side of the King. He had none of the air of power or command that marked the King, however. He was short, his back stooped, with large eyes set to either side of a large, flattened nose. The horn-shaped eyebrows above those eyes and tiny tufts of hair over his ear were the only hair on his liver spotted head, and he exuded a sort of manic intelligence. “Our new ability to aim the Anima Cannon at concentrations of magic has proven to work exceedingly well.”

Next to him, a young girl dressed somewhere between a Court Jester and a page raced forward, dodging around the two men staring up at the towering lacrima this way and that, one hand over her eyes as she tried to spot where the top of it was in the shadows above them. “You aren’t joking, Magister Byro, this thing is huge. I wonder how much magic we can get from it!”

“Come away from it, Coco,” Byro said commandingly, although there was a slight twinkle in his eyes as he gestured the girl away. She was the court page and general runner and Byro rather enjoyed her presence. Partly because he was something of a pedophile and also because he generally enjoyed watching her amusement and joy at magic. That childlike wonder, that innocence, that was why the King and he had to do this, had to keep magic running into their world.

“Nonetheless the child asks a good question,” Faust said, slowly walking around the dais of the ziggurat, staring up at the Lacrima himself. “How long should this last us, do you think?”

“For normal usage? Two years six months three weeks, and four days. However, the week and four days should be used as a buffer, while we either search for other targets, or just in case of emergencies,” Byro replied quickly.

The King scoffed as if emergencies were of no minds to him, because they were not. Emergencies happened to other people at his command.

“Of course, we could use this time to once again use the Anima cannon to bring in more power?” Byro said, his tone almost wheedling. “We just mastered the ability to aim through the dimensional wall, after spending more than a year working on identifying large magical signatures. Give me a few weeks to make adjustments and we could streamline the process, and soon have enough magic here see our nation through thousands of years.”

Faust was tempted, very tempted. But he shook his head. “No, I will not allow that. In fact, we will hold off on using the Anima cannon again for those two years of yours.”

“May I ask why, Your Majesty?” Byro asked, and another man nearby shook his head, chuckling quietly.

“Use your head for something other than mathematical equations,” the man said. He was a tall, debonair fellow, with a habitual smirk on his face that made it seem as if he was looking down on whoever he was talking to, dressed in light pink full body armor compete with a white cape, with blonde hair done up in the pompadour style, a style made famous by wannabe punks in various anime back in Ranma’s Earth. At his side was belted a sword, with a rose shaped cross guard which he was patting lovingly as he looked at the Magister of Science for the Royal Court and then over to the little girl, a shudder of something like revulsion going through him his face shifting to show it for just a second before smoothing.

Despite that when he addressed Byro he did so semi-respectfully. “The magic we take from the other side is not wild or simply from the Earth Land version of lacrima. The majority of it comes from mages. Mages in a country of magic, which might eventually learn what we’re doing if we continually target their strongest magical concentrations. And if that happens, what’s to stop them from trying to fight back? From stopping our device working, or even from attacking us? We used our magical science to get through the dimensional gap, perhaps they could just use their own homegrown magic to do the same thing.”

The old scientist scoffed at the very idea of someone else duplicating his work, his genius, but the King held up a hand. “Precisely,” he said coolly. “While I am confident in our army and our generals, there is no reason to borrow trouble like that when we don’t have to. No, we will continue to take magic as we can. So long as it looks like some strange natural phenomenon, we can keep assuming that our enemies on the other side of the dimensional wall will not be able to figure out what is going on.”

Faust’s words made it clear he felt the fact the people of Earth Land were their enemies was self-explanatory, since to him it was. First, they had limitless magic, which made him envy them and in turn see them as enemies. Second, someone on the other end of the dimensional gap had stopped the Anima cannon’s absorption spheres several times over the years, which was enemy action if ever there was one, stopping Faust from receiving the magic that was his due.

Beyond that, there was a single rule that Faust had followed throughout his time as king: There were always enemies out there, always.

“But enough of this maudlin talk,” he said abruptly changing the subject, his attitude becoming gay almost instantly, a shift that caused more than one of the people nearby to twitch away from him. The King’s mood swings were the stuff of legends in the castle and not the good kind of legend. “Now,” he went on, pointing at the Lacrima. “Let us start siphoning the magic.”

The Sugarboy smiled, smacked side of his sword excitedly and at Byro’s nod, a group of men moved towards the side of the Lacrima carrying a strange number of devices that looked like the amalgamation of a metallurgist set of tools, and those used to dig through rock or work on jewelry. One of them set a large magnifying glass against the lacrima at the base of one of the large prominences sticking out of the rest of the mass of the crystal. That man marked out a small line in the lacrima with a tiny cutter of some kind then gestured two of the other men forward.

They flipped down protective gear over their faces, and activated their welding torches, magical devices used to create intense heat. The heat instantly began to imbue the heads of their chisels to red hot, and soon after, they began to cut into the Lacrima starting from the same point on the line and going in different directions around and up the side of the lacrima. The man on top had to be winched around, using sticky pads on his knees to stay in place as he cut, before moving on, but it was still a relatively quick process.

Later, as the Lacrima continued to solidify, this process would become slower. But right now, with the magic inside the lacrima created by the devices, air, items and mages caught within the absorption sphere still settling, the crystal was more malleable.  At that point, the lacrima would be shown to the people in a royal parade, the better to show that it was the king who held the reigns of magic as favored by the gods. But right now, he wanted to get some of the magic out into his army as fast as possible.

As the king watched, that chunk of the lacrima was slowly cut off, then set in a large barrel to one side. From there it was in turn taken over to a bin, set into the wall of the Anima Project Room. There the lacrima was connected to a second series of large devices via several siphons.

The workers then waited for the king, Byro, Coco and the general to join them before, at the King’s regal nod, one of the workers bowed and quickly flipped a switch. Faust stared avidly at the device as it slowly drained the magic from the chip of anima turning it into more usable element type lacrimas, which slowly extruded from one side of the device. These would be fit to be used in any magical creation, be it a weapon, a tool or public utility, like the lights of his capital or the trains that serviced his nation.

Half of these smaller, more useable lacrima would go to the Kings Castle: magical lights, magical wallpaper, magical rugs, the heating apparatus, the kitchens, security and the specialized weapons all four of Faust’s generals used would be renewed by this small chunk of the whole Anima. The uses of magic are truly endless. Magic lamp lights, magic defenses, a magic back scratcher for the King when he was sitting on his throne, which came complete with a massage setting. Such was the magic of the Anima, and of their devices.

“Look at this!” Faust shouted, moving forward and thrusting a hand into a barrel of yellow lacrimas, pulling one smooth ovoid out and tossing it to Sugarboy, who caught it deftly. “Look at this!” the King repeated, shaking that handful of smaller lacrima above his head as every face in the vast room turned towards him. “This is strength. This is dedication. Through our strength, and our will, the magic still flows. So long as the magic flows, our nation is secure. Because of me, our nation has magic and will continue to have it for years to come!”

As cheers and applause answered his words, the king went on in a lower tone as he turned to Byro. “And it is because of you as well Byro, you had the mind, I supplied the resources, together we have done this thing. Well done once more.”

Byro bowed deeply from the waist, staying silent as he watched the King lead Sugarboy out the door. *Such is the double nature of the gratitude of kings I suppose. Still, he is right, I needed his resources before this. No longer. Perhaps it is time to start siphoning magic for my own project. If the king believes, I will be content to stay in the shadows he will soon learn how wrong he is.*

As they walked the halls of the castle, Sugarboy installed the Lacrima on the side of his sword while waiting a brief moment as the doors behind them closed, before rushing to catch up with his King. “My Lord, a message came in from our scouts while you were inspecting the Anima Project. They have seen signs of that despicable rebel group Fairy Tail having their base of operations deep in the northern forest.”

Faust did not stop his trek towards his throne room, simply smiling grimly. “Excellent. I presume that the other generals have already been dispatched?”

“Knightwalker has gone ahead your Majesty,” Sugarboy said. “Panther Lily will be the next to arrive on the scene, followed by the young boy and myself. I will join him before he arrives on the scene I think, but both Knightwalker and Panther Lily will be there well before us. There remains the chance that they might teleport away again, but if they do, it will be for the last time, according to Byro’ reports on how much magic that device uses up.”

“Very well, so long as that Guild is crushed, I do not care how it is actually done, although of course the swifter the better.” With that the King continued to stride forward, only stopping as Sugarboy bowed his way down another corridor intersecting the one they were currently on. “Oh, and Sugarboy? Tell Knightwalker I want **some** prisoners. The public always loves a good hanging. But only some of course,” he added as he continued his walk, calling the final words over his shoulder as if he was talking about the weather or other, far less weighty matters. “Far be it for me to not allow Erza Knightwalker her little pleasures.”

**OOOOOOO**

The group from Earth Land had travelled throughout the day, pressing on even as the day wound by, heading into evening. As they moved, they spread out in a line, heading forward as quickly as they could through the woods in twos, keeping the others in shouting distance. At last, as thoughts of stopping for dinner began to spread among them, they discovered a sign of human habitation, a small trail leading away to the right of their current course. Unanimously they started to follow it, and soon enough, Natsu and Happy, who had found the trail, led them to a single tree, even larger than normal for the redwoods in the area. And in that tree was a doorway, above which there was a sign with the flowing letters denoting it as Fairy Tail.

“Woo!” Natsu cheered. “Awesome, we’ve found Fairy Tail, this is gonna be great!”

“How are we so close to the Edolas version of our guild?” Cana asked, shaking her head. “I mean seriously that is beyond weird.”

“Hmmm… Juvia wonders if we had to come out nearby.” When the others looked at her, she shrugged, “There is a certain level of symmetry or similarity between the two dimensions correct? Perhaps whatever captured our guild and forcefully brought it over to this dimension could not control where it came out on this end, only regaining that control after it did so. But our guild was somehow, somehow attracted to its opposite number here? And when we started to escape from the hole that passage left between the dimensions, we naturally came out close by, while the transported town was then pulled away somehow.”

“…that sounds really farfetched to me,” Seilah said, shaking her head. “Occam’s Razor suggests that the simplest solution is often the most accurate. That was far from a simple solution. I would instead hypothesize it is mere luck and perhaps geographic positioning that put us so close.”

“You all are using a lot of words I don’t know to talk about a problem that I don’t care about. Come on, it’s Fairy Tail!” Natsu said with a laugh. “Let’s get in there and see all of our weird counterparts, this could be a lot of fun!”

“Aye sir!” Happy said by way of agreement.

“When he’s right, he’s right,” Lucy said with a smirk. “It doesn’t happen often but hey, even a stopped watch can be right twice a day.” As Natsu squawked in outrage, she went on seriously. “We don’t need to know the how of how we got here, all we need to know is we’re here and what do we do from now on to get our friends back!”

“Juvia thinks that while meeting our opposite numbers might be interesting, we should indeed remember our purpose here,” Juvia said coolly, shaking her head at the Fire Dragon Slayer’s antics. “Juvia thinks we need to take this more seriously.”

“Psch, please. If someone thinks they can keep Mira or Erza as prisoners, I feel sorry for them,” Cana grumbled, picking out a twig from her hair and looking irritable as she tossed it away. “While the whole draining magic is nasty, I doubt that our friends are in mortal danger, not from that anyway, not for a long while anyway.”

Just then, Wendy and Ranma, the only ones who hadn’t joined the others yet, came down from the trees to one side, landing behind the others with a smile. Though they, like Juvia, were worried about their friends, neither were going to let it get their spirits down right now. That could come later, when they discovered what kind of danger they were really in. That, and Wendy was of the opinion that there was nothing in the world that could stand against her Onii-chan if he ever got serious. “Mmm, that was great. High places really are best places.”

“Honestly are you two supposed to be Dragon Slayers or monkeys?” Lucy asked shaking her head as she stared at the two of them, their arrival having burst the serious moment like a bubble.

Wendy growled, putting her hands up as if she was about to pounce on Lucy, trying to make herself look fierce. “We’re Dragon Slayers of course! It’s not our fault we can make our way through the trees like that, the rest of you are just not used to being out here.”

While Ranma laughed and nodded at that, all the girls began giggling at how cute Wendy was looking. Cana even reached over and pinched Wendy’s cheek. “You’re so cute,” she cooed.

Wendy pouted, looking away and scuffing the ground beneath them. “I was going for scary,” she muttered. *I’ve seen big brother and fights with a glare, heck I’ve seen Laxus and Natsu do something of the same a time or two, why can’t I do it?*

At that Cana and Lucy went to work trying to cheer Wendy up, Seilah simply hugged the little girl, glaring at the two of them as they did so. Natsu however had no patience for that kind of thing and jerked a finger towards the doorway. “Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s get in there!”

Anna however grabbed his hand shaking it. “Wait no, my heart, it’s not, I’m not ready for this…”

Lisanna nodded too. “Besides Natsu, these people aren’t going to be the guild we know, remember what Anna said! They might not be all that friendly, especially not having been on the run for so long. They may even attack us for real, and how weird would that be?” Natsu gave her a look and she rolled her eyes, “And I don’t mean the playfighting that you and Gray always take part in, I mean seriously trying to hurt us.”

To one side Ranma stayed silent, watching the two dramas playing out, as well as stealing glances towards Carla and Happy, who had taken to talking in quiet whispers early that morning. If they thought that that had stopped him from hearing what they were talking about though, they were mistaken. It sounded as if Carla had gotten a few more memories back during their trek through the woods. None of them were connected, all of these long-term memories from when she was in her egg were disjointed in the extreme, which to Ranma’s mind made sense. *After all, that would be like remembering what was going on when you were in your mom’s womb, wouldn’t it?*

But it was enough to tell Carla that this had indeed been their home world. And she was currently questioning Happy, and getting very irritated, because he didn’t have any such memories. *Although, given the distraught glances she’s shot toward Wendy, it looks as if her guess about their being ordered to find and possibly betray Dragon Slayers might be spot on. I’d guess that Happy’s more than, heh, happy, to not have that kind of memory.*

“Who cares!” Natsu shouted, pulling away from his girlfriend and kicking the door hard, “They’ll still be Fairy Tail after all. We’re home!” he shouted, entering quickly as if this world’s guild would be just as welcoming and just as much family as his own to him.

Behind him, the others groaned, and Cana looked over at the two sisters irritably, pulled from where she and Lucy had been talking to Wendy. “You two are supposed to keep him in line. That’s not keeping him in line. Do I need to buy you some whips and chains or something?”

To that Lisanna had no reply, other than blushing a bright red. Anna too was struck speechless but for a different reason and stepped back away from the doorway, so she wasn’t visible from within. At their reactions, Cana rolled her eyes and moved with Ranma into the interior after Natsu before the others crowded around to take a look inside.

“Carla, Happy, why don’t you stay out here a bit,” Wendy said, stopping the two Exceed in their tracks as she moved to join her brother. “If you two are natives here, let’s give the locals a little time to recover from the first set of shocks before giving them another.”

Carla nodded, while Happy huffed, and made to move around the little girl before Carla grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and pulled him back. “She makes sense tomcat, let’s leave them alone for a bit.”

Poking her head between the others crowding the doorway, Wendy was just in time to see Natsu taking a Lucy Kick™ from the side. This sent him flying sideways to smash into a wall, driving his face flat into the unyielding wooden surface. Not that that seemed enough for the individual who had assaulted him, as she stomped over and began to kick him while he was down.

“Just because you’ve finally shown some courage when not in your magic racer doesn’t mean you can kick in the door like that, you racing retard! Besides, you’re three days late. We were getting worried, asshole and then you show up like this as if nothing’s happened!?” Lucy’s voice shouted from within, bringing their Lucy to a halt in shock, both at hearing her own voice from somewhere else and from the curses being used.

The inside of the Guildhall was built into the giant tree, much like the size of the redwoods all around them. It was an interesting little area, with most of the furniture, bar the seats, being grown out of the tree itself. The tables were thus stationary, alongside the bar set to one side of the guild from the doorway. At the far back was a massive piece of machinery of some kind, the purpose of which Ranma couldn’t discern. Next to the massive machinery the wall was filled from the edge of the machine to the other end with books, the titles of which Ranma couldn’t make out from where he was standing. Looking over his shoulder now with Wendy still in her arms Seilah looked at those books, her eyes lighting up with interest.

While Ranma had been concentrating on the interior of the Guildhall taking in the position of everything within just in case, Cana had been concentrating on the people and could see a lot of familiar faces here. The first one that stuck out to her was Juvia, standing beside the bar and looking over at them, her hair done up in short curls down to her shoulders and wearing skimpier clothing then what Juvia normally wore on a day-to-day basis, but not quite up to the bathing suit that Cana had seen Juvia in a time or two. The suit she was currently wearing looked as if it was half way between a business suit, covering her chest and up with a respectable looking button up shirt complete with a tie going down her chest between her breasts, but it left her stomach bare and her skirt was short, almost as short as Cana’s own.

Standing beside the bar near Juvia was Mirajane, and she at least looked relatively normal. Her outfit was showing more in the stomach region than what Mirajane would normally wear behind the bar, and her hair was done up in this odd little ponytail thing on top. But beyond that, it was an outfit that Cana could easily see their Mira wearing, matching her color scheme exactly, white, light purple and tiny bits of black.

This moment of relief lasted until Cana’s eyes flicked to the man sitting at that same bar, where they widened noticeably at and shuddered away at the image*. No way,* she thought *no way, that cannot be Elfman.* This Elfman looked relatively similar in build and in the face, having the same scar on his face, but he was dressed as if he hadn’t changed his style as he grew up, still dressing like a schoolboy going to an extremely formal primary school, and with his hair done in a dome rather than spikes.

Besides those three, Cana could instantly recognize three more faces in the crowd despite their differences to faces she knew. Two of them were Jet and Droy, although these two were bulkier and tougher looking than the two that she was used to. Jet had spiky hair and dressed something more like their Elfman did, a long jacket open to show a bare muscled chest, with black pants and even a scar on his face. Droy had another x-shaped scar on one cheek and wore sunglasses with his hair slicked into a frankly weird shape, remaining Cana of some pictures she’d seen of deep-sea fish. He too wore a long jacket over a bare chest, the top of it lined with fur.

The other face that she could make out instantly was Levy, who had been near the back but was caught in the silhouette from the doorway, and again there were differences there. The hair was the same at least, but the clothing was different. This girl looked like some kind of mechanic mixed with clothing that wouldn’t have been out of place on Bisca, a wide necklace or choker of gold around her neck and a tube top revealing her stomach coupled with a short skirt. Besides that, she had gloves on her hands and a wide toolbelt full of different tools across her waist.

There were a few others there that she didn’t recognize so easily. A guy who could be Reedus maybe, with the same body type at least, his clothing obscuring most of his body, but the guy had his back turned so Cana wasn’t certain although he had spiky short black hair. There was a woman with even bigger knockers than Lucy by at least two sizes sitting at another table, drinking quietly with blue hair and a face that looked vaguely familiar to Cana. Although admittedly she was somewhat distracted by the girl’s chest when she looked at that girl. *Good God, she’s as big as Seilah! Maybe even bigger.* Sitting at the same table was another girl under a parasol of all things, which was weirdly open despite her being inside, her back to the door and face obscured by the parasol.

But the biggest surprise to Cana had to be the one standing right in front of her, and as that surprise finished remonstrating with Natsu, Cana turned her attention once more to her. Because this was **a** Lucy, but this wasn’t **the** Lucy who was Cana’s girlfriend. No, this was a very different sort of Lucy. She had the same curves, Cana could tell that at a glance, the look sending a familiar tingle up her back, the same dark brown eyes, same face, legs etc. But her hair was done up in a side bun with a tiny skull clasp and otherwise cut extremely close all around her face. She wore clothing that wasn’t quite as outgoing as Lucy’s either. Instead, she wore a skintight uniform of some kind with a high collar, currently unzipped to show a bit of her cleavage, but not a lot. On one shoulder, she wore a shoulder pad and an arm warmer and she had one glove on the opposite hand. Her guild mark was visible on her one revealed shoulder, which was much more elaborate than the ones that Cana and her friends used, a tattoo going around the entire arm rather than being just a single magical stamp.

*And my Lucy would never curse like that, if only because she’d leave that kind of thing to me!* Cana thought with a faint smirk. *Moreover, this Lucy sounds almost as much of a disciplinarian as Erza is, though even more prone to just smack people around rather than listen to excuses or explanations.*

Finally, this Edo-Lucy finished with Natsu and tossed him to the side, uncaring of where the Dragon Slayer landed as she turned to glare at the others who had entered. “As for the rest of you, I don’t know what wheels for brains told, t, told you…” Her eyes went wide before her words stuttered to a halt as she saw not only herself, but also all the others who had entered, with Juvia having just helped Lisanna pull Anna inside.

As soon as the Strauss twins entered, there was a clattering as beer steins were dropped along with jaws and more than one voice was raised in shock. Of course, the most powerful reactions came from the Strauss siblings as Mirajane slumped into a swoon behind the bar, while Elfman slid off his stool, staring in gape-mouthed astonishment yet retained his senses unlike his older sister.

For a moment the guild was silent, then two of them, Jet and Droy, shouted, “Doppelgängers don’t let them take our souls!” They raced forward, pulling out weapons of various types, including a large heavy looking mace, leaping over a kick from a brightly glowing shoe wielded by Jet, followed by more than a dozen other Fairy Tail members. Instantly the original shout was taken up by dozens of throats, shouts of “Kill the intruders! They’re not going to take our souls!” and other such nonsense clamoring for attention among the bedlam.

Ranma blinked, cocking his head to one side as he stared in utter stupefaction. “What the hell, the two weaklings are leading the attack on us?” He didn’t mean it in a mean manner, not really, but he had evaluated everyone in the guild back in Earth Land, and it was fact Jet and Droy were among the weakest of the mages there.

“Yeah I don’t think these are the weaklings we’re used to,” Cana said, rubbing at her neck thoughtfully even as she stepped forward with Ranma, making no effort to defend Jet and Droy from his assumptions, since he was right after all. But after the day she’d been having, getting it on with this group looked to be fun. She cracked her neck and clenched her fists, smirking. “Bring it on, you Bizarro-Tails!”

The others stepped back, letting Ranma and Cana handle it. Lucy was still staring at Lucy in shock and vice-versa, and Anna and Lisanna had quickly moved back, making their way around the violent crowd towards their siblings. Natsu was down, and Seilah, Juvia and Wendy had no interest in fighting at present.

Ranma raced forward, and grabbing the downward swinging mace Droy was wielding, pulling it out of the man’s hand, and flipping up into the air to kick the man heavily with both of his feet, before grabbing the head of his partner, and using it as a pintle. From that perch he kicked and punched out in every direction, sending four people flying with a single hit each.

Beside him, Cana met several others that she hadn’t recognized in close combat, smacking their hands aside and showing a decent amount of hand-to-hand skill, mostly dealing with grappling and then releasing one of her own hands to perform a palm thrust to the side of her enemies’ temples sending them reeling and disoriented.

Ranma had to nod in appreciation of her style and strength. That girl has a lot more upper body strength then I would’ve expected. Then it clicked, and even as he dodged a punch from someone else, he turned to her, smacking one fist into his other palm in an exaggerated act of surprised understanding. “I know, it’s because of those giant kegs isn’t it?”

“What?” Cana said distractedly as she danced around a girl she’d never seen before in her life, getting her into a chokehold even as she charged past like a bull, pulling her off her feet and hurling her sideways into two other men. “What you mean?”

“Those giant kegs of ale you drink out of. Hefting them around is why you have so much upper body strength,” Ranma said, flipping himself off of Jet’s head to land in front of the big-breasted girl that Cana had seen before. She had pulled out two tonfas of all things and was using them pretty well, Ranma reflected even as he dodged. She also winked at him and tried to flash him to distract Ranma, but thanks to the girls at Melona’s and his own female body, that technique wasn’t going to work on him.

“Could be,” Cana said with a laugh, before ducking under a kick from Lucy, this world’s Lucy. Grabbing the short blonde around the waist, Cana pinned her arms there as she ducked out of the way of a backwards headbutt and then twisted her leg around to avoid a backwards kick, while trying also to not let her memories of ‘wrestling’ with her own Lucy to get in the way. Lucy, we’re not here to fight darn it!”

“Could’ve fooled me!” Levy of all people shouted as she raced forwards, a large hammer in both hands. She moved quickly through the tumult, singing it sideways toward Ranma’s back.

But Ranma simply grabbed the head of it and pulled her weapon to one side to block the weapons of the other girl he had been dodging around, unwilling to hurt a girl in a situation like this. “We’re not the ones who attacked here,” he said calmly. “So, can we please stop this farce before one of you lot get hurt?”

“Farce!?” the tonfa-using woman grunted, while Levy tried to pull her hammer out of his grip, having absolutely no luck. “How strong is this guy?”

“Yes, farce, we’re not here to hurt you and we’re not doppelgangers, whatever the heck they are. We’re just here for some information, and maybe some help, that’s all,” Ranma replied. This would have been diplomatic and might possibly have led to the locals realizing that perhaps talking was in order. But then Ranma had to pull a Ranma by saying a bit too much and being honest about it. “Besides, this fight is boring as all get out anyway.”

“Graah!!” shouted more than one voice, infuriated by his blasé attitude. But thankfully he was saved just then by Seilah interrupting in her own unique manner.

Not, mind, that she had in fact intended to do so. “Macro! Get out of my way please,” she intoned, her curse flaring out to grab at everyone in the guild hall bar Ranma, who beat it off with ease, despite the fact that his Demon Slayer magic didn’t activate, afflicted by the same odd sort of stasis feel as his Dragon Slayer magic.

At her command, everyone else found their feet shuffling them out of the demon girl’s way. Many stumbled and even more of them looked on fearfully, then in confusion as Seilah stalked through them, followed by Wendy as she made a beeline to the books.

“Magic,” skull-wearing Lucy breathed, still locked in Cana’s bear hug. “What, what was that…”

“If you stop attacking us, maybe we’ll tell you,” Cana retorted.

With that the fight slowly coming down, Anna and Lisanna were finally able to cross to their siblings and did so quickly moving around the last group of Fairy Tail members. “Elfman, Mirajane, are you all right?” they asked as one, splitting off to look at the two of them.

The eyes of Edo-Lucy stared after them, then she looked back over her shoulders, her eyes widening as she got a close-up look at the face of the girl who was holding her. Then she looked back to the other two twins, shaking her head. “If you’re not doppelgängers, what the hell are you?”

“If I let you go so we can explain face to face are you going to give me a Lucy Kick™?” Cana asked coquettishly, winking at her. She even made kissy noises at her prisoner who rapidly started to look horrified until her own Lucy came up behind her and tugged on the brunette lush’s hair.

“Enough of that,” she said with some jealousy in her voice, pouting at her girlfriend. “Besides you know full well that my kick’s patent is pending, not trademarked yet.”

That at last seemed to end signal the end of the fight, as everyone looked around them with Ranma stepping back and looking at the two blue haired girls he had been fighting. “Aheh, sorry about, you know, not letting me hit you and all. I might’ve been kind of guy in the past who’d just let you guys wail on me for no reason, but that is literally a lifetime ago.” Then he sighed, “The foot in mouth thing, that comes and goes still sorry.”

While Levy scoffed and turned away the big-breasted girl shrugged, looking at him up from head to toe, smiling at what she saw. “It’s fine Blue-Eyes, we’re the ones that started it after all, although if you want you can buy a girl a drink to make up for it,” she said. She put her weapons in a small holster at the small of her back and moved around him to look at the others before sidling up to Ranma. “Beyond that, I am going to want to hear what this is all about. One of those two girls has to be our Lisanna, but that doesn’t explain the other one, or who all of you are. Including the Lucy look-alike.”

Rather enjoying the attention Ranma turned, making no moved to move away from the girl as Seilah sat down at a nearby table, the Demon girl having grabbed up several random book from the large shelf. Wendy looked around, then breathed a theatrical sigh of relief as she hopped over to Ranma while the two Lucys were talking and another girl who had not taken part in the fight was moving towards the two of them and Cana.

No one else noticed Anna turning away from her siblings, as she saw this and pulling out a small camera from the recesses of her dress.

Ranma didn’t pay much attention to that as Wendy smiled and hugged his side, causing him to rest one hand on her head as look down at her in question. “We were right Ranma-nii, there’s no you here. That would have freaked me out badly, I mean, two very different Ranmas, what would he have been like? The mind boggles.”

“You wouldn’t’ve been the only one to be freaked by that Imouto,” Ranma said with a laugh.

“Sister?” the woman currently nuzzled up against Ranma’s other side asked, looking down at Wendy who looked up at her.

Now that they were standing side to side however, Ranma’s eyes widened, and he quickly pulled away from the other girls hold, staring at the two of them. “Wendy!?”

“That’s me, Wendy Mardene,” the girl said with a laugh. She posed, one hand behind her head and the other stretched up over it, a pose that thrust her immense chest forward. Then she winked at him, cocking her head coquettishly. “Have you heard of me, handsome?”

Wendy looked up at this Edo-Wendy, in shock and awe, her eyes beginning to glitter in delight at the implications. “Does, does this mean, that when I’m your age I’ll look like that too?” *Awesome, she’s as good looking as Mira or Erza!*

“What?” Wendy blinked, staring down at the little girl, then her own eyes widened, and she stared too, whilst even Seilah looked up from her books at this, her own eyes widening, a slight blush suffusing her features. Then with a full body shake Edo-Wendy looked away from her alter self and turned towards Ranma, sidling up against him again. “Well, I don’t know who you are, so you’re not my sibling,” she said with a grin. “So, about that drink…”

That brought Wendy back to earth with a thump and she growled, getting between the two of them and trying to push the older girl away, having scant luck despite her Dragon Slayer given strength. The older girl was strangely well-muscled underneath her surface softness. “No, no flirting with my Onii-chan, that is so wrong!”

“How is it wrong?” the older Wendy asked mockingly patting Wendy Marvell on the head. “Like I said, he’s not my brother. Besides, none of the other guys here are that strong, and they’re also boring anyway. Ranma on the other hand looks a little fun to me...” Wendy mused, winking wickedly at Ranma, who flushed, trying to get away from her grip without hurting her, which as he had learned long ago was a bit of an impossibility if the girl in question was strong enough to grab onto him in the first place.

“No!” Wendy shouted back. “You might have a nice body, but that doesn’t mean I want to watch some alter-me flirt with my Onii-chan! That is such nightmare fuel!” Wendy would be the first to admit that she knew the two of them weren’t really related and yes, she did have a tiny little sort-of crush on Ranma. But there was a big difference between that and actually wanting to flirt with him. That would be **so** wrong in her opinion.

Elsewhere, Cana Alberona had come face to face with Edo-Cana and was now currently staring wide-eyed in astonishment something Anna noticed from near the bar. In an instant she raced over through the crowd to take pictures, a wide smirk on her face.

“Oh my, are you actually supposed to be me? That is rather droll and quite pretentious is it not?” the Cana of this world said in well-polished astonishment. She was dressed like a real lady, with a white blouse and pink skirt covering her from neck to ankles, a large white hat, and a refined, kindly air about her. In short, she looked like the dictionary definition of an upper-class girly girl, the sort of daughter Lucy Heartfilia’s father had always wanted her to be.

Seeing her girlfriend, her best friend who had stayed with her through thick and thin, who Lucy loved for her down to earth nature and easy going, snarky, sexual, humor, looking like this, was a bit much for Lucy. She cried out in shock, stumbling back from Edo-Lucy and pointing at Edo-Cana pointing at her dramatically. “I, I do not accept this! It’s like up is down, right is wrong and straight is…”

At that point Cana broke out of her momentary stasis to begin laughing, as did Ranma who was close enough to hear that line and understood the joke there.

“What’s so funny about that?” Edo-Lucy asked as she stared at her alter ego, who was now blushing brightly at the other two laughing at her. The girl certainly was her, even if the clothing wasn’t something Lucy Ashley would wear, far too cutesy. *And is she trying to use her tits, letting them hang out like that?* Lucy couldn’t see any points to wearing something like that if you weren’t going to take advantage of it.

Cana smiled, and looped a hand around Lucy’s waist, pulling her into a sideways hug and then kissing her cheek before leaning her head against Lucy’s. “That’d be because we’re a couple and I’m about as not-straight as it’s possible to get,” she said brightly. “What about you too?”

For a moment it didn’t register, and then Edo-Lucy started to blush brightly, far more brightly than Lucy had a moment before, backing away rapidly and waving her hands in front of her face. “No! No chance in hell, none of that shit, that’s so, that’s unclean!”

“I agree,” Edo-Cana said, pulling open her parasol again and hiding her face behind it as if to shield herself from the very idea her alter persona had just spouted. “So uncouth and, and against nature. The gods will punish such things you know.”

“…huh, I’d guess my alter lands on the straight side of the bisexual line,” Lucy muttered to Cana. She had no issues with acknowledging her own sexuality at this point: she preferred women, but still found men could be attractive. Whereas she knew Cana hadn’t ever been attracted to any guys a short time after she had hit puberty and decided there was nothing wrong with preferring girls. “Your alter, I’ve got no idea there.”

“Ughh, I can tell this is just going to be a pain in the ass…” Cana groaned, shaking her head while Anna put her camera away and skipped back to her family, satisfied.

Natsu had been lying to one side with swirly eyes after Edo-Lucy had finished with him, trampled underneath several of the Edolas guildmembers during the fight and seemingly forgotten by everyone. But he looked up now as a voice said, “Are you okay dude, here let me help you up.”

He looked up, to see the familiar face of Gray, but that was the only thing that was familiar about the form standing above him. Gray rarely if ever wore even a shirt, if that. This guy looked as if he was trying to imitate a snowball given how much clothing he was wearing. Naturally, Natsu began to laugh. “What the hell! You’re Gray!?” he howled, smacking his fist down on the ground of the Guildhall hard enough to start causing dents to the wooden floor.

“Stop that,” Gray said grabbing at Natsu’s shoulder and pulling him to his feet. “Just because you look like my best friend, doesn’t mean I’m going to let you do such damage to our Guildhall.”

While Natsu was gaping at the whole best friend line there, Edo-Gray had turned away, moving over to Edo-Juvia, smiling brightly at her and clapping his hands together “Right Juvia, dear?”

She shied away from him backing away and putting a table between them. “Don’t come near me if you insist on wearing all that clothing.”

“But it’s cold Juvia dear,” Edo Gray said, pouting a little.

“What is that about,” Juvia whispered, as she put a glass of wine in front of Edo-Mirajane. She seemed to be slightly recovered but was not letting loose her hold on Lisanna. And as Anna came close her other arm flashed out like a whip, dragging her into the hug while beside them, Elfman looked a little shaky.

Mirajane looked at her closely, then over towards Juvia Delerand and Gray Surge. “Gray Surge is enamored of Juvia,” she said quietly, “but Juvia won’t give him the time of day thanks to his habit of putting on more clothing every time he turns around.”

“A gray that’s noticed a girl!?” Lisanna and Anna said as one, before looking at one another and giggling wickedly, hugging one another and squishing Mirajane between them.

Now on the receiving end of this and being subjected to their twin act, Edo-Mirajane winced and released them at last, whining a little as she asked, “Could you two stop doing that please? I’m freaked out enough as it is.”

At that Anna hugged her sister even tighter, kissing her cheek. “I’m sorry, I suppose that was rather cruel of us, but we didn’t mean to do it just then.”

“That, I didn’t expect you had, just, please don’t let it happen again,” Mirajane said looking at the two of them and trying and failing to wiggle out of the hug. “But this is going to, I mean are you really our Lisanna,” she asked staring at the girl, trying to see some sign that this was a fake before her and failing. “If, if you were alive all this time, where have you been!?” she nearly shouted; her face distraught. “Why didn’t you contact us?!”

“Would you believe an entirely different dimension?” Anna said shrugging her shoulders and finally releasing her older sister from the hug to back away and look at both her and Elfman. *Good grief, I’d almost forgotten how timid this world’s Elfman is, I wonder if I can do something about that while I’m here.* “I couldn’t find a way back. I talked to all of the most learned mages I could find,” *or rather Master Makarov did for me*, “and none of them knew anything about dimensional travel. The closest was something called Celestial Spirit magic, and that takes you to the Spirit Realm. So I, I just had to make a home there. I’ve known all along how much pain my loss would be causing you, but I couldn’t find a way back!”

She had in fact looked for several months for ways back home and had always told Master Makarov to keep his eyes open for anything that could do the same thing. But Makarov had never gotten back to her with anything that would indicate it was even a possibility.

“I, I can understand that at least,” Elfman said slowly, “but you still haven’t proven that you’re our Lisanna. I mean, this could all be a trick of some kind, like Jet and Droy said.”

“When Mira was ten and I was eight, you tried to cook for the first time,” Anna said brightly, “Not only did you make us both sick to our stomachs, but later Elfman tried the same thing and also got sick without you knowing. You thought it was both the sweetest thing you’d ever heard, and then cried because you couldn’t cook. Elfman, when you were being potty trained…”

“N, no!” the man shouted. “Enough of that please. I get picked on enough as it is.”

“Picked on?” Lisanna said, frowning at her brother, her eyes narrowing dangerously. “Who picks on you?”

“Everyone,” Elfman said simply. “I know I’m not very strong, in fact I’m probably the weakest member of Fairy Tail.”

“You’re not weak!” Anna said sharply, reaching over to pull him into a hug, which startled him, but he returned it after a few seconds of shock. Lisanna too moved over to hug him whispering that he wasn’t in any way weak. That it was just because he didn’t want to hurt people. That didn’t make him week, it made him a more upright, moral individual than those who flaunted their strength.

At this point, Happy finally entered the guild, with a grumbling Carla behind him. This oddly enough, took everyone’s attention from their own, smaller dramas. “Natsu,” Happy moaned, “can we come in now? I want to see all these weirdos.”

The entire guild gasped in astonishment, and more than one of them grabbed at their magical weapons, “What are Exceed doing here!?” Others looked as if they wanted to fall on their knees and prostrate themselves before the two cats.

“That’s also kind of a long story!” Anna said quickly, before noticing that her voice had been lost in the tumult. Growling she whistled loudly and raised her voice. “The two of them have lived in the Earth Land world their entire lives guys! Don’t worry about them, they’re with us. You two, why don’t you show them your guild marks?”

Both cats did so, since Carla had never bothered to get hers taken off, and everyone from Earth Land save Ranma and Wendy joined in. While a few looked in confusion at the fact that the two of them and Seilah didn’t join in, that seemed to settle everything down once and for all and the group of siblings once more moved over to a table and started to talk quietly. With Mirajane on the recovery now, Juvia left them to it, smiling and happy for her friend to be reunited with her original siblings.

She knew however that it wouldn’t be for long, remembering a conversation she and Anna had earlier while walking through the woods. Anna had confided in her that she would not stay here in Edolas if she had a choice. Anna had made a life for herself with Lisanna and Natsu and wasn’t going to give it up, even to be with her original siblings and their friends again.

Ranma nodded at her and moved in the same direction she was going, putting off Edo-Wendy with a promise of getting a drink together later. He and Juvia sat down at a table with Edo-Lucy and Edo-Levy, as they gestured, Cana and Lucy to sit down with them as well, ignoring the Exceed as too troublesome and noticing that the others had no interest in talking about anything serious. Indeed, Natsu was too busy poking at Gray and Edo-Juvia to notice much of anything right now.

Judging by body language and the way everyone deferred to them, this worlds Levy and Lucy were the co-lead leaders of this Alter-Fairy Tail. This was just weird in Ranma’s opinion and he said so as he sat down. “In our world, after Laxus and Makarov the leaders would be Mirajane, Erza then perhaps Freed and… maybe Evergreen?” he asked looking over at Juvia and the other two.

Lucy shrugged, while Cana nodded. “Take Mira and Erza out of the equation, along with Gildarts, and yeah Freed is easily the strongest left over, with Evergreen coming in after him. And he’s got a brain on his head too, unlike Bickslow, Gray or Natsu, who are the next strongest.” She didn’t mention herself there despite how often she had been nominated for the S-class test. Cana knew she lacked raw magical strength, and was only nominated so often because she, like Erza, was simply incredibly versatile, able to adapt to any situation and work well with anyone. “But remember, Anna said Knightwalker killed Freed here.”

“Oh yeah,” Ranma muttered, a scowl appearing on his face as he remembered that.

“Yeah, that’s right, that bitch Knightwalker’s taken more than a few of us down. But I’ve never even heard of a Evergreen or a Bickslow,” Edo-Lucy grumped, still looking a little skittish as she looked at her alter persona and this new, crude and rude version of Cana. *Are, are they seriously together, that’s soooo weird!!!*

Edo-Levy however frowned thinking. “I think there was a Freed that was part Titan’s Nose, but he was captured and imprisoned years ago. As for that bitch Erza…” she shuddered. “You people don’t have a Knightwalker?”

“Actually,” Anna said speaking up from nearby, “the Earth Land version of Erza is really quite nice, if very rule-abiding.”

“Meh, that’s just because she can be as destructive as anyone else in your guild. Making other people follow the rules of the guild is a way for her to make up for it, or at least she thinks it is anyway,” Ranma quipped, a wry grin causing his earlier scowl to disappear.

“What about me then?” Mirajane asked, pointing at herself and looking at all of them quizzically.

Anna giggled, as did Lisanna. “In our world Mirajane is one of the strongest mages in the guild, second only to Erza among the ladies, and even that’s debatable, making her one of the strongest female mages in all of Ishgar. She uses a magic called Take Over to take over demonic souls, and it changes her body type quite a lot.”

From there Anna continued pointing at Ranma. “When this one showed up, we were kind of hopeful that the two of them would become a couple, but he doesn’t want to settle down, and she was unwilling to deal with his curse, and his unwillingness to settle down on top of that.”

“Curse?” asked more than one voice.

Seeing the inevitable Ranma groaned, rolling his eyes. “All right, let’s get this over with.” At his instructions, one pitcher of cold water and one of steaming water was provided and he stood up, glaring around him at the guild. “Alright, I’m only going to say this once. I have a curse. It is water activated. These days, if I want to and see it coming, I can keep water from hitting me at all, but if it does, I change genders.”

He held up a hand as more than one mouth fell open and others began to shout. “No, nothing changes mentally. It involves some changes to my taste buds, making things like chocolate taste a heck of a lot better, but that is all. Yes, it is a full body change, which means that I know what periods are. If any guy expects me to strip or assume I don’t have some kind of body modesty in that form because I wasn’t born with it, I will describe such feelings **in detail** to them.”

This brought many a whimper, whispers of commiseration, and giggles from the guild all around him, and then they watched in shock and growing awe as Ranma poured the cold water over his head. “Holy fuck!” Edo-Lucy shouted, backing away rapidly, her hand falling to the whip at her side. “You, she looks like a shorter bustier version of Knightwalker!”

Ranma blinked, staring at her. “I’ll hold my hand up to being shorter, but bustier? I’m pretty certain that’s wrong… like, I’m absolutely certain she’s bustier than me.”

“And how do you know that?” said more than one voice and Ranma blushed, pushing her fingers together and turning to grab up the hot water pouring it over her face again in lieu of an answer.

Seilah spoke up from where she had been sitting beside this world’s Cana, reading a book and having tea as she did. The two of them had instantly hit it off the instant Seilah had sat down next to her and Seilah was actually thinking about kidnapping the other woman. Edo-Wendy had joined them, bringing a tray of food with her, and had professed to be a very good cook under Seilah’s questioning. *If I could take these two with me, the three of us combined would make my book café idea work rather easily.* “Ranma and our world’s Erza are going out together. They are not exclusive as yet, but I have seen no evidence of Erza being interested in other men, although she is most definitely interested in both Ranma’s forms. He was also going out with Mulan at one point.”

Her eyes tracked to this world’s Bisca, who she was thankful to see was draped across the lap of someone who looked somewhat like the description she had been given of Alzack by Bisca and Wendy. *That is interesting, and rather a sign that perhaps their relationship back in our world will work out for the best, meaning she will not try to get back with Ranma at a later date.*

Indeed, this world’s Bisca was looking shocked and horrified at the idea of being interested in Ranma at all, hugging Alzack to her and being hugged in turn. They then proceeded to turn their attention away from everything else to one another and Seilah could almost see little hearts appearing in the air around them.

*Excellent.* Seilah had deduced before this that Bisca, not Erza, was the main opponent of her seeing if she and Ranma could get together at some point. Bisca had evinced both concern at Seilah’s very presence and had outright vetoed the idea of other girls joining them. Erza had done neither, perhaps believing she was not yet in a position to do so, or perhaps, Seilah thought, because of her own bisexual nature. Regardless, she was pleased by this development.

Among the rest of the guild Seilah’s words caused many an odd look, a shaking of heads and numerous questions directed towards Ranma, who had thankfully for the sanity of everyone around her changed back to his male form at this point. However, this peaceful moment ended, when Happy laughed, pointing at Natsu Anna and Lisanna in turn. “That’s sort of like these three, after all, since Natsu’s dating them both right?”

“What!?” Mirajane and Elfman both shouted, a furious Elfman actually forgetting himself enough to smash Natsu to the ground with a huge fist. “You two timer! How dare you do that to my sisters!”

Nearby Jet and Droy nodded approval at Elfman finally showing his manly side, while Anna and Lisanna tried to restrain their siblings from killing their lover.

Having convinced Edo-Juvia to pour her a glass of orange juice, Wendy decided not to get involved in that or in the serious discussion, leaving that to her Onii-chan. She instead moved over to Seilah’s table, where she found herself pulled into the devil girl’s lap, as Seilah held open a book in front of the two of them. She had found something, which looked as if it was from the same creator, or rather her Edolas version, as the writer of Girl Genius. This was a comic book instead of a book and followed a pair of twins instead working with magic rather than science. But even after only a few pages, Seilah could tell it was quite fun.

That this allowed Wendy to keep an eye on her older self and let Wendy make sure the older version of her wasn’t flirting with Ranma was merely a bonus. That was her story and she was sticking to it.

Ranma looked at the ongoing chaos around Natsu, sighed and shook his head before looking over the others. “Should we just move away and leave them to it?”

“Sounds like a plan,” Edo-Lucy said with a nod, with Levy moving up beside them. They took a seat near where Seilah and Wendy were sitting with Edo-Cana and Edo-Wendy. “We still need to get more of your story out of you stranger,” Edo Wendy said, shaking her head and staring at him thoughtfully, causing little Wendy to tense, preparing to leap between them again. “I gotta tell you, we’ve never seen anyone like you. Neither that curse nor your male form. Trust me, I would’ve remembered those eyes of yours,” Edo-Wendy said with a laugh, winking at her from where she was sitting.

Ranma nodded, smirking a little and ignoring the tint of red to his cheeks that wink had evoked. “I’d be surprised if you had. Still, let’s get serious for now. I’ll tell you what happened to all of us. As you should’ve been able to tell by what Edo-Lisanna, who we call Anna now, we aren’t exactly here by choice. But we have a mission now, and that’s to get our friends back.”

“What do you mean?” Edo-Lucy asked, cocking her head to one side, and frowning at Ranma.

Looking over at the Fairy Tail mages, Ranma sighed and began to explain what happened, why they were there, and the fact that whatever had created the bridge between the two dimensions had somehow sucked all of their friends up, teleporting them to somewhere else. “We think that these anti-magic bubbles have sort of been appearing here and there for a while all across Ishgar, but how that actually impacts our friends none of us have any idea.”

Edo-Lucy scowled, looking away. “We’ve known that the king and his court have figured out a way to somehow create magic for a little over a year now. I’ve even been able to see what they do it with it. They create or have somehow been able to discover these giant lacrima which they can drain away magic into various devices of our own kind of lacrima, storing them there to be paired with weapons and other stuff later.”

“Those lacrima, that’s it?” Ranma said, a sinking feeling hitting him, as everyone else at the table began to feel honest horror fill them. “I mean, that’s the only way they’re getting magic? There’s been no rumors about prisoners disappearing or odd people being seen in the castle and then never being seen again?”

“Yep. No mages, no prisoners. Just those giant lacrima,” Edo-Lucy said crossing her arms. “We’ve heard them called it Anima, that’s about all I can tell you about them. No idea if there are people alive in there, or even if they could be somehow rescued from within.” She then waited, watching as that sunk in.

She watched as the weird Alter-Cana scowled pushing away the beer she’d grabbed from one of Lucy’s unsuspecting guildmates. Her own opposite number looked horrified and near tears. Juvia hissed like a kettle, her fists clenching, her face growing sorrowful and wrathful. Ranma though, his response was more controlled then the others. His face just hardened, his eyes darkening as his whole body became like a tensed spring, his earlier almost affable, lazy air disappearing. The others too looked more worried now, with the youngster going so far as to gasp in horror.

Edo-Lucy sighed. It wasn’t as if she was unfeeling, or blind to their plight or anything like that, but she had to look after the living, not take vengeance that would just put more people into early graves. “I’d say write them off if I were you,” she said gruffly.

“Even if they were your friends we were talking about?” Ranma asked, while Lucy scowled at her alternate self.

She flinched looking away. “It wouldn’t be the first time we’ve had to write off friends.” But her voice had lost its sharpness, and she was looking sad and much smaller and less self-assured now, before rallying slightly. “Besides, you’d have to sneak in to even get that far enough to see the lacrima crystals, let alone trying to do something to them. And no one’s ever come back from trying to infiltrate the castle. In fact, even the capital around it is getting tougher to get into. Only a few of us dare to try these days, and only one of us does it with any regularity. He’s got a job there with one of the few newspapers that the king’s court doesn’t outright own as an investigative reporter. Of course, what they can report on is still controlled but still, it’s a decent source of info.”

Ranma nodded, gesturing her to continue, his own thoughts a whirl around a central thought: how the hell would they reverse this Anima process and free their friends? The answer to him was very straightforward*. If they can’t be broken out, go to the top. Capture the king, force him to order the process reversed. Or else. This has just gone from a simple in and out rescue mission to a true smash and grab.*

While he was coming to that conclusion, Lucy listed all of the reasons why this was a bad idea, why Faust and his army were tough and why trying to fight them was a bad thing. Ranma heard her out from start to finish and then leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms as he looked at her, his eyes narrowing. “So, are you going to help or not?” he asked, acting if she hadn’t said anything. Because from his perspective, she hadn’t. “Whatever they put in front of me, whatever reasons you give for why you shouldn’t do this, it doesn’t matter. Those are my friends, and I’m getting her, that is we’re getting them out of there.”

Juvia and all the others nodded, making no sign they had noticed Ranma’s slip of the tongue and Ranma leaned forward, clasping his hands in front of them in the proper Gendo-Approved-Intimidating-Bastard-Pose™ as he glared at Lucy, flashing a toothy, dangerous smile all his own on top of that pose. “So, I say again, are you going to help or not?”

**OOOOOOO**

High above the land of Edolas, there resides a floating island, situated most of the year near the Royal City. This island, called Extalia wasn’t a very large island as such things were reckoned, possibly about the size of the smallest island of Caelum in Earth Land, which was so small a normal person could walk across it in two days and see the sea all around them from its highest point. Although the fact it was floating in the air along with several other, similar islands nearby offset the fact that it was of a smallish size to anyone who say it, of course.

On that island there was a town. It was equally small, home to only about five hundred people, although even that was more because of the size of the individuals within it then anything else, considering the people living on the island were all Exceeds like Happy and Carla. Their architecture was equally small, and the town was somewhat crowded. Outside the town were several dozen scattered farms and forestry areas, showing that the island was, generally speaking, self-sufficient.

There was also a castle. It was a beautiful castle, with a high outer wall, four small towers, and a larger manor hall set behind them, everything being built of white stone the tower’s roofs being of pink tiles, with light pastel blue tiles mixed in here and there. Above each tower flew a flag, resplendent in the sun. It was truly a castle out of a children’s fairytale book, so pretty it was almost as if it was a dream rather than an actual castle. Most humans who ever saw it and there were scant few of those, were in awe at the sheer beauty of the place.

At the moment however, the throne room of that castle, which was equally resplendent and pretty, was being filled to brimming with the genteel ladylike voice of the queen of the castle cursing up a blue streak. “GOD my head oh my cute derriere, my god damn head feels like someone drove a pick through one ear and out the other!”

The Queen was a white furred Exceed named Shagotte who had diamond patterns around the eyes, as well as a piercing on her left ear. She wore currently wearing her normal, massively overdone formal regalia, a flowing multilayered dress with massive ruffles coming from the back and moving around her on either side, giving the impression to many who saw it that they were her Aero Wings. Normally she spoke in a genteel, aloof, manner, giving the appearance of being some kind of untouchable higher being. However, all of this had faded to nothing in the last few minutes.

Many of her courtiers had fainted in sheer horror at the filth coming out of Queen Shagotte’s mouth. Even the two old Exceed who were her chief advisors (although Shagotte knew all too well that could easily be translated to ‘handlers’) were clasping their hands over their chests, staring at their queen in shock. Some of that shock was the fact they had no idea she even knew those words, but most of it was the fact it was all spewing out of her mouth like this. The fact Queen Shagotte had been unconscious, utterly unresponsive for more than two hours before this made their shock at how she announced her suddenly aware status any less.

Now as they watched she once more opened her eyes for a brief moment and tore her crown off her head tossing it to the ground and holding her head in both hands moving as she closed her eyes with an almost visible snap. “By the blessed magic that sustains us, the light makes it worse, please for the fucking love of all that is good and true stop the world I want to get off!”

“Queen Shagotte, whatever is the matter!?” said one of her extremely old advisors. At the moment, she could barely discern the difference between sound and sight, so she could be perhaps excused from not making a note of which it was. Then again, perhaps they were interchangeable to her mind, since they both seemed to share the same opinions and concerns.

“…Do not shout,” she muttered, holding up a hand. “Your voice makes it worse.”

Nodding the other advisor took a step forward, whispering. “Your Majesty, what has happened? Is it some magical attack? You were unresponsive for several hours after you attempted to use your precognitive powers.”

“Pray do not mention that again,” Queen Shagotte said, her voice scratchy from her earlier shouting. “But suffice it to say that my ability to see the future is no longer useable for some reason.”

Queen Shagotte’s power of precognition, and that of the king before her, was a power that her people had long used to instill awe and fear in humans, a defense mechanism against the fact that the humans were far more warlike than them, far more profligate and far more dangerous in terms of their ability to create magical weapons. The humans lacked the Exceed’s ability to fly, and the ease with which they could manipulate magic. Even here in Edolas where magic was disappearing year after year that had not changed. Even now, when magic was becoming so scarce on the ground it was practically nonexistent outside the various large cities of the human nation, the Exceed could still manipulate the Ethernano within the air around them. This is because the Exceed held magic inside of their bodies, just like the mages of Earth Land.

Yet despite the near religious reverence most humans felt towards them, it was the Queen’s power of precognition that had scared Faust and his court into leaving them alone since the king had begun to consolidate the control of all magic within his own hands. Her use of precognition and careful application of her guards’ war-making potential to help Faust’s forces had shown the humans that they did not wish to fight a war against the Exceed.

But Queen Shagotte and her two advisors lived in almost perpetual fear at the idea of humans realizing how weak the Exceed truly were. After all, one battalion of Royal Guard led by one of their generals could overcome the single company of trained soldiers the Exceed had, despite their advantage in natural flight and their limited offensive magic, something that had become all too clear fifteen years ago when the humans discovered how to domesticate their legions, the large demon-swine.

They were thus forced to keep up the fabrication, the lie of their people’s strength and abilities her father had begun until all too many of their own people believed it. That was a worrisome side effect that had only begun to be seen in Queen Shagotte’s generation but even so, that arrogance was better than the alternative: that of the humans realizing how much stronger they were then the Exceed themselves and using their fearsome new Anima cannon on them.

To hear that her powers were no longer working was a nightmare brought to life to both of her advisors. “What, what do you mean my Queen? You cannot see the fate of a single human and that is throwing off your powers? Or, or is there some great event coming that you do not cannot see past?”

“I mean I can no longer see the future at all!” the Queen said dryly, leaning back and still kneading her head with both hands opening her eyes to send a pain-filled glare at the two men in front of her. “I mean that my ability to predict the future is not only badly impacted, it is completely gone. Something has been added, something so chaotic that it has caused an almost backlash in the future. I tried to see the future and was immediately lost in the myriad of possibilities, changes and sheer randomness of everything that I could barely find my way back to my own body, let alone attempt to see a single event or the fate of a single person. This caused, a kind of mental backlash as if my head had been both used like the ball on a paddle ball and had also imbibed in the worst hangover of all time.”

“What could have caused that?” Advisor B asked, scowling in anger. The Queen knew they had names, but honestly at this point, she could not bring herself to put forth the tiny bit of effort needed to bring them to mind.

“I don’t know,” the Queen growled, shaking her head then wincing in agony. “How the hell should I know!? Nothing like this is ever happened before except for when…”

She paused, almost seeming to shrink within her clothing even as she wallowed in her pain, but her elder advisors both understood, leaping to the same conclusion. “Except for when we were trying to aim the eggs through the Anima portal to find the Dragon Slayers,” Advisor A said grimly. “The same effect is occurring again? And more powerfully?”

“Yes!” Shaggotte Queen said rallying slightly and opening her eyes to look at the two older Exceed even as she put aside thoughts of one particular blue white egg, a look of longing crossing her face before she turned back to more important matters. *Or perhaps more impersonal matters in any rate,* she thought ruefully personally, *I would think my daughter is of more import than anything else, but I as a queen cannot acknowledge that.* “It is exactly that, something is changing the future too fast for my ability to see anything of it. Something here in this world now.”

“Do you mean to say that the individual who had caused all that turmoil years ago is here!? It’s a person in fact rather than just a single huge event as we thought?” Advisor B asked incredulously. “We have known that the Anima grasps mages, but surely they come through unconscious, part of the giant crystals and are thereby drained peacefully, never knowing their fate! One such as that could no sooner create the effect that you’re talking about then they could be aware of their surroundings in their transformed state.”

“I don’t know how, I am just telling you what I am feeling!” the young Queens barked back, anger and irritation in her voice causing both men to flinch away even as she groaned and fell back, closing her eyes again. It had been like looking out your window expecting to see a nice sunny day and seeing something like one of the human’s impressionist paintings. Which then invaded your head, attempting to change every thought within to being just as muddled and bizarre as it is. It was very painful in other words.  *And these two old fools harping on is not helping!*

One of them hesitantly asked “Then what should we do?””

“Keep it a secret of course,” Queen Shagotte said with a sigh, leaning her head back. “Let it join the list of our all too many previous secrets. We’ll have to prevaricate and cover up for a time, until this whatever it is fades, or the cause is somehow sent back to Earth Land. Tell our scout force be on the lookout for mages from Earth Land. If any of them are able to perform magic perhaps we will have found our target.”

“Mages who can perform magic? But without access to the immense amount of Ethernano their home world produces no mages from there could perform magic here,” the other old fool said.

“Wait, perhaps there could be one of them who is able to.” The second old fool said. “A Dragon Slayer. After all, he did not know the extent of those powers of the process. We will of course be on the lookout your Majesty. If one such as that is here, our guards can deal with him, or at the least point Faust and his forces towards him.”

“Good,” the Queen said waving one hand in dismissal, even as the other one covered her eyes. “Now please, could you send for my chambermaids? And some extremely strong painkillers, or perhaps alcohol. I have a migraine larger than Extalia, and I need to get rid of it. If the only way to do so is killing my brain cells, so be it.”

**OOOOOOO**

Lucy Ashley glared back at Ranma, crossing her arms and jutting her chest out aggressively. Normally this would make most of the many guild back away, either blushing or just terrified of her anger. As much as she didn’t like to admit it, between them Lucy and Levy ruled their guild with iron fists. And Lucy kicks of course. Seeing someone so dismissive of them and their advice was immensely irritating especially since he was asking them for help at the same time. “You have no idea what you’re asking of us! We’ve already got bullseyes painted on our backs, on the back of our guild, and you want us to stick our necks out like that?”

“Yes,” Ranma said simply. “It’s the right thing to do.”

That caused Edo-Lucy to flinch, looking away. “How do we even know you’ll be able to break them out? Like I said, they’re stuck in those Anima, they can’t be aware of anything in there.”

“How do we know we won’t until we try?” Natsu said, coming over from where he had been surrounded by Strausses for a bit. “Those are our friends too,” he said smacking one fist into his other palm again and again, as if he was pummeling a wall. Like the others he was worried, but like Ranma, he was responding to that worry with anger. “And we **will** get them free one way or another. If we can’t bust apart these crystals of yours apart and free them that way, we’ll find the people who created the Anima in the first place and get them to reverse it.”

While the locals all scoffed at that, Ranma just nodded, as did the other Earth Landers at the table, determination visible in all of their faces.

“That’s nice and all,” Edo-Lucy said sarcastically. “Can you lot even use your magic here?”

That shut up most of the mages bar Lucy, who nodded. “I can use my magic, it’s based off Celestial, that is dimensional magic. We’ve also got a lot of magic staffs that Anna bought back in Earth Land, and we’ve got the Dragon Slayer’s.”

“Dragon Slayers?” Edo-Lucy said with a laugh. “Damn girl, someone’s been selling you fairy tales for real! Dragons don’t exist, they never have.”

“You take that back!” Natsu shouted, getting in her face and roaring at her. Back home, his doing that would’ve also at least shown a pilot light in his mouth, but at the moment nothing happened, except for her stumbling back and glaring at him, whipping her leg up into a kick. But Natsu dodged it, still glaring at her. “I was raised by a dragon! Wendy was raised by a dragon, Ranma was taught by one! Gildarts fought a dragon not too long ago! They exist!”

Ranma nodded, allowing a smirk to flash across his face. “We’re not exactly defenseless. Some of us are just not as tough as we would normally be. But as Natsu will be the first to tell you, the three of us have our Dragon Slayer durability, and so long as we’ve got that…”

“So long as I got that I can just punch anyone into submission!” Natsu said, putting his arms up in the strongman pose, which caused his muscles to bulge out. “Just point me at them!”

Behind him Anna and Lisanna blushed, while Mirajane looked at him speculatively, and nodded her head in approval. “Not too shabby, in the looks department, anyway,” she whispered, before tapping her forehead, “up here, it’s another story.”

“Hurtful words sister dear, but also true ones,” Anna answered with her own whisper, accompanied by a giggle from Lisanna.

“And how will that ‘durability’ stand up against magic? How will that stand up against the King’s Army, with its monopoly on legions, on magical weapons? Against Knightwalker, Sugarboy, Panther Lily and Hughes! Guild Hunters one in all, with magical weapons that beggar belief!” Edo-Levy said, cutting in for Edo-Lucy for a moment. “You can’t face them in a straight fight, and if they figure out that you’re trying to sneak around the castle, they’ll capture you, drain you for your magic or just outright kill you!”

“You make the assumption that they’ll find me,” Ranma said, his smirk making no move to leave his face as his initial anger slowly cooled. “I can be very darn sneaky if I want to be.”

That caused Wendy to break out of her own worry and let loose a few giggles, nodding her head rapidly from where she was still sitting in Seilah’s lap and now losing interest in the conversation, knowing her brother had it under control. She even went so far as to go back to reading the book along with Seilah, who had not looked up from her own reading and was a few pages ahead of her now, much to Wendy’s pouting irritation.

“Even if you’re able to turn invisible or something they’ll find you,” Edo-Lucy said with a sigh. “We had a team here, team Shadow Strike…

All eyes from Earth Land turned to Jet and Droy then to Edo-Levy, but she waved her hands. “No, it wasn’t us. We’re still alive!” she said grimly. “Team Shadow Strike isn’t. Their magics allowed them to sneak around like spies, able to sneak here there and everywhere, but they were still caught, and wiped out by Hughes and Knightwalker. Something, some kind of magical device in the castle itself revealed them.

Ranma shrugged. “Then I’ll brute force it. This Faust guy’s army won’t be the first I’ve smashed. And if they are looking to drain our friends of their magic while they are in this lacrima form, then that idea starts looking even better.”

“God you’re so overconfident, why don’t you go and get yourself killed then!” Edo-Lucy barked at him.

“Because I don’t even know what direction to go?!” Ranma roared back. “If you don’t want to help us in any other way, at least tell us the direction we need to travel to find this Royal City. Then you can keep on going, running like the rabbits you freaking out for all I care! I’m getting my, our friends back, and that’s all there is to it!”

At that point the conversation (read: argument) was interrupted by a Fairy Tail mage smashing the door open and shouting, “The Army’s here!”

He looked almost like Nab only not quite, he was shorter by far and his face was far less tanned despite the fact he wore much the same clothing as the perennial post haunter. “The Army is here, at least several companies flying in on legions from the south!” He shouted again, “And they’re wearing Knightwalker’s personal emblem!”

That name seemed to send a frisson of true fear throughout the guild, and a lot of them started to run around like chickens with their heads chopped off in panic until Edo-Levy shouted at the top of her lungs, “Will you all sit down and shut up! Jet and Droy, get over to the bar and help Mirajane pull down the protective covers. The rest of you, start putting away your shit! Gray, you’re with me. You’re the only one of these idiots who knows what a spanner is, let alone what size I’ll need when I ask for it.”

“I thought you said that thing was broken?” Edo-Lucy said, glaring at her arrival.

“As is broken as your head is going to be if you don’t get it out of my way!” Edo-Levy shouted back, despite the fact that Edo-Lucy was not in fact in her way to begin with. She quickly moved over to the large mass of machinery at the back of the guild and started to do something mysterious there with a bunch of levers, opening the bottom of it, and rifling in what looked like some kind of chamber. “It’s never been broken it’s just always been very temperamental, and I didn’t want you ham-fisted assholes to mess with it. As long as we have the magic to power it, I think I can get it going again, but it won’t be easy, especially under rush conditions!”

Once at the bar Jet and Dory split off to throw a few small levers. Wooden panels slowly descended from the floor or ceiling to block in the drinks in the cabinets, and other breakable things, while Mirajane vaulted over the bar and began to stuff other things inside the cabinets below it.

Two more mages moved around the walls doing the same for other things or grabbing up loose items and throwing them to other mages, who stowed them in little hidey-holes. Seilah glared as one of them blocked her off from the books, looking down at the book she had in her hand, calculating before getting up and removing another one before the protective panel could fully block out the bookcase.

“So… you all are doing what, exactly?” Ranma asked, watching with the other Fairy Tail mages as their counterparts ran around save Wendy and Seilah. They were both now fully engrossed in the book they had been reading before the Anima revelation. She also trusted Ranma to tell her if there was something going on, she needed to concern herself with.

What do you think we’re doing doofus?” Edo-Lucy shouted, forgetting herself enough to try to kick him in the side, only to wine in pain as Ranma simply took the kick, and she fell on her rear, holding her foot in agony.

“Yeahhhh,” Ranma drawled. “Don’t do that. And why are you running?”

“Because we can’t fight them,” she shouted back. “What’ve I been saying for the last forty minutes!”

Ranma rolled his eyes while Natsu gaped in utter astonishment at the idea of the whole guild of Fairy Tail running away. He was still having trouble accepting the idea of a weak Mirajane to be honest. The idea of just running away from their enemies like this should’ve been anathema to the Fairy Tail mages he knew, and indeed even Lucy and Cana, the least combative of the group from Earth Land, were looking a little disturbed.

Edo-Lucy’s saw this, and she shouted “Do you have any idea how many of us have died?! Laxus, Gildarts, Reedus, Macao, Kinana, Vijeetor, Sherry and more than half of her friends from Lamia Scale! Dozens of other mages joined us like Bisca and Alzack over there only to die! Knightwalker alone killed more than half of the mages we’ve lost since Sugarboy killed Laxus. She’s our bogeyman, hell we thought she killed Lisanna too!”

Earth Land’s Lisanna looked at her twin but Anna just blinked, shrugging her shoulders. “Remember my memory of that fight’s like Swiss cheese. She could have been there I suppose.”

“I suppose,” Elfman muttered, shaking his head and shivering even as he drew both of the twins into hugs. “I was there that night, and I remember all too clearly what happened. Please don’t make me feel that loss again!”

That caused Anna to wince internally, knowing that whatever else happened, she would indeed be leaving Elfman, this Elfman anyway, behind again. That hurt, that hurt a lot but she wasn’t going to leave Natsu or Lisanna, not if she could help it.

Ranma was frowning now, thinking. For one thing, he was a trying to keep a lid on his temper. The idea of someone with Erza’s face going around killing people who looked so much like her compatriots and friends, hell her family, was pissing him off something fierce. For another was his desire to hit something, anything for real right now after hearing what had happened to his Erza and the rest of the Earth Land Fairy Tail guild, hell, and the rest of Magnolia too, considering all of the magic, the items, and everything else, from the rest of the town had also been sucked away.

Besides that, an idea was percolating in his head. “You,” he said pointing at the newcomer. “You said this Knightwalker girl is actually leading them, right?”

“I didn’t see her, but all of the scouts I spotted have the flaming spear mark of her personal battalion,” the man said with a nod before peering at him closely. “Um, who are you?”

Ranma waved that off, turning back to Edo-Lucy. “And all of you said my curse form, it could pass for the Knightwalker, right? With a little work I mean and some six-inch shoes or something like that.”

“Yes…” Edo-Lucy said slowly. “But why would that matter. I mean yeah she’s here, but they have legions, no matter how fast you are, she could still get back to the capital before you.”

Ranma smiled thinly and headed towards the door, “That would imply that I had left her the ability to walk, let alone do anything else.”

Seilah looked up, then shook her head and leaned back in her chair, keeping on reading with Wendy joining her. From his tone it was evident that Ranma wanted to handle this on his own, and the book was quite interesting. Wendy too made no move to leave her soft, super-comfy lap as she read along.

“Why are you two not worried?” Edo-Cana said, cocking her head to one side and putting a hand up to her cheek in dainty move that just looked wrong to anyone who knew the Earth Land Lucy. “I thought he was your friend.”

“He is my Onii-chan,” Wendy said with a nod. “But why would I be worried? He’s right, the King’s Army won’t be the first he’s smashed. Plus…” she looked up and after Ranma’s quickly retreating form. “Plus, I think he needs some alone time to work out his anger right now. An angry Ranma-nii is not fun at all to be around.”

“Yeah I can see that. Plus if Wendy says it, it must be true,” Lucy muttered, shaking her head and making no move to join Ranma. She was being a little bit effected by the atmosphere of fear around her to be honest, and she also wasn’t the most combative of mages at the best of times. *If these people think this Knightwalker is so dangerous, maybe we should listen to them. On the other hand, I bet if I keep working on her, my opposite number will cave eventually on helping us. If our friends really are stuck in this Anima thing, we’ll need all the help we can get.*

Cana on the other smacked her hands together gleefully, and headed towards the door after Ranma, snagging up a barrel of ale before it could be stored away and hefting it onto one shoulder. “I have to watch this. This’ll be the first time I’ll really see Ranma in action after all, and from what Erza’s said, it’s a treat.” The fact this might also let her get some licks of her own in was just a bonus.

At that, Edo-Cana shook her head. “How uncouth, taking delight in the barbarous sport of combat like that.”

“That’s me, babe,” Cana said, turning winking at her. “Just full of low-brow humor and desires.”

“B, babe oh my,” Edo-Cana said holding up a palm to her four head practically swooning, while Lucy rolled her eyes at her girlfriend’s antics.

To everyone else’s astonishment Juvia moved to join her exiting. “Juvia might not have offensive magic, but Juvia still has her ability to transform her body to avoid damage and the staffs Anna gave Juvia earlier. Juvia is also not willing to let Ranma do all the fighting for us.”

 Edo-Wendy frowned a little, then shrugged and stood up sashaying after the other two girls. *That Alter-Cana has the right idea, although I sure as heck am not going to try to fight Knightwalker. And if the worst comes to pass and they need to retreat but the guild has teleported out before they get back, they’ll need a local guide. This’ll also give me a bit of time with the stud. Damn he moves like a freaking cat, all grace and languid confidence, mmm… I wonder if I could get him to put on some cat ears…*

Natsu would probably have going after them too, but both Anna and Lisanna had hold of his arms and were not making any motion to follow. Anna leaned up and whispered in his ear that they wanted him there for a serious discussion with their siblings, one involving Anna leaving with him back to Earth Land when they could.

He sighed dramatically and shook his head. *Darn it, this whole boyfriend thing is tough! Still, anything for my mates, even, even missing out on fighting a Bizarro version of Erza… on second thought, maybe I really should sit this one out.* Natsu had yet to beat Erza in any of their matches, and frankly, she scared him something fierce.

Growling Edo-Lucy was about to try to get in the girl’s way and stop them from exiting after Ranma before she was interrupted.

“Let them go Blondie,” Edo-Levy said, sticking her head out from underneath the devices that she had been tinkering with. “Someone going out there and holding them up is actually a good idea at this point. This is going to take me at least forty minutes, maybe an hour to fix. That’s if I can do it at all.”

“Don’t order me about bitch,” Edo-Lucy muttered, but she subsided, staring after Ranma as the girls exited after him, frowning in thought. *He can’t really fight a monster like Knightwalker, can he?* It was a testament to the amount of self-confidence Ranma exuded even to strangers that Edo-Lucy was even questioning that right now.

Ranma walked away through the woods from the guildhall, whistling as he moved in the direction that scout guy had told him the army was coming from, sniffing the air and listening as he did, noticing the forest had gone silent. “My senses and my Dragon Slayer enhanced abilities are still there I just can’t create a magical attack. But including my ki and that’s going to be more than enough for this,” He said aloud.

A second later he reached down to a fallen branch that was as large as he was tall, hefting it up into the air above his head as something in the distance appeared in the air. Pulling it back behind one shoulder he waited the second, then a hurled it up words, the blunt end of the branch smashing into a giant creature about 300 yards above his head that had been descending towards the forest. The creature squawked in agony and flopped out of the sky to crash deeper into the forest, and Ranma leaped up into the trees sitting in that direction.

It didn’t take more than a few minutes after Ranma had dealt with the first flying beastie for several dozen more to appear in the sky. Six of them immediately began to plummet towards him, and Ranma could quickly make out their riders as they did so. Each of them was wielding long lances with heavily built-up shields to protect the rider from any frontal attack. The lance tips pointed forward from the weird looking beasts, by a good 2 or 3 yards and were glowing with some kind of magical power.

Ranma supposed that to other people they would look intimidating. To Ranma, this was not the case. “Ahh, my first customers, advertising really does pay,” he quipped, before racing up a tree nearby and leaping up towards the airborne knights as they came close.

Before the first diving lancer could adjust, Ranma was already grabbing at his lance right behind the glowing tip, flipping himself up and into the man’s face directly over his shield, his hand grabbing the man’s face and pushing him backwards onto his back. He used that as a springboard to leap sideways, kicking out hard into another one, smashing him entirely out of the saddle, which let Ranma land lightly where the rider had been, standing on the back of the saddle. He bounced there for a moment, while the beast continued to fly forward, possibly not even noticing the change in its burden. “You lot are supposed to be the army around here, huh? So far I’m not impressed.”

With a cry of anger, several other riders raced towards him, some of them releasing energy from their lance tips. They fired them at Ranma, creating balls of fire or lightning that flashed towards him.

“Meh, that’s a little better,” Ranma noted, before leaping away from his current perch towards one of the ones who had stupidly decided to try to close with him despite what had just happened to their fellows. He hung from the guys tip for a moment, then flipped himself back and upwards, before hurling out a Moko Takabisha in beam form, the impact of which sent his body flying backwards, shooting towards one of the ones who had been using fireballs.

The man couldn’t adjust his aim fast enough and Ranma was in close on him before he could do anything. A chop to the side of his helmet both dented the helmet, and sent the man flying off of his steed. “What are these things called anyway?” Ranma had not honestly been paying attention much to Edo-Lucy once she revealed that they weren’t going to even try to fight back, just running away again. *Then again,* he reflected now, *if I was as weak as that lot and I was faced with a psychopathic Erza? I probably would run too.*

Ranma felt the heat of one of the enemy lightning bolts slam into his side, and moved with the impact, the energy actually imparting physical impetus to him, but not doing any damage. Even his clothes were in one piece, and Ranma idly thanked his ki durability for carrying over into his clothing. *It’d be such a hassle to fight every battle and be naked fifteen minutes in after all.*

One of the beasts came close its rider attempting to fly directly over Ranma to use his beast’s claws and mouth. These beasts had a flat, angular head with very sharp teeth coming out of their jaw as if they were just an extension of it, no lips to speak of and round, beady eyes. It was furry rather than scaly with a bit of fur dangling like a beard, with the exception being two devil-like horns. The wings were smallish in comparison to the fat body as were the paws, both those paws had five long talons on the front two and four larger ones on the back. The whip-like tail was also dangerous and was tipped with a heavy looking spike.

A punch to the jaw sent the creature’s head upwards, as its beady black eyes rolled up in its head and Ranma grabbed its tail as it continued to pass by overhead, hurling it to the side into another one. Then Ranma shifted over the side of his own beastie, before leaping up and out. Tapping down lightly on a falling Lance tip, he used that to propel himself back upwards, slamming into a third’s stomach and rolling with it in midair, via a hold on one of its tiny forelimbs. As it rolled entirely over, he used its stomach as a springboard to get even more air.

“Spread out!” shouted a voice. “Don’t get close with him. He can’t actually fly he’s just using us to do it like so many steppingstones! Fall back and use your long-range weapons only, magic staffs and crossbows!”

It was a good plan, Ranma reflected. *Or it would be, if I didn’t have this entire forest to play with.*

Even as he thought that, Ranma was falling back down towards the forest, landing in the trees where he disappeared from sight among the foliage for a few minutes. He blinked as he noticed the trio of ladies hiding down below and waved at them, shouting mockingly, “This lot are mine, go get your own playmates.”

Cana laughed and waved her beer at him, while the other two looked far less sanguine, with Edo-Wendy actually looking worried. She kept looking worried right up until she saw what happened next.

The group of flying beasts above them had been joined by several dozen more, all of whom started to spread out to search for Ranma, lashing down into the forest with fireballs, trying to start fires to smoke him out. This might’ve worked eventually on the three ladies at least, but Ranma had no intention of hiding for very long. Landing on the ground for a brief instant, he grabbed up a falling tree trunk that would have taken four men to lift before hurling it upwards. He then jumped up to grab the edge of it, flipping himself up to stand on the side of the trunk like it was a surfboard as it winged through the air straight through the growing crowd of beasts.

There were about two to three hundred of them now. About a fourth of them had at least two riders on them, two of the largest ones in sight had three. Ranma figured that those were the commanders, considering that the one he was closest to him had some kind of spyglass and no weapon save for a short sword at his belt. Not that their numbers were any great issue, as that commander learned to his cost, smashed off his perch by a well-placed piece of wood coming at him with all the speed of an arrow for all it had flipped through the air.

Just as he dealt with that man though, Ranma’s sixth sense tingled and he leaped to one side, right off of his former perch and down through the air for a second. As he did so, a larger than average fireball had just slammed into his tree-trunk, incinerating it in a second, far faster than even Natsu would have been able to do. Flying towards him with several dozen more riders at her back was someone whose hair streamed crimson in the breeze behind her, and even from here he could hear her voice shouting commands. “Spread out and get out of my way, I’ll be the one to take that Fairy down!”

“Sorry,” Ranma shouted back, “I’m already dating one Erza and I’m afraid that’s my limit.”

For a moment, the sheer randomness of this comment seemed to take the attacking woman aback, allowing Ranma to close through the tumult of the rest of the attackers and get a look at her. When he did, Ranma had to admit she certainly looked like his Erza, for the most part anyway. She was dressed in an armored bra and armored leggings that carried up to well above mid-thigh, paired with a pair of armored panties of all things that was covered by a skirt that covered her left thigh and side. She wore long flailing scarf of dark purple around her neck, the tips of which were also lined with metal he could tell. In her hand she wielded a large spear about a foot taller than she was, the spear tip of which consisted of four blades. Like her outfit, the spear was black and steel colored. Her hair was just as long as his Erza flowing in the wind behind her.

But Ranma was amused to note that yes, Edo-Lucy had been correct. This alter-Erza didn’t have as much up top as Erza Belserion did. *Huh, well, I guess if there can be older versions like my imouto and flirty Wendy then it makes sense some will have different bodies.*

As he watched, she reversed the spear under one arm, and it shifted form suddenly, the tip of it changing though he couldn’t tell what was going on at first, her body being in the way of his line of sight. It was only the flash of magic that told him something had changed there, before she was leaping through the air towards him at a speed that she had obviously hoped to use to take him by surprise.

This didn’t quite work but Ranma made no attempt to dodge, instead smashing the spear aside. The spear tip had changed now, having a single arrowhead shaped spearhead with golden and red stripes. Behind the tip, the spear had a thick golden circle or spiral, centered around a white center.

As Ranma took in this change, Edo-Erza flipped the spear around to bring it down on his head but he blocked it in midair kicking out hard and catching her in the chest though she blocked it with one arm slightly. This caused her to wince both at the fact that she hadn’t quite managed to block the full kick, his heel impacting rather than his entire foot on her stomach, and her bracer denting under the rest of the blow.

*Strong!* she thought, before she was forced to fling herself sideways through the air, using her spear again to leap away as her opponent had just used the impact from that kick to fling himself backwards, grabbing at a another beast that hadn’t quite gotten the memo yet about getting some distance. As she went thought she launched another magical attack, a default fireball that her spear, the Ten Commandments, could launch in nearly all its forms.

While the fireball struck and did no real damage, it did knock him off his perch. And faced with this new threat, Ranma had to strategize for the first time in this fight. *If this Knightwalker is anywhere near as tough as those Edo-fairy Tail guys think, I can’t keep winging it here, not unless I want to go full on kill-em-all mode. Not with these numbers, and not with having to keep them all concentrated on me rather than looking for Cana and the girls. I didn’t need an audience darn it!*

Ranma held back. He nearly always held back when facing multiple opponents like this. It was part of his training back in his old life that he had never quite overcome since his mind always equated fighting in groups to fighting mindless mooks who were either just following orders and shouldn’t be wholly blamed for their actions. He no longer had a real problem with killing, but it would never be his first choice, not in terms of dealing with mindless pawns like these.

*Which means, I can’t let them just keep the range open and pepper me from a distance while she takes the fight to me. I’d still win eventually, but I wouldn’t be able to prevent any of them from breaking off and searching for the girls or the guild. Time for the old make them mad make them stupid technique*

*.* “Hey man tell me something,” Ranma said almost cheerfully, as he alighted next to one of the knights controlling a two-man beasty, actually flinging an arm companionably over the guys shoulder. “Is this a good life for you? Riding through the sky with his gigantic demon-pig thing between your legs? Does it make you feel like a real man?”

With that he flung himself out from that saddle, kicking lightly off of Knightwalker’s spear, which exploded on impact with his foot. Even as she leaped back towards an empty saddle though, Ranma used the impetus from that to almost dance through the air for a brief second before landing on the front of another saddle staring down at the last of the two commanders he had noticed before she showed up, completely uninjured. *Let’s hear it for Dragon Slayer durability you bunch of goose-stepping assholes!*

“And what is with all those long spears, is that some kind of overcompensation? Does flying a giant swine do it for you on the dating scene? How do your parents feel about you spending more time with flying demon pigs than girls? Or do you ride them in some other way too? That’s just wrong man, you can do better…” Ranma peered closer, then frowned as over the top as he could, taking his taunting assault to a personal level. “Or maybe you shouldn’t bother. With a face like that you’d probably have better luck getting one of these pigs between your legs in another way than getting a human girlfriend.”

This continued for a time. ”Ooh, your aim was decent there, but if you want to trim my hair you’ll need to be a bit faster.”

“Man, your flying pigs might be better fighters than you lot. In fact, put them in charge, going by the one little black pig I fought before this, they’d be a lot better at this fighting thing than you all are.”

“Hah! What’re you trying to do swat flies? Or was that supposed to be a warning shot or something?”

With really not a lot to go on, Ranma wasn’t exactly bringing his A-game here, but it seemed to be working a little bit anyway. Several dozen of the knights left in his wake as he continued to bounce around through their battalion were so furious they were now disobeying orders, trying to close on him despite the fact that Edo-Erza was now shouting at them to get away. “Damn it you fools, he’s using you! He can’t fly, get the range open and let me pin him to the earth, once he can’t dodge, he’s finished!”

“Oh yeah, then what was with that explosion earlier Red? Or do you think your matchstick was having performance issues?!” Ranma shouted back, then noticing her words had begun to instill a sense of discipline in the buffoons he upped his game with a few personal insults he wouldn’t normally condone using against a girl. But since this girl was someone who had killed before, and numerous times, he felt it was justified.

“You know, I come from Earth Land, and I know our versions Erza. You look a lot alike,” he said almost companionably as he met her latest charge, smashing her speed-assisting spear to one side and not returning a blow. But then he smirked, hefting his currently nonexistent boobs for a second as he leaped backwards off of one of the beasts, plummeting through the air for a moment before landing on another one down below, smashing its rider into its back with a grunt of agony. “Well, except in this area,” he went on with a laugh. “She’s got you beat there by miles. You’re what an A, maybe a B-cup if you’re trying hard?”

That obviously struck a nerve as Ranma had hoped it would and Edo-Erza stopped shouting orders and roared in, her fury propelling forwards as she forgot all about tactics. “I’m going to gut you like a fish!”

Ranma had discovered very few women were actually comfortable in their bodies, there was always something you could poke fun of, or talk to them about. Akane had been so easy she couldn’t serve even as a basis for that, but Erza and Seilah, and before them Wendy and the girls at Melona’s, had all served as examples of this odd phenomenon.

As he saw Edo-Erza losing her grip Ranma grinned and stepped up his attack, dodging this way and that as he started to move in a spiral pattern, with Edo-Erza and most of the group now trying desperately to stab, fry, shock shoot or otherwise kill him, now getting in their own way more often than not. Ranma kept it up, shouting, “Don’t worry, a lot of men are into women’s rears rather than chests after all.” He dodged another thrust from her weapon to duck around her in midair, very obviously staring at her rear. “Oh… well… at least you’ve got the legs.”

“Why should I care what any man thinks of me!? None of you are strong enough to make me submit!” Erza shouted back, actually catching him on the side with the side of her spear’s butt, but not stopping his movement for an instant. “And if you stayed still for a moment, I’d prove it!”

“Why do people always say shit like that?” Ranma asked shaking his head. “I mean do you honestly want me to let you win. Is that how you got your so-called fearsome reputation? Because I am not seeing it.”

“Ten Commandments: Gravity Core!” Erza roared, flinging her spear around in a wide arc, its edge transforming again. Now it was a single long, dark blade with a slightly wavy edge. Behind that blade was a darkly colored orb marked by wavy lines of runes here and there, which began to glow with black light as she lashed out with a sphere of some kind of energy, the impact of which hurled Ranma backwards, his entire body feeling as if he was being crushed under a gravity several dozen times higher than he was used to. “Look closer!”

The pigtailed warrior grimaced, the gravity assault getting through his durability slightly. But only slightly, and as the attack dissipated, he continued his dance through the air. He now began to move around Knightwalker again alighting on wings, heads, tales, backs anything and everything as he continued to move in a spiral and shout out taunts. “Oh, you almost had me there, but your friend over there, he couldn’t hit the broadside of a barn! Did you hear that by the way boys when she said she wanted to submit? Gives a man ideas. I don’t suppose you know if the Castle has whips or chains do you? What am I saying, of course it does. Although seeing as you all are already her subordinates, well if I was you, I’d probably file a complaint with the union, that kind of thing is just wrong in the workplace!”

Down below the trio of watching ladies were able to hear all this going on, although they had to deal with more than a dozen army troopers on foot making their way through the woods. Most of them were scouts, but a few had survived the fall from their legions, and had attempted to continue the search for the guild. But Cana, Juvia and Wendy could deal with them easily enough, ganging up on each one they saw before turning their attention back to the fight above.

While Cana laughed so hard she choked on her beer, Edo-Wendy shook her head, staring up at the fight in something like awe. “Oh my god, he is ragging on them so freaking hard it’s not even funny.”

“Juvia would beg to differ,” Juvia retorted as she nearly collapsed into a giggling fit at the last exchange of insults. “Juvia thinks it is immensely amusing!”

However, their amusement was short lived, as behind them there was a bright flash of an intense magical discharge. Edo-Wendy turned in that direction and groaned. “Crud! I thought Levy said it’d take longer to get that thing going!”

“What thing?” both Juvia and Cana asked, staring at her.

“The guild’s teleportation device,” Wendy said, shaking her head. “We’re on our own for now, until I can get in contact with our spies and find out where they came out again. Damn…”

“Uh-oh,” Juvia muttered. “Juvia has to wonder what Ranma will think of having little Wendy magicked away from him.”

“Ranma, hell, think about Seilah’s reaction to being taken away from him,” Cana remarked, shaking her head.

**OOOOOOO**

Lucy, Natsu and the others turned to Edo-Lucy and Edo-Levy as Seilah surged up from her chair, setting Wendy on to her feet while she glared around her. The two of them had been the only ones to have remained in their seats thanks to a Macro curse sent into the chair to keep it in place, while the others were all sprawled around the place, a side effect of the mass transportation spell. “What did you do!?”

“We ran!” Edo-Levy shouted back. “We told you we were going to run, what did you think we meant, you stupid cunt!?”

“And how will Ranma find us again?” Seilah asked, coldly as she stalked forwards towards the short chest-challenged girl. “Now that you have run like cowardly rats, leaving him to fight your battles for you without even attempting to aid or do more than convince him not to do so, how will those left behind find us again?”

“He knew the risks when he went out there,” Edo-Lucy said. “Part of our ability to get away is the fact that our magical teleporter is completely random. No one who leaves is going to be able to find us again quickly. Hell, without the proper code phrases to hook up with a few of our friends that are still out there and willing to pass on information it’d be impossible. But Wendy’s still out there with ‘em, if they live through that punk ass’s stupidity, they can get in touch with us again.”

“Um, does Wendy even know those codes?” Gray Surge asked, not liking adding fuel to the fire but having to point this out regardless. “I mean, she’s never gone on a job more than half a day’s trip away from the guild, and even that rarely. She might not be able to find Gajeel or the rest of our spies.” He turned to Juvia, who was still sitting on his immensely padded back. “Right, Juvia my love?”

“Get away from me you overly clothed ball of dough!” Juvia barked back, leaping away from him.

For a moment Lucy Ashley and Edo-Levy were silent, then they said as one, “Well, shit.”

“So essentially, you not only kidnapped us, but left our friends behind,” Seilah said, her voice even colder. Then she barked out “Macro: Choke Yourselves.”

Her magic flared out, and every Edolas Fairy Tail mage there gasped as they went to their knees, their hands rising of their own accord to choke them. More than one man or woman looked fearfully on, their breathing coming in gasps now as their bodies betrayed them as Seilah strode forward to stand over the choking, gasping form of Edo-Levy. “How exactly will you pay for leaving our friend like that? Your lives are but a small down payment on his story.”

Lucy and the others from Earth Land looked at this fearfully, remembering suddenly that the quiet, book-loving girl with the amazing curves was in fact not a human with odd horns but an actual Demon, with all the lack of morals that name suggested. But Wendy shook her head and moved forward to hug Seilah’s side. “Calm down,” she said calmly looking up at the giant breasted Demon girl. “Onii-chan will be fine. Of all of us, he’s the best able to handle himself. It just means we will have to try to find him that’s all.”

 Sighing, Seilah cut out her power, rubbing at Wendy’s head. “You are right, but I expect all of you to help us now both to do that, and to get inside this Royal City and find our friends, is that clear?” she asked, staring around at the Edo-Mages.

 They all nodded, still looking at her in fear, even the normally aggressively self-confident Lucy Ashley. “R, right. We’ll get right on that…”

**OOOOOOO**

Outside, the three girls the only ones who saw the flash of magical light. “What was that!?” Ranma said, almost halting his spiral as he looked behind and to the west of his current position where he had come from initially and where he knew the Fairy Tail Guild Hall was.

Knightwalker was close enough to hear this and laughed loudly, eager to turn the verbal tables on this asshole. “They used you!” she taunted. “How does it feel to be used by a band of cowards? Did you honestly think that Fairy Tail had survived this long just by hiding in one place? No, they run, they hide, they flee from the law and us, it’s enforcers. Their Guild has a teleporter system, which can teleport the entire Guild randomly elsewhere! You’ll never find them again!”

For a moment Ranma was silent, even as he continued his spiral then he shrugged. “I’ll find them eventually. It won’t save you and yours from my smacking you down though. Don’t get your tiny tits in an uproar.” He was pissed, having thought the Edolasians would have enough sense to not cut and run until they could tell how the battle was going, and furious they had taken his sister and the others with them, but he was going to take that out on them when he saw them again, he couldn’t let that anger impact his plans, or more importantly his chilled ki, now.

The deliberately crude jib got through and once more infuriated Knightwalker to the point where she was she was once again trying to indiscriminately stab him. By this point Knightwalker was in a frothing fury, and her men weren’t all that better torn between rage at the fact this guy was simply making fun of them all as he danced around them, blushes at the ideas he was suggesting occasionally, and raw terror at what Knightwalker was going to do to them after this fight for having heard all of this. The only way forward all of them felt, was to help kill this son of a bitch as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately for them, very few of them would get the chance to make amends for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Because even as he continued to taunt him, and dodge their weapons, Ranma was creating his spiral.

It wasn’t a flat spiral this time. Knightwalker had, even in her rage, somehow kept in mind the fact her troops weren’t really a threat to Ranma. To hopefully take him away from them and in a place where her Ten Commandments: Silfarion could overcome his ability to somehow move through the air so easily. She had also begun to speed up her attacks even faster than Silfarion would allow for normally, switching between Silfarion to close and two other forms when she closed.

But even Edo-Erza had no idea what was about to happen when she thrust her Explosion Spear up to smash into Ranma’s downward thrusting fist. This act completed the cone-like spiral, of cold and hot ki, and Ranma shouted, “Flying Dragon Descent Strike!”

Watching from below, Edo-Wendy and Juvia stared upwards, as Ranma punched downward into Knightwalker’s spear and seemed to create a giant tornado from it. That tornado quickly spread accompanied by the sudden shrieking of the wind, grabbing up the entire airborne battalion and then spreading both to the sides of where it began and down towards the ground, tearing at the top of the trees.

“Did you know he could do that?” Edo-Wendy said shakily, as she moved behind a tree, thrusting one of her tonfas into the tree, as she anticipated the winds to come.

Juvia moved next to her, taking her other tonfa and doing the same thing, while nearby, Cana took it a step further and actually tied herself to a slim young tree with her belt, wrapping all four limbs around it like a koala. “Juvia has never seen this technique before, but Juvia has heard it described. It is not among his normal repertoire and is not as Juvia understand it magical in nature.”

The wind hit them then, flashing through the trees as Edo-Wendy gaped at her, clinging to her tonfa, then forgoing that and just hugging herself to the tree, her breasts for once a major liability as she did so. “You’re joking! How can that not be magic, what else is there?”

“Juvia does not know, Juvia is only repeating what Juvia has been told. Now can we please concentrate on surviving?” Juvia shouted analyzing the growing power of the wind, before deciding that running away was the only way to be safe from this event and doing so with alacrity. Edo-Wendy gaped at her, then pushed off the tree and stumbled after her, nearly pushed off her feet several times by the wind before Cana, having figured out the same idea, grabbed her by the arm and hauled her along. The two girls’ weight was enough so they couldn’t be tossed around all that easily and they were able to catch up to the water user and leave the area effected by the tornado’s winds behind.

High above the beleaguered trio, the tornado had started from Ranma’s fist, expanding outwards and down towards the attacking legions and their riders. Knightwalker was at ground zero as she and her people were hammered by a tornado of a size that for a moment boggled her mind before she regained control of her fear, realizing now at least some of what Ranma had done. *He played me!* *All that dodging and ducking around, it was to somehow set up this magical tornado attack! Damn it, I let my anger at his sheer effrontery get to me. It’s been far too long since I faced an enemy in my own class, best to realize it now Knightwalker!*

With that she grabbed her spear with both hands, actually wrapping herself around the shaft as she shouted, “Ten Commandments: Mel Force!” The spear changed, the head replaced by a wider spearhead, the edges of it curving back to nearly touch the shaft. But more importantly, this new spear blasted out its own tornado, pushing her through the tornado her enemy had created before dissipating. At that point, she had to quickly use the defensive measure of Blue Crimson. This version of the Ten Commandments spear split the spear in two, smaller spears and gave her the power to use fire magic with one spear and ice magic with the other. The ice in question at this point was a sphere around her, which protected her from being battered by the various legions and her men who were being flung around screaming and crying in fear and panic.

*Don’t worry my soldiers, I’ll avenge you shortly,* she thought, switching between the two spears again and pushing herself further towards the edge of the tornado before once more creating a barrier around herself. *That pigtailed bastard will not survive the day, I swear it on my pride as a Mage Hunter!*

For his part Ranma rode the top of the tornado for a bit, sort of sliding along its edge almost before he alighted into the treetops below. From there he watched as the tornado grew down towards him, backing away until he watched it crash into the forest behind him. At that point the tornado picked up loose branches, leaves, and even uprooted a few trees, adding them to the tumult within and of course adding those bits to the rest of the junk within that was currently battering anyone alive within into pieces.

It lasted for a surprisingly long time, ten minutes by Ranma’s estimate and he whistled appreciatively as he watched it from nearby. *I suppose that has to do with Knightwalker and her actually having some ki to her. Still, I’m not going to complain.*

Yet even as he thought that, the tornado dissipated, because Knightwalker had finally been able to get to the edge of the tornado and force her way out of it. As the tornado finally died down depositing the remains of the battalion in a wide area all around the battlefield she landed in the woods and charged toward Ranma without a word, her face and body language grim and tightly controlled now.

She had learned now. This man had played with her emotions and those of her men, he had manipulated them from the get go, so she would shut down her emotions for the rest of this fight. She could take enjoyment in his corpse afterward.

Ranma was a little surprised that she had survived the tornado, but not much. *She wouldn’t be an Erza if she weren’t tough after all*. With that, he leaped off of his current perch and came to meet her, his fist meeting her spear.

A shockwave blasted out from the point of impact shattering the ground beneath them and she raised a foot to kick out, lashing out at his chest, then moving into a series of punches kicks and thrusts with her spear, whirling into an attack with the spear but, then around again to use the spearhead. First the normal form with the four claw-like points, then she was holding two shorter spears, one wielding ice and the other fire, both offensively and defensively. Silfarion showed up several times, causing her to flash forward faster than normal, slashing forward like the wind in an effort to try to take Ranma by surprise.

She was an expert at using her spear and all its forms, Ranma had been able to tell that before. But now that they were facing each other one on one, without his ability to use her man as distractions and shields and they were on the ground, he realized anew just how good she was. Her attacks were coming in faster now even without Silfarion, and Ranma again could sense Knightwalker using her body’s ki to enhance her speed and strength. She was decent, Ranma reflected. About at the level he had been when he’d originally come from this world.

Moreover, she was very versatile, using her hands and feet just as well as her spear, the spear transforming between one second and the next, lashing out with fire, ice, gravity, explosive force even cannon attacks*. Pity she doesn’t seem to have a pure water attack, that would’ve been the worst thing that could’ve happened to her if I saw it coming fast enough to get my mouth in front of it rather than to Dodge.* He doubted it would be able to activate his magical powers or anything, but it would certainly give him an internal boost to use later.

Back and forth they went, with Ranma analyzing her style and her face for a moment, concentrating on dodging as he tried to read his opponent. But as she hammered a blow into his chest, and he moved with the punch, Ranma reflected that her skill being comparable to when he landed in Earth Land didn’t mean she was in his league now, unlike his Erza.

This Erza had not had the benefit of years of instruction from Laxus, a Laxus pushed to constantly better himself in turn. She had not had the benefit of the harsh life that his Erza had before that. And Knightwalker had certainly not had the benefit of sparring with Ranma himself on and off for a few months. Nor was she anywhere near as versatile as his Erza was in terms of Belserion’s armor’s ability or her weapons.

But she did have one thing that his Erza lacked. For all that, his Erza had indeed taken lives occasionally in the pursuit of her missions, she did not relish it. She did not go out of her way to land killing blows. This Erza did. She was consciously attempting to hit his weak points at every exchange going for his ankles, the back or sides of his knees, jugular, upper arm, elbow. All the weaknesses of the human body. Even his eyes were targeted a few times as she used lightning or fire to try and blind him or flash fry his eyeballs in his head, whichever she could get away with.

That was a sobering thought and as soon as he realized that, Ranma stopped playing games. This wasn’t just a different Erza, this woman was a killer many times over, an unrepentant murderer who substituted the orders of her kind for any kind of morality. And it was time she paid for that.

The next instant Ranma hammered a punch into her spear, smashing it to one side, and then landed a blow on her stomach that doubled her over, cracking two ribs and hurling her backwards. She skidded back, gasping with agony and holding her rib with one hand, as she stabbed her spear into the ground staring at him in shock.

Ranma cocked his head at her, a cold smile playing over his face. “What? Is that the first time you been injured?”

To his surprise, she laughed, cracking her shoulders and neck, readying her spear even as she spat out blood to the side. “No,” she said still laughing, a laugh that sounded almost innocent, until she went on. “No, this is just the first time in a long while I face an opponent worth my time to kill.”

With that, she charged forward, and Ranma was somewhat surprised to note that she had found an extra burst of speed somewhere, crossing the distance between them very quickly. He was still ready for it, and again met hit her charge with fists and feet, taking her spear tip on his fists, knowing now that her spear wasn’t sharp enough to cut through his durability. “Did you really kill Macao and Freed?” he asked, almost conversationally.

“The Fairy Guild Master and the man who was hot for the one before him? Yes, I killed them. Freed was in fact the last person to hurt me in a fight one-on-one. Right before my spear tips caught his throat like **this**!” Erza shouted, spinning into an attack then halting it before her spear changed again to Blue Crimson, the shorter Crimson spear thrusting at Ranma’s jugular. Ranma grabbed it right before it could impact and the spearhead burst into flame, attempting to burned his hands as he kicked out, but she blocked it with her own kick, flowing into a second kick that took Ranma in the side of the face, twisting his head around slightly and causing him to release her spear.

But he dodged her next attack, one hand on the side of her Gravity Core spear carrying it and the blast it tried to launch at him past his body, as a hard strike to her face smashed into her nose shattering it and causing blood to spout all over her face. But even as he struck she twisted away from the rest of his blow which would have continued into her forehead possibly snapping her neck or cracking her cranium.

“Before that,” Erza said undaunted by the pain, in fact she was smiling wickedly now before that, I killed four other Fairy Tail Guild members. I hunted down and killed all of blue Pegasus! Their staunchest warrior Iron Head Jura could not stand my speed!” she shouted, her spear flashing again and changing forms once more into Silfarion, heightening her already incredible speed to a level that actually made Ranma work to match her. “That is why I am the strongest and that is why I am the best! I have challenged and broken every powerful mage out there, and you will be no different!”

By that point, Ranma had heard enough. Any willingness to hold back because this was gone now. This wasn’t his Erza and she enjoyed killing, that was enough. *The source of her magical abilities is her spear, but everything else is internal, she’s got a decent amount of ki, and would be a danger to anyone even without the spear. First remove the spear, then either kill her or remove her ability to fight.*

With that thought, Ranma change tactics slightly. Instead of attacking Erza, he hammered blow after blow into her spear. At one point he actually grabbed the shaft of it and using his other fist to punch at the speed of his latest version of the old Amaguriken, his arm disappearing from the shoulder down even to Erza’s senses.

She of course understood what he was trying to do, and started to protect her spear from the attacks, using her hands and feet to good effect and landing several dozen blows, but Ranma simply took them, barely even feeling them. *Yes, they hurt a little more than unarmored augmented punches or kicks would hurt from most back home, but they aren’t up to say Laxus’ level, or my Erza. Huh, I wonder when I started to think about Erza so possessively,* he mused, landing another speed enhanced series of thousand punches in a bare second, and starting to see a crack on Erza Knightwalker’s weapon.

That seems to cause Erza to panic, and her style became sloppy as she tried to get through his defenses, trying to end the fight quickly. “Enough! This has gone on long enough! Ten Commandments: Ravelt!” Her spear flashed with the magical light of a Requip spell for a bit longer this time than normal, and when it finished, the spear had changed again.

The head had changed to having a three-headed tip, the central one looking like an arrow, with the side tips going straight with edges extending backwards from the point where they lined up with the central tip, curving inwards. There was a diamond-shaped gold-embossed segment rising out of the central blade, in the center of which a red crystal glowed. Where the spear tip met, the shaft contained another red orb, held in place by golden teeth-like decorations. The shaft too had changed color to a dark blue.

“Behold, my strongest spear! Shatter and burn mage, Raving Shocking Spear!” she howled, the magic cascading around her in a flare of yellow and black energy before bursting forth in a condensed beam of power. “An entire continent would be shattered by this attack mage, and so will you!”

“Bring it on!” Ranma roared, flashing forward, gathering his ki in his hand. An instant later his entire body started to glow blue and his fist smashed into the incoming magical assault as he raced forward to meet it, slamming into the attack before it could get very far away from Knightwalker.

The attacks slammed into his whole body, opening up a crack in the ground and sending a shockwave through the air in every direction, which disintegrated several nearby trees, shattered a few rocks and caused the air to explode out away from them. But Ranma, glowing with the power if his own life’s energy, took it head on, and pushed through it, pushed back against it, pushing Erza backwards a few steps as she lost sight of him in the tumult of yellow, black and blue energies. Even Ranma couldn’t see through this, but he kept going, pushing through the assault. The attack splintered around him, the cracks on the ground zigzagging away in every direction, the shattered fractals of the beam moving above those cracks and doing further damage, nearly killing Cana where she was hiding nearby, causing her to retreat quickly.

But it couldn’t last. As powerful as Ten Commandments was, it only had its own resources to draw on. There was no Ethernano in the air to empower it, and Erza Knightwalker lacked the magical core of her counterpart. Unstoppable force met unstoppable force, and it was the one with the most endurance, which won through. Knightwalker’s attack ended abruptly and then Ranma was there, a bare foot away from Ravelt’s spear tip.

Before Knightwalker could do more than gape at the glowing blue apparition that had just marched through her attack without harm, Ranma’s fist lashed out again. Once more fist met spear head on, and blue light erupted from the impact point, blasting Ranma and Erza off their feet as Ravelt shattered.

Even as Erza stumbled in shock at having lost this contest of brute power, Ranma took advantage, lashing out with a kick at her staff’s remaining shaft. The shaft shattered and he flipped backwards to land on his other foot before using that foot to push off the ground towards Knightwalker in a charge.

In response, Erza tried to use her now shattered spear as she had Blue Crimson before this. But Ranma caught the two spear shafts then headbutted her, causing her to stumble. He then grabbed one hand by the wrist and brought his other hand down hard on her grip on the stick, shattering her fingers. He followed this up by grabbing her now nerveless hand and crushing it, grinding the bones within to powder.

Edo-Erza screamed in pain, and for the first time Ranma saw fear in her eyes as well as hate and the desire to kill. She stabbed forward with the broken end of her spear, putting all her weight and remaining strength behind the blow.

Ranma let it come, the broken spearhead stabbing into his chest, and shattering. This allowed him to grab that hand to do the same thing to it. Once again, he simply ground Erza’s bones inside her hand crushing them so that they would never be usable again.

With her hands now utterly useless, Erza stumbled backwards, and Ranma’s final punch drove into the side of her temple with bone crushing force, shattering her jaw and temple, knocking her unconscious possibly thankfully considering the amount of pain she had been in.

With that done, Ranma scowled down at the unconscious form in front of her, wondering what to do with her now. A part of him really wanted to finish her off, but she was unconscious and helpless now. However, his code about killing opponents in a fight had changed since coming to Earth Land, Ranma still wasn’t willing to kill an already defeated opponent. *Besides, with her hands like that, she’ll never be able to wield a weapon ever again. Even if she does know a bit about ki, it is a big leap from that and consciously healing yourself.*

“If you don’t have any idea as to what to do to with that red-headed harridan I sure as hell do,” Edo-Wendy said moving towards him from the woods.

He looked up to see Juvia and Cana following Edo-Wendy out of the wrecked woodlands towards them. He waved at them, smiling, happy that he wasn’t on his own here, having honestly forgotten about the three of them in the heat of the fight soon after Edo-Erza had shown up. It was an odd thing to realize but Ranma had rather gotten used to having company, even on the road or traveling. “Hey, you three, how are you doing, make it through the whole tornado thing alright?”

“Other than the fact that wind messed up our hair something fierce, we’re fine Edo-Wendy said, moving towards him languidly, then draping an arm around his shoulders before he could pull away, pressing her giant breasts into his side and shoulder. “But damn handsome, I thought you were strong before this, but this takes the cake! Beating an entire battalion, that’s one thing. But beating Knightwalker?! And the way you did it too, taking her on one-on-one at the end there, shattering her spear, that was beyond brutal and…” she said in a whisper into his ear, “such a turn on to!”

Ranma shuddered a little, and very valiantly stopped himself from screaming at the fact that someone who was essentially an older Wendy was hitting on him. *Okay, yes, she’s freaking smoking, as hot as Juvia, Seilah, Erza or Bisca and Jenny. But that doesn’t make it any less weird!* It was all he could do to keep that impulse in check however, and he couldn’t get out of her grip by the time he was once more cognizant of the world around him. However, there was a question to hand that he could use to at least distract her. “What should we do with her?”

Nodding at that, Juvia stooped down to look at the comatose form of the feared Knightwalker, cocking her head speculatively and keeping her mind on what they had to do from now on rather than the fate of this woman*. That I will leave to those she has hurt.* “Juvia has to ask, are you certain that you could pull her off now that you have met her? To Juvia’s eyes there seem to be a lot of differences between you two, barring the height and chest issues you have already been told about.”

Ranma nodded resolutely. “I can do it. I’d have to bind my female form’s breasts a bit, get some of those shoes with the huge bottoms to ‘em, and figure out a way to wear her clothing without blushing too much, but yeah it’s possible. And I might have to put in some hair extenders or something. And contacts of course. But other than that, it’s definitely possible. Why?”

“Then Knightwalker needs to disappear, doesn’t she?” Edo-Wendy said. “We’ll need to take her a way’s away from the site of this battlefield and bury her. Whatever you did to the majority of them, there are at least some survivors of your fight out there who will try to report in about what occurred here. Unless you can hunt them all down before they can?”

“Probably impossible at this point,” Ranma said ruefully. “As fast as I am, I don’t know the terrain, or where the heck they might be going, and I’m not that much faster than someone flying even on those piggy little things.”

“They’re called legions, Blue Eyes,” Edo-Wendy said with a grin, shaking her head. She then moved away, and picked up a loose a spear that Ranma hadn’t noticed before, before moving over to Knightwalker, her face twisting into a snarl.

Ranma stopped her though with a hand on the shoulder. “No.”

“Do you have any idea how many of my friends she’s killed!” Edo-Wendy shouted, trying to jerk out of his grip. This did incredibly interesting things to her chest, but Ranma barely notice this time.

“In battle and in torture and possibly chained up in jail. But she is down and helpless now. Do you want to become like her in order to punish her?” Edo-Wendy flinched at that, looking away and he continued inexorably. “I smashed her hands, she doesn’t have so much as a single bone in them that is whole any longer, hell, most of them are powder. If she ever can get any use of them at all again it’ll be a miracle, and she’s more likely to never be able to use them again, to have to depend on the mercy of others for everything from now on than she is to ever even pick up a spoon, let alone anything else. She also has a few broken ribs, a broken nose, possibly a concussion from that last headbutt and numerous other wounds.”

He gestured around them then. “On top of that she doesn’t have anyone here to look after her right now. If someone comes, they can save her life, but she’ll never fight again with those hands. Is that enough? Is that enough to say that justice has been served? Or do you feel that she deserves to die as she is now, unconscious and helpless to pay for her crimes against you and yours?”

He stepped away, watching Edo-Wendy closely until she sighed and threw away the weapon. “Dammit, when you’re right, you’re right. Are you sure you’re not a Fairy Tail mage? Because right then that sounded like Laxus and Macao might’ve said.”

Ranma shrugged. “Just because I’m not part of the guilds doesn’t mean my values aren’t alike to them at times. If I had killed her in the fight, that would’ve been one thing. But I’m not going to let you kill her now that the fights over with and she’s helpless. Let her live or die by chance and the loyalty of her troopers, that’ll be enough for me.”

As Cana moved over toward them, Ranma turned away, moving towards the one of the beasts who had landed nearby, its pilot having been kicked out of its saddle earlier in the fight. It looked at him warily, but Ranma held up his hand and made soothing noises as he approached, running one hands down the demon-swine thing’s back, rubbing at its fur before rifling into its pouches. He found what had to be some kind of snack and held it up in front of the beast, letting it nibble it out of his hand before going back to rummaging through its rider’s pouches. The girls moved to join him, spreading out over the carnage of the battlefield to look for maps. Even Edo Wendy had no real idea how to get from where they were to the Royal City after all, she’d need at least a map to help them find their way.

Several beasts later, it was Juvia who finally found one that must have belonged to an officer. It had a map, with places marked out and something that looked even larger, along with a little area at the top corner that marked out the dimensions of a compass. It even had an actual compass, and she solemnly handed them both over to Edo-Wendy.

She quickly went to work, figuring out where the Air Battalion had come from, and where she thought they were now judging from a few new marks on the map the commander must have made on the way out here. With Ranma looking over her shoulder she pointed out that they would have to travel south for a time, following the compass until they got out of the forest. From that point, they would be able to find a road that in turn would lead them to a train, which would take them to the capital. “It’s the center position for the four train routes, straight west from where we’ll meet the railroad. I’ve no idea how long it will take us to get there though, I only know the landmarks, not how long it will take to get there.”

“And do you know how to contact your Fairy Tail again? Or are we going to have to trust to luck or wait for them to reach out to us?” Ranma asked not moving away as Wendy squeezed her body onto his, pressing herself once more against his side. Yes, it freaked Ranma out, but Ranma wasn’t going to annoy Edo-Wendy by not letting her flirt with him, considering she was the only link they had to Fairy Tail and his sister. Besides, she was damn sexy, even if most of his mind really didn’t want to admit that.

“Ah, that, right…well, sort of,” Wendy said, blinking and looking way. “Sorry Blue Eyes, but it’s been a while since I’ve been away from the guild to need to know our contacts. I know how to recognize a few of our contacts, but if they’ll do the same and even talk to me without the proper codes is anyone’s guess.”

“Hmm… in that case I think we need to get me dolled up as Knightwalker,” Ranma replied firmly. “Wendy has the others to look out for her and vice versa. We need to concentrate on figuring out how to get our friends out of this anima thing. Once I’m dolled up, we’re going to take one of these Legion critters, run off the others and then head straight to the Royal City. I’ve talked to, argued with, shouted and told off kings before, but this might be the first time I might get to punch one if that’s the only way to get our friends free.”

**End Chapter**