Various NALU one-shots

by Mushi9

Summary

Various one-shots about my favorite pairing, Natsu and Lucy. The genre will change from story to story, but they will mainly be friendship/romance. Summaries will be given for each story to make things easier. I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does. I do not give anyone permission to repost any parts of this story anywhere. Please be respectful.

Notes

I wrote a one-shot! Finally! I'm super excited, since I've never been able to type just a one-shot before. This was my submission for Nalu Fluff week back in September. I uploaded it to Tumblr, but now I decided to upload it here as well. This 'Story' will be a collection of one-shots if/when I can write them. They are not connected to each other unless it's stated that they are. There's also no updating schedule, just when I find the time to write something extra. I hope you enjoy. All of these will be rated T and will be NALU stories. The Genre will be listed as well to give you a warning. I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does.
First one-shot is called "Spotter".

Summary: Due to his best friend not showing up, Natsu was forced to ask someone else for help at the gym. Little did he know, the blonde woman he asked would make a bigger impact on his life than simply being his spotter. Modern AU. NALU.

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Genre: Friendship/Romance

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Spotter

Natsu closed the door to his dorm room before locking it. He was dressed in a tight black shirt with white gym shorts. He made sure his scarf was secured around his head full of pink, spiky locks, keeping the hair out of his eyes.

When he was satisfied with everything, he made his way outside, just to start his run. His destination was only one mile away, so it was a quick warm up before his real work out. The warm air hit his face as his pace increased, letting his adrenaline kick in as his heart sped up. He loved this feeling, because it always made him feel more alive.

He slowed down to a jog when the building came into view. 'Fairy Tail' was the biggest gym in Magnolia. It had five floors, all containing different types of exercise machines. He began to walk once he made it to the door, loving the way his heart pumped at an accelerated pace. He entered the air-conditioned building, letting the cool air tingle against his heated skin.

The pink haired man walked over to a woman who sat behind a desk at the entrance. "Hello sir, are you a member here?"

Natsu looked at her name badge before answering, "yes uhh, Levy?" He wasn't sure if he pronounced it right, but she didn't correct him. He pulled out his membership badge, letting her see it was still valid.

It was a white badge, with Fairy Tail's logo at the top. A picture of him was printed on the left side, while his name, badge number, and expiration date were printed on the right.

"Thank you," the blue haired woman said, turning her attention to a notebook on the desk where she wrote down Natsu's badge number to log his attendance.

"No prob," he muttered as he put the badge back in his pocket before walking down a long hallway.

He'd been a member of Fairy Tail's gym for about two months now, and he loved every bit of it. He honestly didn't know why he waited so long to sign up. His best friend/rival Gray had been trying to get him to join for the better part of a year, but he couldn't see the benefits of paying to exercise when he could just do it at home for free.

Now he saw the gym as his chance to escape reality for a moment. As a full-time student at Magnolia University, he needed this as a way to relax. It was such a freeing feeling, letting the
sweat drip down his skin and his muscles flex. He quickly became addicted to the place, trying to go there every chance he got.

The pink haired male took out his phone as he walked towards the room with all the weight lifting equipment. His thumb brushed over the touch screen, navigating until he found his best friend's contact information. He quickly pressed the call button, bringing his phone up to his ear as it rang.

"What's up, Flame Head? Why're you calling so early?" Gray's voice came through the speaker. It sounded deep and gravelly, letting Natsu know he just woke up.

"Are you kidding me? You said you'd be here to spot me!" The pink haired man raised his voice as his eye twitched. He'd been wanting to bench press today, but he wouldn't be able to do that without assistance. It wasn't that he thought he couldn't handle the weights, it was that he didn't want to hurt himself… again.

The first time he attempted to bench press by himself, he accidentally missed the rack and the bar almost crushed Natsu's skull. He really didn't want that to happen again, because the next time he might not be so lucky. It was true he didn't physically hurt himself, but the scare was enough to keep him on edge.

"I don't know what to tell you. Juvia came over last night and I forgot to set an alarm. Do you want me to head over there now?" Gray's voice cut through Natsu's thoughts.

He sighed, knowing with Juvia's hectic schedule the two didn't get a lot of time to themselves. She went to a college in the next town over. "No, you're fine. Just next time remember," he looked around the gym, seeing everyone else partnered up with someone. "I'll figure something out. You have fun with Juvia."

"Thanks man, see you later."

The call disconnected, leaving Natsu alone once again. He walked over to a free bench, debating if he should try by himself with just less weight than normal. He started placing circular weights on the bar until he reached a nice amount. It would be enough to give him a workout, but not nearly as much as he wanted. He almost decided to put more weight on and risk it, but some movement in the corner of his eye stopped him in place.

Natsu turned, hating the way his breath hitched from the sight.

A woman was walking into the weight room. She had long blonde hair that was tied back into a ponytail. She wore a long-sleeved, pink top with black yoga pants. Her tight clothing allowed him to see every curve of her body, and he couldn't help it when the word delicious came to his mind. He wanted to hit himself. Just because it'd been almost a year since he last had a girlfriend, it didn't give him the right to ogle the poor girl.

She clearly came to the gym to work out, not to have guys stare at her.

He was about to look away when he saw her walking towards him. His heartbeat that had finally settled after his run, spiked up when he noticed she was making eye contact with him. He could feel himself begin to sweat, but not from his previous exercise.

"Hi," the blonde said, looking rather nervous up close. She stopped a few feet away from him, leaving a comfortable distance between them. "Today's my first day here and I'm kinda lost. Do you know where the track is?"

"The track?" Natsu asked, forgetting for a second what the word meant. She was so stunning up
close, her brown eyes easily captivating him. It took him an embarrassingly long time to finally understand what she said.

"Oh, that… It's umm, on the next floor up," he pointed above him as if she might not know what direction 'up' was. To say he was a nervous wreck would be an understatement. This girl was drop dead gorgeous, stunning him easily. His face lit up in a deep blush when she giggled at his silly behavior.

"Oh okay," she smiled, and he swore the room brightened by the simple action. "Thank you," she turned around, ready to leave the weight room.

"Wait," Natsu said, cursing himself the moment his hand grabbed her wrist to stop her. He immediately let it go, trying to ignore the rush he felt from the skin on skin contact. "I… I need a spotter… C-can you help me?"

"A spotter?" The blonde asked, looking behind him to see a bench with a large amount of weights on the pole. "Sure, but I don't know how much help I could be," the woman walked past him, stopping when she was at the head of the bench. "I just make sure it doesn't fall on you, right?"

"Y-yeah," he confirmed, wondering why his voice cracked. "Thanks," he forced out through his dry throat. He laid down on the bench, scooting up until he was in a comfortable position.

"It's not a problem," she assured, resting her hands on the bar in anticipation.

Natsu grabbed the bar himself, willing away the nervousness that seemed to be infecting him, knowing it was dangerous to get distracted while working out. He lifted the bar, feeling the amazing strain on his muscles. He began to do his usual routine of five sets of fifteen reps.

Between each set, he muttered an apology, feeling bad that he was taking the woman away from her own work out. However, the woman brushed it off, saying she didn't mind helping out. He got the impression that she was a nice and helpful person.

When he finished his last set, he had a little difficulty putting the bar on the rack. Luckily the blonde assisted him, guiding the bar into its proper place. He was surprised when she held out a hand to help him up, but he shook his head, saying, "I got it." His hands were sweaty, and he didn't want to gross her out. 'That's dumb, we're at the gym. She would expect me to sweat…'

Natsu lifted himself up, grabbing a wet wipe from the dispenser on the wall to wash his sweat from the bench. He half expected the blonde to leave, but she stuck around. He was about to ask why she was still there, but he decided against it, realizing he liked her company.

"Do you happen to run?" She asked, her ponytail shifting as she cocked her head.

"M-me? I run," he answered, unsure if he sounded like an idiot, because he definitely felt that way. He was never this awkward around people, so he couldn't figure out what this woman was doing to his brain.

The blonde nodded, pointing upwards with her index finger. "Could you show me where the track is? I'd really hate to get lost again. Plus you can run with me if you want," she offered, hoping he would join her.

"S-sure," Natsu felt like slapping himself. He took a deep breath, but it was disguised by his heavy breathing since he was worn out from his work out. His legs were still fine though, so running wouldn't be an issue.
"Right this way," he said, walking past her and towards the exit. He could hear her footsteps behind him as he made his way towards the stairs.

"What made ya want to join Fairy Tail?" Natsu asked, trying to fill the silence between them. He normally didn't start conversations with people he didn't know, but he figured it was the polite thing to do since she helped him out.

"I wanted something to do to take a break from studying all the time," her voice rang from behind him, sounding sweet but reserved. "Plus, my friend works here. She recommended it."

The pink haired male considered asking her who her friend was, but he didn't know if that would be weird. They didn't know each other, and it seemed rude to ask. Before they reached the next floor, a thought occurred to him. "Does your friend work right now?"

"Yeah," she said, staring at one of the posters on the wall advertising an archery class.

"Then why'd you ask me where the track was?"

The question threw her off, and she stumbled on the next step. Before she could fall forward, two warm arms caught her. "Whoa, are you okay?"

The blonde nodded, her face flushed since she couldn't exactly answer his earlier question without sounding weird. The truth was, she already knew where the track was because she'd just asked her friend who happened to work at the front desk. On her way there, she peeked into the weight room, wanting to see if she'd be interested in working out there sometime in the future.

That's when she saw the pink haired man. She was instantly interested in his bright hair, and without thinking, she had walked up to him. When she realized her mistake, she quickly covered it up by asking where the track was, hoping he wouldn't question her odd behavior. That's when he asked her to be a spotter, and she couldn't resist the chance to spend a bit more time with him.

"I'm fine," the blonde answered, planting both feet firmly on the stairs. "My bad."

"No, I'm just glad you're okay," Natsu said, only now realizing their faces were so close. He jerked back a bit, worried that he made her uncomfortable. She didn't seem upset at him, so he sighed in relief. "So why didn't your ask you friend?"

Thinking fast, the girl muttered, "I forgot. I'm always forgetting stuff…"

"Oh, that makes sense," the pink haired male tried to hide the disappointment in his voice. For a split second he thought- well it didn't matter what he thought. Obviously this girl didn't make up some excuse just to talk to him. "Let's get going."

They reached the floor with the indoor track without saying another word. Natsu held the door, letting her enter first. There were a few runners, and a couple of walkers. Treadmills lined one side of the track, giving people a chance to run on a machine if they wanted to.

The indoor track had an open floor in the middle, giving runners a view of the lower floor. It held a basketball court, which was filled with random people playing. The sound of sneakers squeaking against the gym floor and balls dribbling filled the air.

They stretched, and Natsu did his best not to let his eyes wander over to her form. During his few stolen glances, he noticed how flexible she was, and he couldn't help when his mind plummeted into the gutter. His face couldn't possibly get anymore red.
He felt so ashamed, he decided to just start running, not allowing him another peek.

His heart quickly raced as he ran around the track. When he finished his first lap, he saw the blonde was no longer where he left her. He deduced she must be running too, and his suspicions were confirmed when he rounded the next corner.

The woman was indeed running, her ponytail swaying with every step she took. His throat ran dry when his eyes glanced down, seeing how tight her butt looked in those black yoga pants.

"Damn it Natsu, stop it," he muttered through his strained breathing. He forced himself to go faster, passing her easily so he couldn't see her magnificent backside. He slowed down, making sure he wouldn't accidentally lap her again.

"This feels… Great!"

Natsu turned his head to see the blonde running beside him, beads of sweat forming on her forehead. "Yeah," he pushed out, facing ahead so he wouldn't get transfixed again. His body wanted to go faster, but he felt like it'd be rude to leave her now, since technically they were now running together. He could hold back today.

Plus it felt nice working out with someone instead of being alone.

The two continued to run until the girl stopped. Natsu deciding to end his run when she did at lap twelve. It was only a mile and a half, but she was already sweating, the beads of salty liquid dripping down her face and neck. The blonde panted, her chest heaving with every heavy breath.

Natsu had to look away, confused as to why such a sight made him fluster. He'd never felt that way before seeing someone look so disheveled, but he found the sight appealing. His heart raced for a whole different reason now.

They walked around the track twice, trying to regulate their heartbeats and cool down. The air-conditioned building helped tremendously in that aspect, causing Natsu's hot skin to tingle once again. Or maybe it was the occasional brushes his arm had with hers. He couldn't be certain.

Natsu left the indoor track first, swinging the door wide and allowing Lucy to exit as well. He headed towards the stairs when he realized he never caught her name. He stopped, turning to the blonde who stopped as well.

Sticking out a hand, he said, "by the way, my name's Natsu."

She held out her hand, grabbing his to shake it. They were both sweaty, but neither seemed to mind. It felt like jolts flew up his arm, but he tried to ignore it as she spoke. "My name's Lucy. It's nice to meet you." Her smile made his heart soar.

"C-can I buy you an energy drink or something at the bar downstairs?" The pink haired man felt guilty about ogling her, and wanted to repay her somehow. Plus, he still wanted to thank her again for spotting him since Gray didn't show up.

"You seem a little nervous," the girl observed. "Are you okay?"

"Y-yep!" He let out a fake cough to hide his stutter, but it didn't work. She kept looking at him with a perplexed expression, so he said the first thing on his mind. "You're just really c-cute." His first impulse was to slap himself in the face, but he held strong, keeping his hands by his side.

Lucy's eyes widened. "Oh, that's it?" Her lips curved up into a brighter smile. "Well I think you're
cute too, and I'd love to get a drink with you."

Natsu beamed in relief, his heart slamming against his rib cage as if it was trying to get closer to her, "awesome! I'm all fired up now!"

The pink haired man grinned as he led the way to the bar.

The two were silent as they descended the stairs. Natsu felt the dull throb in his legs with every step, but he ignored it, knowing his body was benefiting from the extra exercise. He stopped when he reached the counter of the bar.

A woman with short purple hair greeted him, knowing him as a regular. "Hello Natsu, the usual?"

"Hey Kinana," he hoped he said it right, since he was terrible at remembering names. "I'll take that, and," he turned to the blonde, "what'll you have Luce?"

He noticed her surprised expression, but it quickly faded when she said, "I'll have a strawberry energy drink."

"Sounds great," the woman behind the counter said as she typed on the cash register. She told Natsu the total, which he paid before receiving two energy drinks and a protein bar.

The duo walked over to an empty table, noticing how busy the gym was for a Wednesday morning.

"So Natsu," the blonde started, taking off the cap to her strawberry drink. "How old are you?"

"I'm nineteen," Natsu answered. He took a bite of his protein bar before asking with a mouth full, "wha 'bout yoph?"

"Eighteen," Lucy said, but he would have guessed a bit older judging by how she carried herself. "My birthday is soon though."

"You gonna celebrate?" He asked, a smirk forming on his lips. "I can't even remember my last birthday. My best friend threw a wild party at his parent's house for me, kept giving me shots all night."

The blonde giggled as he continued his story.

"I got so drunk I ended up puking in his car, but that might be because I also get sick in vehicles," he confessed, making the girl's giggles turn into laughter. "He was so pissed. He ended up throwing a bucket full of ice on me the next morning as revenge."

Lucy had to fight the urge to laugh louder. He seemed so nonchalant telling the story, that it only added to the humor. By the way he told the story, she had a feeling it wasn't an unusual occurrence.

The two spent the rest of their break -and a little longer- talking about anything and everything they could. Natsu found out Lucy was also a student at his university, and Lucy found out Natsu was training to be a fireman when he wasn't busy with school.

After they finished their drinks, they broke apart to go take showers at their respective dorms. Then they spent the rest of the day hanging out since neither had anything else going on. Natsu said his best friend was with his girlfriend, and Lucy said her best friend would be working all day.

By the end of the day, Natsu could say he knew Lucy pretty well, and vice versa. After exchanging numbers and promising to text each other the next day, the pink haired male walked Lucy back to
her dorm before he jogged back to his.

When Natsu got back to his dorm, he was greeted by his meowing cat named Happy, who wanted food and attention. Technically he wasn't supposed to have any animals, but Happy wasn't a pet, he was his friend! Plus his roommate Gajeel didn't seem to mind.

The pink haired man smiled as he brought out his phone. With the grin on his face, he texted the blonde.

**Hey Luce! Sorry I couldn't wait until tomorrow. I was thinking, do you want to go out with me this Friday to dinner?**

He was in the middle of pouring his feline friend his tuna flavored cat food when he got a reply. He eagerly read the message, his smile growing larger by the second.

**Sounds great. It's a date!**

His face flushed, and Natsu nodded as he typed out another message to her. What was supposed to be a simple question, turned into a long conversation that stretched into the late night. It wasn't until three in the morning that they decided to call it quits until later that day.

The pink haired man went to sleep with a bright grin on his face. He had no idea if Lucy and him would end up together, but he was excited to find out. She was pretty stellar.

What neither of them knew, was this was just the beginning of their fairy tale, all because Gray couldn't be his spotter.

**The End**
Dibs

Chapter Notes

Hello again! This is a birthday present for the wonderful Doublepassé! Happy birthday! I'm trying out her style by writing fem-Natsu/Lucy. In case anyone is confused, in this one-shot Natsu is a girl and Lucy is a girl. GirlxGirl. Doesn't get graphic. (Still rated T after all) If you are uncomfortable with that then I suggest you skip this one-shot. I fully support straight, bi, and gay/lesbian people. Everyone deserves love! Even female Natsu!

Summary: A stupid game created by Natsu's friends has her going through hell for a week as she watches guy after guy ask out the new girl named Lucy.

Pairing: Fem-Natsu/Lucy.
Genre: Friendship/Romance
Word Count: 6,314

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dibs

"How the hell can you stand to eat that crap?" A raven haired male by the name of Gray Fullbuster asked as he watched his best friend stuff a hot sauce-covered fry in her mouth.

Green eyes narrowed on Gray, a playful smirk pulling at her lips. "Because I'm hot as hell, that's why." The girl brushed some pink hair behind her ear before dipping another fry into her sauce.

Gray merely rolled his eyes, not surprised by his friend's comment. "I don't think I've ever met someone as arrogant as you, Natsu."

"Thank you," she said with a full mouth. She didn't exactly have the best table manners.

The raven haired teen shook his head, muttering, "that wasn't a compliment you idiot."

"Oi, what'd Salamander do now?" A brute named Gajeel Redfox sat down at the table with the two teens, tray in hand and drink in the other.

"Same shit, different day," Natsu answered, not at all minding that they found her choice in food odd. "So, I heard Levy's giving you the cold shoulder. Whad'ya do this time?"

Gajeel scowled at the pink haired girl. "I didn't do anything! She's the one tryin' to make me jealous by hanging out with those two guys all the time." He tore the cap off his drink before adding, "like I'd ever be jealous of Jet and Droy."

"Maybe she's just their friend," Hibiki said, sitting down beside Natsu. He looked down at the girl currently shoving a handful of fries in her mouth before averting his gaze. "Ever think of that?"

"There's no way that's what she's doing," the teen with multiple facial piercings said before chugging his drink. "No girl can be friends with a bunch of guys without something going on between 'em."
Natsu raised a pink brow. She cleared her throat, then pointed to herself. "Excuse me? What about me? I'm friends with all you idiots and I'm not tryin' ta get in your pants."

Gray laughed, shaking his head. "That's different! You don't like guys like that."

Natsu's cheeks warmed as a rosy color filled her cheeks. "I kinda like guys too... Just like girls more..."

The raven haired male nodded, "alright. I guess I should've said you don't like us guys like that."

"It's too bad, really," Loke, an orange haired playboy said as he sat on the other side of Natsu. He picked up a few strands of the sakura colored hair before sighing, "I'd love to take you out on a date."

Natsu jerked her head until her hair came loose from his hand. "No thanks. I already got enough guys hitting on me. I don't need you to start up again."

"Why don't you just tell everyone you're bi?" Gajeel asked, though his tone sounded like he couldn't care less what her answer was.

The pink haired girl shook her head, "no way. I only told you guys 'cause you're my friends. I don't want everyone knowing my business." She ran a hand through her spiky pink hair. She kept it somewhat short, only allowing it to reach her shoulders before she'd take scissors to it again.

"You worried about people making fun of you?" Hibiki asked, gaining Natsu's attention.

The girl chewed on her bottom lip before answering, "a little. I dunno. I just don't want to tell people, so keep your mouths shut."

They all nodded, knowing they would keep Natsu's secret until she was ready to tell people. The four boys and one girl ate their lunch, occasionally throwing something at someone else or arguing over something stupid. Usually it was Natsu who started the little tiffs, but that was because she was a little fireball of energy.

It seemed like a normal day. That was, until Loke said the word that usually caused problems in the group.

"Dibs!"

Eyes shot up, trying to find out who Loke was talking about. Hibiki was the first person to find the prize, a smirk rising to his lips as he said, "you're on. Second dibs!"

Natsu was looking around, but couldn't figure out who they were talking about. She glanced from table to table, but she recognized everyone. The only reason they would call dibs was if it was someone new.

"Dibs," Gray said, shrugging when Loke said he didn't stand a chance.

"I guess dibs," Gajeel grunted. He usually didn't participate because everyone knew he had a huge crush on Levy, but since they were fighting, he wanted to check out other options.

Natsu was still lost until her eyes fell on the only new person in the cafeteria. "Whoa..." She marveled at the beauty of the teen with long blonde hair sitting at the girl's table.

'The girl's table' was what they called the table where all their closest female friends sat. The girls
were Erza, a fierce redhead who was the known to take no shit from anyone. Juvia, a blue haired girl who had an unnaturally weird obsession with Gray. The girl could easily be labeled as a stalker. Of course there was also Levy, a short bookworm who had a love/hate relationship with Gajeel. One week they'd be really close, then the next they'd be at each other's throats or not talking in general.

Some other girls sometimes sat with them, but it was mainly just those three. Cana, a brunette that had a lowkey love for alcohol, also sat at the table today. Next to her was the girl everyone at Natsu's table was looking at.

Natsu couldn't tell what color eyes the blonde had from that far away, but she could see the pale skin of the girl. She wore a blue shirt with a flower patterned skirt. Truthfully Natsu barely paid attention to what she wore, because her gaze was stuck on the new girl's face. 'She's so pretty...'

Just as Natsu realized they were talking about the blonde girl, she remembered what they always had her do for them. Today was no different.

"Alright Natsu, go over there and find out the big three," Loke said, patting the pink haired teen's back.

Natsu groaned, hating that they always had her do 'recon' on the girls they called dibs for. She felt like it was a stupid concept anyway. Just because someone called dibs doesn't mean they get the right to 'claim' them. And the way they did it was just asinine! Whoever called dibs first got the first chance with them. They had a whole day to try to woo the girl before it got passed on the second person who called dibs, followed by the third and so on. If everyone struck out then it just wasn't meant to be.

But of course they couldn't play their dumb game until Natsu gave the 'all clear'.

Natsu grabbed her tray of food as well as her backpack. She didn't particularly like sitting at the girl's table, but that was only because she got along with boys better. The pink haired girl walked over to the table, avoiding everyone's eyes as she sat down. "Hey everyone," she kept her head down.

"Hi Natsu," Cana was the first to greet her, slinging an arm around the girl's neck. "Long time no see. What is it now? Did they try to hit on you again?"

Natsu sighed. This was all part of the game. She would pretend to have a fight with the guys so she had an excuse to join the other girls. "No, they're just being idiots." It wasn't a lie. She glanced up, locking eyes with the blonde. "Oh, I don't think I've met you before. I'm Natsu."

The pink haired teen would hold out her hand, but Cana was in the way, so she just waved. The new girl smiled, causing Natsu's heart to flutter. "Hi Natsu. I'm Lucy."

"Lucy," Natsu nodded, looking into her deep brown eyes. "That's a pretty name."

"Thanks. I like your name too. If I'm not mistaken, it means summer?"

"Yup," Natsu confirmed, finding herself smiling too. "Did'ju just transfer here or something?"

Cana scooted her chair back, then stood up. "Ugh, Bacchus wants me to meet him outside again."

"For what?" Erza asked, alarmed that two 'alcoholics' would be alone and unsupervised. She cared for her friend and didn't want her getting hurt or drunk on campus.
"Says he's out," the brunette grabbed her purse. Everyone heard the liquid that sloshed in her purse. They tried to ignore it, not wanting to meddle in her affairs. They'd tried before to get her help, but it always made things worse. They realized they had to wait until she wanted help before she would accept it.

"Be careful," Levy spoke up.

"I will. You guys act like I'm leaving to get high. He just wants a bottle, then I'll be back."

"Alright..."

When Cana was gone, Lucy cleared her throat. "Is everything okay?" She was speaking to Natsu since the other girls were talking amongst themselves.

"Yeah, she's just got a little issue with alcohol," the pink haired girl tried to assure her that it was fine, but even she couldn't convince herself. "Oh, you never answered. Did you just transfer here?"

"Yeah," the blonde teenager said. "My dad and I just moved her from Crocus last month. Today's my first day at this school."

"Cool. Where'd you go before this?"

Lucy explained that she came from a private school in Crocus. The part that really caught Natsu's attention was when she said it was an all girls school. That would get rid of one of the questions pretty fast.

"So, I take it you're not dating anyone then? Since you were only around chicks?"

The blonde giggled, "I'm not dating anyone. Why do you ask?"

"Just curious," Natsu half-lied. It was part of her mission to find out these things for the guys, but she was also curious herself. It didn't really matter in the long run though, since Natsu wasn't the type to go after people. In fact she was seventeen years old and hadn't even dated anyone yet. She'd kissed a few people, but it was nothing serious.

The next two questions Natsu needed to ask would need to be worded carefully. She leaned back in her seat, grabbing her drink from the tray. "I haven't dated anyone. Have you? Like ever?"

Lucy raised a blonde brow at the question, making Natsu's heart speed up. She hoped she hadn't already alarmed the girl. Lucy cocked her head as she said, "I haven't... Why?"

"No real reason," Natsu tried to brush it off, but she could tell Lucy wasn't falling for it. The next question would be way too awkward to ask outright, so she had to be tricky about it. "You're probably gonna get asked out by a lot of guys. Has anyone ever asked you out?" That wasn't one of the questions she had to ask, but she'd be lying if she said she didn't want to know the answer. She watched as Lucy tapped her chin, staring at the table as she thought.

"A few people have asked me out, so I think I can handle it... Why do you think people will ask me out?" Lucy finally looked up at Natsu, "is there something I should know?"

"What?" Natsu panicked. Had she given away something without meaning to? She rethought what she said, then shrugged as nonchalantly as she could. "I just mean you're really p-pretty, so guys are probably gonna be all over ya."

Natsu could practically feel the hole she was digging for herself. It would be hard to talk her way
out of this one. Instead of what she thought Lucy would focus on, the blonde said something unexpected. "You think I'm pretty?" The question was accompanied by a slight blush on the girl's cheeks.

Natsu stared, wondering if she shouldn't have said that. She'd heard other girls compliment each other before without getting questioned, so why was Lucy asking. "I mean, yeah." She thought it was obvious, but the way Lucy looked she started feeling like it might mean something more. Before she could ask about it, Lucy said, "thanks. I think you're pretty too."

Natsu felt the flush that took over her face. She quickly looked down at her tray. "Th-thanks, Lucy..."

The blonde teen took a sip of her drink before asking, "What's your next class?"

"Mythology, then French. You?"

"Gym, but after that it's French too."

"Oh, I'm only in French one..."

Lucy raised a brow. "Huh?"

"You said you're in French II, right? I'm only in the first class. I'm not very good at it," Natsu poked her pudding with a spoon, feeling a little intimidated by Lucy all of a sudden.

"I think you misunderstood. I'm in French as well." She giggled. "Do you have it with Miss Passé?"

"Yeah," Natsu brightened up now that she understood. "We have the same class?"

"Guess so," Lucy smiled, "maybe we can talk? You can ask me more personal questions."

The pink haired teen felt her cheeks go red again. "Oh, sorry about that."

"It's fine. I expected people to ask me questions, but not like that. Do you have anymore?" Lucy looked into Natsu's green eyes, trying to read the emotions in those deep orbs.

Natsu realized this was her chance. She could get the last question out of the way now and be done with it. Then she could go back to her normal table and continue on like normal.

"Yeah," she gave a nervous laugh. "One more, but umm... Kinda weird. You can totally punch me if I get out of line."

Lucy laughed too, "I don't hit people unless I'm really mad, so I think you'll be okay. What is it?"

The pink haired girl's eyes flashed over to her usual table, catching Loke's gaze before looking back at Lucy. "H-how far... have you gone with a guy?"

Natsu braced herself for a punch. She knew it was a huge invasion of this girl's privacy, but she didn't want to deal with the moaning and bitching her guy friends would bring if she didn't do anything. She waited a few moments before Lucy finally opened her mouth.

"I haven't done anything with anyone," Lucy answered honestly.

Natsu looked into those brown eyes, seeing no traces of deceit. "C-cool..." She wanted to cringe when she realized what that information meant. That answer was sure to make the guys go crazy.
She sighed, wondering why she didn't feel relieved. She got the three answers she needed.

Is she single? Has she ever had a boyfriend before? How far has she gone with a guy?

Natsu was done, so she should be glad. She could now return to her table and act like everything was okay.

But...

She didn't want to do that anymore.

Natsu wanted to keep talking to this girl. Even if she knew she didn't stand a chance with her, she kind of wanted to get to know her more. She didn't seem as bossy as Erza, or as quiet as Levy. Lucy certainly didn't seem to have tunnel vision like Juvia, and the blonde didn't smell of booze like Cana.

"Hey Lucy... Can I ask you one more question."

"Sure," Lucy said, though at this point any rational person would have said no.

The pink haired girl took a deep breath before asking, "can we be friends?"

There was a moment of silence between them. Lucy raised a brow, staring at Natsu as if she grew a third eye. "Well, yeah," she said it as if it were obvious. "I thought we were friends."

Natsu nodded, realizing this girl was just too good to be true. "Awesome," she grinned, showing off her sharp teeth. "I was just asking because-" Her voice cut out when she felt her phone vibrate in her pocket. "Oh, sorry..." She pulled it out, seeing a text from Loke.

_Playboy Idiot: So? Is she a go?_

Natsu's eye twitched in irritation. She was about to text back that he should fuck off, but decided to be nice. Despite the many arguments they got in, they were still friends. She reluctantly texted back, She's good on all three. Pure.

Natsu felt disgusted with herself when she pressed send. She knew it was only a matter of time before he made his move. As if watching from someone else's body, the pink haired teen saw Loke stand up from the other table and stroll over to them.

She didn't want to watch.

"Well hello there beautiful," Loke took the seat that Cana had abandoned earlier, blocking off Natsu's view of Lucy. It was probably better this way. She knew Loke always got the girls he went after. He was a natural at preying on girls, just like a lion preys on its kill.

'Wait... but isn't it the lioness that do the hunting...' Natsu groaned, she'd have to come up with a better analogy.

"Hi," Lucy's voice sounded in the air. Natsu shoved her tray to the side and laid her forehead on the table.

'Lucy has such a pretty voice...'

"My name is Loke. What's your name gorgeous?"

"Umm... Lucy."
"Such a cute name for a cute girl."

There was a pause. Natsu imagined Lucy blushing, then Loke would ask her out and she would say yes. She knew Loke was attractive, even for an arrogant playboy, but she wanted better for Lucy. Any girl deserved better than him. He would probably date her for a month or so before kicking her to the curb for the next girl. It was his routine, and Natsu hated that Lucy was a part of it now.

"So Lucy," Loke started. "I was wondering if you'd like to accompany me tonight on a date. What do you say?"

Natsu suppressed a groan. 'Here it comes...'

"No, thank you," Lucy said, her voice staying steady the whole time.

"What?" Loke asked just as Natsu mouthed the same thing.

'She... said no?' Natsu could hardly believe it, and she heard it with her own ears.

"I said no thank you." Lucy repeated herself without changing her previous tone.

Natsu listened closely, suddenly extremely interested in how this conversation turned out. In all her years of knowing Loke, no one had turned him down -besides Natsu that is.

The pink haired girl was torn between wanting to ask Lucy how she did it and standing up and hugging the blonde, glad she didn't fall for his charm.

"But... Why?" Loke sounded shocked he even had to ask that. Natsu could only guess the expression on his face. It was probably the same one he had on when she rejected him.

Natsu finally raised her head, looking over to barely see Lucy's face. She still had a smile on, though it wasn't as bright as earlier. "I'm just not interested. I'm sorry. We can be friends though."

Natsu imagined the offer of friendship hurt worse than the rejection. The orange haired teen's shoulders fell in defeat. "Are you sure you don't want to go out with me?"

"I'm sure," Lucy nodded as if to make the point more clear. "I'm not interested."

"Why?"

Lucy's lips pressed into a thin line. "I already said I'm not interested. It shouldn't matter why." Her tone teetered towards annoyed. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I was talking with Natsu."

Loke glanced back, frowning slightly at seeing the pink haired girl. He looked over at the other girls at the table, seeing he had their attention. "Whatever we were fighting about, it's over. You can come back now," Loke stood, grabbing Natsu's tray and backpack and walking back to the guy's table.

Natsu sat there with a confused expression on her face. Was she supposed to follow him, or stay behind? She knew what she wanted to do. She wanted to keep talking to Lucy, especially since it seemed like she wanted to talk to her too.

However, that idea got crushed when Erza spoke up. "I'm glad you worked things out with your friend, Natsu. Feel free to join us again if any more fights break out."

Natsu opened her mouth, then closed it. Erza and Loke showed her where she belonged, and it wasn't at the girl's table. "Yeah, you're right."
The girl with pink hair slowly stood, hesitant about leaving Lucy. Loke got turned down, but it wasn't over yet. Tomorrow was Hibiki's turn, and there was no way she would reject him. "I'll see you in class later," Natsu said to Lucy before walking away.

Just as she made it to the guy's table, she glanced back, seeing Lucy's eyes locked on hers. The beating of her heart increased, but then dropped when she saw a random guy walk up to Lucy to talk to her.

The dibs game only applied to their friends, so they had no say in other people asking out the girl in question. Natsu recognized the guy as Dan Straight. He could come on strong, but he meant well. The pink haired girl only hoped that Lucy was strong enough to resist all these guy's attention.

'What does it matter? It's not like I have a chance with her. I should just give up before it's too late.' She didn't want to get hurt when she saw Lucy with another guy, and at this rate, it wouldn't be long before she finally said yes to one of them.

Natsu already felt her heart hurt from that thought.

The next day came before Natsu knew it. She found herself sitting at the guy's table once again because she didn't have a good excuse to talk to Lucy. Yesterday she had found out that they really did share the same French class, but she was seated on the other side of the room, giving her no time to talk to the blonde.

Natsu poked around at her food, but she wasn't hungry. She kept stealing glances at Lucy, hoping that the girl would look her way too. She didn't, and that only caused Natsu pain in her heart. She didn't know why she was acting like this.

Lucy was just another girl who went to the school... Nothing more...

So she couldn't understand why she felt so upset when Hibiki stood up, saying he was going to go win Lucy over.

Yes. They knew her name now. Everyone at the school apparently knew her name. She was known as the girl who turned down Loke, and that news spread like a wildfire.

"What's wrong?" Gray asked, breaking Natsu out of her daze.

"Huh?"

"You haven't touched your burrito or your chips. Are you okay?"

Natsu sighed, realizing she was acting strange. "I'm fine," she lied, though she didn't know exactly why it was a lie.

She stole one last look over at Lucy, seeing her look at Hibiki. She nodded her head, and Natsu's heart clenched painfully in her chest. 'She said yes...' Natsu hated the way she was feeling now. She'd only met the girl yesterday, so she couldn't figure out why she was so ensnared by her. 'What the hell is wrong with me...'

Natsu shook her head, realizing this was a good thing. 'If she starts dating Hibiki, then I can move on. I wouldn't go after a friend's girl, so I could get over this silly crush... That's all it is... A crush...'

When Hibiki returned to the table, Natsu didn't even want to listen to what he had to say. Still, she...
listened. It was almost as if she wanted to torture herself with the news of Lucy accepting a date from him.

"So, what'd she say?" Gray asked.

Imagine Natsu's surprise when Hibiki said, "she rejected me..."

"What?" Loke sounded almost a little relieved. "Is it because she's with Dan? I'm sure he asked her out yesterday."

Hibiki shook his head, staring at the table. "I asked Lucy if Dan asked her out, and she said he did. I asked if she said yes, and she said no... But then when I asked her out, all she said was 'no thanks'... I... I don't understand it."

"Maybe you guys aren't her type," Gajeel yawned, bored of the conversation already.

"But I'm everyone's type," Hibiki reasoned. The boys continued to talk about Lucy and her rejection while Natsu slipped away into her mind.

'She's turned down three of the most popular guys at our school... Does that mean something? Maybe she just doesn't want to date anyone right now... That could always be it... But... But maybe it's something else...' Natsu felt a small spark in her heart. If she had to guess what it was, she would have to say it was hope.

And hope was a very dangerous thing to have in a case like this.

By the next day, everyone had learned that Lucy rejected Loke, Dan, and Hibiki. Gray was up next, but it wasn't looking too good.

Yesterday during Natsu's French class, she was able to speak to Lucy for a little bit. The pink haired teen tried to keep it casual, not wanting to pry into the blonde's personal life. She had done enough of that the first day they met each other. However, it seemed that Lucy wasn't shy about opening up about her life.

Natsu found out that Lucy's father was the CEO of Heartfilia Corps., a large corporation that recently went bankrupt. That's why she was in Magnolia now. It was their fresh start. Natsu asked what the girl wanted to do with her life after she finished high school. The blonde said she wanted to be a writer, which started them on a short talk that resulted in Lucy letting Natsu borrow one of her stories to read.

The pink haired girl was a little ashamed to admit that she read the story three times, completely ignoring her homework and chores for the night so she could absorb as much of Lucy's writing as humanly possible.

She had the notebook with the story in her backpack, knowing she had to give it back to Lucy today. That was fine with her, because it meant they would speak again, and Natsu was finding out she rather liked talking with the blonde.

Natsu kept her eyes trained on the raven haired male as he walked over to Lucy during lunch. Natsu had a feeling the blonde was going to reject him as well, but Natsu had also been sure that she was going to say yes to Loke or Hibiki.

All Natsu really knew was that Lucy was unpredictable.
And she liked that.

Everyone at Natsu's table watched as Gray sat down next to her. He hadn't started talking to her for a solid minute before Lucy was shaking her head. Natsu felt a sense of relief when Gray nodded, then stood to walk back to the guy's table.

"What'd she say?" Gajeel asked when Gray was within earshot. He was now mildly interested in what was going on with Lucy. He was next to call dibs, meaning if Gray struck out, he would be free to try to ask her out.

"What do you think?" Gray sat at the table, unbuttoning his shirt out of habit.

"Please don't strip," Loke requested, his words startling the raven haired male.

Gray glanced down, cursing before buttoning his shirt back up. When Gajeel repeated his question, the boy sighed, "she said no, okay."

Natsu's heart leaped when she heard the news. 'She said no to him too!?'

"Did she give a reason?" Hibiki asked, still shocked that he got rejected by the girl.

Natsu stared at Gray, waiting for an answer. The one she heard didn't help a lot. "She just said she's not interested. I didn't think to push it any further than that. Plus Juvia was staring right at me, and I didn't want to piss her off..."

"Why, do you like Juvia now?" Loke teased.

"Shut up," Gray scoffed, but he couldn't hide the pink dust on his cheeks.

Natsu was still a little shocked that Lucy said no to Gray as well. During the entire time her friends had played the dibs game, it had never gone past round three. Usually one of the first two got the date, unless it started with Loke or Hibiki, then it was over before it really began.

The pink haired girl leaned back in her chair, eyes flitting over to Lucy before her face warmed up from a blush. Lucy was already looking back at her, smiling at Natsu. She waved, so Natsu waved back, hand a little shaky from nerves.

When Lucy turned away to talk to Levy, Natsu looked away too. Her palms sweat, her heart raced, her throat tightened up. This crush was getting out of hand fast. She didn't know why Lucy had such a strong effect on her, but it worried the pink haired girl.

'Why do I feel this strongly towards her? I just met her a few days ago...'? Natsu tried to control her emotions, but in the end, she realized she couldn't win.

It was finally Gajeel's turn to make a move on Lucy. Everyone at the table could tell he didn't really want to, but him and Levy were still arguing over her friendship with Jet and Droy, so he did it anyway.

No one was surprised when Levy intervened, grabbing the metal head's arm to pull him out of the cafeteria. Lucy sat there confused, wondering why weird things kept happening to her during lunch. She wondered if she'd ever have a normal lunch at the school.

Natsu sat at the guy's table, heartbeat accelerated to the max. She'd seen Lucy reject all her friends except Gajeel, but he was doomed to fail no matter what. That only left one person at their table,
She considered saying 'dibs' out loud, but saw no point in it. She gulped, nervous to make a move.

Natsu thought about yesterday's French class with Lucy. She had returned the blonde's story, complimenting her on the originality of it. Natsu wasn't much of a reader, but she wanted to read more of whatever Lucy wrote.

They had a conversation about their families since the teacher allowed the class some free time. Natsu told Lucy about her adoptive parents, and even about her siblings, Wendy and Zeref. Lucy said it was just her and her father. Her mother had passed away when Lucy was just a child, causing her father to grow cold towards her.

Natsu was shocked that Lucy opened up so much to her. She felt touched that the blonde trusted her with this knowledge. It took Natsu a while before she was even able to tell her own friends about her personal life, but with Lucy, she felt safe.

Just as Natsu was about to stand to walk over to Lucy, she stopped. 'Oh no... No no no!' She watched as another male sat down at the table next to Lucy. It was the school's bully, Jackal, a kid who loved to torment other students and prey on the weak.

Natsu balled her hands into fists, not sure if she should go over to Lucy or not. Turns out she didn't have time to make a decision. Before Natsu knew it, Lucy stood up, a frown stamped on her face. She slapped Jackal, then stormed out of the cafeteria.

The pink haired teen didn't hesitate to bolt up, running towards the doors Lucy exited out of to try to find her. Natsu ran down the nearest hall, panicking when she didn't find her. "Lucy!" She called, but was met with silence.

Natsu searched the next few halls, wondering where the hell the blonde had gone. She wanted to keep looking. She wanted to find Lucy and try to comfort her, but she never found the blonde. The bell rang, so Natsu went back to the cafeteria to grab her backpack.

Gray made a comment about Natsu running off, but she ignored it. All she could think about was Lucy's hurt face and what Jackal could have said to her.

When French class came around, Lucy didn't show up.

Natsu worried about her for the rest of the day, and even throughout the night. She heard from Gray that Juvia said Jackal made inappropriate comments to Lucy about her breasts, then implied that the girl should let him give her a test ride to see if she was worthy of a guy like him.

Natsu didn't blame Lucy for slapping Jackal. Hell, she wanted to curb stomp that asshole for violating Lucy like that.

The next day at school, Natsu was hesitant to go to lunch. She stood outside of the cafeteria doors until kids stopped entering. She guessed Lucy was already inside since she hadn't seen the blonde come by.

She was about to give up and go in, but a sweet voice kept her grounded.

"Hey Natsu. What are you doing out here?"

Natsu turned, seeing Lucy standing beside her. She jumped a little, startled by the girl's presence. "H-hey, Lucy..."
The blonde smiled, Natsu's heart warmed from the sight. "Are you going to answer my question?" She leaned in a bit, allowing Natsu to smell her strawberry shampoo. "It's only fair since I answered your friend's questions."

"Wh-what?" She tensed, realizing she'd been found out.

"Oh don't act dumb," Lucy giggled, straightening her jacket. "I know that first day you were just asking questions for your friends."

"How'd you know?" Natsu saw no point in denying her claims at this point. She'd been found out.

Lucy rolled her eyes. "It didn't take a genius. You come by, ask these really personal questions, then out of nowhere guys start asking me out." Her smile dropped, "though I'm upset about Jackal. Did you have anything to do with that?"

"No!" Natsu answered immediately. "I only told Gray, Gajeel, Loke and Hibiki. I promise!"

"I believe you," her soft smile returned. "I'm still not happy about it, but I think I can forgive you on one condition."

"Name it."

Lucy winked. "You have to take me out tonight."

Natsu's jaw dropped. "Wh-what do you m-mean?"

The blonde couldn't help but roll her eyes. "Do you not like me? It seems a little obvious that you do."

"I-I," she gulped, terrified of rejection. "I do, umm... Like you, that is..." Once again, Natsu didn't deny anything.

"Great!" Lucy beamed. "So do you want to take me out on a date tonight? I'm free."

"S-sure," Natsu stammered, her heart beating out of control. "What do you want to do?"

"Anything really," the blonde tapped a finger to her chin. "Though I don't want to see a movie. I'd rather do something where we can talk." She took a step closer to the pink haired girl, causing Natsu to swallow thickly. "I want to get to know you better."

"We c-can hang out at my house," Natsu's suggestion made her cheeks warm up. "My parents will be there. They umm... They know about..." The pink haired teen couldn't get the words out.

"That's good," Lucy nodded. "My dad knows about me too. If you're okay with it, may I ask what your orientation is?"

"B-bi..." Natsu felt her pulse double. "Y-you?"

"Honestly? I'm still confused. I know I'm attracted to girls and boys, but I can't see myself dating a guy. Does that make sense?"

"I really don't know," Natsu admitted. "Do... do you find me..."

"Yes," Lucy answered before she could ask. "I find you very attractive." The blonde took another step closer, leaving only a small gap between them. Her hand came up, grabbing a few locks of pink hair. "You're very cute."
Natsu didn't think her face could flush a deeper red, but she was proven wrong. She had to take a shaky breath to calm her racing heart. "S-so are we... Umm... girlfriends now?"

Lucy's brown eyes widened. "Whoa, wait a second."

Natsu flinched, realizing she messed up. "I'm so sorry! I-I'm not very good at this! I didn't mean to assume or-"

Lucy giggled, intrigued by Natsu's behavior. She placed a hand on the pink haired girl's shoulder. "Look, I like you, but I want to get to know you more before we become official. Is that okay?"

"Totally," Natsu nodded fervently. "I don't mind at all." It sounded a lot better too. It would give them both time to see if they could work as a couple. Natsu knew Lucy had never been in a relationship, and she hadn't either. They were both new to this, so Natsu didn't want to mess it up before it even began.

"Great," Lucy leaned in, giving Natsu a soft peck on the cheek. The blonde pulled away just in time to see Natsu's jaw fall open. "You really are cute." She stuck a hand in her pocket, pulling out a folded up piece of paper. "Here's my number."

Natsu's eyes flitted to the paper, then back up to Lucy's eyes. "You already had it written down?"

Lucy let out a short laugh. "Call it presumptuous if you want. I saw everyone at your table asking me out. I was hoping you'd be next." She smiled, "do you want to sit with me at lunch?"

Natsu nodded, knowing she didn't mind ditching her friends at all. They put her through hell this week, even if they weren't aware of it. She could always catch up with them later.

"Come on," Lucy said, grabbing Natsu's hand. "Let's go."

The pink haired teen looked down at her hand, then back up at Lucy. "Yeah." She smiled, happy to be dragged into the cafeteria by the blonde.

Chapter End Notes

Happy birthday Doublepassé! I hope I did Yuri-Nalu some justice. There's not a lot of fics about this couple, so I thought I'd add to it.

This will probably be the only fem-Natsu story I write because it was so hard! I have no idea how Doublepassé does it! Not to mention she does it so well! If anyone wants more yuri-nalu, I highly suggest checking out her stories. 'The Princess in Pants' and 'In my Head' are my personal favorites! GO! Go read them now! Props to Doublepassé for keeping this ship alive!

Thank you for the hits/kudos/comment for the last one-shot!
Can you wait until fall?

Chapter Notes

This is a birthday present for the awesome MissyPlatinum! Her stories always put a smile on my face, so hopefully I can return the favor. I know how much you like fluffy stories, so here goes! Happy birthday!

Summary: Lucy thought she was going to be babysitting Wendy. However, things take an odd turn when she finds out that Wendy's older brother Natsu made other plans for her.
Pairing: Natsu/Lucy
Genre: Romance
Word count: 7,305

Spring

A knock sounded on the door of the Dragneel' residence. Natsu hopped up from the couch, gladly ready to answer it. Once the door swung open, he greeted the two females outside. "Hello Virgo, Lucy." He kept his voice casual, not wanting to seem suspicious.

"Good morning, Natsu," the older woman said. She wore her usual french maid's uniform, her short pink hair gelled down to give her a serious look. "You need Lucy until six, right?"

'I need her for longer than that...'

He cast that thought away, knowing it was the most embarrassing answer he could give right now. "Yup, 'til six."

"Okay. Jude is out of town and I'll be gone at that time, so when she's done she'll just take the bus."

"I'll make sure she gets to the bus stop safely." He assured.

"That'll be fine. Well, have a good day. Lucy, behave yourself. If she acts up even a little bit please call me." The pink haired woman gave Lucy a little wink, causing the girl to blush.

"I'll keep that in mind." Natsu laughed, loving when Lucy got flustered. He preferred when he did it himself, but this was fun too. He watched as the older woman turned to walk away, not aware of the mischief the teenage boy was planning.

"Come in," Natsu said, scooting to the side for the girl to enter. He wanted to give Virgo some time to leave before making his move.

Lucy was beyond confused. Never had she babysat for Wendy on a Sunday, and never for this long. Eight hours were going to be so boring. She didn't have any homework, and she had already read all her books, so Lucy had nothing to distract her when Wendy would take her nap.

She didn't even bother bringing her backpack. All she had on her person was her clothes and her purse which was filled with her wallet, a small notebook, and a few pens in case she got inspired to
The blonde entered the living room and looked around. She didn't see Natsu's baby sister anywhere, deepening her confusion.

"Oi, I thought I told Virgo to tell you to wear summer clothes?" Natsu's voice came over her shoulders. She turned to see him looking over her outfit for the day.

She was wearing a dark pink, button up shirt. The long sleeves were cuffed back to reach her elbows. Her long legs were covered in a pair of dark jeans, and her feet in a simple pair of black shoes. Her long blonde hair was hanging loosely past her shoulders.

Lucy averted his gaze, feeling her heart speed up. "I-I felt more comfortable in this..." She hadn't spent very much time alone with Mr. and Mrs. Dragneel's son, Natsu. Usually they only saw each other in passing when she would come over to watch their toddler, Wendy. They'd talked a few times, but not very often. She always felt flustered around the handsome teen.

Natsu just shrugged. "If you say so. You might sweat though. It's pretty warm in Hargeon today."

He had prepared, wearing a short-sleeved white shirt with a red dragon on the front, paired with some black cargo shorts.

"Hargeon?" The teen questioned, meeting his eyes again.

"Yup!" His green eyes gleamed. "I thought maybe we could hang out today."

Lucy raised a brow. "Aren't I supposed to be babysitting Wendy? Which by the way, where is she?"

"Nope. She's out for the day with my parents." He said it nonchalantly, throwing her off.

Her brows furrowed. None of this made sense. "Then why am I here?"

"I just said, I wanna hang out with you." Natsu grinned. "You're acting so weird."

She just stared at him as she thought, 'I'm the weird one?'

Lucy gave a half-smile, deciding that it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world to hang out with Natsu. He seemed like a decent guy, though she didn't really know. She wasn't allowed to hang out with people, her father being very strict. This might be the only chance she got to actually spend a day like a normal teenager. "O-okay..."

"Come on." He lightly grabbed her wrist and brought her outside. He led her down the stairs and through the parking lot. In no time they were already waiting a block away from his house for a bus.

Lucy looked at the pink haired teen. "What about your motion sickness? I thought your mom said you suffer from it?" It had been a minor detail in a conversation she had with Mrs. Dragneel, but it stuck out to Lucy. She'd never met someone before who had that issue.

"Ehh. I'll be fine. I'll try not to puke on ya." He laughed, although his voice didn't make it sound like a joke.

"What?" Her eyes went wide as she took a step away from him.

He didn't answer her since the bus was already arriving. One step onto the large vehicle and he was
already wobbling. "I have a bad feeling about this..." Lucy sighed as she watched the pink haired teen pay for two fares.

Thirty bumpy minutes later they were disembarking the vehicle Natsu dubbed 'Satan's happy place'. He managed to not puke, but he did spend the majority of the ride groaning. She'd never seen his motion sickness in action, and didn't know it was so crippling. She understood now why his mother said he walked everywhere. She had wanted to help him somehow, but was nervous to touch him. She still wasn't sure what was even going on.

It took a few minutes for the pink haired teen to get over his sickness and act normal. Well, what she considered normal. She hadn't hung out with him enough to know how he usually acted.

When he bounced back to life, he looked around. "Alright... Which way do I go again...?"

"Natsu... What am I really doing here?" Lucy asked as she looked around the bus station. She guessed they were in downtown Hargeon, but she'd only been to the city a few times. Not enough visits to know her way around though.

He glanced over to the uneasy blonde. He internally cringed, realizing that maybe it was a bad idea to do this without asking first. "I told ya. I wanna hang out with you." Pink lightly dusted his cheeks as he admitted, "I thought maybe I could take you on a d-date..."

"A date?" She asked in disbelief.

"If that's okay with you." He sounded so nervous. He'd never been on a date before. No one ever caught his interest until Lucy. She was so kind and sweet to him, even if they didn't talk much. It made him want to get to know her better, but he quickly found out she didn't just hang out with people normally.

That's why he called up Virgo to ask Lucy to 'babysit Wendy'. It was his way of getting close to her. Admittedly it probably wasn't the best idea, especially since it was going to cost him a pretty penny in the end. Lucy's fees were high, but it was because she was certified in almost everything and had a long list of references. She could afford to charge so much.

"Well, I've never had a date before..." She felt the heat on her cheeks, but ignored it. She looked up at his green eyes, finding no reason to distrust him yet. She smiled, feeling a little excited now.

"...I'd love to go on a date with you."

Lucy saw the way her words brought a smile to his face. "So... Do you have anything planned?"
Her curious tone enthralled him, making him feel a little bit more confident about his plan.

"Actually yeah," he cautiously grabbed her hand. When she didn't protest, he led her towards the sidewalk. "We're gonna do something really fun!"

That intrigued her. "And what's that?" She felt her heart speed up from the simple hand holding. She'd never held hands with a boy before. In fact she'd barely talked to any boys. Sure there were boys at the private school she attended, but they were focused on their studies, not that she blamed them. Her priority when she was in school was her grades, so that left no room for boys, dates, or fun.

"Mini golf," he beamed.

The blonde paled. "I'm probably going to be horrible though... I've never played..."

Natsu laughed. "That's fine. I'm terrible at it too, but it's super fun. I promise."
Lucy smiled at the joyful expression he gave her. She nodded, following him to their destination. Even after they reached the building with dinosaur statues holding golf clubs outside, Natsu still held her hand. He'd even intertwined their fingers somewhere towards the middle of the walk. He couldn't believe how happy it made him when Lucy didn't move away from him.

"You ready?" He asked as they stood outside the Jurassic themed course.

"If I say no, would it make a difference?" She asked, making Natsu laugh.

He grinned at the pretty girl, tugging her along. "Trust me, it never does."

Twenty minutes had passed, and now Natsu was sweating as he stared at the hole in the ground. He held his breath, waiting until-

"No fair! You have to be cheating!" Natsu groaned when Lucy's pink ball went straight into the hole. "You've done this before haven't you?"

"I really haven't," she laughed at his accusation. "I guess I have natural talent."

Despite losing, he was glad to see she'd lightened up considerably since he first saw her that morning. He was worried she'd be quiet the whole time, but she was already joking around with him. Especially on the last hole when she flat out said he sucked at this game. She learned fast not to be a sore winner when that comment earned her a tickling by Natsu.

"I still have two more holes to catch up with you." He grumbled as he hit his red ball. This game required concentration and skill. He apparently lacked both. "Dammit!"

His ball brushed the edge of the hole, but continued on. Lucy patted his back, surprised that she didn't feel shy touching him like that. She tried to ignore her nervousness as she gave him advice. "You're hitting it to hard. Try to do it softer."

Natsu blushed at her touch, but tried to remain calm. "Like this?" He barely tapped the ball, watching it move and stop right next to the hole. "Huh..."

"That's better." Lucy cheered him on, not caring who really won or not. She was having so much fun, and was already forgetting about her real life filled with studying and babysitting. That's all she really did. Her boring life seemed to fade away with every giggle Natsu caused her to expel.

He tapped it again and the damn ball finally went in. "Awesome!"

"Great job!" The blonde teenager collected their balls and proceeded to the next course. "Do you have any plans after this?" She hoped their 'date' wouldn't be ending soon. Natsu was surprisingly a fun guy to spend time with.

"Actually yeah, but we need to kill some time before then." He purposely kept it vague, not wanting to ruin the surprise.

"What are we doing?" She asked, trying to contain her growing excitement.

Natsu could easily see the shine in her brown eyes. "It's a secret."

"Oh really? May I have any hints?"

"You may not." He plucked the red ball from her hand, giving her a coy smile.

She jutted out her bottom lip. "Please?"
The pink haired teen shook his head. "Your cuteness will not work on me." His eyes went wide when he realized he said that out loud. "Wait, I-I didn't mean that, well I mean you are cute, but-oh god! I'm sorry!"

Lucy laughed, finding his stammering adorable. "It's alright," she felt her heart skip a beat from his compliment. "I'll forgive you if you tell me what we're doing later?"

"What? No way!" Natsu wasn't going to be fooled that easily.

"Are you sure?" The girl feigned a sad expression that pulled on his heartstrings. "Pretty please?"

"Er..." His mouth twisted with contention. He really wanted to tell her, but he also wanted to look at her expression when he surprised her. His only option was to turn away while his face scorched from the fierce blush. "N-nope... Not working me..."

"Alright," she sighed, letting him keep his little secret. She wouldn't have to wait that long to find out anyway.

"It's your turn." He stepped aside so she could do her magic. For someone who'd never played before, she was sure kicking his ass. The girl sank a hole in one before it was even his turn. "Shit. I'm gonna lose aren't I?"

"I believe so." She smiled as she waited for his turn.

"That's okay. If I'm gonna lose to anyone, I'd rather it be you." Natsu was a competitive person, but to see Lucy's smile, he'd lose a hundred times.

He tapped his ball and watched it stop an inch away from the hole. "Well... It's better than I've been doing."

"That's the spirit!" She had more faith in him than he did at that moment.

"Yeah yeah..." He hoped the blush he felt wasn't noticeable as he tapped the ball again, letting it sink into the hole. "One more hole."

They walked in peaceful silence while their hands kept brushing against each other. "Hey Natsu..."

"Yea?"

"Thanks for this. I'm having a lot of fun." She spoke honestly, letting her guard down. She realized it wasn't needed right now. 'Natsu's a good guy...'

He grinned, "I'm glad. Especially since we're not even close to done yet."

"We're not?"

"Nope. I get to keep bothering you until six, and I'mma make it worth it." Natsu didn't even bother hiding his blush now. He was feeling way too damn good.

The blonde smirked. "Good luck bothering me." She was having nothing but fun with him.

"Is that a challenge?" He raised a pink brow defiantly.

"I think so," she mused.

"You're on!" Natsu rose a fist in the air. "I'm all fired up now."
They both laughed as they made their way to the next hole. There, Natsu's fire was put out immediately. After Lucy -obviously- won, the duo left the golf course to return their equipment. That's when they left to go search for food, finding themselves in front of a cute looking restaurant.

The establishment appeared to be two stories, built out of tan-painted wood. Large windows reflected the outside, letting the people inside eat in peace without watchful eyes. There was a brick chimney that looked more for show than anything. A large sign decorated the building. The word '8-island' was centered on the sign, with a knife and a fork surrounding the word. There was an adorable little chef's hat resting on the corner of it.

"I've never been in, but I hear good things." Natsu jerked a thumb towards the building.

"I'm not really hungry." Lucy fibbed, but her traitorous stomach gave away her lie with a loud roar. Sarcasm infused with her voice as she added, "well that wasn't embarrassing at all..."

He gently held her hand, loving the way her soft fingers fit through his rough ones. "Come on. Let's eat."

He didn't give her a chance to protest as he already started walking to the entrance.

A perky woman smiled when they walked in. She was wearing an orange dress with the restaurant's name printed across her chest. Her legs were covered in thigh high, white stockings. "Hello and welcome to 8-Island. How many in your party?"

"Just two." Natsu responded while rubbing his thumb on Lucy's thumb, sending jolts through the girl's system.

The woman nodded. "Right this way."

Natsu continued to hold Lucy's hand as they followed the hostess to a booth in the back of the restaurant. He noticed that all the women who worked there wore the same uniform, while the men wore white, long-sleeve, button up shirts with black vests over them paired with black pleated pants, and black shoes.

The restaurant itself was pretty cozy. The hardwood floors complimented the pink booths. The wall was painted beige with light green trim. Natsu felt comfortable being surrounded by such a bright and friendly looking place. He hoped was hoping Lucy did too.

They sat across from each other, forcing Natsu to regrettably let go of her hand. He didn't have much time to worry about it since they were handed menus and told their waiter would be with them shortly.

"Do you know what you'll get?" Lucy said, glancing at the different leafy choices.

"Hmmm... I was thinkin' I'll get one of everything..." Natsu's voice didn't waver in the slightest.

Lucy's jaw went slack. "You're joking... Right?"

"I dunno. Guess you'll have to find out." His devious smile told her he probably wasn't messing around.

It wasn't long before the waiter came to get their drink orders. "Okay, so a coke for you sir, and a strawberry lemonade for you miss?" Their waiter smiled after they nodded. "I'll be right back. Take your time looking over the menus."
"So do you know what you want?" Natsu leaned in, already knowing what he would order.

Lucy pointed to a green option. "I'm going to get the house salad."

Natsu made a buzzer sound. "Wrong answer." He smirked when she cocked her head. "There's only one rule for eating with me. No salads. Well, unless it comes with a salad, but that's different."

Lucy looked puzzled. "I can't order a salad?"

"That's correct." He nodded, then her smile faltered.

"Oh..."

He cringed when he realized he probably offended her. " Eh, unless you really want one." He waved his palms at her frantically in a mock surrender. "Don't let me dictate what you can and can't eat. I was only joking. Well, kinda joking... But I can live with it."

"Oh, it's not that. I'm only allowed to order salads when I go out, so that's all I've ever known." Lucy glanced back at the menu with curious eyes. She'd long given up on even browsing other sections, knowing it would just make her stomach twist with want. Her father wanted her to be as healthy as possible, leaving her with limited options.

Natsu lifted a brow. "Wow... That sucks. I can't imagine eating just salads..."

Lucy could only shrug. "You get used to it after a while."

Natsu opened his mouth to speak, but another's male voice beat him. "Are you ready to order?" The waiter placed their drinks in front of them and pulled out a notepad.

The pink haired teen smiled, and Lucy started to get a bad feeling about the way his eyes glowed. "I'll have..."

"W-where did you put it all?" The blonde teenager asked as they walked down the street. She was referring to the large amount of food he ate, because his stomach was still flat.

"It's a secret." He smiled as he rested his palms against the back of his head, letting his fingers sink into his soft, pink locks.

Natsu had ordered a 9 oz sirloin steak, a half rack of baby back ribs, and a plate full of chicken tenders. It wasn't complete without a side of fries, a side of onion rings, and a bottle of their hottest hot sauce. Somehow he managed to eat everything, which baffled Lucy, who only ordered the chicken fettuccine alfredo and a side salad.

"High metabolism?" Lucy guessed with a laugh.

He practically shrieked. "Who told you?!"

That only made the blonde beauty crack up more. He was glad she was laughing. Things had gotten...a little awkward while they were eating.

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Natsu had been in the process of shoving another piece of chicken in his mouth when a voice had resonated beside them.

"How is everything?"
Natsu and Lucy looked over to see a short, older man smiling at them. His eyes were squinting, and it was hard to tell if he could even see them. He had thick gray eyebrows and a small but thick mustache. A chef's hat with the restaurant's name adorned his bald head. He was in a white chef's uniform with an apron tied around his waist.

"Everything's great! Right Lucy?" Natsu said, then devoured the deep-fried chicken piece.

"Mhmm... It's very delicious." The blonde teenager agreed, loving the freedom of eating pasta without her overprotective father around to stop her.

The short man smiled. "That's good to hear. I'm the owner, Yajima, and I just couldn't help but come over. You two are the cutest couple I've seen in a while."

"Cutest..." Natsu started.

"...Couple?" Lucy finished.

"Yes. It's such a great thing to see young love. Well, I'll let you get back to your meal. Thank you for coming in today." The old man walked away before the other two could fully process what just happened.

"N-no p-problem..." Natsu sputtered, feeling his cheeks burn. Lucy blushed just as badly as him, which made him feel better and worse at the same time.

Things only got more awkward when the check came. Lucy tried to pay for herself, but Natsu refused, saying it was the gentlemanly thing to do. She huffed and said she could do it herself, but he continued to argue.

It was finally decided that Natsu would pay when he shoved his debit card at the frightened waiter without even looking at the bill. He only saw the price when he went to add a tip and sign the receipt. He didn't know why Lucy was making a big deal about it, seeing as her food price didn't even compare to his. Hell, the tip was almost as much as her pasta dish.

They had left the restaurant in silence while Natsu led her down the street. Only when she noticed his lack of belly did she break the uncomfortable silence.

She finished her fit of giggles, then straightened herself. "So... What's next?"

"Your surprise."

"I see." Her smile widened without her consent, not that she would have denied the urge anyway. Overall she was having an amazing day. She couldn't possibly imagine it getting any better.

Lucy daringly seized his hand, feeling him jolt at the action. He clearly wasn't expecting her to initiate anything with him, seeing as he'd been the one making all the first moves so far.

He laced their fingers together as they continued walking. After a few blocks, he stopped. "Well, we're here."

Lucy hadn't even noticed they arrived in front of a large theater. "We're going to see a movie?"

"Not just any movie..." He smirked as he tugged her along to the ticket line. The line was decent, with not a terribly long wait. When they arrived at the front, Lucy watched intently for which movie he'd pick.
"How can I help you?" A teenager girl asked behind the booth.

"Two for 'The Soul's Inferno'." Natsu said.

The employee nodded, accepting his card and swiping it at the register. She handed him his card back along with two tickets. "Enjoy the show."

"Thanks." Natsu nodded, pulling on Lucy's hand again. When they walked inside, he asked, "want anything from the concession stand?"

"What? We just ate." She eyed him suspiciously. There was no way he could cram more food into his stomach. It was impossible!

"And?"

Lucy had to force the words out because she was almost rendered speechless. "How are you still hungry?"

"I'm always hungry." That was the only explanation he offered as he walked towards the smell of butter. They gave their tickets to a short man, who ripped them in half and gave them back the bottom portion. After getting past him, Natsu got in line for more food.

Lucy was even more confused. She couldn't figure out why anyone would still want food after everything he ate. He ordered a medium bag and a large bag of popcorn with a large soda. He handed the medium one to her, even though she made it clear she didn't want anything else to eat.

It became obvious why he got them different bags after he pulled out a tiny bottle of cayenne pepper seasoning. He sprinkled it generously over the melted butter, letting it attach to the popcorn. If she changed her mind later about wanting some, she wouldn't have to deal with having her mouth set on fire from trying to steal from him.

With new food in hands, they walked to the theater designated for their movie. Luckily it had been out a few weeks now, so not a lot of people were present. He led her to the middle row to the center chairs.

Lucy couldn't even remember the last time she saw a movie in theaters. In fact, realizing how much freedom she had today made her aware that she'd been missing out on a lot of stuff. She'd been denied fun just because her father was so strict, and it didn't even make sense. She wasn't doing anything reckless today, so why were these things not allowed?

She didn't have to spend a lot of time in her head though, because the trailers for other movies started, and she got absorbed into the amazing scenes.

Natsu proved to be the biggest dork ever by doing the oldest move in the book. He nervously pretended to stretch so he could rest an arm around her shoulders. Lucy didn't mind his touch, but it did cause a slight flutter in her heart.

Since he didn't seem to mind touching her, she got bold. She snuggled in close, letting Natsu's natural body heat warm her up in the cold theater. She heard his sharp intake of air, but after a few seconds he relaxed. His thumb even started rubbing against her shoulder.

Once the movie started, the laughing was unavoidable. Two minutes. That's how long it took before the blonde let her giggles tumble out. Natsu was right along with her, enjoying the movie far more than he thought he would.
Natsu kept a tight hold around Lucy, loving the way she vibrated when she laughed. Needless to say, it was the most fun he'd ever had watching a movie with someone.

"THAT CREEP FROM THE HOSPITAL FOLLOWED ME HOME!" Natsu laughed as he wrapped an arm around Lucy. They were recounting their favorite lines of the amazing movie they'd just watched.

"Oii, you shouldn't be callin' your old man a creep!" Lucy put her hand on his, pulling him closer.

The pink haired teen made his voice lighter, almost sounding like a girl as he quoted, "I'm not calling my dad a creep! I'm calling you one!"

The blonde's eyes were tearing up as her face went red from the lack of oxygen.

Natsu tried to talk, but he couldn't start since he was dying from laughter as well.

Lucy breathed, filling her lungs with the necessary air. "Thank you for taking me to see that. It was so funny! Even if some parts were sad, I loved it!"

"No problem. I'm glad you enjoyed it." He grinned down at her before he felt nature's call. "Hey, I'll be right back, I gotta use the bathroom. Wait right here?"

"I'm not going anywhere." Lucy assured as they broke away.

She was still smiling, her cheeks were in pain from how happy she was. Throughout the whole movie, Natsu kept his arm around her. It was so comforting, especially since he didn't try to take it any further than that. He really was a gentleman.

Natsu was not gone for a whole minute before Lucy felt a presence behind her. She whipped around with beaming eyes. "That was fast Na- Who are you?"

The blonde teenager stared at a young man who was definitely not Natsu. He appeared to be a few years older than her. His crimson-brown hair and red eyes suited his tan skin. He stared at the girl with an expressionless face.

Lucy took a step away from the odd man. "Can I...help you?"

"Such beauty! Kapow!" The man's hands flew to his cheeks as his face warmed with a blush. "I've never seen someone as pretty as you! And what do they call this loveliness?"

"Uh... Lucy?" It sounded like she was unsure.

"Lucy! Lucy! Lucy! Stunning perfection has a name!" He twirled in a circle, causing her to take another step back. "May I call you Lulu?"

She deadpanned. "I dunno..."

"It's nice to meet you Lulu, my name is Dan Straight." The young man bowed. "I'd be honored if you'd give me your phone number."

"..."

Lucy had nothing to say to him, because currently her mouth wasn't working. It just hung open in utter shock.
"Who's this guy?" A familiar voice asked. The pink haired teen she'd been spending the day with stepped to her right side, taking in the sight of the new man.

"Natsu," Lucy smiled at her savior.

Dan cocked his head. "Who's this, your brother?"

The pink haired teen paled. "Do I look like her freakin' brother?" He knew they didn't look alike, so he was thoroughly confused by the question.

"Doesn't matter to me." The young man said, then turned back to Lucy, taking her hand. "Now, where were we?"

"Hey," Natsu carefully jerked Lucy's hand away from the unknown guy. "Hands off."

"What? Why?" The crimson haired man asked earnestly.

"B-because..." He didn't actually have a reason other than he was simply jealous. Surprisingly it didn't take much thought before he was daringly making a proclamation. "I'm her... Her...boyfriend."

"Boyfriend?" Lucy and Dan asked simultaneously.

"Yeah..." Natsu rubbed the back of his neck just as he began to sweat. "Right?"

"Y-yeah." Lucy blushed, going along with the ruse. She only wished that it wasn't just a ploy to get rid of the guy.

Dan shook his head. "I'm confused. So you're not single?"

"Sorry, I'm not." The blonde looked into Natsu's emerald eyes. They easily captivated her, making her heart race.

The young man huffed. "I guess I can't be that mad. I just hope he treats you right."

Without another word, the man left the fake couple to greet a group of girls. They could faintly hear him asking one of them for her phone number as well.

Lucy was still gazing at Natsu. "Boyfriend, huh?"

His tan face turned scarlet in an instant. "Yeah... Sorry about that..."

"It's fine," she said nervously, feeling her palms sweat. She felt a little out of place, so she changed the subject before things got weird. "So... Where to next?"

The pink haired boy grinned wide, his sharp canines showing. His face was still red, but that didn't stop him from saying, "there's a really cool park a few blocks over. I thought we could take a break for a bit."

Natsu's suggestion sounded great. Lucy nodded, feeling better already. "I'd like that.

True to his word, the park was just down the street. Lucy had already decided that she liked downtown Hargeon. It was near the ocean, but it didn't look like they'd be going there today. It was probably for the better, seeing as she didn't have a swimsuit anyway.
'Maybe another time...' She thought, wondering if she should ask if he'd ever want to hang out with her like this again... She sure hoped so.

The pink haired teen pulled her along until they stopped in front of an ice cream cart. He was adamant about getting frozen treats, and with the hot weather, the girl really couldn't resist.

Lucy got a bowl of strawberry ice cream, while Natsu chose vanilla ice cream in a cone. They walked around the park, only one word coming to Lucy's mind as she saw the area. "Beautiful."

"Yeah." Natsu agreed, but he wasn't looking at their surroundings. He was watching the gorgeous blonde as she scooped up another spoonful of her pink treat.

When they reached the center of the park, Lucy couldn't help but gasp. Right in front of her was a old, stone water fountain. Despite its age, it appeared to be well taken care of. Children were throwing coins in the clear water, laughing and enjoying the warm temperature. Wooden benches lined the smooth, stone tile path that lead to away from the fountain.

Luscious green trees surrounded the park, creating enough shade from the harsh sun. Birds happily chirped away as pedestrians walked by. The wind was blowing just enough to cool them down, making the day even better.

Lucy hadn't had this much fun since her mother was alive. She had more freedom, more laughs, and more smiles than she could even fathom possible. She looked up at her boyfriend, knowing it was all thanks to him.

'If only he was my real boyfriend...'

Boldly taking his hand, she led them to a bench so they could eat and people watch. They sat in peaceful silence, enjoying the fresh air. Lucy was nearly done with her treat when she felt something ice cold against her nose.

"AH!" She flinched back, trying to figure out why she saw brown in the corners of her eyes, or why Natsu was laughing beside her. "What'd you do?"

Without words, he dabbed her nose again with his vanilla ice cream. A playful smirk rested on his lips, trying to tease the now frazzled girl.

All she could do was stare at him, wondering if that really just happened. "Don't just stare at me! Clean it up!"

Although she was yelling, he could see her trying to hold back a smile. "With what?" Natsu asked coyly. They hadn't grabbed any napkins, and he didn't want to get his white shirt dirty.

"I don't know!" She shot back as she gestured to her face. "It's so cold and this is your fault!"

"How about this?" He scooted closer, ignoring personal boundaries as he leaned his face to hers. She didn't even have a chance to ask why he was opening his mouth.

His hot tongue contrasted with the cold ice cream, sending a jolt through her body when he licked up the dessert. After swiping across her nose, he lingered for a bit. His mouth hovering a few inches away from hers. Her gaze was enough to transfixed him. She wanted him to do something, but seeing that he wasn't going to move she decided to take action.

Her soft lips crashed into his surprisingly cold and wet ones. She felt him press against her lips, kissing her back. It was too brief for her liking, so when Natsu pulled away, she leaned in. He took
the hint, seeing that she didn't want the kiss to end. At first he was worried that she hadn't meant to kiss him, but now he saw she wanted it just as much as he did.

Neither asked for permission as their mouths opened to deepen the kiss. Her tongue licked his as their saliva combined with the taste of their ice creams. It was hard to tell where her flavor began and his ended, and neither seemed to care as they kissed in the park.

It felt tantalizing to lip lock with a boy she liked. She'd never had a kiss until now. She'd never been interested before, but now she was hooked on Natsu's addicting lips.

The pink haired teen used his unoccupied hand to cup Lucy's cheek. She leaned into the touch, eyes closed as she simply enjoyed Natsu's kiss.

Their frozen treats went unnoticed. Natsu found that Lucy's mouth was far tastier anyway. He could taste her all day, but unfortunately they needed to stop for the dumbest of reasons: Oxygen. They broke apart, sucking in the precious air they'd been denying their lungs.

Natsu rested his forehead against Lucy's as he closed his eyes. A thin layer of sweat coated their skin, but he didn't mind. He felt comfortable being with her. He had to tell her how he felt before the moment slipped away.

"I like you, Lucy." The words felt so right rolling off his tongue, a rapturous feeling swelled in his heart because he had finally said it out loud.

When he opened his eyes, he was met with a stunned Lucy. Her own chocolate orbs were wide and her jaw went slack. He could see the confliction in her, and he wondered briefly if he should have just kept his feelings to himself after all.

"Natsu..."

"I'm sorry," he mumbled, feeling hurt from the rejection that was coming any moment. He dropped his head in shame. He knew a pretty girl like Lucy wouldn't like him back.

"Please don't be sorry. I... I like you too."

The pink haired boy looked up, shocked by her words. "You do?"

Lucy nodded, her own smile forming. "But, there's something you should know..."

"What is it?" He asked, still surprised that she liked him back. At this point he could handle anything.

The blonde sighed, taking his hands. "This was fun, but I can't do this anymore." When she saw his face fall, she quickly added, "at least not right now."

"What do you mean?" His eyebrows knitted together, not understanding what she said.

"I'm not allowed to date, at least not while I live under my father's roof. It's a stupid rule he has," she explained, hoping it would help. "I graduate in a few months, then I'll be free to leave home..."

Natsu waited, wanting to say something but remaining silent.

"If you're willing to wait..."

"I can wait," he said in a rush. "However long."
She giggled, happy by his enthusiasm. "I'm glad. I'm planning on going to Magnolia University. Freshmen have to live in the dorms, meaning I'm technically not under my father's roof anymore."

He smiled, realizing what she was saying. "So... When that happens, I can ask you out?"

"You can," Lucy saw the gleam in his deep green eyes.

He felt a spark of hope when he asked, "and you'll say yes?"

"Yes."

Natsu grinned, his sharp white teeth poking out. "Awesome!"

Lucy could only laugh and nod. 'Yes, awesome.'

"So... earlier with the whole boyfriend girlfriend thing..."

She sighed. "That was for show, but if I wasn't such a stickler for rules, it would be real."

"That's good to know." Natsu let out a little laugh. "Hey Lucy... Can I hug you?"

"Of course!" She opened her arms, happily accepting a hug from Natsu.

His warm arms wrapped around her, pulling her against his firm chest. She closed her eyes, feeling content in his arms. "It's only a few more months..."

"Yeah!" Natsu grinned, resting his cheek on the crown of her head. "Only a few more months..."

Fall

"Geez, how much stuff did you pack?" Natsu asked, holding a heavy box that he could only guess were filled with concrete bags.

"Only the essentials," Lucy assured, walking past the pink haired teen to enter her dorm room. Her roommate Levy was out with her parents, but Lucy got to spend a few minutes talking to her. Judging from the short conversation they shared, she could tell she was going to get along with the short blue haired girl.

Natsu shuffled into the room, placing the box on her bed. He opened it, gaping when he saw the contents. "It's just books!"

"I said essentials!" She walked over to take out a few. "These are all classics."

Natsu raised a brow when he lifted one of the books. "And Harry Potter is a classic?"

She snatched the book away, holding it protectively against her chest. "Yes!" She scurried away before he could take it away from her. Lucy had a short bookcase set up to hold all her books. She had many more at home, but she couldn't fit them in the small dorm room she shared with Levy.
Natsu shook his head, a smile rising on his face. "Alrighty," he grabbed some more books, handing them to her so she could fill the shelves. "You're still weird."

"You like it," she stuck her tongue out at him, drawing out another laugh from the pink haired teen.

"I can't deny that."

Natsu helped her unpack her stuff. After about an hour or so, the two went to the local cafe to get something to eat. They received their meals, eating happily as they glanced around. "Seems like a nice place," he commented, grinning when he looked back at Lucy.

"Yeah. I think I'll like college life."

"As long as you don't get too busy for me," he grinned, reaching his hand over to grab hers.

She intertwined their fingers, not bothered that she could only eat with one hand now. "I can't promise anything."

Her sheepish smile was enough to make his heart flutter. "I know. School is more important."

"I'll still make time for us," Lucy said before taking a bit of her food.

"Oh, speaking of 'us'..." Natsu pulled away, fishing in the pocket of his jacket for something. He revealed a small blue box. "I wanted to ask you something..."

Lucy's eyes widened when she saw him stand up from his seat, walking over until he stood in front of her. Her heart slammed against her chest when he got down on one knee. She looked around, seeing all eyes were on them. Her face flushed as she asked, "wh-what?"

"I wanted to do this a different way, but what the hell." Natsu paused, building anticipation.

"Lucy Heartfilia, I love you with all of my heart," Natsu began, opening the small box, revealing a pair of pink sapphire heart-shaped earrings. "Will you do me the honors of being my girlfriend?"

Lucy felt a sense of relief when she registered his words. "Oh thank goodness," she placed a hand over her erratically beating heart. "I thought you were about to propose!" She grabbed his arm, pulling him up to crush him in a hug. "Yes! I'll be your girlfriend!"

She heard a round of applause, followed by the chanting of, "kiss! Kiss! Kiss!"

Lucy pulled back, smiling up at her first -and hopefully only- boyfriend. She leaned in, pressing her soft lips to his. It was quick, not wanting to get too affectionate in public. When they pulled away their ears were filled with more cheers.

Lucy and Natsu sat back down, their faces burning red with embarrassment. He gave her the earrings, saying she should put them on now since they matched her shirt. She did, smiling at the reflection on her phone's screen.

"Thank you," Lucy bit her bottom lip, feeling nervous all over again.

"For what?" Natsu asked, cocking his head.

She paused before saying, "for waiting for me... for the earrings... and for taking me on that date..."

A toothy grin surfaced on his face. "You're welcome. Thanks for letting me bother you all this time."
"I wouldn't wish for anything else," she said honestly.

The newly formed couple finished their meal, stealing glances at each other and randomly laughing when they remembered how dorky Natsu was for that fake out proposal. After they left the cafe, they walked back to her dorm, hand in hand. Lucy wore her new earrings, signifying her new title as Natsu's girlfriend.

Natsu couldn't be happier, feeling lucky that Lucy and him were finally a couple. It had been a long wait, but it was worth it.

_She_ was worth it.

"I love you," Natsu confessed, squeezing her hand.

She squeezed it right back, smiling up at the pink haired teen. "I love you too."

The End

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

The lines they were quoting were from MissyPlatinum's story 'The Soul's Inferno', chapter 3, 'Fatal Encounters'. If you haven't already, you should seriously go check it out. Some parts are sad, but the comic relief from Natsu and Lucy's bantering makes it worth it!

Happy birthday again! Hope you liked it.

Let me know what you thought of this one-shot? Did you like all the fluffiness?
Nightmare before Halloween Part 1 of 2

Chapter Notes

This is going to be a two-shot. It came to over 15k words total, so I had to split it up. The next part will come soon. I just need to finish editing it. :)

Summary: Lucy Heartfilia is excited about the Halloween party tonight thrown at everyone's favorite restaurant, Fairy Tail. That is, until something strange happens, causing her and her friends to fight for their lives for fear of being hunted down and attacked. Somewhat based on a part of the movie, "Halloweentown II: Kalabar's Revenge". Modern AU. I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does. Two-shot!

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Rated: T for cussing, slightly suggestive themes and violence.

Genre: Humor, Suspense

Word Count: 8,014

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nightmare Before Halloween Part 1 of 2

"I'll be ready by the time you get here," Lucy said, her phone pressed against her ear as she applied her eyeliner. She wanted to look her best, so she used a steady hand even though her heart beat faster the longer she talked to him.

"I hope so," the voice of her best friend came from the other end of the line. "We're on our way now, and you know how fast Erza drives."

"Yeah, yeah," the blonde teen laughed, almost messing up her makeup. "I promise I'll be good."

"Okay, see you soon, Luce."

She smiled, loving the silly nickname he gave her. "You too, Natsu."

Lucy hung up her phone, relieved that now she could apply her makeup without trying to hold a conversation, but worried because she really did know how fast Erza drove. She almost wished the vehicle would suck up some of her energy in the process, since it might slow her down.

When she was satisfied with her face, she stood up and walked over to her full-length mirror. She gave herself a little twirl, smiling that all the hard work she did paid off. Lucy decided this year for Halloween she was going to go as her favorite zodiac sign, Aquarius.

She spent countless hours sewing her costume together, getting stabbed multiple times by her needles as she worked with her raw material to create -in her opinion- a masterpiece. Most of her
golden hair was down, while some of it was pulled into two high pigtails. Green bows tied off her hair, matching the rest of her costume. She had sleeves that started halfway down her upper arm, coming down to her wrists. They were the same green as her bows, with yellow ruffles underneath. A halter top swimsuit adorned her torso. She used a thick material to make the top, so it was warm despite the cold air that came with this time of the year. She drew Aquarius's symbol right under her collarbone, making sure to get it nice and dark so everyone could see it. She used a special body paint that wasn't supposed to smudge, so she hoped it would last for the night.

Lucy's skirt was uneven, part of it coming up high on her upper thigh while the other part came down to her mid-thigh. The skirt was green, with yellow ruffles sewn on the waistband and on the hem. A matching yellow ribbon was tied around her thigh on the part where her skirt came up higher.

Her outfit was complete with a pair of brown strapped sandals. With her lack of pockets, she'd have to rely on Natsu to carry her phone and wallet, but he doubted he'd mind. He was always willing to help.

A light pink blush dusted her cheeks when she thought about her best friend. They met two years ago at a Halloween party. Coincidentally it was also thrown at Fairy Tail, just like the one they were attending tonight would be.

Lucy had decided a few weeks ago that tonight she was going to confess to Natsu Dragneel. She was going to tell him how she felt about him. She was just unsure how much she should say. The truth was the girl was hopelessly in love with the boy, and had been for the better part of the last year. However, she didn't want to come on too strong. He'd never given her any reasons to suspect that maybe he liked her back, so professing her love for him was risky.

The blonde teen knew the best course of action would be to tell him that she liked him first. It wouldn't be a lie. Despite loving him, she still liked him a lot. He was a great friend, funny, kind, and so full of happiness. Plus he was hot as fuck! She enjoyed spending time with Natsu, and tonight would be no different.

Lucy glanced at her reflection once more before nodding her head. "I can do this," she said, feeling the strength behind her words. She was going to tell him how she felt... She just didn't know when the best time would be.

'Should I tell him before we go to the party? Or maybe after we arrive?' She had no idea, but there was one thing she hoped for. 'I hope when the right time comes, I'll know it.'

Lucy grabbed her phone before walking over to her bed, taking a seat on the edge. She looked over to her nightstand, smiling as she gazed at a picture of her mother. It had been over nine years since the world took Layla away from her husband and daughter, but they both still missed her dearly.

"I wish you were here, mom," the teenager said, laying down on her bed with her eyes still locked on the elegant picture frame. "I think you'd like my costume. The picture on the internet I saw reminded me of you. That's why I tried to make it look just like that."

She was met with silence, but after all these years, she was used to it. "I love you," Lucy rolled, laying on her back to stare at her ceiling. Her smile remained on her face, seeing the ceiling covered in glow-in-the-dark stars. Natsu had helped her put them up after she complained that she couldn't see the stars at night due to the city lights. He even arranged some of them in the forms of constellations.
'He's so caring,' she thought, eyes fluttering closed as her heart warmed. 'I need to tell him tonight. I just hope he feels the same way about me.'

She felt like she had a decent shot with him. Natsu was very attractive. His dark green eyes paired with his exotic pink hair made him stand out amongst the crowd. It also helped that his sharp teeth sent chills through girl's spines when he gave his signature toothy grin. He wasn't exactly Mr. Popular, but he did attract attention from the ladies from time to time.

Over the years Lucy had seen girls ask him out, but every time he said no. He'd be easy about it, but firm. He always said there was someone else he liked. For the longest time Lucy had been jealous over the mystery girl, but after a while, she started to feel better about it. He was still single after all, never having a girlfriend in his life.

The same could be said about her. She'd gone her whole life without a boyfriend. She'd been asked out plenty of times by guys, but she was also holding out for someone special. She just hoped that she wasn't reading into anything with how Natsu acted around her. He always wanted to hang out with her, but that wasn't enough to make her believe he liked her as more than a friend.

Sure he held her hand sometimes, and maybe he hugged her a little more than he did with his other friends, but that could always be chalked up to them being best friends. Natsu felt comfortable with her, just like she felt safe with him. He hadn't given any clear-cut signs that he was crushing on her in return.

Tonight that would change though.

Either he would tell her he felt the same way, or he would tell her he didn't like her like that. One way or another, their friendship was changing tonight. She just hoped it was for the better. The risk of losing her best friend due to rejection was the main reason she'd waited so long to confess to him. She felt like tonight being the anniversary of when they met would help her feel confident enough to tell him the truth.

Lucy's eyes shot open when she heard the sound of something pounding on her door. She looked at her phone, seeing that fifteen minutes had passed since she got off the phone with him. 'How long was I daydreaming about Natsu... again?'

She straightened up, glancing over just in time to see the door swing open, revealing a pink haired boy.

Natsu marched in, stopping right in front of her bed. "Why didn't you answer your phone?" He asked, hands on his hips. Well, they really couldn't be considered hands. They looked like claws!

"What are you dressed as?" Lucy asked, eyes flitting from his hands to his face. She jolted back, terrified for a second from what she saw. "What happened to your eyes!"

"Do you like it?" He asked, demeanor completely switching into one of happiness. "Colored contacts. I think the red goes great with my costume!"

"Costume?" Lucy cocked her head, finally taking in what he wore. His pink hair looked wild, untamed and messy. A pair of black horns came out from either side of his head. She stood up, hands coming out to touch them.

Natsu allowed her to mess with his costume, proud of himself for pulling it all together by himself. The horns were glued to a pink headband, virtually invisible when mixed in with his unruly locks of pink hair. His green eyes were hidden behind red contacts, giving him an evil appearance.

His teeth were naturally sharp, so there was no reason to wear fake fangs. He smiled when Lucy's
eyes raked over his body, seeing his open black vest that revealed his toned body. He wore white shorts with black sandals, but that wasn't what Lucy was looking at.

"Is that paint?" She asked, picking up one of his hands to inspect it.

"Yeah, body paint," he nodded, remembering how long it took to paint his forearms and hands. He wore black gloves with claws at the end of the fingertips. They looked sharp, but it was just an illusion. They were dull to the touch, completely safe if he were to accidentally touch someone. "Cool, huh?"

"Really cool," she said in awe, looking back up to his face. "So this is why you wouldn't let me see what you were making."

"Well, I know you peeked at my rough draft, so I changed a few things," he turned around for her to see. "Like this!"

She gasped, wondering how she didn't notice them before. Coming out of his vest were two black wings. The inside webbing was made of a red material that felt soft when Lucy reached for it. They were tattered at the ends, looking like he had just been in a gruesome fight.

Resting right above his -in Lucy's opinion- nicely shaped butt was a red tail that came down to his ankles. Black paint raced up the tail, looking like it was caught on fire. Her eyes lingered on his body for a few extra seconds, pretending that she was looking at his costume. "It looks really good," she admitted, only half talking about his costume.

"Thanks," he grinned, turning around to face her. Her eyes snapped up to meet his face. "What are you dressed as?" Natsu finally looked down at her outfit, loudly gulping when he took it all in.

"Oh... wow..." He said, eyes flitting from her collarbone down to her toes, then back up again.

"What?" Lucy asked, feeling self-conscious under his gaze. She started to think maybe she should have gone with something else, but then Natsu spoke again.

"You're beautiful."

Heat raced to her cheeks, filling the fair skin with a deep red blush. Her eyes averted to the side, not daring to look the pink haired boy in the eyes. "Th-thanks," she mumbled, her heart hammering in her chest. At the rate it was going, she was surprised it didn't show through her skin.

"Let's go," Natsu said, grabbing her wrist to pull her to her door.

"Wait, I need my wallet," Lucy tried to pull away, but he held on tight.

"For what?" He asked, dragging her out of her room and towards the halls. The house was empty, her father in another business meeting while the maids had already gone home for the day.

"I need to buy my ticket," the blonde teen explained, wondering why he wasn't letting up. Truthfully she felt excited having his hand on her, even if it was just to get her moving.

"Nah," Natsu shook her head, aiming for the front door. "I'll pay for ya."

Lucy didn't think her blush could get any worse, but here it was, burning hot against her skin. "You don't have to do that..."

"I know I don't have to... I wanna."
"Okay," Lucy gave in, secretly thrilled that he was willing to spend his hard-earned money on her. He had a part-time job at a retail store, so she knew the money he made was important to him. Knowing he wanted to pay for her meant a lot more than just her saving a few bucks.

She smiled, moving her legs a little faster so he wasn't pulling her along anymore. "Thanks."

He looked back, flashing her a toothy grin. She was glad his eyes closed, that way he looked like the Natsu she fell in love with. "No problem, Luce."

The two teens climbed into the car. It was a tight fit. Gray and Juvia sat in the backseat with Natsu and Lucy. Jellal sat in the passenger seat with Erza driving. The girls had to sit on the guys laps to make enough room.

Lucy would've felt a lot more awkward if this was the first time she had to sit in Natsu's lap due to lack of space, but it wasn't. She felt comfortable, even with her pulse racing and her blood burning hot in her veins. She knew Natsu wasn't thinking anything perverted with her sitting on him, so she felt safe.

Juvia on the other hand had different ideas. Lucy caught the girl wiggling on Gray's lap, causing her to turn her head to avoid seeing the way Gray's face went red. The blonde looked out the window, seeing kids walking around dressed in costumes. It was technically the night before Halloween, but the town had announced that they were celebrating a day early since Halloween fell on a school day this year. It was Sunday, but no one seemed to care as the car sped on towards Fairy Tail.

Natsu groaned, feeling his stomach do flips despite how much he tried to remain still. He laid his head against the window, feeling the cool surface on his heated flesh. He felt sick, but that was usual for the boy who suffered from motion sickness. He was glad Erza drove fast. It meant the ride wouldn't last as long.

The pink haired teen cheered when the vehicle stopped, parked at one of the spots outside of Fairy Tail. The place looked busier than usual, but that was because of the party. People would purchase tickets to enter. Drinks and finger food was provided by the staff, along with music and a place to dance. Most of the tables and chairs were moved to the side or completely taken away to give room to the many guests who came to the party. It was like that every year.

The line was a little long, but they passed the time talking. Gajeel and Levy were already waiting for them when they arrived, adding more to their group. It seemed fun on paper, but in reality it was awful getting all the boys together.

"What the hell are you supposed to be?" Gajeel asked, glaring at Gray.

"I'm an ice demon slayer," the raven haired male said as if it were obvious. Half of his body was painted black. Even his face was half-covered. His right arm had a weird design on it, the only part not painted. Lucy didn't exactly understand his costume, but she had to give him props for originality.

"It's dumb, isn't it," Natsu laughed, crossing his arms over his chest.

Lucy had to look away when she saw the way his tan skin pulled over his muscles from the action. She really wished he wasn't exposing his torso like that. It was very distracting.

"It's not dumb!" Gray defended, flailing his arms at Natsu. "What exactly are you supposed to be?"

"What?" Natsu lost his smile. "You're messing with me, right? I'm obviously a demon! Look! I got
the horns and everything."

Lucy didn’t want to admit that she’d been wondering what he was supposed to be dressed as too. She slightly nodded her head, now understanding what he was going for. He made a pretty good demon in her opinion.

"You guys are both lame," Gajeel laughed, placing his hands on his hips.

The blonde teen looked at his costume, confused over what he was going for. He had silver paint over his body with his black hair spiked back. On his arms he had what looked like scales carved into the paint, but that didn't make sense. It looked almost like-

"What are you supposed to be?" Erza asked, joining the conversation.

Gajeel responded with a smirk. "A metal dragon slayer."

"You're such a freakin' copycat!" Natsu growled, fake red eyes narrowing at Gajeel's real ones.

"How so?"

Natsu shook his head. "I went as a 'fire dragon slayer' last year! You totally ripped off my idea!"

"I didn't even see you last year. How was I supposed to know you went as one?" The 'metal dragon slayer' held firm that he didn't copy Natsu.

"I posted pictures online! You had to have seen them!"

"I don't go on your profile."

"We're friends!"

"No," Gajeel denied. "We're on each other's 'friend's lists'. There's a difference. We're not actually friends."

"Why you!" Natsu launched himself from his spot, ready to attack Gajeel right outside of Fairy Tail. The only thing that stopped him was Lucy's arms wrapped around him, trying to hold him back. He was much stronger than her, but she held on with all her strength, even when his wings got in her face. "Let me go! I gotta kick his ass!"

The boy in silver paint laughed. "Gihi, you really can't take a joke, Salamander."

Natsu's eyes widened at that nickname. "You bastard! Now I know you saw my costume! I wrote in the captions that people should call me 'The Salamander' from now on!"

Gajeel only laughed harder. "So what if I copied ya. My costume looks so much better than yours did."

The pink haired 'demon' finally stopped resisting, settling into Lucy's embrace. "Whatever. You're only saying that 'cause you couldn't think of something original."

Gajeel opened his mouth, but Erza stepped between them, a sword held up in a defensive stance. It was no surprise what Erza was for Halloween this year. She had already told everyone about her costume, going as a Samurai. Her sword was fake, but it would still hurt if she hit them with it. Her outfit consisted of tattered bandages wrapped around her strapless bra and red flowy pants.

The two boys calmed down, grumbling to themselves about how stupid the other one was. When
Lucy was sure Natsu really wasn't going to go in for another attack, she let him go. She instantly missed his warm body, realizing that even with the thick material of her costume, she was still cold.

The group changed the subject, everyone taking turns to say what they were dressed as. Levy said she was a sexy librarian. Her blue hair was pulled back into a messy bun, her glasses hanging low on her nose. She wore what looked like a businesswoman's outfit, but the skirt was shorter than what would be considered appropriate in the workplace. To finish off her outfit she carried two books, which Lucy was sure the girl would try to sneak off to read a few pages of later. The girl loved to read after all.

Lucy described her costume, getting a few nods and compliments from her friends. Everyone already knew what Natsu, Gray, Gajeel, and Erza were dressed as, so they didn't say anything when it came to their turn.

Juvia stepped up, wearing a dark blue dress with long sleeves. An odd hat adorned her head, beautiful blue locks of wavy hair coming from the hat to cascade down to her shoulders. "Juvia is an ameonna." After a lot of strange looks, the girl went on to explain that she was basically a rain woman, cursed to have the rain follow her for the rest of her life. To go along with her costume, she had a bubble umbrella. The rim of the umbrella had clear fishing line attached to it in multiple places with blue stones tied at the ends, looking like rain was dripping from it.

Jellal was next, but no one quite understood his costume. He said he was a 'Mystogan', but that didn't really explain why he was dressed so weird. His arms and legs were bandaged up, while most of his body was covered in a dark cloak. He wore a green bandanna around his face, paired with a hat making it hard to see his eyes. After seeing that he wasn't going to explain any further, they dropped the subject and accepted that he was a 'Mystogan'.

They thought they were done with announcing what costumes they were wearing, until a familiar voice entered the area. "Hey guys. Anyone wanna guess what I'm dressed as?"

They all turned to see none other than their school's most popular flirt, Loke. His orange hair was more messy than usual, with orange cat ears mixed in with his locks. It was Levy who spoke, causing everyone but Loke to laugh. "Are you a kitty?"

"What?!" Loke flinched back, stunned by her answer. "I'm clearly a lion!"

"Huh..." Lucy started, glancing more at the ears. "I dunno, looks more like a cat to me."

The flirt grumbled under his breath until he felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked over to see his date for the night, Aries. "Hey babe."

The pink haired girl blushed, shrinking down under his gaze. Everyone knew Aries was shy, so it surprised them all when she said yes to going on a date with him, considering he had such a loud personality.

"Oh! I bet I know what you're dressed as!" Natsu shouted, startling the poor girl more. "You're a sheep!"

His guess wasn't too far off. "She's actually a ram," Loke corrected, looking down at the girl. Her white dress was made of wool, keeping her nice and warm in the cold weather. She had stockings on, with white furry boots. A wool choker adorned her slender neck, while two ram's horns sprouted out from either side of her head.

"Close enough," Natsu said, feeling like he was right anyway. "Cool costume."
"Th-thank you... I'm sorry," the girl said, leaning closer to Loke.

"Well, we better get in line. Hope to see you guys in there," Loke said before leading Aries to the back of the line. Lucy was just glad he didn't try to cut in front of them. There was a sign posted, warning that such activities would get someone banned if they were caught. She didn't want to take that chance.

The group started chatting again, passing the time until they got closer to the front. Lucy realized after a while that she forgot her phone in her room. She didn't really need it for anything, but it was still good to have. She asked Natsu if he would text her dad and let him know how to contact her, just in case there was an emergency.

He did as asked, sending a message to 'Lucy's Old Man', letting him know she forgot her phone. She also asked him to make sure he got a picture of her costume since she didn't get one earlier. He said he would, but only if she promised to take a picture with him in return.

She couldn't possibly turn down that offer.

It was past eleven at night when their group finally made it to the front of the line. The party was supposed to last until three in the morning, so they had plenty of time to hang out. Natsu paid for him and Lucy, then took her hand to lead her inside. The loud music instantly hit them, causing Lucy to jolt. Natsu kept his hand on hers, guiding her through the crowd of people. They stopped a few times, saying hi to the people they knew.

One of their friends, Beth, was dressed as a giant carrot. One of the cutest couples from their school, Bisca and Alzach, were dressed in matching cowboy and cowgirl costumes. The Strauss siblings were there, sticking close to each other. Mira was dressed as a she-devil, her red outfit was strangely appealing yet scary. Lisanna wore a cat costume, giving off a friendlier vibe. Elfman, their brother, was dressed as a beast, his whole body painted to give off the appearance of a monster.

As Natsu went to get them something to drink, Lucy had the unfortunate 'pleasure' of running into Dan Straight. The playboy grinned at her, eyes tracing the curves of her body. "Well, you're looking good Lulu!"

Lucy shook her head, staring at what she assumed as supposed to be a vampire. He wore normal clothes, so the only way she guessed he was in costume was from the fake fangs in his mouth. "Hello Dan. I told you not to call me that."

"Aww," he cooed, bringing his hands together to rest them against his cheek. "But I can't help it. You look so cute tonight! What are you dressed as?"

"I'm the zodiac sign, Aquarius."

"Hmmm," Dan cocked his head, looking over her body once more. Lucy felt chills from his gaze, hoping Natsu would be back soon with their drinks. She felt a lot better when he was around. Everything was always more fun when they were together.

"I should get going," Lucy said, taking a step back, only to bump into a body. The body bumped back, sending her into the arms of Dan.

"Oh, this is sudden," the brown haired 'vampire' grinned, taking advantage of Lucy's clumsiness by wrapping his arms around her.

"Hey," she wiggled, feeling a discomfort that made her blood run cold. "Let go of me!"
"But Lulu, I just wanted to-AAAAH!" Dan let her go, hands holding his stomach where she elbowed him. "Why'd you do that!"

"Because," she huffed, straightening out her skirt. "I told you to let me go and you didn't listen. You should never touch someone without their permission."

"Damn..." A male's voice came from behind her.

Lucy turned to see Natsu standing there, two cups of soda in his hand. "Natsu!" She didn't think twice, grabbing his arm and pulling him closer to her. "I'm glad you're here."

"Me too... But it looks like you didn't need my help..." The pink haired 'demon' looked at Dan, seeing tears forming in his eyes. He guessed she hit him pretty hard to cause him to cry. "Remind me never to touch you without permission. I don't wanna get a 'Lucy Elbow'. I thought your kicks were bad enough."

Lucy mumbled, thinking he couldn't hear him over the loud music. "I don't mind if it's you touching me..."

Natsu's face burned from the fierce blush coating his cheeks. He was thankful for the low lights, not allowing her to see his embarrassment. Before Dan or Lucy could say anything else, he pointed with his chin over to their group of friends by the dance floor. "Let's go over there."

Lucy nodded, keeping her hands on his arm as he led her away from the brown haired 'vampire'. They joined their friends, overhearing the end of a conversation about whose costume was better. Erza pouted, saying a costume contest would have been a great addition to the party.

"Maybe next year," Mira said, joining their group. Her she-devil outfit was still intimidating, even if Lucy already saw it once. Lisanna and Elfman joined in, along with Loke and Aries.

"Who wants to dance?" Loke asked, eyes flitting over to the pink haired girl beside him.

"Dancing is manly!" Elfman chimed in, beating his fists against his bare chest.

"You wanna dance Lucy?" Natsu asked with a childish grin. He wasn't the best dancer, but he sure enjoyed swaying to the music.

"Sure," the blonde didn't think much of it. They'd danced at parties before. The first time it happened she thought maybe he was hinting that something more was going on between them, but that quickly faded when he danced with Erza and Levy right afterwards. Sure he danced with Lucy more often than other people, but it was still enough to negate any ideas that he saw her as more than a friend.

The two went out to the dance floor with everyone else behind them. Natsu awkwardly put his hands on Lucy's waist when he saw all the other guys do the same with their partners. To Lucy's surprise, Natsu actually danced with the song. Her feet thanked him, since usually by now they'd be stepped on at least a few times.

The music choice for the night consisted heavily of Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie songs. Lucy didn't mind, loving how it made the party that much more Halloween-like.

"Thriller" came on, and immediately everyone cheered. The people who knew the dance stayed on the floor while people who didn't walked off to the side to make room. Lucy stayed, loving the dance that went along with the song. She was a little shocked when Natsu stayed next to her, but that vanished when she saw him keeping up with her.
His fake wings and tail almost got in her way a few times, but she made it work. If it weren't for his red eyes, he'd make an adorable demon.

When the first chorus came up, everyone gasped when a 'zombie' jumped into the center of the dance floor. The boy's face was painted slightly green with black around his eyes to give off a shrunken look. As if he had planned that it would happen, he wore a red leather jumpsuit that was torn to shreds, looking just like the zombie from the music video.

Once he started dancing, everyone followed his lead. Lucy kept looking over at Natsu, seeing the wide smile on his face. She loved that smile. She caught sight of her other friends also dancing, though they were further away from them. The song went on for a bit longer until it eventually faded.

The next song to pop up was "This is Halloween" by Marilyn Manson. There wasn't exactly a dance to go along with it, so everyone moved their bodies as best they could to match the music. Natsu went with a silly dance that involved a lot of stomping his feet and flailing his arms. It should have been off-putting, but it was surprisingly catchy. Soon everyone was following his lead, stomping their feet and clawing the air to the rhythm.

Lucy found herself laughing, enjoying the party far more than she thought she would. When the song ended, Lucy couldn't help but hug Natsu. She was glad she got their first, because a crowd of people came up to him to compliment him on his dancing abilities.

The pink haired 'demon' kept an arm wrapped around Lucy's shoulders as he went on and on about how he 'planned' the dance. It was obvious he was lying through his teeth, but Lucy didn't want to burst his bubble. She thought he was cute when he was that happy, so she let him gloat.

"Deep Six" came on and Lucy about lost it. She squealed, then grabbed both of Natsu's hands. He was a little stunned until she started dancing with him. He quickly found a good rhythm of them both pushing and pulling each other's arms to go along with the beat. Lucy laughed, loving the way Natsu looked at her. She knew she was surprising him since she never expressed any interest in this type of music, but she could see him realizing it as they moved with each other.

She leaned in, yelling over the music in his ear, "I'm having a great time!"

Natsu grinned, then yelled in her ear, "I'm glad! I'm having fun too!"

Lucy pulled away, her cheeks warming. If it weren't for the low lights then she was sure he'd see her blush. Part of her wanted him to see just how much he effected her. He would know later tonight just how she felt. For a second she considered telling him now, but it wasn't exactly the right moment. It didn't feel like the right time, so she stayed quiet on the matter.

The 'water-bearer' couldn't believe how happy she was when the next song sounded. It was Korn's version of 'Kidnap the sandy claws'. The song also didn't have a set dance, so Lucy grabbed Natsu around the waist and jumped with him. He didn't mind, loving the song as well. Her cheek brushed against his during one of the jumps, but she was too excited to get embarrassed over it. Everyone else seemed to have the same mood, cheering and singing along with the song.

"This is awesome!" Lucy shouted, her voice drowned out by the music. She saw Natsu yell something too, but she might as well have been deaf to his voice. They pulled away when the song started to fade out, not prepared for what happened next.

"Living dead girl" came on, and Lucy found herself separated from Natsu. A wave of people flooded the area, causing the blonde to lose sight of her best friend. She continued to dance,
knowing it would be harder to fight the crowd. She didn't know this song would be so popular, but she guessed it made sense since it went along with the Halloween theme.

A girl with long black hair white and green face paint on came up to her, dancing with Lucy to keep her company since she was alone. Lucy leaned in to ask her what she was dressed as, to which the girl replied that she was 'The Grudge'. The blonde felt a chill run down her spine since she was terrified of that movie, even though it'd been years since she last saw it.

She was still afraid to sleep with her closet doors open.

The girl eventually danced away, getting replaced by a pair of zombies with a single werewolf. Lucy had to hand it to the girl dressed up, the fur on her face looked authentic, matching a dark brown pair of wolf ears attached to her head. The zombies appeared to be a couple, both holding hands and giving each other longing gazes. Of course since they were zombies it looked more like they were stuck in a trance, waiting until they heard the sound of a person nearby so they could attack.

When that song ended, "Dragula" came on. As if fate had a grudge against her, Dan the 'Vampire' came up to her. He seemed to have forgotten about the elbowing she delivered to him, smiling as he danced up to the blonde. Lucy let it slide, knowing that deep down he wasn't that horrible of a guy. He was just a big flirt, similar to Loke. Only difference between the two was Loke usually ended up with the girls while Dan ended up with rejections.

Lucy head banged to the beat, finding it oddly liberating to cut loose. She noticed other people jumping along with the song, so she tried it too. As fun as it was, she had to stop. Her top wasn't the best clothing to wear for that activity, so she stuck with head banging and spinning in circles while making small jumps. When jumping with Natsu she didn't feel self-conscious like she did now.

Lucy really liked how fast-beat the song was, but she didn't like one line. 'Who the hell would feast on a cat?'

When the song ended, she saw Dan going in for a hug. She quickly ducked away from his arms to waddle through the crowd. The next song started playing, but she barely paid attention. She just wanted to get away from him. One 'hug' from him was bad enough.

She bumped into someone, then said an apology before letting out an 'eep'. Despite what was on the news lately, someone had decided to dress as a clown. She was sure as fuck not taking any candy from him!

The blonde finally stood up straight, recognizing the song as "Killing Strangers". It was a lot slower, causing everyone to follow suit and move languidly around. Lucy didn't think it really fit the Halloween theme, but it was dark and creepy enough to make the cut.

With everyone slowing down, it was easy to find her best friend. It looked like he was searching for her too because his lips pulled into a huge smile when he found her across the dance floor. He pointed towards the food tables. She nodded, understanding that he wanted to meet her there.

Lucy arrived to the table first. She guessed Natsu's costume limited his agility. She glanced up at a clock hanging on the wall, seeing they had about ten minutes until midnight. In other words, it was almost officially Halloween!

"This is just chaos!"

Lucy's attention went to the boy standing beside her. He was dressed in a black suit with a gray
skull where his tie should be. She looked up, seeing his short black hair with three horizontal white lines on one side of his hair. Without thinking, Lucy blurted out, "what are you supposed to be?"

"What?" The boy flinched, then looked over to Lucy. His eyes went straight to her breasts, making her feel self-conscious. Before she could call him a pervert or slap him, he opened his mouth. "You're zigzagged lines aren't symmetrical."

"Wh-what?" She blinked, thrown off by how his voice sounded strangely familiar. She ignored it, looking down at her top. "They look fine to me."

He tsked, then looked back at the food. "Trust me, they're all wrong, just like this food!"

She was stunned again, thinking she heard his voice somewhere before. "I don't see anything wrong... What is it?" Lucy's brown eyes flitted to the different trays of food.

They were all Halloween themed. There was a plate of 'Eyeball Tacos', a plate of 'Mummy Dogs', and even a bowl of roasted pumpkin seeds. She thought it looked pretty delicious. Well, except for the 'Halloween Brain Dip', but that was only because she didn't like cauliflower.

"Of course you wouldn't see anything wrong," the black haired male shook his head. "These 'Vampire Bite Cupcakes' have the bite marks all wrong. This one is crooked, and this one is too spaced out. This one is too close! It's madness!"

Lucy stared at the guy, unsure what was going on. 'Is he just joking around?' She tried again, wondering if he even heard her the first time. "What are you supposed to be dressed as?"

He looked at her like she just told a bad joke. "What? I'm Death the Kid."

Lucy raised a brow. "Like a kid version of the grim reaper?"

"No no no," the boy shook his head, "I'm- you know what, just forget it. I'm leaving. Patty! Liz! Where the hell did you two run off to!"

Lucy almost laughed as the boy walked away with his arms flailing. He sounded almost like-

"Guess who!"

Lucy's eyes were instantly covered by warm hands. She could recognize them anywhere. "Natsu!"

"Aww," he uncovered her eyes, pouting that he always lost that game.

"You'll never believe it," Lucy pointed at the boy she had just talked to. "That guy kinda sounds like you."

"He does?" Natsu looked at where she pointed, seeing the black haired boy arguing with two blonde girls. "Huh... weird." He grabbed one of the 'Vampire Bite Cupcakes', unwrapping it to pop it into his mouth whole. He barely chewed before swallowing. "Man that tastes great!"

"You didn't think they looked wrong?" Lucy inspected the cupcakes again, seeing what that 'death kid' meant. Some of the bite marks weren't correct.

"Nope! Besides, doesn't matter what they look like," Natsu grinned, a bit of white frosting on his bottom lip. "The taste is all that matters!"

Lucy heard what he said, but she barely registered it. Her focus was now on the frosting, feeling a strong impulse to lick the treat straight from his lip. 'Calm your hormones down!' She mentally
scolded herself, feeling her face heat up by at least ten degrees.

Lucky for her, Natsu took care of it, his tongue flickering out to swipe up the stray dessert. She felt a little remorse for not seizing the moment, but she knew that would be coming on too strong. She didn't want to scare away her best friend.

She just wanted to tell him how she felt.

'Why not now?' Lucy thought to herself, opening her mouth before she could stop. "Hey, Natsu..."

"Do you want a kiss?" Natsu asked after finishing up his dessert.

Lucy's face felt like it caught on fire. "Wh-what!" Her heart pounded, her palms growing sweaty in an instant. She couldn't believe he was being so forward!

"A kiss?" The 'demon' said again, looking down at his hand.

Her brown eyes followed, a sense of embarrassment washing over her when she saw a 'kiss' candy in his palm. She was about to pick it up and just accept her misunderstanding until he said, "I got it from this really cool clown!"

Her hand jerked, swatting the candy away from both of them as it traveled under the food tables. Natsu started protesting, but Lucy shook her head. "You shouldn't take candy from clowns! Don't you watch the news!"

Natsu sulked, eyes flitting back and forth from Lucy to the candy as if he debated whether or not to go grab it. He decided to leave it be in the end, knowing Lucy would scold him about picking food up from the floor, even if it was in a wrapper.

"Fine..." He muttered, a slight blush coming to his cheeks.

Lucy's heart fluttered, seeing the adorable pout on his face. He looked so cute in that moment, giving her just enough confidence to start. When she saw him reach for more food on the table, she said, "Natsu..."

"Yeah?" The pink haired boy asked before shoving another cupcake in his mouth. This time she wasn't sure if he took the wrapping off first or not. She waited until he swallowed before she continued.

"I umm... I wanted to tell you something." She tapped her toes on her right foot against the ground, trying to find her confidence. For all she knew it flew out of the building once she opened her mouth.

"Alright," he grinned, about to grab another dessert.

"It's kinda serious," Lucy said, feeling her palms start to sweat. She was nervous. She'd never confessed to someone before. She'd had boys do it to her in the past, but that wasn't enough to prepare her for this moment.

"Okay," Natsu's hand dropped down to his side. She nearly gasped at the action. He was choosing listening to her over eating another sweet treat.

Her heartbeat skyrocketed when she realized she had all of his attention.

"Umm, it's about y-you... and m-me... and, well," Lucy stammered, not able to find the right words.
'Maybe now isn't the right time after all?'

Natsu gave her a warm smile, clawed hand coming up to gently grab her upper arm. "Hey, it's just me. There's no reason to be nervous."

She took a deep breath, knowing in her **erratically beating** heart he was right. If there was anyone who would be understanding, it was him. Even if he didn't feel the same way about her, she trusted that he wouldn't abandon their friendship due to awkwardness. He'd probably just call her a weirdo and move on.

Feeling the slightest bit better, she smiled. Lucy looked into his red eyes, wishing he wasn't wearing those colored contacts during this moment. "I just wanted to tell you that... I like-"

The music cut out, followed by a booming voice over a microphone. "ATTENTION EVERYBODY! Is everyone having a great Halloween?"

Everyone's eyes went to the bar counter, seeing the owner of Fairy Tail standing on top. He was a short man with white hair. Some wondered how he was able to run a restaurant while being so old, but he never let his age stop him. His name was Makarov Dryer, one of the friendliest **and most perverted** men in Magnolia.

Lucy glanced over at Natsu, seeing his attention was still on her. She blushed under his intense gaze, unsure if she should try again. "I'll tell you after he's done," she promised, hoping a little time would help steel her resolve.

The pink haired boy nodded, turning his focus to Makarov. He was dressed as a wizard, with a pointy purple hat and matching cloak. Lucy knew there was a pretty good chance the short man got his costume in a kid's size, but she remained silent with her observation.

"I said, is everyone having a great Halloween?!"

The crowd cheered, some fist bumping the air in celebration. Makarov merely chuckled, shaking his head. "I don't know how you could be. Halloween isn't until..." He lifted his hand, revealing a watch on his wrist. "TEN! NINE!"

Lucy caught on quick, realizing he was counting down until midnight. The corners of her lips hurt from the wide smile on her face. This was it, the moment she was waiting for! Halloween! The two year anniversary of when she met Natsu!

Everyone joined in, counting along.

"SIX!"

She glanced around, seeing everyone dressed up and excited for midnight.

"FIVE!"

Makarov raised his other hand, presenting a wooden staff for everyone to see. On the top was a crystal ball. The staff had an intricate design carved into the wood, resembling what looked like a cross between a bird and a woman.

"FOUR!"

'A fairy?' Lucy wondered to herself. The restaurant was called Fairy Tail after all. 'Hmm... Do fairies even have tails?'
"THREE!"

Lucy's eyes widened when the crystal ball began to glow green. A few people gasped, but most cheered at the cool effect. Lucy took a step closer to Natsu when a sense of trepidation washed over her.

Something was wrong.

"TWO!"

A beam of light shot out from the staff, hitting the ceiling and lighting the place up. Most people closed their eyes, the light too bright for them. Lucy was among those shielding their vision. She felt like she might go blind from the intensity.

Only one voice was heard in the restaurant, and that was Makarov's. "ONE!"

Suddenly the light went out. Lucy blinked, then looked back at the bar. Makarov was gone, his purple costume and staff nowhere to be seen. She glanced around, seeing everyone faintly glowing green.

"What the?" She looked down, seeing she was also glowing, but it faded a few seconds later. "What's happening?"

"That was weird," Natsu said, finally opening his eyes.

Lucy jolted back. "WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE!" She yelled, causing him to cup his ears.

"God damn! Don't scream so loud!" His ears rang from her voice. Normally it wouldn't have bothered him that much, but right now it felt like his ears might bleed.

"Your face!" She pointed, panicking as she stared at her best friend.

"What's wrong with it?"

Lucy couldn't form the words. She could only stare in horror as she looked at Natsu, wondering what the hell was going on.

Chapter End Notes

What'd you think of part one? Did you guys like the Easter egg? :P I love Soul Eater. Death the Kid is my favorite character! And that was before I found out he has the same English voice actor as Natsu! :D

I hope everyone enjoyed this part of the two-shot. The next one should be out soon.

Anyway, hope you liked it. Anyone excited for Halloween this year? I hope everyone has a fun and safe Halloween! Gets lots of candy and stay away from killer clowns! (Seriously, clowns scared me before any of this stuff started on the news.) *Shivers when I think of clowns*
See you soon with part two!
Nightmare Before Halloween Part 2 of 2

Chapter Notes

Here is part two! I hope you enjoy!

Summary: Lucy Heartfilia is excited about the Halloween party tonight thrown at everyone's favorite restaurant, Fairy Tail. That is, until something strange happens, causing her and her friends to fight for their lives for fear of being hunted down and attacked. Somewhat based on a part of the movie, "Halloweentown II: Kalabar's Revenge". Modern AU. I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does. Two-shot!

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Rated: T for cussing, slightly suggestive themes and violence.

Genre: Humor, Suspense

Word Count: 7,758

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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Nightmare Before Halloween Part 2 of 2

"Your face!"

"What's wrong with it?" Natsu asked, worried about his best friend's reactions. A second ago she was fine... but now...

Lucy couldn't form the words to describe to Natsu what she was seeing. His fake red eyes were now darker, his pupils were now slits. His canine teeth were always sharp, but now every tooth in his mouth had a pointy edge. The horns that were attached to his head by a headband were now longer, twisting at odd angles. They looked heavier, thicker, and more spaced out from before. Black marks adorned his cheeks and jaw, looking like a dark fire licked at his face.

Her eyes flitted down, seeing the black paint on his arms had shifted. Now they went up past his elbows. The dull claws on his hands were now larger, sharper, longer, and extremely intimidating. She nearly gasped when she saw the fake wings on his back spread out, the webbing between the bones looking authentic.

Daringly, she reached out and touched the edge of his wing. "Whoa!" Natsu flinched when he felt the weird sensation. His eyes snapped to his side, seeing the wings looking different. "Those aren't mine!"

"Yes... they are," Lucy inspected, eyes tracing the wings to his back. His vest was burning away around the part where his wings attached to his body. She glanced down, seeing the swinging tail behind him. "Holy crap!"
"What!!?" Natsu asked, but his voice was soon drowned out by the sound of screams. Natsu and Lucy looked around them, seeing people running and yelling for their lives. "What the hell is going on?!"

"I don't know," Lucy took a step closer to Natsu, fearing the reactions of the people around them.

It seemed for a moment that no one had noticed the blonde haired 'water-bearer' and the pink haired 'demon'. That was, until the clown from earlier stepped in front of Lucy, wearing a feral grin. Her pulse increased when she saw its bloodshot eyes staring at her while its white-gloved hands reached out. It jumped for her, causing her to shriek.

"Look out!" Natsu shouted, grabbing Lucy's arm to jerk her away from the evil clown.

Lucy heard a honk come from the clown when it bonked its nose against the food table. Any other time she would have laughed, but she couldn't now... Not with the pained scream tearing from her throat.

They both looked down, seeing Natsu's claws had pierced her skin, red streaks of blood dripping down her arm and soaking into the sleeves on her arm.

"Oh fuck!" Natsu let go of her immediately, horrified with what he did. "I'm so sorry! It was an accident!"

Lucy couldn't be bothered with the details now. She needed to figure out what the hell was happening. She looked around, seeing the bizarre scene unfold right before her eyes. She couldn't believe what she was seeing...

Vampires chased after people, screaming that they wanted to suck their blood. Werewolves howled, then clawed at anyone nearby, trying to rip them to shreds. Zombies slowly walked towards groups of people, probably trying to eat their brains, but they couldn't speak. Only grunts and groans left their mouths as they languidly moved around.

Lucy's eyes scanned the room, finally landing on her best female friend, Levy! Ignoring the pain in her arm, she grabbed Natsu's wrist, avoiding his sharp claws at all cost as she jerked him towards the blue haired girl. When they got within earshot, they both cringed at the horrific thing they heard.

"You're such a naughty boy," Levy said, her voice low and sultry. In other words, it was nothing like her actual voice. The 'sexy librarian' was talking to Gajeel, who looked to be covered in actual metal. "There's some overdue fees you need to pay for."

Natsu and Lucy watched with dropped jaws as Levy wrapped an arm around Gajeel's arm, then pulled him towards the exits. The 'iron dragon slayer' only gave a grunt in response, allowing himself to be led away. It was clear what Levy was implying.

Lucy started, "what..."

"...The actual fuck..." Natsu finished, stunned by what they saw. There was no way their shy bookworm of a friend would ever be so forward, even with the boy she liked.

Before Lucy could say anything else on the matter, she felt something weird rub against her leg. She squealed at the foreign sensation, scaring the ram that had ventured towards her.

"Why is there a sheep here!" Lucy screamed, startling the poor animal again.
"I think it's a ram," Natsu said, though he didn't know why he bothered correcting her. His head was spinning, trying to figure out what was going on.

"Does that really matter?" Lucy bent down, seeing the frightened creature. She saw a faint pink tint to the wool on its head, giving her a shuttering thought. "...Aries?"

"What?" Natsu tried to bend down, but the bottoms of his wings prevented him from doing so, resulting in the boy standing up instead.

"I think this is Aries," Lucy said, though she didn't sound very convinced.

"Well if that's Aries..." Natsu started, "then where's...?"

A loud roar came from behind them, jolting Lucy up in an instant. They turned around, seeing a massive lion standing proud in the middle of Fairy Tail.

"Holy fucking shit!" Natsu took a step back, never coming face to face with a lion in his life. "The hell is a lion doing here!"

"Loke?" Lucy tried, but the lion didn't seem to register her word. "I think that's Loke..."

"What are we supposed to do?" Natsu looked at Aries, realizing something horrible. "It wants to eat her!"

"What?!" Lucy quickly spun around, trying to grab the ram but failing since it was too heavy. She ended up pushing it, successfully moving it away. "I'll take care of her! You handle him!"

"Why do I gotta do it?" Natsu yelled back, but Lucy was already gone. He cringed when he heard the lion again. "Well... This might get messy."

It was indeed messy.

Natsu wrestled with the lion after it tried to pounce on him. The 'demon' was shocked by his newfound strength. He grabbed the lion, hoisting it up to carry it to the kitchen where he released it. He accidentally clawed up the lion in the process, but the wounds didn't look too bad. After locking the door and securing it with a chair 'just to be safe', he went back to the main area to look for Lucy.

Natsu found the girl leaving the bar, closing the little door behind her. He rushed over, seeing she locked Aries behind the bar.

"She should be safe there," Lucy frowned, looking back at the ram. "For now..."

Natsu glanced around, seeing that most of the people had left Fairy Tail. He could still hear screaming, though it now came from outside. "Okay, what the hell is going on?"

"I have no idea," Lucy's eyebrows furrowed together as she tried to think. "I've never seen something like this happen before."

"Me either..."

"Let's get out of here," Lucy started walking to the exit.

"Good idea."

They took two steps before stopping when water splashed up on them. Lucy looked down,
screaming when she saw a large puddle of water on the floor.

"What's wrong?" Natsu quickly looked down, wondering what she was freaking out over.

"It's Juvia!"

Natsu took a closer look, seeing their friend's eyes reflecting in the water. Her umbrella she brought to go along with her costume was also there, resting by the puddle.

"Gray! My darling Gray! Where have you gone!"

Both Natsu and Lucy screamed when they heard the puddle talk, using the same voice as Juvia. "Oh my gosh! It really is her!"

"What do we do?!" Lucy asked, frantically trying to come up with a plan but failing to do so under the stress.

"Juvia!" Natsu yelled down at the puddle. Those blue eyes moved, now looking up at the pink haired 'demon'. He flinched when he saw her stare. "We... We're gonna go find Gray for you! He... He might know what to do."

Truthfully both of them doubted Gray would know anymore than they did, but it was worth a shot. If anything it might at least calm down the... the puddle...

"Please! Bring me my darling!" Juvia's voice came from the water again, still freaking out the two standing teens.

"We will," Lucy promised, then moved around the puddle. "Sorry for stepping in you!"

"Just don't touch Gray and I will forgive you!"

Lucy could barely groan in frustration before Natsu told her to follow him. He led the way outside, seeing it just as chaotic as Fairy Tail had been. People screamed, fires were started, and somehow someone had turned a car upside down. It looked like a riot just took place.

They ran through the town, searching for anyone familiar. Lucy's heart clenched when she saw a group of zombies devouring a screaming child. She already knew it was too late to save him, just like it was too late to save the woman being ripped apart by a werewolf.

The only silver lining was a few people dressed as superheros were trying to save the day, but even they weren't enough to stop the carnage. The evil now lurking in Magnolia was too much for the good guys to defeat. It was looking hopeless...

Until...

"There!" Lucy pointed, seeing a head of red hair she'd recognize anywhere. "It's Erza!"

Natsu looked, seeing their friend with her back turned to them down the road. They both ran harder, trying to get to her as fast as they could despite the burning in their lungs. If anyone could figure out what was going on, it was her! She always had a 'take charge' attitude, which was exactly what they needed right now.

"Erza!" Natsu shouted, trying to get her attention.

They both slowed down when they saw their friend draw her sword, lifting it high in the air. Her back was still facing them as she said, "I will kill you for what you did to Simon!"
Natsu and Lucy stopped, then looked at each other. They seemed to have the same question on their minds. 'Who's Simon?'

They never got an answer, because all they heard was a loud scream of pain when her sword came down. Natsu ran, trying to find out what happened. He gasped when he saw Jellal kneeling in front of Erza, a bloody gash in his shoulder.

Before Natsu could do anything to stop Erza, she struck Jellal again. The screams stopped.

"What the hell did you do?!" Natsu growled, seeing his blue haired friend's lifeless body fall to the ground.

The redhead snapped her attention to Natsu, snarling as she raised her sword again. "I shall slay you demon!" She appeared to have forgotten all about Jellal as she lunged for Natsu.

He jumped back, surprised once again by the strength that seemed to come with his weird transformation. Deciding he didn't want to challenge Erza - he had lost enough times to her in the past, he quickly ran, scooping up Lucy in the process before high tailing it out of there.

They both heard Erza screaming, running after them, but Natsu was faster. The wind blew violently against her face. Lucy almost felt like they were flying from how fast he ran. She glanced down, seeing his feet were no longer on the ground. Her eyes widened.

"Natsu!"

He looked down, but didn't stop. It was only then that she saw his giant wings flapping, keeping them afloat. "What the heck is going on!"

"I honestly have no idea," Natsu said, though his voice started to grow deeper for a moment. He coughed, trying to clear his throat. Lucy would have commented on it, but she didn't get a chance as Natsu abruptly stopped. "I see Gray!"

Natsu set Lucy on the ground, luckily not stabbing her with his vicious claws while doing so. She watched as the pink haired 'demon' rushed over to their friend. Gray was crouched down, staring at his hands.

Lucy looked around, seeing the area they were in was mostly deserted. She still heard screams in the distance, but it wasn't nearly as bad as before. She just hoped whatever hell they stepped into would be ending soon. She had seen Jellal's body hit the ground, but fortunately didn't see Erza striking him with her sword. She didn't know what got into their red haired friend, but it seemed like she wasn't in the right mind to explain things even if they had decided to stick around.

Gray was always level-headed, keeping a cool personality despite his struggles. If anyone could solve this, it would be him... She hoped.

"Gray! Juvia's looking for you!" Natsu called out, his voice not sounding quite the same. It changed between normal and weird at the most bizarre times.

Lucy flinched a little, a strange fear washing over her from the darkness that seemed to be present in his tone. "Natsu..." She murmured, but he didn't seem to notice since he was now shaking Gray's shoulders.

"Snap out of it! Hey! Look at me!" Natsu tried to get his friend's attention, but Gray's face was absent emotions. His icy blue eyes were dull, still staring down at his hands. "She's... She's dead..."
"What?" Natsu cocked his head. "Who's dead?"

"Juvia..."

Both Natsu and Lucy tensed. 'Does... Does he think she died?' Lucy was about to tell Gray that she was alive, just in the form of a puddle on the ground in Fairy Tail, but no words escaped her when she saw the black marks on Gray's body grow, covering more of his pale skin.

"SHE'S DEAD!" Gray screamed, hands coming up to tug at his raven hair. "YOU KILLED HER!"

Natsu recoiled, "what?"

"YOU KILLED HER!" Gray slammed his hands together, purple and blue mist surrounding his hand in an instant. "I'll make you pay, END!"

"What the hell are you-" Natsu didn't get to finish, because a blast of ice shot out from Gray's hands, nailing the 'demon' right in the stomach to send him backwards.

Natsu snarled, his clawed hands grabbing at his stomach where it burned cold. "You fucking stripper!" The 'demon' stood up, the whites around his eyes turning black just as flames erupted from his body. "I'll kill you for touching me!"

Lucy stumbled back, her eyes wide and her mouth open. Natsu's voice sounded harsh, deep, almost demonic. She shook her head, trying to get rid of his words still echoing in her head. The Natsu she knew was a little violent, but he certainly wasn't a killer!

The Natsu she loved was slowly fading, disappearing as a demonic force took control of his body. The flames increased, encasing him in the brilliant light. Flickers of black fire danced with the red, until soon it was consuming the lighter flames until all that remained was the darkness.

Natsu growled, his wings expanding, his tail swinging, and his claws growing in size. He was ready for a fight.

Both males lunged at each other, punching wherever their fists could strike. Lucy had to dodge a few stray arrows made of ice and a ball or two of fire that came too close. Blood began to drip from their bodies the longer the fight went on, neither giving up for even a moment.

Lucy tried screaming for them to stop, but it was as if she was mute. The males fought, Natsu's demonic claws ripping at Gray's flesh while he used his newfound ice magic to seal up the wounds and attack back.

Deciding she'd seen enough, the 'water-bearer' started running towards them, hoping she could break them up. Instead, she got hit by a blast of ice on one side and a searing hot fist of fire on the other side. She screamed in agonizing pain, feeling her body throb from the horrible sensation.

"LUCY!" Natsu roared, his voice striking fear in her down to her bones despite his caring undertone.

She couldn't take it anymore. She had to get out of there and away from the danger, even if that meant getting away from her friends.

With no destination in mind, Lucy took off, running as fast as her legs would take her until she could no longer hear the vicious growls from the pink haired 'demon'.

Lucy barely saw where she was going, her vision blurred from her stinging tears. When she finally
stopped to catch her breath, she realized she was in front of Magnolia's high school.

She looked around, seeing a large group of zombies coming her way. They were still down the block, but they moved faster than they did earlier. Deciding she'd be safer inside, she crashed through the double doors of the school, not looking back as she ran down a hall.

It was quiet inside the building, aside from the sound of her footsteps. She ran to the Astrology classroom since it always made her feel better being in that class. She locked the door behind her, but it didn't seem to matter in the end.

"Well hello Lulu!"

Lucy shivered when she heard Dan's voice. She turned around, seeing the brown haired 'vampire' walking towards her from the corner of the classroom.

"What are you doing here?" Lucy asked, still a little breathless from the run over. Her heart pounded in her chest, her legs throbbed with a dull ache. She was in no mood to deal with Dan and his horrible flirting. She made an attempt to reach for the door when she felt a hand on her shoulder.

"Not so fast," he laughed, arms coming around her to hold her tight. In the worst 'Dracula' voice he could muster, Dan said, "I want to suck your blood."

Despite being held against her will, Lucy couldn't help but laugh at the stupid accent he used. "You have got to be kidding me!"

Without skipping a beat, she felt teeth graze her neck, "I'm not!"

Lucy let out a piercing scream, struggling against the hold he had on her with all her strength. She pulled her leg forward, then slammed it backwards, hitting him hard in the knee.

"Fuck!" Dan shouted, still using that terrible accent.

With his arms loosened, she wiggled away from him easily. Lucy unlocked the door, racing down the halls to put as much distance between her and Dan as possible. She heard his footsteps behind her, heard the sound of him calling her name, but she ignored it all in favor of escaping.

She came across the double doors leading outside, but to her surprise, they were chained up and locked. "What the heck?" She didn't have time to mull over it as she heard Dan approaching faster than before.

Lucy ducked into the nearest room to her, shocked to find it was the school's gym. With the lights off, she couldn't see a thing. With any luck, that meant Dan couldn't see her either if he happened to stumble upon the room.

Running in a random direction, Lucy crashed against a wall. "Ouch!" She rubbed her sore nose, convinced it was probably bleeding from the impact.

Before she could attempt to find out, she saw light shine in the gym when Dan opened the door. She saw his dark figure enter before the door closed, surrounding her in the pitch black scenery.

"I can smell your blood, Lulu!"

Lucy cringed, realizing she was bleeding. She had nothing to defend herself with as he closed in on her. She'd have to fight him with her fists and her legs. Hopefully a good 'Lucy Kick' would take
him out so she could escape, but she was at a disadvantage since she couldn't see anything.

Just as she felt hands grab her arms, she screamed. She felt something powerful well up inside her, then release around her body. Dan yelled as a blast of water shot out from Lucy, sending him backwards.

"What the hell was that?" Dan wasn't the only one confused. Lucy had no idea what happened. She felt the burst of energy, but she had no logical explanation for it.

That didn't stop her from using it again when she heard Dan walking towards her again. The water seemed to know where to attack, trying to keep her body safe. It worked for the most part, but in the end, it was only water.

"Gotta!" The 'vampire' laughed maniacally when he grabbed her arms again, this time holding on tight despite the next round of water. "You're not getting away from me!"

Lucy was about to scream for help, but she doubted anyone would be able to hear her over the dangerous roar that came from beyond the gym.

Both Lucy and Dan froze from the noise, scared of whatever made that sound. The moment flashed by in the blink of an eye, the door to the gym slammed open, then fell off the door frame and onto the floor.

The only thing they could make out was a body standing where the door once stood. However, it didn't look like a normal person since it clearly had wings and horns. The light from the hall shined behind them, masking the person's face, but Lucy could tell who it was. Her heart always beat differently when he was around.

"Natsu!"

Despite being scared of him, she knew deep down he would never hurt her. She could trust him! Especially when it came to taking care of Dan.

Red eyes flickered, zeroing in on the blonde teenager and the guy holding her arms.

"YOU!" Natsu's voice was almost unrecognizable.

"Nat...su..." Lucy muttered, her body trembling as a new wave of fear took over.

Whoever was at the door was not Natsu.

It was a true demon.

"I'll fucking murder you!" The demon's wings flapped as he jumped forward, flying through the air at a speed Lucy couldn't fathom. She could barely see with the low lighting, but she distinctly saw Natsu's clawed hands grip Dan's throat before ripping him away from Lucy.

The demon threw Dan's body across the gym, his form smacking against the wall with a sickening splat sound. Lucy's stomach twisted as she thought, 'is he dead?'

Lucy didn't want the answer.

She didn't want to know if Natsu was in fact a murderer. Even if Dan was attacking her, that didn't warrant him a death sentence. She looked at the demon standing in front of her, watching as blood dripped from his claws, only to pool on the gym's floor.
She didn't want to, but Lucy's mouth opened, a single word slipping past her tongue.

"Natsu?"

The demon spun around in an instant, causing her to recoil in surprise. His red eyes glowed, but that wasn't what frightened her. It was the sharp teeth that showed when he gave her a toothy grin. Any other day that would have made her heart leap in happiness, but now all it did was make her want to vomit.

Staining those pearly whites was a crimson liquid. It didn't take long for Lucy to realize that he hadn't bitten Dan... So the blood was from someone else.

"Natsu?" She tried again, her voice strained as she fought off tears. Her bottom lip quivered as she tried to move past her new sickness. "Wh... What happened to Gray?"

The demon cocked his head, his tail swaying languidly behind him. That toothy grin vanished as his eyebrows furrowed together. "Gray?" He looked as if he didn't know what the word meant.

"Our friend..."

The curious expression on his face grew as he examined the word in his head. "No more Gray," he finally said, though his voice sounded distant. He took a step closer to her, causing her to step back. She pressed against the wall, no longer able to escape his gaze.

"Just Lucy."

A tear finally escaped her watery eyes. "What did y-you do to Gr-Gray?"

The demon's lips stretched into a feral smile. Instead of answering her, he leaned in, taking a deep inhale to collect her scent. "You smell good," he growled, his hot breath fanning over her face. "I'm glad he didn't get to taste you."

Lucy felt her heart beating like a drum, her throat going dry as she tried to say, "w-why?"

He answered by moving his lips to the right side of her neck, his tongue coming out to taste her skin. She tensed when she felt that hot tongue slide up her throat. Natsu's clawed hands grabbed her waist gently, though she had to fight off a cringe when she felt that wetness touch her stomach.

There was no use denying what was touching her.

It was blood.

Probably the blood of Gray or Dan, but she couldn't be certain.

Despite her twisting stomach, she felt warm from the way he touched her. Even though they'd never touched like this before, it somehow felt familiar, as if her body knew all along this was how Natsu would touch her.

Her mind blanked when she felt him kiss her sensitive skin. Her resolve crumbled under his fiery touches. She didn't know what was coming over her, because all she knew was she didn't want it to end.

He sucked at her neck, drawing out an odd sensation in her. Forgetting about how terrifying he was for a moment, she indulged, actually humming as she received her very first hickey.
Natsu growled, his sharp teeth scrapping along her neck. He finally answered the question she'd asked moments before. "Because," he opened his mouth wide. "I want to taste you!"

And just like that, Lucy cried out in agony as she felt Natsu's teeth pierce her skin. She thrashed, trying to get away from the demon, but it was pointless. He held her against the wall, not letting her go for anything.

Lucy felt the warm liquid pouring from her neck. She was bleeding, badly. She screamed for him to stop, but it only spurred him on to bite her harder. She swore she felt her skin rip, but she didn't know for sure because she couldn't see.

Her vision blurred as she lost blood, her body already feeling weak as he drained her. She guessed that he hit an artery, but there was no telling. She'd be surprised if she walked away from this alive.

Lucy stopped screaming, her throat sore on the inside and outside.

The demon pulled away, licking his lips clean, though his chin was still smeared with the red liquid. He looked down at her, smiling at the trembling girl. "Mine!"

Summoning her strength, Lucy lifted her arm and slapped him hard. He merely laughed, taunting her as he said, "you'll have to do better than that!"

He stepped away from her, giving her the opportunity to run. She hobbled instead, her body feeling light and heavy at the same time. She had a bad sense of direction as she tried to go to the door. It felt like the room spinning, but it was only her body swaying as she tried to walk in a straight line.

Lucy grabbed at the bite wound, feeling her blood seep through her fingers. As if getting some sort of enjoyment out of this, Natsu laughed again.

Lucy turned her head, trying to see where he was. She let out a surprised sound when she saw he was right behind her, even though she hadn't heard him heading her way. It made sense, seeing as her hearing was fading, just like her consciousness.

"Come here, Lucy," the demon grinned, blood dripping from his sharp teeth. "I want another bite! The first one wasn't enough."

Lucy stumbled back in shock, falling to the ground and landing hard on her butt. Her hand was still on her neck, trying to stop the bleeding. It was no use, her right side was covered in the crimson liquid, staining her fair skin and costume.

She wondered why that water magic wasn't working on Natsu like it worked on Dan. She tried to summon it again, but it was no use. Deep down she felt like maybe it wasn't working because Natsu was still her best friend... He was still the person he loved. Maybe that was enough to keep the magic at bay, but only hindered her right now.

In a last-ditch effort, she started begging for him to stop. "Please! Get back Natsu! This isn't you!"

"Oh, but it is," the demon hovered over her, eyes raking over her body before his tongue came out to flicker over his lips. "You look so tasty! I could eat you up!"

Lucy's cheeks blushed on their own accord. She knew the demon meant it in a malicious way, but her mind jumped straight to a Lewd thought. She shook her head, trying to get rid of the ridiculous idea.
It was easier than she thought it would be when she felt his hands grabbing her arms, forcibly shaking her as he laughed. "Lucy! What's going on?!"

Everything turned fuzzy as he continued to jostle her body like a rag doll. "Lucy! Are you okay?! Wake up!"

"Wh-what?" She didn't know if she asked the question or not, her mind was already slipping away. She had lost a lot of blood, her head falling back as she gave up. He could kill her if he wanted to. She had no strength to fight anymore.

If she had to die by someone's hands, she figured it'd be best to die by his. Murder was a crime of passion after all. She just wished she could have told him she loved him before he turned into a demon.

"Na...atsu... I... ove... y-" She passed out as Natsu screamed her name.

"Lucy!"

Lucy's hazy eyes snapped open, blinking them until her vision cleared. Natsu hovered over her, red eyes gazing down at her with his sharp teeth exposed. "AHHHH!" She screamed, kicking at him to get away from her. "Don't bite me!"

"Huh?" Natsu pulled back, barely avoiding one of her feet. "Who's trying to bite you?"

Lucy scooted away, not aware that everyone was staring at her. Her hand came up to her neck, covering where he just bit her a moment ago. "You are!"

"What?" He blinked at her, a blush forming over his cheeks. "I'm not tryin' ta bite ya..."

"Yes you are! You already did, see!" She held out her hand, shocked when she saw it wasn't covered in blood. "Wait a minute... It was just..." She looked up, seeing the confused faces of everyone around her. "What's going on?"

"That's what I wanna know!" Natsu said, gaining her attention once more. "I left to go get you something to drink and Dan here says you fell on the ground. Said you hit your head pretty hard. Are you okay?"

Lucy glanced over at Dan, seeing he was no longer the vicious vampire from earlier. Instead he was just the dumb kid with fake fangs in his mouth. Behind him stood Loke and Aries, no longer in their animal forms.

"I... I don't know..."

"Come on," Natsu held out his hand, waiting for her to accept it.

She was hesitant. Natsu had turned into a demon, he had bit her, but now there was no evidence of that. He was just offering her help. She took his hand, letting him lift her to her feet.

"Let's get you over to Porlyusica." Fairy Tail hired her in case anyone got injured. Natsu ignored the many stares they received, instead bringing her over to the older lady to get checked out.

While the woman looked over Lucy, the music started up again, filling the air with the loud noise. A chill ran down Lucy's spine when "Thriller" came on. She felt déjà vu in the worst way.

After a checkup from the woman, she was cleared. There didn't appear to be anything wrong with
her, so there was no reason to keep her away from the party.

Lucy and Natsu walked a few feet away before Lucy shook her head. "I think I need some fresh air..."

"Okay, yeah," he nodded, wanting to do whatever it took to get her feeling better. They got their tickets stamped for reentry, then went outside to the parking lot.

When Lucy asked what happened, Natsu explained. "I came back and found you on the ground. Dan said someone bumped into you and you hit your head on the ground. Shortly after that, they cut off the music and called for help. You were only out for a minute or so."

He let her soak in the information, then asked, "are you really okay? You had me worried."

"I feel fine," she said, feeling a lot better now. Seeing everyone in their costumes and not as the actual creatures they dressed up as helped a lot. She didn't know how much more she could handle in that nightmare. "I guess that's what it was..."

"What?"

Lucy looked into his red eyes, wishing she could see his green orbs again. At first the contacts looked cool, but now she missed how he actually looked. "I had a nightmare..."

"Must've been a pretty bad one..." He blushed, looking at the ground. "Thinkin' I was tryin' to bite ya and stuff..."

She giggled, realizing how silly she must have looked. "It was a little scary. Everyone turned into what they were dressed as."

"How so?" Natsu's eyes flitted up to her, seeing the blonde was still laughing.

"Well, you see..." She explained what happened in her nightmare, everything from how she elbowed Dan until Natsu was about to bite her for a second time. She left out some parts, not wanting to admit just how graphic her dream became towards the end. When she was finished, she took a deep breath. Her throat was dry, making her wish she had gotten that drink after all.

"Wow... That's pretty crazy," he smiled at her, "you're really weird."

"Am not!"

"Oh you're the weirdest! Who else dreams of stuff like that!"

She puffed out her cheeks, but she couldn't deny his accusations for very long. It had been a bizarre dream, filled with stuff she'd never think of in real life. The blonde wanted to laugh again. She felt her creative juices flowing, wanting to write out everything from the dream before her mind forgot it.

However, as she started trying to remember more about it, she found herself already forgetting some parts. She was glad she told Natsu, hoping he could remember for her and help her out if she needed it.

"So," Natsu cupped the back of his neck, chewing on his bottom lip for a moment before asking, "you said this all happened at midnight?"

"That's when the magic or curse or whatever it was started. Right at midnight everyone started
changing." She sighed, glad it was all just a nightmare. "Why do you ask?"

The pink haired boy clenched his fist, then released them. "I uh... Kinda had something planned... for midnight." He couldn't hold her gaze, terrified of her reaction. "I was gonna ask you something..."

"Ask me what?" Lucy cocked her head, trying to find his eyes, but they were blocked by his bangs. "Natsu?"

He took a deep breath, then reached into his pocket. He pulled out a small, black velvet box. "I... I had something I wanted to tell ya, but I'm nervous as hell. You know I'm no good with words."

Lucy's eyes were trained on the box in his hand, her heartbeat picking up speed as she wondered what the hell was inside it. She wanted to be patient, but her curiosity was winning the internal battle with herself. "What is it?"

He sighed, thumb rubbing over the box to try to soothe his nerves. "I'm gonna tell you something, but you gotta promise not to freak out." Natsu finally looked up, locking eyes with her. "This is yours to keep no matter what happens. I got it for you," he held out the box, waiting for her to accept it.

'He got me something?' A shaky hand came out to gently pluck the box from his warm hands. Her fingers traced over the velvet, afraid to open it but excited to see what was inside. She decided to wait, wanting to hear what he had to say first.

Seeing that she wasn't going to open it, he nodded, understanding what she wanted. "So, I was just thinkin' that tonight would be a good night to do it. We met two years ago on Halloween, so I was gonna wait until midnight to tell ya so it would be exactly two years..." He was rambling, stalling the inevitable.

Natsu ground his teeth together before finally saying, "I wanted to tell you that I like ya."

Lucy took in a quick inhale, staring at her best friend. "You... like me?"

"Yeah..." He felt the heat swirl in his cheeks, but there was nothing he could do to stop it. He was laying it all out, putting himself out there for potential rejection. He'd never liked a girl before Lucy, so he wasn't exactly sure how he was supposed to confess.

"As... a friend?" She hoped he would say no. Lucy didn't know if she could take it if he said he just liked her as a friend. She could easily see herself running away from him, escaping the embarrassment.

Slowly, he shook his head. "No... As m-more than a fr-friend..." He stammered, unsure of himself. He didn't realize confessing would be so nerve wrecking. Usually he was confident in himself, but now... Under Lucy's gaze he felt so small. He'd never felt this way about a person before, so he was terrified of admitting his feelings.

"You like like me?" She asked. Even in the cold air she started sweating. 'Stupid nerves!'

"Yeah," he breathed out. Natsu wanted to tell her more, but he held back. The truth was that he loved her. He had loved her for longer than he could remember. His heart was drawn to her like a magnet, wanting to be closer to the golden haired goddess.

"D-do you..." His voice tapered off, terrified of her rejection.
"Yes!" Lucy answered, not giving him much time to doubt. "I mean," she choked up, embarrassed for her outburst. "I like you too! I have for a while now." She decided not to tell him she loved him just yet.

"You do?" He looked surprised by her answer.

"Of course! I thought I was being obvious!" She glanced down at her hand, seeing the box. "Should I open it?"

"Unless you wanna just display the box?" It was meant as a joke, but his nervous tone shined through. He was excited that Lucy liked him too, but for some reason that made him panic a little. He never thought he'd get this far. He never thought he'd fall in love.

Lucy giggled, feeling her heart leaping in her chest. 'He likes me too!' She couldn't believe how happy it made her! She carefully opened the box, gasping when she saw what was inside.

"Oh, Natsu! It's beautiful!"

She slowly pulled out a gold necklace. At the end was a golden key with the symbol of Aquarius carved into it in blue. "It's, whoa," she marveled at its beauty.

Natsu cupped the back of his neck, feeling the beads of sweat clinging to his skin despite the cold October air. "I-I wanted to get ya something that matched your costume. I didn't know if you wanted gold or silver... It's real gold by the way... I know that doesn't matter, but in case you wanted to know..."

When Lucy smiled up at him, he felt his heart slam against his chest. He was winded from the feeling. "Wanted to... I mean, I wanted to get ya a ring, but I didn't know the size... of your finger that is," he gnawed on his bottom lip for a second.

"Plus a ring would be kinda soon," his eyes widened when he realized what he implied, "not sayin' I'm planning on anything like that! I mean, I'd like to see how things go between us, only if you're interested that is... But I wouldn't be opposed to that, in the future... with you..."

During his stammering his tan face had changed from a pale pink, to the color of his hair, then to a red that rivaled even Erza's hair. Lucy couldn't help but think he was adorable. Natsu was always so carefree, so to see him this worked up over her was interesting.

"Thank you, Natsu," Lucy's brown eyes softened as she gazed at the nervous teen.

He gulped, feeling a strain in his throat. "Can I ask you something..."

Lucy cocked her head a bit. "What is it?" She was so happy that he returned her feelings, even if it was just liking her. She could ease in to telling him that she loved him later.

Natsu took a deep breath before finally asking, "Lucy, will you be my girlfr-" He was cut off when she placed a finger over his lips. Natsu looked down at her with a dumbfound expression.

Lucy smiled, "Wait until midnight to ask me."

He cocked his head, "why?"

"Because," the blonde held back a giggle as her face flushed. "I know I'll say yes to that question, but I'd rather you ask on Halloween..."
"Because?"

"Because," she started, "then our anniversary will really be on Halloween."

Natsu found himself grinning, his sharp teeth exposed before nodding. "I can do that."

"Good," she took his hand, leading him back inside. "Until then, let's go party!"

"Alright! I'm all fired up now!"

The two teens entered Fairy Tail once again, this time closer than before. They met up with their friends, telling everyone that Lucy was okay and there was nothing to worry about. Lucy decided to hold off on telling them about her dream, not wanting to make things weirder than they already were for the night.

When Lucy said she was thirsty, Natsu led her to the food tables so she could get some punch. Lucy tried to ignore the way her heart jolted when she saw a single 'kiss' candy laying under the table. 'It's just a coincidence!'

At least that's what she hoped.

After she got her drink, Natsu and Lucy went to dance. It was a little difficult maneuvering with his wings and tail, but he made it work. Lucy helped out a lot, having learned how to dance at a young age. She realized Natsu's earlier dance moves were just from her dream. That should have been her first clue that things weren't right, since the Natsu she knew and loved had two left feet.

They stayed wrapped up in each other's arms for the next hour, excited and nervous for when the clock struck midnight. Lucy was glad it was a woman announcing the countdown since it showed that already things weren't repeating themselves. Natsu had an arm around Lucy's shoulder as everyone began to count.

"FIVE!"

Natsu looked down at the gorgeous girl under his arm, feeling lucky as hell that they were about to officially become a couple.

"FOUR!"

Lucy's head tipped up, smiling wide at the pink haired boy. Her heart fluttered while her stomach flipped, but it was all worth it for what was about to happen.

"THREE!"

Natsu began leaning in, red eyes closing and grip on her shoulder tightening.

"TWO!"

When Natsu's eyes were closed, he looked normal. The red eyes scared her, but like this, he looked so peaceful. She leaned in too.

"ONE!"

Natsu and Lucy were already kissing, hands coming up to hold the other while their lips pressed against each other. Lucy noted how hot the 'demon's' lips were, while Natsu noticed how soft and plump the 'water-bearer's' lips felt against his own.
Even when they heard people cheering and the music starting up again, the two continued to kiss, oblivious to the world around them. All that mattered in that moment was being together. Lucy was just glad to be in Natsu's arms and not the demon's arms who tried to devour her from her nightmare. Everything seemed normal, and that was more than all right with her.

When someone bumped into Natsu's fake wings, he jolted away from the kiss. He checked his costume, making sure nothing had been knocked loose. Feeling confident that his costume was alright, he turned to look down at Lucy.

"Luce," he started, feeling himself already sweating from nerves. "Will you be my girlfriend?"

The blonde teen smiled, nodding her head as she said, "yes!"

They both leaned in again, sealing the deal with a kiss. As they pulled away, they heard a round of applause. Natsu and Lucy's heads snapped to the sound, seeing all their friends gathered around them.

"About time," Gray said, one hand on his hip.

"Juvia is glad that love rival will no longer be after her darling Gray."

"Natsu," Erza warned in a threatening tone, "you better be good to her... Or else."

"I'm so happy for you Lu!" Levy cheered, clutching her books to her chest.

"I guess congrats," Gajeel muttered with only mild interest in the new development.

Jellal only nodded, not speaking a word.

Natsu and Lucy didn't know who to respond to, so they looked at each other, then laughed. "Guess that works," Natsu grinned, wrapping an arm around Lucy's waist. "Who wants to party!"

They all cheered, getting back into the groove of things to dance again. Natsu kept a close eye on Lucy, not wanting her to fall again and have another crazy nightmare. Lucy couldn't complain, loving how attentive he was to her. The rest of the night went by without any more incidents.

They danced, ate, laughed, talked, and of course kissed some more. It was the perfect Halloween night for the new couple. Lucy didn't even wish they'd gotten together sooner. Tonight just seemed oddly perfect. But that's how she liked things with Natsu.

It would be weird if things were normal between them.

She wouldn't their relationship any other way.

THE END.

Chapter End Notes

Yay! Another NALU story! This one was way longer than my last one, so it had to be a two-shot! I'll be posting another Halloween story soon. It's a one-shot I wrote last
night. Literally it was 2 in the morning and my brain felt like it was the perfect time to think of story ideas. I couldn't get to sleep until I got it written down, which somehow ended up being 6k words. So... I guess you'll have that to read as well soon. (It's actually connected to this story. :) Sorta like an epilogue.)

Let me know what you thought of this two-shot! I love hearing from you!

I'm gonna play some video games now... I think I earned it, lol.
I'd rather have a treat

Chapter Notes

So I was in bed, trying to go to sleep. It was 2AM, and for some reason my brain thought, "hey... You wanna know what would make a good one-shot?" Thus resulting in me staying up, laptop in bed, typing this story to get it out of my head. Oh shit... I rhymed!

Summary: Halloween is here! Natsu and Lucy get into the spirit, deciding to throw a party before trick or treating! NALU, Modern AU. I don't own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does.

Rated: T for adult situations and slight cursing.

Genre: Humor, Friendship, Romance

Pairing: Nalu, Gajevy, Gruvia, Jerza

Word count: 6,175

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I'd rather have a treat

It all started with a simple trip to the store. Lucy needed another composition notebook for class, and Natsu needed a new basketball because somehow he managed to pop another one. It was only supposed to take ten minutes tops, but when they walked by the Halloween section, they both lost track of time.

"This is adorable!" Lucy lifted the woman's costume high enough for Natsu to see.

His green eyes flitted from the bottle of fake blood in his hand up to what his girlfriend was showing him. He grinned, knowing the full-body leopard print suit would look fantastic on her. Especially since she tended to wear clothes that clung to her body, revealing her curves. "Looks great," he said, earning a smile from her. "Don't expect me to match ya though."

Lucy merely giggled, tucking the costume under her arm to look around at other things. She was pretty sure she was going to get it, but it didn't hurt to see what else the store sold.

By the end of the shopping trip, they had a cart full of Halloween party supplies, costumes, a cape -for some reason-, and a fog machine. The couple were halfway to Lucy's house before they realized they forgot to get her notebook or his ball, resulting in a U-turn and another long look through the Halloween section 'just in case' they missed something the first time.

Lucy smiled at the set up. Erza, Levy, Juvia and her spent all day setting up for the party, wanting to get everything perfect before they guys arrived. All four girls shared a house off-campus, wanting some freedom from the college life. After spending their first year in the dorms, they realized they wanted some privacy. That led to them renting the three bedroom house. Erza, Levy, and Lucy all had their own rooms, while Juvia had the basement. Juvia protested at first, but when
the girls told her why she should stay there, she couldn't help but agree.

The basement was nearly soundproof, making it better when her fiancé, Gray, came over. They could get quite noisy when they were alone.

Lucy looked at the girls, loving their costumes almost as much as she loved her own. She decided to spruce up her costume since she felt like the body suit wasn't enough. She attached a small orange ghost charm to the end of her tail. She was relieved when she realized it wouldn't weigh down the tail. Lucy pulled her blonde hair into pigtails with black bows that looked almost like bats. She wouldn't admit it out loud, but the reason she wore her hair like that was because she knew how much her boyfriend loved it.

Resting on the top of her head was a pair of black cat ears, giving her a playful look. Around her neck she wore a red collar which Lucy knew would get Natsu's attention easily. Not only was it a little sexy, but it was also in his favorite color.

Lucy's eyes moved until they landed on Juvia. The blue haired girl really jumped out of her comfort zone this year. She wore a tight black tank top with black leggings. Carefully sewn on her clothes were white bones to make her look like a living skeleton. She wore arm sleeves that matched her outfit, as well as a small black top hat that sat on her head of blue curls.

Lucy smiled, then looked over at Erza. This year she went as a witch, though in Lucy's opinion it seemed more like it was a 'sexy witch', but Erza assured her it was just a normal one. The top was a corset, revealing a generous amount of her cleavage. She had a cute orange bow around her neck, matching the little bits of orange adorning her black corset, skirt, and witch's hat. Just for fun the redhead carried a broom around with her, one end had straw for sweeping while the other end had a small pumpkin charm attached to it.

"When are the guys coming over?" Levy asked, checking the oven to see if the roasted pumpkin seeds were done. Satisfied with the golden brown color, she removed them to let them cool.

Lucy's eyes were now trained on Levy. Every time she looked at her today she had to remind herself that her friend was just in costume. Levy's blue hair was hidden under a blonde wig. It looked incredibly weird, but it wouldn't make much sense for Tinkerbell to have blue hair. The wig was pulled into a bun, her petite body adorned in a green dress. She wore silver high heels, probably wanting to shorten the distance between her and her tall boyfriend. On her back she wore a pair of fairy wings, completing her outfit.

"Should be any minute," Lucy said, pulling out her phone to text her boyfriend. Before she could bring up her messaging app, they heard a knock on the door. "I'll get it!"

As she went to answer the door, she heard Erza start up some music. When Lucy opened the door, she was greeted by four dressed up males. Each one was dressed up differently.

Jellal wore a white button-up shirt with a black vest over it. His slacks were black, matching his vest and cape. Looking at the white, half-faced mask he wore, it was easy to figure out he was dressed as the Phantom of the Opera.

Gray was shirtless - which was no surprise to anyone. His costume matched his fiancée's. His body was painted with white bones, resembling a skeleton. He wore black pants with white bones designed on the fabric. Hanging off the side of his face was an orange skull mask. He was smiling, obviously proud of his handy work.

Gajeel was dressed as a pirate. It seemed to match Levy, who was dressed as Tinkerbell. His black
hair was curled - which looked extremely weird considering no one had ever seen his hair like that before. He wore a red coat, with black pants and brown boots. He had a pirate's hat on his head and a fake parrot on his shoulder. On his right hand he held a prop, making it look as if he had a hook for a hand.

Lucy felt a little jealous that two of her friends convinced their significant others to wear matching costumes. The only reason she wasn't upset was because Erza and Jellal weren't matching, and she knew Natsu really loved Halloween. She didn't want to dictate what he wore, even though after getting a look at him, she realized she should maybe reconsider that idea for next year.

Natsu's costume was a little more 'complex'. In other words, it was strange and didn't make much sense. His body was covered in a black, long-sleeved shirt, black pants, black boots, and a black cape. At the trim of the cape was an orange fire design that seemed to whip in random directions. Lucy glanced down at the bottom of the cape, seeing he had cut it to shreds at the end, probably in some attempt to make it 'cooler'.

Natsu wore his white scarf since he usually never went anywhere without it, even in costume. So far those things alone weren't enough to make his costume seem weird. What made it odd for Lucy was the hollowed out pumpkin mask on his head. The mouth was large, letting her see most of his face. He had that devilish grin that always sent chills through her, but it didn't seem to do it to her today with the weird getup. Resting at the top of the pumpkin - with white eyes that looked like maybe they were set on fire at the edges - was a bronze crown. As much as she wanted to ask, she decided not to. If Natsu wanted to dress as some type of royal pumpkin guy for Halloween, who was she to stop him?

"Hey Lucy!" Natsu's lips stretched into a bigger smile when he saw his lovely girlfriend. No matter how long they'd been together, he still got excited when he saw her.

Lucy stepped aside, letting the other guys go past her before walking up to Natsu. They hugged, though it was brief due to his costume. The big pumpkin head made it difficult for her to rest her head against him, so she gave up, deciding she could wait until later to get her hug. There was never a shortage of hugs when Natsu was around.

The couple went into the house, casting away the chilly air that came every October. Inside they found that everyone had already started drinking. Well, everyone except Erza and Jellal. They already agreed before hand to be the designated drivers, knowing it wasn't safe to risk it. They would be driving later, and it was better to miss out on a little fun than potentially harm or even kill their friends as well as others.

Lucy and Natsu joined along, loving the freedom that came with being twenty-one. While Natsu opted to have a beer with the guys, Lucy, Levy and Juvia stuck to jello shots. They were small, but after a few they could already feel the alcohol kicking in.

Natsu started up the fog machine, marveling as the room filled with the smoky air, giving off a creepy vibe. After a few minutes of drinking, Erza tapped a spoon against her glass of orange juice, gaining everyone's attention. "Alright! The first game of the night will be the scavenger hunt!"

The girls cheered while the guys looked at each other with a determined glint in their eyes, all silently challenging the others to a battle to see who could win the most games.

They all went to their significant others, but Erza shook her head. "Not tonight. Tonight you will draw to see who your partners will be."

Everyone wanted to protest, but they couldn't say much considering they already agreed Erza
would be in charge of the games for the night while Jellal was the referee. They could try to talk to him to see if he could change her mind, but the chances of that happening were too slim, so they didn't even bother.

"Okay, first teams will be Lucy and Levy, Gray and Gajeel, then Natsu and Juvia."

Lucy smiled, knowing with Levy on her team they were sure to win. Gajeel complained about having to team up with Gray, but Natsu said nothing about being partnered with Juvia. They weren't really the best of friends, but they did get along pretty well, so he had no problems. Juvia on the other hand pouted the whole time, even after Erza blew her whistle to begin the game.

Lucy raced through the house, clutching the list of items she was supposed to find in her hands. She thought she had the easy list, but it turned out to be harder than she thought. Her first item was a 'left shoe', but for some reason all she could find were right ones. She guessed Erza went around the house beforehand and removed most of the items on everyone's lists to make it harder. She wished she was wearing shoes, but her costume had built in ones that couldn't be removed without ripping them from it.

Lucy eventually found a left shoe in the furthest corner of Levy's closet. Coincidentally she ran into Natsu who said he was looking for a yearbook from their high school. She wished him luck and continued on her search, hoping she could gain her team a victory.

When Lucy collected all her items - a left shoe, a blue rubber band, a lanyard, and a green mechanical pencil, she raced to the living room where Erza and Jellal were waiting. Levy was already waiting for her, much to her delight. As Jellal checked over their lists and items, Natsu and Juvia came racing in with their stuff. Not far behind them was Gray and Gajeel, though they were bickering at each other more than anything.

"Alright, so for this game, the winners are Levy and Lucy, followed by Juvia and Natsu. Gray, Gajeel, you lose." Erza wrote down the scores on a notepad. First place winners received two points while second place winners received one point. The losers got no points and were instructed to take shots. Even though they didn't have to drink, the others drank too, wanting to loosen up after the long week at school. After everyone took a shot, Erza continued on.

"Okay, time to draw for the next game.

Up next was a game called 'Mummy wrap'. The object of the game was to wrap up your partner with toilet paper to make them look like a mummy. It seemed simple until they added in the rule that the person getting wrapped couldn't help with wrapping it around their body.

The way to win wasn't by speed or by finishing off the roll first. The winner would be determined by who Jellal felt had the best mummy.

The teams for this game included: Juvia and Lucy, Levy and Gajeel, and Gray and Natsu. The latter were displeased with their teammate, but that all changed when Erza blew her whistle.

"Lift your arms," Natsu instructed, already holding the roll of toilet paper in his hands.

Gray complied, hoping that his rival/friend knew what he was doing. Natsu proved himself, wrapping the toilet paper around his torso, covering all his pale skin before telling Gray to hold out his arms.

Gray did as he was told, then watched as Natsu wrapped up one arm, then moved it across Gray's back to start wrapping the other arm. Gray was about to say he was wasting time before Natsu told
him to cross his arms over his chest like a real mummy.

When Gray did it he realized Natsu was on to something. While everyone else wrapped the toilet paper over their partners immediately, Natsu calculated his actions, making Gray's mummy wrap look more authentic.

The rest of the work was simple. He wrapped up Gray's shoulders, then moved until he covered his neck and head, then grabbed another roll and got to work on his legs. By the end, Gray looked like a legit mummy. Well... That is if mummies were made of toilet paper.

They were the last to finish, but it paid off in the end. Juvia was supposed to wrap up Lucy, but for some reason the blue haired girl continued to get the toilet paper wet, saying it would help it stick better to Lucy. It only resulted in soggy paper that fell to the ground with the slightest movements.

Gajeel wrapped up Levy. Despite her being completely covered in toilet paper, it didn't make her look like a mummy. Instead it just looked like she turned into a pile of toilet paper.

Natsu and Gray got first place while Levy and Gajeel got second. "Lucy, Juvia, you two are the losers this round."

Lucy groaned, wishing she was partnered with Natsu instead. At least then she wouldn't be called 'love rival' three times in the last ten minutes. Seriously, she wasn't even talking to Gray at the time. How was she still considered a rival? Better yet, she was dating Natsu! Lucy shrugged it off, knowing old habits die hard.

Luck seemed to be on Lucy's side for the next round. She was finally partnered with Natsu, while Gajeel was with Levy, and Juvia with Gray. The game was horror movie trivia, causing her to grin like a madman.

"Where was the location the survivors in 'Dawn of the Dead' stayed?" Erza asked, flinched a little when Natsu shouted.

"I know!" He raised his hand high as if she couldn't see him. When she said he could speak, he grinned. "They were in a shopping mall!"

"Correct... again," Jellal gave their team another point, wondering why Erza chose this game in the first place. Everyone already knew Natsu was going to win.

Sure enough, Natsu slayed at the trivia game, answering almost every question correctly. Him and Lucy won, with Levy and Gajeel right behind them with second place.

The last two games were trickier. The next game had to do with red strings, cut in different lengths. The contestants had to stand outside while Erza and Jellal set up, scattering the pieces of red yard around the house. Each team was given two minutes to gather as much strings as possible, then they were given another three minutes to tie as many together as they could before the time ran out. Whoever had the longest piece in the end was the winner.

Lucy was paired with Gray, while Levy and Natsu were put together, leaving behind Juvia and Gajeel. When Erza blew the whistle everyone ran, trying to find as many pieces as possible. While some went for quantity, Lucy went for quality, only grabbing the longer pieces, knowing it'd be difficult to tie the shorter ones together. Once the two minutes were up, Erza blew her whistle, attracting everyone back to the living room. Everyone seemed to do the same thing, tying up their own pieces until the end, then they'd tie the two parts together to finish it off.
When the game was finished, they measured the pieces. Lucy and Gray's was a lot longer than everyone else's. Juvia and Gajeel's were the middle length, while Levy and Natsu's was less than half that amount. Either they didn't seem to think much about gathering larger pieces of yarn, or the alcohol was getting to them.

It was probably the latter, seeing as they were swaying a little towards the end of that round.

"Okay, so far the total is Lucy in the lead with six points, followed by Natsu with five, then Gray and Levy are tied with four, then it's Gajeel with three points. Juvia's in last place with two points."

Said girl sighed, "Juvia is just not meant to play games like this."

Gray wrapped an arm around her, hoping to cheer her up before she could get upset with her low score. It seemed to do the trick, but whenever Juvia was given an inch, she took a mile. The girl jumped on her fiancé, covering his face with kisses until everyone groaned at the public displays of affection.

Erza drew names to the last game, causing everyone to complain when she read the teams for the game 'ice bath'. The concept was simple, but the game was difficult. Players submerge either a hand or a foot in a bucket of ice water. Whoever can keep it in the longest wins.

Normally no one would complain, until they found out that Natsu and Gray were going to be on the same team! The two boys laughed, knowing they already won before the game even started.

Erza set out the three buckets, filling them with cold water before dumping the ice inside. They used special molds that made the ice into little ghosts and bats, making it seem more like a Halloween game.

Lucy put her foot in the bucket while Levy put her hand in. Gajeel and Juvia both put their feet in, hoping it would give them some type of advantage. There was really no point in trying, since it was obvious Natsu and Gray were going to win.

Both males stuck their hands in, Gray unaffected by the icy water while Natsu's naturally high body heat fought off the cold longer than a normal person could.

Two minutes passed by, but everyone remained stubborn. Lucy swore it felt like something was nipping at her toes, but she knew it was just from the cold. Gajeel didn't say anything, but judging from the way his teeth chattered, they guessed he was feeling it.

Juvia normally didn't mind being in water, but the cold was starting to bother her. Even though she was used to the cold because of how much time she spent with Gray, she still wasn't as acclimated as he was to icy water.

"Gajeel... Juvia doesn't think she can handle much more..."

"Just tough it out," he grunted, not wanting to lose at the very last game. They were already in last place. He at least wanted to go down swinging.

"Juvia will try..."

More time passed, the only noise filling the room was the music from Erza's laptop and the sound of everyone's teeth chattering, even Gray and Natsu's. Right at the eight minute mark, Lucy yanked her foot out of the water as she shook her head fervently. "Nope! Not worth it! I'm sorry Levy, but I can't!"
Levy ripped her hand away from the freezing water. "Oh thank goodness! I was two seconds away from giving up too. I just didn't want to disappoint you!"

Both girls laughed, deciding they didn't need this win. Zero points sounded fine if it meant not having to keep a body part in that icy water.

Juvia and Gajeel shared a look, deciding without words on what they should do. They both yanked their feet out, feeling the numbness that came with soaking their body part in that iced water.

"Okay, so Lucy and Levy are the losers this round. Gajeel and Juvia each get a point, which means you two boys win. Two points each," Erza wrote down their scores, then peeked over the notepad to look at Natsu and Gray. "Umm, you guys can take your hands out now..."

Natsu and Gray barely heard her. They were in an intense staring contest, daring the other to give up first. It seemed they forgot they were on the team, now deciding to challenge each other.

Not caring to deal with their silly rivalry tonight, Erza grabbed their arms, pulling them away from the bucket. "What do you two imbeciles think you're doing?"

Natsu and Gray paled, realizing they pissed her off. "S-sorry!" They both stammered, throwing their arms around each other to resemble a hug, though anyone looking close enough could see it was forced.

"Very well... Who wants to hear their scores?"

That caused everyone to perk up. They all said yes, then waited for Erza to tally it up. Okay, in first place we have Natsu with seven points."

Natsu cheered, raising a fist in the air in victory. He didn't have any doubts that he would win, but it still felt nice being number one.

"We have a tie for second place. Gray, Lucy... you both have six points."

The two looked at each other, then at Erza. "What's the tiebreaker?"

Erza and Jellal shared a knowing look, then smiled. "It's easy. Just a quick game of egg roulette."

Lucy's eyes widened. "No thanks! I give up, he can be second!" She didn't want to play that game. She'd never done it before, but she heard stories. Apparently there are raw eggs and hard-boiled eggs, and each person picks a random egg without knowing which one it was until someone gets hit with a raw egg... On their head!

"Oh come on," Natsu laughed, "it'll be fun!

"You're only saying that because you don't have to do it!"

Natsu couldn't argue with her there. He just wanted to see her get covered in an egg! He stayed quiet while everyone else tried to convince her to play along. She finally agreed, saying she would only do three. If she got all hard-boiled eggs then they needed to let her off. Erza agreed to the terms, then went to fetch the carton of eggs.

Levy and Gajeel were snickering until Jellal said, "you two are also tied with four points, so you're next." That seemed to be enough to shut them up.

Gray went first, standing in the kitchen over a tarp just in case they made a mess. He looked at the
eggs, seeing there were twelve eggs. He picked one, then grabbed it. He couldn't really tell if it was raw or not. All he knew was it was cold. Gray raised the egg high, then slammed it against his head.

It made a weird crunching noise, but nothing came out. When he pulled it away they saw it was hard-boiled, giving Lucy a sense of trepidation.

She stepped up, grabbing an egg at random, then crashing it on her head as fast as she could. Lucy felt relieved when it was hard-boiled as well. The next round wasn't so lucky for Gray. Lucy squealed in delight when Gray's second egg ended up being raw.

"Yes! I win!"

"Not yet. You need to get a hard-boiled egg this round, otherwise it's another tie and you have to go again." Jellal tipped his chin to the carton of eggs. "Pick another one."

Lucy groused, but did as she told. An odd happiness filled her heart when she slammed a hard-boiled egg on her head. "Ha! Now I win!"

"Second place," Natsu corrected, wanting everyone to remember he was in first.

"Do you want to try another egg?" Erza asked, thrusting the carton of eggs in front of her.

"What? No way! I already won." Lucy shook her head, her mind made up.

"Please?" Erza wiggled the carton as if it might entice her. Even after Lucy said no again, the redhead insisted. When everyone started begging Lucy to do 'just one more' egg she cracked, huffing in frustration as she grabbed another egg.

She wished on every star in the sky that this would be another hard-boiled egg. Even after she hit it on her head and felt the liquid leak out, she still didn't believe it. Lucy's only realization that she chose a raw egg was brought on by the laughter of her friends.

Natsu handed her a towel, saying she looked 'fucking adorable' with that pout on her face. She grumbled as she tried to clean her head off, but it was no use. She'd have egg stuck in her hair until she took a shower.

At least most of it came out.

Once Lucy was declared the second place winner with Gray as the third, all the focus went on Levy and Gajeel. "Alright," Erza started, looking down at the remaining eggs. "Who wants to go first?"

Gajeel muttered that he would, just to get it over with. He removed his pirate's hat, then grabbed the egg closest to him. He cursed out loud when he realized he got a raw egg on his very first time!

Levy tried to say that meant she won, but everyone argued saying she had to get a hard-boiled egg to be considered the fourth place winner. The short blue haired girl grabbed an egg, squashing it against her head. She screeched when she felt the runny yolk pour down her head. "Ew ew ew!"

Gajeel laughed, until they told him that he had to go again that is. He cursed louder the second time he got a raw egg, saying it wasn't fair! Levy was just thankful that her second egg was hard-boiled, meaning that they could end the silly game.

The way it stood in the end was Natsu was the winner, followed by Lucy, then Gray, then Levy,
then Gajeel, followed by Juvia. Natsu was awarded a twenty-five dollar gift card to Fairy Tail. It was the best restaurant in town, coincidentally it was also the place Natsu and Lucy met and got together at.

That was many years ago, but the memories were still great -even if Lucy sometimes had nightmares about the things she saw when she was passed out after getting knocked out that fateful night.

Lucy looked at the clock on the wall, seeing the time. "We have about forty minutes before we need to leave."

Erza followed her gaze, nodding when she read the time. "You're right. Everyone, get your last drinks in now. I'm cutting everyone off in five minutes."

That was the motivation they needed to drink. The girls -excluding Erza- gulped jello shot after jello shot down, while the boys -excluding Jellal- chugged their beers. After they were cut off, everyone started dancing to the music.

Natsu and Lucy tried dancing together, but the alcohol was getting to them, causing them to sway to the music more than anything. It also didn't help that once again his costume got in the way. Lucy giggled at her silly boyfriend as he rambled on and on for ten minutes straight about how amazing the fog machine was.

Right before they left, they all got a quick bite to eat. Erza made three pizzas in the oven, enough to fill everyone's bellies.

When everyone was full, they grabbed their bags and left the house. Erza drove one car with the girls while Jellal drove another with the boys. Lucy sat in the backseat with Levy. They felt a little bit more sober considering it'd been over thirty minutes since their last drink, plus getting some food in them helped put a lot.

Lucy hoped Natsu was doing well in the vehicle, but she had to remind herself that he surprisingly did better with his motion sickness when he was drunk. He tried to explain it to her one time, something about since the world was spinning one way while he was drunk, and the car made his head spin the other way, it somehow cancelled each other out.

She was a little skeptical about that logic, but so far he seemed to be good every other time they'd been in a vehicle after he drank a bit. She would just believe that he was alight.

When they arrived at Natsu's parent's house, he jumped out of Jellal's car, running to the front door. He knocked hard, excited over what was to come. His little sister answered the door, dressed up as a vampire. "Hi Natsu!"

Beside his sister stood her best friend, Sherria, and their other friend, Romeo. Sherria was dressed as Wonder woman, while Romeo was going as Darth Vader.

"Hey! You guys ready to go trick or treating?"

"Yeah!" They all cheered, then followed Natsu back to the cars. Everyone rearranged to accommodate the kids. They were all around eleven years old, bursting with excitement to go get candy.

The girls left Erza's car to go sit in the boy's car. The three kids climbed into the back seat of Erza's vehicle while Natsu sat in the passenger seat up front. He had to store his pumpkin head in the trunk since it was so big. Lucy sat on his lap, hoping he wouldn't get handsy while his sister was in
Natsu was respectable, only placing his hands on her thighs to hold her steady as Erza drove off to the best neighborhoods in Magnolia. They stayed out for a few hours, collecting as much candy from houses as the night went on.

Of course Natsu still trick or treated, even though some people considered him too old for the tradition. He didn't let that stop him from getting candy, even when Lucy scolded him a few times for taking too many out of the bowls labeled 'take a piece' that were left outside of some people's houses.

All in all everyone had a great time. The adults felt pretty sober when the night was coming to an end, lessening their chances for a hangover. Of course they could always drink plenty of fluids to avoid one, but it was hard to remember to do that when they were in the heat of the moment.

It was almost midnight when they dropped off the kids with bags full of candy, wishing them a goodnight before they went back to the house. Erza had Lucy, Natsu, Juvia and Gray in her car, while Jellal had Levy and Gajeel.

They already agreed that Erza would stay the night at the boy's house, along with the other passengers in Jellal's car. Erza dropped off her passengers, then warned them to stay out of trouble before she drove away.

Natsu and Lucy walked slowly to the house, wanting to give Gray and Juvia a head start since they didn't know how long it would take before they made it to the basement. Juvia wasn't shy about public displays of affection. Gray was more reserved, but even he had his moments where he didn't care.

Natsu held his pumpkin head under his arm as they walked to the porch. "Five minutes?"

Lucy shook her head. "Better give them ten, just to be safe." She giggled, causing her boyfriend to laugh.

"You're probably right." He sat down on the steps, then set his massive bag of candy and pumpkin head to the side. Lucy took a seat on his other hand, resting her head on his shoulder. Natsu grinned, wanting to tell her that her head smelled like eggs, but he decided to keep that information to himself, not wanting to frustrate her.

"Hey Lucy..."

"Yeah?"

"We've been together for a while now..."


"I was just thinkin'..." He stretched out his leg so he could reach into his pant's pocket. Natsu pulled out two things. One was his phone, the other was a small blue box. He checked the time on his phone, seeing he had only a few minutes until midnight. Feeling oddly nervous, he asked, "how long do you wanna stay with me?"

Lucy furrowed her brows, but her eyes remained closed. She enjoyed the scent of her boyfriend too much to move. It always lulled her into a relaxed state. "Forever and ever," she said with a strong voice. She knew in her heart and mind that he was the one she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. They just complimented each other so well.
Natsu smiled, a boost of confidence rising within him. "Hey Lucy... Trick or treat?"

Lucy thought about it for a moment. "Trick."

The smile on his face dimmed for a moment. He had rehearsed this in his head a million times, but not once did he think she'd pick trick! "Umm... I don't think you want that one."

He moved away from her, drawing out a groan from his girlfriend. She slowly opened her eyes, seeing Natsu in front of her, down on one knee. He held a small, opened box, revealing a diamond ring sitting in the center. It wasn't anything extravagant, but it was gorgeous to Lucy.

"Natsu..." Her voice now came out breathlessly. "Are... you?"

His heart beat wildly in his chest as he spoke. "Lucy Heartfilia, I love you more than life itself. You're my best friend, and I want to spend every moment I have on this Earth with you by my side."

Lucy felt her face heat up with an intense blush. She couldn't believe this was happening. Even though they'd been dating for years, she was still shocked to see him in that position, surely about to ask the question she'd been dying to hear...

"I want to do this while it's still Halloween, because that's the day we met... That's the day you agreed to be my girlfriend."

Tears welled up in Lucy's brown eyes. She blinked them back, happiness and shock bubbling up inside her.

"Lucy, will you marry me?"

Lucy couldn't nod fast enough, the word 'yes' spilling from her lips more than once as she tackled him into a hug. "I love you so much, Natsu! Of course I'll be your wife!"

He chuckled, feeling her cutting off his air supply, but he didn't mind. He was too excited that she said yes! The woman he loved with all his heart agreed to stay with him until death do them part, but deep down inside, Natsu knew even death wouldn't change how he felt about her.

Lucy finally pulled away from him, letting him breathe. He sat up, not caring that his pants and cape were getting dirty from sitting on the ground. He held up the ring, presenting it to her. She lifted her left hand, letting Natsu see how nervous she was from her slight shaking. He carefully took the ring from the box, then slide it onto her ring finger.

Lucy stared at it, stunned that he really asked her to marry him. She looked back up at him, a huge smile on her face. Through her happy tears, she said, "you were right."

Natsu cocked his head in confusion, his grin remaining on his face. "About what?"

Lucy giggled, leaning in to give him a long, sensual kiss that took his breath away. When she pulled back, she saw the glossy look in his eyes. She placed a hand on his cheek, then rested her forehead against his.

"I'd rather have a treat."
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Let me know what you thought of this one-shot. :) See you next time with another short story!
January

It started with a lump. Natsu was playing with Happy like normal, rubbing his belly to get the little blue cat to purr, when out of nowhere he felt an odd lump on his stomach.

"Hey Lucy!" He called, fingers staying on the spot. "Can you come here for a second?"

"Yeah," he heard her voice from the other room. Natsu's eyes stayed on Happy, swearing that the little guy had a smile on his face as he waited to be pet again. "What is it?" She said when she entered the living room.

"Feel right here," Natsu said, waiting until her fingers overlapped his before taking them away. "Does that feel weird?"

"Actually... Yeah, it kinda does..." Lucy's eyebrows furrowed together as she felt around the small lump. "I wonder what that is... Was it there before?"

"I don't think so," he shook his head. Happy had been his pet since birth, and he'd never felt a lump on him before in the almost fourteen years that he'd had him. "Should I get him checked out?"

"Maybe," Lucy twisted her lips as she thought. "Maybe we should wait a bit, see if it gets worse. It doesn't seem to be bothering him right now..."
"I guess you're right," Natsu picked up his cat, then set him in his lap. "Who's the best kitty in the world?"

Lucy chuckled as she watched her husband scratch Happy's chin. "You two are too cute." Her small smile faded when she heard the sound of boiling water burst out of the pot in the kitchen. "Shit! I forgot I'm cooking!"

As she scrambled out of the living room, Natsu laughed. He glanced down at his purring feline, smiling when he said, "it's probably nothing..."

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**February**

"Hmm," the vet hummed as she felt Happy's stomach. Said cat was growling, clearly not liking being handled by someone who wasn't Natsu or Lucy. "It feels like a growth." She released the cat, watching as he tried to shrink in on himself. "You have a few options. You can either get it removed, or we can wait to see if it gets bigger."

Natsu frowned, looking down at his frightened cat. "It's already gotten bigger..."

Lucy set a hand on Natsu's shoulder, pulling him away from his troubled thoughts. "How do you remove it? Is it just surgery?"

"Yes," the vet said. "We made a small incision and remove whatever's in there. If you want we can also do a biopsy to see what exactly it is."

"Why would you need to do that?" Natsu asked, his hand stroking through the blue fur of his friend.

The vet gave him a wane smile. "To see if it will come back. You don't have to get it if you don't want to."

"How much will this all cost?" Lucy asked, feeling a strain in her throat. They were willing to pay whatever cost it was to take care of Happy, but they weren't exactly made of money. Natsu made just enough to cover their rent, two car payments, and food, while Lucy made enough to cover the rest. Seeing as they were both twenty-four years old, they hadn't thought a lot ahead on savings and retirement, so for the mean time they lived paycheck to paycheck with a little wiggle room.

"Let me go check," she said before leaving the small room, leaving the two of them alone with Happy.

Once she was gone, the cat seemed to perk up. He stood up, looking around his surroundings as Natsu and Lucy started to talk. "Have you ever had an animal go through surgery?" He asked, biting his lip. The idea scared him, worried that something might go wrong.

"Only when Plue got neutered," she sighed. "But I think that's a little different." Her pit bull's procedure was routine, with little risks.

"Yeah," Natsu looked down at Happy, smiling to himself when he felt the small vibrations stirring up in his cat. "I'm sure it'll be fine..." Despite saying that, he felt a little nauseous.

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**March**

"Hi, what can I help you with?" The lady at the front desk asked when Natsu and Lucy showed up.
"Hi... I'm here to pick up Happy." Natsu eyed the white board behind them. He felt a little better seeing the message they wrote: *Wishing a speedy recovery to Happy*. It made him feel like they cared about his animal almost as much as he did.

"Okay, let me go get him. You can meet us over next door to make it easier." With that, the woman disappeared and Natsu and Lucy exited the waiting room to go to the pet supply store next door.

The vet they took Happy to was the friendliest place in Magnolia. They could always go for the higher rated ones, but that came at a price. The same surgery would have easily cost them double. They already knew this place was great, even if it didn't have a brand name attached to it. The service and quality of the vets and medicine was all that mattered to Natsu.

"Let's see," the man at the register started. "It looks like you guys already paid the $75 deposit, so your total will be $351."

Natsu's cheek twitched at that total. He swiped his credit card, already casting away the negative thoughts about dropping that much money at once. It was just $10 more than Lucy's monthly car payment, but Happy was worth it. He would always be worth it.

"Just need you to sign here," the man said as he handed Natsu a pen with the receipt. He signed quickly, then passed it back. He was anxious to get his little friend back.

Natsu had to drop Happy off this morning at seven. He was told his cat couldn't have anything to eat or drink for twelve hours before, making Happy a very unhappy camper. The earliest they said he could pick Happy up was at three in the afternoon, so here he was at three sharp.

"They'll be out with Happy in a minute."

While Natsu waited there, Lucy walked around the pet shop to see if there was anything interesting they could get for Happy or Plue. She smiled at the little E-collars for cats, thinking they looked adorable. She could only imagine how silly Happy would look if he had to wear one. Plue had to wear one twice in his life. Once was when he was neutered, and the other was when he got pink eye. If only her dog wouldn't have caught it at the dog park, but that was another story.

Natsu heard Happy before he saw him. The loud growls were hard to miss. "He's a little grumpy," a woman in scrubs said as she brought the cat carrier out, containing the pissed off feline.

"Hey Happy," Natsu tried to soothe the angry cat, but it did little to help calm him down. "So are we free to go?"

"Yup," she nodded as she handed over the carrier. "Here is the instructions for the aftercare. It's pretty straightforward. Don't let him lick at the stitches, make sure he doesn't get them wet... In eight to ten days come back in to get his stitches removed."

"Okay," Natsu said, glad when Lucy showed up beside him to grab the papers the lady was trying to hand him. "And umm... When do we find out what it was?"

They went ahead and paid for the biopsy, even though it cost $125 plus the $6 biohazard disposal fee. They wanted to make sure whatever it was wouldn't come back.

The lady smiled down at the carrier. "The biopsy usually only takes a few days, so you'll receive a call when it's back."

"Thanks," Natsu said before taking a step back.
"You guys take care. Bye Happy!" The lady said, receiving a hiss for a response. "He's a little feisty," she commented before the two started walking towards the door.

"Sounds like someone I know," Lucy whispered, throwing a knowing glance at Natsu.

The usually go-happy guy tried to smile, but something in the back of his head was nagging at him. He couldn't help but shake the unsettling feeling.

---

April

"Hey guys," Gray greeted when Natsu opened the door. "Am I early?"

"Nope, right on time," he said, swinging the door open to let Gray and Juvia in. They passed Natsu to go to the kitchen where Lucy, Levy, Gajeel, Erza, and Jellal were already at.

Natsu closed the door, then started heading to the kitchen with them, even though it was getting pretty crowded. They were throwing a small get together. There wasn't exactly a reason why, mainly just that the weather was starting to warm up and it was the first barbecue of the season.

While Lucy worked on the side dishes and talked to the girls, Natsu headed outside with the guys so he could start up the grill. They weren't doing anything fancy, just hot dogs and burgers. No one minded, as long as they got to hang out together.

"Hey little buddy," Gajeel said as he bent over to pick up Happy.

"Careful," Natsu warned, though his tone was still the same. "He had a tumor on his stomach."

"A tumor?" Gajeel repeated, then gently felt around on the feline's stomach. "Oh, you mean this bump? Are you sure it's not scar tissue from the surgery?"

Natsu was glad he was facing away from his friends. They wouldn't have to see the dullness to his green eyes as he dumped the charcoal in the grill. "I'm sure... It's gotten bigger..." It had been almost a month since Natsu received the worst call of his life.

---

Natsu was getting ready for work, just like any normal day when his phone started to ring. He answered it, not thinking anything of it as he said, "hello?"

"Hi, this is-" The vet introduced themselves. He hardly remembered her name since at the time he was more focused on his cat. "Is this a good time?"

"Uh, yeah," he said, holding the phone between his ear and shoulder as he buttoned up his pants. "What's up?"

Her voice returned. "It's about Happy... We got his biopsy back."

Natsu's hands stopped moving. "You did?"

"Yes. I'm afraid it's not good news."

Natsu's heart began to sink as he asked, "what is it?"

"Happy has mammary cancer," she honestly sounded apologetic. "It's rare in male cats, but it does happen."
"Oh..." He grabbed the phone, sitting on his bed. "So what do I do?"

There was a silence before she spoke. "I'm afraid there's not much that can be done. About 80% of mammary tumors are malignant. Meaning it might grow back."

"... I see..." Natsu swallowed hard. "So, there's nothing?"

"The only options are more surgeries if it grows back, or possibly chemotherapy, but we can talk about that more when you come in to get his stitches removed. That's in a few days right?"

"Y-yeah," Natsu felt the shakiness of his breath. "We were planning to c-come in Friday..."

"That's good," she paused before saying, "I'm very sorry to have to tell you this..."

"It's okay," Natsu felt like his stomach was empty, even though he'd eaten less than an hour ago. "N-not your fault..."

"We'll see you in a few days, goodbye," she said before hanging up the phone.

Natsu let his phone drop to his side. He stared at the wall, but he couldn't really see anything. It all felt so unreal. As if sensing his distress, Happy jumped onto the bed to lay beside Natsu. He glanced down, seeing the sweet cat curl up.

He slowly pet his feline, a broken smiling rising on his face. "Hey Happy..." His voice was hoarse as the tears welled up. "You're a good kitty, aren'tcha." Happy only responded with a deep purring noise. That's when the tears finally fell down his cheeks. "Y-yeah, s-such a good k-k-"

He couldn't finish the sentence.

May

"Are you ready?" Lucy asked, coming down the hall with two bags. "Natsu?" She looked around until she found him in the living room with Happy on his lap. "Hey, what's wrong?"

He looked up at her, a forced smile on his face. "Nothing."

"Don't lie to me," she said as she set down the bags. "Are you worried about leaving?"

Natsu tried to control the trembling of his bottom lip. "K-kinda..."

Lucy slowly walked over to him, then sat down on the couch beside him. "You already told Gray everything he needs to know. It'll be fine. We're only going to be gone for a few days, and if anything happens we're a phone call away. Hargeon isn't that far away..."

"I know," he gently pet Happy's back. As much as he didn't want to, his hand slipped under him to feel at his stomach. "It's getting bigger..."

Lucy could only frown. "I know... I felt it this morning..."

"What do I do?" He asked, feeling the medium-sized lump on the cat's belly. There was no denying it anymore. It definitely wasn't scar tissue. It had been almost two months since the surgery. Plus it only got bigger as time went on.

Lucy wrapped an arm around her husband, then rested her cheek against his shoulder. "There's not much we can do, besides get the surgery again..."
"It won't help," he said, his eyes pricking with the familiar sensation. They found out the chemotherapy option wasn't exactly a cure. It would just prolong his life, maybe. It only had a 50% success rate, and even then it wasn't really success since it didn't actually get rid of it.

Natsu swallowed past the lump in his throat. "It'll just grow back again..."

"I know," she said, her own resolve crumbling. She was trying to be strong for Natsu, but it was hard when her own heart hurt. Despite knowing Happy for less time, she still felt a bond with him. He was like family to her, even if at first she couldn't stand him. He could be annoying at times.

"There's not much we can do right now," Lucy said, giving his arm a squeeze. "So let's just go to the convention." She desperately hoped that would cheer him up. They'd been excited about going to the anime convention since the last one ended a year ago. "It'll be our first time cosplaying."

Natsu let out a chuckle. "Yeah, you're right..." He leaned over, kissing Happy's head despite the cat's protests. He quickly jumped away from his owner waddling over to the water bowl to get a drink.

Plue walked up beside him, eyeing the water bowl as he waited for his turn. The cat looked up, pawed at the dog, then returned to drinking. Natsu and Lucy laughed at their playfulness. They didn't exactly get along, but they did coexist well enough.

"Let's get going before you change your mind," Lucy stood up, walking over to the bags.

"Okay," he nodded, willing away the unshed tears as he got on his feet. "But you're driving."

"Don't I always?" She asked, smiling when he grimaced, probably thinking about the drive. "Just make sure you take your pills this time."

"Yeah yeah," he smiled weakly as he went to the bathroom to grab his medication. Before they left, he gave Happy a few pets. "I'll see you soon," he promised, then made his way to the door. "Bye guys," he said before locking up the door, then slipped the key under the rug for Gray.

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**June**

"Fuck," Natsu clenched his teeth when he felt Happy's belly. Instead of the large lump on his stomach, he felt that and multiple little bumps all around it. "It's spreading..."

Lucy watched, staying silent since she didn't know what to say. 'I'm sorry' hardly seemed to work. It only seemed to make Natsu more upset. She knew how important Happy was to him, so to see him go through this was heart breaking.

"It's pressing against his skin," Natsu said to himself, staring at the cat's belly. He could see the skin already stretching a little, though it didn't look that bad. "I wonder why it's doing that..."

Lucy stayed quiet, not knowing the answer to that question either.

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**July**

"Path of least resistance?" Natsu questioned as he stared at the vet. "What does that mean?"

"The tumor is moving where it's easiest to travel. Instead of moving inward, it's moving outwards towards the skin..."
Natsu furrowed his brows, his gaze dropping to his growling cat. "So... Is his skin gonna be able to keep it in?"

The lady sighed before saying, "if we're lucky. The real issue is if it spreads to his lungs."

"I remember you saying that," he slowly nodded, recalling her saying something like that when she removed his stitches. "Do you know how long he has?"

Lucy's breathing stopped when he asked that question. She'd been wondering herself, but she didn't dare saying anything on the matter, not wanting to upset her husband. She stayed quiet as she held Plue's leash. They were getting Happy checked out before they were going to give Plue his vaccinations since he was due for some.

The vet looked down at Happy. "Honestly I don't know. If he's still eating, drinking, and doing what he's always been doing, then he probably has a while."

"He was trying to catch two birds that got trapped in our back patio the other day," Natsu laughed to himself, thinking it was adorable to see the blue ball of fur hunt down the two birds. He was unsuccessful, but he did manage to hit one with his paw before they escaped.

"See, that's good," the vet smiled, then tried to pet Happy. Said cat only growled at her hand until she brought it away from him. "He really doesn't like me, does he?"

"He's like that with anyone he doesn't know," Natsu found himself actually smiling. Happy was still acting himself, even with the tumors growing inside him.

"Good to know," she nodded. "So, you came to get them vaccinated?"

Natsu's smile faded instantly when he was hit with reality again. "I-I was actually going to ask if it's even worth getting him vaccinated," Natsu stroked Happy's fur. "Since he... he probably doesn't have much time left..."

"Well, you said he's going outside? On the patio?"

"Yeah," Natsu nodded.

"What about outside?"

"He goes out there occasionally..."

The vet's mouth twisted. "In that case, I recommend getting at least the rabies shot. Just in case. The other ones are the feline distemper and the Feline Leukemia Virus. They help boost his immune system and helps prevent feline leukemia."

Natsu almost snorted. As if Happy's biggest concern was going to be catching leukemia! He already had cancer! Despite knowing Happy probably didn't need them, he nodded anyway, "I'll get them all..."

Lucy said nothing as she watched the vet leave, only to come back with the shot. "I went ahead and grabbed Plue's as well..."

Neither commented, so the vet got to work. Natsu held Happy still while she gave him the shots. The cat growled, even hissing at Natsu during the process. When it was all over, he was more than happy to crawl back in his carrier to get away from everyone.
Plue's shots went by much faster since the dog seemed more at ease. He was obviously still nervous, even shaking a little, but he didn't squirm away when they injected him. He had to get his annual heartworm test, but that didn't take much time at all. When it came back negative, Lucy said she'd get a year's worth of medication for Plue, just so they wouldn't have to come back in six months.

When it was all over, Natsu and Lucy left the animal hospital with their two pets, but not before dropping another $265.

Who knew animals could be so expensive? The price was nothing compared to having them in their lives though. Natsu and Lucy couldn't imagine a world where they didn't have their cat and dog to keep them company.

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**August**

Natsu found himself in the animal hospital one month later, cat carrier in one hand while tears streamed down his face. He ignored the looks he received as he went to the front desk. "I n-need to get my c-cat checked out..."

"What's the last name?" The lady behind the desk asked.

"D-Dragneel..."

"Natsu?" She asked when the only 'Dragneel' popped up.

"Yes," he weakly nodded.

"Is this for Happy?"

"Y-yes..."

"And what seems to be the problem today?" She asked, giving him a sympathetic smile.

Natsu could barely keep it together as he said, "I th-think his tumor h-has a sore on it... It's pussing..."

He noted the slight change in her eyes as she typed something down. "Okay, if you'll have a seat I'll get you all checked in."

"Thanks," he mumbled as he went to sit down.

Happy growled in his carrier as more people entered the waiting room. Dogs would come up and sniff at the carrier, only to earn a hiss from the pissed off cat. It was no secret by now that Happy hated the animal hospital.

Natsu sat down, clutching the carrier for dear life as he tried to keep it together. He had to wipe his eyes and nose off with his sleeve so many times that his shirt became wet all over, leaving him with nothing to get rid of the pain on his face.

When Happy's name was called, he stood up immediately, almost feeling lightheaded as he walked down the hall and to the examination room. He struggled to get the cat out of the carrier since he didn't want to leave. When asked what was going on with Happy, he broke down again.

"H-his stomach is open..."
The vet frowned as she went to check out his stomach. Another woman held Happy as they flipped him. "Man, he has no scruff, does he?"

Natsu barely shook his head, wishing Lucy was there with him. She was already at work when he noticed the wet spot on the couch. It took him another five minutes to find out it was coming from the puss on Happy's stomach. He had to force down a motion sickness pill, then drive Happy to the vet. He didn't even care if he was late for work. Happy was more important.

"Oh, that doesn't look good," the vet commented when she saw his stomach. Through the white fur it wasn't hard finding the tumor. Some of his hair had fallen out, showing the red bulge on his belly. It was raised, an uneven lump pressing aggressively against the skin. There was a small sore on the biggest bump, with yellow-clear puss leaking out.

"Okay, for this we'll give him some antibiotics and some pain medication. I'll show you how to use them before you leave," the vet said, then both women released Happy.

While one woman went to get the medications, the vet stayed. Before Natsu put Happy in his carrier, he asked with a shaky voice, "umm... I-I have a question..."

"What's what?" She asked, more than happy to help.

Natsu paused, gnawing on his inner cheek as he debated even asking. After an internal battle with himself, he spoke. "S-since he's not getting better..." Natsu had to swallow, not realizing how difficult this would be. "What are the options..."

"Are you talking about euthanizing?"

It felt like a searing hot needle stabbed through his heart at that word. Fresh tears formed as he nodded. He didn't want to, but the tumor was just getting worse. Now his stomach had medium-sized ones all over his stomach, some not even close to the original one. He didn't want to face the harsh reality, but he knew he at least needed to know the options.

The vet's face fell as she explained, "what we do here is we would give him a sedative. That'll put him to sleep. Then when he's out, we'd give him an overdose of the sedative, which will put him down."

Natsu couldn't stop the sob that racked through his body. He looked down at Happy, giving him the weakest smile he could muster, but even the cat could tell something was wrong. "It's okay," he said slowly so his words would come out right. He pet Happy, feeling his heart break over and over again at the thought of losing his friend.

Natsu barely heard her speak, even though she was right in front of him. "It's a lot to think about. I'll get you some paperwork with the information in case it comes to that."

Natsu left the animal hospital with a bag full of antibiotics, pain medicine, and several papers that he didn't want to read. It ran him $82, but at this point he didn't care. He was numb inside, and looking at Happy only seemed to make it worse.

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**September**

The medication didn't work.

For the first five days, things seemed to get better, but it only took a nosedive when Happy started puking up the medication. Natsu felt like he was doing more harm than good, but he still tried
giving his cat the medicine, even if he got scratched in the process. He couldn't blame Happy. He'd hate to have someone shoot the inside of his mouth every morning with some kind of nasty tasting liquid too. And he had to do it twice, once for the antibiotic and once for the painkiller.

As the tumor grew, Happy lost more hair. Some veins started to show up right under the skin, but Natsu tried to ignore it. Happy was still acting normal, and that was all that mattered. As long as he was eating, that meant he wanted to live...

Right?

That's what Natsu convinced himself anyway, even when he had to dab Happy's wound multiple times a day to soak up the excess puss. It was a small price to pay to keep his feline friend around. Natsu and Lucy's furniture suffered, leaving behind odd stains that didn't come out easily, but neither minded. Happy was more important than furniture any day.

Happy still wanted to go outside, to feel the warmth on his fur, but that made things difficult with an open sore. Natsu tried putting his cat in a onesie, but that proved to be a horrible idea. Happy didn't move at all when he was put in the baby outfit. He'd literally just stay still until someone took him out of it.

The only option was to wait until the rare moments when Happy wasn't leaking. Whenever it happened, Natsu dropped everything he was doing so he could bring his friend outside, not knowing how long it would be until the sore opened up again.

It was a hard month, but Happy didn't show any signs of discomfort...

Okay, that was a big fat lie. He showed plenty of signs, but Natsu chose to ignore it. If he accepted it then he was basically accepting that his friend was getting closer to his end, and Natsu just couldn't handle that. So he ignored it.

He ignored the way Happy wouldn't lay on his left side.

He ignored the way Happy would stand awkwardly when he ate or drank, just so his sore wasn't pressing against the ground.

He ignored the way Happy flinched when someone touched a little too close to the tumor.

He ignored the way Happy would leave the area to go lay by himself in another room.

He ignored the darker shade of red his skin took on as the tumor grew larger, pressing, stretching the skin with no remorse.

He ignored it all, but he couldn't ignore it forever.

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October

The third of October Natsu had to face the facts. The tumor was getting worse, no matter how much he tried to pretend it wasn't. Now it had a purple tint to some parts, the number of veins visible increasing with every day.

By the twelfth of October, Natsu noticed the tumor was about the size of a baseball. Not all of it was near Happy's skin. Most of it was hidden inside Happy's body, growing larger as time went on. It was uneven, bumpy, and that was just the biggest one. The ones scattered all over his stomach were also growing, though they hadn't reached his skin yet... Fortunately.
He tried to stay optimistic because that's who Natsu was. He was always a cheery guy, but people felt he was distant, only half-present. Lucy noticed this the most, but she understood. She felt horrible when her mother passed away, and although it was slightly different since Happy was a cat, she didn't dare say anything about it.

Pain can't be measured, pain can't be dismissed simply because someone else went through worse pain. She knew how deeply Natsu cared for Happy, rescuing him from under someone's porch when he was still a little kitten. Happy meant the world to Natsu, so seeing him struggling like this tore her up inside. She could only offer him kind words, but even those barely reached him.

It was just three days later when Natsu noticed the color around Happy's main sore was turning black. He had no idea what it was, or why it was turning so dark, but he tried to not let it bother him. Happy still seemed fine, eating, drinking, using the bathroom... Everything was relatively normal.

He still felt his insides twisting up painfully whenever he saw it, but he stayed strong for Happy. Well... As strong as he could. There was only so much Natsu could take before he broke down and cried. It was usually when it was just himself, not wanting anyone to see him so weak.

Three more days passed, and things started to look a tiny bit brighter. The black surrounding his sore had faded into a brown, and even formed a scab over the sore. Natsu loved taking Happy outside more, spending most of his time off outside with his cat so he could enjoy the outdoors.

Deep down inside he knew he was being naive, but who cared? Happy seemed cheerful, walking through the yard and occasionally eating grass. It made it even better when he didn't throw up afterwards, not that Natsu minded cleaning up after his longest friend. He would do anything for Happy's happiness. Natsu especially loved when Happy would sunbathe. He would lay out in the yard, letting the warmth soak in. The air was getting chilly, but the sun still shined as if it was summer.

Natsu should have known better than to be so optimistic.

On the twenty-third of October, Natsu noticed the blood. It was only a few drops on Happy's bed, but it was enough to cause alarm. Lucky for him, when he went to check on his cat, the blood had already dried. It looked as if the scab had come off some, but it wasn't bleeding anymore, so Natsu tried to think positive. Happy was still eating... He still drank a little bit... Yeah... It was all going to be okay...

Three days later, the scab got worse. New sores opened up, and the scab grew black again. Happy started licking at the wound, making things far worse. He was pussoing all day, not drying up long enough for even one outside trip. Natsu cried that day, clutching his cat in his arms and saying how much he loved him. The cat only squirmed a little before settling in, deciding to let his owner do whatever he had to. It was then that Natsu started to lose hope...

The day before Halloween, things turned from worse to terrible. More of Happy's tumor pressed against his already stretched skin. More hair started to fall out, Natsu could see the outline of the tumor making its debut. He hated seeing his cat like this, but what made it worse was the pussoing. The scab had fallen off, leaving behind a weird white layer over part of his skin. Natsu felt nauseous every time he went to dab up the puss since the white spot was squishy. He didn't know what that meant, but he knew it couldn't be good. All he could do was try to keep it as clean as possible, falsely hoping that things would get better.

The next day on Halloween, Natsu didn't dress up. He had a few costumes from the previous years, but he wasn't in the mood. Happy's wound was getting worst. The white part spread, taking up a
larger chunk of his red skin.

Natsu noticed it right before he went to work. There, he had a pretty miserable day. He was asked questions like, "why aren't you dressed up?" to "where's your costume?" and finally "why are you in such a bad mood?"

"I'm not feeling in the Halloween spirit..." He said, but they wouldn't take that as an answer, wanting to know why he wasn't in the mood. Natsu finally told them his cat's tumor was getting worse, hoping it would shut them up, but instead it made them more talkative.

"I know what you're going through. My cat was killed six months ago by two pit bulls," a female coworker said as they unloaded a truck. "I had her for seven years."

Natsu wanted to be an asshole and point out that he had his cat for over FOURTEEN years, and the way she explained her story, she made it sound like all pit bulls were bad, which he knew wasn't true because Plue was one of the sweetest dogs in the world. He kept his mouth shut though, knowing if he lost it at work, he might lose his job. He really couldn't afford to be out of work.

Finally the HR manager, Cory, came back to the warehouse. He looked ridiculous in his cow costume, but Natsu said nothing about it, even when he asked Natsu if he was alright. Natsu wanted to say yes and get him to leave, but he shook his head. "Not really..."

"Oh, well there's candy in the break room. Maybe that'll make you feel better?"

Natsu shook his head again. "It won't..."

Cory frowned. "Well I hope it gets better."

Natsu could already feel his bottom lip tremble as he said, "it's not. It's just gonna get worse..." He didn't mean to be that honest, but keeping it inside was killing him. He already talked to Lucy about it, but he held back a little, not wanting to show just how vulnerable he was. However, in this moment he couldn't help himself. "It's not anything work related... So don't worry..."

"Do you want to talk about it?" Cory asked, stepping closer.

"Not much to talk about," Natsu shrugged. "My cat's tumor is getting worse..."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that," he said, then started telling Natsu about his cats at home. One of his cats had FIV, which was the feline version of HIV. When asked, Cory explained that it wasn't transmitted through sex like with humans, but it did still weaken the immune system. Cory said he panics if his cat gets a simple cold because even that could kill him. That made Natsu feel awful, but at least he knew he wasn't the only one with a sick cat. Someone else actually understood what he was going through.

"Does he mess with it at all?" Cory asked towards the end of their conversation.

"He licks at it," Natsu said, cringing when he remembered how gross it looked seeing his cat clean the infected area.

"You might try getting an E-collar. Might help."

Natsu dropped his gaze. "I don't think he'll like that very much..."

"It's worth a shot? Anyways, I hope he gets to feeling better."
Cory left, and Natsu went to hide behind some couches in the backroom to cry. He kept quiet, not wanting anyone to see him like this at work. He brought out his phone, flipping through the pictures of Happy. When the wound wasn't showing, Happy looked completely normal. He just wished desperately that he really was normal, and that nothing was killing him from the inside out.

That night he didn't go out for Halloween. Lucy had to work, so he stayed at home. He didn't even bother turning on the porch light for trick or treaters. He felt too horrible to move. He spent most of the night trying to get Happy to stop licking at himself. That's when he noticed it.

The lump had a weird smell to it. It didn't take a genius to know Happy's sore was now infected.

November

Natsu spent the first day of November debating what he should do. What could he do? Bring Happy to the vet where they might suggest putting him down? Or would they stick him on more antibiotics that wouldn't work. It didn't work the first time, and that sore was tiny compared to this! He practically pulled out his pink hair trying to figure out what he was supposed to do. The entire time he cried, throwing fits that the world wasn't fair, and that Happy didn't deserve this to happen to him. He was a good cat, he was the best cat! It just wasn't fair!

During the time Natsu complained, Happy seemed fine. Sure he licked at the wound, but he was still eating... Well, he was licking the juices around the meat in his wet food. Oh yeah, a couple of months ago they switched him to wet food since he seemed to be eating his dry food less and less. It was another one of those things Natsu ignored just so he could pretend Happy was alright.

He was so wrong.

November 2nd, 2016 was a day Natsu would remember for the rest of his life. He woke up early that morning, started awake by a weird dream involving naked Bill Cosby gifs. After that he really couldn't go back to sleep.

Lucy got up, dressed, then kissed Natsu goodbye before going to work. It was Natsu's day off, so he didn't bother getting dressed, deciding instead to stay in his sweatpants and shirt. He took Plue outside to use the bathroom, then went to check on Happy.

The blue cat was sitting on the couch, licking at his wound. Natsu's face scrunched up as he marched over to him, then carefully moved his head away from the area. "You can't do that," he warned, then stole a glance at the spot.

The spot itself was absolutely horrific. Happy's skin was stretched to its limit, red and purple all over. The white layer on his skin was now yellow, with a dark red, almost black ring on one of its side.

Natsu cringed, then slowly lowered his head to the spot. He didn't want to, but he knew he needed to. One sniff was all it took for him to pull away quickly. "God damn," he muttered, the smell stinging his senses. He looked down at the cat who was now trying to lick at the infected spot once again.

Natsu let him, deciding to go take a shower since he was going to take Happy to the vet. Even if he knew the antibiotics wouldn't fix it, it might still help a little. Natsu took a shower, got dressed, then put Happy in the carrier. It was as if the cat knew where he was going, because he struggled the whole way in.
After popping a motion sickness pill, he loaded him and the cat up in the car before driving to the vet. He tried to assure himself that this visit was going to go okay. He went inside, checked in, and was the second person called to the back since he arrived so early.

When they finally managed to get Happy out of his carrier - he was being extremely difficult, they turned him on his side to look at his wound. The vet attending to him was a different one than before, not knowing how much Natsu and Happy already went through. She checked out the spot on his stomach, grimacing at the sight before gently poking at it with a gloved finger.

When she released Happy, she said, "he can go back in his carrier now."

Natsu quickly scooped up his growling cat, putting him inside his cage so he could feel more secure. When Natsu was finished locking it up, he looked at the vet, anticipating her reaction.

"Are you wanting to get it removed?" She asked, throwing away her gloves.

Natsu shook his head, finally feeling his emotions catch up to him. He felt tears well up in his eyes as he tried to say, "n-no, umm, w-we already tr-tried that b-before... It just g-grew b-back." The tears spilled down his cheeks, uncaring as they dripped past his chin and onto the floor.

"Okay," the vet slowly nodded.

Natsu blinked, but the tears didn't end. "C-can he get antibiotics?"

"Sure." She glanced down at the cat with a sympathetic look in her eyes. "He can stay on antibiotics and pain medicine for the rest of his life."

Natsu's heart twisted at hearing that. The rest of his life? Happy could barely manage ten days, how was he supposed to deal with getting two shots of liquid in his mouth for the rest of his life without throwing up again? "It's, umm... pressing against his s-skin... Is... Is it eventually going to split his stomach open?"

The vet only said one word. "Yes."

"You won't be a bad dad if you decide to euthanize him, but you don't have to make a decision right now," she assured.
"I need to talk to my wife first," Natsu's vision blurred as his whole world came crashing down.

"That's understandable," the vet said. "If you want, you can come back later to either pick up the medication, or to go another route."

His body shook when he registered what she implied. "Kay," he nodded, feeling hollow. It felt like if someone poked him he would burst into a million shards.

"If you want, you can wait here for a while, or you can go out the other exit," the vet offered.

Natsu realized she was worried about him crying in front of other people. At this point he really didn't care. He felt like he had nothing left to lose, why not send his pride with it? "I'm fine," he sniffled, wiping his stinging eyes on his sleeve. "D-do I just go out and pay for the office visit for now?"

The woman's eyes held pity as she said, "no. There's no charge."

That was almost worse than paying the $32 for the office visit. He felt pathetic as he nodded. "Th-thanks..."

Natsu left the room, went down the hall, then exited the building through the waiting room. He set Happy's carrier in the passenger seat, then walked over to the driver's door. More tears were escaping before he could climb into the vehicle.

He cursed under his shaky breath, feeling like the world was unfair. Like it dealt Happy a bad hand. Natsu drove with tears in his eyes all the way home.

That day he spent all his time with Happy. The signs were easier to see that day than they'd ever been over the past few months. Happy only licked the liquid out of his wet food, but it was far less than he had before. He barely drank water. His tongue dipped into the bowl, but he wasn't collecting much. He wouldn't lay on his left side, favoring his right.

Natsu had to get up multiple times to collect Happy because the cat continued to escape, wanting to sit alone in another room instead of cuddle like Natsu desperately wanted to. He had to continuously stop Happy from licking at the would, knowing he was only making things worse.

The first two hours Natsu debated what to do. The antibiotic/pain med route sounded awful for both of them. He didn't want to put Happy through that again. Plus his stomach was going to eventually split open anyway, regardless of if the infection cleared up or not. There was also the fear that the cancer would spread to his lungs, since that was common for this type of illness. He really didn't want Happy to go out like that.

That really only left one option, but he didn't want to do it.

Natsu cried harder as he held onto Happy, wishing that all his love would somehow cure this deadly disease he formed. "It's not fair," Natsu said, his eyes wet with tears. He was getting tired, all the crying doing a number on his body.

Happy purred, then got up to go sit alone... again.

Without admitting it, Natsu made up his mind. When Lucy got home from work, they were going to go back to the vet to-
with Happy. He brought his cat outside, despite the open wound. It wouldn't matter by tonight anyway.

They spent a while in the backyard, then in the front yard. Natsu snapped lots of videos and photos. By the end of the night he'd have 434 of them combined. Some were blurry or out of focus, but he would never delete them. Never.

Natsu eventually found himself upstairs with Happy. They laid in bed together, with the cat resting against his side. It was how he woke up sometimes, or how he went to sleep other times. He always loved having his feline companion nearby. He always made Natsu feel better about life.

He didn't know what he'd do after today... After he lost-

'Nope. Not gonna think about it,' Natsu thought as he closed his eyes, one hand resting on Happy's back. He let sleep take him, knowing this would be the last nap he ever took with his longest friend.

Natsu woke up feeling more tired than when he started. He glanced down, relieved when he saw Happy was still sleeping on his side. He pet him, feeling the soft fur under his fingers. "I love you," Natsu said, rubbing the back of his hand against Happy's whiskers.

Carefully Natsu brought his phone out, checking the time. He frowned, the vet's office closed in forty minutes, and Lucy wasn't home yet. He tried calling her, but it went to voicemail. He tried a few more times, getting the same results. "Damn..."

Natsu sat up, bringing up a sleepy Happy with him. "I just want to say, I love you, Happy. I hope you know that..."

Happy barely looked at him, too tired and already trying to fall asleep again. That was another thing Natsu noticed. Happy slept a lot more than he used to lately... He must have ignored it, just like he ignored all the other signs.

Natsu carried Happy to the living room, setting him down on the couch before trying again. Before he could press the call button, he received an incoming call from Lucy. He quickly answered it, saying, "where are you?"

"I'm leaving work now. Why, what's up?" She sounded stressed, so he figured she had a hard day at work. It was about to get harder though.

"I need you to come with me to the vet again... I... I'm p-..." Natsu slammed his eyes shut as he forced the words out, "I'm putting him down."

There was a long pause before she asked, "are you sure?"

"I don't know," he said honestly, more tears filling his eyes. He never thought he'd cried so much in his life before. "What do you think I should do?"

"Well... I know it sucks, but it's the humane thing to do..."

Natsu knew she was right, but that didn't make it any easier. "How far away are you?"

"I just left work."

Natsu ground his teeth together. Lucy worked at least fifteen minutes away from where they lived, but the vet was more towards the middle. "Can you meet me there? They close soon, and I don't
know if they'll take him. They usually stop taking people twenty minutes before they close..."

"I'll meet you there," she promised. "Natsu, I love you..."

"I love you too," he mumbled, already feeling his heart ache. He didn't think he deserved love at all... Not after what he was about to do. "I'll see you there. Bye."

After Natsu hung up the phone, his eyes searched out Happy. He was still on the couch, licking at his wound again. He had to take another motion sickness pill first, since the other one wore off already.

Natsu gulped before walking over to his beloved cat. "I'm really sorry..." He picked him up, cradling him to his chest before heading towards the door.

Happy's carrier was still inside the car since Natsu took him out of it once they arrived to the house. He went outside, putting Happy in the backseat while he went to lock the door. Tears flooded his eyes, his breaths getting shallow as he climbed into the car.

"H-Happy," he called with a shuttering voice. Said cat slowly crawled to the front of the car with Natsu's assistance. He placed him on his lap, then started up the car for the drive. Right now he didn't care about laws, he just wanted his friend as close to him as possible, even if his wound was pussing against his clothes.

Natsu drove to the animal hospital, muttering over and over again, "I promise I love you Happy... I promise. I'm only doing this because I think it'll help... You won't feel any pain, won't that be great? I promise I love you... I hope you'll forgive me..."

When he saw the building come into sight, he cried out, "please forgive me."

Natsu couldn't bring Happy in. He cracked the windows of the car, then proceeded into the animal hospital. He tried to keep his tears at bay as he waited in line. When it was his turn, he almost lost it.

"Hi..." Natsu's voice was hoarse and weak. "I came in this morning..." He dropped his head, ashamed of himself as he said very slowly, "I'm here... to put... m-my cat down..."

The room fell silent when he finished. New tears forming, just to run down his face. He didn't bother wiping them away. More would come anyway.

"What's the last name?" The woman behind the desk asked, a frown on her usually cheerful face. With all the visits over the years, he recognized her, and judging from her face, she felt sympathetic to him.

"Dragneel," he muttered, staring at the desk.

The woman turned around, then fished through the folders on the wall until she found the one labelled 'Dragneel'. "If you want, you can wait in the supply store, or in your car."

Natsu nodded, "I'll be in my car... It's the silver one..."

When he turned, he saw everyone shift out of his way. He walked to the door, thanking a man who held it open for him. He didn't dare look at his face, knowing he must have the same pitied face as everyone else.

Natsu was already crying harder when he got to the car again. He went to sit in the backseat with
Happy, grabbing the cat to drag him on his lap. "I love you," he cried, hoping with all his heart that his cat understood. He didn't know what else to say, so he repeated it over and over again.

Lucy pulled up, got out of her car, then came over to Natsu's. She crawled in the backseat with him, resting a hand on his shoulder as he trembled. Her heart broke for him, wishing she would do something to ease his pain, but there was nothing. All she could do was be there for him.

"H-he had a good life, right?" Natsu smiled down at Happy, stroking his back.

"He did..."

Natsu nodded as he said, "fourteen and a half years is a long time... For a cat..."

"It is..."

Sobs racked his body. "It still doesn't feel like enough."

Lucy could only frown. It really didn't seem like enough. Hell, a hundred years with the little blue ball of joy still didn't seem like enough.

They both watched as Happy moved, deciding he wanted to rest on one of the scarfs Natsu had in his backseat. It was white, with an odd scaled pattern. He'd been meaning to bring it back inside for days, but now he was glad he left it out there.

Happy laid between their thighs, trying to drift to sleep even with the noise of traffic in the distance. Natsu cried more, Lucy rubbed his back, and Happy laid there, seemingly oblivious to what was about to happen.

It seemed like hours passed by, but as soon as a lady came outside of the animal hospital to say, "Happy?" Natsu swore it was only a few minutes. He glanced at the clock on the dash, seeing that exactly one hour had passed. He knew they were already closed, but even he knew they wouldn't turn someone like him away during this time.

Natsu panicked as he looked at Lucy. "C-can you ask them if I can bring him in without the carrier... He hates it..."

Lucy gave him a warm smile as she nodded. "Sure."

He watched as she got out of the car to walk to the lady. They spoke for a few seconds before Lucy looked back at him, nodding and beckoning him to come over.

Natsu wrapped Happy in the scarf, then held him tightly to his chest, whispering again how much he loved him. When Natsu walked into the waiting room, there was no one there. They walked down the hall, past the room he was used to and went to a different one. It looked just about the same, but it made him feel more uneasy.

Natsu gently set Happy down on the table, then opened up the scarf so he was resting on it. The vet asked if they could look at his wound, but Natsu knew that would only make Happy upset. He was already starting to growl, he didn't want him to cry out too.

"Can I show you a picture?" Natsu asked, bringing out his phone.

"That'll be fine," she said.

Natsu scrolled through his phone, "sorry... I took a lot today."
"It's understandable..."

Lucy stayed quiet as Natsu brought up the latest picture of Happy's stomach. It was clearly infected, painful to even look at. She couldn't imagine what kind of pain Happy was going through.

"That does look awful," she looked over at Happy. "Poor baby..."

Natsu pocketed the phone, then went to place a hand on Happy. He just had to feel him.

"I'll be right back with some paperwork. Are you wanting to take him with you?"

"Cremation," Natsu answered.

"Okay. Will both parents be present?" When they both nodded, she said, "I'll be right back." With that, she left them alone.

Natsu burst into tears, leaning over Happy as he said, "oh god, please Happy, please know I love you. Please, just... just please. Please don't hate me." He finally said it. He said his biggest fear out loud. Natsu was terrified that Happy would forever hate him for ending his life. "I promise, I'm only trying to do the right thing, but I don't know what that is. I'm sorry."

Lucy rubbed Natsu's back, but he barely felt it over the trembling. Happy just growled, not liking the vet's office one bit. Natsu tried to pretend Happy wasn't mad at him, but he felt it deep down in his heart he probably was upset at Natsu.

The lady came back in, having Natsu sign some paperwork. He didn't read over it. His vision was too blurred anyway. His signature was shaky, barely legible. He tried his best to keep a steady hand, but it was useless. He decided not to care, knowing he wasn't the first person to mess it up, and he probably wouldn't be the last.

"Have you ever been through this before?" The vet asked as she gathered the papers.

"No," he shook his head, feeling more tears spring loose.

"Okay. What were going to do is really simple." She explained how they did it. It was the same as the person did before. They would sedate Happy, putting him to sleep as if they were going to do surgery, then they would give him an overdose and he would die from that.

Natsu choked on his saliva as he said, "k-kay..."

"Oh, bless your heart," she said before leaving to grab the stuff.

"Oh, bless your heart," she said before leaving to grab the stuff.

Once again Natsu was begging Happy, pleading with his pet to forgive him. He wouldn't let him pass without knowing how much he loved him, how much he cared for him. "Please, I love you. Please know that." He knew he'd said it before, but it didn't feel like enough. Nothing felt like enough.

He just wanted a few more years with his cat. Why the hell was life so cruel it couldn't even give him that? He would gladly trade some of his own years over if it meant he got to spend more time with Happy, without the cancer eating away at him. Natsu barely heard when the vet came back in. He stood up, keeping a hand on Happy.

"We're going to do the first dose. We need him on his side so we can get to his leg," she said, another woman coming into the room to join them. As they grabbed Happy, he hissed, immediately resisting their touches.
"He really doesn't have any scruff," the other girl noted as they turned him on his side.

The next part was something that would haunt Natsu for the rest of his life. Once they got him on his side, Happy started hissing like crazy, bearing his fangs for anyone who dared put their hands on him.

"Happy," Natsu tried to coo, his voice strained as he gently rubbed a finger over his whiskers. "I love you." He glanced over, seeing the needle inside his cat, the liquid getting injected into his veins.

The vet began to pull the needle out when all the sedation was in. "There, see that wasn't so-"

Happy screamed, his whole body tensed as his voice echoed through the small room. "What's happening?" Natsu asked, then made eye contact with his screaming cat. "Haaaaappy," he called out like he usually did when he tried to calm down his cat.

"Whoa, what was that?" One of the women asked as if someone knew. Happy screamed for a few more seconds before he stopped, his body going lax. "There he goes, nice and easy." She pet Happy's side, slightly angering Natsu.

Happy was without pain now, but the last thing he ever felt in his life was pain. It was fucking pain! He was screaming, and there was nothing Natsu could do for him! He caused it! He did it, there was no way Happy would forgive him now. He didn't even feel like he deserved forgiveness.

Natsu openly sobbed, hand cupping Happy's still face as he stared into his unblinking eyes. He glanced up, seeing as the ladies turned Happy over so they would see his wound.

"Oh wow, poor baby. Mammary cancer is just awful." The vet looked at Natsu, then said, "you're doing the right thing, stopping this before it could spread to his lungs."

Natsu only cried harder, clenching his teeth as his breathing became shallow. He didn't feel like he was doing the right thing. How on Earth could killing his friend be a good thing? Let alone the right thing! He wanted to scream, he wanted to punch the wall and ask for a do-over.

It just wasn't fucking fair. Happy never did anything to deserve this! Why the hell did he have to get cancer! He was the best cat in the world, he didn't deserve this fate.

One of the women's voices reached him. "Do you want to hold him while he do the next shot?"

Natsu didn't have to think about it. He nodded, then watched as the other lady wrapped the scarf around Happy's body. Natsu picked him up, cradling the motionless cat against his chest as he cried into the fur on his back. "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. I love you, please know that I love you Happy. I'm sorry, please, please forgive me. I-I'm sorry."

He heard them shave off some hair from Happy's front paw, but he didn't see anything since his face was pressed into Happy's fur, pleading for his cat's forgiveness. "I'm sorry," and then he felt Happy's body go limp in his arms.

Natsu paused for a moment, completely caught off-guard. Was... Was he...? Natsu didn't think he could cry harder in that moment, but he proved himself wrong. "Oh god!"

The vet waited less than a minute before saying, "we just need to check."

Natsu pulled his head away slowly, blinking his water eyes as she pressed the stethoscope to Happy's body, then moved it around a few more times before pulling it away. "He's gone."
"He's..." Natsu couldn't believe it. He just couldn't fathom a world without Happy. He held his cat closer to his body, weeping as he felt just how lifeless his friend really was. The women left the room, leaving only Natsu and Lucy.

He turned to Lucy, seeing the tears in her eyes, then looked down at Happy. "Is... Is he?" He had to mouth the word 'dead', not able to say it out loud.

Lucy's eyes flooded as she nodded, her face pained as she watched the love of her life lose his oldest friend.

Natsu spent the next twenty minutes crying over Happy's body, kissing him all over his head, wishing that just once Happy would try to push him away with a paw. It was useless, Happy was gone. Natsu set Happy down on the table, they cradled his face against Happy's shoulder.

"I love you," he whispered, not caring if Happy couldn't hear him anymore. "I'm so sorry this happened to you. I'm so sorry..."

There were no words to describe the empty feeling inside his heart, the pure sadness coursing through his body. He had Happy for his whole life, and now he was just gone! Natsu didn't think Happy would forgive him, because he couldn't even forgive himself.

The vet came back again, asking how they wanted Happy returned, in a gold box or in a dark cherry brown box. Natsu chose the latter, but at the moment he didn't really care. He just wanted his friend back, but he knew that wasn't an option. If he was to get one wish granted, he would wish Happy could come back perfectly healthy, with no cancer in his system, but that was a hopeless wish.

"Do you want a paw print of his?"

Natsu looked up at her, then down to Happy. He nodded, then heard her leave.

Despite everyone telling him it was the right choice, he still felt awful about it. He stroked Happy's fur, feeling the limp body in his arms. Eventually the vet came back again with a clay mold. She moved Happy's body so his paw could press against the clay, leaving behind a print. She asked if it was good, but Natsu barely looked at it. He just nodded, hoping it would be good enough. Nothing they did would fill the void in his heart.

It was several minutes later when the vet finally came back. By then Lucy was standing behind Natsu, leaning against him as she cried with her husband. Natsu bent down, giving Happy one last kiss on his cheek before saying, "I love you."

He stood up straight, then said, "I'm ready... Whenever you need him."

"Okay," she whispered, not wanting to startle him. "The guy who takes the animals hasn't left yet, so Happy won't spend the night here. It usually takes a few days before we get him back, but we'll give you a call when that happens so you can pick him up."

Natsu weakly nodded as he pet Happy a few more times, memorizing the feeling of his fur since he would never feel it again. "I love you Happy. I'm sorry." More tears filled his eyes, but at this point he really couldn't care even if he tried. He was broken, shattered...

As Natsu lifted Happy's limp body, Lucy worked to pull the scarf from underneath him. Natsu gently set his cat back down, wishing this never had to happen. He pet Happy one last time before turning, his hand lingering on his lifeless cat for a few seconds before finally letting go. He stole one glance back at him, seeing his back half.
Natsu went down the hall with Lucy to the waiting room. Lucy handled the paying since Natsu was in no condition to talk. Lucy wasn't much better, but she knew she had to be strong for him. They paid the total, $225, then slowly turned to leave. They heard the lady behind the desk say she was sorry, to which Natsu softly said, "thanks..."

Natsu was already crying again when he walked to his car. He really wanted to ride with Lucy, but his car would get towed if he left it overnight. He got into the driver's seat, then placed the scarf over the cat carrier in the passenger seat, not wanting to see it.

"Do you want to wait here a while?" Lucy asked as Natsu grabbed the door handle.

He shook his head. "No. I just want to go home." He tried to ignore the man on the other side of the parking lot. The man who had Happy and probably other animals with him in his truck. It gave Natsu the slightest bit of comfort to know the man put the animals inside the truck instead of the bed, showing that Happy would be safe for the trip to the crematory.

"I'll see you at home," Natsu said a little coldly, but Lucy immediately forgave him. She already knew he would be upset, and she couldn't blame him. She nodded, then walked to her car.

Natsu was already driving away before she could start up her car, trying to get home as fast as possible so he could cry in peace. It wasn't safe to cry while driving, especially at night. He glanced at his clock, seeing that he spent two hours at the animal hospital. Part of him believed it, and part of him didn't.

Natsu pulled into the driveway a few minutes before Lucy did. He went inside, immediately seeing Happy's wet food sitting on the floor. Natsu gulped as he picked it up, along with the bowl of dry food Happy never touched. He threw it away, knowing the faster he got it done, the better.

Natsu gathered up some of Happy's stuff: The extra wet cat food, the extra litter scoop, some of the toys. He picked up the blankets Happy used, putting them in the laundry to wash later. When he was done with that, he walked outside to see Lucy sniffling by her car.

"You should come inside," he said, surprised that he wasn't crying now.

"I can't..."

Natsu frowned, "is it because his stuff is in there?" Lucy nodded, her body slightly shaking. Natsu went to lean on his car, facing her. They stayed quiet for a few minutes before Natsu asked, "we did the right thing... right?"

"Yeah... But it doesn't make it easier..."

"I know," he sighed, feeling his heart throb dully in his chest. "I picked up some of his stuff, but I don't want to get rid of it all too fast... I don't want to pretend he never existed..."

"You're right," she swallowed thickly.

"I think he lived a good life..." Natsu's gaze was on the ground, hoping with every fiber of his being that Happy lived a good life.

"He did," she agreed, finally standing up straight.

Natsu took the hint, moving towards the door to go inside with Lucy following. She went to the couch while he went upstairs to grab the litter box. In a few trips he grabbed the litter box, the two tubs of litter, and the other scoop. He cast a glance at Happy's bed, but he couldn't bring himself to
move it just yet. It would stay right where it was for the time being, until Natsu felt comfortable enough to do something about it.

He had already decided a while back he was going to donate Happy's stuff. He didn't want to get another cat anytime soon. It would feel wrong to replace Happy that fast.

He cleaned out the litter box, then washed it out in case the animal shelter needed everything clean. He set the separate parts of it out to dry since it was the kind with a lid attached.

When it was all clean, Natsu went to the living room to sit on the couch next to Lucy. "I've done all I can do tonight," he said, feeling that emptiness spread through his body again. "We should go to sleep..."

"Yeah..." She agreed, but neither moved. It wasn't long until they were both crying again, especially when Plue came over to see what the fuss was about. They had no idea if the dog would understand that Happy was gone, since there wasn't exactly a way to tell him.

They both cried themselves to sleep that night, holding each other tightly as they drifted to sleep. Neither felt up for being intimate. Natsu had no idea how long it would be before he felt up for that anyway, the pain of losing his friend was constantly on his mind.

The next day wasn't easy for Natsu either. He called out of work, knowing he wouldn't be stable enough to complete his job without crying. It proved to be the wise decision, seeing as he cried off and on all day. The worst was whenever he forgot, because for a second he would look around the room for Happy, only to be reminded that he would never see his friend again.

He would never see Happy again.

Natsu tortured himself by looking over the pictures and videos he took yesterday of Happy. He smiled with watery eyes as the cat sat in the grass, looking around but not moving. He wished he could do something different, but he knew he made the right decision for Happy. He died before things got too bad... Before Happy gave up.

But that also made Natsu feel horrible.

Happy hadn't given up, but he did. There was no changing the past now, but it still hurt like a bitch. Happy was the best cat he could ever wish for, he just hoped and prayed Happy would forgive him, even if he couldn't forgive himself.

When Lucy came home from work, Natsu was sitting on the couch, typing out his feelings in a word document. For some odd reason, it made him feel a tiny bit better. He just had to get everything in his head out, so he could finally breath again.

It only did so much, because he still felt that ache in his chest when he remembered his fallen friend. Happy was a huge part of Natsu's life. He wasn't just a pet, or a fur-baby. He was his true family. He would still be his family, even after his death.

Natsu would have to live knowing Happy's last feeling was pain, but he hoped over time it would hurt less. This was the only time in Natsu's life when he wished this hard that there was an afterlife, so that maybe he could see his friend one last time.

He stroked a thumb over Happy's favorite fish stuffed animal as he whispered to his friend, hoping somehow Happy could hear him, but knowing ultimately that he was just talking to himself...
Natsu knew he had to lean on Lucy for support, since she knew better than anyone how close he was with Happy. She was his best friend, so he didn't mind so much when he randomly cried in front of her. She'd ask him if he was okay, which he would simply answer, "no."

Lucy understood, and even cried along with him a few times. Happy was important to both of them, dead or alive. He would forever live on in their hearts and in their memories.

Natsu wondered how things would have gone if he chose the other path... If he would have stuck Happy on medication for the rest of his life, but ultimately he knew it would all lead to this in the end. He would still euthanize Happy, the timing would just be different. That was the only comfort he held onto during this time in his life.

Natsu barely ate anything, not feeling hungry at all. It was strange since he always ate, sometimes even overeating, but nothing sounded appetizing. As he scrolled through his phone to try to find a distraction, a thought popped into his head. So many people said 2016 was a horrible year, and for the longest time he ignored it, thinking people were overreacting.

Now he could only agree with them. 2016 was so far the worst year of his entire life. November 2nd being the worst day.

As optimistic as Natsu wanted to be, the future seemed pretty bleak without Happy in it. He knew eventually he would move on, after mourning his friend. He would smile again, he would laugh, but right now he still felt hollow, and that was alright.

He was allowed to grieve, as long as he did it in healthy ways. Okay... So maybe curling up on the kitchen floor while clutching a puss-stained blanket while bawling his eyes out wasn't the healthiest thing to do, but Natsu couldn't help it. He was hurting...

But it was fine, because everyone deals with death in their own ways. It was just harder for Natsu since he was the one to ultimately decide when Happy would die. He would carry that guilt for the rest of his life, always wondering if there was a different option he could take...

Natsu knew in his shattered heart he made the right choice...

He just hoped Happy would someday forgive him...

Chapter End Notes

I'm very sorry for this depressing one-shot, but if you couldn't tell, I'm trying to deal with the loss of my cat. She had mammary cancer, the tumor grew so large that her skin started opening up since it couldn't stretch anymore. The only option was antibiotics and pain meds for the rest of her very short life, or euthanasia.

I cried over the decision, but decided in the end to put her down. It is by far the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life. I've never cried so much in my life. I took her in when she was six months old, and she passed away when she was fourteen and a half. She is my world, I love her, but she's gone now.

90% of this story is based on what happened to me and my cat. I hope I didn't upset
anyone with this story, but I honestly had to get it all out. The emotional pain is still eating me up inside, but it feels good to get this out.

For those wondering, I don't have a pit bull, but I do have a dog. He's a five year old German Shepherd. I just wanted to make Plue a pit bull since they get a bad reputation even though they're gentle by nature, or at least the ones I've personally met are.

You don't have to leave a comment for this story, I won't mind at all. If you have anything negative to say, I'm asking you now to please keep it to yourself. This was a difficult decision for me to make, and I didn't take it lightly. I'm still wondering if I made the right choice, and I'm still hoping my cat will forgive me. I honestly feel like I failed her.

R.I.P.

Socks

May 14, 2002 - November 2, 2016

I will hold you in my heart until the day I die. I love you, Socks.
Let's make a deal

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for the kind words for the last chapter. It really helped. I will always miss Socks, but I'm getting to the point where I can start accepting it. I got her urn back, so she's resting on our bookcase, surrounded by her favorite toy, her collar, and the brush I used on her. I just hope she had a good life.

Now, to get onto other things... I've been thinking about this one-shot for a while now, so I thought I'd give it some attention. Just a fluffy nalu story. :P

Summary: Natsu's had his eyes on Lucy for a while now, but she won't give him a chance despite his multiple attempts at asking her out. Maybe a little friendly wager between them could change things for him? Who knows? NALU, Modern AU. I don't own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does.

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Genre: Friendship/Romance

Word Count: 5,321

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Let's make a deal

"Thank you very much!" A small blonde girl smiled as she waved to the older couple at the doorway. "We'll see you again when the cookies come in!"

"You have a wonderful day," an older blonde teen said as she grabbed her little sister's hand. "Come on, Michelle. We still have a few more houses to go to."

"Okay!"

The two girls walked to the next house, ready to try to sell more cookies. They spent the morning traveling neighborhood to neighborhood to get as many cookies sold as possible.

"Hello!" Michelle said once the door opened to the next house. "Me and my sister Lucy are selling Girl Scout cookies! Would you like to place an order?"

She glanced up at her older sister, seeing the teen sending her a wink. She had mastered her presentation, much to Lucy's satisfaction. This was the last day to sell cookies before she had to turn in her sheet to the Girl Scout's leader to get counted, so she wanted to spend the whole day working on her sells.

When they finished with that neighborhood, the two girls climbed into Lucy's car to drive to the next. She parked, then turned off the vehicle for them to begin the next round of houses. They
were barely out of the car when Lucy heard a voice she hadn't expected to hear, at least not today.
"Yo! What's up Lucy!"

"No..." She shook her head, unaware that her little sister was now staring at her with a weird look.
"No no... Is it really him?"

Lucy glanced up, her suspicions confirmed when her eyes landed on the pink haired guy who seemed to find her at the most bizarre times. Seriously, at this point she felt like he was her Juvia and she was his Gray.

Natsu Dragneel was a pink haired boy who happened to attend the same high school as her. They only met about five months ago. They shared some mutual friends and hung out a few times at group gatherings, but that was about it. Well, aside from the fact that he asked her out at least six times since they met... but who's counting?

As she watched the pink haired boy and a small girl -that for some reason looked familiar to Lucy- walk up to them, Lucy thought about all the reasons she wanted to say yes to going out on a date with him. He was funny, nice, and super cute. Okay... More like drop dead gorgeous, but she would never admit that out loud.

When he flashed her a grin her heart thrummed faster in her chest, then she thought about the single reason she hadn't said yes to him. It was simple. She didn't want to date at this age. There wasn't a rule against her dating, but she didn't want to get tied down to one boy before really experiencing life.

It wasn't Natsu's fault that she had this reason against dating. It had to do more with the horror stories she heard about girls dating too young. She didn't want to become a victim to her stupid heart, so she pushed aside her silly feelings for the boy in favor of sparing her the heartbreak that may or may not come.

"Lucy?"

Said girl already felt her stomach doing flips when he stopped in front of her. "Hi Natsu..."

"Who's this?" He seemed to ignore her as he kneeled down to get to Michelle's height. "Well aren't you pretty," he grinned up at the teenage girl as he said, "just like Lucy."

Michelle blushed, then stepped closer to Lucy due to her embarrassment. "I'm Michelle! Lucy's my sister!"

"What are you two doing out here?" Natsu asked, but then his eyes landed on the sash around Michelle's torso. "Oh..."

Before he could ask, the little girl beside Natsu took over. "Hi Michelle," she started, "are you selling lots of cookies too?"

"Too?" Lucy looked at the girl with blue hair, finally noticing the identical sash. That's when she realized she recognized the girl from some of the Girl Scout meetings she attended with Michelle. "Oh, yeah. We're selling cookies. You're Wendy, right?"

"Yup!" The small girl nodded, smiling as if she were proud to be recognized.

"How do you know my sister?" Natsu asked, standing up to get on Lucy's level.
She shrugged, "after you go to enough meetings you start to pick up on that kind of stuff. How come I've never seen you there before?"

"I haven't gone yet," Natsu looked down at his little sister, seeing her have her own conversation with Michelle. "Usually my dad goes to the meetings, but he's busy so I'm covering for him..."

"I see," Lucy nodded. "Well, we have to go sell mor-"

"Hey!" Natsu beamed, cutting her off. "Let's make a deal!"

"A deal?" Lucy cocked her head.

"Yeah," he nodded fervently. "To see who sells the most cookies!"

The girl barely resisted the urge to groan, knowing well how competitive Natsu could get. She'd seen it a few times when he interacted with their friends, but she'd never faced off against him before. It did sound a little fun.

"Okay, you're on." A glint flashed in Lucy's brown eyes. She felt confident that her and Michelle would come out victorious. "What do I get if I win?"

Unbeknownst to Lucy, Natsu was already forming a scheme. "What do you want?"

"Hmm," Lucy tapped her chin as she thought about it. "If I win, you have to do my chemistry homework for a month."

"Sure," Natsu would have agreed to do that anyway. Chemistry was his favorite subject after all.

"Do you want to know what I want if I win?"

Lucy paled. For some reason, she hadn't thought about the chances of him winning. "Wh-what do you want?"

His devilish smirk overpowered his urge to stay in control of his expression when he said, "I want you to go on a date with me."

"Oh gosh," Lucy finally groaned, "not that again... I thought you gave up?" It had been at least three weeks since the last time he tried to ask her out. She honestly thought he accepted the fact that she wasn't going to say yes.

"No way," he shook his head. "I was just waiting for the right time to strike!"

"And you think that's now?" Lucy had to give him points for determination. Never had a boy continuously pursue her after being rejected so many times.

"Of course! You don't stand a chance!"

"Is that a challenge?" Lucy looked down at the paper in her hand, the one with the amount of buyers they had and the number of boxes of cookies they already sold. "So you think you can beat... ninety-four boxes?"

Natsu's grin dropped when he heard that number. "Ninety-four?" He carefully grabbed the paper Wendy was holding to count their total so far. He grimaced, seeing Lucy and her sister had over twenty more than them. "That's nothing! We got this, right Wendy?!"

"Huh?" The little girl looked up, but Natsu was already grabbing her hand to pull her away.
"See you tonight at the meeting!" Natsu called off, ignoring when Wendy told him their dad was supposed to take her. "You're goin' down!"

"That's what you think! It's on!" Lucy shouted, then asked Michelle to get back in the car.

"Why are we leaving?" The little girl asked as she buckled her seat belt.

"We'll let them have this neighborhood. They'll need it if they want to have a chance against us." Lucy drove off, heading to a neighborhood a mile away to create enough space between them. "There's no way we're going to lose!"

"You have got to be kidding me!" Lucy's outburst grabbed everyone's attention at the meeting. It especially caught the attention of a certain pink hair boy who was smirking at her after his little sister's name was announced for selling the most cookies.

Lucy clenched her teeth as she waited for everyone to look away from her before they continued with the meeting. Michelle was announced as the second place winner, but neither her nor Wendy seemed to care as they sat next to each other, whispering back and forth as their friendship grew.

Lucy spent the rest of the meeting with her eyes looking everywhere but at Natsu. She just knew he was still smirking at her. When the meeting was over, Lucy was forced to face the music.

"So," Natsu gave her a toothy grin as he strolled up to the girl he liked, "when are you free for our date?"

She sighed, accepting defeat as she asked, "how's next Saturday?"

"Sounds perfect!" His green eyes gleamed. "Come over to my house at six?"

Lucy crossed her arms over her chest, a huff to her voice when she spoke. "Why do I have to come to you? Isn't the guy supposed to pick the girl up?"

Natsu raised a brow. "Geez Lucy. It's the twenty-first century. Girls don't have to rely on guys like that anymore."

Lucy puffed out her cheeks as she looked away from him. "Whatever..."

"Plus," he started, feeling a little embarrassed for admitting, "I can't pick you up. I get sick in vehicles... Remember?"

"Oh, right," she nodded, remembering how horrible he did the few times she had to ride in the same car as him. "Okay, text me your address. I'll be there at six."

"Awesome!" Natsu pulled out his phone, eager to get this thing started even if he still had a few days before their date. He punched in the address to send to her since they exchanged numbers about a month ago. She told him to only text if he needed something, to which he took as text if you 'want' to talk to Lucy, which he always seemed to want to do.

"I'll see you then!"

"See you then," Lucy agreed, then looked at the clock on the wall. "Well... We better get going. Have a good night."

"You too!" Natsu gave her an adorable wave, then ran off to grab his little sister.
Lucy watched as he scooped her up, resting her on his shoulders before making his way to the exit. She could still hear their laughter even when the door shut behind them.

"Lucy?" Michelle stood next to her older sister, drawing her attention. "Are you upset I lost?"

Lucy smiled at her sister, then grabbed her hand before heading towards the same door Natsu just went through. "Of course not! I think you did amazing!"

That seemed to cheer the little girl up since her face broke out into a childish smile. "I'm glad. I hope you have fun on your date."

Lucy's cheeks tinted pink. "I hope so too..."

Lucy sighed before walking up to the house. She hesitated before knocking, her fists barely hitting the wood to produce a quiet sound. She really didn't want to go through with this, but a deal was a deal... All she had to do was get through this evening, then she was done.

The door swung wide, revealing a grinning pink haired boy.

He was dressed rather nice, much to her surprise. He wore a black button up shirt with black slacks. Of course he still wore that silly white scarf around his neck, and his pants had some stray blue hairs scattered around the material. She ignored that, instead looking at his toothy smile as he greeted her. "Hey Lucy!"

Lucy was dressed a little nicer than she originally intended. Her hair was pulled into a single braid with a few locks loose to frame her face. She wore a simple pink summer dress that went down to her knees, while her feet were adorned in sandals.

"Hi," Lucy said, not meaning for her voice to sound so flat. She tried smiling at him, but she could tell he saw right through it.

"Come in," he shifted out of the way, his grin not faltering, even when he heard her let out another sigh. Natsu knew she didn't want to go out with him, but she hadn't even given him a chance yet. If he could show her a good time, maybe she'd reconsider? It was the hope he needed to carry out the evening.

"So what are we doing for our date?" Lucy asked, eyes scanning the living room as she walked in. From the sound of it, no one else was home, but it was just a guess.

"Dinner and a movie!" Natsu smiled, proud of himself for the idea.

Lucy on the other hand raised a brow. In a sarcastic tone, she thought, 'how original...' She nodded anyway, not wanting to burst his bubble. He won fair and square, so she'd go along with his idea for a date.

She walked further into the living room, seeing it was attached to a dining room. Natsu let her wander around, not minding if she scoped the place out. As she got closer to the dining room, a heavenly smell filled the air. Lucy breathed in deeper to let the aroma wash over her, her mouth already watering as she closed her eyes. "What's that smell?"

"Dinner," Natsu answered, his grin growing when he saw Lucy's reaction.

"Dinner?" She opened her eyes, sending a glance his way. "Did you order something?"
"Nope," he shook his head, walking past her to reach the kitchen attached to the dining room. "I'm cooking."

"You're what?" Her eyes went huge, staring in shock when she saw Natsu walk up to a stove with a pot on it.

He grabbed a slotted spoon, then used it to stir whatever was in the pot. The amazing smell increased, and Lucy's stomach let out an unladylike growl. She blushed and Natsu chuckled. "Glad you're hungry. It should be ready soon." He stole a glance at her, seeing a soft blush tint her cheeks pink.

Natsu looked away, feeling his own face warm up, and not from the hot stove under him. "Go ahead and make yourself at home. We'll be eating on the couch."

Lucy raised a brow at that idea. She was taught to always eat at a table. The very idea of eating on the couch seemed barbaric, but she was forced to go along with this date. Though it was now feeling less like a chore as she saw how much trouble Natsu went through already. She'd never had someone cook especially for her besides her mother, so this would be interesting.

Natsu told the truth when he said dinner would be done soon. He brought in two plates, resting them on the coffee table in front of Lucy before taking off to the kitchen again. Her mouth dropped on its own accord when she saw what he prepared. Natsu cooked Spaghetti Carbonara with a side of roasted asparagus. It looked absolutely tasty, so much so that her brown eyes lit up when she saw it. "Oh wow!"

"Looks good, huh?" Natsu came back, two glasses in hand. He set one beside Lucy's plate. When she cocked her head at the drink, he said, "it's Sparkling Rosemary Limeade... I umm, I thought you might like it..."

Lucy merely looked at it, then picked up the glass to take a sip. As she drank it, he started rambling, "I looked up what drinks would go best with the food, but it only showed me wine options, and we both know we're too young for that... I mean my mom's got a bottle somewhere, but I didn't want to get caught trying to sneak a drink, and also I didn't want you getting mad," he tore his gaze away from her as he continued.

"I didn't want you thinkin' I was tryin' to get you drunk or anything... Because I promise I wouldn't do that, but I wanted something that would taste good with the meal, which I'm hoping tastes good too... I just got the recipe off the internet and I've been cooking it every night since you agreed to the date just so I could get it right by the time you came over..."

Natsu felt sweat trickle down the back of his neck as he admitted, "the first time I tried making this I burnt it, bad. The smoke detector wouldn't shut up, so I had to disconnect the battery, and then the second time I made it I completely forgot the-"

Natsu was silenced when he felt soft fingers touch his lips. He turned to face her, unaware of the bright blush on his face. Lucy smiled at him, but this time it was genuine. "It tastes great," she said, then slowly removed her fingers to set them in her lap. "Thank you."

"Y-you're welcome," he gulped, terrified at the feeling of having her complete attention for the first time. "Umm... Wh-what do you wanna watch?"

Natsu quickly got up, then went over to a DVD rack filled with movies. "We have all kinds. Do you like comedies, or maybe action movies? Or maybe you like romantic comedies? I have some scary ones too..."
Lucy giggled to herself, finding this side of Natsu charming. The boy always acted so collected when they hung out with friends, so it was nice seeing his nervousness. It made him seem more approachable. It also helped that she saw how much trouble he really was going through to make this date go well. He could have easily taken her out to a movie and restaurant, but this felt so much more personal.

"I'll watch whatever you want to watch," Lucy said, trusting Natsu to pick a good movie.

They ended up watching 'Warm Bodies'. Natsu said it had a little bit of everything... Some action, some comedy, and some romance. Lucy was pleased with his choice, eating the delicious food he cooked as they watched the movie about the silly zombie who fell in love with a human.

When their plates were cleared and the movie was over, Lucy stuck around. She found herself lost in conversation after conversation about the most random things. It started out with them talking about their adventures trying to sell cookies with their little sisters, to talking about school and what they wanted to do when they graduated. Natsu said he wanted to be a dragon slayer, causing Lucy to burst into laughter.

Hours passed by, and soon Lucy and Natsu were saying goodnight to each other. He leaned in to give her a soft kiss on the cheek, which she allowed. Before she turned to leave his house, he asked, "hey Lucy?"

"Yeah?" She faced him again, a smile on her face that hadn't faltered all evening since they started watching the movie.

"Do you... umm, do you maybe want to... to do this again?"

Lucy watched as he ran his hand through his pink locks, his eyes staying on her even though it was clear he wanted to avert them. She decided to put him out of his misery instead of waiting to build anticipation. "Yes. I'd love to do this again."

"Really?" His green eyes lit up from her answer. When she nodded her head, he threw a fist into the air. "Alright! I'm all fired up now!"

Lucy let out a giggle, then said, "I'll see you later, Natsu. Text me?"

"Yeah," he nodded, watching as she walked out to the street where her car was parked. She turned to wave at him, seeing that he was already waving back.

She drove home much happier than she was when she drove to his house earlier that day. The date had gone amazingly, and she couldn't wait to see how the second one would go. Natsu really was a fun guy.

"Hello Mr. Dragneel," Lucy greeted when a man answered the door.

The redhead shook his head. "How many times do I have to tell you? Call me Igneel." Then more to himself, he added, "Mr. Dragneel makes me sound old..."

"Hi Igneel," she corrected. "Is Natsu home?"

"He is," the male scooted to the side, letting Lucy through. "He's in his room."

"Thanks," she walked past him, then took her shoes off to set them beside the hallway. She heard Igneel shut the door as she made her way to her boyfriend's room.
Yes. Natsu was now her boyfriend. He had been her boyfriend for a little over a month now. After their first date, Lucy realized that she actually liked spending time with the boy. They went on two more dates before he finally asked her out, to which she -of course- said yes.

She knew it was a risk since she was still scared to get her heart broken, but she felt like Natsu was worth the risk. So far he'd proven himself a great boyfriend, always texting her during the day when he wasn't busy, making time to hang out with her, and occasionally getting her a gift or two, even if they were just small things like ear rings. She appreciated it all.

Lucy slowly opened up the door, immediately getting hit with the scent of her boyfriend and the sound of his music blaring from his speakers. She shifted into the room, wanting to surprise him since he was sprawled out on his bed reading manga. His face was so close to the pages he could smell them. He didn't hear a thing, only startling when he felt a sudden weight on his body.

"Oomph!" Natsu tore the book away from his face, seeing his smiling girlfriend laying on his stomach. Her elbows dug into his ribs, her hands supporting her face.

"Hey," Lucy's smile turned coy when she saw the way Natsu narrowed his eyes. "What?"

"You know what," he moved to sit up straight, forcing her to roll over on the bed in order to avoid getting hurt. He quickly turned off his music so they could talk. His demeanor quickly changed as he moved closer to her, his hands gripping her waist as he pulled her close. "What are you doing here? I thought you were coming over at three?"

Lucy bit her lower lip, instantly catching his attention. She released the pink flesh, whispering a pout. "I just wanted to see you, is that okay?"

A wide grin spread on Natsu's face as he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her flush against him. The warmth of his body caused her heart to pound... Or maybe it was the way he was gazing at her... Who knew?

"That's more than okay?" Natsu practically growled before seizing her lips with his, kissing her soft and slow.

Lucy's eyes fluttered closed as she hummed against his mouth. That was, until he started to pull away. She opened her eyes, seeing the nervous glint in his green orbs.

"Kiss me," Lucy started, leaning in closer to the boy. "Please?"

"How could I say no?" He chuckled before sealing her mouth with his own.

Afraid of scaring her off, he went as gentle as he could with her, even if every cell in his body screamed for him to kiss her with all the passion he'd held back for months since meeting her.

His right hand cupped the back of her neck, while his tongue carefully licked at her lips, seeking permission. She parted them, allowing him to invade her mouth. They had experimented with making out before, so Lucy felt a little more confident than when they first started a few weeks ago.

Soon Lucy's tongue was dancing along with his, trying to claim victory. Natsu resisted the urge to smirk against her lips as he calmed down his competitive side, letting her have this win. Hell, she could have anything she wanted as long as he could taste her sweet lips.

Natsu leaned in, making her land softly on her back. He hovered over her, tasting her mouth, tongue, and lips. He wanted more, but he would be patient for her. They were both inexperienced
when it came to physical touching, so he didn't want to go too fast. Plus she deserved the best from him. His tongue swept inside her mouth, loving her unique flavor.

"I can't... stop thinking... about... you." He desperately kissed her in between words, savoring her delicious taste. His nose was filled with her normal strawberry scent, but there was an extra smell too. It smelt like strawberries and the ocean breeze. He'd only been to the ocean once when he was a kid, but he'd never forget that smell. And now it clung to Lucy, warming his cheeks as he continued to kiss her.

Lucy ran her fingers through his pink locks, knowing that was one of his weaknesses. The low growl he emitted was enough to drive her crazy. "Me... too..."

Natsu sucked on her tongue, causing her to let out a groan. The vibrations in their mouths were satisfying to say the least. His hand fell on her waist, and he massaged her side. She broke the kiss in favor of air, and moaned something that made his heart leap.

"...Natsu..."

Hearing her moan his name unleashed a dragon that'd been locked away deep inside him. Throwing caution to the wind, he let his pent-up energy get the better of him. He pushed his limits. Natsu's greedy hand went under her shirt, feeling the soft flesh under his fingers. Lucy hummed in his mouth as his hand drifted up her torso. He daringly cupped her breast, kneading it.

Lucy immediately broke the kiss, pushing him away with one hand as the other left his hair. "Natsu," she covered her chest as he sat up, a dazed look in his eyes as he shook his head.

"FUCK, I'm so sorry! I-I don't know what came over me!" He stood up, backing away from her with his hands raised in a mock surrender. "Please don't be mad!"

"I'm not mad," Lucy giggled, straightening her shirt as she stood up. "You just surprised me."

"I did?"

"Yes," she nodded. "But umm, maybe we should wait a little longer before we do stuff like that..." Lucy's pale skin turned red as she admitted, "I don't think I'm ready for that yet..."

"Of course," Natsu dropped his hands, a nervous smile coming to his face. "I won't do that again... Not unless you want it."

"Thank you," she sat back down on his bed, feeling relieved that he took the news so well. She heard horror stories of guys pressuring girls into going further, or flat out breaking up with them for not putting out. She was glad Natsu wasn't showing her those signs.

Lucy didn't want to, but she would be forced to break up with Natsu if he tried anything like that. Her personal comfort was more important than any boy's need to 'get some'.

Lucy's mouth dropped when she finally looked towards Natsu. Instead of focusing on the sheepish grin on his face, her eyes landed behind him to his dresser. A mountain of cookie boxes were stacked on top.

"What's with all the cookies?" Lucy blinked, confusion clouding her head. "They were supposed to be delivered over a week ago!" She remembered vividly going around the neighborhoods with Michelle to deliver the cookies to all the customers.

A red hue surfaced on Natsu's cheeks as he said, "I know... These are mine..."
"You bought all those cookies?" Lucy asked incredulously. "How many are there?"

Natsu opened his mouth, muttering something under his breath. "Come again?" Lucy asked, seeing the color on his face darken.

"I said," Natsu's voice rose, "thirty-seven..."

Lucy didn't think her jaw could drop anymore. "Why did you-Wait!" Her eyes narrowed as she stood up again. Her hands gripped her hips as she asked, "is that how you won?!"

Natsu couldn't help but give her a cheeky grin. "Sorry..."

"You're unbelievable," she threw her hands into the air, slightly exasperated at his ridiculous antics. "You cheated! Why would you do that?"

Natsu's shoulders dropped, his grin faltering as he admitted, "you wouldn't give me a chance before..."

Lucy saw the way his eyes fell to the floor, his smile long gone. A sigh escaped her when she realized he was right. She wouldn't have given him a chance if it hadn't been for that deal.

Her eyes softened as she strolled over to her sulking boyfriend. Using a finger, she raised his chin so he could meet her gaze. "Can I have a kiss?"

Natsu's eyes widened. "You're not mad?"

"Don't get me wrong," she smiled, leaning in. "I'm furious." Lucy's lips slid over Natsu's as she turned her head, enjoying the feeling of him kissing her back after hesitating for only a second. It was Natsu's turn to close his eyes, savoring the warmth that spread through his heart as the girl he felt so deeply for kissed him, even after finding out his scheme.

When Lucy pulled away, she said, "I forgive you."

Natsu's green eyes lit up, a huge smile taking over his face. "Awesome! Thank you!"

"No problem," she sighed, wondering why she didn't just give him a chance in the beginning. She could have saved him... over one hundred and fifty dollars if she would have just said yes the first time he asked her out on a date. "You sure spent a lot just to get a date with me."

Natsu pressed his forehead against hers as he trapped her in a hug. "You're worth it."

Lucy allowed herself to feel at ease in his arms, enjoying the comfortable moment between the two until Natsu's loud voice rang in her ears. "Do you want to help me eat all these cookies?!"

Lucy dropped her head, letting it rest against his shoulder. "Oh gosh, why did I have to fall for a dork like you?"

Natsu only grinned, squeezing her tighter as he laughed. "Do you regret it?"

"Not even a little bit," she mumbled into his shirt. "I'm just wondering how I'm going to eat these cookies without having to go shopping for bigger clothes right afterwards."

"You are getting pretty heavy... OUCH! Why'd you step on my foot!"

Lucy pulled away from him, huffing as she said, "that's what you deserve!"
"Ah, you know I'm just messing with you."

"Still!" Lucy's cheeks puffed out as she walked over to his dresser. She swiped a box of peanut butter cookies before marching back to his bed.

Natsu watched the entertaining sight, then grabbed a box of mint cookies before joining her on the bed. "Am I still forgiven?" He asked, seeing her rip open the plastic to reach for her first of many cookies.

"Ask me again when I'm done with this box," she answered, her voice muffled from chewing on her treat. "Turn on your tv."

"Okay," he chuckled, then grabbed his remote from his nightstand. He clicked his tv on, then went to his Funimation app to start something for them to watch.

The rest of their evening was spent watching anime and eating cookies, even when both of their bellies were full.

"Hey Natsu?"

"Hmm?"

Lucy looked up at her boyfriend. They were both laying on his bed, her head resting on his chest while one of his arms was wrapped around her waist. "Thanks..."

"For?" Natsu raised a brow.

Lucy placed her head back on his chest, listening to his heartbeat as she said, "for being you. I really really like you..."

His heartbeat sped up as his face flushed. "I really really like you too."

"Good."

That was the last word said for a while as the two continued to watch their show, thankful for Natsu's silly idea to buy cookies just so he could get a date with Lucy. She had to admit, she never stood a chance against him.

Chapter End Notes

So I don't know if selling Girl Scout cookies has changed since I sold them in elementary school, but the way we did it was we went door to door to get orders, then later we would go back with the cookies to finish the sale, so that's why the story is written like that.

If anyone is interested, this will actually be a story Lucy writes in 'Fairy Tail GO!' Guess how much fun the girls will have with it when they find it? Hehehe... Commence the teasing!

Thank you for reading this one-shot. Let me know what you thought of it? Was it too
fluffy? Or not enough fluff? What did you think of Natsu's idea for a date? :)
Heated Kisses

Chapter Notes

This short one-shot was inspired by the picture Hiro Mashima posted on his twitter account of Natsu and Lucy 'fighting' with their thumbs in each other's mouths. If you haven't seen it you should definitely go check it out. It's amazing.

Summary: A bad date and a poker game later, Lucy finds herself in the arms of a fiery dragon slayer. Will their passion get the better of them? Or will they end up challenging each other because they're two stubborn wizards?

Rated T: Foul language and some suggestive themes.

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Genre: Humor/Romance

Word Count: 2,237

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Heated Kisses

Lucy opened the door to her apartment. She was mentally exhausted. Yet another one of her dates went awful. There wasn't exactly anything wrong with him like the others, he just didn't catch her interest. None of them seemed to be able to do that...

After a long soak in her bath she was feeling a little more refreshed, but she still couldn't shake the thought that she would never find the right guy. It didn't make sense to her. She'd been trying to date for the better part of six months now, and never had she made it past the first date.

She'd shared a few kisses with them, but that was it. It never made it past a rare goodnight kiss at the door, then she would never see them again. She didn't think it was fair to waste her time or theirs. She didn't want to say she was one of those people who believed that they should feel fireworks explode when they have their first kiss, but she couldn't deny that her bar was set pretty high. So far no guy had made her knees weak or made her see stars.

Lucy sighed, wondering if she was just not meant to be with someone. In nothing but a towel, she strolled over to her closet, her feet barely lifting from the floor as she walked. She pulled out a simple tank top and white mini skirt, knowing they would be comfy since the weather had started to warm up. She didn't think she'd be leaving her home again today anyway, so there was no point in worrying about her wardrobe.

Lucy was about to walk over to her desk to start writing, but a loud and cheery voice startled her.

"Hey Lucy!"

Said girl flinched, letting out an 'eep' as she whirled around to see the pink haired fire dragon slayer sitting on her living room floor. "Natsu! What the hell are you doing here?!!"
Natsu raised a brow. "I came to hang out with you!" He said as if it were obvious, because to him, it was. He always loved spending time with her. "I didn't see you at the guild this morning."

"That's because I was out on a date," Lucy turned, not catching the way Natsu's eye twitched when she said 'date'. "Where's Happy? I swear if he's raiding my fridge again I'll-

"Happy's not here," Natsu answered, his tone a little dejected.

Lucy easily picked up on his mood change. "What's wrong with you?" She asked, forgetting she was in nothing but a towel.

Natsu glanced up at her, his cheeks going pink before he looked back down at the playing cards in his hand. "Nothin'."

"Like I believe that." Lucy placed her hands on her hips, her clothing tucked under one of her arms. "Come on, spill it."

The dragon slayer grumbled something under his breath before saying, "you should probably get dressed... Your towel's slipping."

Sure enough, when Lucy looked down the towel was drifting further south. She quickly clutched it to her body, then stomped back to her bedroom, muttering that she wouldn't have to change in there if a certain intruder didn't barge into her place uninvited.

Natsu ignored her statements. If Lucy really didn't want him to come by she would lock her window. Instead it was always unlocked, sometimes even opened. He would respect her privacy if she had a more serious talk with him about it, but for now he would continue to pop into her place to hang out with her.

The celestial wizard came out a few minutes later. Her hair was brushed, now in two long pigtails. Her tank top was a little tight and her skirt was a little short, but she didn't mind. It's not like Natsu would check her out anyway. As far as she knew the boy didn't care about girls.

The girl sat down in front of Natsu, not saying a word as she scooped up the cards. He protested, but she ignored it in favor of setting up a game of poker. The boy smiled when he accepted his hand, settling into the game since it seemed to make Lucy's attitude shift for the better.

They chatted about a mission Natsu had seen on the board. It looked like something they'd be interested, but he didn't grab it because he didn't know if she'd be free or not. Lucy said if it was still there tomorrow morning then she'd accept it with him. Her rent was coming up soon anyway.

After a few rounds, he asked, "how was your date?" He didn't want to ask, but his morbid curiosity got the better of him. He noticed the way Lucy's eyes dulled, the corners of her lips pulling down.

"It was okay," she mumbled, looking at her pitiful hand.

"Just okay?" Natsu asked, trying to reign in his happiness. He felt awful, truly he did. He was her best friend, so hearing that her date was 'exciting' or 'good' should have made him upset, but it didn't. Natsu was good at keeping his feelings a secret, and the particular feelings he shared towards the celestial wizard could be described as love.

Natsu knew he loved her a little bit after she joined Fairy Tail, but he had kept quiet about his feelings. He knew the type of guy she was looking for, handsome, charming, and respectable. In other words, not him.
Natsu just didn't fit into that category. He was rough around the edges. Sure he had his own good looks, but charm? He didn't really have that. Maybe a boyish charm, but what girl wanted that when they could have a prince charming?

"Yeah," Lucy started, cutting through his self-doubt. "Just okay..."

Natsu felt the guilt tug at his heart. Here Lucy was clearly suffering, and what was he doing? Secretly smiling that she was still single. It was completely selfish of him, so he sighed. "Do you want a hug?"

Lucy blinked, looking up at the dragon slayer in surprise. It was true that Natsu's hugs always cheered her up, but usually it was her stealing them instead of getting offered them. "Y-yeah."

Natsu shifted the cards to the side, setting his hand on the ground. He scooted closer to her, wrapping his arms around the blonde woman. He loved being near her, loved hugging her, but there was just something about being this close that made it hard for him to concentrate. Her scent overpowered his better judgement. It made him want to hold her tight, vow to never let her go. He felt his possessive nature flare up, the need to hoard her away from the world and call her his.

Lucy hugged him back, loving the warmth that radiated off his body. Being a fire dragon slayer had its advantages. Lucy hummed, closing her eyes and letting herself get swept away. Natsu was her best friend, the guy who was always there for her when she needed him.

A thought sparked in her mind, and before she let it slip, or let her confidence waver, she spoke. "Hey..." Her voice came out as barely a whisper. "Can I see something...?"

Natsu pulled slightly away to see her face. He was about to ask what she wanted to see, but he had no time to respond. The next thing he knew was he felt warmth on his lips.

His eyes widened, shocked that Lucy was actually kissing him. Natsu was too stunned to move, unsure if this was really happening or not. His head spun, his heart started pounding while his brain tried to figure out what the hell was going on, and why his best friend was actually kissing him.

Lucy let her eyes flutter closed. She felt the heat from his lips as she applied more pressure. She didn't want to admit it, even to herself, but there was no use denying it. Lucy didn't feel fireworks, she felt explosions, and that was just from a simple kiss. It set her skin on fire and her heart into overdrive.

Lucy parted her lips, her tongue coming out to see exactly what Natsu's mouth tasted like. He was about to ask what she was doing, but he was rendered speechless when her tongue slipped into his mouth with ease. Her tongue roamed around, playing with his vapid tongue.

Natsu pulled way, out of breath and extremely confused. "Lucy..." He didn't mean for his voice to sound so breathless, but that's the effect she had on him. "What are you doing..." He felt her arms tighten around him, her body coming closer as she sealed her lips over his again, giving no answers for why she was kissing him. Her breasts pushed up against his bare chest in the process.

Lucy's hand cupped his cheek as she smoothed her thumb over his skin. Natsu felt heat creep over his face and neck. It was weird for him to actually feel hot. His body physically responded to her actions while his mind was shutting down from too much thinking. It was almost like natural instincts took over when he cupped the back of her neck, pulling her in closer.

Natsu didn't know why all this felt so good, but he wasn't about to start questioning it. He just didn't want it to end, especially when Lucy started rubbing her lower half against his crotch,
stirring up a fire that raged in his belly unlike anything he'd ever felt before.

Lucy's lips pulled away from his, her eyes hooded and hazy. Natsu was still in a daze, his breaths coming out shallow as he looked at the celestial wizard now straddling his hips. *When did she get like that?* She leaned in, planting her lips on his neck. Lucy had to push his scarf aside, then she left wet, open-mouthed kisses from his jawline down to the jagged scar adorning his tanned flesh.

Natsu let out a soft moan at the strange pleasure she caused him. She gave his neck one last lick before returning to those scorched lips. Natsu didn't hesitate to shove his tongue into her mouth, drawing out a whimper.

Lucy tried to fight back, but Natsu proved to be quite the foe. What was supposed to be another heated kiss quickly turned into a battle of the tongues to see who could dominate the kiss.

Lucy cupped both of his cheeks, the tips of her thumbs reaching the corners of his lips to try to distract him. Natsu decided he could play her game as well, bringing his thumbs up to her lips. Natsu furrowed his brows when she stuck the pad of her thumb into his mouth.

Natsu growled, his own thumbs mirroring her actions. Before either of them knew it they were ending the kiss in favor of trying to widen the other's mouth. Lucy's cheeks were stained light pink, a few tears coming to the corners of her eyes when Natsu spread her mouth wider.

Lucy did the same, jerking her thumbs further apart to really stretch his mouth. Neither seemed to want to give up. Lucy ignored that her skirt was hiked up while Natsu ignored how cute she looked growling back at him. He finally let go of one side of her mouth, only to grab at part of her shirt to tug at it.

"Give up," Natsu muttered, not wanting to pull her cheek any more.

"Naaatsuuu," she groaned, mouth moving to try to chew on his thumb. She managed to nick the edge pretty hard, forcing him to let her go.

They pulled apart, both massaging their cheeks to relieve the pain that had accumulated during their little battle. Lucy moved away from his lap, scooting further away from the dragon slayer. Natsu wanted to protest, but what could he really say?

"Hey Lucy, I want you to sit on my lap so we can make out again?"

Yeah... That didn't seem like the best approach. He still didn't even know why she kissed him, but he wasn't about to complain.

When Lucy didn't say anything for a long minute, Natsu decided to just summon all his courage and just put it out there. The corner of his lip twitched, fear trickling in as he spoke. "Hey Lucy..."

Lucy looked over at him, feeling embarrassed over what she just did. She kissed Natsu, out of seemingly nowhere! What could he possibly think of her? Was he mad? Not likely... He had kissed her back. What if he thought she was easy, if this is what she did with all the boys she went out with? She couldn't live with herself if he thought of her like that.

Hesitantly, she mumbled, "yeah?"

Natsu gulped, a lump stuck in his throat. He feared rejection. He feared messing up their friendship, but after that kiss... He feared never kissing those sweet lips again far worse. "Do you maybe... maybe wanna go on a date... with me?"
Lucy stared at him, seeing the color filling his cheeks and his eyes flitting left and right in a nervous manner. She could have waited a while, made him suffer, but she wanted to put him out of his misery.

With a soft smile, she leaned in. "I'd love to," she said, then gave him another heated kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you thought. :) Sorry if it's rushed, it's just supposed to be a quick one-shot. Is this okay for rated T? I know part of it kinda dances on the line between T/M.
Battle of the Holidays

Chapter Notes

Here's a silly one-shot idea I came up with while at work. Hope you all like it.

Summary: Halloween and Christmas just aren't meant to mix. Natsu accepted this without any questions. That was, until the pink scaled dragon met a glowing angel. They were destined to be enemies, but sometimes fate is meant to be ignored. I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does.

I also don't own any of the songs mentioned in this story. The songs go as followed: "The Christmas Shoes", "You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch", "Baby, it's cold outside", "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer", and "Wonderful Christmas Time".

Rated: T

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Genre: Friendship/Romance (With a tiny bit of angst)

Word Count: 6,909

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Battle of the Holidays

"Thank you for shopping at Magnolia Mart. We will be closing in five minutes. Please make your final selections and bring them to the front. We will gladly check you out. We will reopen tomorrow at eight AM for your shopping convenience. And as always, thank you for shopping at your local Magnolia Mart."

Natsu grinned. Or, he tried to grin. He still had a while until the spell would activate, giving him and his fellow Halloween friends the gift of life. See, Natsu was a dragon statue. During shopping hours he was an item available to be purchased, but when the employees clocked out and the doors locked, the Halloween decorations came alive.

No one knew how it started, or who was responsible for casting the spell. Somehow they all just knew about it, and that was what they accepted as fact. Everyone was just glad for the spell since it gave them a little bit of freedom.

Of course there was another aspect of the spell that Natsu had not been a fan of at first. Halloween decorations weren't the only ones to come to life. Christmas decorations were the same way, and that infuriated him.

It wasn't Natsu's fault he had a hatred for Christmas. It was hardwired into his brain when he was built at the factory. All Halloween items felt the same way as him. It made it worse that Halloween stuff were set up the week after Labor Day, and Christmas was set up the next week after that.
Why the hell couldn't Christmas just chill out?

Could it not wait until Thanksgiving was over with before stomping its way into the store?

These were some of the default thoughts programmed into Natsu's brain. Natsu glared at the other end of the store. Halloween was set up in two aisles while Christmas got three aisles and a huge middle area for their decorated trees.

The nerve of them!

He loved it when it was just Halloween for a week. They partied, brawled, and had a grand old time. Natsu wished it could have lasted longer, but there was nothing to be done about it now. At least this gave him someone to fight!

Natsu heard someone make another announcement, claiming the store was now closed. It wouldn't be long until he could stretch his wings and join the fight. Yes, Halloween really disliked Christmas. As soon as the spell would take over, the creepy decorations would attack!

Natsu's marble eyes stared over at the Christmas aisle. It was only half-full since they were still setting up. It gave Halloween an advantage which they definitely needed. More customers were prone to buying Halloween over Christmas this time of year, so it made sense when their numbers started to drop.

No one blamed the items that were sold though. That was the goal, to go home with someone. Everyone was also programmed to want a home, a family to call their own. It was celebrated when a Halloween item was sold, but it still effected their fight.

Christmas seemed so pretentious. At first they didn't want to fight. They tried to say peace was the better option, but Halloween wasn't falling for it. After a few strikes Christmas had retaliated, then the war started.

Natsu felt his heart pulse. It was almost time.

He glanced over, seeing the cat skeleton a few shelves down from him. That was his best friend, Happy. He would have a hard time being sold, and that broke Natsu's heart. See, a few days ago a pesky kid took Happy over to the spray paint aisle and decided he would look much better in the color blue. The damage already took a toll on the poor cat. Most of his brothers and sisters were being sold, but he was left ignored.

It pained Natsu's heart, but Happy wasn't alone.

Natsu wasn't made correctly at the factory. All the other dragon statues were black or dark brown, their eyes glowing red. Natsu didn't know how it happened, but he came out with a pink tint on his scales, his eyes a flat black with green flakes in them. He felt awkward at first, but now he just felt crummy.

"Wow, look how silly this one looks!"

"Eww! Who'd want a pink dragon?"

"Maybe we should get it as a joke?"

Natsu wanted to growl at the rude customers, "words hurt ya know!"

The pink dragon watched as the lights started to dim. The Christmas trees provided a glow around
the area, but Halloween would never admit it was helpful.

The motion detector for some Christmas bells was triggered when the lights went out overhead, causing them to ring out with their horrid song. It wasn't Natsu's fault he despised anything having to do with Christmas. It was just the way he was.

And he was okay with that, for now.

Natsu felt the pulsing spread from his heart through his limbs. It was almost here, the spell that would free them from their chains. The dragon tried grinning once again, but this time he managed to actually move his hips up a centimeter. He could already feel the blood pumping through his veins, his excitement growing.

Of course he could do without the Christmas music playing overhead, but he could deal with that for now. It was just more fuel for his hatred. Yet another reason to fight.

His sharp hearing picked up on the front doors closing, then locking. The rest of the lights around them went out, activating the spell.

Roars, yells, and laughter could be heard around the store. Natsu stretched, his little dragon arms lifting in the air while his tail whipped behind him. Happy jumped over to his shelf, curling around the dragon's side.

"Are ya ready, Natsu?" The chipper cat skeleton asked.

"Oh yeah!" He growled, wings spreading before he took off, Happy holding onto his back. "I'm all fired up now!"

The battle raged on for the next few hours. The store closed at eleven at night, and didn't reopen until eight in the morning, but employees would be in at five. That gave them roughly six hours to beat the crap out of each other before they had to return to their spots. The spell was pretty nifty. No matter how much damaged they caused it would all be erased once the spell went away, thus giving them more time to fight without worrying about clean up.

Natsu laughed as he punched a rather ugly elf with metal eyebrows, then watched as a little blue haired elf tried to come to his rescue. The dragon decided not to mess with a girl, not wanting to be 'that guy' who punches females.

Happy was somewhere by the stuffed animals, no doubt trying to talk to that white cat again. It wasn't a rule that Halloween and Christmas couldn't be friends, but most couldn't break past their default settings, which was to hate Christmas and everything about it.

As long as it didn't directly cause any conflict with Natsu, he would turn a blind eye to their friendship.

Towards the end of the battle Natsu was feeling pretty worn. His wings were scuffed, his nails dulled, and he was missing a scale or two, but he didn't worry. Everything would go back to before when the spell ended, which was soon.

Everyone felt it at the same time.

A rush of heat hit all the Halloween decorations the same time a rush of cold hit the Christmas. It was time... Time to pack it up for the day. Technically it was night-time, but most decorations used the day to sleep so they'd be well rested when the spell was activated.
Natsu was in the middle of trying to punch a naked elf when out of nowhere he was teleported back to his shelf. He felt his body hardening, his heartbeat slowly die out. He used the last of his energy to sigh, sad another day had already passed. As fast as time was passing, he wasn't sure he was ever going to be sold, and that worried him.

The dragon didn't let his concerns show up on his face. He turned back into the statue, looking as if nothing was wrong. Everyone in the area turned back to normal, the damage miraculously disappearing as well.

Less than a minute later Natsu heard the clicking sound at the front of the store, followed by some chatter coming from the early crew. The dragon would grin if he could. 'They have no idea...'

The day seemed just as boring as ever. Natsu watched through his marble eyes as a few employees stocked the Christmas shelves. The dragon wasn't very interested in watching, but there was nothing else to do. He'd already taken a long nap, and there was still a few more hours until closing time. If he could sigh, he would.

Natsu glanced over at Happy, seeing the cat skeleton perfectly still. He didn't know what he was expecting. No one could move during this time, so why bother investigating?

Flat black eyes flitted over to the Christmas section again. If Natsu could move, he would have gasped.

In the hands of an employee was a Christmas item, but this one was like one he'd never seen before. Long golden hair fell in curls, ending roughly at her lower back. A pure white dress adorned her short body, her hands clasped together in front of her. Tucked between her side and her arm was a little white snowman with a carrot nose.

But that wasn't what Natsu was focusing on.

Instead it was that porcelain face. Her skin was pale, with a tad of pink in her cheeks. It was hard to see from this far away, but he could see the brown in her eyes. Resting over her golden head of hair was a halo, attached by a band that disappeared into her dress.

Natsu had never thought he'd lose his breath over the sight of a Christmas decoration. Much less an angel!

But he couldn't deny the way his heart felt like it had pulsed for a moment after gazing at her beauty. She was placed on a shelf, next to other angels that just couldn't compare. Natsu felt heat rush through him for a split second when he realized she was in the opposite spot as him, staring right back at him!

He panicked, but it didn't show. He was still just a statue after all. No flesh or bones to speak of for the moment. Knowing she couldn't see his reaction, he decided to look at her. Natsu would be an idiot to try to say she wasn't beautiful. He might not be interested in Christmas decorations, but he couldn't help but feel strange when his eyes locked with hers.

He wondered what she was thinking. Was she even aware yet? He knew he was aware of his surroundings the moment he came out of the box and was placed on his shelf, so maybe she could see him right now?

If Natsu could move... Well he wouldn't do anything. What was there to do? He hated Christmas. It didn't get anymore simpler than that.
Solidifying his beliefs, Natsu looked away from the angel. He decided to focus his attention on a Christmas tree instead. The tree was covered in purple decorations, little butterflies and bulbs adorning the branches. He remembered last night seeing the butterflies floating around, trying to enjoy the night air instead of fight back.

Honestly he couldn't blame them. What the hell was a butterfly supposed to do anyways? Fly straight into someone's eyes and blind them?

If he could, Natsu would have gulped. He made a mental note to avoid the butterflies from now on, fearing they might realize they could cause some temporary damage.

The rest of the day passed by slowly. Natsu found himself looking back at the angel a few times, always cursing himself when he thought about how pretty she looked. He wondered if she had a name. Everyone was programmed to know their names. Some people shared names. He felt bad for all the red-nosed reindeer named Rudolph. That must get confusing!

Natsu tried to not let the angel get to him, but it was no use when the store closed, the doors locked, and the spell was activated.

His plan was to avoid her the entire time. To pretend like she didn't exist. However, his plan was ruined as soon as he saw a miniature zombie rushing right towards her. Instead of fighting back, the angel ducked, covering her face with a hand.

Muttering a curse to himself, he took off. His wings flapped, his claws extended, and he hit his target. A scream sounded through the area as Natsu grabbed the angel. She struggled in his hold, which she couldn't blame her. He was after all a dragon capturing a female. The only thing missing was for this girl to be a princess instead of an angel, then he'd really be making the cliché come to life.

Natsu ignored her screams for the mean time as he soared through the air. The girl quieted down after a few seconds, realizing she wasn't in immediate danger. This dragon could have torn her apart without even trying, yet he was carefully cradling her against his chest as he flew.

Natsu landed three aisles away in the stationary section. Notebooks, binders, pencils, and anything else someone could use for school surrounded the two decorations.

The angel quickly jumped away from Natsu when he loosened his grip. She dusted herself off, then set the snowman that had previously been stuck to her arm on the ground beside her. After inspecting the little item, she turned to face the dragon.

Natsu was already spreading his wings, about to fly off without another word. His actions were stopped as soon as the girl spoke, her voice sounded just as divine as her face was beautiful.

"Wait!"

Natsu startled, eyes snapping to see the angel approaching. He said nothing, waiting to see what she wanted.

"Thank you back there. I was ready to try to kick him, but I'm not sure how that would have gone, so thank you for saving us."

Natsu raised a scaled brow, then looked down at the snowman beside her. Without thinking, he asked, "what's wrong with him?"

The angel looked down, seeing her companion was wobbling, his entire body shaking as if he were
cold and stuck outside in the snow. She felt a bead of sweat roll down her forehead, wondering herself what was wrong with the snowman.

"That's just Plue for you," she tried to sound casual, but Natsu could see right through it.

He said nothing, not wanting to make this angel uncomfortable. However, it seemed like she wasn't done with him just yet, especially when she asked, "what's your name? My name's Lucy."

"Lucy," he tested the name out. "That's a cool name, I guess. My name's Natsu."

"Natsu, huh?" She smiled at him, walking up to extend her hand. "It's nice to meet you."

The dragon looked down at her hand, seeing the delicate skin. He glanced at his own hand, covered in pink scales with sharp talons at the ends of each finger. Natsu didn't even want to touch her, not wanting to taint the angel's flesh.

The only reason he ended up shaking her hand was so he wouldn't seem rude, even though a part of his brain screamed for him to insult her. She was a Christmas decoration after all, and that meant they were nothing but enemies.

With all that in mind he still stayed, finding it interesting when Lucy sparked up a conversation. She asked him about where he came from, to which he said he didn't know. They both agreed that they weren't aware until they came out of their boxes.

Natsu asked her if she wanted to fight him, playfully of course, but she said no. "I'd rather talk, if that's okay with you."

The dragon's tail flickered behind him, a little amused at this angel. He agreed, wondering what the harm would be if he just chatted with her for a while. However, a while turned into hours, which soon turned into the entire night.

Neither even realized their time was almost up until they both felt a rush of hot and cold, then a few second later they were teleported to their respective shelves.

Lucy was across the opened space from him, smiling her sweet smile as if she hadn't just talked to a dragon for the past few hours.

Natsu found himself wanting to grin, but his default setting was to frown. He was a dragon in the end, meant to look menacing. Of course the pink scales didn't help his image, but shy of going over to the spray paint aisle and spraying himself, there was nothing he could do.

Besides, if he spray painted himself black he would just end up pink when the spell wore off. The only reason Happy was still blue was because it happened when the spell wasn't activated, leaving the cat skeleton to live out the rest of his days with blue bones.

The cat didn't seem to mind, as long as the white stuffed cat would still talk to him and Natsu would still be his friend. There was no reason to worry about the latter. Natsu would remain Happy's friend no matter what.

As the dragon felt his heart die out, he couldn't help but think.

'I made a new friend tonight, and she's a Christmas decoration... Who would've thought?'

Maybe... Maybe they weren't so bad after all...
"Tomorrow's the big day," Lucy said, leaning against a stack of copy paper. "Are you nervous?"

"What? Me?" Natsu scoffed. "Why would I be nervous?"

Despite his carefree tone, Natsu was lying. The dragon felt anxious about tomorrow. It would be Halloween.

And no one had bought him yet.

The Halloween section was pretty bare now. The battles had died down a little at a time until finally no one fought anymore. Christmas wasn't interested in starting anymore wars, and Halloween didn't have a lot on their side seeing as most of the items had already been bought.

The only ones left in the Halloween aisles were the overly expensive decorations, some costumes, and the defected items. That included him and Happy. Said cat skeleton was curled up to the white stuffed cat a little down the same aisle. Natsu learned the stuffed animal's name was Carla. Going along with the cats was a short elf named Wendy, who hung out with more elves.

Natsu knew most of their names. There was Gajeel and Levy, the ones he encountered the night before he met Lucy. There was the naked one named Gray, who carried around a snow globe with a blue haired mermaid inside named Juvia. Also included in the weird group of elves was a red haired one named Erza. She was part of a couple's set, with a blue haired elf permanently attached to her hand.

Natsu didn't feel like he fit in with that group. They would often stare at his scales, or even raise a brow at his oddly-colored eyes. He knew he shouldn't be offended, he was meant to look creepy, but it still got to him. That's why he spent so much time with Lucy. She looked at him differently than everyone else, but in a way that made his heart flutter.

The dragon swore he even felt his heart beat randomly during the daytime, but he knew he was just imagining it. Decorations couldn't move or live when the spell wasn't in effect.

He felt a conflict he never thought he'd have to deal with. As much as he wanted to be sold, he didn't want to leave Lucy. She was like a bright light that never went out, and he wanted to bask in that light for as long as possible. She was just such a pleasure to be around.

At first he had been worried a beautiful angel like her wouldn't want to be friends with a dragon like him, but she proved him wrong. The next night after they met they hung out again, and then the next night, and the night after that. Soon it wasn't even a question, they both wanted to spend time together, and that was more than alright with him.

The angel reached over, grabbing Natsu's clawed hand. She hummed along with a Christmas song, purposely not commenting on the way his palms sweat from his nervousness. She knew he was worried about getting sold, so she would do her best to distract him.

However, she didn't realize she could do it without even trying.

"This song is ridiculous," Natsu groused, changing the subject. "Why the hell is this kid out trying to buy shoes when he should be spending his last moments with his mother?"

Lucy giggled, leaning against Natsu's scaled arm. "He just wants his mom to feel pretty before she passes away."

Natsu scoffed, shaking his head. "I still think he should be racing home instead of bumming money off a stranger."
"If you say so," the angel closed her eyes, letting the dragon's heat warm her skin.

Natsu stayed quiet until the next song came on. There was no way he wasn't going to comment on it.

"Okay, seriously! You have to agree with me here?"

Lucy sighed. "What? He's the Grinch who stole Christmas. How can I agree that he wasn't at fault?"

"Because! Those people treated him like crap! If I was told constantly how horrible of a person I was, you better believe I'd steal something away from you."

The angel laughed, listening as he continued ranting about Christmas songs and how they were all horribly worded.

"This one is just awful!" Natsu practically shouted, a small ball of fire coming from his mouth.

Lucy nodded, finally agreeing with him. "Yeah, it does seem like he's being pushy."

"Pushy? It sounds almost like date rape!" Natsu shook his head. "She just wants to go home, and this guys like 'it's cold, you gotta stay!' It's despicable!"

He went on to criticize a few more songs, but really got into it when a song got under his scales.

"I wouldn't have done it," Natsu crossed his arms over his chest. "I woulda said figure it out yourself!"

At this point Lucy was in a fit of laughter. Natsu had been berating every Christmas song he heard, and she couldn't help but notice he had a few good points. This one really took the cake.

"So you wouldn't have helped Santa?"

"Hell no!" He narrowed his eyes, glaring at a row of staplers across the aisle. "They can go grab a flashlight for all I care!"

The angel patted his arm. "I guess Rudolph is just nicer than you."

Natsu snorted, "as if. He's just a pushover. They made fun of him for years, then once they need his help they're ready to praise him. No! That's not fair at all, and Rudolph should have had a backbone and refused to help."

Lucy's laughter increased. "I guess it's good you were made for Halloween. Compassion doesn't seem to be your strong suit."

Natsu glanced over, his earlier frustrations vanishing. "I can be compassionate!"

It was Lucy's turn to raise a brow. "Oh yeah tough stuff, prove it!"

The dragon didn't think twice before leaning in. He tried to be gentle, but his scales caused him to place a rough kiss on her soft cheek. Lucy's eyes widened, completely caught off-guard. When the dragon pulled away, he grinned.

"See! Compassionate!"

Lucy stared at him, her jaw falling open. Just as she tried to speak, a deep blush spread over her
"N-Natsu, I meant _compassionate_, not _passionate_!"

The dragon cocked his head. "Aren't those the same things?"

The angel couldn't shake her head hard enough. "N-no! They're different!"

"Oh," Natsu pondered a moment, wondering if he did something wrong. With his smile still on his face, he said, "I'm sorry?"

Lucy was left speechless for a moment, trying to gather her thoughts. "I-It's okay... J-just warn me n-next time."

The dragon smiled brighter, happy that she implied he could kiss her again. He wouldn't take advantage of it, only kissing her when the moment felt right. "Sure thing, Lucy!"

Blushing aside, the angel stayed next to him. The later they stayed up the closer she got to him. She curled up to his side, not minding the hard scales over his body. They had become an odd comfort to her over time, and she wouldn't trade that for anything.

Truth was the angel had developed feelings for him. She knew it was wrong, but she didn't care. Why couldn't Halloween and Christmas come together? Even if it was just for an angel and a dragon. At least he wasn't a demon... That she knew of anyway.

The next song to come on surprised Lucy. Instead of insulting it, Natsu was actually mumbling the words.

"Simply... having... a wonder Christmas time..."

Lucy chose not to comment on it, not wanting him to stop. She closed her eyes, allowing herself to relax against him as he sang one of her favorite songs.

Before either of them knew it the spell was dissolving and they were all being sent back to their spots. Natsu once again hardened, but for some reason he felt his heartbeat pulse even after the doors to the store opened. Sure it wasn't as strong as it was when he was alive, but it was enough to startle him.

Why was his body acting this way? Without magic?

Hours passed by and Natsu still didn't have an answer. He watched Lucy, letting her be the distraction he needed. Today was the big day. It was Halloween.

Customers trickled in, browsing what was left of the Halloween selection. A few people looked at Natsu, but none wanted a pink scaled dragon. He tried not to let it get to him. The longer he stayed on the shelf, the longer he got to spend with Lucy.

He was upset at himself for the most part. Last night he had not even had a chance to say goodbye. The spell ended without much warning, leaving the dragon feeling a little hollow inside.

If only he could have kissed her goodbye.

It was getting close to closing time. Natsu worried, wondering if he really wasn't going to be sold. He knew what happened to items that passed their season. They would be marked as clearance. He definitely didn't want to suffer that fate.

Natsu was so wrapped up in that thought he didn't notice when someone went to pick him up.
"Daddy! Daddy! Can I have this one!"

It was a little kid, clumsily holding onto the dragon statue with her small hands. He was apparently heavier than the kid originally thought. Less than a second later he felt himself slipping through her fingers, falling straight to the ground.

He was caught at the last second, but not without taking damage.

A man, probably the little girl's father hoisted the dragon statue up. He frowned, mumbling that there was a crack on the dragon's cheek. He glanced around, seeing no one in sight. Without any shame, the man put Natsu back on the shelf, then grabbed his daughter's hand to pull her away.

The dragon was left stunned and heartbroken.

No one was going to buy him now.

On the other side of the store Lucy internally gasped. She'd seen the whole thing, and she already knew without seeing that Natsu was devastated. How was he supposed to be sold now?

A selfish part of her was happy. She knew it was horrible of her to think that way, but she was glad she would get to spend more time with the dragon. However, this wasn't how she wanted it.

Feeling awful over her own thoughts, Lucy closed her eyes. Of course the angel she was trapped in remained the same, seeing as the spell wasn't activated. She couldn't look at the dragon, feeling like she didn't deserve to even gaze at him.

That night when the spell was activated, Natsu was still on his shelf.

He allowed Happy to crawl on his back so he could fly them both to the ground. He was slow with his movements, sadness the only emotion he could feel. Since the crack in his cheek happened when the spell wasn't activated, he wouldn't heal. No, this was something he would have to deal with for the rest of his life, however long that was supposed to be.

Happy and him walked to the stationary aisle where they met the others. Sad looks were exchanged, knowing both Halloween items weren't bought in time. A big yellow tag would be attached to them soon, but that wasn't the worst part.

What if they weren't bought then?

They had a week to be sold, and if they couldn't get that, they'd be sent back to the factory to be destroyed and reused for next year.

Everyone tried to cheer them up. Even Carla offered to snuggle next to the cat skeleton for comfort. Both Natsu and Happy just wanted to be left alone for a while, to deal with the ultimate rejection that came with not being sold in time.

They were made specifically for Halloween, so imagine how they felt to be looked over for so long.

Natsu eventually allowed Lucy to join them. She sat in silence next to him, waiting patiently for him to say something first.

He didn't. There wasn't much to say. He felt like a failure, like he would never amount to anything now.
The next few days didn't help either.

Even with a half-off tag, no one bought Natsu or Happy. All the Halloween items were condensed to a single shelf, yellow tags all over the place to try to entice shoppers.

Every day more Halloween items were sold, but the dragon and cat skeleton remained.

Every night they sat in silence, listening to the Christmas music as they accepted their fates.

The last day was finally here. Natsu and Happy had to be bought by the end of today, or else they would be sent away. The night before he finally opened up to Lucy. He told her he was scared, that he didn't want to leave anymore.

She gave him a kiss on the cheek, telling him everything would work out. She had faith that he would get a happy ending. A sweet dragon like him deserved it. When he said he didn't buy it, she took matters into her own hands.

"I would pick you every time," Lucy said, leaning in to give him a quick kiss on his lips.

Natsu didn't think about it when he wrapped her in a hug, tears finally springing from his eyes. "I love you, Lucy. I-I don't want to leave."

She cried, allowing him to hold her. "I love you too, Natsu."

That was a comfort last night, but it did nothing to help him get through the day. He watched people pass him and happy by. They were now marked to ninety percent off, and still there were no buyers. Natsu had already given up hope. He was just glad he had Happy with him. At least if they were sent away, they'd still have each other until the very end.

Natsu spent most of his day staring at Lucy. His heartbeat was weak, but he definitely felt it. He wished it was enough to help him, but it didn't. Lucy was now on sale since Halloween was over. She was starting out at thirty percent off. If only Natsu was a human, he would buy her without hesitation.

Natsu felt his heart sink when a couple walked over to the Christmas section. They looked around for a few minutes, admiring all the items and adding things to their cart as they went along the aisle. The dragon statue watched as elf after elf was placed into the carts. Wendy, Gray, Gajeel, Levy, Erza and Jellal, they were all picked.

The dragon wanted to scoff when even Carla and the snow globe containing Juvia were selected by a pink haired man accompanying the woman. Natsu didn't think it was fair. They were made without defects, easily getting picked for purchase.

Natsu thought it couldn't get any worse, but it did when the couple walked by the angel section. He felt himself screaming on the inside when the blonde woman grabbed Lucy. She checked her out, smiling at the little snowman in her arm before placing Lucy in the basket as well.

If Natsu could cry, he would.

The only person besides Happy keeping him sane was Lucy, and she was now about to leave his life forever. He thought he'd get tonight to be with her before he was sent away tomorrow morning, but that hope was tarnished.

Natsu watched as the couple walked away, his eyes locked on those brown orbs until they turned a corner.
The dragon felt like his heart was ripped out. It wasn't fair! Why was she being taken away from him! Couldn't they have waited one more day before buying her?!

"Why did I have to be damaged? Why did Happy have to get painted?" He yelled at his own mind, but there was no answers returned.

Minutes went by, his hope shattering into tinier pieces with every passing second. Lucy was gone, ripped away from his life so quickly. He just wanted one more night with her before he died. Was that really too much to ask?

"Oh look Honey!"

Natsu looked over, still feel his heart broken as he searched for the voice. It was a blonde woman. No! Not just any blonde woman! It was the woman from a little bit ago! The one who took Lucy!

Natsu tried glancing down, but he could only see a little of the shopping cart she had. Inside he saw the top of an angel's golden hair and halo, as well as Carla, the stuffed white cat.

Hope.

It sparked in Natsu far stronger than he thought possible. He barely heard how the woman told her significant other about the blue skeleton cat she was holding. "I'm sure this paint will come off with a little work. He's only a dollar."

"Yeah, we can get him," the pink haired man said, absentmindedly looking at one of the left-over costumes.

Natsu saw Happy being placed in the cart. As much as he was glad Happy was being chosen, the dragon panicked worse. He was truly alone now.

Despite the spell not being in effect, Natsu struggled. He tried his hardest to jump, to fall into that cart with his friends. Once he saw the woman take another step away he fought harder against his current state. There was no way he was giving up without a fight!

Natsu's heart raced in his chest. He even felt a bead of sweat drip down his scaled neck. It was working! He was overcoming his fate!

However, with all his efforts, all he was able to do was jump half an inch in the air, only to land in the exact same spot that he was. What he considered a loss, turned out to be the greatest thing he could have done.

The blonde woman stopped, then snapped her head to find out what made the noise. She narrowed her eyes, then leaned in to inspect the dragon statue. "Honey," she mumbled, poking Natsu's snout with her finger. "Can I get this one too?"

The pink haired man looked at Natsu, then frowned. "He looks kinda weird, don't ya think?"

"I think he looks cute," the woman smiled, picking Natsu up.

"He has pink scales," the man pointed out.

"And you have pink hair. You'll match! You're always calling yourself a dragon anyway."

"He has a busted face," the man's eyes zeroed in on Natsu's cracked cheek.

The woman only shook her head, placing Natsu in the cart. He was shocked, wondering if he was
just dreaming. He didn't even register when the woman said, "and you have a scar on your cheek. Once again, you'll match. I'm getting him. He's only five dollars."

"Fine," the pink haired man leaned over, placing a kiss on his significant other's cheek. "I guess I can try to fix his cheek with some super glue."

"Thanks Honey," the woman smiled before rolling the cart towards the front of the store.

Natsu felt his heart soaring. He was finally picked, and he was going to be going home with Lucy! If he was dreaming he hoped he never woke up. He didn't think his heart would be able to handle it if this was all made up.

Christmas items and Halloween decorations were placed on the conveyor belt. Natsu swore he would explode if he could when he was scanned, then placed in a shopping bag. Happy was placed in the same bag, making the dragon's heart warm.

He was going home, with his best friend and the angel he loved. The other friends were a bonus, but at the moment Natsu couldn't think much about them.

During the ride to their new home the Christmas decorations and Halloween items all sat together in the trunk. About ten minutes later they were being unloaded into a small house. A little boy ran up to them, followed by a young woman.

"How was he?" The blonde woman holding a few shopping bags asked.

"He was a little rowdy, but nothing I couldn't handle."

Natsu didn't catch more of the conversation because he was being hauled upstairs with Happy. They were both put in an attic next to a box marked 'Halloween'.

"Guess we'll see you guys next year," the pink haired man said before leaving the attic.

Natsu expected things to be dark and quiet, but as soon as the attic door closed, he felt that familiar tingle in his limbs and heart. Within seconds he was brought back to life, along with Happy and the other items in the attic.

The small window on one of the walls was enough to provide them with some light, allowing Happy to see the large grin on Natsu's face.

"Happy," the dragon started, tears coming to his eyes. "W-we're home."

The skeleton cat leaped into Natsu's arms, purring as he said, "I know! I'm so glad!"

Less than two months later, Natsu and Happy were pretty used to their new environment. The attic was better than they originally thought it would be, which they already had high hopes.

They got familiar with the other holiday decorations up there, finding a few more friendships along the way. Of course that didn't stop the dragon from fighting a few times. He was always down for a good brawl.

The day had finally come that Natsu was waiting for. It was finally after Christmas, so he would soon be reunited with his love.

Natsu and Happy felt the magic fading at the same time he heard footsteps approaching. They all teleported back to their spots, Natsu and Happy staying together in that same shopping bag from
before.

The attic opened at the same time Natsu's heart slowed. The magic was gone, but he still felt nothing but joy when he saw that pink haired man bringing up a few boxes labeled 'Christmas'.

Five minutes later the man left, closing the door and unknowingly activating the spell once again. The two newest boxes burst open, elves jumping out to gauge their new surrounding.

Natsu flew high in the air, swooping down to grab the gorgeous angel that never left his mind for a single second while they were separated. Lucy greeted him with a giggle and a kiss, enjoying the smooth ride as he flew around the attic.

"I love you's" were shared, as well as more kisses.

So what if they had to be separated for a few months during the year?
So what if the attic sometimes felt a little cramped with all the different holidays hanging out?
That didn't matter.

All Natsu and Lucy cared about was being together, finally. And no 'defects' or clearance tags were going to keep them apart. He'd be damned if he allowed his default thoughts to control him. Christmas wasn't that bad after all, as long as Lucy came with it.

But there was something they both could agree on.

"Easter sucks."
"I know, right?"
"I mean, does the rabbit poop out an egg filled with candy, or what? Who thought that up?"
"Clearly someone was high when they came up with that idea."

Chuckling, Natsu grabbed Lucy, then flew her over to where all their friends were gathered. Before he landed, he whispered, "I'm so happy we're together."

"Me too, Natsu." Lucy closed her eyes, leaning against his chest as he held her. She sighed, feeling relieved everything worked out. "Me too..." They were never meant to like each other, but neither could stop themselves from falling for the other.

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas!

Or Happy Holidays for which ever holiday you celebrate! Or even if you don't celebrate anything, have a great day/night! Hope you all enjoyed this silly one-shot.
Lucy woke up with a dull pounding in her head. She blinked, vision blurry for a moment before she could focus. Her eyes landed on the curtain on the wall, narrowing as she realized those weren't her pink curtains. They were yellow with black and red flames at the bottom.

'This isn't my room... It's-'

Her eyes widened as she bolted up, only to realize she wasn't wearing a shirt. She clutched her arms over her chest, thankful she was at least wearing a bra. 'What the hell is going on?'

The light shining in the room stung her eyes, her head still throbbed painfully, and her nose was now being filled with a familiar scent. Eyes flitting from item to item she slowly realized she was in his room.

Just then she heard a heavy snore coming from her side. Lucy gulped, then slowly looked down to see none other than her best friend, Natsu Dragneel, sleeping next to her. She covered her mouth with a hand to muffle her gasp. Natsu was shirtless as well, the sheets stopped right at his hips.

Her eyes lingered on the pink happy trail leading to the sheets, then raked over his toned abs and chest before her eyes fell on his face and neck. His pink hair was a little more messy than usual, but that wasn't what caused her chest to tighten.

Natsu had something pink smudged all over his face and neck. Lucy's eyes widened more when he recognized that shade of lipstick. Lucy pressed her fingertips to her lips, finding her lips dry with only a little bit of lipstick left on them. It was her lipstick all over Natsu's face and neck.

Panic flashed through the girl. 'What the hell happened last night?!' It was a dumb question. Any idiot could see clearly what happened between them. She just didn't understand how it happened.

Despite her flustered state, her eyes wandered back to his lower half again. If she just raised those sheets she would surely see more of her best friend than she ever had before. Or at least the sober version of her would. Drunk her probably saw plenty.

Lucy had no memories of last night after she took her fourth shot of tequila. She partially blamed
Erza for that one. The redhead challenged her, saying she couldn't handle it. The joke was on Lucy.

Clearly she really couldn't handle it.

It wasn't completely Lucy's fault she drank so heavily last night. She was celebrating just like everyone else. 2016 was finally over, and it had been a rough year for her. Not only had her mother passed away, making it hard for her to even finish the last semester of college, shortly after that her father's business started to fail, causing her to take two part-time jobs just to handle her tuition while he sorted things out. She actually considered dropping out for a while.

Only recently Heartfilia Corps. started doing better, meaning she could quit one of her jobs, but it still didn't make the loss of her mother any easier. Lucy had wanted 2016 to end, and it finally had. And to celebrate she decided to drink.

Of course she'd drank in the past, but not like this, and not in such a manner that happened last night. Natsu's fraternity threw the huge party, and everyone who didn't go home for winter break was there, partying and drinking til they passed out. Lucy just didn't count on passing out in Natsu's bed, or what happened before that.

A fierce blush stained her cheeks when she remembered her current situation. It was obvious what happened between the sheets. Why else was she in her underwear and he naked in bed? In his bed!

Lucy slowly slipped away from the covers. Sure enough she was in her panties. A little black thong that left nothing to the imagination and her bra were her only cover. It took her a few minutes looking around his room to find her jeans.

Lucy cringed, realizing her shirt was nowhere to be found. She threw on her jeans, then grabbed one of Natsu's old shirts to wear outside. There was no way she was doing the walk of shame without at least being decently covered.

Lucy sighed, a slight pang in her heart when she realized she was no longer a virgin. She would have been more upset if it had been with a different guy. She was saving it for someone special, which happened to be Natsu - *if he ever decided to ask her out*, but she didn't want it to happen like this.

Hell, she would have liked to at least remember it! She hoped at least he remembered it, but there was no way she was going to ask him about it. Maybe it was better if they both didn't know. She didn't want to ruin their friendship with a one night stand, but she didn't see very many plausible ways to get out of this one.

Lucy grabbed her high heels, not wanting to make the clinking sound on her way out of Natsu's room as she escaped. She saw her phone tossed in the corner of the room by his bedroom door, so she grabbed it, only to realize it was dead. *'Figures.'*

Lucy carefully opened the door. Knowing Natsu had extraordinary hearing, she made sure to be quiet. She felt successful in her attempt, until she stepped on a loose board and made a loud creaking sound.

Her heart stopped for a moment when she saw Natsu's eyes snap open. She froze in place, not knowing what she was supposed to do. She panicked when he looked over at her, then bolted once he said one word.

"Lucy?"

She was down the stairs and out the door in an instant. Lucy sprinted across campus to her sorority.
No one had a chance to talk to her since she ran right past them, not stopping until she reached her room.

With her heart pounding wildly in her chest she went to take a shower. With what had to happen last night there was no way she was not washing her body. Lucy plugged up her phone, started the water, then washed away her slight regret. She couldn't say she was upset Natsu was the one to take her virginity.

She'd been in love with the guy since they were in high school. At the time she didn't feel comfortable asking out a guy, assuring herself if he wanted to he would ask her out. He didn't, so she tried to give up on her feelings.

Of course that was easier said than done.

As time passed her feelings for him grew, but so did their friendship. They became so close to the point she didn't want to risk ruining what they had with a relationship. She already planned on telling Natsu how she felt when they graduated college, but now she wasn't sure what she was supposed to do.

Was it just a hookup to him? No, that didn't make sense. Natsu caught a lot of attention from the ladies, but he never dated anyone. His excuse was wanting to focus on school, which made sense because the boy had the attention span of a squirrel. Don't get her wrong, Lucy knew he was smart as hell, but he became distracted easily, causing him to need to study a little longer and harder than most kids.

A girlfriend would surely be the ultimate distraction.

Lucy tried dating. It always ended miserably. She always found herself comparing the guy to Natsu, even on accident. She knew it wasn't fair. There was only one guy like Natsu, and he was unavailable to her. They'd been friends for years and he still hadn't given her any reason to think he was interested in her.

So she tried to move on, only to realize her heart wouldn't let her. She never let anything get past making out with her dates, and it always felt a little wrong, like she knew she wasn't with the right person. She blamed it on her damn feelings for the pink haired frat boy, but it wasn't his fault she fell hard for him.

When Lucy finished her shower she got changed into some of her lazy clothes. Her outfit consisted sweatpants and a shirt, both adorned with the college's logo. Lucy decided to sort the whole thing out with Natsu later. If she remembered correctly she had a big test coming up when winter break was over, so she needed to study. She curled on her bed, ready to get to work. However, her plans were stopped when she turned on her phone.

Lucy's draw dropped when she saw all the messages piling up, so many her phone froze for a moment when she tried to check it. When the device was done loading, she clicked on the first message. It was from Natsu, asking where she went. Lucy ignored it and the way her heart beat a little faster at reading his name.

The next text was from Juvia, calling her a love rival. Lucy furrowed her brow, not understanding. It'd been a few months since she last referred to Lucy as a love rival. Her confusion ended when she saw the next text. It was from Levy with a few links to some YouTube videos. Lucy clicked the first link, breath hitching and nerves going numb when she watched a video of drunk Lucy dancing rather provocatively next to Gray, Juvia's crush.
Lucy cringed when she saw Gray take off his shirt, seemingly for no reason, only to have Lucy copy his actions and rip her own shirt off. 'Well that's where my shirt went.' Lucy already felt embarrassed. How many people had seen this video? Would anyone know it was her if they didn't already know her? Luckily she was wearing a pair of lime green sunglasses -that she didn't own- and a black beanie -that she also didn't own. The only reason Lucy recognized herself was from her outfit, giving her a small sense of relief.

Lucy watched a little more of the video. Right after her shirt came off another male joined in. It was Natsu, quickly throwing a towel over her shoulders to cover her torso. He sneered over at the camera, shouting "turn that damn thing off!"

A few seconds later the video finished. She guessed whoever took it decided to listen to Natsu's warning tone. Lucy was thankful Natsu looked sober enough to take care of her. She didn't remember that moment at all. Hell, she didn't even know if it was during 2016 or 2017. That was how wasted she was.

Lucy clicked on the second video, cheeks flooding with warmth when she saw what played on her screen. The video was focused on her friend Gajeel doing a keg stand, but in the background she saw Natsu sitting on the couch with a very drunk Lucy straddling him. That towel was still around her, so she guessed it took place after the first video. Judging by how close their faces were and the way she moved her head it looked like she was kissing him. Her back was facing the camera, so it was hard to tell, but it looked like Natsu wasn't moving an inch.

Was it that she came on to him and he just accepted it? Why? She couldn't imagine Natsu taking advantage of her drunken state. That just didn't fit his character. Was he pitying her? Accepting her advances despite not feeling anything for her? Lucy felt her chest constrict with pain. Not only was she embarrassed, she was upset Natsu would let her do that to him while she was in that state of mind. She clearly didn't know what she was doing.

She couldn't hear anything over the loud sounds of people chanting "chug, chug, chug!", so she moved on to the next link. The third video was by far the most incriminating. The video was titled "Cana vs Bacchus" but in the first ten seconds of the video Lucy saw Natsu dragging drunk Lucy up the stairs, presumably to his room, while his face was covered in her lipstick and she was barely holding onto the towel covering her torso.

Lucy choose not to finish the video after Natsu and her disappeared. She honestly felt a little hurt. He really had taken advantage of her. She was drunk and he led her to his room to do whatever it was he wanted. A tear pricked at her eye before more followed. Lucy scrubbed at her face, not wanting to feel so let down. She wanted to give her virginity to Natsu anyway, but to find out he was just going to take it. Well that just didn't sit well with her heart.

Lucy felt a lump form in her throat as her thumb hovered over the fourth link. She didn't want to press it. The others had only made her lose respect for herself and her best friend. Still, she had to know what else happened last night, so she pressed the link.

The video barely started before she heard a heavy knock come from her bedroom door. Lucy let out an 'eep', finger clicking the side button to shut off her phone and end the video in one motion. Lucy stared at the door, wondering who would bother her on a Sunday morning? She really didn't want to see anyone. Her head still throbbed and her heart felt mangled. Despite that she let out a weak, "who is it?"

"It's Natsu," the voice behind her door said.

Lucy felt her whole body clench. She really didn't want to see him. She wasn't sure if she ever
wanted to see him again after what she saw. "Go away!" She managed to yell, legs coming up to her chest as her arms wrapped around them.

"What?" Natsu sounded confused. "Why?"

"You know why!" Lucy yelled, finding her inner strength as she went.

"Can I please come in? I think we need to talk."

Her eyebrows darted inward. "No!"

"Lucy, please? I brought coffee and donuts?"

Lucy's stomach betrayed her as it let out a growl. She cursed herself, realizing she hadn't had anything to eat or drink, and both those items sounded delicious. She reluctantly stood up, opening the door to see her bribe.

Natsu was grinning like a fool, hands revealing two coffees and a bag of donuts from her favorite cafe. Draped over his arm was her shirt, reminding her of how exposed she was in front of him last night. His face and neck was cleaned up, no lipstick in sight. He was also fully dressed, but that wasn't as surprising.

With a huff she swiped the bag of donuts, marching over to her bed to take a seat. Natsu might have been able to take advantage of drunk Lucy, but this Lucy was fired up and ready to go. She watched as he closed the door, a little smile on his face now as he made his way over to her.

"No!" Lucy held up a hand to stop him. "You sit over there," she said while shifting to point at the chair by her desk.

Natsu raised a brow, but obeyed. After setting her coffee on her nightstand and placing the wrinkled shirt by her bed he walked over and sat down on her chair. "How ya feeling?"

Lucy felt her eye twitch. "How am I feeling?" She felt angry he would even ask that, while wearing a smile at that! "Pretty embarrassed." Not to mention humiliated, ashamed, appalled, revolted, the list could go on and on.

"There's no reason to feel embarrassed," Natsu laughed, taking a sip of his coffee before saying, "I know you were drunk and couldn't help yourself. I forgive ya."

Lucy's jaw dropped. "You forgive me?" She was ready to bolt up from her bed and smack him on the head. "Why the hell would you forgive me? You should be the one asking for forgiveness!"

Natsu raised a brow. "But I didn't do anything wrong." He sounded genuinely confused, but she wasn't buying it.

"How can you say that?" A little of Lucy's sadness slipped into her voice, revealing how hurt she was from his nonchalant attitude. "I trusted you Natsu!"

His smiled faded, a look of concern crossing his face. "What do you mean?"

Lucy couldn't believe he was acting like this. "You had sex with me," she choked out, "while I was drunk!"

Natsu's eyes widened. "What? No I didn't!"

"Yes you did!" Lucy curled on her bed, feeling small in front of her best friend. "You took
"Whoa whoa whoa!" Natsu stood up, barely placing his coffee on her desk before walking up to her, only to stop when he saw her flinch away. "Lucy. Do you really think that little of me?"

"Well why else would we both wake up naked in bed." Lucy felt her heart cracking the longer he denied it. She'd rather he own up to his mistake instead of pretending like it didn't happen.

"Naked?" Natsu furrowed his brows. "Sure you went to bed in your underwear, but I still had my jeans on!" He dragged his hand against his face as he groaned. "Lucy, I promise I didn't have sex with you. We didn't even kiss!"

"I know that's a lie!" Lucy narrowed her eyes. "I saw the video!"

Natsu froze. "What video?"

Lucy's emotions conflicted. She felt victorious for catching him in a lie, but also sad that it was coming to this. With shaky hands she grabbed her phone to turn it back on. The video she was on was paused, so she exited out of it to go to the second link in Levy's text.

Lucy pressed play, then showed him the video where Gajeel was doing the keg stand and Lucy was clearly making out with Natsu in the background. Natsu stared at it for a few seconds, then frowned. "Damn..."

"Yeah," Lucy all but growled as she jerked her phone away from his view.

Natsu slowly nodded his head. "It really does look like we're kissing."

Lucy blinked. "What do you mean it 'looks like' we're kissing. We clearly are."

She felt aggravated when he started chuckling. "Okay, so maybe some kissing happened, but I promise I didn't kiss you back."

What was supposed to make her relieved only crushed her heart. She was right. Natsu was only going along with it because he pitied her. A few tears welled up in her eyes as she lowered her head. "O-oh..."

Natsu furrowed his brows, "do you honestly not remember?"

She didn't say anything, only shaking her head before she sniffled. Natsu's eyes softened, his lips twisting into a frown as he sat next to her on the bed. "Look... I really didn't want to show you this, but I guess it's better than you not knowing..."

Lucy slowly raised her head, seeing Natsu pull out his own phone. "Gray promised he wouldn't post this, but he did send it to me." Lucy watched as he clicked a video in his messages, only for it to play on his screen.

*The video started with Natsu sitting on the couch, his head tilted back as he stared at the ceiling. From the angle it was obvious the person recording was sitting a few feet away from him on his side. Gray's voice sounded, letting her know he was the one recording "sorry about that man. I didn't know she was dancing there."

Natsu shook his head. "You're fine. I didn't know Lucy would be stripping like that. Guess she's even more weird drunk."
Lucy narrowed her eyes, but chose to keep watching without interruption.

"So what'd you do with her?" Gray asked, camera shaking a little.

Natsu kept staring upwards. "I put her in my room. I'm hoping she sleeps it off."

"What if someone goes up to mess with her?"

Natsu stole a glance at the camera. "Door's locked. I wouldn't let anyone touch her. You know that."

"Sure do," Gray laughed. "cause you're saving her for yourself."

"Shut up," Natsu groused, his cheeks tinting red. "And turn that thing off. Why are ya recording anyways?"

"Someone dared Gajeel to do a keg stand. There's no way I'm missing it."

"So you're just going to record until he shows up?"

"Yup," Gray said, camera moving to show the keg stand, then flashed back at Natsu. "I don't think he can d-"

"Naaashhhuuuu," Lucy's voice was now heard in the video.

Lucy felt her stomach twist. Is that was she sounded like drunk?

"L-Lucy," Natsu stared off to the side. The camera followed where he was looking, landing on drunk Lucy swaggering over to him on the couch. "I thought you went to sleep?"

"Nope!" Lucy stumbled over to him, barely getting her knees on the couch before straddling the frat boy.

"Wh-what are you doing?" He tried to scoot back on the couch, but that only made Lucy shift closer to him until she was resting on his lap.

"I wanned ta play," Lucy leaned in, her head swaying as she curled a finger under his chin. "Can I make you puuuurr Nashuu?"

Lucy felt mortified. As much as she wanted to stop the video now, she needed to know what really happened.

"Come on Lucy." Natsu tried to push her off, but it was obvious he didn't want to accidentally hurt her by shoving her off him. "Let's get you back to bed."

"I dowwne wanna," Lucy nuzzled her face into the crook of his neck. Her voice was now muffled as she said, "I wanna shhtay wif you."

Natsu looked over at Gray, then held up his hands, mouthing, "what do I do?"

The camera shook, but Gray said nothing. Natsu tried looking at Lucy's face, but it was still buried in her neck. "You can hang out for a little bit, but no more stripping." He grabbed the towel that was slipping from her shoulders to secure it on her body again.

"Why?" Lucy pulled back, glossy eyes staring up at him. "Are ya jealously?"
Natsu’s eyes darkened in an instant. "Very."

Drunk Lucy raised a brow, then smiled wide. "I knew you liked me too!"

"Wha-" Natsu didn't get to finish before Lucy was leaning in to place a kiss on his face. She missed his lips, hitting between his left cheek and nose.

A pout escaped her as she tried again, only to have Natsu shake his head. "Please don't kiss me on the lips."

Lucy stared blankly at him for a few seconds before saying, "okay!" She proceeded to place messy kisses all over his face, barely avoiding his lips as he stayed perfectly still. The camera was shaking, Gray's laughter muffled but clearly heard since he was so close to the camera. She could hear the people in the background chanting, "chug, chug, chug!"

When Lucy covered a decent amount of his face with kisses she moved on to his neck. That was when Natsu forcibly stopped her. "That's enough," he said sternly, a little anger in his voice. "You had your fun, now please just go to sleep?"

Lucy jutted out her bottom lip. "Y-youu d-don like meh?" Before Natsu could say anything, drunk Lucy admitted, "buh I la you."

Natsu blinked. "You what?"

"La!" She whimpered. "I laufse you!"

Natsu still looked confused, so Gray helped him out. "Hey Lucy?"

Said girl rolled her head until she looked at him. "Huh?"

With a laugh, Gray asked, "do you mean you love Natsu?"

A bright smile crossed her face. "Yesh!" She looked back at Natsu, trying to give him a kiss on the lips, but he turned his head, causing her to land another kiss on his cheek. "I's love you Nassshhhuuu!" Drunk Lucy said when she pulled back from him.

Natsu just stared at her, lips slightly parted as she looked up at him. Gray was the one to progress things, saying, "but only as a friend, right?"

Natsu shot him a glare, opening his mouth to say something, but was cut off when Lucy shook her head. 'Nope! I love hims for real!' She dropped her head on his chest, eyes fluttering closed as she muttered, "shoo, shoo much."

Lucy drifted to sleep then, head resting on his chest while Natsu stared down at her in disbelief. "Sh-she's just drunk," he said, then looked up at Gray. "She didn't mean it."

Gray scoffed, "dude, she obviously loves you. Just ask her out already." After a pause, he added, "but probably when she's sober."

The two males laughed, Natsu running a hand threw his hair before sighing. "I'm gonna take her to my room. I'm getting tired anyways."

"You're not gonna date rape her or anything?" Gray joked, but there was a hint of concern in his voice.

"Please," Natsu said. "I'd rather chop off my balls than do that."
The camera shook again, Gray laughing as he said, "good answer."

As Natsu tried to get Lucy up, she startled awake. "Where I am?" She looked at Natsu, then smiled. "Hiiit.

"Hey," he said softly before tapping his finger to her nose. "Wanna have a sleepover? We can go watch a movie in my room?"

Her brown eyes lit up. "Yeah!"

That was all he needed to say to get her off him. He carefully took her hand, leading her over to the stairs then up towards his room. Shortly after that the camera shifted until Gray's face was on the screen. "Those two are so dumb." Then the video stopped.

Lucy stared at the blank screen for a moment, collecting her thoughts as she fumbled for something to say. While she did that, Natsu put the phone back in his pocket.

"We went up to my room, you took off your jeans, I told you to put them back on, you started crying, so I said fine, we watched 'Big Hero 6', you passed out, then I went to sleep." Natsu said without pausing. "I promise I didn't touch you Lucy."

Lucy slowly nodded, feeling ashamed she ever thought Natsu would actually do that. "I'm sorry for doubting you."

Natsu shrugged. "I get it. You were pretty drunk."

"So..." Lucy didn't know what to say about the last part of the video. Would he consider what she said a confession? Judging from his reactions it was clear Natsu felt something for her, but she was scared to ask about it.

"Wanna go to dinner with me?" Natsu asked, quickly changing the subject.

Lucy startled, not sure if she should laugh it off and say, "as friends, right?" In the end she decided against it. "I'd love to."

After a few seconds, Natsu's cheeks puffed out as he tried to stop himself from laughing. "Don't you mean you'd laufse to?"

"Shut up!" Lucy groaned, grabbing a pillow to cover her face. "I'm never living that down, am I?"

"No way," Natsu laughed, gently placing a hand on her shoulder. "But if it helps..." He gulped, cheeks growing red. "I... I laufse you too..."

Lucy couldn't help herself as she asked, "but as a friend... Right?" She looked up, seeing Natsu shake his head.

"Nope. I love you for real."

Lucy's bottom lip quivered, her heart pounding as a blush spread over her neck and chest. "Really?"

"Really," Natsu smiled, leaning in to place a soft kiss on her cheek. "For a while now."

"How long?" Lucy found herself asking, cheek warm from the feeling of his lips.

"Hmmmm..." Natsu shifted his gaze so she couldn't see his eyes. He mumbled something, but she couldn't understand him.
"What?"

"A few years," he whispered, pink locks shielding his eyes as he took his hand off her shoulder. "Sorry..."

"For what?" Lucy raised a brow. She was shocked to find out he loved her just as long as she loved him, but she couldn't understand why he was sorry.

"For not saying anything earlier. I..." Natsu glanced up at her, a weak smile on his face. "I really didn't want to lose my best friend."

Lucy couldn't help but smile with him. "I was worried about that too..." She looked up at the clock on her wall, seeing it was just past noon. "Want to hang out for a little bit before dinner? I have to study... If you wanna keep me company."

Natsu's eyes brightened. "Yeah. That sounds good."

So that's what they did. Both sitting on Lucy's bed, her laptop on while his phone was out, casually talking while she studied. Lucy apologized a few more times about the misunderstanding, but Natsu shook it off each time. He was just glad she trusted him again, saying it really hurt to hear her think so low of him.

They talked, laughed, and eventually went back to how they were before Lucy got drunk last night. They were just Natsu and Lucy again, but this time both knowing their feelings weren't one-sided.

Maybe 2017 was going to be better than 2016.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked this little one-shot. It was supposed to be only 2k tops, but you know how that goes. Anyways, Happy New Year! Bring it on 2017! Stay safe!
Hey everyone! Here's a one-shot filled with slight angst but a happy ending. ;)

Summary: It's been two months since Lisanna got back from Edolas. Everyone is excited for her return, except Natsu? He's feeling pretty lonely since his best friend Lucy started hanging out with Lisanna when they found out they had a lot in common. Fairy Tail Universe. Twist on the cliché.

Rated: T

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Genre: Angst/Friendship/Romance

Word Count: 3904

Don't get him wrong. Natsu was glad Lisanna was alive and well. He felt his heart soar when she was reunited with her sister and brother, and of course he was one of the ones partying that night to celebrate her return from Edolas.

But shortly after that, Natsu noticed he was seeing less and less of a certain blonde celestial mage. It wasn't that she was being ignored by her teammates now that Lisanna was back. It was actually the opposite.

Natsu was the one being ignored.

And he didn't like it one bit.

At first he was understanding. Lucy and Lisanna were both nice girls who surprisingly had a lot in common. It was only natural for them to become friends. What Natsu didn't count on was him being replaced by Lisanna so quickly.

"Oh hi, Natsu," Lucy greeted him on her way out of the guild. Lisanna was right by her side, giving Natsu a slight wave before she turned her attention back to the paper in her hand.

"Hey Luce!" Natsu grinned, hoping he caught her at a good time. "I was wondering if you wanted to hang out tonight? Happy and I were gonna go fishing?"

Lucy's smile faltered only a little bit. "Oh, I'm sorry. Lisanna and I are actually about to leave for a job."

Lisanna took that as her cue to hand Lucy the flyer. "It's to protect a shipment against potential bandits," Lisanna said, glancing at the paper now in Lucy's hands.
"Sweet," Natsu looked at the paper, feeling a rush of excitement from the idea of going on a mission. "Can I come?"

Lucy stole a peek at Lisanna, then looked back to Natsu. "Sorry. We wanted to take it by ourselves. Besides, this mission would be too boring for you."

Natsu visibly pouted, shoulders going slack as he frowned. "Oh..."

"Plus we'll be on a carriage the entire time," Lisanna pointed out. "You wouldn't have a good time with your condition."

Natsu barely held back a whine. "Okay..." He turned to Lucy. "But when you get back can we hang out?"

"Yeah!" Lucy nodded, glad they could compromise. "We'll be back in a few days. See you soon!" And with that, they left.

Natsu watched Lucy's retreating form until she disappeared in the distance. He sighed, realizing he was once again alone. He decided to stay optimistic. Lucy said they could hang out when she got back, so he would look forward to that while he waited.

In the meantime he took a short job with Happy, enough to get some jewels for food and to keep his mind off his best friend. Well, Happy was his best friend too, but with Lucy it was different. Unlike her, he'd never had romantic feelings for his exceed.

Natsu was successful in swallowing his loneliness down until Lucy returned. True to her word, she made time to hang out with him and Happy. She went straight to his house when she returned from the mission, but she wasn't alone.

"Hey Luce," Natsu smiled wide when he opened the door to the small cottage he shared with Happy. He held back the urge to drop that smile when he saw the animal soul takeover mage next to her. "Hi Lisanna..."

Yes, Lucy had brought Lisanna with her. He had to force his smile for most of the day since he really just wanted it to be Lucy, Happy, and himself today. He didn't hate or dislike Lisanna, not even a little, he just really wanted it to be the three of them. He decided to grin and bear it, seeing as the only alternative was being a rude jerk and telling Lisanna to leave. That would only make him feel bad and upset the girls.

They all fished, then brought their haul back to Fairy Tail so Mira could cook it up for the guild. Natsu managed to sit next to Lucy during their meal, so it wasn't all bad... Even if Lisanna was on the other side of Lucy, and was currently getting all her attention.

Natsu ate his fish quietly, which was unlike the dragon slayer. He didn't want to tell Lucy who she could and couldn't hang out with since he was only her friend. As much as he wanted to be more than that with her, he wasn't. Natsu only had himself to blame for that one. He never told her how he felt, so how could she know?

Natsu wasn't as dense or oblivious as everyone made him out to be. He knew the difference between boys and girls, and even the difference between friends and crushes. He was well aware of his feelings for Lucy. It was hard not to fall in love with her when she made his heart race and his fire burn hotter.

He just didn't want to rush things. If they were meant to be, they'd be. Or at least that's how he thought things went. He wasn't all that romantic, but he was hopeful. He could wait forever if that's
what it took. Hell, he didn't even need to be with Lucy as more than a friend if that's what she wanted. As long as she was in his life, he was happy.

That's why lately he'd been feeling pretty down, since Lucy spent all her time away from him. It wasn't just with Lisanna either. Levy, Erza, and even Juvia would hang out with the two of them. There was no room for Natsu to notch his way in their girl groups.

He remembered the last time he tried. They were all having a sleepover at Lucy's apartment. He tried to include himself, only to get a Lucy kick to the chest as she sent him out the window.

Natsu got the message. He wasn't welcomed.

That didn't stop him from going to her apartment though. Whenever she was on missions with the girls -which was more often than Natsu thought needed, he would sneak into her apartment. It might be considered creepy, but he liked sleeping in her bed. Her scent was everywhere, and it always worked to calm him down.

Without those little break ins, Natsu didn't know how he'd survive being away from his best friend for so long.

Natsu was dealing with the change as best as he could, but the worst part about Lucy ignoring him was when she wasn't. It sounded strange, but Natsu didn't really enjoy when she gave him attention lately. It was always in the form of pranks and teasing.

It was like Lucy and Lisanna made it their personal mission to pester him. They'd give him fire, only for him to find out it tasted like farts. They'd tie his short spiky hair into pigtails and say he looked adorable. They'd cover his face with his scarf and ask him to guess which one it was, all while they were heavily doused in perfumes, making it impossible for him to tell who was who.

He endured all of it, because at least he got to hear Lucy's laughter and get some of her attention. It was the only small prize he collected from their torment.

But that all changed when they decided to play a new game. A game that nearly broke his heart.

"What about Kinana?" Lisanna asked, eyeing the purple haired girl behind the bar.

"I dunno..." Lucy tapped a finger to her chin. "She seems a little shy. I think Natsu needs someone a little more outspoken."

Natsu groaned. He didn't even try to hide it this time. They were playing a match making game, and he was the victim. Their game was pointless. Natsu already knew the only person he wanted was sitting across from him, currently tapping her damn chin as she looked around the guild.

"You're probably right," Lisanna sighed, then giggled. "What about Mira? She's outsp-" Lisanna didn't finish. She stopped once she saw Natsu tense at that suggestion. "Okay, maybe not Mira."

"What's wrong, Natsu?" Lucy teased, giving him a smirk. Any other day he would enjoy that cute expression, but right now he wanted to wipe it off her face. He would leave, but he was finally getting attention from Lucy again. He felt like a battered dog, accepting whatever attention he could get from his master despite the constant neglect he dealt with all the other times.

Lucy leaned over, her breasts pressing against the table to give him a better view at her cleavage. "You can't handle a she-devil?"

The two girls misunderstood his blush, thinking it was meant for Mira and not from Lucy's exposed
"Maybe we're onto something," Lisanna laughed. "Should we try Erza? She's tough enough to handle Natsu."

Natsu didn't try to stop himself from flinching. He imagined the pain he'd be in if Erza ever found out she was being subjected to this game as well. The messed up part was he felt like he'd be blamed for it!

Apparently his reaction was enough proof that it wouldn't work, so they moved on. The girls went through a list, naming off different females not only from their guild, but from other guilds throughout Fiore as well. He was two seconds away from smacking his head on the table when Lisanna said the one thing he'd been thinking all day.

"What about you Lucy? Do you think you'd be able to handle him?"

Natsu finally perked up, unintentionally glaring across the table at the celestial wizard. She tensed under his stare, then shook her head. "There's no way Natsu and I would work out! We'll always be just good friends!"

Ouch.

He didn't think it would hurt that bad to get his heart torn in half.

"Come on," Lisanna teased, nudging Lucy's shoulder. "You're telling me you wouldn't want to try dating Natsu?"

He clenched his teeth when she spoke again.

"No way! That'd just be weird!"

He swallowed thickly, fighting the tears swimming in his eyes. Natsu keep his head lowered as he stood up, making sure Lucy couldn't see just how pain her words caused him. He barely heard her ask him if he was alright before he forced out, "please. Just stop."

Natsu said nothing else as he left the guild hall. Once he was a block away he allowed the tears to flow. He had to stop in an alley to avoid stares, not wanting anyone to see the mighty Salamander crying over a shattered heart.

He rested his back against the dirty wall as he tried to think rationally. He always knew there was a possibility of Lucy not liking him back, but to hear it out loud was... was... He couldn't describe it.

Heart breaking, terrible, horrifying, numbing...

He felt all those things and more. All he wanted was to spend a little time with the girl he loved, but instead he got a kick to his heart. It took a while, but after he cried it out, he felt a little better. Sure it still hurt knowing he didn't have a romantic future with Lucy, but at least he could still be her friend.

That was good enough for him, even if it meant never having his love reciprocated.

When his tears dried, Natsu started heading home. Unfortunately for him, where he lived and where he considered home were two different places. His feet automatically brought him to Lucy's apartment.
He sighed, wondering how he was going to get over the numbness in his chest. He figured one last nap in Lucy's bed would be like taking a last drink, or a last drag of a cigarette before quitting.

Natsu saw her light was off, so she wasn't home yet. He hopped up, jumping through the open window to land on her bed. Sure enough, she wasn't home. It was still light out, so he doubted she would be home for a while.

With any luck she would take another mission with Lisanna, leaving him alone to process his emotions in peace.

Natsu slid under her pink covers, nose filling with her calming scent as he got comfortable. Crying had made him tired, so he wasn't surprised when his eyelids fell, their heaviness causing him to close his eyes.

He fell asleep in Lucy's bed, surrounded by her comforting smell. Natsu dreamed of a world where Lucy actually liked him back. They hugged, kissed, and shared all their secrets. He was specifically dreaming about her being curled up on his lap while she was reading when he startled awake.

Natsu's eyes snapped open, realizing the lights to Lucy's apartment were on. He sat up, hair flat on one side of his head as he looked around. His eyes fell on Lucy's form at her front door.

She jolted a little at seeing him, then she calmed down. "Hey Natsu," she said softly, then closed the door behind her.

Natsu raised a brow. He thought for sure Lisanna would be with her. She'd been with Lucy every other day he tried to see her. "Sorry," he grunted, climbing out of her warm bed. "I'll go."

He was just about to reach for the window when he heard Lucy racing over to him. She grabbed his vest, saying, "don't go!"

"Why?" He asked, tone turning dark. "You gonna try to fix me up with another girl again?" He couldn't keep the anger from his voice. He was still upset despite convincing himself he would be fine with her decision.

"Natsu, what's wrong?" Her pleading voice was almost enough to keep him there.

"I don't want to talk about it," he said tugging at his vest. She refused to let go, hands tightening around the black material. "Lucy... Let me leave."

"No! Not until you tell me what's wrong?"

"Fine," he growled, upset he was going to make her mad. "I'm pissed you won't spend time with me." He cast her a look, seeing the confusion in her dark brown eyes.

"What?" She furrowed her brows as she tried to understand his words. "I see you all the time."

"Yeah, but it's not the same." He hated the way he sounded right now. He felt like a child complaining, but he couldn't stop. "You're always with Lisanna. Why can't it just be me and you again?"

Lucy's lips parted, her eyes softening. "That's what this is about?" She slowly released his vest, seeing he wasn't trying to leave anymore. "I thought you were upset about our game?"

His eyebrows drew in as he scowled. "I'm mad about that too."
"Why?" Lucy asked, hand coming up to reach for his face. She gently rested it on his cheek, then guided him to look at her fully.

Natsu reluctantly shifted until he was sitting in front of her on the bed. His eyes fell to the mattress, not wanting to see Lucy's face while he was so angry. "Because..." His tone became barely a whisper as he admitted, "I miss you..."

Lucy blinked, a little stunned. "You miss me?" When he nodded, she said, "why didn't you just say so?"

"I didn't want you to think I was bein' a jerk," he groaned, realizing he was doing the very thing he tried to avoid. "I know I can't tell you who you can and can't hang out with."

"Well that's true," Lucy said, taking a seat in front of him. She was at the edge of her bed, so she grabbed onto his knees for support. She didn't see the way his eyes flitted to her hands. "But you could have told me how you felt sooner. I would have made time for us."

"You would?" He asked, a little skeptical.

"Of course," she grinned, thumbs rubbing at the black bands at the end of his white shorts. "You're my best friend."

Natsu wanted to be happy at hearing that, but his jealousy sparked as he asked, "then why have you been hanging around Lisanna and the other girls so much? You used to always hang out with me and Happy..."

He looked up just in time to see her lips twist. "Well... There's a reason..."

"A good one?" He asked doubtfully.

"Not really," she sighed. Her cheeks turned a light shade of pink. "I was trying to see if... if..."

"If what?" He coaxed.

"... if Lisanna liked you."

Natsu raised a brow. "Why would you think she liked me?"

"Mira told me stories about you guys when you were younger. It sounded like you had a thing going before she vanished." Lucy dropped her gaze, embarrassed over her own jealousy. "It didn't matter though. Lisanna told me you two are just friends."

"Well, yeah," he said, thinking it was obvious. Sure they hung out a lot as children, but that didn't mean they were romantic together. They were just kids after all! "When'd she tell you that?"

"About a month after she got back," Lucy confessed, causing Natsu to frown.

"Well it's been two months. Why haven't I seen you away from her?" Natsu felt her grip his knees. He didn't know if she remembered she was holding onto him.

"Honestly?" She paused to take a deep breath. "She's been helping me..."

"With what?" Natsu asked, curious. He wondered what Lisanna could possibly be helping Lucy with. Maybe she was training with her? Or was it the missions to help her get rent money?

Natsu shook that last thought out of his head. If Lucy wanted rent money she usually went to him
or the team with a mission. She'd been avoiding missions with him since Lisanna returned from Edolas.

Finally, after a few minutes of silence, Lucy said, "You."

"Me?" Natsu frowned. "What about me?"

"She's been helping me see if maybe you like... if maybe you like..." Lucy shook her head. "It doesn't matter!" She tried to get up, but Natsu lightly grabbed her wrists. Despite barely putting any pressure on her, it was enough to keep her grounded.

"Lucy," he breathed, "what is it?"

Lucy squeezed her eyes shut as she said, "She's been trying to see if maybe you like me like I like you."

"What?" Natsu's eyes widened, unsure if he heard her correctly. "You like me?"

"Of course I do." She dropped her head as if she was ashamed to admit it. "I've liked you for a while now."

"Then why didn't you say something?" Natsu asked, his heart beating against his rib cage. He wished she would open her eyes, but they stayed shut. He was filled with both relief and shock at her confession.

"I was going to," she admitted, breath getting shaky. "After going to Edolas and seeing how hard you fought and how brave you were for our friends... I just started realizing the silly crush I had for you wasn't going away. I was going to tell you once we got back, but then Lisanna came with us. I..."

Lucy swallowed, slowly opening her eyes to reveal the tears lining them. "I thought it'd be better if I backed off to see if maybe you wanted to be with her."

"But I don't," Natsu reasoned, only to earn a strained laugh from Lucy.

"Well I know that now." She wouldn't meet his gaze, too scared of what he thought. "It doesn't matter. Our stupid plan didn't work. We were going to suggest me dating you and see your reaction, but you looked so... mad."

"But I wasn't," he said, wishing she knew how badly he wanted to redo that moment.

"Are you sure?" She gave a humorless laugh. "Because you looked pretty upset when she said my name. Then when she started talking about dating I saw the way you clenched your teeth. You were obviously upset."

"N-no," he pleaded. "I just really wanted to know your answer. Then when you said we would only be friends, I got a little hurt."

A little hurt was an understatement. He was crushed when she said that.

"Why?" Lucy asked, crease forming on her forehead as she tried to comprehend.

"Because you weirdo," he lifted a hand to push some of her loose strands of hair behind her ear. "I like you. I thought you were saying I never had a shot."

"You like me too?" Lucy asked, eyes wide and mouth open.
Natsu debated whether or not to tell her the extent of how much he felt for her. In the end, he decided to be truthful. "I actually sorta... love... you..."

Lucy's expression didn't improve. She stared at him, not making a move or sound. When he thought for sure she wasn't going to say anything, she surprised him. "L-love?"

"Is that too intense for you?"

"N-no," she shook her head, her blush darkening and spreading to her neck. "It's great, really. Umm," she bit her lip as she struggled for words.

"You're not there yet?" Natsu asked, guessing her feelings. "It's okay if you're not. I understand this is a lot."

"Are you sure?" Lucy asked, feeling guilty for not saying she loved him back. She honestly didn't know if she felt that strongly, but she knew she liked him a lot. Enough that she turned down quite a few dates just so she could keep herself available in case the dragon slayer decided to ask her out.

Most of the time she thought it was just hopeful thinking, but now she wished she'd said something earlier.

"Yeah," Natsu gave her a small smile. "I don't wanna freak you out or anything, but I'd like to try to see if things could work out between us? What do ya say?"

Lucy couldn't stop the grin from spreading on her face even if she wanted to. "You just want to spend more time with me, don't you?"

"Can you blame me?" He asked, giving her a coy smile.

"Were you jealous of all the time I spent away from you?"

Natsu huffed, crossing his arms over his chest. He looked away just as a red flush consumed his face. "A little..."

Lucy nodded. "I'll go back to spending more time with you." She wouldn't stop hanging out with Lisanna now that she knew Natsu liked her, but she would make sure to make time for just Natsu more.

"Awesome," Natsu smiled despite the warmth in his cheeks. "When?"

"Well," Lucy looked over at her kitchen. "How about I make us some dinner and we can catch up?"

When she looked back at the dragon slayer, he was nodding. "I love that idea."

So that's what they did. Lucy made fire chicken - a recipe she got from Mira, and the two of them ate while talking about the missed moments between them these past two months.

They decided to give dating a shot, not knowing how it would end up but staying positive that they would make a great team. They ended the night in bed - fully clothed with only light cuddling! Lucy was very clear about that. She did let him sleepover though, whispering to each other until they could no longer stay awake.

It was a great end of the day considering the morning was less than pleasurable. Natsu wished things turned out differently, but sometimes life had other plans. As long as it worked out in the
end, Natsu was happy.

Especially because that was the last day Lucy ever intentionally ignored Natsu.

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**Bonus drabble I was thinking about this morning after having a nightmare. I'm sure this has been done before, but oh well. Hope you like it.**

**Nightmares**

Lucy was jolted awake when she heard the window open. The breeze rushed in, bringing in the cold, late night air. She didn't have time to ask what was going on before the window was shut and the covers lifted.

She felt a warm presence shift under the blanket and curl up behind her. Her eyes drifted shut when she felt those strong arms wrap around her. The sound of sniffing filled the air before she heard him sigh.

"Natsu?" Lucy asked in a whisper, already knowing it was the fire dragon slayer. "Are you okay?"

It was silent in her room now. She could barely hear her own breath, let alone his. Finally, she felt his chest against her back move. "Y-yeah," he said, voice low and rough.

She frowned at his tone. Lucy started moving, shifting until she was facing him. She could barely see him, the only light coming from the moon shining through her window. "Did you have a bad dream again?"

Natsu's arms tightened around her, bringing her closer to his body. "Y-yes…"

She could hear the restraint in his voice. He was holding back unshed tears. She knew about his problem. Lately he'd been plagued with dreams of her dying in the war. The war was over, but it didn't lessen the heartache he felt watching her die.

Her face softened, eyes closing once again as she scooted closer to him. "You can sleep here tonight," Lucy whispered, earning a sigh from the dragon slayer.

"Thank you," he whispered back, lips resting at the crown of her head.

"Anytime," Lucy murmured before slipping out of consciousness. His warmth and comfort were always enough to lull her to sleep.

Natsu curled protectively around Lucy, making sure he could smell her scent and hear her breathing. He always did this when he had a bad dream, and she never made fun of him for it.

He relaxed shortly after, muttering as he drifted asleep, "I love you, Luce."

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**Chapter End Notes**

So, what'd you think? I wanted to give a twist to the cliché. I can't say I like Lisanna's character, but it's because of the way Mashima just sort of threw her in. It's the same way I feel about Kinana or Laki really. They're just kinda there and occasionally do something.
I don't hate Lisanna though if anyone is curious. And I think Lucy and her would really be friends with each other, probably talking about how cute/adorable Natsu was as a kid.

Anyways, hope you enjoyed this little one-shot. :) Let me know what you thought of it.
Fairy Tail Pranks

Chapter Notes

Summary: A Valentine's Day special based on the show "Impractical Jokers". Natsu, Gray, Gajeel, and Loke love their jobs. They get to go around pulling pranks on people and each other all while earning a paycheck. It seemed like a normal day on the job, but one prank ends up changing Natsu's life forever when he runs into a special woman at the park.

Rated: T for foul language.

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy

Genre: Hurt/Comfort, Romance, & Humor.

Word Count: 5,283

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fairy Tail Pranks

"So your friend," Loke started, running a hand through his short orange hair, "is she hot?"

"She's engaged," Levy said, wanting to crush whatever hopes the playboy had of hitting on her old college roommate in one blow. "Happily, I might add, judging by her tone when I talked to her."

"Sooo," he grinned, "what you're saying is she's not married yet?"

Levy could only drag a hand over her face in frustration. "She's unavailable to you, and any other man for that matter." She turned to face Jellal, seeing he finishing up a conversation with the sound crew. "Change of plans. Loke can't prank Lucy tomorrow."

"What?" Loke's jaw dropped, shoulders going slack. "But I wanted to meet her!"

"Yeah, and I don't want her getting hit on by a pervert!" Levy reasoned, then spoke to Jellal. "Throw someone like Gray or Natsu on her prank."

"Why not Gajeel?" Jellal asked, taking a sip of his coffee.

"Lucy's already met Gajeel. We all went to college together, so she'll recognize him," Levy explained. "It has to be a guy she doesn't know," she cast a glare over her shoulder at Loke, "but I don't want her getting hit on."

"Fair enough," Jellal nodded. "I'll probably send Gray."

"Sounds good," Levy smiled, excited to see Lucy's expression tomorrow. Gray was married already, but his wife was back in their hometown holding down the fort. There was no way Gray would hit on her friend.

Levy McGarden worked with her boyfriend, Gajeel, and friends for a TV show called 'Fairy Tail
Pranks. The show was fairly new, only started up two years ago. They were now back in Levy's hometown where her old friend still lived. She hadn't seen the beautiful woman known as Lucy Heartfilia in years, so she was excited for a reunion.

Only the reunion wouldn't go as planned.

Levy called Lucy up last week to arrange a lunch to catch up. Lucy sounded ecstatic to hang out with Levy, making the latter all the more happier. They planned on meeting at their favorite cafe downtown tomorrow, the day after Valentine's Day. She would have scheduled it for today, but she figured Lucy would be busy with her fiancé.

Levy never met the guy because Lucy said they didn't start dating until after Levy moved away from Crocus, which was where they currently were.

"Yo! Levy," a man with spiky pink hair called out as he jogged up to her. He was one of the pranksters on the show, Natsu Dragneel. He was by far the most immature one of the bunch. "You shoulda seen it! We made Gajeel eat from the garbage!"

"Ew!" Levy scrunched her nose up in disgust. He would need to wash out his mouth before they kissed again. "Why would you do that?"

"It was funny!" He smiled, flashing her a glimpse of his sharp white teeth. "He was chewing on a metal gear for two minutes while trying to have a normal conversation with a guy. Guy just left 'cause he thought Gajeel was crazy!"

Levy sighed, wondering why she expected anything less from them. As much as she loved working for this show, it could get a little ridiculous. They would pull pranks on each other and unsuspecting citizens, all for the sake of a few laughs. The main drive to work for the show was to be closer to her boyfriend and friends, otherwise she would miss them when they were on tour.

"You guys are dumb," she giggled, then followed Natsu as they walked to where the rest of the pranksters were. She stood aside as Gray explained the next prank to the camera.

"Since today is Valentine's Day, our next challenge involves roses," the raven haired man known as Gray Fullbuster started. He showed the camera a bouquet of roses.

Gajeel jumped in, grinning despite the taste of garbage still in his mouth, "And a confession!"

Loke stepped up, lowering his glasses to smile at the camera. "Each of us will go up to a pretty lady."

"-Or man," Natsu cut him off, "and try to give the person a rose..."

"But," Gray held back a laugh, "they have to admit something embarrassing about themselves, and then get the person to agree to meet them again later. Otherwise, they lose!"

"Only thing is," Gajeel started, "we get to decide what the confession is for everyone else."

"This isn't gonna turn out well," Natsu laughed, plucking one of the roses from the bouquet to twirl in his fingers. "Ouch! What the hell! You didn't get the roses without thorns?"

The camera cut off a little after Gray and Natsu started bickering with each other. Loke grabbed the bouquet so the roses wouldn't get damaged in the process. A few minutes later, they were ready to start.
Gray went first, holding a single rose as he walked through the south side of Crocus' largest flower garden. It was a spot where a lot of tourists visited, or citizens of Crocus who wanted a relaxing day.

"Gray, you see that guy by the water fountain?" Natsu snickered over the mic.

Through the screen, the boys saw Gray look around. "Yeah? You want me to go to him?"

"Yes!" Loke answered back, grabbing the mic from Natsu.

With the hidden earpiece in his ear, Gray followed their orders to approach the random guy in the park. He stood beside him, clutching the rose between his fingers. "Nice day today," Gray started, making small talk.

"Yeah," the man agreed, nodding his head as he looked at the fountain. "Supposed to get warmer later this week."

"Is that so?" Gray stalled, waiting for his friends to give him his prompt.

In his earpiece, he heard Gajeel say, "I gotta be honest with ya."

"I gotta be honest with ya," Gray started, catching the man's attention.

"I'm alone this Valentine's Day," Gajeel said, barely holding back a laugh.

"I'm alone this Valentine's Day," Gray repeated, feeling a bit of warmth tinge his cheeks.

"I'm sorry to hear that," the man said, patting Gray on the shoulder.

"And that's not all," Gajeel said, waiting for Gray to repeat it. When he did, Gajeel added, "I came to the park to pick up a date."

Gray felt like his face might catch on fire as he said the last line. "I came to the park to pick up a date." After hearing his next line in his ears, he said, "Will you be my Valentine?" He held out the rose, trying to offer it to the man.

The man looked down at him a little shocked, then shook his head. "I'm sorry, no."

"Aw," Gray took a step closer when the man took a step away. "Are you sure? I can be very romantic?" That only caused the guys to start laughing in his earpiece.

The man looked at Gray for a moment. He felt like maybe the man was considering his offer, but then the man shook his head again. "Sorry, no. Have a good day."

Gray dropped his head when the man walked away, signalling he lost that round. "Damn it!"

The next one up was Loke. They made him confess to an older woman that he was diagnosed with hemorrhoids today, so his girlfriend dumped him. The old woman comforted him until he asked if she'd like to meet up later.

All the guys laughed when she said yes, giving Loke a big hug. Being a good sport, Loke hugged her back, then gave her the rose.

Next up was Natsu. He already filed down the thorns, not wanting to get poked again. With his earpiece in and a smile on his face, he walked to the other side of the park.
"Let's find someone he shouldn't be talking to," Natsu heard Loke say over the mic.

Natsu stared down at the rose as he spoke, probably confusing a few people. "Just don't make me talk to a police officer again. I almost got arrested last time."

He heard them laughing through the earpiece, recounting the time Natsu was forced to ask an officer if he could play with his gun. It ended up with Natsu thrown on the ground with his hands held behind his back until Jellal and Erza ran to him to explain they were on a TV show. Natsu still remembered how bad that busted chin felt.

"NATSU!"

Natsu flinched when he heard Levy's voice over the mic. Usually she didn't get involved in their pranks, but it was allowed every now and then.

"Yeah?"

"That blonde!" Levy shouted, clearly forgetting how sensitive his ears were. "The one by that black bench! Go talk to her!"

"Okay." Natsu started heading that way, locating the blonde female who was staring at some white flowers.

Before Natsu could say anything else, he heard Levy's voice again. "That's the girl I was talking about! Lucy!"

Natsu stopped walking, then turned to look away from her. In a whisper, he said, "But I thought the prank was scheduled for tomorrow. Are you sure you want me to do it now?"

"Yes!" It was all Levy said, causing Natsu to shrug.

"Alright," he shrugged, turning around to head towards the woman he now knew as Lucy. Of course he wouldn't use her name, not wanting to scare her. He'd never talked to her before, so it was sure to freak her out if he knew her name.

Natsu stood next to her, but his presence seemed unnoticed by the woman. He glanced over, seeing she looked almost bored to be at the garden. Everyone else was smiling, but she just looked indifferent.

"Hey," Natsu said, startling the girl. She jolted, then glanced over at him.

"Oh, hello..." She turned back to the flowers, causing Natsu to frown.

"Okay Natsu," he heard Levy's voice again. "Say-

He waited, but nothing else came over the mic. It remained dead for a full minute, causing him to panic. Natsu didn't want to lose, so he decided to wing it until he was given further instructions. "What brings you here today?"

Lucy didn't look up at him, keeping her eyes on the flowers. "I just wanted to see the flowers," she said, her voice sounding strained.

Natsu furrowed his brows, wondering if she was okay. "Do you like flowers?" He stalled, wondering what was taking so long for them to give him a prompt. So far this prank didn't feel all that funny.
"I guess," she said, reaching out to touch a white pedal. Some dew got on her finger, but she didn't seem to mind. "What brings you here?"

Natsu grinned, "I was just looking for someone to give this rose to." He already knew from Levy that Lucy was engaged, so he doubted she would agree to meet up with him later. But still, it was worth a shot. He really wanted to win, especially since Gray already lost this round.

Lucy's eyes dropped to the rose in his hand, then back up to Natsu's eyes. "That's nice of you."

He thought she might try to take the rose, but she turned to look back at the flowers. Natsu frowned, then discretely tapped on the earpiece, wondering why they weren't saying anything.

"Do you want the rose?" Natsu offered, feeling flustered. He was decent at improv, but he preferred when they told him what to do. He had very little shame, so he usually won challenges like this.

Lucy looked back at him, her brown eyes flashing with an emotion Natsu couldn't place. "No thank you," she said, then swallowed thickly. "It should go to someone else."

"Nah," Natsu gently grabbed her hand, then pressed the rose's stem to her palm. "I think you should have it." He smiled at her, earning a small smile from her in return.

"Thanks," she said, slowly curling her fingers around the stem.

"So what's your name?" Natsu asked, wanting to get an introduction so he wouldn't accidentally slip. He already wanted to call her Lucy a few times. "Mine's Natsu."

"Nice to meet you, Natsu," she said, thumb rubbing over the stem. "I'm Lucy."

"Lucy, huh?" He grinned, glad he wouldn't slip up. He waited a moment, seeing if he could hear anything through the earpiece. It was still silent, causing him to tap his foot on the ground. "So..."

Despite talking to random people all day, Natsu usually didn't start up conversations with strangers when he wasn't on the job. Especially not with pretty girls like Lucy. It helped him knowing she was engaged. There was no reason for him to worry about impressing her. She was taken, so he would respect that.

"Got any Valentine's Day plans?" Natsu asked as casually as he could, frowning when he saw Lucy flinch.

"Umm... No," she shook her head, taking a deep breath before saying, "I was thinking of staying here today..."

Natsu furrowed his brows. Why would she stay at the park all day instead of hang out with her fiancé? "Don't you have a boyfriend or something?" He started panicking. Why wasn't the mic working?

Lucy didn't answer the question, instead she swallowed hard. "Wh-what are you... doing today?" Her voice cracked as if she forced the words out.

Natsu really didn't understand what was going on. He tapped on the earpiece again, hearing absolutely nothing. He turned, seeing two of the cameramen in the distance. If only he could ask them what was going on.

"Oh," Natsu said when he realized she asked him something. "Probably just hanging out at the
hotel I'm staying at."

Lucy didn't turn to face him. "You're not from Crocus?"

"Nope," he smiled. "I'm from Magnolia. Ever been?"

"N-no," she said, her voice strained again. "I have some friends that live there though."

"Tell me about them." Natsu said, hoping to get the conversation rolling. It would help stall time while this mic thing got sorted out. 'I wonder if someone tripped over the cords again...’ That would explain a short delay, but not a delay this long.

Lucy briefly described Levy and Gajeel. She mentioned she had a lunch date with Levy tomorrow at her favorite cafe. For the first time since he started talking to her he saw her eyes light up. Talking about Levy seemed to brighten her mood.

Natsu was about to ask some embarrassing questions about Levy and Gajeel to collect some dirt on them, but stopped when he looked down at her hand. Something was missing.

"You're not wearing a ring?" He commented, more to himself than her. Levy said she was engaged, so he assumed there would be a ring on her finger.

Lucy raised a brow, then glanced down to where he was looking. She inhaled sharply when she saw what he was talking about. "Oh, umm. Yeah, I-I don't have a ring." As she tried to turn away, Natsu caught the glimpse of a few tears lining her eyes.

"Hey." He grabbed her arm as gently as he could. "Are you okay?"

Lucy looked away from him, but he could hear her sniffle. "I'm fine..."

"No you're not," Natsu frowned. He tried to keep his voice soft. "What's wrong?"

Lucy kept her eyes down. "Thank you for the rose. It's... It's the nicest thing anyone's done for me all day."

That should have made him smile, but it only made him frown. "What about your-" He stopped himself, remembering he wasn't supposed to know who she was or who she was with. "Don't you have like a boyfriend or something?"

He cringed when he saw her shoulders shake. Natsu walked around her until he could see her face. She moved one hand to cover her face, but he already saw the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Lucy, please tell me what's wrong?"

"Natsu!" Levy's voice finally came in through the earpiece. It freaked him out, causing him to flinch. "We're sorry about that! Gray spilled ice water on the equipment and fried some of it. What's going on?"

Natsu frowned deeper. 'As if I can really tell them what's going on with Lucy standing right in front of me.' Luckily, he didn't have to, because unluckily, Lucy did.

Through her tears, Lucy admitted, "I-I don't even want to be here right now." She tried wiping away the tears, but they were quickly replaced with more. "I just wanted to write in my apartment, but my stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid-" Her voice caught in her throat. She gritted her teeth, showing anger in her brown eyes. "That stupid son of a bitch," Lucy seethed.
She looked up at Natsu, seeing his confused expression. "I caught my fiancé cheating on me. On Valentine's Day of all days!" She shouted, one foot stomping onto the ground to help control her anger. "That stupid, idiotic, fucking douche, asshole," Lucy clenched her fist around the rose so hard it almost snapped.

"I'm sorry," she finally said, releasing her anger through deep breaths. Her tears still flowed, but she did well to stay composed after her little outburst.

Natsu stood there, completely stunned. This was not how the prank was supposed to go. He just wanted to have some fun, and now he was in the middle of this woman's problems. He really hated seeing girls cry. He watched as she wiped more tears away, then swallowed.

"I just wanted to have a nice day, but when I got home I saw him-" Lucy cut herself off. "I left. I wanted to go to my favorite cafe to try to relax, but I left my dumb purse and phone there, so I came here because I really don't know where else to go."

"Do you have any friends or family that live here?"

She shook her head. "Family, no... And friends... Well, not anymore."

"Damn," Natsu muttered, realizing she was having a really bad day. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Lucy let out a pathetic laugh. "You can punch him in the face. He deserves it after screwing my one and only friend in this dumb town."

Natsu's shoulders fell. "He cheated on you with your friend?"

She nodded, face scrunching up as she fought off more tears. "But no, you're fine. You don't have to help." Lucy lifted the rose, a watery smile spreading over her lips. "This was m-more than enough. Like I said, it's the n-nicest thing anyone's d-done for me all day."

Lucy leaned in, giving Natsu a hug. He remained frozen, not knowing what was going on. She swallowed past the lump in her throat before she pulled away. "I'm sorry for unloading all that on you. I'll leave you alone now."

As she turned to leave, Natsu grabbed her arm. "Wait!"

She stopped, eyes snapping to his face. "What is it Natsu?"

He tried to ignore the spark that shot through his system when she said his name. He opened his mouth, then paused when he remembered what he was originally doing there. "I forfeit this challenge," Natsu said, loud enough so his friends could hear.

"What?" Levy and the others asked over the mic before he pulled the earpiece from his ear.

Lucy raised a brow, wondering what he was talking about, but he didn't answer the unspoken question.

Natsu turned the earpiece off, then slipped it in his pocket. "I wanna take you out." He said, seeing the way she blinked in surprise. "Let me buy you lunch at the cafe you were talkin' about."

"You shouldn't," Lucy frowned, "I don't want to put you out."

"Nonsense," Natsu grinned, slowly easing his arm around hers. "I want to. Don't even think about
it. Let's just go."

"O-okay..." Lucy said warily, brushing away the last of her tears. Her eyes were still a little red and puffy, but she was already looking better.

"Awesome!" Natsu led the way to the cafe in question, already knowing where it was since Levy showed them it once they made it to town.

Levy, Gajeel, Gray, Loke, Jellal, and Erza all stared at the screen in awe as Natsu and Lucy walked away.

"What... What do we do now?" Gray finally asked, looking up at Erza and Jellal since they ran the show.

"I honestly don't know," Jellal frowned. "This hasn't happened before..."

As they were left stunned, Natsu and Lucy headed to the cafe. He waited until they arrived at the cafe before he told Lucy the truth. He figured it was better to get it over with now than for her to find out later.

He explained how the show worked, then played a few YouTube episodes for her to see them in action. Her face grew more red by the minute as he told her about the prank they had set up for her tomorrow, but then Levy changed the plans when they saw her in the park.

"So," Lucy started, hands covering her face, "Levy, Gajeel, and all those other people just saw what happened."

"There's no reason to be embarrassed," Natsu assured. "They won't air that stuff. I don't even have to make sure of it. I'm sure Levy's destroying the evidence as we speak."

Lucy groaned, still embarrassed despite what he said. Natsu decided to change the subject, asking Lucy what she did for a living -since she obviously knew what his job was now.

She said she was a writer. She published one book already, but she was currently writing a sequel. Natsu listened to everything she said, not only giving her all his attention to show respect, but because he was finding he rather liked talking to Lucy.

By the end of their -two hour long- lunch, Natsu suggested she ditch her loser fiancé and come on the road with them. They were stationed in Magnolia, but occasionally did tours like this. Lucy seemed hesitant, but Natsu assured she could have all the time she wanted to write, plus she could see the awesome pranks they pulled all over the country.

"Where would I stay?" Lucy asked, to which he said she could stay with him. "Isn't that moving a little fast?" She didn't think her face could burn any brighter.

Natsu laughed at what she suggested. "We don't gotta hook up or anything. My apartment is big enough for two people. Plus you can have your own room. I'm usually not there anyways 'cause of the job, but if you want you can come on tour with us too? We might have to share a bed but I promise to keep my hands to myself."

Lucy had to press her hands to her cheeks to get them to cool down. "I don't know... This is all so sudden..."

Natsu offered her a soft smile. "Levy will be there, as well as Gajeel and the others. Unlike your fiancé, we're actually nice. Besides, how long have you been stuck in this town?"
Lucy frowned. "All my life."

"See! Don't you wanna travel around?" Natsu asked, watching as her hands finally lowered from her face. "We don't just pull pranks. After we're done recording we like to venture around the city. It's really fun, and if you decide you don't like it, you can leave anytime."

"Maybe..." Lucy said, but she was starting to come around to the idea. She was tired of Crocus, and she always wanted to travel. Plus, she was without a fiancé and a friend in this town. There wasn't much keeping her here. All her writing was done online, sending it to her editor instead of meeting face to face. She could essentially do that anywhere.

After another round of hot chocolate and discussing more details about the life Natsu was offering, Lucy said yes.

"Yosh!" Natsu threw a fist in the air. "Awesome! I promise you'll love it!"

As they went to leave, Natsu said, "There's just one thing we need to do before then."

Lucy cocked her head. "What's that?"

Natsu's sharp teeth gleamed when he grinned. "We gotta pay someone a little visit."

Lucy knocked on the door to her apartment she shared with her fiancé.

Scratch that, ex-fiancé.

Lucy would unlock it herself, but her keys were inside. After a moment, the door opened, revealing a brown haired man wearing nothing but gym shorts.

"Lucy!" He gasped, taking a few steps closer with his arms opened. "I didn't think you'd come back! I promise I can explain why she was on top of me and-"

He was cut off when a hard fist met his face. The man fell backwards, landing on his butt. "What the hell?!" He let out a groan, rubbing at his sore nose. "Lucy?"

The man looked up to see Natsu standing in front of her. Half his face was covered by his pink bangs, but his scowl looked murderous. "Lucy's just here to get her stuff."

"Lucy?" The man looked up at her, but she was too busy walking past him to get to the bedroom to give him any attention.

Natsu watched over the man, threatening him with another punch if he dared stand up. Lucy didn't take long, packing two luggage bags full of clothes, books, personal effects, her laptop, and anything else she might need.

Natsu grinned when he saw her heading his way, but she stopped when she remembered something. She set the luggage by Natsu, then went to retrieve the gaming system from the living room. She snickered to herself because her fiancé begged her to buy him one when they first moved in together. Now he would be without one.

"What are you doing?" The man asked, eyes wide as he saw her hand the gaming system to Natsu.

"Shut up Dan," Lucy said, not looking at the man on the ground. She smiled at Natsu, asking, "Do you have one?"
He nodded. "Yeah. I have this exact one if you wanna leave this here?"

Lucy grinned. "No. I bought it with my own money." She finally cast Dan a glare. "I think I'll give it to someone on the street."

"Lucy wait!" Dan finally stood up despite Natsu's warning growl. "Let's just talk about this. It was just a mistake, and I promise I'll never do it again!"

"No," Lucy said, eyes narrowing as she walked up to him. She slapped him hard on the face, smiling to herself when the red handprint showed up. She never felt more alive. "I don't care if it was the first or hundredth time you slept with her. The point is you did it, and I don't tolerate cheating."

She turned her back on Dan for the last time in her life, vowing to never look at him again. At least the lease wasn't in her name, or the bills. It would be easy to part from him. As she walked past Natsu, grabbing her luggage, Lucy said, "Keep what I said in mind, in case you're thinking of asking me out."

Natsu felt a deep blush coat his cheeks from her words. He really hadn't thought of asking her out, but after seeing how feisty she could be he was seriously considering it. She seemed like she could tame the wild dragon living inside him.

Natsu and Lucy left the apartment complex to go back to the hotel the crew was staying in. Natsu let her drop her stuff off at his room, absent the gaming system since Lucy actually gave it to a random guy on the street. Afterwards they found the rest of Natsu's friends to tell them what was going on.

Lucy was shocked to find out everyone was on board with the plan after Natsu explained it to them. They welcomed her, making her feel like she wasn't a stranger despite her meeting a few of them for the first time. They decided to finish shooting the rest of the episode, Lucy sticking beside Levy as she watched the boys work.

When the day was finished, they all had a group dinner in the hotel's restaurant to celebrate gaining another member to the Fairy Tail team. Lucy ended up sharing a bed with Natsu that night, but he was true to his word when he said he wouldn't try to touch her.

Lucy followed them for the rest of their tour after that. They went all over Fiore, pulling pranks and laughing at one another. By the time the tour came to an end, Natsu and Lucy were already dating. They no longer shared a bed out of convenience, but out of the desire to be near each other.

Years passed like that, Lucy following him and the boys on tour while she wrote her books, or she would stay in Magnolia while Fairy Tail Pranks recorded in their hometown. Lucy never looked back at her old life, thankful it had been Natsu to find her in that park at her lowest point, even if it was all for a silly prank.

Although, she did wonder what would have happened if his friends were able to speak to him. Would he have succeeded in the challenge? Or would Lucy have said no?

She really didn't know.

Lucy stood in the largest flower garden Crocus had. It had been four long years since Natsu and Lucy met that Valentine's Day. He told her to meet him there, saying he wanted to go get lunch with her.
She stared at the flowers again, just like that fateful day. The flowers in the spot were now yellow, with little orange specks on the pedals. She reached out, carefully tracing her finger over the soft flower until a voice startled her.

"They're beautiful," Natsu's voice came from beside her.

When she turned to greet him, she noticed he was dressed nicely, down on one knee. Her eyes widened, her hands coming up to cover her mouth when she saw the velvet box in his hand.

"But no flower could ever be as beautiful as you, Lucy." He opened the box, revealing a diamond ring. With a grin, he said, "I love you so much. Will you do me the honors of marrying m-

He didn't get to finish before Lucy tackled him in a hug. "Yes! Of course I will!"

Natsu chuckled, not minding getting dirt on his clothes as he fell to the ground. He hugged her, holding her on top of him. "Happy Valentine's Day, Lucy!"

They started to kiss, only for him to stop abruptly. In his ear, he heard Gray's voice, "Geez! Get a room you two!"

Natsu couldn't stop his smile from spreading. "Did you guys get all that?"

Lucy looked at him in shock, a blush slowly working its way over her cheeks and ears as she realized what he did. "Did you...?"

"Yeah," Natsu said with a sheepish grin. "We're recording."

"AHH!" Lucy ducked her head into Natsu's chest, thoroughly embarrassed being caught on film.

Natsu laughed at her reaction. He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer to his body. He whispered, but anyone listening through the mic could hear him. "They won't air it if you don't want them to."

"Thanks," Lucy smiled against his chest. "I guess they can, but I need to see it first."

"Sounds fair," Natsu grinned. When she looked up at him, he said, "Although, they might not want to air this next part." With that, he kissed her. It wasn't slow or chaste either. After thirty seconds the camera stopped recording at Erza's orders.

Natsu was right, they really couldn't air what happened next.

The End.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Valentine's Day! (Yes I know this is early) Despite being married, I don't celebrate the holiday, but I still thought this idea would be cute. What do you think? Was it fluffy enough?
Lucy clutched her book to her chest, bottom lip quivering as she looked at the sign on the wall.

*Detention*

The single word made her stomach twist and her eyes prickle. Never in her twelve years of life had she been in trouble with her school, but today she slipped. She knew she had to face her consequences, but she didn't expect it to be so daunting.

A few kids passed her on their way into the room, a mixture of smiles and frowns on their faces. Lucy wore a frown, something she tried to avoid while in public. She wanted to appear in control of her emotions, but today wasn't agreeing with her.

After a few minutes, she stepped forward. It had less to do with her gaining courage and more to do with the ringing bell. She didn't want to add being tardy on top of her offenses that day.

Feeling terrified, Lucy went to sit in the back of the classroom. Most kids sat on the other side, giving her space to think about her predicament.

'*Father's going to be mad,*' she reminded herself, shaky hands setting her book on the desk. The last time she got in trouble with him was when she was eight and interrupted him during a conference call in his home office. Since then, she had done everything in her power to avoid trouble, until today.

'*Why couldn't I let it go?*’ she wondered, no answer to soothe her besides her stubborn attitude. It wasn't her fault the science teacher marked her paper wrong, giving her a 'C' instead of the 'A' she deserved. Anyone would have stood up for themselves. However, it was her fault when she called her teacher a moron, landing her in after-school detention.

That she couldn't blame on anyone but herself.

At least the teacher changed her grade... *after* he assigned her a punishment.
A middle-aged man strolled into the room, making his way to the front. He told the students they had to sit there for an hour before they were allowed to leave. Lucy saw him sit down at his desk, leaning back and closing his eyes as he dozed off.

Lucy wanted to scoff. Here she was freaking out about detention, yet the teacher acted as if this wasn't a big deal.

'He doesn't have to face my father when he goes home,' she told herself, fear striking her when she imagined what he would do.

Grounding her wouldn't do any good, her lack of a social life gave her father no leverage. Being the new kid at the school didn't leave her with a lot of opportunities to make friends. She had two friends total, one being the student body president while the other was the only other bookworm in her homeroom.

Deep down she wished she had more friends, but she was thankful for the two she had. At least they seemed to like her company, even if they only talked during lunch.

Dropping her head, Lucy's eyes landed on the book she brought to read, but she couldn't calm her mind long enough to open it. She couldn't stop herself from thinking what her father would do when she got home. She expected yelling, knowing he didn't tolerate mess ups.

Her shoulders shook as she tried to hold back the tears. Her father would no doubt be angry. He would have to call the maid to rearrange picking her up since she would be an hour later than usual. That alone would aggravate him. She knew her father hated changing plans, especially when it came to her.

'If only mom was still alive... She was nicer.' Lucy lowered her head, eyes closing to squeeze out a tear. It was only a matter of time before she started crying, but she hoped she would have lasted longer than the first five minutes. 'Why can't he be-

"Hey!"

Lucy jolted, head snapping up and eyes searching until they landed on a head of pink hair. For a moment she thought it was her father's maid, Virgo, but once she looked down she noticed the hair belonged to a boy her age.

Instead of greeting him, she stared blankly. The boy stood in front of her for a moment before frowning, shifting to sit backwards in the seat in front of her so he was still facing her. "What's wrong?"

Blinking, Lucy cocked her head. "What?" She didn't know why, but she didn't expect him to talk to her. She couldn't remember seeing him before, but she didn't pay attention to other students most of the time.

The boy gave her a lazy grin when he heard her voice. "I said, 'what's wrong?'"

"N-nothing," she lied. Her heart beat faster when she saw him narrow his green eyes at her. She opened her mouth to ask him what he was doing, but he cut her off.

"Well that's obviously a lie." He shook his head, finger tapping at his own cheek. "You're crying. What's wrong?"

Instead of answering the question, she snapped. "None of your business. Go away."
She dropped her head, trying to hold back her tears as the boy continued to stare. He made no effort to leave, frustrating Lucy until she was no longer upset, she was angry.

"Look," she said sharply, raising her head to tell the boy to go before she told the teacher. She stopped once she saw his toothy grin, a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Wh-what?" She didn't like that look he gave her or the way it made her stomach flip.

The boy with pink hair—who she didn't have a name to place with his face—let his head tilt as his smile grew. "That's better." He chuckled, a sound that made her face feel a little warmer than before. "You look better when you're not crying."

Lucy's hand came up before she could stop herself, fingers pressing to her cheeks to feel her tears had stopped. She knew it was due to her anger at the boy, but something about his warm smile had her releasing those bitter feelings.

"Fine, I stopped crying," she admitted, gritting her teeth. "Will you leave me alone now?"

The boy didn't hesitate to shake his head. "Nah. I'm not done talking to ya."

Her eye twitched, the urge to pull at her blonde locks in aggravation growing. "What could you possibly want to talk abo-"

"Why were you crying?" he cut her off again, causing her hand to ball into a fist.

Lucy swallowed, trying to control her emotions. The boy was trying her patience. "If you must know, I'm worried my father will be mad at me for getting detention. Now, if you could please leav-"

"Why would he be mad at you? It's not like you robbed a bank or anything. You just got detention."

She wanted to tell him it was rude to cut people off, but judging by the cheeky grin he offered, she figured he knew that. Choosing her words carefully, she admitted, "He's very... strict." That was putting it lightly. Her father demanded perfection, but she knew she wasn't perfect.

"Ah," the boy started, nodding his head. "That sucks. I'm sure he'll understand though. Mr. Clive was being a moron."

Lucy blinked, mouth parting but no words escaped. She saw the boy laugh, predicting her next words. "Yeah, I have the same science class as you. You never noticed?"

She shook her head, heat rising to her face as she said, "I... I'm new to the school... I don't even know who you are."

The boy placed a hand over his heart, an exaggerated wince coming from him as he said, "Damn, that hurts."

Brown eyes widened when she heard him curse. She looked around, making sure no one heard him swear. Her eyes flitted back to him when he started laughing, hand on his stomach as he smiled her way.

"Jeez, relax would ya? A cuss word never killed anyone."

Lucy resisted telling the boy to shut up, not wanting to encourage his behavior. She had a feeling he was trying to mess with her, though she couldn't figure out why. They didn't know each other
"What do you want?" Lucy asked, keeping her voice calm despite her urge to throttle him when he snickered. *What is wrong with this boy? Can't he leave me alone?*

"You're weird," he said, making her scoff.

*I'm weird? Me?" She couldn't believe he would suggest that. He was the weird one, bothering her when she wanted to sulk alone. Where did he get off calling her weird?

The boy ignored her question in favor of asking one of his own. "Wanna know why I'm in detention?"

"Not really." She couldn't see how that information would be useful.

Instead of listening to her, he explained his situation. "I'm in here for fighting."

Surprised, Lucy's eyes widened. "Really? Why?" Fights were rare at their school, or at least that was what she had been told by Erza, one of her friends.

The boy jerked his thumb to the side, sneering over at a dark haired male who was talking to a girl with blue hair. Lucy didn't recognize either one of them, but they seemed familiar. She wondered if she had a class with either one of them.

"Gray over there was making fun of my hair, so I punched him."

Lucy had no idea what to say. "You... you punched him?"

He laughed, nodding. "Yeah. That's how I got detention. Not as cool as calling a teacher a moron to their face, but I think I was pretty badass."

Lucy's eye twitched when he cursed again. It was something she didn't think she would get used to. "Why is he here then?"

"Huh?" The boy glanced over at Gray, then shrugged. "He punched me back. It's kinda our thing."

"To hit each other?" she asked incredulously.

"Yup!" His smile was wide, as if he were proud of himself. "He's my best friend."

Lucy couldn't comprehend how fighting with each other could make someone friends, but she didn't want to judge... much. "I see."

"Oh!" the boy started again, not allowing any pauses in their conversation. "My name's Natsu by the way." He held out a hand, to which she reluctantly took to shake.

She opened her mouth to introduce herself - it was the polite thing to do after all, but once again Natsu cut her off.

"I already know your name's Lucy." Natsu snickered, hand still holding hers. "It's hard to forget your name after Mr. Clive's said it like ten times this morning."

Lucy wanted to shrink down, remembering the incident that morning. She had been forceful with her words, demanding he recheck her paper. At the time she was trying to avoid her father's wrath, knowing he would be angry if she showed up with a 'C'. However, her own stubbornness got the better of her when she flung an insult the teacher's way after he told her she was wrong.
She had been right, but that didn't excuse her behavior. There were better ways to go about bringing up the issue, but she had chosen wrong.

Sighing, Lucy's eyes glanced at her book, then back at the boy. She wondered why he was still sitting in front of her, but she didn't get a chance to ask before he opened his mouth.

"What's your favorite color?"

"Huh?"

Natsu didn't skip a beat, repeating the question before smiling her way.

She decided to answer it, thinking it was the fastest way to get him to leave. He didn't go, asking another question, then another, until finally she was asking some of her own to keep the conversation going.

She didn't know it then, but Natsu was trying to distract her, filling every bit of awkward silence so she couldn't get stuck in her head again. At the time she was annoyed, but towards the end of the hour she found talking to Natsu somewhat enjoyable, even if he did cuss a few more times.

They talked about anything that came to mind, finding they had a few friends in common as well as a few interests. Natsu surprised her, finding an odd comfort in the boy's smile and warm demeanor.

When the hour was up, the students were dismissed. Natsu walked Lucy to the front of the building, telling her she should sit with him and his friends during class next time.

"You're pretty cool... for a weirdo."

Instead of scoffing, Lucy smiled, brown eyes reflecting the happiness she felt after talking with him for the better part of an hour. "Thanks. I guess you're cool too, for a...a..." She didn't have a good comeback, causing her to sigh.

Natsu wrapped an arm around her shoulders, giving her a half-hug before pulling away. He wore a toothy grin, one that made her heart flip in her chest. "That's okay! I don't mind being just cool to you."

Lucy opened her mouth to tell him he was full of himself, but he was already running down the street. "See ya tomorrow, Luce!"

"Wait!" she called out, frowning when he didn't turn around. She had no idea he was sporting a blush, heart pounding from the small hug he gave her.

Instead of being sad, she smiled. He may have been a strange boy with a seriously random personality, but she had fun talking with him.

Facing her father didn't seem so scary as she climbed in the back of the maid's car, waiting to be driven home. She looked out the window, peering at the school. For the first time, she couldn't wait to go back the next day, wanting to see Natsu's smile.

...Even if he tried calling her weird again.

Chapter End Notes
Eeek, I hope you liked it siriusly-random! Happy birthday once again!

Let me know what you all thought!
A picture's worth a thousand words

Lucy couldn't help but scoff when she came out of her bathroom, seeing the fire dragon slayer sprawled out on her bed. "Are you really wearing that?"

Snapping out of his daze, Natsu glanced at his outfit, smiling when he turned back to his partner. "Of course! Don'tcha think it looks nice?"

Shaking her head, Lucy ignored the question. Today Fairy Tail was doing a photo shoot for Sorcerer Weekly, and everyone was asked to dress up for the occasion. Lucy sported a little black dress that hugged her curves comfortably and matching black boots while Natsu... Well, he went in a different direction.

Dark green pants tucked into black rain boots, his blue shirt matching nothing while his scaly white scarf hung loosely around his neck. Add that to his pink hair and Natsu equaled a fashion disaster.

Still, she had to admit it looked exactly like what someone would expect him to wear. He was always pushing the boundaries with his outfits. She had a feeling he was competing with Gray and his wild fashion sense, but she dismissed the thought in favor of fixing her hair.

Natsu raided her kitchen while she pulled her long blonde hair into two pig tails with black bows. She left a lock of hair free on both sides of her face to frame it. Smiling, she thought she did pretty well considering she didn't ask Cancer for any help.

"How do I look?" Lucy asked when she walked into the kitchen, paling when she saw Natsu shoving a whole turkey leg into his mouth, bones and all.

"Hmfph?" he asked, green eyes flitting until they landed on the form of the celestial wizard. Choking, Natsu pounded his fist against his chest until his airway was clear. "Damn! Why are you
dressed like that?"

Under his intense gaze, she blushed. "Master told us to look our best... Why? Do you think it's too much?"

Realizing she misunderstood, Natsu shook his head. "It's not that, it's just..." He didn't know how to say every guy -and probably a few girls- wouldn't be able to keep their eyes off her. He always knew his partner was beautiful, but today she looked drop dead gorgeous.

He had half a mind to kidnap her and keep her all to himself instead of going to that photo shoot, but he knew Lucy was looking forward to it. Why? He didn't know. Sorcerer Weekly always printed articles about him, but he never felt flattered or thankful.

Of course his articles covered a lot of the damage he did to cities while on missions, but that was another story.

"Are you ready to go?" Lucy asked when she never got her answer. She figured she looked fine enough for a few pictures. Besides, the attention was bound to be on Erza and Mirajane, the two prettiest girls at the guild.

"Y-yeah!" Natsu set the turkey leg down, stomach no longer craving meat. He followed Lucy without another thought, lost in the gentle sway of her hips as she left her apartment.

The walk to Fairy Tail was peaceful. Lucy hummed quietly to herself while Natsu enjoyed the calming sound. Shaking away his earlier thoughts, he decided to be on his best behavior. He didn't want to ruin today for Lucy, or worse... Get on Erza or the Master's bad side.

It was no secret Natsu was destructive, even more so when his emotions got involved. He could sort things out later. Right now he wanted a clear mind. As long as he didn't do anything stupid, Lucy was sure to smile.

And he loved when she smiled.

"Natsu! Lucy!"

The two wizards glanced up, seeing the chipper blue exceed flying towards them. "Hey Happy!" Natsu called back, waving at his friend.

"Erza said you're late! Hurry up!"

"What?!" they both screamed, terrified of the punishment if they kept the requip mage waiting.

Without thinking, the two raced off as fast as they could, all earlier thoughts dismissed as they dashed down the streets.

"Cool! Cool! COOL!" Jason, the photographer yelled as he snapped photo after photo of Cana and Lucy, both posing in various positions. The two wore similar dresses, so Jason thought it would be 'cool' to get some shots of them together.

After he finished, he turned to Levy and Gajeel, saying he wanted to get a picture of him picking her up. Levy protested, but she was silenced when the metal dragon slayer hoisted her up in the air with one hand. "Like this?"

"Cool!"
Since she was done for the moment, Lucy went to the bar to get a drink. She ordered a strawberry lemonade from Kinana, sipping the fruity drink while glancing around the guild.

Jason had moved on from Levy, instead getting a picture of all the dragon slayers together, Laxus included. Lucy giggled when Natsu fell on the ground, putting Wendy's foot on his chest before he played dead, making it look as if the youngest dragon slayer had slayed him.

"He sure is cute," Lucy whispered, a light blush coating her cheeks. She had known for a while that her attraction for Natsu ran deeper than purely physical. In her mind, she never denied he was hot. Any girl with half a brain and working eyes could see the fire dragon slayer was handsome.

But over time, she grew closer to him, and with that the flame between them grew. Of course she wouldn't admit her feelings for the guy. She didn't want to ruin the strong friendship they shared. Things were great between them, and she didn't want to risk that.

"Lucy!"

Said girl perked up, looking over to see Natsu struggling on the ground. "Help me! Wendy's trying to kill me!"

A smile spread over Lucy's face when she saw Wendy shaking her head, pointing at her foot where Natsu was holding her in place. He wasn't in trouble, he wanted attention.

"Wendy!" Lucy called in an overly-sweet voice, playing along with his little ruse, "Could you release Natsu so I can talk to him for a minute?"

At that, Natsu let go of the sky dragon slayer's leg, letting her 'release him'. "Haha!" he cackled as if he escaped, rolling until he was a few feet away from her before jumping to his feet. He left the photographer baffled while running over to Lucy.

"What'd you want to talk to me about?" he asked, smile wider than usual.

Lucy shook her head, fighting the urge to mirror his smile. "Nothing, just wanted to hang out a bit. Is that alright?" He was her best friend, so the request didn't sound weird... Right?

Natsu nodded, taking the seat beside her. "Of course!"

"Natsu! Lucy! Did I tell you that Carla gave me a fish?!"

Happy was in a great mood. Not only did Carla finally accept his fish, but she had one to give him in return. It was his favorite, making him debate between eating it or saving it forever. The choice was obvious. He had to eat it or else it would rot, but he wanted to remember the memory for years to come.

"Yes, Happy," Lucy giggled, walking along the stone wall on their way back to her apartment. The photo shoot was over, and thankfully went successfully. There was only minor damage done when Gray and Natsu got in a fight over who took the better photos, causing Elfman and Gajeel to join in when they claimed they took the best picture.

Overall, it was better than Lucy expected. She got to take a few more pictures, one of her and Levy and another one with all the girls of Fairy Tail. If she were honest with herself she would admit she wanted a photo with Natsu, but she was too scared to ask for it.

Besides, she didn't need a photo to remember what he looked like. She saw that exotic pink hair,
gorgeous green eyes, and toothy grin whenever she closed her eyes.

But a picture still would have been nice.

Natsu was about to tell Happy congratulations, but he was interrupted when he heard a male's voice behind him.

"Salamander!"

Raising a brow, Natsu turned to see Jason running towards them, camera held against his chest. "Hold on!"

The trio stopped walking, confusion clearly written on their faces. "What's up?" Natsu asked, tone slightly bitter. He never liked Jason all that much, but if it weren't for the articles he wrote about him he wouldn't mind the guy.

Winded, Jason stopped in front of them. "I forgot to ask earlier! But can I get a picture of you!"

Natsu cocked his head while furrowing his brows. "You already got a few of me?" After spending a little time with Lucy at the bar, Jason had Natsu take pictures with Gray, Erza, and even some with Makarov. 'Didn't he get enough?'

As if answering his thought, Jason shook his head. "I want a few more." He glanced at the celestial wizard, smiling as he added, "With Lucy, if that's okay."

Green eyes widening just a bit, Natsu smiled. "Sure!"

Lucy didn't have time to respond before Natsu wrapped an arm around her, pulling her off the stone wall. "How do you want us?"

"Like that's great," Jason said, pulling his camera up and snapping a few pictures, Natsu's arm staying around Lucy's waist.

She blushed under the attention and the position Natsu was in, his warm scent surrounding her. Barely remembering to smile, Lucy relaxed into their pose. When Jason brought his camera down she thought it was over, but she was pleasantly surprised when he asked them to take a seat on the stone wall for more.

Sitting at an angle, Lucy crossed her legs and held a hand out, waving at the camera while her teammates got into their poses. She had no idea Natsu was throwing up bunny ears behind her, something she wouldn't find out until the pictures were published in next week's issue.

Happy clutched the fish he received from Carla to his chest, smile wide and eyes a little dazed as he sat by the two closest humans to him.

Natsu grinned from ear to ear, a small blush on his cheeks as he held his fingers up behind Lucy. He knew he'd pay for it later, but in the moment he was having too much fun to care.

"This is so cool!"

Just when Lucy was sure it was finally over, Jason surprised all of them. "Salamander, how about a kiss for the lady?"

Remembering the events that followed after Asuka asked him to kiss Lucy, he didn't hesitate. Instead of aiming for her lips, Natsu kissed her cheek, hand resting on her shoulder as he closed his
eyes.

He wanted to make sure he kissed Lucy this time instead of Happy again.

He still had nightmares about that.

Lucy's eyes widened as she gasped, caught off guard by the warmth his kiss brought. However, she found herself leaning into his touch, enjoying it even if it was only for a photo.

She closed her eyes, listening to Natsu's steady breath through his nose while the sound of the camera's shutter filled in the silence. Even when the sounds stopped and she felt Natsu pull away, she didn't open her eyes.

"That was so cool!" Jason said, finally letting his camera hang from his neck. "Thank you again!"

Slowly, Lucy opened her eyes. At first she saw black boots on the ground, then looked up to see Natsu standing in front of her. She hadn't realized he moved.

"Sorry about that," he mumbled, scratching at the back of his head. "If you wanna kick me or something, I understand."

Lucy knew any other day she would have pretended to be angry, storm off and continue to hide her feelings for her best friend, but for once she wanted to hold on to the blissful feeling she had.

"It's okay," she said softly, shifting until she stood on the street with him. "Want to come over for dinner? I can cook."

Realizing he wasn't going to get punished, he smiled. "Yeah! That sounds-"

"Don't you dare say cool," Lucy warned, narrowing her eyes. She had heard that enough for one day.

Chuckling, Natsu shook his head. "I was actually gonna say awesome."

"Oh." She smiled, nodding before she turned. The footsteps behind her let her know Natsu was following her, happy he couldn't see her face that slowly grew redder by the second.

Happy snickered overhead, still holding his fish as he chirped, "You liiiiiiike her!"

For once, Natsu didn't bother denying it, causing Lucy's smile to grow.

She could always count on Natsu to make her smile.

Chapter End Notes

So maybe a picture can be worth two thousand words? Hehe

Just a quick one-shot! I felt inspired after seeing that super cute photo!
Okay Natsu, truth or dare."

The dragon slayer tapped at his chin as if he was thinking, but judging by the glint in his eye, Lucy knew he wasn't going to pick truth.

"Dare!"

Lucy looked around her apartment, wondering what she could make him do. Her eyes landed on her fridge, remembering there was something she always wanted to try. 'Maybe I should have him try first? See how hard it is...'

Getting up, Lucy made her way over to her fridge to remove a jar of cherries. She brought it over, smiling as she set it on the ground. "I want you to tie a cherry stem with your tongue."

Natsu snorted, clearly underestimating the challenge. "Piece of cake!" He opened the jar, taking out a single cherry. Lucy watched as he popped it into his mouth, pulling out the stem as he chewed on the small fruit. After he swallowed, he put the stem back in her mouth.

Lucy didn't bother holding back her giggles as Natsu grew more and more frustrated with the stem, his lips twisting as he moved it in his mouth, trying to maneuver it with his tongue.

She fell backwards in a fit of laughter when she saw fire coming from his mouth, the stem disintegrating in the flame. Natsu let out a roar as he picked out another cherry, trying again.

By the time Natsu went through five more cherries, Lucy was crying from laughing, her stomach cramping in the process. She couldn't help it. Natsu looked too cute trying to tie that knot.

"H-here," she giggled, taking a cherry for herself. "I'll try."

"It's impossible," Natsu muttered, tempted to knock the whole jar over in his aggravation. The only thing stopping him was the knowledge that Lucy would kick him if he messed up her floor... again.
Natsu turned his glare to Lucy, watching as her mouth moved, her lips pressed tightly together. His cold stare slowly faded, replaced with a lazy grin as he watched her struggle. Somehow, knowing Lucy couldn't get it either made him feel a little better, even if that thought made him feel guilty at the same time. What could he say? Sometimes he could be a sore loser.

"You're right, this is impossible."

She pulled the stem from her mouth, seeing the bends along the red line. She was about to get up and throw the stem away when she froze, unsure if she heard Natsu correctly. "What did you just say?" she asked, shooting him an incredulous look.

Natsu raised a brow, as if he was wondering why she was looking at him like that. "I said, maybe we should try to work together to tie it. Isn't teamwork our best strength?"

Lucy's stomach felt as if she had butterflies swarming inside her. She had to press a hand to her belly to make sure she couldn't feel a flutter. "Do you realize what you just asked?" She didn't think Natsu was as dense as people kept claiming him to be, but that last question had her wondering if he meant to say what he did.

Natsu cocked his head, brows pinching together in concentration. "I asked if-" And then Lucy saw the recognition in his eyes.

He laughed, scratching the back of his head. "Wow! Guess that did come out wrong. Can you imagine?"

Lucy frowned, eyes falling to the ground. Yeah, she could imagine. She had been doing a lot recently, ever since she started feeling more than 'just friends' with Natsu. It started one day after he helped her organize her bookshelf. It was such a mundane activity, but laughing beside him as they made fun of story titles made her realize how comfortable she was with him.

She thought it would end there, but it didn't. Those types of thoughts didn't stop. She began really thinking about their friendship and the trust between them. It all happened so fast after that, until finally she realized that maybe what she wanted wasn't just friendship with him.

She wanted more.

But, clearly he didn't, judging from his reaction. He continued laughing as he grabbed another cherry to eat. He was having fun until Lucy spoke again.

"Sure. Let's try teamwork."

Natsu jolted, the cherry getting stuck in his throat. He had to cough before it finally went down, a few beads of tears in his eyes as she struggled to breathe. "Damn. That was a close one." He looked at Lucy, body freezing when he remembered what she said. "You're not serious, are you?"

"Why not?" Lucy shrugged. "You said so yourself. Teamwork is our greatest strength." She knew she was manipulating his words to get what she wanted, but she couldn't help it. She really wanted to kiss him, even if it wasn't real. Of course she would never force him to do it. If he said no, she wouldn't press the issue. Respect was a two way street.

Natsu seemed to think long and hard on her offer, his eyes narrowing just a bit as he chewed on his bottom lip. Lucy was just about to tell him never mind when he sat up straight. "Good idea. I'm sure with both of us working on it, we can tie this damn stem!"

Lucy blinked in surprise, shocked her plan worked. She thought he was going to call her weird and
keep laughing, but that didn't happen. "Come here," he said, voice as calm as ever.

Her legs felt a little heavier than normal as she scooted in front of him, the jar of cherries by their side. She watched as Natsu plucked out a fresh cherry, eating the fruit before holding up the stem. "Okay, I'm gonna try to twist it into an 'o', you try to push one of the ends through. Then we'll grab both ends with our teeth and pull."

Lucy's throat went dry, seeing he was dead serious. "O-okay."

Natsu popped the stem into his mouth, leaning in with his lips parted. She watched as his tongue moved in his mouth, his lips closing and his eyes narrowing as he tried to make it into an 'o'. A growl rumbled in his chest when he couldn't get it, a hand coming up to beckon her closer.

"I can't do it. Maybe you can," he started, leaning in the rest of the way to press his lips against hers.

Lucy flinched, her chest tightening as he moved his lips against hers, his brows furrowing a moment later. He pulled back, giving her a questioning gaze. "You gotta open your mouth. This isn't gonna work with just me doing it by myself."

She swallowed hard, realizing she was in over her head when she suggested they really give it a try. Giving a shaky nod, Lucy parted her lips, watching as Natsu leaned in to press a kiss against her again. Though, it wasn't a real kiss. She had to remind herself of that.

Lucy nearly jolted when she felt Natsu's tongue invading her mouth, pushing the cherry stem to her. She thought he might pull away as she tried to tie it, but he stayed put, lips covering hers.

She tried tying it, but it was harder with her mouth open. She didn't have anything to push the stem against while her tongue worked on it. Natsu's tongue entered her mouth again, gently pushing at one of the ends.

Lucy had a hard time not thinking about the heat from Natsu's mouth, or the fact that he tasted like cinnamon. She knew it was only because he was eating spicy candy before they started playing truth or dare, but she couldn't help but imagine that was how he tasted all the time.

Lucy's breathing turned heavy as their tongues moved, the stem not bending to their will. She had to gulp back the excess saliva building in her mouth a few times, her heartbeat racing when she felt some of his trickle on the corner of her lips.

Brown eyes met his, a determination in his green orbs as he twisted his tongue, accidentally tickling the roof of her mouth in the process. Lucy thought this was getting a little out of hand. At the rate he was going, she was surely going to-

"Mmmm," she moaned, eyes widening when she realized what she just did. There was no way she was going to be able to play that off. He was going to-

Her thoughts died when Natsu closed his eyes, pushing his tongue much further into her mouth than it had been before. He ignored the stem, tongue swiping at every inch of her mouth.

A soft groan left his mouth when he felt her massaging her tongue against his, his hands coming up to rest on her shoulders. Lucy closed her own eyes, not sure if he was really doing what she thought he was doing, but loving it either way.

Natsu pulled away abruptly, stem caught between his teeth before spitting it out. Lucy thought that was it, he was giving up, but her mind stopped working when he leaned in to kiss her again, tongue
thrusting roughly into her mouth.

She whimpered when his hands massaged at her sides, rough fingers pushing her shirt up a few inches so he could feel her soft skin. It took Lucy a moment to get control of herself, her head jerking away from his when she could finally think clearly. "W-wait!"

Natsu's face was flushed and his breathing was harsh, chest rising and falling quickly. "What? Did I do it wrong?"

"Wh-what are you trying to do?" Lucy asked, voice sounding airy. She took in a deep breath, her heart pounding faster when he kneaded her flesh with his hands.

"Kiss you. I thought it was obvious."

She frowned, brows furrowing and mouth parting. "You actually wanted to kiss me?"

He nodded. "Why else would I suggest working together? I thought..." His hands loosened around her waist until he let her go. "I thought you wanted it too..."

"I do," she quickly said, feeling a blush rushing to her face. "I just didn't think you... well, I thought you didn't see me like that."

Natsu snorted, shaking his head. "Are you kidding me? I've been trying to make up reasons to kiss you all month! Haven't you noticed?"

Lucy stilled, mind racing as she thought about what happened in the last month. There was an incident where Natsu started choking. Erza said someone had to give him mouth-to-mouth, but he miraculously recovered after Gray volunteered to save him. There was one time when he asked if he could taste her lip gloss, but instead of letting him taste it off her lips, she said no, thinking he was going to eat her make up. Once he accidentally fell on her and pressed his mouth to her forehead, but she was starting to realize that wasn't an accident. None of it was an accident.

"You're so..." Lucy couldn't find the right word. Idiotic? Crazy? Eccentric? Any of those would do. "... silly," she finished, deciding that fit his personality best. "You could have just told me you liked me." Lucy paled, heart falling in her chest as she asked, "Wait... You do... like me... don't you?"

Natsu nodded. "Of course. I wouldn't want to kiss someone I didn't like."

Lucy sighed in relief, thankful Natsu didn't think of this as some type of hookup. She couldn't stand being a friends with benefit with him. She liked him too much and that would cause her too much pain.

"Good."

"Do you like me?" Natsu asked, green eyes remaining unblinking.

Her voice caught in her throat at his intense stare, so instead of answering with words, she nodded. Natsu grinned, his eyes softening as he leaned in. "I'm glad. I thought you wouldn't want anything more than friendship."

She shook her head, coughing to clear her throat. "That's what I was worried about too. I didn't think you'd like me like that."
Once again, he snorted. "What's not to like? You're nice, funny, pretty, and weird."

"Hey!"

"You're the whole package!" Natsu said, ignoring her protests.

Lucy puffed out her cheeks, causing Natsu to grin. "And, you look really cute when your mad."

She shot him a glare, hands crossing over her chest. "You're just saying that."

He didn't bother hiding his chuckle. "I'm really not."

Lucy loosened the grip on her body, hands falling to her sides. She wasn't really angry, just slightly annoyed. Here they were having a moment, then Natsu had to call her weird.

Then again, his behavior was one of the things that attracted her to him in the first place. She had met plenty of guys who were 'smooth', but she didn't want that.

She wanted Natsu.

With a smile twitching on her lips, Lucy scooted closer to him, their knees brushing against each other. "You really think I'm pretty?"

The red tint on Natsu's face slowly crawled to his ears. He nodded, his Adam's apple bobbing as he gulped. "Y-yeah," he mumbled, chin and mouth dipping into his scarf.

Her smile grew as she leaned closer, bracing her hands on his thighs. "I think you're handsome," she admitted, feeling her face grow hotter. She couldn't believe she was admitting that, but she figured it was the right thing to do seeing as he was confessing things to her.

"Since when?" he asked, then shook his head. "Fuck it, I don't care right now." He cupped the back of her head, pulling her in for a searing kiss. Lucy followed his lead, eyes shutting and body relaxing against his. She could always tell him the first time she thought he was handsome was after Mira suggested Natsu might have a crush on her. That was so long ago and barely mattered.

This, what they were doing right now, that was all she cared about. She straddled his hips, trying to get closer to him as their tongues took turns invading each other's mouths, trying to dominate the other one.

Natsu's fingers dipped a few inches into the back of her shorts, brow raising when he didn't feel something that should have been there.

He pulled back with a smirk, his green eyes holding a teasing glint. "Are you going commando?"

Lucy let out a squeak. He opened his mouth again, but she quickly cut him off before he could say anything else by kissing him again. There was no way she was answering that question.

It wasn't her fault he decided to visit her on laundry day and she had nothing to wear down there. Lucy was determined to not answer that question, even if she had to kiss him for the rest of the day.

She couldn't see any flaws in that plan.

Chapter End Notes
Let me know what you thought! I had fun writing this. :)

Living Nightmare

Chapter Notes

I blame Chikach00's headcanon for this story. :P Her headcanon: "Although, thanks to mushi0131 fic plus playing some L4D with my friends online, I've got a headcanon of Lucy as a witch and Natsu as a hunter (if they turned into zombies)." This story is dedicated to her!!

Summary: Lucy thought she was alone, living in a nightmare she couldn't wake up from. She thought there was no hope, but that changed when she found herself running into a certain zombie again and again. Each time she thought he might try to hurt her, but he surprised her in ways she could never imagine. Left 4 Dead AU.

My second submission for nalu angst week. Day Four: Nightmares

Rated: T, foul language and some violence.

Genre: Angst with some humor

Word count: 6.6K

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Living Nightmare

Lucy's heart pounded in her chest as she ran down the alley. Tears lined her eyes, falling down her cheeks despite her attempts to hold back her sobs. They were dead. Every last one of them. Her comrades were torn apart in front of her by a tank, and there was nothing she could do but run. She was out of ammo. Her pistol was useless like this.

No, she was useless.

If she couldn't save her friends, what was the point of living? She didn't want to be alone in this fucked up world. What was worse, she couldn't take her own life now. Her only option was to run or let herself be eaten.

She ran.

Lucy heard the snarls behind her. No matter how far she ran, there would always be more zombies. It wasn't fair. She had her whole life ahead of her, but then everything came crashing down a few weeks ago. Within hours, Magnolia was overrun. Within days, Fiore belonged to the infected.

Lucy jumped, banging her knee on the dumpster as she climbed on top. The pain barely registered to her, her body working hard to keep itself alive. She grabbed onto the brick building beside her as she placed a boot on the chain link fence. She debated how she should go about jumping over, but all thoughts died when she looked behind her, seeing the hoard of zombies coming straight for her.

"Fuck," Lucy mumbled, putting all her weight on her foot as she jumped over the fence, landing hard on her ankles. She winced at the pain, but it wasn't enough to stop her. She would rather die of exhaustion than let herself become one of those horrid things.
The fence worked to stop the hoard, if only for a little while. She used that time to run down the main street, keeping low to avoid attracting attention from any other infected in the area.

She didn't know how long she ran until she made it to a familiar neighborhood. It was the one she lived in when she was a child. If she went a few blocks up, she would find her childhood house, the one she lived in when her mom was still alive.

Remembering her mother's death reminded her that everyone she knew and loved were also dead. She was the last one, cursed to live alone until she too fell like the others.

Lucy stole a look around her in all directions, making sure the coast was clear before falling to her knees. She let go, the tears she was trying to hold back falling faster than before. She buried her hands in her face, hating this life she now lived.

Why couldn't she wake up from the nightmare?

She screamed at the ground, cursing everything around her for this shitty situation. What was the point of living if she had no one by her side, no one to talk to?

Lucy cried, cursing herself and everyone else for leaving her alone. If they had just ran instead of tried to fight that monster, maybe she wouldn't be alone.

While Lucy cried into her hands, she didn't hear the distinct growls of a predator coming closer to her until it was too late. The hunter let out a shriek before it pounced, pushing Lucy backwards as it pinned her down.

She screamed as she saw it throw its clawed-hand backwards, ready to rip into her chest and devour her. In that moment, she realized she didn't want to fight anymore. It would be easier to give up and die. Closing her eyes, Lucy accepted her death.

Only... it never came.

She opened her eyes, flinching back when she saw green eyes staring back at her. Red veins disrupted the emerald color, the virus being to blame. His skin around his eyes was scratched, dried blood caked in the wounds. The hunter cocked its head, pink hair shifting with the movement. It leaned in closer, causing Lucy to gasp.

She thought it was going to go straight to eating her, but instead of feeling sharp teeth pierce her flesh, she heard the zombie sniffing. She tried pulling away from it, but she was pressed tightly against the ground, the hunter holding onto her arms and legs.

"Please," Lucy pleaded, tears brimming her eyes again. "Just kill me." She didn't want to live alone. She also didn't want to get sniffed by some zombie! Especially one that smelled like he raided a garbage can!

The hunter's lips pulled into a frown, pink eyebrows pinching together as it leaned in closer. It opened its mouth, revealing razor sharp teeth.

'This is it,' she thought, accepting her fate.

However, it still didn't bite her.

She nearly gasped in shock when she saw a hint of color fill in his cheeks, contrasting with the sickly gray color of his skin.
Before she could say anything, the hunter climbed off her. Stunned, Lucy didn't move, unable to think. She watched as one of the hunter's claws scratched at its cheek before turning away, hands pressing against the ground as it leaped away, letting out a loud shriek.

Lucy blinked, unsure if she imagined that or not. 'Did it... let me go?' She shook her head. There was no way a zombie would let her go. They were mindless beings who only wanted to kill and eat. It wasn't possible for a zombie to resist a meal, especially one asking to be eaten, not that it would understand her anyway.

After a few minutes, Lucy found the strength to move. She hobbled to her feet, exhaustion weighing heavily on her shoulders. Now that her heart wasn't racing, she felt all the pain in her body, starting from her headache and ending at her worn feet.

She staggered to a house, not caring which one she went to as she busted a window, climbing through to safety. She had no idea what just happened, but part of her was thankful she was still breathing. Either that, or she was wrong. Maybe the hunter had killed her, and now she was just living a real nightmare.

Either way, she needed sleep. She could deal with reality when she woke up.

Lucy thought the encounter she had with that bizarre hunter was a one time thing, but she was proven wrong one week later. She was trying to sneak through a subway station when she heard the moans coming from a zombie. She couldn't hide in time, causing her to fight.

Fortunately for her, there was ammo lying everywhere in town. Not only that, pipe bombs and molotov cocktails littered the streets. Lucy found herself more surprised every day she lived in this wretched nightmare.

Lucy took out the zombie easily, but the sound from her shotgun caused a hoard to run towards her. She shot at them, taking out as many as she could with her gun before switching to her pistol. Bodies dropped to the ground as she unloaded her clip, until finally the last bullet left her gun.

However, there was still another zombie she hadn't taken care of yet. While Lucy fumbled to reload, the zombie attacked. It was two seconds away from grabbing onto her pink jacket and biting into her when it was ripped away, thrown onto the subway floor by another zombie.

Lucy's eyes widened when she saw a hunter jump onto the zombie, leaning in to rip its throat out with its teeth. The zombie's limbs flailed for a few more seconds before it went limp underneath the hunter. Blood dripped down the hunter's chin as it stood, green eyes fierce when it met her gaze.

Lucy froze, hands forgetting how to move. She recognized this hunter, it was the same one who spared her a week ago. She honestly never thought she would see it again, but here it was, in the flesh.

Well, rotting flesh, but same difference.

"Wh-wh-" Lucy struggled to find the words, body tensing when she saw it walk up to her. It stopped less than a foot away, clawed-hand reaching out towards her face as its eyes pinned her in place.

Lucy's eyes slammed shut, knowing this was her end. There was no way she was lucky enough to get past this hunter twice. She didn't know why he let her go the first time, but it was obvious to her he wasn't going to do it again.
She waited for those claws to tear her skin apart, but instead of that, she felt something brush against her cheek.

Lucy slowly opened her eyes, seeing the hunter was carefully pushing a lock of blonde hair behind her ear. She was speechless, more confused than before. What the hunter was doing almost seemed... human.

She swallowed thickly when she saw that same red hue painting the zombie's gray cheeks. Its green eyes fell to the ground as it turned away, preparing for another leap when she shouted, "Wait!"

The hunter's movements stuttered for a second, but it quickly regained its composure. It let out a low growl, one that sent chills through her body. Lucy took a few steps back, terrified that she upset the zombie.

It didn't attack her though, instead jumping away down the dark subway, leaving her alone again.

"That... that was weird," she said to herself, hands shaky and eyes fixed on where the zombie disappeared to. 'What was that all about?' she wondered, but she didn't receive an answer.

And she wouldn't for a few more weeks.

After a few more times, Lucy realized her run-ins with the hunter weren't by coincidence. Every time he would show up to save her when she needed it the most, and every time he would leap away before she could ask him what his deal was.

Lucy had lost hope in living, but knowing the hunter was somewhere out there, acting as her dark guardian angel, kept her going. It wasn't long until she started catching him following her.

She realized he wasn't all that sneaky.

All those times she thought she heard something, but brushed it aside as her imagination, it was him. He was following her, either overhead on the roofs or low to the ground behind cars. She would listen for those faint growls, the ones he couldn't seem to suppress.

At first she acted as if she didn't notice he was following her, but when the loneliness set in again, her resolve crumbled.

The first time it happened, Lucy was sitting in Magnolia's park. It was a nice day. The air was warm and the infected weren't around. She thought it would be great for a picnic, but since she was by herself, she didn't bother. Still, she missed companionship, which was why she decided to make the first move.

"Hunter," she called out, careful to keep her voice from carrying. She didn't want any other zombies to overhear and see what was making that noise. "I know you're there! Do you want to sit with me?"

She waited, half-expecting no reply, but after a moment, she saw the bushes near her rustling. A dark figure jumped out, landing a foot away from her. Angry red veins mixed with green eyes, his lips curled up to reveal his sharp teeth. He let out a low growl, claws flexing against the ground. If she didn't know better, she would think he was about to attack her.

Lucy took one look at him before sighing, patting the spot beside her. "We both know you're not going to hurt me," she said bluntly, eyes flitting to the sky above. She wished there were more clouds in the sky so she could guess what their shapes were. She loved doing that with her friends.
When she realized the zombie wasn't moving, she turned her attention back to him. His lips were now pressed in a thin line, his eyebrows pinched together as he stared at her.

She raised a brow, once again patting the spot beside her. "Sit, please?"

The hunter hesitated before crawling closer, keeping his eyes on her as he planted his butt on the ground. He stayed further away from her than she told him to, but she didn't mind. The company was welcomed either way.

"My name's Lucy," she said, her words causing the hunter to jolt. She looked at him, offering a smile. "What's your name?"

The hunter seemed to struggle. Every time he opened his mouth, a growl or weak shriek came out. He shut his mouth, no legible words escaping. Lucy watched as one of his claws dug into the ground, writing out a single word in the dirt.

**Natsu**

Lucy's smile grew when she saw he was capable of communication. She thought all infected were mindless, but she didn't mind being proven wrong. "Natsu, huh? That's interesting."

She bit her bottom lip, wondering what she should say to him. This was a rare opportunity. How many people could say they were talking with a zombie?

She wouldn't know. She hadn't seen another human in over a month.

"How long have you been a hunter?" she asked, wondering if that question was offensive. *Can zombies even get offended?*

The hunter, Natsu, smoothed out the dirt with his palm before writing in it again.

**Day One**

"So, since the beginning?" she asked, watching as he nodded. "I'm sorry."

Natsu shrugged, letting out a low growl, but it lacked any threat.

"Do you like being a zombie?"

Natsu paused, eyes narrowing as if he was thinking. He scratched at the ground, forming a few words.

*It has its ups and downs.*

Lucy couldn't help but let out a giggle. Natsu cock his head, clearly wanting an explanation. She shook her head, trying to fight back her laughs. "Sorry, it's just that you're a hunter, so you're always jumping up and down."

It took a few seconds for him to understand, a crooked smile gracing his lips as he let out another growl. She could see his sharp teeth, but she knew he wasn't going to use them to bite her.

Lucy decided to lean back on her hands, smiling up at Natsu as she asked him a few more questions. A few turned into many, and soon she found she spent most of the day 'talking' with him. Despite him being a zombie, Natsu was actually pretty interesting.
After a few hours, Lucy found herself asking a personal question that had been bugging her for a while. "Is there anything you miss about being a human?" she asked, curious about what went on inside a zombie's head. Were they all like this? Or was Natsu special?

Natsu's claw dug into the ground again, writing a bit more than before.

**I miss my friends and family... And my cat.**

Lucy frowned, knowing that pain all too well. "I miss my friends too. They were killed by-" She didn't finish. It was obvious what killed them.

Natsu smoothed the dirt again, taking a moment to write his thoughts.

**Mine too. They didn't come back though. Just me.**

For some reason, that made Lucy's heart sink. Natsu was alone too, missing his loved ones. She knew it was dangerous, and might result in her death, but she pushed those thoughts aside to ask, "Do you want to hang out with me?"

Natsu cocked his head. Before he could write in the dirt, she added, "And not stalk me?"

A blush tinted his cheeks, his green eyes looking away in embarrassment. She giggled, finding the sight endearing. She never thought a zombie could blush before she met Natsu.

"I don't mind, honestly." Her words seemed to perk him up. "But I'd rather you not hide. It gets pretty lonely out here."

Natsu nodded, dragging his claw through the dirt.

**I get lonely too.**

"Is that why you're following me?" she asked, biting back a smile when his blush darkened.

Natsu let out a low growl, claw slowly writing as if he wasn't sure he wanted to say something. When he finally pulled his hand away for her to see, Lucy felt her own cheeks warming up.

**That... and you're really pretty.**

Lucy didn't know which one to be more surprised from. The fact that Natsu spent the time to write '...', or that he thought she was pretty. She had seen herself in the mirror lately. Her hair was a mess, her face was constantly dirty from the lack of showers, and her body had nicks and scars adorning her once-flawless flesh.

How could he think she was pretty?

Despite her insecurities, Lucy didn't argue with him. She hadn't been complimented in a long time, and hearing it from him, *her dark guardian angel*, she couldn't help but feel flattered.

"Thank you, Natsu," she said, gently holding out a hand to cup his cheek. Her eyes widened a bit when she felt his warm flesh. She thought for sure it would be cold. "That means a lot to me."

Natsu shrunk down at her words, as if he was ashamed she was touching him. She brushed her thumb against his cheek where a thick scar was, offering him a smile. "So, you'll join me?"

He opened his mouth, but only a shriek came out. He closed his mouth immediately, eyes darting
away from hers as he wrote in the dirt.

_I'd like that._

Lucy found she enjoyed having Natsu by her side. Not only did he help her take out offending infected more often now that he wasn't in hiding, but he also provided some much needed company.

As the days went on, they grew closer. She told him about her life before the outbreak, and he did his best to tell her about his. The communication barrier was difficult, but it wasn't impossible. Though it was sometimes annoying that they had to find places where he could write. He wasn't very good at holding a pencil with his claws, so that left their options limited.

Despite that, they talked as often as they could. The longer they stayed together, the less lonely they both became. She thought everything was finally getting better, until they ran into a foe neither could defeat.

Lucy wiped at the sweat in her eyes as she shot at the large monster in front of her. A tank had found her hiding in a small shack towards the outskirts of Magnolia. Natsu and her were going to head to Hargeon, but they got stopped when they heard the rampaging.

Unfortunately for them, the tank sniffed her out.

Natsu was jumping from infected to infected, tearing out their throats and ripping them to shreds to keep them away from Lucy. The commotion brought a hoard that they were unprepared for.

Lucy was running out of bullets, but the zombies kept coming.

"Natsu!" Lucy screamed when the tank tried to grab her. It barely missed, Lucy falling to the ground and dropping her weapon. Picking it up, she aimed it towards the tank, only to stop when she saw the figure on its back.

Natsu was slashing at the tank's tough skin, distracting it enough so it looked away from Lucy. She lowered her weapon, too scared to shoot at the tank now that Natsu was in the way. She couldn't risk hitting him. If he died... she didn't know what she'd do.

Instead, she turned to the hoard, firing at the oncoming infected as she tried to thin the crowd. The sound of snarls and gunfire rang in her ears, but she couldn't stop. Natsu was risking his life to save her. The least she could do was try to take out as many zombies as she could.

However, in the end it was useless.

Lucy ran out of ammo at the same time the tank threw Natsu off his back. The hunter went flying, crashing into the side of a building. He fell, green eyes unfocused for a moment as he tried regaining his bearings.

His eyes landed on Lucy, mouth falling open to growl a warning at her, but it was too late. He watched in horror as a swarm of infected surrounded her, each taking a bite into her flesh.

Natsu growled as he jumped towards her, knocking down a few zombies that were attached to her arms. Lucy was screaming, the tank was roaring, and the infected were groaning, but to Natsu, everything was silent.

He clawed at the zombies biting her, wrapping her in his arms before jumping. The tank almost hit
him as he leaped by, but Natsu was faster. He held Lucy close to his body as he jumped, free hand grabbing at a building so he could climb it.

He felt Lucy shivering in his arms, the infection already taking effect. It wouldn't be long before it spread through her entire body. Natsu tried not to think about that as he landed on the roof, stumbling as he set Lucy down.

Blood gushed out of her wounds. If the infection wasn't going to kill her quickly, the blood loss would.

Tears filled the hunter's eyes as he let out a pained growl, wishing he could tell Lucy it would be okay. Maybe it was better that he couldn't speak. He would just be lying to her if he could.

She couldn't move, the pain too much to bear. She cried, looking up at him with fear in her eyes. "N-N-Natsu...su..." She coughed, blood shooting out from her throat.

He looked down, seeing a zombie had taken a large chunk out of her side. She was bleeding everywhere, and there was nothing he could do to stop the pain. Well, he could do one thing, but he didn't want to end Lucy's life, even if it would end her suffering.

She lifted a shaky hand towards him, a sob racking her body as she tried but failed to reach him. Natsu bent down, scooping her up into his arms. She cried out from the pain of being moved, but he couldn't let her go. She had grown to become his best friend. She treated him like he was a person, not the disgusting creature he had turned into.

Lucy was too pure to die this way. She deserved a long, happy life. Even if he knew she couldn't have that with him, he still wanted her to grow old, have a family. He didn't want her to die on some rooftop in his clawed-hands.

He opened his mouth again, desperately wishing he could say something to her, but nothing but growls came out. It wasn't fair. None of this was fair! She was dying in his arms and he couldn't even say anything to comfort her. He couldn't even wipe away her tears without risking cutting her with his claws.

His tears fell down his gray cheeks, a lump forming in his throat as he pulled her closer. He pressed his forehead to hers, feeling her heat seep into his skin. He didn't know what Lucy was talking about when she said he felt warm to her. She was the warm one.

As he struggled to keep himself together, he felt soft hands on his face. He looked down, seeing Lucy cupping his cheek. "N-Natsu... Th-thank... y-you."

"No!" he shouted, but the word didn't come out right. It sounded like another growl. "Please! Please don't go!"

She didn't know what he said, but the way she looked at him, he could tell she knew what he meant. "I-I'm s-so happy I g-got to meet y-you, N-Natsu." Her voice grew softer, her eyelids slowly falling. "Y-you're m-my best fr-friend."

With the last of her strength, she leaned in, pressing a soft kiss to his cheek. Natsu's heart dropped at that moment. His grip on her tightened, claws threatening to pierce her skin.

When she pulled away, her eyes no longer held that warmth he had grown accustomed to. Instead they were blank, dull, lifeless. Her body fell limp in his arms, the blood covering his claws and lap.

She was gone, and Natsu could do nothing to save her.
He tried countless times to protect her, but in the end, he failed her. He held her close to him, curling around her as he cried. He mourned not only the loss, but what was sure to happen next. They had talked about it before. She made herself very clear.

Lucy didn't want to become a zombie.

At the time, Natsu agreed to stop the change if the worst happened, but now, he didn't think he could do it. He couldn't kill what was left of her brain, because then she would really be gone forever.

It was selfish, and he knew she would hate him, but he couldn't go through with it. The hunter wanted his friend, at least for a while longer. He wasn't ready to say goodbye. He didn't think he'd ever be ready.

Natsu stayed by her until he fell asleep, holding her close as he felt her warmth leave her body. When he woke up, he was shocked to find she had already started to change. Instead of becoming an ordinary infected, she was becoming a special one like him.

He saw the massive black and red claws where her small hands used to be. Her skin had darkened, a few shades lighter than his gray skin. Her lips and eyes were turned red, taking over the softer parts of her face.

Natsu knew without a doubt what she had become. She was a witch, one of the more deadly of the special infected. She was one step lower than a tank, but a few steps higher than himself. One swipe from her massive claws would be enough to kill a human, but he didn't know if she would be able to do that.

Natsu survived without feasting on human flesh. He made do with whatever food he could find elsewhere. Sure, he craved flesh, but he didn't need it to live. When Natsu had jumped on Lucy the first time, he was acting more on instincts than anything. It was harder to control himself back then, but he managed.

The first time he tried to eat a person, he had nearly gagged. His mouth watered for it, but once it hit his taste buds he had to stop. He remembered what it was like to be human, but...

Would Lucy?

There was a high chance she would come back like all the others, mindless, only wanting death. Witches rarely ate, desiring solitude above all else. They only attacked when frightened.

Would Natsu frighten her?

He hoped not. He hoped she would be herself, but that was unlikely. Still, he held on to that last bit of hope, refusing to let her go until he found out what she truly became.

Every person came back at a different time. Some took minutes, others took hours. Some... well, some didn't come back at all.

Lucy didn't come back until two days later. Her claws grew longer during that time, her skin now almost as dark as his own. He laid beside her, never moving away, even when it rained. He couldn't afford to miss a single second. He knew once she came back, he was going to have to face his punishment for disobeying her wishes.

He wanted to spend as much time with her as he could before she turned her back on him. He knew
he deserved it.

It was late in the afternoon when Natsu felt her body twitch against his. He jolted, scampering to his feet and claws as he watched her face contort, her body waking up.

When she opened her eyes, they were no longer that brown color he grew to admire. They were red, glowing despite the light outside. She blinked a few times, eyes darting around to see her surroundings.

Her red eyes landed on Natsu's, stilling when she saw the hunter. She opened her mouth, prepared to say his name, but the only thing that came out was a pained cry.

Tears flooded her eyes a moment later, her body racking with a sob that she couldn't stop. She sat up, only to hunch over a second later, as if the weight of the world rested on her shoulders.

"What happened?" she asked, but it came out as another sob. She shook her head, trying to force the words out.

She had no idea Natsu understood her perfectly, as if he spoke the weird language that came from her mouth.

He growled, but to her, she heard him say, "Lucy."

She looked at him, red eyes wide as recognition flashed through them. "Natsu," she cried, looking around them. "What happened?"

Natsu felt his gut twist, the dread of what was about to happen reminding him that Lucy waking up was not a joyful thing. She didn't want to be one of the infected, and he went against her wishes.

"Y-you got infected," he said, but to a human, it sounded like a shriek. "I'm sorry." Tears lined his eyes, the guilt still fresh in his mind. "I couldn't save you. I couldn't stop them from-"

Natsu dropped his head, knowing his excuses wouldn't help. It didn't matter that he couldn't get to her in time. The damage was done. "I'm s-so sorry, Lucy."

He fell forward, not caring that the gravel from the roof was digging into his face. Natsu felt lower than dirt for what he did and didn't do for Lucy. He didn't deserve her friendship.

"Natsu," she wailed, but to him her voice was soft, just like it had been when she was still a human. "Am... I?" Her question was answered when she went to reach for him, tensing when she saw her long, angry claws. She tried to push her hands away, as if that would cast the claws from her body. It didn't work, causing another cry to slip past her lips.

"Wh-what am I?" she asked, but judging from what she could see, it was obvious.

Still, Natsu answered her, his voice broken. "I'm sorry. Y-you're a... a witch."

Lucy dropped her clawed-hand, lower lip trembling as the urge to actually cry hit her. She couldn't stop herself, claws wrapping around her body as she wallowed in her pain. She could feel it, her true nature taking over. Already she wanted to be left alone, suffering by herself.

She knew what she told Natsu to do if she was ever infected. It was clear he wasn't able to end her. Could she really blame him? If the roles were reversed, she wouldn't want to live without him either.
That statement was still true. Despite hating what she had become, Lucy still cared for the hunter that went out of his way to save her life again and again. If it wasn't for him, she would have died a long time ago, but he kept her breathing. He gave her a reason to live. She was thankful for that. She had a few extra weeks of living as a human.

But, this wasn't as bad as she thought it would be. Sure, she hated that she couldn't stop crying, but her brain felt the same. She held her memories, her feelings. She was still her, even if her appearance had changed.

An appearance she hated...

Lucy frowned as she looked at herself. Her skin was a sickly gray, her claws sharp and long. This wasn't how she wanted to look like. She didn't want to be vain, but she missed her pale skin and normal hands. She wanted to be normal.

Now... now she was a monster.

'A monster that's not alone,' she reminded herself, watery eyes flitting to Natsu, who was mumbling something intelligible to the ground. "Natsu," she whispered, causing him to flinch.

He looked up, but he couldn't meet her gaze. She saw him gulp, shoulders shaking as he tried to keep from crying again. "D-do you h-hate me?"

Lucy's eyes widened, her lips parting as she shook her head. "I could never hate you. You're my best friend."

"B-but I... and now you're-"

"I know."

If they were humans, silence would have fallen between them. They weren't, so the sounds surrounding them were hushed growls and low wails. Lucy realized this was going to take some time to get used to.

"I forgive you," she said, feeling the tension slipping.

He craned his neck to look at her, pain in his voice as he asked, "What?"

"I forgive you," she repeated, arm jerking for a moment before she remembered she had claws. She wanted to reach out to him, but she feared cutting him in the process. 'Was that how he felt?' Many times Natsu tried to grab her arm or pat her on the back, but he always stopped himself, saying he didn't want to hurt her.

Whatever she was feeling, she didn't like it. Even with Natsu in front of her, she felt lonely.

"Why?" he asked, nails digging into the rooftop. "I-I didn't stop... it."

Lucy nodded, red eyes softening until they no longer glowed. "I know, but I understand."

Natsu's bottom lip quivered as he looked at her, eyes pleading. "A-are you going to... to..." A real growl came out of his mouth, hating the idea of what he was about to ask. "Are you going to k-kill yourself?"

Lucy blinked through her tears, shaking her head. "No. I'm not."

What should have calmed Natsu down, only made him feel worse. "I'm sorry. I should have just
done what you wanted. I just... I didn't want to lose you."

"That's why I'm not mad," she said, crawling towards him until she was within a foot from him. "Honestly... I'm glad you didn't end me."

Green eyes widened, the claw marks around his forehead and eyes stretching from the movement. "Wh-what do you mean?" He didn't understand. He went against her wishes. How could she be okay with that? No, not okay. She said she was glad! It didn't make sense to him.

"Because," she whispered, body racking as an involuntary sob came out, "I don't want to lose you either." She rested a clawed-hand on his back gently, terrified she might accidentally cut him. "Now we can be together, forever."

"Forever," he repeated, as if it were the first time he heard the word. "You really mean it?"

Lucy nodded. "We'll have to be careful around humans though, but as long as we avoid them, I don't see why we can't be." Normally zombies didn't mess with other zombies. As long as they kept to themselves, they could be together.

Just as Natsu felt himself smiling through his tears, Lucy said, "Although, I'm going to miss being human."

He frowned, that empty feeling in his chest returning again. "Bein' human's not all that great," he muttered, but truthfully he didn't believe that. He missed being a human, more so when he met Lucy. Maybe now that she was like him, he wouldn't crave that life anymore. They could start a new life.

"Maybe," she started, looking at her black claws, "but now I wish I was pretty."

"What are you talking about?" the hunter asked, shifting until he sat on the balls of his feet. He furrowed his brows, his own smaller clawed-hand coming up to cup her face. She felt colder than when she was human, but not nearly as cold as the mindless zombies staggering around. "You're beautiful."

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she looked away, refusing to believe him. "I'm hideous."

Natsu moved his hand so he could turn her face, locking eyes with her. "You're not. You're Lucy, and Lucy is beautiful no matter what."

Lucy shook as she let his words soak in, feeling her body warm. Without thinking, she wrapped her arms around him, pulling him into a hug. She wanted to show him how much she appreciated him, but instead she ended up hurting him.

"Fuck!" He flinched in her arms, reacting to the few claws that pierced his jacket and dug into his back. Her claws were much sharper than his. "C-careful!"

"Sorry," she said, loosening her grip a bit. "I just... Thank you."

"For what?" Natsu asked, voice a low rumble. "I didn't do anything."

"That's not true." Lucy pulled away, her palms resting on his shoulders. "You did everything you could to try to save me. Thank you."

"But, I failed you." He couldn't accept her thanks. He didn't feel like he deserved it.
Lucy shook her head. "No, you didn't. You went out of your way time and time again to save me. It's not your fault I got bit. I would've been bitten a long time ago if it weren't for you."

Natsu's eyes widened when he saw her leaning in. Instead of a peck on the cheek like last time, her lips brushed against his own. It wasn't enough pressure to be a kiss, but it was enough to make his chest tighten.

When she pulled back, she smiled. "Now, what do you do for food? I'm kind of hungry."

Gulping, Natsu nodded, moving to stand up. "We could check out a campsite not too far from here, but-"

Tears still fell down Lucy's face, but inside, she felt happy. "But what?"

Natsu groaned, arms crossing over his chest as he growled. "There's this annoying smoker that usually hangs out there. I don't wanna see his droopy-eyed face again."

She cocked her head, finding his behavior amusing. "There are others?"

"Others?"

"Like you and me," she said, gesturing with her claws between the two. "Infected that aren't mindless?"

Natsu snorted. "That pervert's just as bad as a mindless zombie. D'ya know he likes to strip off his clothes? What smoker does that?!"

Lucy giggled, but outwardly it sounded like a sob. "He sounds fun."

Green eyes narrowed as he turned his face away from her. "Yeah right. He's a loser. And the witch he hangs out with is annoying too."

Lucy pouted. "Do you have something against witches?"

He stole a glance at her, tough exterior crumbling when he saw her face. "No, I don't. You're not annoying at all."

She smiled despite the tears she cried. It would take some getting used to. "So, can I meet them?"

"Why do you wanna?" the hunter asked. His tone suggested he didn't want to go, but he walked to the edge of the roof to check if the coast was clear anyway.

"I think it would be neat to talk to others, especially another witch."

Natsu sighed dramatically, lowering down until he was on all fours. "Fine, hop on. I'll take ya."

"Promise you'll be on your best behavior?" Lucy asked, walking over to settle on his back. She had to keep her claws pointed away from him while still holding on.

"Nope!" Natsu yelled as he jumped, flying through the air as he aimed to land on the street.

Lucy screamed, squeezing her legs around his waist so she wouldn't fall off. It was scary falling, but once Natsu jumped again, and the air flew through her pale blonde hair, Lucy found herself enjoying the ride.

She thought she was living a nightmare, but it turned out she was just getting prepared for her new
life as a zombie. Hopefully, this life would work out better than her last.

With Natsu by her side, she knew it would be worth finding out.

Chapter End Notes

Definitely not as angsty as my other submission, but I still like it. Let me know what you thought! Thank you chikach00 for the headcanon! And thank you everyone for reading! I really love Left 4 Dead, so it was awesome mixing nalu into this. If you haven't played before, I hope this one-shot wasn't too confusing. Once again, thanks for reading, and I hope you let me know what your thoughts were! :D Was it angsty enough?
Hostage

Chapter Notes

This is part of my submission for Nalu Week 2017. I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does.

Rated: T for foul language, slight violence, and slightly suggestive themes.

Prompt: Mask

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy (Nalu)

Words: 9.8K

Summary: Lucy takes revenge to a whole new level when she comes face to face with the elusive 'Salamander', who is making a name for himself as Fiore's newest bank robber. Modern AU, Humor/Romance

Disclaimer: I don't know much about banks. Most of my information came from the internet, so I apologize if any of this is inaccurate.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hostage

Lucy slammed her eyes shut in aggravation as she listened to her father ramble over the phone. She tried to cut in three times to tell him her opinion, but he always raised his voice so he could talk over her. After the last attempt, she gave up, letting him talk until his heart's content.

"The experience you gain today will help you when you get to where I am. Knowing the ins and outs of the business will-"

Lucy stopped listening, holding her phone away from her ear far enough so she couldn't hear exactly what he was saying, but close enough that she could jump in when he stopped talking.

Her father was hellbent on her staying on as a teller at the bank. It all started when she said she was thinking of taking off a few days a week to focus on writing. Apparently, her father thought that meant she was quitting, so he started ranting about the benefits of working up the line, gaining this experience, and blah blah blah.

Lucy had heard his speech a million times. He told it to her so much she could recite it back to him, but of course he would only call her a smart aleck and tell her she needed to learn some manners.

His speech was wasted though. Lucy had no intentions of staying with the bank, at least not for the rest of her life. She wanted to be an author, to write mysteries and adventures. When she told her father that, he laughed at the idea.

"You need a real job," he would say. "Who's going to take over the business when I retire?"
Lucy didn't know, but she did know it wasn't going to be her. She had plans for her life, and they didn't involve counting money all day. She needed excitement!

Lucy stole a peek at her clock, frowning when she saw the time. Risking death by boredom, she put her phone against her ear to talk to her father.

"-and another thing. Did you know-"

"Hey! You'll have to tell me some other time. I'm going to be late for work."

"Well that's not very responsible of you. How will it look having you show up late?"

"I'm guessing not good," she said, proud of herself for keeping her voice calm despite her growing aggravation. Before he could monopolize the conversation again, she asked, "Can you just think about what I said. I would only need two more days off a week. That shouldn't cause any problems. Plus, I can afford to take that time off."

"I'm not concerned about money!" her father yelled, causing her eyes to narrow. "I'm concerned about your lack of responsibility. You are a Heartfilia. You have to-"

"Sorry! Gotta go!" Lucy cut him off before hanging up her phone, sighing when she saw her screen turn black. She pressed a hand to her forehead, cooling herself off. She always got worked up talking to her father. He was as hard-headed as they come.

With a long sigh, Lucy composed herself before heading out the door. She had work soon. Even if she hated her job and disliked her father for making her work there -he threatened to pull her college fund if she quit her job, she still didn't want to make a bad impression there. Like her father said, she was still a Heartfilia.

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Lucy raised a brow when she walked through the front doors. She kept her mouth shut as she walked to the back, putting her purse in her locker before punching in for her shift. When she went to get her money for the day, she saw her favorite co-worker, Levy.

The shorter, blue haired woman noticed her frown immediately. "What's wrong?"

Lucy sighed, running a hand through her long blonde hair. She should have put it up today, but she ran out of time. It was supposed to be warm later on. "Nothing, just another fight with my father."

"So, the usual?"

Lucy nodded. "Exactly." The two girls shared a soft laugh while Levy grabbed her money for her till. Lucy looked at the lobby again, frowning when she saw the two security guards. It puzzled her because for the past year, there was only one guard at a time. "What's with the extra security?"

Levy's eyes widened as she lowered her head, whispering as if it were a secret. "You haven't heard? The Salamander's nearby."

"The... who?" Lucy asked, staring blankly at her friend.

"The Salamander," Levy urged, as if it might jog her memory. It didn't. "He's this guy who's been robbing banks all over Fiore. The last one he did was two towns away. That's why there's more security, in case he tries to strike here too."

Lucy laughed, waving her hand as she accepted her money. "Please. He'll never come here. Our
Lucy waved it off with a laugh. She said goodbye to Levy before heading to her till, preparing for a long, mundane day at work. She didn't worry about Salamander, doubting something that exciting would ever happen here.

Lucy's day went on just like any other. She deposited people's checks, withdrew their money, and occasionally made a cashier's check. It was just a normal day. She bowed her head slightly as a businessman walked off after handing her his shop's daily deposit. The amount was too great to put in her till, so after logging the money in the system, she went to put it in the vault with her manager.

She smiled when she was given the keys to unlock the vault. Normally she would have to let him do everything, but since her father wanted her to learn every aspect of the business, she was given special privileges. Being the daughter of the owner of 'Heartfilia Credit Union' had its advantages. People gave her more trust than she earned, not that she was a dishonest person.

At least, she had done anything yet to hurt the bank, or her father's business.

Lucy furrowed her brows as she walked towards the tills with her manager, hearing shouting as she rounded the corner. Her eyes immediately went to the door, seeing a thick chain wrapped around the handles. Her eyes flitted to the tills, seeing they were empty, no tellers in sight.

Looking at the lobby, she only saw one person standing there, their face turned away from her. A black strap ran horizontally across the back of his head, almost blending in with his dark brown hair.

Lucy opened her mouth to ask what was going on, only to stop when she looked down. Her co-workers, along with the two guards and some customers were all on the ground. Some were crying, mumbling incoherently at themselves while others were more stoic, no emotions on their faces.

She gasped when she saw the security guards had handcuffs on, their wrists pinned in front of them. The sound she made attracted the attention of the only guy standing, his face turning immediately.

Lucy lost her breath when she saw him, red scales adorning his face, covering almost every inch of tanned skin. His black eyes locked with hers, causing her to freeze.

"I think I'll choose you," he said, lifting his gun to point it at Lucy. His voice was low, one she didn't recognize. He looked over towards her manager, eyes narrowing. "Come over here and get on the ground with the others. Make sure you throw your phone in the bucket with everyone else's."

Lucy's heart dropped, frozen in terror. She had never had a gun aimed at her before, the rush was exciting and horrifying, not knowing what the man was capable of. The manager did as he was told, dropping his phone into a white bucket towards the entrance before taking a seat with the other people on the ground.

"Wh-what?" she asked belatedly, stomach twisting when she saw his lips curve up.

He cocked his head, giving her a lazy smile. "If you would, fill this with everything in the tills." He threw her a gym bag, but she didn't catch it, her arms limp by her side. It hit her chest, falling to the
That seemed to irritate the man, his black eyes narrowing at her. She saw his sharp teeth when he curled his lips back, practically growling at her. "Put the money in the bag! NOW!"

Lucy jolted, shaky hands reaching for the bag. She paused, not knowing what she should do. She had training, but her mind couldn't bring up anything to help her. She swallowed hard, feeling sweat bead on the back of her neck. Her high heels clicked as she walked over to the tills, recognition flashing through her eyes when she saw the small button on the floor. She was supposed to press it in case of emergency.

"Don't bother," he snickered, eyes roaming over the people on the floor before looking at her again. "It's disabled. I mean, you could try if you want, but it'll just waste everyone's time."

Lucy almost didn't hear him, eyes focused on his mask. It looked almost like a dragon's head, the scales covering his face with short horns coming off the sides. She saw his brown hair sticking out from the top when he faced her.

She looked down, seeing if she could recognize anything to tell the police later. He wore a simple black hoodie, dark jeans, and black shoes. She doubted that would help them at all. The only thing she had on him was his hair, eye color, and skin tone.

As Lucy started filling the tills, she felt her breathing picking up with her heart rate. She was scared, but a part of her felt a spark of excitement. Nothing like this had ever happened to her before. She could already imagine herself writing every emotion she felt, along with everything she saw.

Lucy was halfway through the tills when one of the men on the ground stood up. She recognized him as the usual security guard for the bank, Gajeel, if she remembered correctly. The bank robber pulled a second handgun that had been tucked inside his pants. He pointed it at Gajeel while growling out a warning to sit back down.

Gajeel didn't move, red eyes narrowing at the gun. "How do we know that thing's even real?"

The bank robber sighed, pointing the gun towards the ceiling. Lucy saw it had a long black piece attached to the end. If the shows she watched was anything to go on, that was a silencer.

"I really didn't want to cause any damage," he mumbled before pulling the trigger, a bullet flying out to hit the light a few feet away from him. Glass shards fell, but the light was far enough away that it didn't strike any of the people on the ground.

He pointed the gun at Gajeel again, smirking when he saw the man flinch. "Wanna try something now?"

Gajeel grumbled something before pressing his back to the wall, sliding down so he sat next to Levy. He shifted so he sat in front of her, just in case the bank robber decided he wanted to shoot someone anyway.

Lucy felt her heart pumping faster than before. He could have shot Gajeel, but instead the robber took out a light. Lucy didn't have to wonder who this guy was. With what Levy said before, this had to be the Salamander she just heard about that morning.

She thought back to that morning as she started emptying the last till. Her father had pissed her off. He even went as far as to say he wasn't concerned about money. A plan formulated in her head, the corner of her lip twitching up as the thrill coursed through her body.
Lucy turned, jolting when she saw the robber was behind the tills, standing a few inches away from her. His gun was lowered to his hip, his second handgun hidden from her view. She gulped, holding out the bag to him.

She saw him open his mouth, but before he could say anything, she whispered, "You want in the vault, right?"

His expression was mostly hidden behind the mask, but she could tell he was confused by the glint in his eyes. Those dark, black eyes, seemed to bore into her the longer he stared.

Salamander's eyes flashed down to her hip, seeing the keys hanging off her skirt's belt. His lips quirked up, forming a smile that made her shiver. "Yes. Take me to the vault."

Lucy nodded, slowly turned to lead him that way. She knew she had to act fast, otherwise her opportunity would slip through her grasp. Grabbing the gym bag he tossed on the floor, Lucy slung it over her shoulder as she unlocked the safe. The heavy door opened, revealing the metal bars. She felt Salamander's eyes on the back of her head as she unlocked that door, swinging it open. Swallowing hard, Lucy entered the vault, heading to the side where a table with money on top sat.

Opening the bag, Lucy sucked in a deep breath before grabbing some banded bundles of cash. She probably confused the robber when she ripped the bands off the money, flipping through the bills to make sure there were no dye packs inside. They would be triggered once the robber stepped outside of the bank due to radio signals.

Salamander said nothing, watching as she went through the stacks of money. She found three dye packs, tossing them to the side of the table. He didn't say anything about it, but she guessed that was because he kept looking over his shoulder to see if anyone was there. It was just the two of them, so she decided to make her move.

As she zipped up the bag full of money, Lucy opened her mouth, ready to ask him a question that was sure to shock him. She stopped once she heard the sounds of sirens in the distance. They were faint, but strong enough to know they were coming from a police car.

"Shit!" Salamander yelled, one hand slapping over his mouth. His voice was barely a muffle, but she heard him. "Oh shit oh shit oh shit! I knew I shouldn't have gone to the vault. Stupid stupid stupid!"

He started hitting himself in the head, but stopped once Lucy grabbed his arm. His black eyes locked with hers. "What?" he hissed, jerking away so she was no longer touching him. She saw his grip tighten on his gun, but he didn't point it at her. She imagined if he wasn't wearing gloves, she would have been able to see his knuckles turning white.

She was thankful there were no security cameras inside the vault, otherwise her actions would look suspicious to an observer. "Take me as a hostage," she whispered, trying to stay as calm as she could despite her pounding heart.

"What?"

"A hostage," she repeated, holding out her arm. "Use me to get out."

Salamander glared at her for a few seconds before grabbing his bag, putting it on her shoulder so he could keep his hands free. The bag was heavy, making her hunch over slightly. Her eyes flickered with shock when she saw him switch his gun to safety, his hand gripping her arm tightly before he pressed the gun to her temple. He started walking, forcing her to walk alongside him.
Before they left the vault, she heard him whisper, "I'm not going to hurt you. Just don't fuck with me."

She felt herself smiling before she wiped it off her face, knowing she had a part to play. It wasn't too difficult. She was scared, but deep in her heart she knew she wasn't going to get killed. It wasn't that she trusted the bank robber. She just trusted gut feeling.

Once they reemerged to where the people in the lobby could see them, they heard glass breaking at the front of the bank. The police were trying to come through the front door, but Lucy wasn't going to let this end too soon.

"Back," was all she whispered before jerking backwards, but to everyone else it looked like she was trying to escape his grasp.

Salamander took a deep breath before pointing the gun in everyone's general direction, shouting, "Stay on the ground and she won't get hurt! Make one move, and I'll blow her brains out."

For a moment, Lucy really believed him. Her skin covered in goosebumps, her mind racing as she realized she might be in over her head. She didn't know this guy. Just because he didn't shoot Gajeel didn't mean he wasn't dangerous. Maybe she wasn't in control of herself. Maybe she just signed her death certificate.

Lucy jolted as he jerked her back, going through the door behind the tills that led to the back entrance. It was rarely used and could only be opened from the inside.

Once the two of them disappeared from everyone's sight, Salamander let go of her, grabbed the bag, and started running towards the back door. He flung it open, feet hitting the concrete as he raced down the back alley. Pulling out a flip phone, he pressed the speed dial to reach his partner.

"Are you in position?" Salamander paused, listening to the answer. "Good. I'll be there in a minute."

As he slid his phone into his pocket while running, he didn't notice the puddle on the ground. He stepped in it, realizing immediately that it was covering a hole. His foot caught on it, his ankle twisting as he started to fall.

He braced for impact, shocked when only his right knee hit the ground. Looking up, he saw the blonde banker, grabbing onto his left arm to keep him up. "Hurry!" she yelled, helping him to his feet.

Salamander opened his mouth to say something, but she was already pulling him forward. "The police are going to swarm this place any second. We need to get out of here!"

"We?" was all he mumbled before getting to his feet, limping beside her since his ankle caused him pain every time he put pressure on it. He already knew he sprained it.

Lucy wondered how far they would have to walk, a shiver running down her spine when she heard more sirens getting closer. She was about to ask him, but stopped when a car pulled up at the mouth of the alley, the passenger door opening up to reveal an empty seat.

Lucy watched as the driver leaned back into their seat, shouting something at Salamander. The bank robber flipped him off, the action confusing Lucy. She helped him to the front seat, but he slammed the door shut, instead opening up the back door to push her inside.

Lucy fell over the seats before lifting herself up, Salamander sliding beside her before resting the
large, heavy bag of money on his lap. He shut the door, grunting to the driver. "Drive!"

Instead of listening to his command, the driver turned his head around, dark blue eyes locking with Lucy's. "Who the fuck is that?!!"

Salamander shrugged, partially out of breath as he said, "My hostage."

The driver gaped at him. "Since when the fuck do we take hostages?!!"

"Since now! Just hurry up and drive before we end up in prison!" Salamander pointed ahead, his black eyes narrowing. "I'll explain later!"

The driver shook his head before throwing the car in drive, pressing his foot to the gas to get away. Lucy thought they would speed through the town and somehow end up in a police chase. Instead, the driver obeyed all the laws, stopping at stop lights and even using his blinker when he needed to switch lanes.

Lucy felt her shoulders dropped, almost upset that things weren't going to get insane. She craved adventure, but the way he drove, she might as well be on her way to the grocery store. There was no urgency in his driving.

She guessed it made since. The police didn't see Salamander or herself get inside the car. Speeding would only draw unnecessary attention to themselves. If she wasn't in the vehicle, she wouldn't know the man beside her just robbed a bank.

Salamander kept his head down, fingers scratching at the back of his head. "Stupid fucking itchy-" he mumbled under his breath, giving up on scratching his head in favor of digging his nails into his knees.

"I think I need another pill," he said aloud, catching the driver's attention. The man behind the wheel kept his eyes on the road while he opened the center console, taking out a bottle of pills before carelessly tossing them behind them.

They landed next to Lucy. She stole a quick glance at them before Salamander grabbed them, taking a pill out before swallowing it dry.

'Gross,' Lucy thought, throat feeling tight from the sight. She cleared her throat, turning her gaze to the bank robber. "You have motion sickness?"

His eyes widened slightly before looking at his hand where the bottle was. He growled, putting the cap on the empty bottle before slipping it into the pocket behind the passenger seat. "What's it to you?" His tone was a bit rude for her taste, but it wasn't nearly as bitter as it had been when they were in the bank. She wondered if being around his partner helped.

At least, she guessed the driver was his partner. Why else would he pick the robber up?

Lucy never got to give him an answer, the driver speaking over her. "What took you so long back there?"

Salamander grinned, hands grabbing onto the bag full of money. "I robbed the vault!"

"You dumbass!" the driver yelled, causing the robber to frown. "They put dye packs in that money!"

"They do?" Salamander asked, looking down at the bag. His low voice disappeared, replaced by a
slightly higher tone. If Lucy had to guess, she would say the voice he used while robbing banks wasn't his normal tone.

Before he could say anything, Lucy spoke up. "I didn't put any in there. If I had, they would have gone off by now. Check it."

Salamander seemed reluctant, but he obeyed her order, opening the bag to shift through the money. "I don't see any dye in here. She's telling the truth."

The driver didn't seem relieved. "Who is she? Why'd you take a hostage?" His tone didn't match the way he drove, voice harsh but driving calm.

"I panicked," Salamander said, hand absentmindedly scratching at the strap behind his head. "Fuck, this thing itches."

"Don't you dare take it off!" the driver yelled, causing the robber to lower his hand.

"I wasn't gonna. Sheesh."

The driver huffed, flipping on his signal before merging onto the highway. He was taking the quickest route out of the city. Lucy wondered where they were headed to.

"She doesn't have a phone on her or anything?"

Salamander looked at Lucy, then at the driver. "I don't know..."

"You didn't check her?!" The driver looked as if he was ready to pull at his black hair in frustration. "Search her, now!"

The robber turned back at Lucy, frowning. "But I don't wanna."

"Too fucking bad! You kidnapped her! It's your problem! We have to make sure she's not recording us or some shit!"

Salamander grunted. "Fine, but if I get slapped I'm hitting you." He looked at Lucy, sighing as he said, "I'm gonna touch you, but I'm just looking for a phone. I promise I won't hurt you."

Lucy raised a brow, wondering why he even cared what she thought. It wasn't as if her comfort was high on his priorities. She pressed her hands to the seat, nodding. "Go ahead."

He set the bag of money behind him before looking back at her. Hesitantly, he put his hands on her shoulders, smoothing over the material before trailing down her sides. His hands roamed over her stomach, then quickly brushed over her breasts to make sure she didn't slip her phone in her bra.

Salamander's hands went down, tracing over her hips before sliding down her thighs. Her skirt came down to her knees, so he had to push it up a few inches before dipping his hand underneath, slowly reaching upwards.

Lucy wasn't surprised when her face burned ten degrees hotter, but she was surprised when she saw Salamander's neck turn red, crawling upwards into his mask. She still couldn't see his face, the dragon mask concealing it.

He went halfway up her inner thigh before retreating. "She's clean. No phone." Sitting back in his seat, he muttered an apology to her before putting the bag of money on his lap. He scooted further away, clearly embarrassed despite not being the one who was touched.
Lucy took deep breaths until she calmed down, knowing the man wasn't trying to cop a feel. He was just covering his bases. She could have told them she left her phone in her purse at the bank, but she doubted they would have believed her anyway. She thought it was silly to search her. Her clothes were too tight to hide anything.

"Good," the driver muttered, running a hand through his black hair before putting it back on the wheel. "We can drop her off at one of these exits. I think there's a gas station about ten miles down the-

"No," Lucy said, voice calm but firm. "You're not. I'm coming with you."

Salamander cocked his head at her while the driver shook his head. "No. We're dropping you off."

"I'll tell the police what car you're driving."

The robber tensed while the driver chuckled. "You think this is actually our car? This is just a getaway vehicle. Our real car is parked not far from where I'll drop you off. By the time you call the police, we'll already be switched over."

"I'll describe your face," Lucy threatened, but the driver didn't seem fazed.

"Go ahead. I doubt that'll be enough to figure out who we are. You don't even know our names. How can you-" The driver stopped talking as soon as he heard a cry of pain from the backseat. He looked in the mirror, jaw dropping when he saw Lucy ripped the mask off Salamander.

"Now I can describe his face too. That'll-" Her voice died when she saw the brown hair attached to the mask. She tried pulling it off, but it didn't budge. "What the," she started, looking over at the robber.

Brown eyes widened when she saw his tanned face, pink bangs hanging over his forehead. Her eyes flitted up, seeing the pink locks slowly spiking upwards now that they were free from the wig.

"Shit! Na-Salamander! What the hell!"

"It wasn't my fault!" he yelled back, hands scratching at his head, his hair getting messier by the second. "She did it too fast!"

"How hard is it to keep a stupid mask on! You idiot!"

"Hey! It's not my fault! I wanted to dye my hair! You're the one who said a wig was better!"

Lucy sat back, listening to the two men bicker back and forth. The argument started about wigs, but slowly it changed until they were just hurling insults at one another.

"Ice Princess!"

"Pyro!"

"Pervy Popsicle!"

"Squinty eyes!"

"Droopy eyes!"

"Enough!" Lucy yelled, causing the two men to jolt. If she didn't know better, she would have thought they forgot she was in the car. "I'm not leaving until you get me out of the state. I want to
get out, and you're going to help me."

"Why can't you leave on your own? You don't need us?"

Lucy turned to look at the man with pink hair, wondering if that was his natural color. She guessed it was since he mentioned dying it earlier. "My father won't let me leave. I'm not looking to stay gone. I just want to get out for a bit before I have to go back."

"Why?" he asked, unaware that he was leaning in a bit.

She sighed before letting out a humorless chuckle. "Because my life is boring. This is the most excitement I've had in... Well, probably my whole life."

"Working as a bank teller does seem kinda boring."

"Our hostage works at the bank?" the driver asked, groaning to himself. "So it won't take them long to figure out who she is." If it was a regular person, there was a chance it would take them longer to figure out who Salamander took.

Lucy ignored the driver, keeping her focus on Salamander. "It's the worst! I hate it. If it wasn't for my dad threatening to pull my tuition, I would've quit a long time ago."

He huffed air through his nose. "So, a college girl? Whatcha studying to be?"

"I want to be an author," Lucy said, knowing it was safe to tell him. It wasn't as if she kept it a secret from people. "But my father is against it. Says it isn't a real job."

"People like to read," he pointed out. "Someone's gotta write the stuff. I think it's a real job." He laughed harder as he patted the bag of money on his lap. "It's more legit than what I do."

They both heard the driver grumbling in the front seat, but he went ignored. "Why are you robbing banks anyways?"

His lips curved down, his gaze falling to the side. He bit his lower lip, a sharp canine peeking out. She frowned with him, shaking her head. "You don't have to tell me."

"He shouldn't anyways," the driver muttered, moving to the fast lane on the highway.

She realized it was easier and easier to ignore the man in the front. He was all bark and no bite. "My name's Lucy," she said, holding out a hand.

Salamander took his gloves off before shaking her hand, but he didn't introduce himself. Lucy didn't take offense, knowing his friend would yell at them again if he said it. "Nice to meet you," he mumbled, a hint of pink coating his cheeks. "Sorry about, umm, taking you hostage and stuff."

Lucy shook her head. "It was my idea. I'm sorry I told you to go to the vault. If it wasn't for me, you would've left way before the cops showed up."

The driver's eye twitched as he listened to their conversation. "It was her idea to be a hostage?"

Salamander laughed, giving his partner a lazy grin. "Well, yeah."

"Unbelievable!"

Lucy picked at her nails while listening to the radio. The three of them already switched cars a few
hours ago at a rest stop. The driver wasn't kidding. He really had this all planned out. Unfortunately for them, they didn't count on Lucy crashing into their plan.

Salamander was busy counting the money, which seemed difficult since they were all missing the bands that kept them together. It was a small price to pay to ensure there were no dye packs inside. She hoped he would appreciate it.

Everyone remained silent, the driver heading to some unknown destination. They had already crossed state lines, lessening the chances of them being caught. Lucy slowly closed her eyes, sighing as she let the music lull her. She was just about to fall asleep, but the voice that came over the radio made her eyes snap open.

It wasn't the way he sounded, but it was what he said that alarmed her.

"Earlier today, the Heartfilia Credit Union in Crocus was robbed. The suspect is a white male of average height, brown hair and black eyes. He is armed and dangerous."

Salamander looked up from the cash, smiling. "Hear that? I'm dangerous."

The driver flipped him the bird before turning the volume up.

"He has taken a hostage. A young woman by the name of Lucy Heartfilia, the CEO's daughter."

Lucy heard both males taking in sharp breaths, clearly surprised by the news.

"If anyone has any information on the whereabouts of Miss Heartfilia, call this number." The man on the radio recited a number which people could call, but she wasn't paying attention anymore. Instead, she was busy shrinking in her seat, waiting for their reactions.

"You're..." Salamander started, voice strained as if his throat was dry.

"A Heartfilia?" the driver finished, sounding equally tense.

Lucy lightly scratched at her cheek, giving them a sheepish smile. "Oops... Did I forget to mention that?"

She was met with silence and Salamander's blank face. She gulped, hoping they wouldn't be too mad at her. "Sorry. I just didn't think you would take me if you knew."

"Of course we wouldn't take you!" the driver yelled, dark blue eyes narrowed as he glared at her through the mirror. "Fuck! Fuck fuck fuck! We're gonna end up in prison!"

Lucy waved her hands, trying to calm him down. "It's fine!"

"Like hell it's fine!"

"You two won't end up in prison," Lucy promised, giving him a forced smile. She glanced at Salamander, seeing his blank expression. He was looking down at his hands, but she didn't know what he was thinking. "I won't tell anyone who you are."

The driver shook his head. "That doesn't matter! There's going to be more cops looking for you since your dad's important. God damn it!"

Lucy tried to reason with him, but he kept telling her that they were doomed no matter what. She only stopped trying to convince the guy things would be okay when she heard a gagging noise.
coming from beside her. Looking to her side, she saw the bank robber with a hand over his mouth, his cheeks turning blue.

"Hey... Something's wrong with your friend..." Lucy started, pointing at the robber. "He looks sick."

"Damn. His pill probably wore off. Can you give him another one. Ya know, before you land us in prison!"

Lucy narrowed her eyes at him for a moment before grabbing the bottle from the pocket she saw Salamander put them in earlier. She shook it, frowning when she heard nothing. "He's out."

"Fuck! This is not the time to be getting sick N-Salamander. Damn it."

Lucy watched as he merged from the fast lane over to the furthest right lane, preparing to take the next exit.

She remained quiet, slowly rubbing circles on the bank robber's back while the driver took them to the nearest store he could find. Before taking a wad of cash from the open bag on Salamander's lap, he muttered something about getting a change of clothes for Lucy, and possibly a wig so people wouldn't recognize her. He left, leaving Lucy alone with Salamander.

It took a few minutes for him to feel better, the blue slowly fading from his face. When he was back to himself, he zipped up the bag of money, shoving it to the floorboard as best he could. He had to sit crisscross in the seat since he didn't have any leg room after that.

Lucy tried to stretch in the backseat, but it was no use. Her legs were killing her from sitting for the past few hours. Even at her job she got to walk around regularly. She placed a hand on the door's handle, but froze when she heard Salamander's warning.

"Don't open that, or else."

Lucy raised a brow, stealing a glance behind her to see him holding his gun. It wasn't high enough for other people to see, trained on her lower back. She shifted in her seat, barely holding back a giggle. "Or what? You'll hit me with it?"

Salamander grunted, black eyes narrowing. "No, I'll shoot you."

"No you won't," Lucy said without skipping a beat. "You can drop the tough guy act. I know your gun's on safety."

Salamander frowned, looking at the side of his weapon. "You can tell?"

She nodded. "Yeah. I know it's been on safe since you took me as a hostage." She used air quotes for the last few words. With how things went down, she couldn't really consider herself a hostage. Hell, at this point she was the one who was refusing to leave.

Salamander lowered his gun, groaning. "This wasn't supposed to happen..."

Cocking her head, Lucy asked, "What was supposed to happen."

He sighed, putting the gun in the pocket in front of him. "I'm supposed to stick to the tills, leave, then go to another town. I'm not supposed to go to the vault, and I'm definitely not supposed to take a hostage. That wasn't part of the plan."
Curious, Lucy leaned in. "Why are you doing all this? Are you in debt or something?"

He shook his head. "Promise you won't tell?"

Lucy thought it was somewhat naive for him to trust a stranger, but she nodded anyway. She had no intentions on telling. "I promise."

Salamander paused, running a hand through his pink hair. "My dad... He's real sick. I'm tryin' to pay for his treatment."

"Does insurance not cover it?"

Salamander snorted. "No. He has a plan with L&L, but they don't cover what he has. Says it's not within our plan."

Lucy's shoulders dropped, already realizing his reasons for robbing banks. "L&L... Love and Lucky insurance."

He nodded. "The company your father owns. Figured if he wasn't gonna cover this, I'll get it covered some other way."

"So you're robbing Heartfilia banks." Lucy's gaze fell to the space between them, noticing it was smaller than before. "I'm really sorry. I know my father can be greedy when it comes to money."

"Not your fault," he said, patting the bag of money. "Actually, you really helped me out. This is enough to cover at least another six months of his treatment. The doctors said he's getting better, but he still needs more time. I think this'll be enough. At least, I hope..."

He chuckled, scratching at his head. "I didn't want to do this. I tried to get the money another way before I started robbing banks. I had to drop out of college so I could get three jobs, but it still wasn't cutting it..."

"I'm sorry to hear that," she said, voice low. She was upset he had to go through that, but she was glad the frown on his face was slowly vanishing.

She didn't blame him for robbing her father's banks. With as much money as he had, he could've helped more people with his insurance company. Instead, he offered the bare minimum coverage so he wouldn't have to pay out if something serious came along.

"I tried porn once."

Lucy's eyes widened, a smile creeping on her face. "You did?"

"I didn't say I did it," he quickly added. "I made it to the set, but once they told me to get naked, I bolted." He shook his head. "Couldn't do it."

"Why not?" She knew she wouldn't be able to do porn, but she wanted to hear his reasons. If he was willing to rob banks, why wasn't he willing to have sex on camera for money.

"I... Fuck," he started, a blush surfacing on his cheeks. "You're gonna think I'm lame."

Lucy giggled, scooting closer to him. Her knees touched his leg, but he didn't bother moving away. "You just robbed a bank. There's no way I'd think you're lame."

He hesitated, teeth chewing on his bottom lip before admitting, "The whole thing freaked me out... I'm inexperienced. I've never even had my first kiss."
Lucy's brown eyes softened. "That's nothing to be embarrassed about. Lots of people haven't had their first kiss."

"Yeah, *kids,*" he said with a scowl.

She shook her head. "I'm talking about adults."

He perked up, locking eyes with her. "Have you never kissed anyone?"

Her smile faltered a little. "Unfortunately, I have." She sighed. "I've kissed a few frogs, hoping they would turn into princes."

He snorted, leaning back in his seat. "Sounds like you shoulda been looking for a dragon instead."

"What?" she asked, seeing his blush darken.

"N-nothing!"

She smiled, deciding not to press the question. She heard him correctly, she just wanted to know what he meant. Though, judging by his mask and the red stain on his face, it wasn't hard for her to figure out.

"Anyways... thanks for getting me into the vault." He didn't meet her gaze, eyes trained on the bag of money. "I think we might be done now. I'll just have to see if my dad keeps getting better before the money runs out."

"Will you go back to school when he gets better?" She didn't bother saying if he gets better. She didn't want to put that thought in his head.

He nodded. "I wanna be a chemist, but I still have a long way to go."

Lucy rested the side of her head against the seat, offering a smile that he didn't see. "You'll get there."

"Thanks," he mumbled, biting on his lower lip again.

Lucy glanced at the money, knowing her father would be pissed when he found out he was robbed. Well, at this point she figured he already knew. It had been several hours since the robbery. She mentally laughed, remembering him telling her that morning he wasn't concerned with money. Her revenge was pretty sweet, but now she had to figure out a way out of this. She wanted adventure, but she didn't want to risk getting Salamander or his friend in trouble.

They might have broken the law, but her father wasn't exactly that great with morals either. Plus, he had insurance to cover the loss. It was ironic, since the insurance he used for the bank would help with his loss, but it couldn't help Salamander's dad when he needed it the most.

Lucy smiled at the man beside her, thinking it was admirable he was willing to risk his life for his father, even if what he was doing was illegal. She started leaning in, already knowing what she was doing was crazy, but hey, she wanted adventure, right?

Salamander glanced up when he saw movement, brows furrowing when she inched closer to him. "What are you doing?"

Lucy placed a hand on his arm, feeling his large bicep underneath his hoodie. "I want to try my luck with a dragon," she whispered, closing the gap between them.
His eyes went wide when her lips pressed against his. He was stiff for a moment, but soon melted into the kiss. Lucy could feel his inexperience immediately, deciding to take the lead.

She opened her mouth, slowly dragging her tongue against his lips to seek access. He opened up, allowing her tongue to snake inside. A soft groan tore from him when she rubbed her tongue against his, coaxing him to play with her. She gave his tongue a playful suck, loving the way he reacted.

It was a slippery slope from there.

He cupped the back of her head as he took control of the kiss, tongue wild and lips rough. Lucy loved it, her heart racing and her mind blanking. She didn't protest when his lips moved from her mouth, trailing hot kisses across her jaw then down her neck.

His tongue was warm and his mouth was hot, teeth scraping at her throat as his hands gripped her waist. Lucy pulled him closer, moving downward so he was hovering over her in the backseat.

She moaned when he started nipping at the crook of her neck, his fingers pushing the material of her shirt to the side before latching on. "Mmmmm!" Lucy gasped when he bit harder, her pulse skyrocketing and her adrenaline pumping. She swore a kiss never made her feel so alive.

She threaded her fingers through his pink locks, keeping him close. He stopped biting her, a soft mark left on her pale skin. He licked over the spot, drawing a moan from her.

"Salamander."

He murmured against her neck in a daze, his body hotter than it had ever been before. Robbing banks was the only thing that could possibly compare to the excitement he felt having Lucy under him, and it had only just begun!

"Call me Natsu."

"Natsu," she moaned when he grabbed her hip, fingers rough and hot.

She felt him reaching up, fingers starting to unbutton her shirt. She didn't stop him, wanting this to continue. With her shirt loosened, his hand started trailing up her body, leaving a trail of fire behind. He was an inch away from her bra when the sound of the car door opened, jolting them out of their daze.

"Sorry it took so long. Some old lady was payin' with pennies," the driver said, slipping into the front seat. He started turning as he spoke. "I got the- WHAT THE FUCK?!"

Natsu jerked away from Lucy, who was busy buttoning her shirt back. Their faces were flushed, embarrassed they were caught.

"I can explain!" Salamander-Natsu said, waving his hands back and forth. "It wasn't what it looked like!"

"It looked like you were making out with our hostage!"

Natsu paled, looking down at Lucy, then at the driver again. "Damn... I guess it was what it looked like..."

"Are you kidding me?" the driver asked, voice rising. "You were supposed to look after her, not hump her!"
"I wasn't humping her!"

Lucy felt more heat fill her face. If the driver hadn't come back when he did, they might have actually started doing just that. She listened to them bicker back and forth, her eyes wandering to the shopping bags he had in the passenger seat.

A silent laugh made her shoulders move. She saw one of the packages sticking out from the bag. It was a brown wig. She guessed he wasn't kidding when he said he was going to get her one.

Lucy's eyes widened as another plan started forming in her mind, this time it was one to get everyone out of this mess. A smile ghosted over her lips as she worked out the details in her head.

"Guys," she started, her voice not loud enough to break their argument. "Guys!"

Still, they ignored her, throwing out insults and threatening to beat the other's ass. She took a deep breath in, then yelled, "Natsu!"

Both men stopped immediately, Natsu turning his head to look at her, the driver narrowing his eyes at Natsu.

"You told her your name!" It wasn't a question, his tone furious. "Are you trying to get caught?"

"What?" No, I-" Natsu was cut off when the driver shook his head.

"I can't believe you. Did you tell her my name too?"

"No. You're just Ice Princess."

Lucy wanted to say it didn't matter if she knew the driver's name or not. She didn't want them to get in trouble, so she had no intentions on giving up their names. However, it didn't look like he would believe her anyway.

Before they could start fighting again, Lucy yelled, "I have a plan!"

They looked at her, the driver with suspicion in his eyes and Natsu cocking his head. "A plan? For what?"

Lucy's smile returned as she whispered, "I have an idea that will help all of us out."

The driver looked at Natsu, then back at her. "What's your plan?"

Lucy waited by the payphone for the police to arrive. She had placed a call saying she was Lucy Heartfilia, the hostage that was taken from the bank a few days ago. She was directed to wait there.

Ten minutes later, two police cars showed up. They helped her get into the back of one of the cars before bringing her to the station. It was all a blur after that.

She had to answer questions, tell them what she saw, and help identify the men who took her as a hostage. She did her best to help, but it wasn't the police she was helping.

"Brown hair, black eyes. He didn't say much after he forced me into the car."

"Was he driving?"

She shook her head. "There was another man driving, and a woman with them."
"Can you describe them?"

Lucy nodded. "The man had blue hair. I couldn't see his eye color. The woman was very tall. She had short green hair. I didn't see her eye color either."

"How did you end up in Hargeon?"

Lucy shook her head, her lower lip quivering as she played her role. "I... I don't know. They put something over my head so I couldn't see. I didn't know where we were going."

"Can you describe the car they were driving?"

Lucy swallowed, closing her eyes tight as if trying to remember. "I think it was dark? Maybe an older model? I'm not good with vehicles. That wasn't their only car though."

"What do you mean?"

"After I got in the vehicle, it was only a few minutes later before they stopped and changed cars. I couldn't see what it looked like, or where the switch was at."

The police officer nodded. "Was that the only time they switched vehicles?"

She shook her head. "I think once... maybe twice more?"

"Did they give you anything? Drugs?"

She shook her head.

"Did they hurt you or touch you?"

She shook her head. "I don't think so. Not while I was awake anyways."

"Would you mind if a medical examiner checks you out to make sure you weren't sexually assaulted? We'd also like to get a test to see if there's any toxins in your body."

Lucy nodded, already knowing they wouldn't find anything. She told them it was a few days ago that she was taken as a hostage, but it was truly a week. She wanted them to think she didn't have a clear sense of time while with her 'captors'. The hickey Natsu had left her was already gone, and they never had sex while she was with them. She also didn't take any drugs, so she was going to be clean.

The police officer asked her more questions, the entire day wasted on answering with lies. She never slipped up though. As an inspiring writer, it was her job to create worlds and people. She had her characters down, making sure to throw them off Natsu and Gray's trail. Gray was the driver. It took him an extra day and a half before he revealed his name to her, after she gained more of their trust.

While Lucy told the police she overheard her captors saying they were going to Alvarez, they were really heading to a little town called Magnolia. She felt guilty for wasting the police's time and possibly wasting tax payers money by sending them on a wild goose chase, but she wasn't going to let Natsu and Gray get arrested.

"The investigators there said the dye packs were removed. Did you do that?"

Lucy nodded, tears coming to her eyes. All she had to do was think about her mother who passed away to appear terrified. "He threatened to shoot me if I didn't check every single one. He had the
gun up to my head."

"Do you know why he decided to rob the vault? His m.o. is to only stick to the tills. Why the change?"

Lucy gulped. "H-he saw m-my keys on my hip. I-I think he knew I could g-get into the v-vault. I d-didn't know what else t-to do. I didn't want t-to get sh-sh-shot."

"I understand," the officer said with a nod, writing it all down on his notepad. "You're lucky. This was the first time he took a hostage. We didn't know what he was going to do to you. It's a miracle you made it out alive."

Lucy swallowed hard, her tears still dripping down her cheeks. "I'm glad t-to be alive. C-can I see my father? I really want t-to go home."

He nodded. "Your father's on his way to pick you up, but it'll be a while until he gets here. You're free to wait until he arrives."

Lucy nodded, glad her plan was working so far. "Thank you."

**Six Months later**

Lucy sighed as she walked to her car. She waved to her co-workers before opening her door, slipping into the driver's seat to start her vehicle. Six months had passed since the bank robbery. No one had any news on where the elusive Salamander went. The investigation was coming up dry, and they had no leads to go on since he hadn't robbed any banks after the last time.

It was as he vanished into thin air.

After driving home and taking a long bath, Lucy was ready for bed. She had a long day at work, and nothing sounded better than sleep. She curled up under her blankets, ready to fall asleep when something caught her attention. Her phone started vibrating, causing her to raise a brow.

She turned over, seeing a familiar face pop up on her screen. Those dark green eyes were piercing, much better than the dull colored contacts that he used to wear. Yawning, she answered the call, bringing the phone up to her ear. "Hello?"

There was silence on the line for a few seconds before a rough voice asked, "Lucy?"

A smile worked its way on her lips. He sounded a little different over the phone, but she recognized his voice. "Hey. What's up?"

"... Just callin' to check on you. How is everything?"

Lucy shifted onto her back, smiling at her ceiling. "Good. I have more packing to do, but I should have it done before the movers get here."

"When are they coming?"

"Saturday."

"... And when are you coming here?"

"Monday," she whispered, eyes sliding shut. "I sign my new lease that morning."
She heard a sigh over the line. "I'm glad. I can't wait to see you."

Lucy's heart warmed. "I can't wait to see you either. How's Magnolia?"

"It's good. It's missing a certain girl though."

She giggled. "I'll be there soon, just wait."

"I know, but I get impatient."

"It's okay. I understand."

It had been half a year since she last saw him. Her plan was still working perfectly. After talking with the police, Lucy spoke with her father. He was surprisingly okay with her quitting her job at the bank. Apparently after a scare like that, he didn't want her near a bank ever again.

Lucy waited after that, biding her time until it arrived. It was a pamphlet advertising Magnolia University. That was her cue to put part two of her plan into action. She showed it to her father, pretending to be uninterested in the school.

A few days later, her father came back to her to tell her he checked out the school. He said it was highly regarded and in one of the safest cities in Fiore. It didn't take much after that to convince him to send her there, thinking she would be safer.

It was a long plan, but they needed that time to set things up. It would be too suspicious if Lucy uprooted her life overnight after the bank robbery. So, she waited. So far, everything was working out in her favor. Her father even offered to help pay for her tuition as long as she held down a job and made good grades. He didn't once mention her working in a bank ever again.

"I really miss you," he said, breaking her out of her thoughts.

She hummed, feeling sleepy yet happy. "I miss you too, Natsu."

He laughed, a sound that made her cheeks warm and her heart swell. He had a great laugh. "It's weird. I hear my name being said all the time, but it's so much different when you say it."

Lucy wanted to ask if it was because she thought of him as 'Salamander' before, but she didn't voice it. Part of the plan was to act as if someone was always listening, because she worried the police might think she was in cahoots with them.

She never saw any evidence of that, but she wanted to be careful. This was the long game they were playing. Every move had to be precise. That was why she didn't 'meet' Natsu until she signed up for an online dating site. She had to pretend to accidentally find him. They talked for three weeks before Lucy gave him her number, then they started talking on the phone.

It was as if they never met five months ago, which was exactly what she wanted it to look like.

Lucy yawned, her eyelids feeling heavy. "I think you're just weird. That's why it sounds different."

"Oi! You're the weird one here!"

She giggled, not taking his words seriously for a second. "How's Igneel?"

"Better. He's in remission. Doc says if he keeps this up, he'll be in complete remission before we know it."
Lucy bit her tongue, desperately wanting to ask if he had enough money to cover the rest of Igneel's treatment, but she didn't. She couldn't risk if anyone was listening.

"I can't wait for you to meet him," Natsu said, sounding surprisingly upbeat.

"I'm looking forward to it. Maybe Monday night we can all get together. Have dinner?"

"My treat," Natsu offered immediately.

She wanted to ask if that meant he did still have money left over from the robbery, but she said nothing about it. "If you insist, but I'm buying dessert."

"Deal."

The two talked for about thirty minutes more before Lucy said she had to go to bed. She had a long day at work. Being a waitress wasn't easy, but it beat working at the bank. At least, in her opinion it did. Still, she was ready to move on with her life, and that meant going to Magnolia.

There, she would have more freedom. She could study whatever she wanted without her father trying to dictate her education, she could do what she wanted without worrying about his judgement, and she could be with whoever she wanted, and right now, that was Natsu.

She couldn't lie, she fell pretty fast for the wild dragon with pink hair. There was just something about him that screamed adventure and excitement. Of course, it could always just be from the way they met. Holding up a bank was definitely something her ex-boyfriends had never done.

She knew it was crazy to uproot her life like this, but it was what she felt like she needed now. She wanted adventure, and she was confident she could find that at Magnolia and with Natsu.

"I'll talk to you tomorrow."

Lucy nodded despite him not seeing her. "Talk to you soon. Good night, Natsu."

"Sweet dreams, Lucy."

She hung up, her heart fluttering and her cheeks warm. She didn't know what kind of life she would have in Magnolia, but she was ready to take that risk. Her gut had never steered her wrong before.

Chapter End Notes

So, what do you think? I had a completely different idea for this story at first that featured a certain Edolas couple, but I decided to go with this route. I may still write the other version, but it'll be later on. I have too many projects to work on first. I hope you enjoyed this story!

Disclaimer: Don't rob banks! I'm pretty sure it's not as easy as this story made it seem. Plus, prison doesn't look so fun.

Let me know what you thought of this one-shot. :) Hope you liked it!
Here's two drabbles I posted on Tumblr. The first one is based off the picture Hiro Mashima posted on his Twitter on July 16th, 2017. It's the one of Lucy with a tan and a white bikini on. Both of the drabbles are rated T.

Itty bitty white bikini

Natsu swore his heart was beating faster than it had when he was fighting Acnologia.

To celebrate winning the war, Sorcerer Weekly was doing a photo shoot to commend Lucy and a few others for their bravery throughout the fight. Lucy had been a huge part of their victory, so she was going first.

While some people thought Lucy's choice for her spread was a bit risqué, Natsu thought it suited her. She wore a small, tight bikini that clung to her body like a second skin. It accentuated all of her assets, showing off her toned figure.

The only problem?

He didn't anticipate her surprise.

Now he saw the reason Lucy wouldn't spend any time with him over the past week. She was busy working on a tan, and damn, did she wear it well. He was used to her creamy, pale skin. Now she was nearly as dark as him!

He didn't expect it, but Natsu thought it looked really good on her. However, it made him curious about her tanning experience. Specifically, he wanted to know if she had tan lines under that tight, white bikini, or if every inch of her was that sun-kissed color.

Natsu knew he wouldn't find out, at least not now. While their relationship was being taken to the next level, they weren't nearly ready for that level of intimacy. Sure he didn't mind hanging out at her place in her underwear, but he doubted she was ready to strip down to her birthday suit just to satisfy his curiosity.

He could always ask her, but what fun was that?

For now, Natsu would admire her curvy form, awestruck all over again by how gorgeous she was. Honestly, he didn't think he would ever get used to it, or the way his heart would flutter every time she called his name.

No matter what, pale or tan, Lucy was still Lucy. In the end, that was all that mattered. He loved her. He had for a while, but it never felt like the right time to tell her until recently. She was his everything. She was home.

Well, Happy had a special place in his heart too, but that was a completely different kind of love.

What he felt for Lucy, well, it was enough to make his heart race and his palms sweat. Even as a fire dragon slayer, she made him feel hotter than any flame ever could.

Natsu's chest warmed when he saw her glance over to him, a smile gracing her lips as she started to wave. He waved back, knowing she still had a while until she was finished with her shoot.
At least in the midst of getting her picture taken, she still had time to acknowledge him. He was more than willing to wait if it meant getting her all alone later.

Of course, they wouldn't do anything scandalous. He just wanted to spend time with her, talk about her week and possibly talk about what they were going to do when everything settled down. They had all the time in the world, and Natsu was going to cherish every minute of it.

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**This was a request for the dirty jenga prompts! It's Nalu with a bit of Gajevy in it too.**

Lucy expected a few things when she walked through the guild doors that morning. She figured she would see Mira behind the counter, serving something to drink for Cana. She thought she'd see a few of the men fighting in the center of the hall. Hell, she considered seeing half of it blown away after another attack.

What she didn't expect was to hear her boyfriend yelling at Gajeel in the corner of the room.

"No! We're cuter!" Natsu yelled, arms flailing by his side.

"In your dreams, Salamander," Gajeel grunted, crossing his arms over his chest. "We're the best couple!"

"This isn't about who's better," Natsu snapped, quickly adding, "even though we'd win that one too! Me and Lucy are way closer and cuter than you and Levy!"

Lucy raised a brow, eyes scanning the room until she found the blue haired girl. She was sitting at a table, reading a book as if the fight wasn't going on. But, judging from her eye twitching, Lucy figured she knew about it.

Lucy decided to walk over to the bar instead of greeting the fire dragon slayer. He seemed pretty... busy, with his weird competition. As long as he didn't damage anything, she was fine.

After ordering a drink and a bag of chips, Lucy made her way to the table Levy was sitting at. She was in the mood for some good conversation.

"Hey Lu," Levy said once the girl sat down.

"Morning." She opened her bag, taking a few chips out. "What are you reading?" She tried to look at the cover, but the book was dropped a second later.

Levy screamed, hands clawing after the table as she was lifted into the air, two strong arms around her waist. "Levy," Gajeel's voice sounded in her ear, "help me prove we're cuter."

"No!" Levy tried but failed to squirm away from his grasp. "I want no part in your petty fight! I just want to read my book!"

"Fine," Gajeel muttered, taking a seat at Levy's spot before planting the girl on his lap. "Go ahead and read."

Before Levy could get a word out, Gajeel turned to Natsu, a triumphant grin on his face. "See Salamander! We're cuter!"

Natsu's eye twitched as he let out a growl. It was clear he didn't want to be bested. He marched over to where Lucy sat, gripping onto the seat of her chair to pull her away from the table. She let out a quick 'eep' as he snatched her bag of chips, dumping the entire contents on the ground.
"Natsu!" she scolded before choking, wondering why he was getting down on his knees. He looked feral when he glanced up at her, his tongue dragging along his top lip before smirking. "Oh yeah, Gajeel. Look how cute we are!"

Gajeel snorted as Natsu started eating the chips off Lucy's lap, laughing when she shut her eyes and shook her head. "Doesn't look like she thinks it's cute."

Natsu growled again, shooting Gajeel a dirty look while munching on the chips in his mouth. "Doesn't look like Levy likes sitting on you either!"

Gajeel looked over Levy's shoulders, seeing his girlfriend's pout. "That's not true, is it?"

She raised a brow at Gajeel, pointing to her book. "I just want to read my book, but you keep distracting me with your fight. Why does it matter who's cuter?" Her voice lowered to a whisper, but Lucy and Natsu heard her too. "We both know how we feel about each other. Why does it have to be a competition?"

Gajeel's red eyes stayed just as stoic as ever, but his cheek twitched, giving away the smallest bit of recognition for his mistake. "You're right."

Levy sighed, thinking that was the end of it. However, just as she turned to look at her book again, she felt herself being picked up. "What are you doing?!"

"You wanna read your book. Let's go to your room so you can have some peace and quiet."

Levy flailed in his arms as he carried her to the door. "W-wait! I didn't grab my book! And you're not even allowed in Fairy Hills!"

Gajeel proceeded to ignore her as he left the guild, Levy still over his shoulders. Lucy watched everything, her face blank as she made sense of what she saw. Her eyes fell to the book Levy was reading, making a mental note to keep it with her so she could make sure Levy got it back later. For now, she had a certain dragon slayer and mess to deal with.

Looking down, Lucy saw Natsu was staring at the door. She cleared her throat, catching his attention. A small blush rose on his cheeks as he mumbled, "Sorry 'bout that... I really wanted to win."

Lucy let out air through her nose, cocking her head. "And how is eating chips off my lap supposed to be cute?"

He shrugged, taking another chip before popping it in his mouth. While still chewing, he said, "I dunno. Didn't think it through."

"Clearly."

Natsu started to rise, collecting all the food before putting it in the bag again. He apologized for wasting her food before he turned towards the bar, saying he would go buy her another bag.

He barely took one step before he felt a sharp pain on his ass. He jolted, looking around to see Lucy's fingers in a pinching motion. She giggled, leaning back in her chair as she grabbed her drink. "Your punishment," was all she said before she took a sip.

Natsu couldn't help but laugh, nodding as he headed to the bar. He didn't mind Lucy pinching his butt, punishment or not. She was free to do that whenever she wanted.
'Because we're the cutest,' Natsu declared in his mind, a toothy grin surfacing on his face. 'Levy and Gajeel have nothing on us.'

Sorry for the randomness. I really don't know what to do with drabbles. I hate posting them here because I like my stuff being longer, but I didn't know where else to put it. If you haven't checked out that picture on Twitter, I suggest you go look at it. Lucy looks so gorgeous in it. I swear if my eyes could have hearts in them, they would. Anyways, hope you liked them, even though they were both short. Have a great day/night! Next time I post here should be for nalu day! :) Wish me luck!

Also, I'm not taking requests in case anyone was wondering.
Pocky Day

Chapter Notes

This one-shot is inspired by Hiro Mashima's picture he drew for Pocky Day 2017. I do not own Fairy tail or the picture, Hiro Mashima does.

Summary: Some people can't seem to grasp the concept of staying in their lane. Erza finds out the hard way that sometimes it's better to leave things alone. Canonverse.

Rated T for foul language, blood, mild violence, and adult situations.

Genre: Humor, Romance

Pairing: Natsu/Lucy (Nalu)

Word Count: 3.5K

See the end of the chapter for more notes
"We need to figure out which guy Lucy likes."

Cana and Mira looked over, giving Erza a questioning glance. They looked over to Lucy, seeing her sitting at one of the tables. A book was in her hand while her spirit, Plue, wobbled about the table. Their gazes turned to Erza, Cana choosing to ask, "How do you plan on doing that?"

"Let's do a pocky test!"

"A pocky test?" Mira asked, her tone skeptical. "What's that?"
Erza's eyes gleamed as she explained. "We make her and a guy eat a stick of pocky together to see who makes Lucy blush the most!"

Cana and Mira shared a look before shaking their heads. "That's... that's not a real test," Cana said, but it was too late.

The requip mage was heading from table to table, asking if anyone had any pocky. When she found a pack of chocolate pocky in Levy's possession, she snatched it away, ensuring the girl it was for a good cause. By the time Erza returned to the bar, a small crowd had gathered, Cana and Mira filling them in to Erza's shenanigans.

"It's not gonna work," Macao said, shaking his head. "That girl blushes at everything."

"Shhh," Kinana swatted at the old drunk, "it might work."

Erza grabbed a few sticks of pocky, waving them for everyone to see before heading to Lucy's table. The celestial mage looked up when she saw someone approaching, offering Erza a smile.

"Hey Erza. How are you— What are you doing?!"

Erza dragged Lucy to the center of the room, looking around for her first victim. She found him sitting at the bar, a piece of chicken in his hand. "Natsu!"

The fire dragon slayer paused his chewing to look over his shoulder. "Yeah?"

"Come here please."

Natsu was about to say he was busy eating, but before he could, Erza narrowed her eyes at him. He shivered as he wiped his face with one sleeve, making his way to the two females. "What's up?"

"Eat this pocky with Lucy." Erza handed him one stick, gesturing towards Lucy.

His pink brows knitted together as he stared at the pocky. "Why?"

"Just do it," Erza demanded, her patience running thin. She put a hand on both of their backs, careful not to let the excess pocky touch Lucy's hair. It wasn't too hard considering her hair was pulled up. "You eat one end while she eats the other."

Lucy's eyes widened in panic as she tried pulling away. "I don't want to do this!"

Erza shook her head, applying more pressure to Lucy's back. "You have no choice."

"What's this for?" Natsu asked, inspecting the pocky before sniffing it.

"Research." Erza studied Natsu's expression, seeing she hadn't won him over yet. "It's a challenge."

Fire burned in his eyes as he nodded. "Alright! Come on Lucy! Let's do this!" He stuck one end in his mouth, leaning in towards the flustered girl.

Lucy's eyes widened in panic as she tried pulling away. "I don't want to do this!"

Erza shook her head, applying more pressure to Lucy's back. "You have no choice."

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Fire burned in his eyes as he nodded. "Alright! Come on Lucy! Let's do this!" He stuck one end in his mouth, leaning in towards the flustered girl.

She looked at Natsu, then turned her gaze to Erza. When the redhead didn't budge, she looked around, seeing no one was trying to help her. Sighing, Lucy accepted defeat, taking the other end of the pocky between her teeth. "Whatever. I guess it's not going to hurt me."

"That's the spirit!" Erza said, standing back so she could observe. "Now, each of you takes a bite until there's none left." She rejoined her earlier group, nodding towards the two wizards in the center of the guild. "What do you think? She's blushing a lot."
"She was blushing before you started," Cana pointed out.

Mira tilted her head back and forth before smiling. "But now she's sweating. You can see a few drops on her face. Maybe that means she likes Natsu?"

"I don't think you can tell much off this test," Happy said, floating overhead. If he hadn't spoke, they wouldn't have known he was there.

They watched as Natsu took big bites of his end, Lucy counteracting that by taking tiny bites. She leaned back an inch when he started getting closer, but before their lips could touch, Erza's booming voice made them freeze.

"Okay, that's a pretty good reaction. Let's see if we can get a better one! Lucy, you can let go of that pocky."

As soon as she released her end, Natsu scarfed down the rest, grinning as he made his way back to his food. Lucy tried sneaking away, but Erza grabbed her arm, her grip loose but firm. "Who's next? Hmm... Oh, I know! Gray! Get over here!"

"Wait! No!" Lucy shook her head, but she didn't budge. She looked over, seeing Gray's eyes were huge.

"I didn't agree to be a guinea pig!"

Erza narrowed her eyes at him, her tone lowering. "Are we going to have a problem?"

Gray cringed, his body going tense before he slowly shook his head. "N-no." Without another command, Gray walked towards Lucy, accepting the stick of pocky when offered. He stuck his end in his mouth, leaning towards her.

Lucy leaned back, her head shaking as she held her hands up. "No way!"

"Come on, Lucy," Gray muttered. "It'll only be a few seconds."

With that logic, Lucy reluctantly agreed, biting at the end of the stick. She leaned further away than she had with Natsu, her eyes squinting as they took their bites.

Back at the group, the wizards were discussing what they saw, debating Lucy's reactions. "She looks more flustered, but I dunno. That body language looks like she's uncomfortable," Erza said, not noticing the several eyes that rolled around her.

Levy was the only one to say what everyone else was thinking. "She looks uncomfortable because she doesn't want to do it."

"Gray's expression is pretty calm and collected. I don't think he likes her in a romantic way," Erza observed, ignoring Levy's words. "I don't know, it's still hard to tell."

Erza marched up to the two wizards, pulling Gray away before they could accidentally kiss. "Gray, you're out."

Lucy sighed in relief, thinking it was over. "Can I go back to my book now?"

"Almost. There's another guy I want to try." Erza fumbled with the pouch on Lucy's belt, causing the celestial mage to jolt.

"What are you doing?!"
Erza found the key she was looking for, but she didn't have the magic or contract needed to summon him. However, she knew she could get his attention one way. Bending over, Erza spoke at the key while tapping it. "Hey Loke! Come out so you can kiss Lucy!"

"What?!" Lucy's question fell on deaf ears, a blinding light appearing a second later. When it vanished, Loke was standing in front of her, his orange hair short and his old green jacket hanging off his chest. She blinked, eyes growing wide. "Why are you dressed like that?"

"I thought you might like it better," Loke offered, shrugging. He happily took a piece of pocky from Erza, popping more of it into his mouth than Natsu or Gray had. He was more than willing, smirking as he leaned in. "Your turn, Princess."

Lucy leaned back, her brows furrowing as she accepted the end of the pocky. In her mind, it was going to end just as quickly as the others had, meaning she wouldn't have to kiss one of her spirits. However, that didn't mean she had to enjoy it.

She closed her eyes as more sweat beaded on her face, her blush spreading. Erza shook her head from where she stood, mumbling to herself. "She's blushing and sweating with all of them." Frustrated, she yelled, "I can't tell!"

"This was a bad idea," Levy, the voice of reason, said, but she was once again ignored.

Erza slammed a fist into her palm, her eyes shining. "I know! We need a control group!"

"A what?" Cana asked, watching as Erza smiled.

"Someone who Lucy's not going to be affected by at all."

Mira scratched at her cheek with a finger, a forced smile on her face. "I think you're using that term wrong."

Erza wasn't listening. She walked to Lucy's table, grabbing the shaking dog spirit. Lucy's eyes opened when she heard movement, seeing Erza heading towards her. She pulled away from the pocky seconds before Loke was going to kiss her. "Erza, what are you—"

"Loke, get back!" Erza demanded, sticking a piece of pocky in Plue's mouth. "Here! Try him!" She lifted Plue to Lucy's face, not realizing her dangerous mistake.

Lucy didn't have time to register what was happening, the blinding pain taking over as something sharp hit her face. She was stunned for a second before jerking back, a bloodcurdling scream filling the guild as blood dripped down her face. Her hand covered her injury, but it was no help. The damage was already done.

Erza dropped Plue, her eyes widening as she saw Lucy crumple on the floor, crying out in pain. "SHIT!"

"ERZA! WHAT THE HELL?!" Natsu roared, running past the requip mage to wrap his arms around Lucy. He pulled her against his chest, hand trying to push her bloody hair out of her face.

Erza shook her head, her voice caught in her throat as she looked for someone's help. However, everyone was too busy focusing on Lucy to lend her any.

"WENDY! Get over here!"

"Where is she?!!"
"She was outside! Go find her!"

"Fuck! That's a lot of blood!"

"Someone needs to alert Porlyusica!"

"Lucy! How bad is it?"

"That's a stupid fucking question! Can't you see it's fucking bad!"

"Don't yell at me! I'm just tryin' to help!"

"Get back! Wendy's coming!"

Erza watched as Wendy ran to Lucy's side, holding up her hands to instantly cast a healing spell. When everyone saw the girl working, they turned to the scene around them, taking everything in.

"Someone clean up Plue! Poor thing's scared to death!"

"Why's there so much blood?"

"ERZA!"

The said woman flinched, looking down to see Levy's glare. Before she could get a word out, Levy was shouting.

"Did you really think that was smart?! What if Wendy wasn't here?! What then?!"

"I-I—" She was left speechless, her head turning so she could look at Lucy.

Lucy pulled her hand back as the wound started healing, Wendy's magic being better than most medicines. Judging by the wound, Plue's nose hit Lucy between her cheek and eye. Erza cringed at the injury, imagining the pain Lucy was in. Guilt flooded her when Lucy turned her good eye on Erza, holding her stare for a few seconds before narrowing her eye.

Erza had to look away, her stomach churning at the sight.

Wendy pulled away after a while, saying that was all she could do for now. She asked how Lucy was feeling, but the answer broke her heart.

"It hurts," she mumbled, tears mixing with her blood.

Natsu wrapped his arms tightly around her before picking her up, his voice rough as he growled.

"I'm bringing her to Porlyusica." He left without saying another word or sparing anyone a glance, needing to get Lucy more help so she could heal.

The guild hall was silent for a moment, Erza's heart hammering as she looked at the door where the two wizards disappeared through. "Fuck," she whispered, throat tight. "I messed up."

"Yeah, you did."

She didn't bother looking to see who spoke, knowing they were right. "I'm... I'm sorry."

Footsteps sounded until someone stood next to her, placing a hand on her shoulder. She looked over, locking eyes with Cana. "We're not the ones you need to apologize too."
Erza's eyes fell to the ground, seeing all the blood. She tried to find Plue, realizing the spirit had gone back to his world during the commotion. She swallowed, hands balling into fists as she walked towards the back of the guild, grabbing a mop to clean up the blood.

Erza would clean, then she would go face Lucy and tell her how sorry she was. Not only did she realize using Plue was a mistake, she shouldn't have pressured Lucy to play her game when it was obvious she didn't want to play.

"I took it too far," she mumbled, wetting the mop before heading to the center of the guild, the place where she hurt one of her closest friends. She vowed she would make it right, even if she didn't know how to do that.

Erza hesitated before knocking on the door to Natsu's house. She went to Porlyusica first, but she was chased away after the old lady tried hitting her with a broom. During the yelling to get off her property, Porlyusica told her Lucy left a while ago, her destination unknown to her.

Erza guessed she was at Natsu's since she wasn't at her apartment, her suspicions confirmed when he opened the door, revealing Lucy sitting on his couch. She gulped, that guilt striking her again.

"May I talk to her?"

Natsu glared at Erza for a few seconds before looking over his shoulder, doing something Erza should have done in the beginning.

"Is it okay if Erza talks to ya?"

Lucy nodded, her eye focused on the floor. Part of Lucy's face was bandaged. Erza recognized the work Porlyusica did. Not only was the woman one of the best healers in Fiore, she was a professional when it came to wrapping bandages.

Deciding not to beat around the bush, Erza walked up to Lucy, taking a seat beside her before saying, "I am so sorry, Lucy. It wasn't my place to pry..." She suppressed a cringe as she added, "And I shouldn't have stuck Plue in your face."

When Lucy didn't reply, Erza said, "I didn't realize his nose was so sharp, not that that's an excuse or anything. I just, I didn't realize the consequences of my actions."

Natsu took a seat on the couch, occupying Lucy's other side. He grabbed her hand, thumb brushing over the back of it with gentle strokes. He remained silent, offering Lucy moral support.

"How's your eye?" Erza asked, heart dropping when Lucy finally looked at her. She could see the pain in her good eye before she turned away from her.

"Porlyusica said I'll be fine in a day or two. Wendy fixed most of it." Lucy took a deep, shaky breath before slowly exhaling. "From what she can tell, there's not going to be any lasting damage. The worst she thinks is maybe a scar, but Wendy can fix those."

Erza nodded, her stomach twisting despite the relatively good news. "I'm very sorry."

Lucy moved her head up, but she didn't look at Erza. "What were you trying to do?"

Erza closed her eyes, knowing her excuse wasn't good. She shook her head, groaning at her own stupidity. "I was trying to see who you liked."
"How?"

"By seeing what guy made you react the most. I know, it was dumb."

"It was," Natsu muttered, squeezing Lucy's hand before resuming his soft strokes.

Erza let him have his jab at her, knowing she deserved it. She injured one of their teammates and friends. She should have known better than to interfere like that.

"I hope you take this as a lesson," Lucy said, training her gaze on Erza. "Don't meddle with people's personal lives like that. I have a right to my privacy."

Erza nodded. "Absolutely. It won't happen again."

"Good." Lucy took a deep breath, squeezing Natsu's hand.

Erza couldn't shake the guilt she felt. It was as if it were clinging to her skin, not letting her have a chance to breathe. "I'm sorry again for my behavior."

Lucy nodded. "It's fine, as long as it really doesn't happen again. I mean it."

"I know you do." Erza paused, wondering what else she could say. "Do you need me to do something? Get you anything?"

Lucy shook her head. "No, I'm fine. Natsu's going to help me until I'm better. If anyone needs me I'll be here, but I'd rather not see anyone right now." She snorted at her poor choice of words. "Well, I'd like to see people, but not now. Do you think you can tell people to give me some space until I recover?"

"Yes, I'll make sure no one disturbs you." Erza stood, offering Lucy a bow. "I'm sorry again. If you need anything, and I mean anything, let me know. I will do whatever it takes to make up for this."

Lucy nodded, her tone reflecting how tired she felt. "Don't beat yourself up too much. Accidents happen. I'm more concerned with the meddling than the Plue thing. Okay?"

"I understand."

Lucy allowed herself a small smile. "Thanks." She yawned, a hand coming up to cover her mouth. "I think I'm going to take a nap. The pain killers Porlyusica gave me are making me sleepy."

"I'll give you your space." Erza walked towards the door, giving the two wizards another glance before saying, "Get well soon. Our team wouldn't be the same without you."

Lucy's smile grew a little bright as she nodded. "Thank you for saying that."

She watched as Erza left, waiting a moment before turning to Natsu. "Is she gone?"

He sniffed the air, smiling when her scent faded, letting him know she was walking away. "Yeah, she's gone."

Lucy leaned back in the couch, Natsu letting go of her hand so he could wrap an arm around her. She tucked her feet underneath her before nuzzling against Natsu's chest, making sure her injury didn't touch him. "I thought she'd never leave."

Natsu leaned in, pressing a kiss to her forehead before she tilted her head. They shared a slow kiss to the lips, Lucy lifting a hand to cup his cheek. She whimpered when he tugged on her lower lip.
with his teeth, the sound getting him fired up.

When the kiss ended, Lucy went back to snuggling against him, her arm wrapped around his middle. "I can't believe they still don't know. I thought it was obvious."

"Guess they're more dense than we thought." Natsu chuckled, his fingers playing with Lucy's hair. "I thought for sure we were gonna get caught today."

"Me too." She sighed. "I thought that pocky thing was just to get proof we were dating, but then she asked Gray and Loke."

Natsu huffed. "They're lucky I didn't knock 'em out. Especially Loke."

Her spirits and Happy were the only people who knew about her secret relationship with Natsu. They were waiting to tell people they got together, but after seeing how meddlesome their friends could be, they both decided to wait a while until revealing it. That was months ago, the two deciding they could wait a little longer. There was no rush, the two enjoying their little secret.

Lucy giggled, her eye sliding shut as she listened to Natsu's heartbeat. "Yeah. Maybe he was just trying to throw them off our trail?"

Natsu grumbled to himself. "Or he was seizing his chance to kiss ya."

Lucy gave him a squeeze, hearing the low growl rumbling in his chest. Her heart warmed, loving the sound. "You're ridiculous."

"Yeah," he said, grinning. "But that's why you like me."

She couldn't help but smile as she looked up, her one eye staring at his two. Her cheeks filled with a soft blush, her lips parting as she whispered, "Yeah."

They shared another kiss, Natsu humming at the feeling of her lips against his. When they separated, he pressed his forehead to hers, his voice husky and low as he mumbled. "Hey, Lucy?"

Her heart pounded, wondering what he was going to say. His green eyes held a seriousness she wasn't used to, anticipation thrumming through her body. She thought this was going to be the moment she was waiting for, wanting to hear those three words. She loved him, but she was too scared to tell him, hoping he would be the one to say them first.

He opened his mouth, pausing before he whispered, "You'd make a cute pirate."

She jerked back, laughing as she shook her head. "Oh my gosh!"

Natsu laughed with her, pulling her in for another hug before kissing the top of her head. "Sorry, couldn't resist!"

Lucy hugged him back, her chest filling with warmth and happiness. Natsu wasn't the most romantic guy she had ever met, but he still stole her breath away and made her heart race. She loved him, and she was happy he was hers.

Her yawn cut off her laughter, Lucy's eye sliding shut as she snuggled against him. "Can I go to sleep here?"

Natsu's chuckle died down as he started stroking her cheek with his knuckles, admiring the beautiful goddess in his arms. "Of course," he whispered, shifting so she could set her face against
his lap. She fell asleep within minutes, Natsu's eyes staying on her for a moment afterwards.

He sighed, thumb brushing over her cheek. His voice was heard by him alone, but he didn't mind. He wasn't ready to tell Lucy the truth yet, wanting to give them more time to grow closer. However, despite that, he felt it deep in his heart, the feeling driving him to do better every day.

"I love you," he whispered, smiling at the woman who held his heart.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you thought! I'm not sure why I was inspired by the picture so much, but I was. :P Thank you for reading!
It's the thought that counts

Chapter Notes

Summary: Lucy was a good person, down to her core. So, when she saw someone she thought was in need, she decided to help them. Little did she know, sometimes things weren't as they appeared. Modern AU, spin on one of my favorite tropes.

Rated T for foul language and adult situations.

Genre: Humor, Friendship, Romance

Word Count: 5.8K

It's the thought that counts

"Yeah, I shouldn't be too long," Lucy said, her phone pressed against her ear. "I'm just going to pick up the book I was telling you about."

"Lu, you and I both know you're not going to just pick up a book. When was the last time you spent less than twenty minutes in a bookstore?"

Lucy found herself stifling a laugh, knowing Levy was right. She was notorious for spending hours at a bookstore, combing through countless shelves to add to her overflowing collection. She couldn't help it. Levy tried convincing her to switch to e-books, telling her it would save space. Lucy didn't give in.

There was something about holding a book in her hands, turning the crisp or worn pages that made her soul feel alive. She preferred real books, and she was positive nothing was going to change that.

"Okay, so maybe I'll browse a little." Lucy walked down the sidewalk, hearing the busy traffic all around her. She could have taken her car, but what fun was that? The weather was beautiful and her body craved excitement. She didn't receive that driving the short distance from her house to the bookstore. It was boring even if she took the scenic route, which involved driving past Lucy's favorite local bakery where a lovely redhead sold the best homemade cakes in Magnolia.

Lucy's stomach growled, but she ignored it. She could swing by that bakery on her way back since it wasn't too far out of the way. She just hoped it would still be opened by the time she left.

"You're ridiculous," Levy teased, a soft giggle traveling through the line. "Oh, Gajeel's here. Gotta go!"

"Have fun!"

Lucy heard the girl say her goodbye before the phone hung up, leaving Lucy by herself. She didn't mind being alone. After growing up with her negligent father, Lucy had grown to enjoy her own company. She could spend the whole day by herself and not get bored. Sure, she liked having friends around, but if she had to be by herself, she was content too.
Lucy crossed the street when it was her turn, looking up at the sign to one of her favorite restaurants. Their delicious meals and great staff earned them Lucy's business. Whenever she got to pick the place her friends would hang out at for dinner, she always chose 'Fairy Tail'. It was convenient for her too, seeing as it was a short walk from her house.

Lucy didn't think anything of it when she glanced at the large windows of the restaurant, seeing the patrons gathered at tables. One particular man caught Lucy's eyes, her brows raising when she noted his brightly colored hair. She couldn't help but wonder if it was naturally pink or if he dyed it. Either way, she found it intriguing. She looked to see who he was eating with, eyes widening when he saw the seat was vacant.

She looked at the man, seeing him sip a glass of water. Her cheeks tinted pink when she noticed he was attractive, but she couldn't appreciate his features too much, her eyes tearing away from the scene a second later.

'It's none of my business,' she told herself, continuing her journey. 'His date is probably running late.'

Lucy pushed the image of the man out of her head, replacing it with the idea of venturing around the bookstore. She had one book in mind she wanted to buy, but that didn't mean she wasn't open to the idea of getting more. Her chest filled with excitement as the store's sign came into view, her pulse picking up just as her feet did the same.

Lucy laughed at herself as she left the bookstore, one hour later. She had found the book she was looking for immediately, but between the free cookies they were passing out and the new releases, Lucy found herself entranced, forgetting about the outside world.

Reality came crashing down when Lucy noted the sun had fallen, streetlamps lighting the sidewalks. She didn't worry about walking alone at night. Magnolia was a safe place, and she was in a busy area. Someone would have to be crazy to attack her on her way home. Besides, if someone decided to take that chance, she had her handy pepper spray in her purse, ready to use if she needed it.

Walking home felt different from walking to the bookstore. There were less people and cars, but the buildings around her seemed more livelier. Every window was glowing from the lights inside, letting her see more than she did earlier.

Lucy considered taking a different street home. It would take her by the bakery, but she had her fill with the cookies from the shop. She decided to stay on course, a direct path towards her neighborhood.

Lucy saw Fairy Tail's sign again, causing her to think about that pink haired man. She figured he was long gone by now, or perhaps at the end of his meal. She peeked into the window when she passed, her feet stopping when she caught sight of the inside.

Lucy's heart dropped when she saw the frown on the man's face as he stared down at his phone. He tapped away at it before setting it face down on the table. In front of him was the single glass of water and a basket of breadsticks, at least half of them eaten judging by how many the restaurant usually brought to a table.

She swallowed, piecing the situation together in her mind. It wasn't too hard seeing as she read many stories over it. She came to one logical conclusion.
Lucy watched as the waitress came up, saying something to him. The man lifted his phone as he shook his head. The waitress nodded before leaving, causing the man to stare down at his phone as his frown grew.

Lucy's chest tightened, imagining the pain and embarrassment that man was feeling. She had been stood up before, so she knew how humiliating it could be. She was about to leave and hope for the best, but she couldn't do it. Lucy didn't want that man to suffer anymore than he already had. She stuffed her three books into her purse before taking a deep breath, thinking she was crazy for even entertaining the idea floating around in her head.

However, despite it being crazy, Lucy found herself walking back towards the entrance, her heart hammering as she entered the restaurant. She was greeted by a host who asked her how many was in her party, but she gave the man a dismissive wave before looking at the dining area.

"Actually, I'm meeting someone," she lied, finding the back of the pink haired man's head. She pointed to him before hurrying on her way, not hearing what the host had to say.

Lucy didn't have to rehearse her lines. She had read them many times before in fanfictions. It was one of her favorite tropes after all. She walked right up to the man before opening her mouth, her brain telling her it wasn't too late to change her mind, but she ignored it.

"Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry I'm late! I got held up in traffic!"

The man jumped as he turned around, green eyes wide as he took in the sight of Lucy. She offered him a large smile, hoping she sounded convincing. Heat flooded her cheeks as she leaned in, wrapping her arms around the stiff man. She whispered, hoping no one else would hear but him.

"My name's Lucy. Go with it."

She pulled back, seeing he hadn't relaxed. 'He's probably surprised. I would be too if I was in his shoes.'

Despite that thought, Lucy went to sit down in the vacant seat across from him. She put her bag on the ground, tucking it under the table. When she met his gaze, her breath hitched, realizing how handsome the man really was.

His pink hair was spiky, some of the locks brushing over his forehead in bangs. His emerald eyes were piercing, making her heart flip when he narrowed them at her. He opened his mouth, allowing her to see his sharp canines. She gulped, wondering if she was in over her head, but she stayed planted in her seat, wanting to rescue him from embarrassment.

"How was your day?" she asked before he could get a word out, causing him to blink a few times.

"Uh... Good?" The man cocked his head as he leaned back, his brows furrowing in confusion. Lucy didn't notice, her brain trying to grasp the concept of how perfect his voice sounded. It wasn't too deep or high, having just enough roughness to give her goosebumps. "You?"

"Great," Lucy said, keeping her voice cheery. "I got a few new books today. You know how much I love to read."

He raised a brow before the corners of his lips twitched into a smile. She guessed he decided to 'go with it' when he said, "Oh yeah. You're a reading maniac."

While Lucy wouldn't use those words to describe herself, she was happy he was playing his part.
She wanted to save his evening, and part of that meant he had to pretend to be her boyfriend just as much as she was pretending to be his girlfriend.

"Glad you haven't ordered yet," Lucy started, running a hand through her blonde hair in an attempt to seem flirty. She kept herself from cringing when she felt a knot, wanting to appear calm and confident. She wiggled her fingers free, settling for keeping them in her lap. There was no menu on the table, making her wonder why the waitress hadn't delivered any. He had been there for at least an hour.

'Maybe the waitress took them away after a while when they realized his real date wasn't coming?' Lucy could only speculate since she had no knowledge of this man.

"Why's that?" he asked, relaxing in his chair. He grabbed one of the breadsticks from the basket, tearing off a piece with his teeth before chewing on it.

Lucy fought off a blush, wondering how he managed to look attractive while he ate. "I'm starving. I was hoping we could eat at the same time."

"I see," he said, his voice full of amusement. It confused Lucy, but she didn't get a chance to ask him what was so funny. "Well, I guess I can get something while I'm here. These breadsticks are pretty filling though."

Lucy furrowed her brows, wondering what he meant before. It sounded as if he wasn't there to eat in the first place, but that made no sense. Who went to a restaurant without the intention to eat?

Before she could ask, a waiter walked up, his hair as dark as the night sky and his eyes a deep blue. He looked disgruntled, his shoulders sagging as he sauntered over to the table. She thought maybe the waitress from before had left and this new guy was taking over, but Lucy realized she was wrong soon enough.

"Hey man, sorry it took so long. Someone called out so I had to fill in until they got someone else to come in. I should be ready to go in like five minutes."

Lucy's pretend date shook his head, waving the waiter off. "It's cool. Mira let me hang out here 'til you got off."

"Well, it shouldn't be too much lon—" The waiter paused when his eyes flitted to Lucy, one of his dark brows raising when he finally noticed her. He looked back to the man with pink hair, his tone more cautious than before. "Who's this?"

Lucy opened her mouth, ready to ask if the two knew each other - which seemed silly given how obvious that answer was, but she was cut off when her 'date' shrugged.

He looked at Lucy, his green eyes gleaming as he said, "This girl thought I was stood up. She came to rescue me I guess?"

Lucy's smile dropped like a ton of bricks, her stomach twisting as the waiter set his eyes on her again. "Is that so?" he asked, a wicked smile surfacing on his face. "Well can you blame her? Look at you. Who'd want to go out with you?"

"Oi!" the man said, glaring at the waiter. "I could get stood up if I wanted!"

"Do you hear yourself when you talk? That made no sense."

"Shut up! At least I had someone come try to help me out. That didn't happen when you got stood
up!

"That was two years ago! Give it a rest!"

Lucy's jaw went slack as she fumbled for words, not knowing what to say. She listened as the two men bickered at each other, grabbing the attention of everyone nearby. Heat crawled up Lucy's chest and neck, her skin turning a bright red as embarrassment set in. She wanted to save this man from humiliation, but it turned out she was the only one looking like a fool.

"I-I'm sorry," Lucy said as she stood, the chair uncooperative as she tried to push it back. She struggled with it, feeling sweat bead on the back of her neck. "I didn't realize you were, oh wow." It was hard to breathe, her chest constricting and pulse racing. "I'm... I'm gonna go."

She tried walking past them, but a warm hand grabbed her wrist just as the man sitting down said, "Wait."

Lucy shook him loose, unable to meet his gaze. "No, sorry. I-I didn't mean to mess up your night." Without saying another word, she rushed out, her eyes pricking as fresh tears built up. She felt everyone staring at her as she exited the restaurant, her feet carrying her in the opposite direction of her house so she wouldn't walk past Fairy Tail's large window.

She kept her head down as she walked, following the familiar path to Magnolia's largest park. The streetlamps kept it bright enough to guide her way, which was welcomed seeing as her vision was blurred with tears. She couldn't remember a time she had been more humiliated. She put herself out there to try to help a stranger, only to end up looking like an idiot.

"I'm so stupid," Lucy muttered, taking a seat at a secluded bench before resting her elbows on her knees. She dropped her head into her open palms, wiping away her tears before supporting her head. "I can't believe i just did that. What the hell was I thinking?"

'I was trying to be helpful,' she thought, but it brought her no comfort. 'That's what I get for trying to play hero. I bet that guy's laughing at me. I deserve it. It wasn't any of my business.'

More tears formed, but they didn't have a chance to fall since she wiped them away. She swallowed thickly, forcing herself to calm down. It may have been nighttime, but she was still in public. Her father would scold her for making a scene like that.

"I should just go home," Lucy mumbled to herself, standing up to head out of the park. She took the long way to her house, avoiding the restaurant. She doubted they would be there now, but she didn't want to take that risk. If she never saw that handsome stranger again, it would be too soon. She didn't want the chance of him actually making fun of her to her face. She berated herself enough over the idea of it happening.

She didn't want to see it come to life.

When Lucy entered her neighborhood, she reached for her keys in her purse, eyes growing wide when she realized she wasn't carrying it. Her feet stopped moving, her heart dropping when she thought about the last place she remembered seeing it. It was at Fairy Tail, but she didn't want to go back there.

She shook her head, deciding it would be better to go retrieve her purse later. It had her keys, wallet, and phone in it, but that wasn't enough to get her to turn around.

'I'll ask Levy to go in and get it for me tomorrow. I'm sure she won't mind.' After what happened tonight, Lucy never wanted to step foot in that restaurant again. That waiter was sure to tell the
other staff, thus making that place too risky for her to visit. If she wanted their food that bad, she could always order it to-go and have someone else pick it up. Anything was better than dealing with that embarrassment again.

Lucy took a deep breath before walking towards her house, hoping Levy was home from her date. If her roommate wasn't there, she would have to wait outside until then. 'Unless Levy's spending the night at her boyfriend's again. I wouldn't know since I have no phone.'

Lucy thought about trying to climb in the laundry room window. They kept it unlocked for emergency entries, but the space was small and she would have to push the screen through. It would be worth it if it meant getting into her house so she could curl in her bed. She could cuddle with her dog, Plue, while watching TV since her new books were in her purse.

'I really messed up. I should have just stayed in my lane.'

Lucy stepped onto the porch, her eyes trained on the door as she knocked. She didn't bother looking around, only thinking about getting inside. When there was no answer, Lucy went to knock again, jolting when she heard the wood in her porch creak from someone else's step.

She whirled to the side as she held up her hands, ready to fend off an attacker to the best of her abilities. She let out a scream on instinct, causing the figure to flinch.

"What the hell?!" an eerily familiar voice asked, taking a step back.

"Don't come near me! I'll... I'll hurt you!" Lucy fibbed, hoping he would just leave her alone. If she needed to, she would scream again, hoping to get a neighbor's attention.

"How're you gonna hurt me if I got your pepper spray?" the voice asked, his tone a cross between amused and startled.

Lucy blinked, her heart sinking when she lowered her hands, allowing her to see the stranger. The first thing she saw was pink hair, followed by those deep green eyes. "Oh no," she mumbled, shaking her head as she closed her eyes. "No no no!"

The man from the restaurant chuckled. "Yes?"

Her eyes snapped open, the first question in her mind spilling past her lips. "What are you doing here?!"

He lifted a hand, her purse dangling by its strap. "Jeez, I was just returnin' your bag. Didn't think I'd get yelled at."

Lucy looked from her purse to the man, her body tensing when she asked, "How... how did you find me?!"

The man let his hand down, seeing as she wasn't attempting to get close enough to take her purse. "Your address is on your driver's license." He offered her a smile, but it did little to settle her rapid heartbeat. "I figured you were gonna have to come here eventually."

Instead of explaining himself further, the man sat down on her porch steps, digging through her purse to pull out one of her books. "This one's pretty good by the way. Kinda mushy for my taste, but it's still decent."

"You read my book?!!" Lucy asked, as if the answer wasn't obvious.
"What?" He shrugged, giving her a fanged smile. "I got bored. Figured it was better than going through your phone." His eyes widened when Lucy flinched, shaking his head as he returned to her book. "I promise I didn't go through your phone. Don't worry."

'Don't worry,' she mocked in her head. Lucy felt herself fuming until she realized what a fool she made of herself at the restaurant. Her temper vanished as her shoulders fell, the flush coming back to cover her face. "Look," she started, voice meek as she averted her eyes, "about earlier."

"What about it?" he asked, looking up at her before scooting over. He patted the spot beside him, but she didn't budge.

"I'm really sorry about that," she confessed, struggling to meet his gaze. He looked too carefree while she felt embarrassed over her mistake. "I didn't know you were waiting on your boyfriend. I thought—"

The man barked out a laugh, cutting her off. "Gray is not my boyfriend. Just my roommate."

"Are you sure?" Lucy asked, causing him to laugh again.

"Pretty sure. His girlfriend would kill me if I made a move on him." He closed her book before holding out a hand towards her. "I didn't get a chance to introduce myself before. My name's Natsu."

Lucy paused before sliding her hand into his, feeling the calluses on his warm palm. "Lucy," she said as she gave his hand a firm shake.

His smile met his eyes, light dancing behind them. "You said that already."

"Right." Lucy pulled her hand away, feeling a little less awkward than before. At least now she had a name to place with the face. "Well, thank you for returning my purse."

"My pleasure. Thanks for making my night a little better."

"What," Lucy started, but shut her mouth a second later. It wasn't her business. She should take her purse and go inside before she made herself look more ridiculous.

"What is it?" Natsu asked, once again patting the spot beside him.

She bit her bottom lip, debating what she should do. Figuring he wasn't going to leave, she sat down, feeling the cold from the wood seep through her jeans. She looked towards the street, mentally scowling at her neighbors. She screamed and they did nothing. It made her doubt they would be helpful in a real emergency.

"I was going to ask why you were at the restaurant by yourself for so long, but it's not my business."

"I don't mind tellin' ya," he said with a shrug. "Sometimes I hang out there and eat free food while I wait on Gray to get off work. Usually it's not that long though, maybe like ten minutes or so? Mira let me sit down when we found out Gray was gonna have to stay late. Figured it'd be easier to hang out there instead of walk home. We live like five miles away."

"You don't have a car?" Lucy asked, causing him to shake his head.

"I eat free breadsticks for dinner. Don't really have the money for a car," he laughed, the sound soothing her nerves. "You know, broke college kid problems."
"Ah, you must go to Magnolia University?" It was located less than a mile away from Fairy Tail. When he nodded, she mumbled, "So do I."

"I haven't seen you there before," he said, raising a brow. "But I guess it is kinda big. What are you majoring in?"

"Business," she drawled, voice growing flat. "My father wants me to join his company once I graduate." She blinked, wondering why she told him that last part when he hadn't asked.

Natsu furrowed his brows. "You don't sound too happy about that."

"Eh, not much I can do. He's paying for everything. It's only fair that I help him out."

"What do you want to do?" he asked, making her wonder if she should have been so concerned about minding her own business. Natsu seemed to poke into her life easily, but she didn't mind too much. It wasn't as if any of the information she was giving him was a big secret.

"I'd rather be an author, but I doubt I can make it."

"You should still try, if that's what you want."

"I will," she assured, giving him a soft smile. "My father agreed to let me work part time after I graduate. Hopefully I'll have enough time to write." She took a deep breath before relaxing her shoulders, her chest lightening. "I know it's going to be tough, but I've wanted to do it for most of my life. And if I don't make it, at least I gave it a shot."

"I'd read some of your stuff," Natsu said, lifting her book before putting it back into her purse. "Is it gonna have all this romance stuff in it?"

"Maybe," Lucy replied, finding herself fighting off a giggle. "You really don't like that?"

His lips pulled into a toothy grin, one that made her heart flip. "I mean, I don't hate romantic stuff, but it's not really my thing."

"I see."

He nodded. "I'm not much for words. I like actions better."

Lucy was tempted to ask him what that meant, but she held her tongue. There was a lull, one that was soon interrupted when Natsu spoke up.

"It was nice of you to try and save me."

Lucy didn't know if he was trying to make her feel better or not. All it did was remind her of her mistake. "Yeah... I don't normally do things like that."

"I thought it was pretty weird, but in a good way." Once again, Lucy wondered if Natsu was trying to make her feel better, but she was hopeful. He didn't seem like he was trying to insult her. He was just different.

Different wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Lucy was about to tell Natsu she felt stupid for putting herself out there like that, but he cut her off before she could get a word out. "You're a nice person, Lucy. Not a lot of people would try to help a stranger out."
Heat warmed her cheeks, but she did her best to ignore it. "I-I didn't help you though."

"But you tried," Natsu pointed out, meeting her gaze. "That's the important part. It's like what they say. It's the thought that counts."

Lucy had to force herself not to move, her mind telling her to look away to avoid further embarrassment. She nodded, thankful Natsu didn't seem to think she was stupid for her actions earlier. He saw her intentions were good.

Silence fell between them, but Lucy didn't mind. It was comfortable enough, her eyes falling to land on the sidewalk leading up to her porch. She didn't know what to say, so she settled with the obvious question she hadn't asked. "How are you getting home?"

He shrugged before leaning back, palms pressing against the wood to stabilize himself. "I was thinkin' of calling Gray. He's probably gonna be up for a while anyways."

"I can drive you home," Lucy offered, inwardly cringing. She didn't want him to think she was weirder than he already did. "If you want, that is. Feel free to say no."

"That sounds good," Natsu said, placing her purse beside her, filling up the gap between their thighs. "If it's not too much trouble, of course. I don't mind making Gray do it."

Lucy allowed herself a short laugh as she shook her head. "I don't mind. Let me go let my dog potty, then I'll be good to go." She stood with her purse in hand, ready to unlock her front door. She paused when she pulled her keys out, wondering if she was overstepping either of their boundaries when she asked, "Do you want to come in?"

Natsu stood, fixing his jeans before nodding. "Sure."

As soon as Lucy slid her key into the lock, she heard Plue barking inside. "Plue, calm down." Plue didn't stop when she stepped inside, the canine immediately spotting the stranger behind his owner. The little white dog howled at Natsu, but made no effort to get close enough to bite him.

Plue was all bark, only harmful to one's eardrums.

Lucy led Plue to the backyard, opening the sliding door to let him outside. The dog ran out, heading to the nearest bush before sniffing it. While he did his business, Lucy turned to see Natsu in her dining room, looking at a picture on the wall. It was of her, Levy, and Cana, the three of them celebrating Lucy's twenty-first birthday at a local bar.

"Looks like fun," Natsu said, tearing his eyes away from the picture to give Lucy a smile. "Do you like to party?"

Lucy felt her blush deepening as she grabbed her purse strap, needing something to hold onto. "Um, sometimes."

Natsu accepted that answer, eyes roaming to find another picture on the wall. Plue trotted in a moment later, the dog looking at Natsu before deeming him harmless. Lucy watched as Plue went to his bed in the living room, circling around it three times before lying down.

"Plue should meet my cat. I'm sure he and Happy would get along."

"You named your cat Happy?" Lucy asked, wondering if she was the first to ask him that.

He nodded, his smile never fading. "Yup! He's a little ball of happiness, so why not?"
"I can't think of a reason not to," Lucy said honestly, gesturing for Natsu to head towards the front of the house. When they stepped outside, Lucy locked her door, then headed to her car.

Natsu took a deep breath before opening the passenger door, hesitating before he moved to sit inside. Lucy raised a brow as she took her own seat behind the steering wheel, not bothering to hide her curiosity. "You okay?"

He gave her a short nod as he buckled, his jaw tight and his shoulders stiff. "I kinda get motion sickness. I should be good though."

"You're not going to puke in my car, are you?" Lucy asked, only half joking.

Natsu shook his head. "I took some medication earlier. Vehicles still make me sick though."

She found herself smiling as she buckled up. "Is that the real reason you don't get a car?"

His cringe said it all. "Maybe."

"You're fine," Lucy assured, not wanting him to feel embarrassed over something he couldn't control. At least he wasn't the one who looked silly today in front of a room full of strangers. When Lucy put the car in reverse, she said, "Just tell me where to go."

Natsu gave her directions while keeping a hand on his stomach. He didn't look like he was going to puke, but he did look uncomfortable to be sitting there. He seemed thrilled when the car came to a stop in front of an apartment complex, his lips tugging into a smile when she put the car in park and turned it off.

Lucy wondered if Natsu was going to leave without saying anything, but he proved her wrong when he didn't get out of the car.

"Thanks for the ride," he mumbled, hand hovering over his seat belt before he undid it.

Lucy looked over at him, smiling. "No problem. Sorry again about earlier."

"You can stop apologizing. I didn't mind." He chuckled, the skin around his eyes crinkling as he grinned. "It confused me at first, but when I figured out what you were doing it was fun."

_Fun_ wasn't the word she would use, but she was glad she wasn't too much of an inconvenience to him and his evening. As she debated over what she could say next, Natsu cleared his throat, preparing himself for what he was about to say.

"I kinda..." He paused, swallowing as he scratched the back of his head. "I kinda wonder how that dinner woulda turned out if Gray didn't show up when he did."

"Really?" Lucy asked, pushing past her embarrassment.

"Really," he repeated, locking eyes with her. "You seem sweet. I wouldn't mind getting to know you... If you're okay with it of course."

Lucy found herself nodding, her heart hammering in her chest. "I-I wouldn't mind."

"Great," Natsu said, shifting so he could pull his phone out of his pocket. He swiped and tapped at it until he got to the 'Add Contacts' part, then handed the device over. "Can I get your number?"

Lucy's shaky hand grabbed the phone, pausing before her fingers started to move. She didn't hesitate because she was having second thoughts. She was nervous because she didn't expect Natsu
She passed him his phone when she finished, a deep breath of air needed to soothe her growing anxiety. She didn't hand her number out like that, but she trusted Natsu wouldn't do anything bad with it. He seemed like a good guy, even if he had his own little quirks.

Natsu shoved the phone back in his pocket, a soft blush coating his cheeks and the tips of his ears. "Great. Now I can call you so we can go on a real d— a real date."

Lucy's eyes widened, surprised and thrilled from the offer. She thought he wanted to get to know her in a friendly way. She still wanted that, but she wasn't opposed to more, if things went well between them. So far, they seemed to click well enough, despite the strange way they met.

"I'd like that," she admitted, her own blush threatening to consume her.

Natsu smiled to himself as he stole a glance her way, his eyes full of light as he reached over, capturing her hand. He gave her a gentle squeeze before pulling back, his hand fumbling for the handle until he found it. "See ya, Lucy," he said as he opened the door, his blush growing darker as he stepped out of the car.

Lucy managed to wave at him as he retreated, waiting until he was out of sight before starting her car again. Her chest bubbled with excitement at the adventure she could have with Natsu. He wasn't the type of guy she normally looked for, but that wasn't a bad thing. 'He seems nice, and he didn't make fun of me for my mistake.' Those two things helped make her decision, deciding to give the man an honest chance.

Her heart fluttered when she got home and saw she had a text from Natsu, telling her he had a nice time hanging out with her. She smiled, holding her phone to her chest for a few seconds before replying to him, not realizing that it was the beginning of their blossoming relationship, the two dorks taking their time as they got to know each other and grew closer.

Lucy would always think her actions that night at the restaurant were silly, but she couldn't bring herself to regret them. Without her last-minute decision, Lucy would have never met the man of her dreams, even if at the time he was just a stranger who looked like he could use some help.

Even if Natsu didn't need that help, he still spoke fondly of the time Lucy came to 'save' him. He always finished the story with the same line, making Lucy's heart fill with warmth every time.

"It's the thought that counts."

Chapter End Notes

So, what'd you think of this one-shot? I absolutely love the 'stood up' trope, but I wanted to write a spin on it. I dunno if this has been done before, but I haven't read anything like that where the person really wasn't stood up. If you have, let me know so I can go read it because I love secondhand embarrassment like that. XD Thank you for reading! I hope you enjoyed it. Let me know what you thought! I love hearing from you!
In the Cover of Darkness

Chapter Notes

Submission for Nalu week 2018. Day Four: Wicked

Summary: Lucy and Natsu were off to a good start, but they needed a little push to get the ball rolling. Is a game enough to cast away the embarrassment of intimacy, or do they need the darkness to show what they truly want?

I do not own Fairy Tail. Hiro Mashima does. Fantasy AU.

Rated T for foul language and adult situations.

Genre: Romance, Fantasy

Word Count: 3.2K

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the Cover of Darkness

Lucy's heart beat wildly as she walked forward, her fingers curling into fists as she struggled to keep herself composed. Her friends gave her a mixture of snickers and shit-eating grins, making her wonder if the game they were playing was rigged. She wouldn't be surprised, knowing Erza would go to extreme lengths to get what she wanted.

It wouldn't be the first time, after all.

Lucy placed her stick into the jar on her way to the closet, cursing herself for getting '4'. Then again, if she hadn't, someone else would be paired to play seven minutes in heaven with the person who had '9'.

In other words, someone else would have been paired with her new boyfriend, Natsu Dragneel.

Lucy heard his footsteps behind her, her eye twitching when a clanking sound filled her ears. He had dropped his stick into the jar as well, doing so without so much as a peep. She thought he would have protested the game, but he said nothing, merely obeying the 'Master'.

Lucy hadn't wanted to play the game in the beginning, but Natsu convinced her it would be fun, only to be proven wrong. So far, Lucy was forced to hop on one foot for two minutes, sing the chorus to a song with no music playing, and pretend she was a dragon for three minutes. She had hoped the last one wouldn't offend her boyfriend, but he ended up enjoying it, saying she would 'make a fine dragoness with a little more practice'.

The game was called 'Guild Master Game', and it was one of Erza's favorites. Each stick besides one had a number assigned to it, and when everyone picked their sticks from the jar, they would see who had the one stick with a crown symbol on it. That meant they got to be the Master for the turn, choosing what the others would do. There were a few rules, like no nudity or things that would be permanent, but other than that it was free game.
Lucy frowned when she realized Natsu was being too quiet, especially since he had been hyper all night. Pigging out on cake and soda was bound to do that to a person, even if said person hadn't been an eighteen year old, already full of energy to begin with.

Not only that, his kind were naturally boisterous, but Natsu wasn't living up to that expectation right now.

Lucy's shaky hands grabbed the knob, slowly twisting it open. She took a good look at the closet she would be sharing with her partner, happy they wouldn't be dealing with clothes hanging everywhere. For the most part, the closet was bare, which would be helpful when Natsu stepped in since he took up more space.

Taking a deep breath, Lucy entered the closet, her eyes adjusting to the darkness when Natsu shut the door behind them. His tail bumped against the few jackets hanging on the rod, but he didn't complain, merely moving around until he fit better. There was nothing he could do about his tail or horns, but at least his wings were gone, needing to be summoned to appear. She couldn't imagine how cramped they would be if he had them out tonight.

From outside the door, they could hear Erza's voice as she gave them their 'instructions'. Lucy couldn't help but narrow her eyes, wishing she had sat this round out.

"We'll get you two in seven minutes. Make sure you use your time wisely, and don't get too carried away!"

Not a few seconds later, the music was turned up in the other room, drowning out any sounds that might have escaped the closet. Lucy couldn't help but blush, realizing they were truly alone. She didn't know what was going to happen between them, but part of her thought there wouldn't be much sounds coming from them anyway. She doubted Natsu wanted to go through with it, even if they had experimented a little on their own.

Well, experiment was a strong word. They had only kissed a few times, but that was because their relationship was fairly new. She didn't know how far Natsu wanted to go inside the closet, but she knew he would back off the instant she said she didn't want to do something.

There was a reason she said no to all the other boys who asked her out before. She only wanted Natsu, her best friend. She trusted him more than anyone else, so when he finally asked her out, she didn't hesitate to say yes. She didn't want anyone else, especially not the boys like her.

She knew her father wanted her to settle down with another werewolf, but Lucy wasn't attracted to them like she was supposed to be. There was nothing particularly wrong with her kind, she just preferred someone more fiery and fun, and that was Natsu.

While her father didn't approve of Natsu, her mother did, and that was a relief. Even if both parents didn't like him, that wouldn't have stopped her from spending time with him.

Despite demons being known as wicked, Natsu had a kind soul. She knew part of that was because of his dragon nature, the creatures nurturing yet fierce when their loved ones were threatened. Natsu was the best combination of the two, mischievous yet loving.

Lucy couldn't help but fall for him, her heart yearning to be by his side, and she would hold him close to her for as long as she lived.

Which would be a normal hundred years, so long as nothing brought her end sooner. Natsu's species lived far longer than hers, almost three times as long, but they hadn't been together long
enough to bring up that topic. They were still figuring out how to be girlfriend and boyfriend. The tough conversations could wait until later.

Lucy swallowed, feeling the closet's temperature rising already. Natsu's dragon side made things hotter, and the small space around them didn't help.

Lucy's breathing had already increased, worried things might get awkward between her and her boyfriend. Despite the two of them being seniors in high school, they were both inexperienced. She barely knew what the differences between the bases were, and now she was supposed to spend seven minutes in a closet figuring them out with Natsu?

To say she was nervous was an understatement, and when Natsu finally spoke, that nervous energy only increased.

"It's kinda small in here," he said, making her jump. She was thankful for the darkness. He could see her, but she knew he would be able to smell her stronger emotions.

Lucy's abilities were far different from his. While she could smell people's fear and sense happiness, she could only do them when she was close to the full moon. Since she was nowhere near her cycle, Lucy's powers had receded, laying dormant until it was that time again.

She was thankful her species had less noticeable features for most of the month. While she did sport some excess body hair and slightly pointed canines, it was almost impossible to tell what she was without asking.

Natsu on the other hand couldn't blend in even if he wanted to, but she knew her friend didn't care about things like that. With long horns, a tail, and patches of scales adorning his exposed skin, Natsu stood out like a sore thumb. Of course, most people did, only a few pure humans remaining in the mix.

Mostly everyone was mixed with another creature. Lucy even had a little fairy in her, but that bloodline wasn't strong enough to give her any powers. Natsu was the same, having human, demon, and dragon blood coursing through his veins. He was a force to be reckoned with, yet he was one of the kindest souls she had ever met.

Lucy swallowed hard, almost forgetting she was supposed to say something back. She imagined the silence made things worse, her palms sweating as she cleared her throat. "Y-yeah, it is."

She heard him sigh, wondering if he was running a hand through his hair or cupping the back of his neck. He usually did one when he made that sound, one of his nervous tics ingrained in her mind.

"I'm starting to think we shouldn't have played this game," Natsu whispered, unknowingly causing Lucy to smile.

She had been thinking the same thing. "I don't think Erza would've given us any other choice. She can be..."

"Demanding," Natsu supplied, but Lucy cut him off.

"Persuasive."

They shared a chuckle, the slight relief of them being on the same boat easing some of her tension. "Yeah, I guess that's a good word for it, just don't let her hear you say that."
Natsu barked out a laugh, the sound of something rustling behind him accompanying the cheerful sound. If Lucy had to guess, she would say it was his tail. Sometimes she swore it had a mind of its own. Natsu said the same, but she suspected he had more control over it than he lead on, especially when it 'accidentally' tripped Gray.

Natsu snorted, his words suggesting he wasn't afraid of their friend, but his tone said otherwise. "I can take her."

Lucy smiled, glad to hear Natsu acting normally. He was overzealous at times, and a bit rough around the edges, but he was fun, and that was what she liked about him.

However, that lightheartedness faded when Natsu breathed a sigh, his voice turning serious. "If you don't wanna play along with this game, we don't have to. I'm fine with just waiting here and talking." He paused, his tone growing softer. "I really like talkin' to ya."

Lucy bit back a blush, though she didn't know why. It wasn't as if Natsu could see her anyway. "I like talking to you too." Her heart sped up when she stood straight, resisting the urge to keep her thoughts to herself. "And... I want to play, just..."

"You don't know how far you wanna go?" Natsu guessed, earning an unseen nod.

"Yeah. Is that okay?" She didn't need to ask, knowing he was an understanding and patient guy when it came to her comfort. He hadn't rushed her so far in their relationship, and she was confident he wouldn't try now.

"Perfectly okay. I promise."

Lucy licked over her sharp canines, wondering how far she wanted to go with Natsu. She knew whatever they did together would stay between them. Despite Natsu's tendencies to brag, she hadn't heard him breathe a word of their private time to anyone, even when their friends tried prying the information out of him.

She trusted him completely.

Others saw a wild, fiery guy, but she saw his compassion, his willingness to put others before himself, especially when it came to friends and family. He never hesitated to lend a helping hand or listen when someone needed to talk about what they were going through. He was always there for her when she needed him, and she hoped he felt the same about her.

Tension seeped out of Lucy, her heart warming and her shoulders easing. She sucked in a breath, building her confidence while trying to keep herself from sounding like a dork. Or worse, she didn't want to sound too eager, but she also didn't want him thinking she was only doing it for the sake of the game.

Lucy rolled her eyes at herself, realizing she was being ridiculous. She didn't need to think too much about it. The best adventures she had with Natsu was when they didn't plan ahead, just going with the flow of things. That was how she needed to be tonight, even if they were essentially trapped in a closet because their friend was a bit too intrusive on their relationship.

"I... wouldn't be opposed to, kissing," Lucy mumbled, hearing Natsu gulp in response. She didn't know if that was a bad sign or not, but she didn't hear him complain. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

"That works with me, if you're sure?"
"Yeah, I... I am."

Lucy felt the heat rolling off Natsu when he took a step closer, the inner dragon in him taking the lead. She gasped when she felt his warm hand on her breast, but it was removed within a second.

"Fuck, my bad," he whispered, letting out a few more curses under his breath. "Sorry, I can't see your arm."

"Here," Lucy started, reaching forward until her hand landed on his solid chest. He had taken his shirt off a few turns ago, but she was okay with that. She enjoyed looking at his bare chest, but it wasn't as good as feeling it.

She let her fingers brush over his muscles, taking a bit longer than necessary to find his arm. A smile surfaced on her face when she found a small patch of scales on his bicep, but she didn't spend too much time playing with them. Instead, she trailed her hand down until it found his own, bringing his hand towards her waist.

As soon as his palm made contact with her side, he gripped her, using that as a guide to help him find the other side of her waist. After Lucy set her hands on his shoulders, Natsu leaned in. His nose grazed her chin before he moved upwards, lips skimming her face until he found her mouth.

Lucy's eyes fluttered closed when he pressed a soft kiss to her lips. She kissed him back, enjoying the way his lips slid against hers. His hands tightened when she gave his upper lip a nibble, causing him to sigh. She didn't rush things, the two teasing each other with quick pecks and lingering kisses.

"Is this okay?" Natsu asked, his answer coming to him in the form of a kiss. She melted in his arms as he kissed her back, but there was only so much soft and slow she could take before she wanted more.

It wasn't until Lucy cupped the back of his neck and brought him closer that she decided to push forward, her tongue softly prodding at his parted lips. Heat flooded the closet when his tongue came out to play, coaxing her to come into his mouth before he gave it a suck.

Lucy couldn't stop herself from moaning, wondering where that had come from. She wasn't upset in the least bit, intrigued to see what else he was capable of. Their tongues massaged each other for a moment, both getting a feel for each other before Lucy tilted her head, deepening the kiss.

Things escalated from there, both using the cover of darkness to keep them from getting too embarrassed. Every time they kissed before, they had been able to see each other, but now they were shielded, able to put more enthusiasm into the kiss without getting flustered as easily.

Natsu wrapped his arms around Lucy, pulling her flush against his body. She hummed into his mouth, her hand weaving into his long pink locks before giving them a tug. His chest rumbled with a growl, causing her to shudder against him. Her tongue dove into his mouth, surprised but happy when she felt more scales surfacing on his chest and arms. That only happened when he was either really excited or angry, and she didn't need to guess which one he was.

Natsu groaned as he let her control the kiss, but his instincts kicked in soon after, needing to tame her wicked tongue. He pushed her backwards until she was pressed against the wall. Neither cared how intense the kiss was getting, nor did they try to slow down. It was all fire and passion, the roaring flames burning hotter every second they breathed each other in.

Lucy moaned when Natsu's tail wrapped around her leg. The scaled appendage squeezed just
enough to let her know it was there, but not hard enough to cut off her circulation. It tickled her outer thigh as it moved up, careful not to cross any lines in case Lucy wasn't okay with more.

"Sorry," Natsu mumbled against her lips, his voice thick and deep. She didn't know if it was because of his dragon or demon heritage, or if it was caused by their activities. "Sometimes it has a mind of its own, but that's all me right now." As if to solidify his statement, his tail gave her another squeeze, one that made her pulse jump.

"It's okay," she breathed between kisses, one of her hands moving to his chest to feel the defined pecs before teasing more scales that appeared over his skin. "I like it."

"Good."

Her hand left his chest, touching the tail wrapped around her thigh before petting it. Natsu groaned when she did it, his breathing labored when she rubbed her hand against his back before pulling him in for a heated kiss.

The longer they kissed, the less they thought about embarrassment or lack of experience. Lucy loved getting lost in their kisses, but unfortunately for them, they forgot one key detail about what they were doing.

Their minds failed to realize they were on a time limit, and just outside that door was a group of friends they would have to face when it was all over. Until then, they gave the kiss their all, blissfully unaware of the outside world while they got wrapped up in each other, hiding away in the darkness.

Erza smiled when the timer on her phone went off. She said they had seven minutes, but she gave them twice that, hoping it would give them enough time to spend together.

She was ready to send another pair of her friends in there, these more clueless about their feelings than Natsu and Lucy had been. 'Seriously,' she thought, shaking her head at the two. 'It was too obvious they liked each other.'

Eyeing Alzack and Bisca, her next targets, Erza snickered before heading to the stereo. She turned the volume down so the two lovebirds in the closet could hear when she knocked on the door. However, Erza hadn't even reached the closet before she could hear the sounds coming from within. She froze, stunned by what she heard.

"N-Natsu!"

Erza blinked, glancing at the rest of their friends, all wearing equally surprised expressions. She didn't know what to say or do, her body keeping her trapped as she was forced to hear more, which only made her face as red as her scarlet hair.

"Damn Lucy," Natsu moaned, his voice husky and muffled through the door. "That feels so good! Please don't stop!"

It was a struggle for Erza to breathe, not expecting the turn of events. She cleared her throat to gain everyone's attention before gesturing to the cup of sticks. Her voice came out shaky as she stammered, trying to fight off the secondhand embarrassment she felt.

"N-now, um, I think we should keep playing." She didn't want Natsu and Lucy's absence to disrupt the night, even if it was her idea to put them in that closet in the first place.
Erza didn't worry about them as she turned towards the stereo, knowing they wouldn't do anything stupid. Natsu and Lucy had good heads on their shoulders, but then again, hormones could do some crazy things to levelheaded people. Not only that, they were both creatures who relied heavily on instincts, even primal ones.

She would give them a little more time before interrupting. It was the least she could do for putting them in that situation to begin with.

Everyone else continued playing the game, but not before turning up the music to drown out the sounds of their friends taking the game to a whole new level.

Chapter End Notes

I love nalu week, but this year I didn't have time to write for every day. Honestly I'm just glad I was able to participate, even if it's just one entry. Thank you for reading! Please let me know what you thought of it! It's basically seven minutes in heaven trope with a spin on it, lol. Hope you liked it! :)}
Responsibility

Natsu wasn't the most responsible person in the world.

He didn't claim to be, and for most of his life, he didn't try to go out of his way to prove people wrong when they called him out on it. He knew who he was, and so did his friends. He was often known as a troublemaker in school, mostly getting in fist fights to defend people being bullied. It ultimately ended with him in detention or suspended, but he didn't care.

He didn't always think ahead, but his heart was in the right place.

He just wanted to have a fun and enjoyable life, but sometimes he needed to be more careful and thoughtful, instead of wild and passionate. He had a fiery personality. Anyone could see that after spending five minutes with the man. It was what got him so much attention, some bad, but mostly good.

One night in particular stood out in Natsu's mind, seeing as it continuously popped into his head from time to time. He had been out drinking with his friends, celebrating his roommate's girlfriend's promotion. All their friends decided to go out to dinner, followed by a night out on the town.

They ended up in a bar they had never tried before, but a few minutes there was all it took for them to feel right at home. The music was great, the alcohol was excellent, and the atmosphere was warm and comfortable.

Just like the arms of the woman Natsu went home with that night.

Now, Natsu didn't normally do one-night stands. In fact, that was his first and only time bringing home a woman he barely knew. He couldn't help himself, not thinking about the consequences of his actions. Like stated before, he wasn't the most responsible person in the world.

Lucy.

She was someone Natsu hadn't been expecting. He met her out on the dance floor, the two clicking as soon as they made eye-contact. Of course, that was probably due to the fact they were both buzzed. He didn't believe in love at first sight, but whatever he felt that night, he swore it was close enough. It didn't take long for him to start falling for her.
Literally.

He fell flat on his face because he couldn't take his eyes on her, resulting in him tripping over someone's purse that was on the floor.

She laughed before helping him up, electricity buzzing through his veins as soon as they touched.

Lucy was beautiful, her golden hair pulled into a messy bun, a few locks loose to frame her face. Her eyes were dark and alluring, inviting him in when she batted her long lashes at him. He couldn't for the life of him remember what she was wearing or how many drinks they shared together after they met, only knowing she was someone he wanted to get to know.

After she helped him up, the two got to talking, joking and laughing about what happened to lead them both to that bar that night. Natsu got lost in her eyes, and later that night, they got lost in each other.

His friends had ditched him at some point in the night, and Lucy didn't bother looking for her friends. They shared a kiss after Lucy told him the song playing was her favorite, and they walked out of the bar hand-in-hand after a few more songs had passed.

They went to his apartment since his roommate would be with his girlfriend that night. They took an Uber to be safe, neither capable of driving. Not only that, it allowed them to continue their kiss from earlier without interruption.

Natsu still cringed to this day when he thought about it, hoping the Uber driver wasn't offended by their lack of self-control. He liked public displays of affection, but not when it came to making out. Holding hands and pecking were perfectly fine in his book, but he knew how gross it could be having people shoving their tongues into each other’s mouths with an audience around.

However, by then they were drunk, and Natsu didn't give a flying fuck about anyone but the gorgeous woman embracing him back.

The rest of the night was more of a blur for Natsu, but the parts he remembered, he treasured. Him and Lucy ended up in his bed, giggling and moaning as they explored each other, coming together in a way Natsu reserved for much later in a relationship. He had never had sex with someone so soon, but it didn't feel too fast when he was with Lucy, every moment an adventure.

Natsu wasn't too clear on their details of their night together, but he remembered the next morning all too well. She must have woken up first, the spot next to him warm but empty. He had just missed her, the woman taking off before he could wake up.

He remembered sitting up in his bed, his head pounding from a hangover. In his pained state, he didn't notice the note sitting on his nightstand, Natsu too busy getting up to grab something to dull the ache. He returned to his bed a moment later with two pills and a glass of water, using them to help him get better.

Since he didn't have work until later that day, Natsu slipped back under the sheets, deciding to deal with reality after he recovered.

However, that had been his downfall.

In his sleep, Natsu had knocked over his glass of water, ruining not only his phone, but the note a certain blonde left behind, containing her phone number.

Natsu had cursed when he woke up, trying but failing to fix his phone by putting it in a container of
rice. When he found the note, he knew it was useless. The only numbers he could make out was the area code and a '4', but six of the numbers were smudged beyond repair.

Lucy had wanted to keep in contact, but he had no way of reaching her.

Berating himself had done nothing to solve the problem, and trying to remember key details of that night were harder than he thought. The night was fuzzy in his memory, and the more he thought about it, the more distorted it got.

He was left with limited memories of her, but the ones he had, he held as tightly as he could.

There were a few physical reminders of their night together, but they didn't bring him much comfort. The floral perfume clinging to his sheets would eventually fade, and he would need to wash his shirt to get her shade of lipstick off his collar.

The only thing he could save was the sock she lost under his bed.

The scariest part of that morning for Natsu by far was he didn't even find a used condom anywhere around, but he had messed up before by flushing a condom down the toilet when drunk, so he hoped that was the case this time. He always had protected sex, so he was pretty sure they were covered last night.

Natsu wondered if Lucy would show up at his apartment later that day, hoping he would get a chance to successfully exchange numbers with her and get to know her better, but she didn't. She didn't even come back for her sock, which was a shame because it made her seem cute. Who wore snowman socks in the summer?

Only a weirdo would.

He held out hope that he would see her again, but, five long months passed, and he hadn't heard a word from her.

At first, Natsu thought to look her up, but he couldn't find her. It didn't help that he couldn't remember her last name, Natsu only knowing it started with an 'H'. He looked through the phone book without any luck, not finding anything remotely similar.

He couldn't go to her work to find her either. Not only would that come off as creepy, she didn't tell him where she worked. She just said she was in publishing, but that could mean anything. He didn't want to give up, but the more time that passed, the more discouraged he grew.

His friends told him to give up, to move on and learn from his mistakes.

"One night stands don't work out," Erza had said, giving him a sad shake of her head.

"She probably took one look at you in the morning and ran," Gray had laughed, earning a punch to the stomach from an angry Natsu.

"She left me her number, so clearly she wanted to talk!" Natsu argued back, but that didn't stop the teasing.

"Just get over it. It's not like y'all had something meaningful," Cana had said, her words being the most hurtful.

Natsu thought their encounter was meaningful, even if his friends didn't think so. They didn't hear the softness of her laughter or see the light in her eyes. Natsu felt a connection, and he wanted to
feel that way again.

On the third month, Natsu had given up on trying to find the mystery woman. If it wasn’t meant to be, he had to let her go. Thinking about her only made his longing worse. His skin still buzzed when he thought about her, his cheeks tingling pink when he remembered the sounds she made that night, but they would only be hazy memories in the back of his head.

He thought they had a true connection, but it wouldn't be the first time he made a mistake.

Two more months passed, those feeling just as long as the others. At least once a day, Lucy's face would flash into his mind, urging him to go find her. He ignored that voice in the back of his head, knowing it would only lead him to trouble. No good was going to come out of wondering what could have happened if he had her number, so he had to stop thinking about her, no matter how hard that seemed to be.

He was trying to be responsible, but that could only last so long.

"Fuuuuuuuck!" Natsu groaned, dragging his hand over his face as he stared at the smashed cake on the floor. Icing was everywhere, the box the cake came in crushed beyond repair. "Gray's gonna kill me!"

Gray had trusted Natsu to get the birthday cake for Erza's party, something Natsu had begged for. He wanted to show he was getting better when it came to doing things right, but old habits die hard.

What?

It wasn't his fault a fly was circling his head. He thought he could swat at it while balancing the cake with one hand. Clearly, he had been wrong, but he had good intentions.

"Damn it!" he grumbled, pulling out his phone to call the bakery again. He tried ordering a replacement cake, but the lady on the phone told him it would take at least six hours to prepare the same kind. The party would be over by then, so Natsu hung up and called the local grocery store, seeing what they could do.

Erza wasn't the biggest fan of sheet cake, but considering it was better than nothing, she would have to deal with it.

After placing his order, Natsu grabbed his jacket and headed to the store. It was cold outside, winter right around the corner. He didn't mind the cold, but he liked his new jacket and wanted to show it off as much as possible.

It was another irresponsible thing he had done, purchasing a jacket with a high price tag all because it had a cool dragon on the back. His friends had scolded him for his decision, so he wanted to show it was a good investment, wearing it whenever he could.

Despite things not working out with Lucy, he was glad that night happened. After it did, he tried making an effort with himself, trying to be better and more responsible. It didn't always work out, but he was trying, and that was what mattered.

However, even after showing them it was useful, they still called him dorky, saying the jacket was a crime against fashion. He responded in the way that came naturally to him. He flipped them off and told them they had no taste. That produced a laugh or two, his friends used to his behavior.

They all messed with each other, but it was only because they trusted and cared for one another.
Natsu wouldn't go pulling pranks on strangers, but he showed his love and appreciation for his friends by screwing with them, and they did the same.

Natsu sighed when he entered the grocery store, his legs giving him a good throb from the run. He lived four blocks away from the store he frequented a lot, so most of the time he walked. His car was in the shop, the rim bent after he let his little sister practice driving it.

Once again, Natsu wasn't very responsible, but he had good intentions.

He headed to the bakery section, frowning when he was told he would have to wait fifteen minutes before they put the finishing touches on the cake. He nodded, knowing there wasn't much he could do. He had an hour before he had to be at the party, meaning he was cutting it close, but he shouldn't be late.

Deciding he had nothing better to do, Natsu took to the aisles, wanting to get some light shopping done in the meantime. He found himself with the snacks, his belly growling as he looked over the different options.

Despite wanting to get only a few things, Natsu filled his cart with various foods, ranging from chips to cookies. His high metabolism combined with his regular exercise kept the weight off, but his friends warned one day he wouldn't be so lucky. Until that day came, he would engorge himself on all the desserts and treats he could get.

Natsu sent a text to Gray, asking if he needed anything from the store for the party. He lazily scanned the shelves around him, waiting to get a reply.

When his phone chirped at him, he checked his message, nodding at the short list of items Gray requested. He got to work, making his way out of the snack aisle towards the fruits and vegetables.

Erza was obsessed with strawberries, and apparently the ones Gray got were starting to go bad since he got them too early.

Natsu's eye twitched as he passed by an aisle, hearing the sound of a screaming baby not far away. It made his ears hurt, his teeth clenching as he moved on, hoping to get away from the loud sound quicker. His ears were sensitive, and he could only handle so much before he got irritated.

He didn't blame the child or their parents, knowing sometimes it couldn't be helped. However, that didn't mean he wanted to hear it. The crying served as a reminder he wasn't ready for children, something he had known for a while.

He didn't have the patience to be a parent yet, not to mention he was still working on being responsible. Maybe one day he would be better, but until then, he put the idea of having a kid on the back burner.

Besides, he would want to find a partner before he seriously considered having kids, and currently he didn't have anyone in his life. His last encounter had been roughly five months ago, and since then he hadn't so much as gone on a single date, let alone found someone he wanted to spend his life with.

Natsu took a deep breath before pushing down those ill thoughts, knowing he needed to be in a good mood for Erza's party. She was bound to be nervous seeing as she was finally introducing them to her boyfriend she had been hiding from them, so him being in a sour mood would only make things harder on his friend.

He cheered up when he found the items Gray requested, placing them gently in his cart before
making his way back to the bakery. It was almost time for the cake to be ready, and he wanted to get it and go check out as quickly as possible.

Natsu was two aisles away when he froze, eyes widening as he pulled his cart backwards, slowly peeking down the aisle he just passed. He thought his eyes were deceiving him, but he realized they were working just fine when he glanced to his side, shocked to see that stunning blonde hair draped down a woman's back.

He swallowed, knowing there was a good chance it wasn't Lucy. He had been fooled before, and each time he fell for it, it became harder to move on. Natsu considered just going, ignoring the woman for his own sanity, but his feet wouldn't budge, needing to verify it wasn't her before he could leave.

He blinked, throat tight as he turned his shopping cart towards the aisle, surprised when he was able to move. Natsu entered the aisle, only to stop again after a few steps. Clenching his teeth, he debated his options, knowing which was the logical choice and which one he wanted to make.

How many times had he gone out of his way to check to see if someone was indeed Lucy, only to find out he was wrong? He didn't know if he could take the disappointment again, and honestly, he was feeling a little pathetic at this point. Why couldn't he just let her go?

'Because,' he thought, frowning as he moved forward again. 'She left me her number. She wanted something more...'

Natsu swallowed before nodding to himself, knowing it was worth the slight disappointment to at least pass the woman to see. Lucy had wanted him to contact her. Though, he did wonder if she would be pissed he hadn't talked to her sooner.

She probably thought he blew her off, chalking it up to being just a one-night stand like his friends did. It couldn't be further from the truth, and knowing she was out there, thinking that of him, it made his stomach twist and his chest heavy.

He wanted to see her again, if only to make sure what he felt that night was real.

Natsu let out a growl of frustration as he looked over his shoulder, knowing he needed to get moving. He was going to drive himself crazy looking for her.

Natsu turned his head forward, ready to leave the aisle when he noticed the woman was looking at something on the aisle, her side facing him. His breath hitched, eyes fixed on her familiar face, his heart stopping for a second before resuming at a fast pace.

'It's... her.'

He rubbed his eyes, making sure he wasn't seeing things. He would recognize her face anywhere. She was glowing, her eyes soft as she grabbed a can to read the back of it. Natsu didn't notice anything but her face, shocked and frozen as he stared.

He wanted to say something, to wave or walk up to her, but his feet remained rooted to the floor. She was just as stunning as the night he met her, even in her slightly baggy shirt and sweatpants. As Natsu's eyes fell downwards, he smiled, thinking she looked cute in her comfortable clothing.

Natsu took a deep breath before forcing himself to open his mouth, but he didn't get a word out before his eyes were blown wide open.

Lucy hadn't done anything remarkable, merely reaching up to grab something from a higher shelf.
However, his attention was drawn to her stomach in an instant, the hem of her shirt rising just enough to reveal the very noticeable bump on her belly.

Natsu swore all the blood drained from his face in an instant. He found it hard to breathe, his chest constricting and stomach churning. The last time he had seen her, Lucy's stomach had been flat, no bump in sight. He wasn't an idiot, recognizing what had happened to her within seconds.

She was pregnant, and by the looks of it, she was quite a few months along.

Natsu's knuckles turned white as he gripped the handle of his cart, his whole body tense as he continued to stare. He didn't know what to say, his brain threatening to shut down at any minute. He struggled to comprehend what had happened despite knowing there was only one thing that could cause that to happen to her.

Lucy turned away, putting the item in her cart while also helping Natsu think. Once he lost sight of that bump, his mind started racing, trying to do the math in his head. He didn't have a lot of references to go on, none of his friends had been pregnant before, so he didn't know how long it took to show. Lucy's belly wasn't huge, but it wasn't small either.

He needed more time to process what he had just seen, but once he saw her take a step away from him, he panicked, shouting, "Wait!"

Lucy jolted, turning around to see Natsu standing there, breathing heavily while clinging to his cart. He looked frazzled, but that didn't stop a small smile from spreading over Lucy's face as she lifted a hand to him. "Oh, hey, what brings you here?"

Natsu couldn't respond, stunned by how much he missed her voice. It sounded so much better in person than his memories, so much clearer when he was sober.

He didn't have to say anything, Lucy chuckling to herself as she shook her head. "Silly question. Obviously you're shopping." She looked down at his cart, then back to his face. He hadn't said a word, his panicked expression remaining the same. She raised a brow, visibly uncomfortable as she added, "How... are you?"

Natsu opened his mouth, but nothing came out. He swallowed, slowly peeling his fingers from his cart before flexing them. They hurt from gripping the handle too long, his pulse in his throat as he tried getting control over himself. "I..."

He couldn't think of anything else to say. He didn't want small talk, he wanted answers. Natsu forced himself forward so they were closer, not wanting to shout across the aisle when he finally asked, "How far along are you?"

Lucy's eyes widened, shocked he would ask that without so much as a proper greeting. She placed a hand on her belly, her voice reserved as she said, "Almost five months."

The air left Natsu's lungs without warning, causing him to struggle to catch his breath. That had been the answer he was dreading, but no matter how irresponsible Natsu was, no matter how much he wanted to be selfish and live his life for him instead of a kid, he had to own up to his actions and take responsibility.

He spoke around the lump forming in his throat, wondering what his parents were going to think when he told them. He doubted they would freak out more than he was. He was ready to pass out at any moment. "Is..." He straightened up, voice tight but firm. He needed to know, even if part of him was scared of the answer.
"Is... is it mine?"

Lucy blinked twice before looking where Natsu's eyes fell, right to her belly. She immediately broke out into laughter, shaking her head as she covered her mouth with a hand. "No, Natsu," she said, light flickering in her eyes, amused by the shocked expression spreading over his face. "They're not yours."

Natsu gaped as she continued laughing, clearly getting a kick out of his reaction. He almost huffed in annoyance, but her next words made his world come to a stop.

"They're not even mine."

Natsu's jaw dropped, unable to form a sentence for a second. He missed it the first time, be he caught it the second. "You, they're?" He looked down at her stomach, brows pinching together. "I... don't get it?"

Was it a costume? Halloween had come and gone, but maybe Lucy got a kick out of wearing a fake baby bump around town? He remembered thinking she was funny when they shared their night together, but he didn't think she had that kind of sense of humor.

Lucy smiled, lifting her hand to push some loose locks of hair out of her face. Her cheeks were red from laughing, the woman taking Natsu's breath away once again without trying to. "I'm a surrogate," she said, giving him a moment to digest that before adding, "One of my friends can't have kids, so I'm helping."

Natsu's gaze fell to her belly again, his tension slowly fading as he realized he was not going to be a father. He wasn't ready for that. He already knew it, but coming face to face with the possibility made it all too clear to him. He needed more time before he wanted to go down that path.

"I'm having her twins," Lucy said, snapping Natsu back to reality.

He looked up at her, unable to wipe the look of surprise off his face. "Oh?"

She nodded, lightly patting her belly before nodding towards the shelves. "Yeah. These little guys want to eat all the time, so I've been trying to find healthy stuff so I don't gain too much weight."

"You look great!" Natsu blurted out, immediately cringing when he startled her. "Sorry," he mumbled, clearing his throat before awkwardly tugging at the collar of his jacket. "So, you're having two boys?"

Lucy shrugged. "I think so. Doctor can make out one of them as a boy for sure, but the other's always hiding. Their dad thinks they're both going to be boys, but the mom's hoping for one of each."

"Th-that's cool," Natsu started, unsure what he should say.

He finally found Lucy, and he didn't know what to do. Seeing her pregnant had caught him off guard, and to find out the kid, no, kids weren't even hers? It was a bit too much for him, but he knew better than to turn around and run.

Natsu couldn't help but steal another glance at her belly, finding the whole situation strange. He had been drunk the night they met, but he thought he might have remembered if she mentioned being a surrogate.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Natsu asked, seeing the confusion mar Lucy's face. "That night? I don't
think you mentioned anything about a pregnancy."

Lucy snorted, her lips tugging into a soft smile as she tilted her head. "I didn't think that was the best thing to say to a guy I was trying to impress," she said. "I—"

"Excuse me."

Lucy and Natsu both turned to see an older gentleman trying to squeeze by them. They both muttered apologizes while Natsu pushed his cart to her side of the aisle, getting out of the way for the man and anyone else who wanted to pass.

That put him closer to Lucy, merely a foot or two away. He felt that tension again, but Lucy's chuckle eased him once more.

"Anyways... I thought you'd run off if I told you, so, I figured I'd keep it to myself. It didn't happen until a week later. I would have told you... if you called."

"Shit." Natsu cringed, remembering he was the one who left her hanging. She had left her number, leaving it up to him to decide if he wanted to pursue her or not. He could only imagine how she felt when he never called her.

If he had been in her shoes, he would have felt pretty crummy.

"About that, I—"

Lucy shook her head, cutting him off. "It's fine, I promise. I'm sure you had your reasons for not calling, and I'm okay with that. I've already accepted it was nothing more, so there's no reason to feel bad." When Natsu didn't look convinced, she said, "Seriously, it's alright."

"But that's not it," he pleaded, the tension vanishing as he explained his morning after. "I had this huge headache, so I took a painkiller to help, but I was stupid and left the water on the nightstand and I never saw the note before and then I must have kicked or knocked over the water when I went back to sleep, 'cause when I woke up the note was soaked and I couldn't read the number to save my life."

He grumbled as he pulled out a phone from his pocket. "And then I had to get this thing because I ruined my phone, but honestly I was more pissed about not gettin' your number."

He met Lucy's eyes, seeing them wide but not angry. Most of what he said was rambling, but she followed along just fine. She breathed out through her nose before slowly nodding, her smile returning to her face. "So, you did want to call me?"

Natsu nodded without hesitation. "Yes. I even tried to look for ya when I couldn't figure out your number, but I couldn't find anything helpful."

"Sorry?" Lucy said, giving him a shrug.

Natsu shook his head, knowing she had nothing to be sorry for. "It was my bad. I really did wanna call you." When he saw her blush, his confidence grew. "I had a lot of fun with you, and I thought, maybe we could, I dunno... Get to know each other?"

"Sober," he quickly added, a nervous chuckle following. "I liked drinking with you, but I'd rather hang out with you sober."

Lucy bit her bottom lip before nodding. "I would've liked that too."
It took every ounce of energy Natsu had not to let his shoulders fall. "Would've?" He tried keeping the disappointment from his tone, but it was no use. 'Does that mean I'm too late? She doesn't wanna see me anymore?'

Lucy leaned back a few inches, gesturing to her belly. "Well, I'm sure this isn't what you were wanting."

Natsu shook his head, deciding honest was the best policy. "It's not... but I don't mind."

"You don't?"

"Nah." He grinned, this time the expression coming naturally to him. "I still wanna hang out with you, if that's okay?" He wanted to see if something between them was a possibility. He remembered liking her, and clearly she was a generous person if she was willing to let her friend use her body to make a baby.

Plus, it wasn't her kids she was carrying, meaning once she delivered those babies, she wouldn't be a mom. He didn't have anything against mothers, but he wasn't ready to settle down like that right now. He had a lot of living he wanted to do for himself before having children of his own.

If he had a kid he would do everything in his power to make sure they had a great life, but since it wasn't on the table, he didn't have to think about it now.

"Oh... okay," Lucy said, giving him a soft nod. "But only if you want to."

He didn't hesitate. "I do." With his phone still in hand, Natsu reached out and handed it to her. "Can you put your number in? That way there's no chance of me losing it?"

Lucy chuckled, shaking her head at herself as she tapped at his screen. A few seconds later, a vibration came from her purse in her cart. "I sent me a message, so there's no excuses this time." Her voice held a teasing tone as she winked.

Natsu couldn't help but grin, accepting his phone as his day drastically improved. He almost forgot what he was at the grocery store for. 'I can spare a few more minutes... for Lucy.'

"Can I ask when you're due?" Natsu looked at her belly, then back into her eyes. He was merely curious, wondering how long she would be pregnant.

"April of next year," Lucy answered, not minding the question. "But part of me wants them to come out sooner."

"Why's that?" he asked, raising a brow.

Lucy snorted before kicking out one of her feet. "My feet are starting to swell, the morning sickness is not a good way to wake up to, and I can't eat half the stuff I like."

She sighed before gesturing to her face. "And people keep saying, 'oh, look how you're glowing!'. What they don't know is that's just sweat! I'm constantly burning up, even in December."

"Is that why you don't have a jacket on?" he asked, trying to smother his laughter. Despite Lucy seeming frustrated, she was also cute. He hadn't spent time around pregnant people before, but he had a feeling it was going to be an interesting ride hanging out with Lucy while she was going through this adventure.

Lucy nodded, tugging on her shirt to lower it more. "And I'm about to break and just go buy some
maternity clothes. I've been trying to put it off for as long as I can, but I think I need them now. I can't even wear my dresses anymore."

She frowned before a small smile surfaced on her face. "But it's for a good cause. My friend's been wanting to start her family for so long, and I didn't like seeing her sad."

"That's really nice of you," Natsu said, earning a shrug from her.

"She would do it for me if the roles were reversed."

Light flickered in Natsu's eyes, his chest warming at the thought. He valued friendship and family above all else, and to see how far Lucy would go for a friend, that only made him like her more.

Lucy took a deep breath, adjusting her feet a few times in an attempt to make them not hurt as much. She looked up at Natsu before holding back a laugh, finding his earlier reaction amusing. "So, you really thought you knocked me up or something?"

Natsu's shoulders shook as he suppressed a laugh. "Yeah, that scared the fuck outta me."

"I bet." She pushed her hair back before tying it up, all while keeping her eyes on him. "If you had though, I would've come back. Whether you called or not."

"That's good to know." Natsu would have hated having a kid out there without knowing about it. He believed Lucy when she said she would have told him. She seemed like her heart was in the right place, though she also seemed way more responsible than him.

Before Natsu could open his mouth to say anything else, a voice came over the loudspeaker, calling for him.

"Natsu to the bakery, your cake is ready."

Natsu looked up at the ceiling until the voice cut out, his gaze falling on Lucy. "Shit, I gotta go."

Natsu nodded, eager to hang out with her as soon as they were both available. "I get off work at three. We can grab a late lunch? Or dinner?"

"Dinner sounds great." As if to solidify her point, her stomach growled, causing both of them to laugh. "I swear, I haven't felt full in months." She looked back at the shelf before grabbing another can of food, one she had picked out earlier.

"Well, then let's go to a buffet tomorrow?" Natsu suggested, wearing a toothy grin. "There's one a mile away from here. They got the best steak and potatoes."

Lucy almost moaned from the thought. "Deal! Meet you there at six?"

Natsu didn't bother concealing his blush. "It's a date."

With a giddy smile, Natsu said his goodbyes before racing off towards the bakery, almost laughing at himself when he had to go back to the aisle to retrieve his cart he had forgotten. Lucy was no
longer in the same aisle, but he didn't mind. She was no longer a fleeting memory, a one-night stand that would lead to nowhere.

He had a date with the woman that made his heart race and chest warm.

He was even happier knowing she wanted to see him again too. He hadn't been too late, and despite him messing up the note she left the morning after, fate seemed to want them together.

Natsu was almost glad he smashed Erza's cake, otherwise he wouldn't have wound up in that store at the perfect time.

Maybe, just maybe, he didn't always have to be responsible.

Chapter End Notes

In case anyone was wondering, Lucy's being a surrogate for Levy and Gajeel.

I headcannon that someone had a back up cake because they figured Natsu was going to mess up somehow. And if he managed to pull it off, then that just meant more cake to go around!

I actually started writing this in December of 2017, but I never finished it and forgot about it. I recently found it and decided to try again at it, but I rewrote what I had because I wasn't satisfied with it. Originally this was going to be called 'Surrogate', but I figured that would give the name away immediately, so I changed it to something more vague. I hope you liked it. I wanted something lighthearted and funny, and I hope I delivered. (Haha, pregnancy pun) Anyways, let me know what you thought of it!

Happy Valentine's Day! Or as I'm calling it, Happy it's totally okay to be single Day! Hope you're having a great day regardless of your relationship status.

For CHDH: I feel like I'm almost done with the next chapter. I just have a scene or two to write to finish it up.

For FTGO!: I'm gonna be honest, it's not coming along as well, but that's because the next chapter isn't as interesting to me. I kinda wanna skip it, but there's parts that need to be told in order for the story to faze into the next part. I'll keep playing around with it until I find something I like.

Thank you for reading! Let me know what you thought! Sorry I haven't been updating as much lately, but life is busy, but I'm still gonna try to update when I can! Thank you again! Have a great day/night!
Lucy stood in the dark bathroom, taking ragged breaths as she failed to calm her racing heart. Her friends were just messing with her. There was no way a demon lived inside the mirrors, waiting until someone said just the right thing to set them free.

Despite being sure of herself, Lucy felt her hands shaking as she gripped the edge of the sink. It was her fifteenth birthday party, and all of her friends were there. Well, almost all of them. Natsu had shown up, but he left shortly after Erza finished telling a scary story to go check on his cat two blocks over. Lucy hadn't seen him since, even while they were playing 'Truth or Dare'.

Lucy had foolishly chosen dare, thinking her friends were going to make her do something embarrassing. She had no clue they would want to freak her out, sending her into the bathroom with the lights out, telling her to chant 'E.N.D.' three times while staring into the mirror.

Her throat was tight and her palms were damp, every nerve in Lucy's body telling her something was wrong. She didn't feel alone in that bathroom, but she knew she was imagining things. Her friends were right outside the door, probably pressing their ears to the wood to hear her chant those words.

The words that supposedly summoned a demon who took pleasure in feasting on souls.

"It's just a dumb game," she whispered to herself, forcing her eyes to fix with the mirror. She couldn't see her reflection very well, but she didn't mind. All she had to do was say the words three times and she'd be done with it.

She took a deep breath before beginning.

"E.N.D."

Lucy gulped, wondering why the hairs on the back of her neck and arms felt like they were standing up. She took a shaky breath, reminding herself if was just a game. No demon was going to burst out of the mirror and attack her. Her friends were just teasing her, giving her a hard time since she was the birthday girl.
"E... N... D."

Lucy released her breath, her lower lip beginning to tremble as trepidation washed over her.

'It's just a game... Just a silly game...'

Lucy squared her shoulders, her eyes narrowing at her reflection in the mirror. She would only be scared if she allowed herself to be, so, she summoned every bit of confidence she could muster before saying, "E. N..."

Lucy held her breath for a few seconds, almost sighing in relief when she said, "$D."

For a split second, Lucy wanted to smile. She got through it, and nothing bad had happened. However, in the blink of an eye, the shower curtain was ripped open as a growl emanated from her right.

Lucy whirled towards the noise, eyes only able to focus on the dark figure stepping out of the tub. She couldn't make out any features, only seeing red eyes and horns sticking out from its head. She did what any logical teenage girl would do in that situation.

She screamed.

Lucy couldn't hear anything but the sound of her scream as she scrambled to the door knob, wondering why it wouldn't twist. She hadn't locked it, but the thing wouldn't budge no matter how much strength she put behind it.

She turned just in time to see the large arms from the demon reaching for her, making her heart stop for a moment. Lucy didn't have time to think, reacting as quickly as she could.

Lucy lifted her leg before jutting it out as fast and hard as possible, kicking the demon in the side. A loud grown tore from its throat, but she didn't care, she flew after it, throwing punches at its face and chest and anywhere else she could reach.

She wasn't dying in her bathroom. She had too much to live for.

"LUCY STOP!" the demon cried out, the voice catching Lucy's off guard.

She knew that voice. It belonged to...

Suddenly the door burst open and the lights flicked on, Lucy's eyes widening as she adjusted to the brightness.

There, sitting under her small frame was one of her friends, Natsu Dragneel, wearing fake glowing glasses and the horns he used for Halloween last year.

Lucy gasped, unable to react as she looked over the bloody lip and various bruises to his face she had given him. She thought that was the worst of it, but as soon as her friends got her off him and tried to stand him up, she realized she was dead wrong.

"Fuck!" Natsu held his side, tears clinging to the corners of his eyes as he grimaced. He had to lean on Gray, the pain in his side too much to bear. "The hell Lucy?!"

"I... I..." She stared in horror, wondering what had happened. "But, the... E.N.D."

"It was a prank!" he yelled, screaming when Erza tried inspecting his side. That only made the pain worse.
"Should we tell someone?" Gray asked, causing Levy to duck out and find Lucy's parents. They would know what to do.

Lucy backed into the corner while her friends helped Natsu leave the bathroom, the boy barely suppressing his sobs as he moved. She didn't bother holding back her tears, guilt and anger flaring up inside her.

When they left the bathroom, it was easy for Lucy to put things together. They wanted Natsu to scare her by pretending to be E.N.D., but she got carried away and beat Natsu up because she thought he was really a demon.

She didn't know if she broke a bone or worse, but Natsu was clearly in pain. She had seen Natsu cry a total of two times since they met three years ago. He was a tough guy, but even he had his limits.

"What did I do?" Lucy asked, receiving no answer. She could hear her father yelling while her mother told her friends to help him in her car. They were going to the hospital because whatever Lucy did to him, it was bad.

She swallowed as she forced herself to leave the bathroom, hoping he wouldn't be mad at her for hurting him. It was just an accident, one that could have been avoided if they didn't pull that stupid prank on her.

Hours passed before Lucy got an update about Natsu's condition. Even then, it didn't make Lucy feel any better. Her heart had dropped when her mother told her what happened, how Natsu had a cracked rib from her kick. She didn't mean to hurt her friend, convinced her life was in danger and the only way to save herself was to fight.

She had never been in a situation like that before, so she had no idea how she would have reacted.

Lucy's party had been cancelled immediately after the incident. Her friends' parents came to pick them up, but they all more or less told her the same thing before they left.

"It wasn't your fault. We shouldn't have pulled that prank."

Lucy waited until everyone was out of her house before crying again, the pain she felt in her heart only increasing when her mom came back to give her the news. Lucy spent the rest of the night in her room, avoiding texts and calls from her friends while she buried herself under her blanket.

She didn't want to talk to anyone, feeling guilty and empty.

Not only did she hurt one of her friends, which was tearing her up inside, she hurt the one she harbored feelings for. She already thought she didn't have good odds with ending up with Natsu. Now she knew those slim chances were gone. There was no way he was going to want to date the girl who almost broke his rib!

She hadn't even touched her birthday presents, feeling undeserving of them. Her birthday cake was put into the fridge for a later date, Lucy hating the idea of celebrating while her friend was in pain.

Despite Lucy wanting to stay in her room until she grew old and died, her mom came to her the next morning, knocking on her door incessantly.

"Lucy, sweetie. You have to come out now."

Lucy didn't respond, her body curling into a tight ball while the knocking continued.
"You have to go see Natsu."

Grumbling, Lucy said, "He doesn't want to see me."

"You don't know that. Come on, you need to check on your friend."

"He'll be fine if I stay here," Lucy urged, but her mother wasn't having it.

"I already called his father. He said Natsu would love to see you."

Lucy's eyes shot open, but she could only see darkness from under her covers. Slowly, she peeled them off, her voice hesitant as she asked, "He... does?"

The awkward pause of silence was enough to give Lucy her answer. Her mother never called. Natsu didn't want to see her.

"I'm sure he wants to see you."

"UGH!" Lucy buried herself in her safe cocoon again, wondering how hard it would be to finish high school online instead of facing him in school come Monday morning. She knew he wouldn't hate her, Natsu could never do that, but she doubted he wanted to spend time with her anymore.

Or worse, she would be treated like Gray and Gajeel from now on. She liked the way Natsu teased her now, but she didn't know if she could handle all the insults and random fights that seemed to ensue whenever the three were around each other. She feared he would see her as an opponent from now on, wanting to challenge her strength instead of conversate like a civil human being.

If there was one thing Natsu hated — besides cars, it was being bested.

"Just go talk to him," her mother said, reminding her she hadn't left yet. "You should at least go check on him."

Lucy groaned, knowing her mom was right. What kind of friend hurts someone, then ignores them? However, she couldn't exactly call what she was doing as ignoring. Natsu hadn't tried reaching out to her once, making her less enthusiastic to see him.

She didn't want her best friend angry at her, whether it was from an accident or not.

"Lucy, you should—"

"Alright!" she yelled, cutting her mom off. "Just, give me a minute."

A beat of silence passed before Layla said, "I'll be downstairs when you're ready."

Lucy took a deep breath, hoping she wasn't making a mistake by going to see him. She had never dealt with something like this before. The closest was when Gajeel and Natsu fought too hard and Natsu ended up with a dislocated shoulder. Even then, the boy hadn't cried like he did yesterday. Natsu had proceeded to challenge Gajeel to a fight every single time they saw each other for a solid three months before he finally calmed down.

Lucy didn't want to share the same fate.

Despite being nervous to see him, Lucy didn't try to do anything special with herself before leaving her house. She wore plain jeans and a shirt, her hair pulled into a ponytail while her face was bare, not a trace of makeup in sight.
She didn't want Natsu thinking... well, she wasn't sure what she was even thinking. There was part of her that said tone it down, so she did, showing up to his house as plain as she possibly could.

Lucy stepped out of her car, thinking her mom was going to come in with her. Instead, she was told to call her when she was done before her mom drove away, leaving Lucy all by herself.

'I'm only a few blocks away from the house. If I leave now, I could be back in the safety of my bed in minutes...'

Her stomach twisted as she turned, looking up at Natsu's house. It wasn't nearly as big as her home, but it didn't have to be. The home was filled with warmth and comfort, but today all she felt was a chill running down her spine as she forced herself up to their porch.

She lifted her fist, holding it there far too long before knocking on the door. It was too soft, no one hearing it on the other side. After a moment, Lucy knocked harder, wanting to get it over with.

If she was going to become Natsu's newest opponent, she might as well find out sooner rather than later.

Lucy's heart stuttered when she heard the door unlock before it swung open, revealing a man that easily towered over her. He was large and strong, but she didn't fear him for a second. Igneel was as soft as a teddy bear, even if sometimes he looked as fierce as a dragon.

"Lucy!" Igneel widened the door, ushering her in. "What a surprise!"

She already suspected, but Igneel's words confirmed it. Her mother hadn't called ahead to see if it was okay for Lucy to check in on Natsu. That only made her nervousness grow.

"Good morning, I... I was wondering if... umm..." Lucy twisted her lips in what she hoped was a smile, but it felt unnatural. Taking a shaky breath, Lucy whispered, "Is he home?"

"Natsu?" Igneel asked, raising a brow.

Lucy almost wanted to scoff. Of course she was referring to Natsu. It wasn't as if she came to see his older brother. "Yes."

"Yeah, he's up in his room." Igneel looked up as if he could see through the ceiling where his son's room was. "He hasn't been up yet. So lazy."

Lucy bit her tongue, stopping herself from saying he had a good excuse to stay in bed. He had a cracked rib after all.

Lucy jolted when she felt a hand on her head, ruffling her hair out of place. "By the way, I laughed so hard when I found out what you did."

"You what?" Lucy's eyes widened, shocked to hear Igneel laughed at his son's condition.

"I almost split my side laughing so hard." He grinned, shaking his head. "Seriously though, Natsu deserved everything he got. He shoulda known not to mess with a girl like you." For added emphasis, Igneel patted her head before laughing. "You're one tough cookie."

"Thank... you?" Lucy furrowed her brows, wondering what world she woke up in. She never thought Igneel would have taken her side over what happened, especially when it went against his son's actions.
"Don't worry about it," Igneel said, removing his hand when he saw the confusion on Lucy's face. "Natsu's tough too. This won't hold him back."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Lucy mumbled under her breath, but Igneel's sharp ears picked it up.

"He's not mad at you or anything," he added, trying to see if that made her feel better. When she didn't look convinced, he sighed, all traces of humor wiped away. "He already told me he's not upset at you. Even told me he thought it was pretty cool you were able to fight. He thought you were gonna pee your pants but you sure showed him!"

Lucy paled, her jaw falling as she gaped at Igneel. "He thought I'd pee myself?!" She almost groaned, convinced she had zero chances of anything more happening between her and Natsu. He clearly didn't think of her as anything more if he imagined her peeing herself from a prank. Either that, or he didn't have much confidence in her in general.

She didn't know which was worse.

"Can I see him?" Lucy asked, her shoulders and chest feeling heavy. She wanted to make sure he wasn't angry at her, and also give him a piece of her mind.

Igneel smiled at the fire in her eyes, stepping out of the way as he nodded. "You know where to find him."

He watched as the girl made her way up the stairs, hoping things would be okay between them. Out of all of Natsu's friends, Lucy was definitely his favorite. She kept his son levelheaded most of the time, while also making him smile more than he ever had before.

It would be a shame for them to throw away their strong friendship over a prank gone wrong.

Lucy would have knocked on Natsu's door as soon as she made it to his room, but the door was wide open, letting her peek inside. The room was unsurprisingly a mess, dirty clothes thrown on the floor while a plate of half-eaten food was placed on his desk. Pictures littered the walls, as well as random items he collected over the years.

Lucy liked to tease him by calling him a hoarder, but secretly she found it endearing. He treasured memories, especially those built with his friends.

She swallowed before her eyes fell to his bed, seeing some pink tufts of hair sticking out from his blanket. By the even rise and fall, Lucy figured he was fast asleep. It didn't surprise her in the least bit. He was always a heavy sleeper. It was one of the reasons he was usually late to things, his alarm strong enough to get him up on the first try.

Knowing he wasn't going to wake up from a simple knock, Lucy stepped into his room, just like she had so many times before. Unlike every other time when she felt welcomed, Lucy felt uncomfortable, hoping she wasn't intruding. She stepped over to his bed, hesitating before grabbing the covers.

She lowered them just enough to see Natsu's face. If it weren't for the new bruises decorating his skin, she would have thought he looked peaceful. Instead of beating herself up again, she continued pulling the blanket down. Once a shoulder was revealed, Lucy took to shaking it, hoping the movement was enough to wake him up.

A sleepy groan and a hand swatting at her later, Natsu was blinking, his brows pinched together as he tried adjusting to the light. As soon as he looked up and made out Lucy's face, he smiled, but that look didn't last long. Natsu tried moving, but a wince tore from him at the painful action.
Lucy cringed, taking a step back to give him space. She felt her heart drop at the look of pain crossing his face, convinced it was a bad idea to come. "I'm sorry," she mumbled, turning to leave.

However, before she could take a step, Natsu's hoarse voice called out, rough from sleep. "Wait!"

"I shouldn't have come," Lucy said, scrambling towards the door before she heard Natsu's sharp intake of breath. She looked over her shoulder, seeing the pained look on his face as he tried getting out of bed.

That stopped her, Lucy turning around just as Natsu mumbled, "Don't leave, please?"

"Will you stop trying to move?" Lucy asked, earning an immediate nod. She sighed, taking a step closer to him, watching as he relaxed, propping himself up against the headboard. She should have felt relief he wanted her to stay, but upon seeing the dark bruise over his ribs, all Lucy could do was tear up once again.

Natsu froze, eyes wide before he waved his hands in front of him. "Please don't cry! You know I'm not good with that!"

"I'm sorry," was all Lucy could mutter before the tears fell, the girl hurrying to wipe them away. "It's just—" She swallowed, the guilt swarming every ounce of her once again. "I didn't mean to..."

"I'm not mad," Natsu rushed out, managing a calm smile despite the obvious pain he was still in. His eyes crinkled, but it wasn't from laughter like usual. "Promise."

"How?" Lucy asked, earning a stunned look from him.

"How?" he asked, cocking his head. "How could I be mad at you? Lucy, you didn't do anything wrong."

"But you said—"

Natsu cringed, remembering those words he shouted at her. "I wasn't thinking rationally. I felt bad before we even got to the hospital. I'm the one who should be apologizing to you."

Lucy shook her head, but Natsu wasn't having it. "I ruined your birthday. It was my idea, everyone said it could backfire, but I didn't listen. I just wanted to give you a little scare."

He chuckled, but Lucy didn't miss the way his hand pressed against his side soon after. "I didn't think for a second you'd kick my ass. I gotta admit," he grinned, "that was pretty awesome!"

Lucy couldn't stop the flush that spread over her face. Thankfully if he asked, she could blame it on her tears, though they had started drying up. "Why am I surprised you'd think that?"

Natsu shrugged, light flickering behind his mischievous eyes. "Beats me."

They both paused before laughing at his poor choice of words. Lucy wiped away the last stubborn tears, needing a deep breath. "So you're really not mad at me?"

Natsu shook his head. "I was never really mad at you. I was just in pain when I said those things. Honestly, I can't even remember exactly what I said."

"I believe your exact words were, 'fuck, the hell Lucy'," she said, causing him to frown.

"I'm sorry. I promise I didn't mean them."
"I believe you," Lucy said, seeing the new pain in his eyes. It wasn't caused by anything physical, but as soon as she assured him, the pain started vanishing. "So why didn't you just text me or something to let me know you weren't mad?"

Natsu blinked a few times before he gave her a confused look. "Don't you remember? I said I forgot my phone at home."

"No, you said you needed to go check on Happy," Lucy said, looking around to see if she could spot the blue feline, but he was nowhere in sight.

Natsu shook his head. "That was just a ruse. I never left your house, but I really did leave my phone at home." He paused before pointing at his desk. "I left it there. Pretty sure it's dead by now."

"You didn't charge it when you got home?" Lucy asked, walking over to the desk to find it. As she did, Natsu continued talking, but his voice became background noise when something else caught her attention.

"I was so tired I just crashed, but I was planning on texting you when I woke up. I promise, I just slept more than I thought I would, but you came over, so I—"

"Is this for me?" Lucy asked, whirling around. She held up a folded piece of paper, decorated with brightly colored stars around her name, written in his handwriting.

Natsu paled in an instant, his stomach dropping. Lucy tried opening it, but he shouted, unable to stop himself. "Don't!"

"What is it?" she asked, listening to him. She stopped, but she didn't let go of it. Clearly it was meant for her. It wasn't like Natsu knew anyone else named Lucy.

"It's uh, not finished yet."

"Oh." Lucy looked down at it, curiosity bubbling inside her. 'What could be in there?'

"It's just a birthday card," Natsu said, failing to sound nonchalant. A blush slowly crept over his nose, spreading to his cheeks. "It's a, a rough draft."

"My birthday was yesterday," Lucy started, wondering why he hadn't brought it with him to her party. Then again, he forgot his phone. He's always so forgetful. But it's kind of cute. 'She smiled before giving him a look. "Did you procrastinate?"

Natsu gave her an awkward smile as he nodded. "Yeah. Surprised?"

"Not at all." She ran her thumb over the paper, wanting nothing more than to open it. "Why can't I just look at it?"

"You're a writer," Natsu said out of nowhere, throwing her off.

Lucy blushed, her heartbeat speeding up. She had only told Levy and Natsu about her dream to become an author, but they hardly discussed it. "I write, but I don't think I can consider myself a writer."

Natsu snorted before giving her a genuine grin. "You're the best damn writer I've ever seen." His eyes fell to the paper before returning her gaze. "Anyways, I'm sure you understand not wanting someone to see your rough draft?"
Lucy nodded, finally able to put the paper down. "True."

She missed Natsu's breath of relief, instead giving him a teasing smile. "But I want it soon, okay?"

Natsu nodded, his own heart thrumming out of control. "Yeah, you got it."

After a moment of silence, Natsu asked, "So, do you wanna hang out? Or do you have to leave soon?"

"My mom dropped me off," she said, letting him know her answer.

Natsu looked down at his bed before scooting over, trying to muffle his groans. "Come here. Grab the remote first though?"

Lucy let out a breath before doing as he asked, grabbing the remote so they could watch TV together. It turned into a typical Sunday morning, Lucy and Natsu hanging out, doing nothing in particular except share each other's company.

"Maybe we could train together one day," Natsu said once during a commercial break, causing Lucy to laugh, accepting her fate.

"I guess it wouldn't be the worst thing." She wished Natsu saw her as more than a friend or fighting buddy, but she decided those were better than nothing at all.

Natsu chuckled, leaning back against the headboard before resting his hand between them, his breath stopping when he accidentally set it against Lucy's arm, but she didn't jerk away, acting as if it wasn't there.

He stayed frozen for a moment before relaxing, happy with the small connection. His eyes flitted over to the folded piece of paper a few times, thankful Lucy hadn't opened it.

Maybe one day we would be brave enough to give her that note, confessing his feelings for her. Maybe one day he could ask her to be his girlfriend, and maybe even kiss her or hug her longer than he could get away with as just friends.

Natsu didn't know, but he held onto hope. He didn't care how long it took. He wanted to wait until the moment was right before telling her how he felt.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I'm happy I was able to participate in Nalu fluff week 2019! I'll have another one-shot up on Thursday! I hope you check it out as well!
Please, let me know what you thought! :D Was it fluffy enough?

Yeah, I absolutely refuse to do any of those 'say their name three times' games. I'm too scared to find out if they're real or not.

Has anyone ever accidentally hurt a friend? When I was a kid (probably 10ish), I was hitting stuff with a baseball bat. They were these small green ball things that fell from a nearby tree, so I would toss them up in the air then swing. Well, my friend's little brother (probably 8ish) walked too close while I was doing that and I hit him in the forehead. It didn't cause any major damage, only split the skin and he had to go to the
hospital. He was up playing soon after. I remember crying as soon as it happened and some of his family members actually tried comforting me since it was clearly an accident. I didn't come out of my house for a few days after that. I felt too guilty. The only reason I finally left was because he ended up coming to my house and asking if I could come play with them. He offered me two yellow Lifesavers and I realized he wasn't mad at me, so I went to hang out with my friends again. There's not really a point to the story besides be careful? Watch your surroundings, whether you have the potential weapon or not.
Con Crush

Chapter Notes

Submission for Nalu Fluff Week 2019. Day Five: Cosplay

Summary: What's a convention without catching a little crush on a random person? Lucy expects to get another crush at this convention, but she never expected anything more would come out of it, until she met him.

Rated T for foul language and some adult humor.

Genre: Fluff, Humor, Friendship, Romance

Word Count: 8K

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lucy clapped along with the other guests in the room as the speakers ended their panel. She smiled, enriched after hearing people discussing her favorite game. Sure, some people criticized it too much, but mostly the conversations were in favor of it.

After standing, Lucy had to pull her jean skirt down which had ridden up. It was a tad too short, but it wasn't like Lucy wasn't used to wearing short skirts or shorts. However, usually she wasn't also wearing a tight tank top that didn't even reach her belly button along with them.

Grabbing her purse and replica Tonfa Blasters, Lucy filed out of the room with the other con-goers. Once she reached the main lobby, the cosplayer headed for the escalators, wanting to get to her next panel in time.

There she would listen as experienced cosplayers discuss different ways to make weapons, which would be helpful for Lucy seeing as she wanted to make her props next time instead of hire someone off Etsy to create it for her.

Between rent and other bills, she needed to find a cheaper alternative if she wished to keep dressing up every few months for anime conventions.

 Luckily for her, she didn't need to spend much gas getting to Magnolia, seeing as it was twenty miles away from her. She had moved to Onibus after accepting a job as a junior editor of their newspaper. It was a small job, but Lucy knew she had to work her way up before she could get the attention from the bigger names in the industry.

"Hi!"

Lucy jolted when a small boy jumped in front of her, holding his phone up. "Can I take a picture of you?!

That brought a smile to Lucy's face. She took a few steps back to prepare herself. She dropped her purse, attaching her Tonfa Blasters to strike a pose. While the boy took a few pics, others gathered, taking their own before moving along.
Lucy nodded and thanked them before collecting her things, blushing at the compliments thrown her way about her cosplay. She hadn't thought it would get as much attention since Rave Master didn't have a huge fandom, but to her surprise a lot of people seemed to recognize her.

It helped that she was dressed as the main female character, named—
"ELIE!"

Lucy whirled around, stunned by a voice yelling her character's name. Before she could react, a guy came charging at her, stopping inches away before grinning. "Hey! Your cosplay is awesome!"

Lucy blinked, frozen in place for a moment before she looked over the strange enthusiastic man. Normally Lucy didn't pay attention to the color of people's eyes, but he wore colored contacts, making the purple stand out. His silver hair did him no favors either, making his appearance confusing until realization hit.

Her eyes widened as her mouth opened, recognizing him as her partner in the anime. "Oh, um. Hi, Haru?"

That seemed to make him light up as his grin turned toothy, his canines appearing sharper than normal. He stuck out a hand, his voice at a reasonable volume as he said, "Nice ta meet ya! I didn't think anyone else was gonna dress up for Rave Master."

"Me either," Lucy admitted, shaking his large and very warm hand. She bit back a giddy smile when she looked over his face once more. To put it simply, he was attractive, and the energy he radiated felt contagious. She could feel her heart speeding up when he spoke again.

"Did you buy those or make them? They look really cool!"

Lucy followed his gaze, seeing he was looking at her weapons. She lifted them up so he could inspect them, which he happily did. "I bought them. I don't know how to make weapons."

"Me either," he said, running his hands over the material before jerking a thumb towards his back. "I bought mine too. Hoping I can learn how to make them eventually."

Lucy looked past him, finally seeing the giant sword strapped to his back. If she had to guess, she would say it was made out of foam, but the craftsmanship was of high quality, making it look real.

"Oh!" Lucy paled, remembering what she was doing before being stopped. "I'm actually heading to a panel about weapon making. Shoot, I hope I'm not late."

"You're not," he said, pulling out his phone to look at the time. "I was going to the same panel, 'Weapon building for beginners'?"

Lucy nodded, relieved she wouldn't miss out. "Well, um, do you want to go together?"

The man tilted his head, causing a blush to erupt on her face. She waved her hands in front of her frantically, almost hitting him with her Tonfa Blasters. "N-not like in a together-together kind of way! Just, if we're going to the same place I thought why not walk together? And I feel like I'm making this more awkward so I'm just going to go before I make it worse."

Before Lucy could turn away, the man laughed, shaking his head. "Man, you're funny. Come on, Weirdo, or we really will be late!"

Lucy didn't get a chance to say anything before he hooked his arm with hers, tugging her forward.
towards the stairs. "The escalators are right there," she pointed out, realizing they would have to go out of their way to go down the stairs.

"What? Are you afraid of some exercise?" he asked, looking down at her body.

Lucy went from embarrassed to angry in a matter of seconds, which the man realized immediately when his eyes returned to her face. "What?"

"Are you calling me fat?"

It was his turn to panic, jaw dropping as his eyebrows —which were also white— shot up. "What?! Of course not! Why would you think I—" He tipped his head back, a groan leaving his mouth. "Ooooooh! You thought? No, definitely not."

He leaned in closer, his voice growing to a whisper, which made Lucy's anger disappear in an instant, replaced by mild embarrassment from the close contact. "Between you and me, I get kinda motion sick, and I didn't take my medication today. Kinda wanna avoid puking all over the place, if that's okay?"

Lucy's body shook as she struggled to hold in her laughter, finding his excuse wild but believable. He didn't seem to mind her reaction. In fact, he relaxed once he saw he was no longer in danger.

"So, stairs okay?"

Lucy nodded, tightening her arm around his before they made their way downstairs and to their next panel.

"I'm Natsu by the way," the man said when they left the room, the two moving to the side to get out of the way. "What's yours?"

"Lucy."

"Well, Lucy. Where are you going next?"

"Hmm." Lucy pulled her phone from her purse, scrolling through the app that held the convention's schedule. She switched over to 'My Schedule', which included all the panels and activities she found interesting. "My next one doesn't start for another... forty-five minutes, so I think I was going to go to the dealer's room until then."

"Ah, bummer." Natsu frowned before shifting his shoulders, trying to readjust the sword on his back. "I was going to the kendo demonstration, but that's starting soon."

Lucy didn't know what she was supposed to say. Sure, it was nice hanging out with Har—Natsu, but she wasn't too fond of the idea of tagging along with him to activities that didn't interest her. Part of her wanted to ask if he would be willing to meet up at another panel later, but she didn't know what she hoped to accomplish with that.

'Maybe I'd make a freaking friend,' she thought, wanting to bop herself in the head. Since moving to Onibus, she had a few acquaintances at work and exactly zero friends for all the other times. It would be nice to have someone to hang out with and talk to, especially someone who clearly had at least one thing in common with her.

Lucy opened her mouth to suggest hanging out later, but before she could, she heard someone yelling across the hall again, only this time they weren't calling her name.
"Natsu! There you are!"

Lucy watched as Natsu jolted, but before she could see who had called him, he was being jerked away. He turned towards her, their eyes locking before he was lost in the crowd seconds later. She stood there for a moment afterwards, shocked how fast everything had happened.

'Damn,' she thought, realizing she never got a chance to ask him if he wanted to see each other later. 'Maybe... maybe it's for the better.'

With a heavy heart, Lucy sighed, accepting Natsu would just be a con crush. It wasn't the worst category to file someone in, seeing as she didn't get crushes too often. However, part of her hoped she could see if there could be something more between them, even if it resulted in nothing more than a friendship.

Honestly, Lucy could use a real friend.

Reminding herself she was getting nothing accomplished by pouting, Lucy moved forward, heading to the dealer's room to check out the merchandise.

After visiting the food stand and stocking up on flavored baked wheat cakes and candy, Lucy looked through the stands nearby, waiting for something to catch her eye.

While a few things stood out, Lucy found herself wandering around. If she did a quick look around on the first day, she could decide what she actually wanted and buy it tomorrow. 'Or hopefully it'll already be sold out so I don't spend anymore money.'

Lucy chuckled at herself before heading towards the back, hearing someone speaking over a microphone in the distance. She moved closer, eventually making it through the crowds before finding a set of bleachers facing a cleared part of the room.

People sat in a circle, all wearing dark blue jackets with split skirts. Their protective gear let Lucy know it was one of the many demonstrations the convention had. She didn't have to do any investigating to realize she had stumbled upon the kendo demonstration since Natsu had mentioned it was starting soon, and that hadn't been too long ago.

Stealing a quick glance at the bleachers, Lucy spotted Natsu sitting towards the top, his sword propped up against the back rail. He sat next to a few people, but Lucy didn't bother speculating who they were, assuming they were his friends or random viewers. Either way, that had nothing to do with her.

Turning around, Lucy headed back to the vendor's area, telling herself she wasn't going to turn into some creepy stalker by joining him after they parted ways. Despite those thoughts, Lucy lingered near the demonstration area, wanting to keep it within earshot... Just in case she wanted to find out when it was dismissed.

After going back and forth a few too many times, Lucy walked back to the bleachers, her shoulders weighing a little more as her confidence lowered. She wasn't the type to chase after people. Never had been, never wanted to change that. However, she couldn't suffocate the yearning that pulled her towards Natsu like a magnet.

She told herself it was because she hadn't had any decent social interaction in months, and that kept her feeling less crazy as she waited for the demonstration to end.

Lucy tried being inconspicuous, especially when she heard the announcer say the presentation was over and the crowd started cheering. However, before Lucy could try to act natural and pretend to
accidentally run into Natsu like she planned, a group of people came over asking to take her picture.

"Oh, um, sure!"

Lucy nervously dropped her stuff before striking the pose she had practiced for weeks, managing a smile that said she could be fun but also kick someone's ass if they threatened her.

After two or three shots, Lucy forgot everything else, internally grinning at herself for getting the positive attention she had wanted. She was just about to break her pose when she saw the person putting their phone down, but her body froze when they yelled, "Haru! Can I get a pic with you two?!"

Lucy managed to look over just in time to see Natsu turn his head away from someone else, eyes landing on Lucy. He squinted for a second, probably wondering what she was doing lurking around, but then a toothy grin pulled at his lips before he looked at the person beside him. He said something, but Lucy couldn't read lips.

Natsu turned, letting someone attach his sword to his back before heading over. Once people saw matching cosplays, more gathered around to take their pictures. Lucy modified her pose, angling outward so she wasn't the star of the show, sharing the spotlight with her character's partner.

"Fancy seein' you here," Natsu mumbled, trying not to move his lips so the picture wouldn't look weird.

Lucy bit her tongue, hoping her face wasn't as hot as it felt. "Y-yeah."

"Be honest, are ya stalking me?"

"What?" Lucy broke her pose, eyes wide as her stomach twisted. She didn't know what else to say, but her nerves immediately calmed down when Natsu shook his head, letting out a laugh.

"I'm just kidding."

"Can I get one of you two hugging?" someone asked, prompting Lucy and Natsu to look at each other before he shrugged.

"Only if you're okay with it," he whispered, the sudden softness in his voice and eyes making Lucy's insides feel fuzzy and warm.

"I'm okay," she said, giving him a single nod before stepping closer.

The hug, to put it simply, was awkward. Lucy didn't think about her Tonfa Blasters when she reached behind Natsu, and neither of them adjusted for his giant sword, making their bodies squished together while Lucy's arm didn't even go around him, merely hanging behind him.

After a long moment, the two broke apart. If the pictures hadn't been taken by then, that wasn't their fault.

"Thanks a lot!"

"You two look great!"

"Thanks!"

"Thank you!"
Lucy and Natsu waved and nodded, watching as the onlookers disappeared into the crowds. They didn't have a moment to catch their breath, a new group of people coming up to them, only this time one of them walked right up to Natsu to show them his phone.

"That good?"

Natsu nodded before looking at Lucy. "What do ya think?"

Lucy blinked a few times before looking down at the phone, seeing a picture of them standing next to each other. She couldn't help but smile. Despite not knowing each other, the two looked like they belonged together.

Which only made the warmth on Lucy's face double when she realized how silly she sounded, but luckily it was all in her head. She couldn't imagine the embarrassment if someone knew what she had been thinking.

"This is Lucy," Natsu said, catching her attention.

She couldn't figure out why Natsu would introduce her to these people when he hadn't done it before, but after studying the face of the person he spoke to, Lucy remembered he was sitting next to Natsu on the bleachers.

"Sup?" the guy asked, pocketing his phone. "Sorry I interrupted you two earlier. Erza woulda killed us if we missed her performance."

"What?"

"My friend does kendo here in town," Natsu said, as if that explained everything. He looked over at the other guy before saying, "This is Gray. He likes Rave Master too but he's lame and didn't wanna dress up."

Lucy couldn't help but laugh when Gray scoffed at him, crossing his arms over his bare chest. 'Wait! Where the heck did his shirt go?!'

Before either could say anything else, a shirt was draped over Gray's head as an exasperated woman appeared beside him. "Gray, you really shouldn't be stripping in public. It's unbecoming."

"Yeah, there are kids here," Natsu said, snickering to himself. "Don't want them seeing anything indecent."

Lucy could see Gray wanted to say something smart back at Natsu, but instead the man's demeanor cooled in an instant before he looked at the newest woman, who Lucy just realized was dressed in that navy jacket she saw earlier.

"Great job out there. Work up a sweat?"

"Sadly no. I wish they would let us go all out for these things, but they want us to just go over the basics."

"Probably so y'all don't intimidate potential sign ups?" Natsu asked, earning a nod from the woman.

She looked over at Lucy before smiling. "I like your cosplay. Elie is one of my favorite characters from Rave Master."
"Thanks!" Lucy smiled before holding a hand out. "I'm Lucy. I'm guessing you're Erza?" She went out on a limb, and thankfully her guess was correct.

"I am indeed. I assume one of these two told you?"

Lucy nodded. "Sorry I didn't see you perform, but I'm sure it was great."

"We'll be going on again tomorrow morning, and then again in the afternoon if you're interested," Erza said, leaving it open-ended before turning her attention to Gray. "We should get going if we want to make our panel in time."

Gray nodded, turning to Lucy and Natsu. "It was nice meeting you. Natsu, are you coming?"

"Nah, I'm gonna sit this one out."

Gray shrugged while Erza said, "Suit yourself. Are we still meeting up for dinner?"

Natsu nodded, patting his stomach. "Seven o'clock sharp! Wouldn't miss it!"

Lucy watched as his friends walked away before realizing that left her and Natsu alone, her heartbeat slowly picking up speed when he turned towards her. "Anyways, I'm glad you were nearby. I was gonna look for you after the show, but this saves me the trouble."

"You... you were?" Lucy asked, unable to stop herself from smiling. She tried brushing her bangs out of her face to be flirty, but she forgot she was still holding her replica weapons, causing her to hit herself in the forehead. "Ouch."

"Careful," Natsu said, barely holding back a laugh. "So, what are you planning on doing next?"

"Cringefessions. It sounded fun."

If he wasn't wearing colored contacts, Lucy could have sworn his eyes would have lit up. "It is! I went last year and it's awesome!"

"Great." She grabbed her purse before they started walking towards the exit, but since they were at the back of the room, it took them a while to navigate through people and booths.

They were just about to clear the last crowd when someone started calling, "Haru! Haru!"

Assuming someone wanted a picture, Natsu turned, horrified when he caught a glimpse of the person yelling his character's name.

Lucy watched in amusement as a vendor walked over to him, holding up a pillowcase for a body pillow. "I was wrong. Turns out we did have one more Elie one."

Lucy had to cover her mouth to stop herself from laughing when she caught a glimpse of the barely-dressed Elie adorning the fabric. She looked over at Natsu, seeing his skin, which had been a soft tan, turn into a deep red.

"I— I wasn't looking for that!" he sputtered, but the man didn't seem convinced.

"You're the only Haru I've seen all day. Remember? You said you'd been looking all over the place for one since you couldn't find it online?"

Lucy almost doubled over, her other hand holding her stomach as it started cramping from containing her laughter. Natsu caught her reaction, the guy looking more mortified than she could
have ever imagined.

"It's not what it looks like!"

Lucy shook her head, not bothering to stop her chuckles as she said, "It's fine. I get it."

In a mutter so the vendor and others couldn't hear her, she confessed, "I... I have a Haru one kind of like it, so I get it."

Lucy thought that would make him feel better, but the man looked more uncomfortable, almost squirming in place as he fought his growing blush. She watched his internal struggle until finally pulling out his wallet, forking over the money before snatching the pillowcase.

"Do you want a bag?" the vendor asked as he took out Natsu's change.

"Please," Natsu mumbled, clearly wanting to hide it from the rest of the world.

Instead of teasing him, Lucy hooked his arm like he had done before, pulling him towards the exit. "Come on. We don't want to be late."

Natsu didn't say anything, but he managed a nod before keeping up with her pace.

The two made it to the Cringefessions' line just before the doors opened. Luckily the room reserved for the panel was huge, giving them lot of space. Lucy led them to the left side, taking a seat next to the wall while Natsu took the one beside her. She set her things under the table in front of her before resting her arms on the surface, enjoying the break from standing. "Are you planning on confessing anything?"

Natsu shook his head, patting the bag in front of him. "Think I got all the embarrassment I can handle for one day."

"It's really not a big deal," Lucy said, giving him a kind smile. "Remember, we are at an anime convention. It's pretty normal to be into that sort of thing."

"I'm not gonna do anything with it," Natsu said, his blush returning in an instant. "I just like sleeping with a body pillow and figured if I'm gonna do it might as well see something nice on it."

He turned his head, but Lucy could see the worry building on his face.

"I sleep with my Haru pillow too, so I get it."

Thankfully before either could make their conversation more awkward, a voice came over the microphone, directing their attention to the four people sitting at the front of the room.

"Hello, and welcome to Cringefessions!"

After a quick introduction of the speakers and a short story from one of them, they opened it up to anyone else who had any cringefessions they wanted to get off their chest, as long as they obeyed the rules since the panel was rated PG-13.

Most of the stories were anime-related, seeing as they were at an anime convention, but a few strayed from that path. Lucy hadn't planned on confessing anything, but after a while, a memory popped into her head that wouldn't go away.

Her hand shook on her lap before she raised it, heart thumping faster when they called on someone else. 'Maybe I shouldn't?'
"You have a story?" Natsu asked, causing her to give a halfhearted shrug.

"Maybe?" She felt less confident every time she raised her hand, but after two more stories, one of the speakers called on her.

"Yes, the girl with the short brown hair."

If they hadn't been pointing at her, Lucy would have thought they meant someone else. She kept forgetting she used a temporary dye to change her hair color from blonde to brunette for her cosplay.

Lucy scooted past Natsu, her heart in her throat as she walked towards the front of the room like all the others before her had. She took the microphone, muttering a small thank you before taking her seat, facing the large crowd.

Following the other's example, Lucy started with, "My name's Elie."

"Hi Elie," the crowd chimed back, used to the routine.

"Okay, so my cringefessions happened when I was also around eleven or twelve years old."

"Why are those such cringy years?" one of the speakers asked, causing a few laughs.

Lucy smiled, thankful she wasn't the only cringy person in the world. "So the kids in my neighborhood started a fight club, and if you've never seen the movie, the first rule is you don't talk about fight club. I've never seen the movie, but they told me I had to fight this girl I had never met before, who was like sixteen or something."

Lucy's eyes danced around the room, not wanting to focus on any person in particular. However, she found herself glancing at Natsu, whose whole focus was solely on her.

Despite the heat warming her face and neck, Lucy pushed on. "Neither of us knew how to start. I had never been in a fight before. The other kids keep screaming for us to start but we're just standing there. Finally, my cousin yelled 'Say something bad about Inuyasha.'"

She heard some chuckles from around the room, probably seeing where her story was going. "Inuyasha was my favorite show at the time. The girl didn't know what it was, so all she said was, 'I don't know that chick.' I got mad, charged at her with everything I had, and she kicked my ass."

Lucy almost apologized for cursing, but the laughter around the room stopped her. She chuckled herself before gripping the microphone, hoping her palm wasn't sweaty. "I limped home, and my neighbor saw it and told my mom. But when she asked me about it, I told her I wasn't allowed to talk about it, so then I got grounded too."

As soon as Lucy stood up, people started clapping, amused by her story. She handed the microphone back to a speaker before making her way to her seat, feeling embarrassed but also a little lighter, as if confessing that had given her some type of control over it.

"That was pretty funny," Natsu whispered, grinning at her.

She smiled back, unable to stop herself from admiring him. His smile made him ten times more cuter than normal. "Thanks."

The panel went on, and after another thirty minutes of laughter, they were dismissed.
"What's next on your agenda?" Natsu asked. "I was gonna do this plushie sewing thing if you were interested?"

"That sounds fun." Lucy didn't have to look at her schedule, remembering she had nothing else planned after Cringefessions. "The only other thing I wanted to do today was see the gaming room, but that doesn't close until later."

"Cool. Let me see which room it's in."

After looking over the online map, Natsu and Lucy made their way to the correct room. They had to wait a while until it opened, but after taking their seats, things progressed quickly.

They made their own ramen bowls, sewing white fabric together before putting yellow yarn inside to look like noodles. They sewed a few toppings, as well as a fried egg. Overall the panel was fun, and they got to keep their plushies in the end.

"I don't really wanna carry this around all day," Natsu said, frowning at the cute fabric bowl in his hand. "Would you might if I stopped by my room? You can leave yours in there too if you want."

Lucy bit her bottom lip, a wave of anticipation hitting her at the idea of going to his room. 'That's not a way to get me alone, is it?'

After taking one look at his harmless demeanor, Lucy felt herself relaxing. She nodded, following him as he led the way through the convention to the tunnel connecting to the hotel across the street.

"Luckily we got the first floor," Natsu said, pulling out his room key. "I hate riding the elevator if I don't have to."

"Motion sickness must suck," Lucy said, not wanting to imagine having it herself. "Guess I should count myself lucky."

Natsu shrugged as he opened the door, turning on a light before walking in. "Eh, you get used to it. There's medicines but I only take 'em if I'm gonna be riding in a car. It's weird. If I'm driving it's not as bad, but once someone else is in charge I'm all queasy."

Lucy half-listened as she stepped inside his hotel room, eyes roaming the place. She saw the couch had a pillow and blanket on it, while an air mattress rested in the corner of the room next to a sleeping bag. "How many people are staying in here?"

"Six total, but three of them share the bed," Natsu said, putting his ramen bowl next to the couch before removing his sword, propping it up against the wall. "We drew straws for the other spots. I got the couch," he said, his grin showing how proud he was of his accomplishment.

"Do you live out of town?" Lucy asked, surprised when he said he lived only ten miles away.

"We get a room because most of us cosplay, so it saves us time from going back and forth. Tomorrow I'm doing two different ones, then Sunday I'm doing another one."

"That's a lot of dedication," Lucy said, seeing the various wigs and costumes throughout the space. "Color me impressed."

"Are you dressing up for anything else?" he asked, earning a nod.

"Tomorrow I'm doing Tohru from Fruits Basket, then Sunday I'm going as Misty."
"From Pokémon?" Natsu asked, his voice eager.

Lucy nodded, watching as he pulled out his phone to show her a picture. "I'm doing Charizard tomorrow night, but maybe I can switch it up so we can match?"

Lucy didn't bother fighting her blush or her smile. "Won't we look weird? Misty uses water Pokémon."

Natsu waved his hand as he put away his phone. "Nah. I don't care what people think. Well, I mean, I do, but it'll be fine." He grinned. "Fun even! What do ya say?!"

Lucy didn't have to think about it, liking the idea. "How about I do Misty tomorrow, that way you don't have to change your things."

"Are you sure?"

Lucy nodded. "You were only planning on doing Charizard for half the day. It makes more sense for me to change. I didn't really care which order. I just wanted to do her since she was my favorite character growing up."

While Natsu explained why Charizard was his favorite character from Pokémon, Lucy couldn't help but think, 'I guess it's been decided. We'll be seeing each other tomorrow as well.' It seemed silly to resist at that point. She was having fun, he seemed like a nice person, and they clearly had some good chemistry.

Deciding she didn't want to shy away from what could be a potential friendship, Lucy set her ramen bowl on the couch's armrest, making herself a little at home. "What's next?"

"We don't have to be at the ramen bar until seven, so we can go see the game room until it gets closer?"

"We?" Lucy asked, trying to remember when she was invited to dinner.

Natsu's eyes widened before his jaw dropped. "Oh, shoot that's right. I forgot to invite you." He cupped the back of his neck as an awkward smile crossed his face. "I asked my friends if I could bring ya. They said yes, but I forgot to ask you..."

Lucy shook her head, wondering how it was possibly someone could be so cute yet clueless. "Sure. I like ramen."

"Sweet! It's really good."

Lucy didn't need more assurance, already looking forward to it. "Should we get going now?"

Natsu nodded, trying to take a step forward, but his foot landed on a small sewing kit, throwing off his balance. He might have been fine, but Lucy tried to help, grabbing him so he wouldn't fall in the opposite direction, but that only made him stumble right into her.

Lucy let out a yelp as they both landed on the couch, knocking Lucy's ramen plushie off, the contents spilling on the floor. However, neither noticed, their focus captured by lack of space between them after Natsu landed on top of her.

"Sorry," Natsu mumbled, trying to collect himself. He grabbed onto the back of the couch, hoisting himself off her. "Really sorry! We haven't gotten a chance to clean up since we were in a rush this morning to get to the—"
"It's okay," Lucy said, managing a laugh. "Accidents happen. I promise I'm fine."

Seeing there was nothing to worry about, Natsu sighed. "Good." His shoulders shook as he suppressed a laugh, sparking Lucy's curiosity.

"What?"

"Nothing."

His knowing smile didn't look like it was nothing, "Come on, tell me."

Lucy pouted when he only shrugged, causing him to give in. "Fine. But remember you asked for it."

Natsu went over to the plushie spill, putting the yarn and sewn food back into the white bowl. "I was just thinking if this was an anime, that would've been the part where the main male character accidentally gropes the female main character."

Lucy gasped before laughing, shaking her head. "Pervert!" she shouted, but there was no conviction in her voice, only mild amusement.

"Aaaaand," Natsu started, giving her a look. "I was thinking if this were a fanfiction, that would've been the time that I... I mean the character, well..."

His voice trailed off before he stood, handing her the plushie. Lucy couldn't hold back, needing to know what he meant. "What would've happened?"

Natsu couldn't look her in the eye, his throat bobbing when Lucy grabbed the plushie, their fingers brushing against each other. "Just that, I dunno. The two characters probably woulda... well, you know."

Lucy had an idea, but she wanted him to say it. She kept her mouth shut, the silence forcing him to finish.

"They probably would've kissed or something mushy like that," he rushed out, crossing the room to get to the mirror.

Lucy saw he had enough torture. She stood, adjusting her skirt before walking towards him. "Need any help?"

Natsu stole a glance towards her, looking for any signs of danger before relaxing. "Can you see if my hair is peeking out from the back?"

Lucy nodded, looking all around before giving him a thumbs up. "All clear. Hmm, what color is your hair?"

"Pink."

Lucy blinked, unsure if she heard him correctly. "Did you say pink?"

"Yeah." Natsu looked over, seeing her confusion. "I mean, it's not really pink. It's black, but right now I have it dyed pink."

"Did you dye your eyebrows?" Lucy asked, seeing the make up on his face and brows, making them look like Haru's. She couldn't imagine there was pink under there, but Natsu nodded.
"Yup. I've had my hair pink for..." He let out a breath. "I wanna say three years now. Kept experimenting with different colors until I found one I liked."

"Is it hard to keep up with?" Lucy asked. She had no interest in permanently dying her own hair, but she had wondered how it was for others.

"Not really. One of my friends does hair on the side, so I go to her every few weeks to get touch ups."

At the mention of a girl, Lucy started wondering more about him. "What does your girlfriend think about your hair?" She was fishing for information, and judging by the twitch in the corner of his lips, he caught on fast.

"I don't have a girlfriend." His eyes met hers before looking back at the mirror, busying himself with his wig. "You?"

Lucy couldn't help but chuckle, seeing them tiptoeing around what they wanted to talk about. "Nope, I don't have a girlfriend either."

Natsu gave her two long nods as he grinned. "What about a boyfriend?"

Lucy could feel her palms sweat, but she did her best to look calm. "The position is vacant... at the moment."

Lucy wasn't sure, but she thought she heard him mumble, "Good to know," under his breath.

'Maybe wishful thinking,' Lucy thought, wondering when she had gone from seeing Natsu as a potential friend to a potential partner. 'He seems like a go-with-the-flow type of guy. Not usually who I go for, but maybe a change would be good."

Lucy turned her attention to his reflection before noticing his contacts again. "What color are your eyes?"

"Green."

"Really?"

Natsu raised a brow. "Don't believe me?"

"That's not what I mean. You just don't see a lot of people with green eyes." She thought to herself before adding, "Actually, I don't think I pay much attention to people's eyes in general actually."

"Let me see if I can find a good picture," Natsu said, looking through his phone once more. "Here, you can kinda tell," he said, showing her his phone.

"Oh yeah, they kind of look green."

"You can see tomorrow morning. I'm giving my eyes a break until the afternoon when I put the Charizard stuff on."

"I've never tried colored contacts. I'm scared of putting things near my eyes."

"It's weird at first," Natsu admitted before shrugging. "But some cosplays just look better with them on. But if someone doesn't wanna wear them that doesn't make their cosplay invalid or anything. Preference and comfort are way more important."
"I agree," Lucy said with a smile. The more she heard from Natsu, the more she liked.

In an attempt to keep the conversation going, Natsu asked, "Is that your real hair color?"

Lucy couldn't resist teasing, seeing as he walked right into that one. She pretended to scowl before asking, "Are you really asking me if the carpet matches the drapes?"

"Wh-what?! No! I—"

He didn't get to explain, Lucy bursting into laughter, unable to keep up the charade. "I'm totally kidding! Geez! Don't have a heart attack."

While Natsu looked a little relieved, he still had a nervous tone to his laugh. "Very funny."

"And no, I'm naturally a blonde. This is just temporary. Should come out after a few washes."

"That's cool."

Lucy and Natsu jolted when the heard the electronic lock opening, the door swinging a moment later to reveal two people Lucy had not seen before entering the room.

"Hey Natsu," a girl said, carrying in a bag full of goodies from the artist room. "Hey strange girl."

Lucy awkwardly waved a hand, unsure what to say.

"Cana, Levy. This is Lucy, Lucy, these are more of my friends."

"Pleased to meet you," Levy said, going straight to the bathroom. "Have either of you seen my make up bag? I think Erza borrowed it last?"

"No, it was me," Natsu laughed, heading towards the couch to retrieve it. "I forgot to pack my contouring stuff so I used yours."

Levy peeked a head out from the bathroom before looking over his face. "Not bad, but next time blend your nose a little more."

"Show me?"

"Come here."

Lucy stood by the mirror, wondering if she was intruding. However, her question was answered when the other girl in the room spoke up, making Lucy feel more welcomed.

"Want a drink?" she asked, pulling out a bottle of wine from the mini fridge. "I have cups over there."

Lucy didn't bother seeing where she was pointing, politely declining a drink. "I have to drive tonight. Sorry."

"You didn't a room?"

Lucy shook her head. "I thought it'd be cheaper just driving."

Cana nodded before pouring herself a glass of red wine in a plastic cup. "Fair enough." The girl pretended to clank an imaginary glass before gulping down her entire drink in one sitting.
Lucy turned just when Natsu came out from the bathroom, walking up to Lucy. "How's it look?"

"Honestly? I can't tell a difference," Lucy said, offering a small smile. "It looks good though."

"Thanks!" Natsu took another look in the mirror before looking at the time. "So, game room?"

"Yes please."

"We'll see y'all at dinner," Natsu called before they left the room, heading back to the tunnel to reach the convention. "Anything in particular you wanted to see in there?"

"No, just curious."

"Cool. Well, let's go see what they got!"

"Alright, I'm sure everyone knows what's going to happen, but let's go over it for anyone who hasn't been here before. We're going to play some music. If you know the dance, jump in. There will be a short countdown between each song so you can clear the floor or stay up there. Halfway through we'll have a break for you to rest or use the bathroom or whatever. Now, who's ready to dance?!"

Lucy cheered along with everyone else, watching as Erza put the microphone down. This wasn't the panel Lucy would have found herself in normally, but after Erza told her about it during dinner, Lucy couldn't help but check it out.

She wasn't experienced with the dances, but she knew a few K-pop songs.

The countdown begun, then five seconds later the first song started. People raced to the middle where the chairs were cleared out to make a dance floor. Lucy watched as Cana and Levy danced to most of them, while Erza joined in every few songs. The most surprising moment to Lucy was when Natsu and Gray got out there as well, dancing perfectly to the choreography.

Lucy clapped as hard as she could when Natsu started heading back to his seat, her bewildered look being enough to get him to spill.

"Erza taught that one to us. She wanted to record it for her Instagram."

"I'll definitely have to follow her so I can see that video!" Lucy laughed while Natsu smiled.

"I'll tell you it later."

The two turned back to the center, watching people dancing. Lucy wished she could move like that, but she had never tried any of the moves before, only listened to the music occasionally.

When they finally called for a break, Lucy and Natsu turned towards each other, deciding to take advantage of the time.

"Erza's doing a great job hosting a panel," Lucy said, looking over at the woman who had to tie her hair back after working up a sweat. "I thought about hosting one once."

"About what?"

"Fanfiction," Lucy said as she met his gaze. "This is the first year I saw a panel about it. I went to
it this morning, but it wasn't good, in my opinion."

"What was wrong with it?" Natsu asked, cocking his head.

"They just focused way too much on the kink aspect of fanfiction. I thought it was going to talk about plot or writing styles. It just wasn't my cup of tea."

Natsu nodded as he leaned his arm against his chair. He was practically sitting sideways so he could face her. "Well, if you ever decide to do it, I'll show up. As long as it's not gross or anything."

Lucy laughed, waving her hands in front of her. "No worries there. I'd be too embarrassed to do all that. I think I'd just talk about ways to stay motivated when writing, setting realistic goals, and some editing tricks I've learned over the years. Then I'd see what everyone else does when they write."

"That sounds pretty neat."

"Do you like fanfiction?" Lucy asked, causing him to shrug.

"I mean, I read it occasionally, but I'm not a big reader. Oh! Unless it's manga of course, but let's be honest, that's basically a picture book for adults."

Lucy snickered. "Can't argue with you there." She smiled as she turned more towards him. "And that's okay that you're not a reader. The world would be pretty boring if we all liked the same things."

Lucy resisted the urge to bite her lip when Natsu leaned in a bit, his voice a little low. "Yeah, can't have that."

"Nope," she whispered, wishing she could be more bold in that moment, but she refrained herself. Part of her thought Natsu wanted something to happen too, his eyes flitting down to her mouth for a second.

She took a deep breath, allowing herself to be in the moment without worrying what could be. "No, we can't."

Lucy waited out in the hall while Natsu ducked into the hotel room, retrieving her ramen plushie. He returned a moment later, the sound of his friend's conversations muted when he closed the door behind him.

"Here you are, Elie."

"Why thank you, Haru." Lucy accepted it, carefully tucking it into her purse. She would bring it back out when she reached her car. Hopefully it wouldn't lose its shape during that short journey.

When Lucy looked back at him, she noticed something different. "Oh wow! Your eyes really are green!" She stepped closer, moving her purse around to her side so it wouldn't get in the way. Her replica weapons dangled against the back of her legs, attached to the purse for easier travel. "That's amazing."

"They're nothing special," Natsu said, but his faint blush told another story. "I literally had no part in making them, but I'll take the credit anyways."
As Lucy chuckled, he asked, "So, did you have fun today?"

Lucy easily nodded. "I went in with low expectations, but I had a good time. Magnolia's con is pretty great."

"I think so, but I haven't been to a lot of cons. Have you?"

Lucy nodded, her teeth catching her bottom lip for a second before releasing it. Her lip wasn't the only thing she caught, Natsu's attention slipping, his eyes lingering for a few beats before looking back up.

"I can tell you about the other conventions, tomorrow."

Natsu grinned, taking a half-step closer to her. "Sounds like a plan."

"Should I meet you here in the morning?" Lucy asked, wishing something would happen, but fear kept her in place. What she was afraid of? She didn't know, which only made her frustrated as well.

"That works. We're all getting breakfast at nine, if you wanna join?" Natsu stuffed his hands into his pockets, then took them out before balling them into fists. Lucy looked down, giving him a curious look before he sighed. "Sorry, I'm not really smooth when it comes to this sorta thing."

"What thing?" Lucy asked, cocking her head.

"This," Natsu said, gesturing back and forth. "I mean, I think we're on the same page..." He paled, his body going rigid. "Unless I've been reading into things!"

"Thought you weren't a big reader?" Lucy teased, giving him a wink, which only made him flustered. "Sorry, that was mean." When she chuckled, Natsu released some of his tension.

"Am I?" he asked, worry coloring his voice.

Lucy didn't bother speaking, taking another step to close the distance between them. She tilted her head up, leaning in an inch. She wasn't one to make the first move, but she didn't want to risk missing out on an opportunity with Natsu. Maybe he wasn't the one. Maybe he was just meant to be a friend.

But she would never find out if she didn't put herself out there, fearful or not.

Thankfully her efforts weren't fruitless, Natsu taking the hint. As he leaned in, Lucy closed her eyes, surprised by the warmth on her lips despite craving it. There was barely any pressure, but the fire coursing through her veins made her skin dot with goosebumps. It made no sense to Lucy, but she didn't try to dissect the moment, merely melting into it as Natsu began to press closer.

Just as Lucy was getting weak at the knees, Natsu pulled back, his face as pink as the hair he was hiding. She took a steady breath, lips parted as she tried to find the words, but they didn't come.

"Can I walk you to your car?" Natsu asked, needing a breather himself.

It took Lucy a moment before she realized she had to respond, her head finally managing a small nod.

He smiled, and she swore in that moment she felt the true definition of giddy. She couldn't help but be excited for what tomorrow awaited while also savoring the present, since that was where Natsu was at that moment.
With a shaky hand, Natsu reached out, taking hers before tugging her forward. She almost wanted to laugh when she felt his clammy palm against hers. He was just as nervous as she was, and honestly, that made her relax.

She hoped there was more than just this day, but if there wasn't, she would always remember him fondly as her favorite con crush.

Chapter End Notes

I've been to five anime conventions (as of 2019) and one small comic con. My favorite convention was in Raleigh NC called Animazement. I went there three years. If you're ever in that area around Memorial's day, you should check it out! Wish I could go back. The one in my hometown is not as good, but it's better than nothing!

The Cringefession story is true. It definitely happened to me and it was incredibly embarrassing. And I confessed that at a Cringefessions panel at animazement. XD I still remember thinking, "Oh shoot, I cussed," but no one seemed to notice, they were laughing too much.

Thank you all so much for reading this one-shot! I had the idea a few years ago, but just now finally got to writing it. This idea came the second year I cosplayed at Lucy, which would have been in May of 2017 lol. Let me know what you thought! I hope this was fluffy enough! :D
Lucy held in a groan as she listened to the customer try to explain to her why she was wrong, even though she knew without a shadow of a doubt she had given him the correct wrench for the project he had in mind. She nodded along, letting him vent his frustrations before suggesting they bring in another employee to get the matter resolved.

After a quick call on her mic, Lucy smiled as Gajeel came to her rescue. The only thing that could have made the moment better was if she could get a picture of the guy's face as Gajeel told the man she had been right all along.

She didn't particularly like working at the home improvement store, but she needed a job during summer breaks. Being an English teacher had its challenges, but even her students weren't as stubborn as some of the people she helped when she took on a retail-type job.

"That was infuriating," Lucy sighed as her and Gajeel walked towards the carpet section. She had been pulled away from her job to help a customer while her coworker was headed to the break room.

"Nothing you can do to fix ignorance," Gajeel said, patting her on the head.

She gave him a fake pout before easing into a smile. "Only two more weeks, then I'm out of here!"

"Gi hi, don't let Laxus hear you say that. You might be packing your bag by the end of the day."

Lucy shivered, not wanting to invoke the wrath of their manager. "True." As they neared the hardwood section, Gajeel broke off, whistling a tune while Lucy returned to her station. She helped mind the flooring department, which was about as much fun as it sounded, but it gave her some extra money and kept her from going insane with boredom between school years.

'What was I doing again? Oh right, sorting the sample tiles someone didn't put back.'

Before Lucy could make her way to her destination, someone caught her eye, a man down the aisle waving towards her. She looked behind her, realizing he was waving at her.

"Can I help you?" Lucy asked, strolling down the aisle surrounded by rugs. They had all sizes, some the size of a welcome mat while others could cover a whole room. The man in question held one perfect for a small bedroom.
"Hey, sorry to bother you miss," he said, gripping the rolled material before giving it a good look. "Are you good with fashion and stuff like that?"

Lucy held back a smile, finding the customer oddly cute, even with his bright pink hair. "I think I'm pretty good. What do you need?"

"Do you think this rug looks good? I wanna put it in my living room, but I'm not sure. I think it looks cool, but I've been told I have bad taste."

Lucy couldn't help but let her eyes flit over to his clothes, finding that statement true. 'Who wears a hoodie in the summer? Maybe that's why one sleeve looks like it got ripped off, to keep him from overheating? At least his shorts are the same color as his hoodie...'

She didn't comment on his clothes, instead focusing on his question. "It's a nice rug, but I guess it depends on what your other decor looks like if you want it to match. What color scheme do you have in your living room?"

The man snorted, lips pulling back to reveal a devilish smile that made Lucy's pulse jump. "That's such a weird phrase, color scheme. Like they're up to something devious."

Ignoring the heat slowly growing in her cheeks, Lucy cleared her throat. "What color are the walls?" she asked, trying to remind herself where she was. If she wasn't at work, where flirting with customers was prohibited, she would likely lean into it and see if he was feeling some chemistry.

She didn't know who could blame her. It wasn't every day she met a guy who appeared the same age as her who looked as good as he did. 'Maybe I've been single for too long. I need to cut it out and act professional!'

The man's dark eyes seemed to light up as he shifted the rug to his side. "Would you take a look at my apartment and see if the rug would be a nice fit?"

Lucy paled, her eyes widening at the absurd suggestion. She didn't notice him reaching in his back pocket, her nerves unraveled as she took a step back. "Please don't."

"Huh?" the man cocked his head as Lucy narrowed her eyes.

"I've heard a lot of pickup lines, but that has to be the creepiest by far." Which was saying something, considering she had heard a lot between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight. "I can find someone else to help you."

As Lucy started to turn, the man panicked, shaking his head before holding up his phone. "It's not like that! Promise! I-I was gonna show you a picture of my living room!"

Lucy's jaw dropped as things started clicking together, her face steadily burning with a flush of embarrassment. "Oh... my gosh," she whispered, mortified from her wrong assumption. "I am so sorry sir! I... I thought—"

"Don't apologize," he said, his brows furrowed as he did his best to force a smile through the awkwardness. "I shoulda worded that better. I guess it did sound like I was suggesting... Anyways, no, I gotta picture if you'd take a look."

"Absolutely," Lucy started, her underarms and palms sweating as she stepped closer.

She watched as his hand shook while unlocking his phone, scrolling through his photos until he found the right one. "Cute cat," Lucy said as she looked at a picture of his couch, a little blue feline
curled at one end while some mismatched pillows sat at the other end.

"Thanks! His name is Happy," the stranger said, giving her a strained laugh as his nerves calmed down.

Lucy watched as he flipped through three more pictures, her concern growing the more she saw. "Well, if I'm being honest, there doesn't seem to be any connections between your decor." The blue walls didn't match the off-white leather couch, nor did they match the brown chair or black entertainment center.

She looked at the rug for a moment before turning towards the selections around her. "It may take a minute, but maybe I can find something to piece them together."

"That'd be great!" he said, giving her a toothy grin that made her heartbeat faster. "Thanks!"

"N-no problem." She turned her head, failing to hide her blush. "Let's see what we have..."

"Alright Natsu, I think we got you all set," Lucy said, looking at the cart full of goodies. After finding a decent rug to match the unmatchable living room, he had asked her about lamps and other items to pull his apartment together.

Somewhere along the lines Lucy had forgotten she was even at work, enjoying her time spent looking for things as she got little hints as to the type of person Natsu was. He seemed to be a funny and quirky individual, the man catching Lucy's interest quickly into their shopping trip.

So much so, that when he asked for her number -so he could send her pictures of his living room after the makeover, she said yes.

"Thanks for your help Lucy! I really appreciate it!"

She grinned, giving him a nod before stepping backwards. "Well, I better get back to work. It was nice meeting you."

"Same! I'll text ya once I get all set up." Natsu closed his eyes as he smiled, Lucy's heart leaping at the sheer cuteness radiating off him.

"I look forward to it," she said, not bothering to hide her flush. "Have a good day."

"You too!" Natsu watched as Lucy walked back to her department, his stomach filled with butterflies, but he welcomed it.

He didn't get all the way out of the store before he dialed his friend, who happened to be a teacher as well.

"Hello?"

Natsu smiled as he pushed his cart towards his car, a giddy grin plastered on his face. "You weren't kidding, she's awesome!"

A laugh filtered through the line before Lisanna exclaimed, "And she's single! Did you two hit it off? I really think you two would be cute together!"

"I think it went pretty well," Natsu said before laughing. "I messed up though and made it sound like I was a creep, but it got sorted out."
"Well tell us all about it tonight."

Natsu nodded, looking forward to Erza's infamous game night. He could count on three things from those events: Getting drunk, playing lots of games, and taking part in the teasing among friends.

He had a feeling he was going to be at the receiving end of the teasing when he told them about his encounter with Lucy, the gorgeous and kind English teacher that Lisanna had been trying to set him up with for the better part of a year now. He had finally caved and agreed, but instead of a normal blind date, Lisanna wanted them to meet in a less traditional way.

He hadn't thought it was a good idea at first, but after meeting Lucy, he was glad he went along with it.

Chapter End Notes

Story inspired by a moment that happened like a year or so ago when I went to a home improvement store and a guy asked me for an option on a rug, to which I said I would be the worst person to ask because I have no sense of fashion XD But, that moment stuck in my head and it wouldn't leave me alone until I got it out, so here ya go! :P Not sure when I'll be able to update my other stories, but I promise I haven't abandoned them. I don't see it happening, but if I do give up on them I'll be writing a summary to let you know how I was going to have the story go so there's some type of closure, but that's going to be a worst-case scenario. I want to finish them, I just need to get my motivation up and make time for them. Thank you so much for your patience! Hope you enjoyed this long drabble/short one-shot! Have a great day/night!

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