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Fangrai Forever

by Raziel12

Summary

A series of shorts based on the Fangrai Forever prompts celebrating FLight (Fang/Lightning). Some sensual, some humorous and some a little hard to classify, but almost all of them romantic.

Chapter 39: Yun courtship traditions are odd to say the least. It's a good thing then that Lightning is getting a crash course.
You Can't Always Get What You Want – But Sometimes You Can

Lightning hated bars, and it had nothing to do with all the booze. It was the eyes that bothered her, the eyes that watched, and stared, and leered. It was almost as bad as being touched, and more than once, she’d walked into a bar, and imagined what it would be like to draw her gun blade, switch it into its gun form, and spin in a slow, lazy circle, the trigger pulled back as far as it would go.


Thankfully, she’d never actually done that. It wouldn’t matter if she was famous, or if she had a lot of pull with the higher ups. Gunning down an entire bar’s worth of civilians was not something the Guardian Corps could ignore. Her lips curled. Maybe she could claim they shot first? No. Amodar knew her a little too well for that.

“Here to pick up Fang?”

Lightning stopped. Turned. Scowled.

Lebreau stood beside the doors of her bar, her arms folded over her chest, a small, inscrutable smile on her lips. There was something about the other woman that had always bothered Lightning. It wasn’t because she was one of Snow’s friends. No, there were times when she felt like Lebreau could see right through her.

“Yes.” Lightning frowned. “Is she almost done?”

Lebreau nodded. “Yeah. We’re already closed for the night, all she has to do is lock up.” She pushed away from the doors, and sashayed toward Lightning. “Do you want to know something interesting?”

“Interesting?” Lightning’s jaw clenched. “Don’t play games, Lebreau. It doesn’t suit you. If you have something to say, say it.”

Lebreau gave a throaty chuckle. “You’re no fun, although I can see why she likes you.” She put on a thoughtful expression. “She had a lot of attention tonight, Lightning.” She smirked and backed away, just out of Lightning’s reach. “You’d better be careful or one of these days she’ll be going home with somebody else.”

“Fang is not going home with somebody else.” The words came out in a snarl. “And you should stop talking right now.”

“Fine, fine.” Lebreau grinned. “I’ve said what I needed to say. Tell Fang I’ll see her tomorrow.”

Lightning said nothing as Lebreau turned, and walked off into the night. One of these days she was going to do something she’d regret. But perhaps that’s what Lebreau wanted. The other woman liked to push people, liked to see how far they’d go.
With one last look at the night, Lightning turned, and pushed through the doors of the bar. A soft whisper of a song was playing inside, the words all but lost beneath the swelling, rising notes of an electric guitar. A faint smile crossed her lips. It was exactly the sort of song Fang liked, a curious mix of hard and soft, loud and quiet. Very much like the warrior herself.

But almost as quickly as Lightning noticed the song, she ignored it. Instead, her attention went to the bar, and to the lone figure swaying to the music as she wiped it down. Dear Etro, only Fang could make cleaning a bar look so damn alluring. The other woman’s back was to her as she bent over, the cloth running over the polished timber of the bar.

The sweet curve of Fang’s back was almost entirely bare, and Lightning was torn between wanting to throttle the other woman for wearing something so revealing – she hated the thought of anyone else looking at Fang – and wanting to shove the other woman against the bar so she could lick the beads of sweat that had gathered at the small of Fang’s back. She could almost see it now. Fang would stiffen in surprise and then she would melt, go soft, and weak, as Lightning’s lips traced the outline of her spine, and went up to tickle the back of her neck. It would be easy then, so easy, to just lean Fang against the bar, and then slip a knee between her legs, and after that –

“You’re staring awfully hard at nothing. Tough day at work?”

Lightning jerked back. When had Fang gotten right next to her?

“You’re jumpy tonight.” Fang chuckled. “Well, have a seat. I won’t be too much longer.”

Intimately aware of how close the other woman was, Lightning nodded, and took a seat at the bar. Fang’s presence was like a bonfire at the edges of her awareness. Burning. Burning. Burning. Any closer, and Lightning would catch fire – if she hadn’t already. Maker, when had she gotten so pathetic?

For the next few minutes, she watched Fang finish tidying up. She’d always had an eye for detail, but now she hated how good she was at picking up all the little things. There was the sway of Fang’s hips as she walked, the shift of muscle across her toned frame as she moved, and of course, the way her jeans clung to the best set of legs that Lightning had ever seen.

“Want something to drink?” Fang slipped into a seat beside her. “Non-alcoholic though, since you’re the one driving us home.”

Home. If that wasn’t a loaded word, Lightning didn’t know what was. After Serah had married Snow and moved out, Fang and Vanille had moved in with her. And she’d been going slowly insane ever since.

It was all Fang’s fault. The dark haired woman seemed to have entirely different standards when it came to modesty. It wasn’t unusual to find her lounging about the house in her underwear, or to find her walking around in nothing more than a towel after taking a shower. After bumping into her in the corridor for what felt like the hundredth time, Lightning had been a hair’s breadth from just shoving Fang into the wall and ripping that towel off. The damn thing barely even covered her properly, and it was damp enough to hide absolutely nothing when it came to Fang’s figure. What made it even worse was the gleam in Fang’s eyes. The other woman wanted her to do that, wanted Lightning to lose control and just take her. And more and more, Lightning wanted that too.

It had gotten so bad that Vanille had taken to creeping around the house like a ghost. The poor girl was probably worried that she’d either walk in on Fang and Lightning trying to kill each other, or walk in on them doing something else that would most likely still involve a great deal of violence and screaming, albeit with a healthy – or perhaps unhealthy – does of pleasure thrown in.
“Cola.” Lightning had to force the word out. “I’d like some cola.”

“Sure.” Fang poured each of them a glass of cola. “Well, how was your night?”

Lightning stared as Fang tipped her head back and took a long sip of her cola. The other woman’s neck was a slender, graceful curve, and for a moment, all she could think about was what it would feel like to press her lips against Fang’s throat. She trembled. She was turning into a pervert, a sex-obsessed pervert, and it was entirely Fang’s fault. If only the warrior didn’t look so good, if only she didn’t grate on Lightning’s nerves so much, then Lightning wouldn’t have all these… fantasies.

“The usual.” Lightning looked away, and downed most of her cola in one go. The liquid was cold, icy, but she barely tasted it. “Drunks. A few car crashes. A wild animal or two.”

Fang laughed, and Lightning twitched at the sound. She’d heard that laugh a thousand times in her dreams, and almost as many times, she’d dreamed of cutting it off, turning it into a moan as she showed Fang exactly which one of them was in charge. But it was funny. She didn’t feel like she was in charge. Her whole body was on autopilot, every muscle moving of its own accord as she turned and stared at Fang again. Fang knew, oh yes, she knew what she did to Lightning. There was a knowing gleam in those green eyes, and a smirk on those full lips.

“I had an interesting night myself.” Fang traced the contours of her glass with long, slender fingers. Lightning could think of better ways to use those fingers.

“Lebreau told me you had a lot of attention tonight.” Lightning’s expression darkened. “Does that happen often?”

“A bit.” Fang grinned. “One of the perks of the job, I guess. A lot of the girls coming in here are just looking for a good time, and if they have one, they come back.”

Lightning wasn’t sure that she wanted to know what a good time entailed.

“They’re a little noisy, but they’re not too bad.” Fang caught and held Lightning gaze. “They know what they want, you see. And they’re not afraid to reach out and take it. Take this blonde who came up to me tonight. She was a pretty little thing, Lightning, not tall, but she had curves in all the right places, and the kind of eyes that you can’t help but look at. They were a lot like yours actually, blue, although hers were a darker blue than yours, and she smiled more.”

Lightning had to pull her hand off her glass before she broke it. “And what did you do?”

Fang tugged a napkin out of her pocket. There was a number there written in lipstick. “In case I ever want to call her.”

“Will you?” Lightning hated the undercurrent of carefully controlled fury that filled her voice. Fang wasn’t hers – even if she should be.

“No.” Fang shrugged. “I liked her eyes, but they weren’t quite my style. They were too innocent. I could tell, just by looking, that she’d never had to fight for her life, that she’d never waded through the blood of her enemies. I’d scare her, Lightning. When she saw exactly who and what I was, I’d scare her. She seemed like a nice kid, but she’s not what I’m looking for.”

“And what are you looking for?”

“Someone who gets it.” Fang’s voice had darkened, taken a rough, almost brutal edge. Lightning liked the sound of it. It made her insides clench, and her breathing quicken. “I want someone who
can look right into me and not be scared of what she finds, someone who’ll stand up to me and show me that she’s my equal. I won’t have anything less than that, Lightning, I won’t.”

“There aren’t a lot of women like that around.” Lightning swallowed thickly. She could feel Fang’s gaze on her, could feel the other woman eyes tracing her face, her collarbone, her chest. “You might be waiting a long time.”

“I’ve waited a long time already, I can wait a little longer if I have to.” Fang’s eyes shimmered. “Besides, who’s to say I can’t indulge a bit while I wait.” She smirked. “That wasn’t the only number I got.” She pulled out another napkin, and then another. “That one is from a red head – tall, leggy, and curvy. That other one? A brunette. Quiet, but you know what they say, it’s always the quiet ones you have to watch out for.”

Fang laughed, and Lightning’s hand jerked across the counter and grabbed the napkins.


“What the hell did you do that for?” Fang growled.

“I think you know exactly why I did that.” Lightning pushed to her feet. The air was a million degrees, and she could feel the heat of it throbbing through her body.

“Do you now?” Fang got up as well, and Lightning shuddered as the other woman advanced until they are almost nose-to-nose. “Why don’t you tell me?”

Lightning shoved Fang back, and she felt a thrill of anticipation run through her as the other woman’s eyes narrowed. Good. She wanted Fang angry. She wanted Fang mad. She just wanted Fang.

“I’ve talked to Vanille about the Yun,” Lightning said. “They were supposed to be great warriors.”

“They were the best.” Fang’s jaw clenched, and Lightning could see the tension running through her.

“Vanille said that when they wanted something, they took it.” Lightning shoved Fang back again, and felt her lips curve into a smirk as the other woman clattered into the bar. Good. She had nowhere to run, not that Lightning planned on letting her go anywhere. “But you’re different.”

“I –”

“Stop talking.” Lightning put one hand on Fang’s lips, and shivered when the other woman’s tongue swept out to run along her index finger. “I know what you want, I’ve known ever since you moved in. But you haven’t taken it.”

“What I want, I can’t take.” Fang wrapped one hand around Lightning’s wrist, and pressed her lips against the pink haired woman’s knuckles. “Because it’s the kind of thing that has to be given.”

“And if I gave it to you? What then?” Lightning moaned as Fang began to trace small circles on the back of her hand with her thumb. Maker, something that simple shouldn’t feel so good.

“It would have to be forever,” Fang whispered. “You wouldn’t get to take it back. You wouldn’t get to wake up the next day and wonder if you’d made a mistake. It has to be everything, Lightning, or nothing at all.”

“Everything?” Lightning laughed softly. “If I give you that much, I’d have to ask for the same in
return. You wouldn’t get to walk away either. You’d have to be mine and no one else’s.”

“That almost sounds like a proposal.” Fang’s hand trembled. “You know that, right?”

“I do.” Lightning’s lips curled. “And I’m telling you, right now, that if you want everything, you can have it. If you want forever, it’s yours. I’m sick of this… this…” Lightning gave a growl of frustration. “You’re driving me crazy, Fang, and I’m sick of it. I spent an hour in the shower today thinking up all the ways I could have you, and another hour at work wondering what it would be like to come home to you – not to the same house, but to you, because you’re mine.”

Fang’s hands dropped, coming to rest on Lightning’s hips. “I was kind of hoping you’d notice me.”

“Well, I have.” Lightning backed Fang up until the other woman was forced to sit on top of the bar, her legs parted just enough to let Lightning stand between them. “What’s your answer?”

Fang leaned forward, their lips almost touching. “You keep asking me to take what I want, but it doesn’t look like you’re going to give me the chance.”

“Oh, you’ll get your chance.” Lightning reached forward and grabbed hold of Fang’s shirt. A quick tug and it was off, half a dozen buttons rolling across the floor. “But only after I’ve had mine. Sound fair?”

Fang’s laugh turned into a moan as Lightning pressed against her. “You’re lucky I like pushy women.”

Lightning bared her teeth. “Believe me, I can be very, very pushy.” Her hands ghosted along Fang’s sides and along her back.

“Good.” Fang relaxed, let Lightning take control. She’d take it back later, anyway. “Now how about we give Lebreau something to complain about?”

X X X

Lebreau unlocked the doors of her bar, and stepped inside. Her eyes widened. The place was a mess. Tables had been upturned, chairs had been thrown about, at least half a dozen broken bottles had been scattered around, and unless her eyes were deceiving her, the bar had been moved at least a foot or two back from where it was supposed to be, the bolts that kept it anchored to the floor all but torn out of their sockets.

“What the hell?” Lebreau bellowed. She reached for her phone and started to punch in a number. She was used to the bar being a little untidy, but it had been fine last night.

“Stop yelling.”

“Ah!” Lebreau jerked back as Fang appeared from behind an upturned table. The other woman had the tattered remains of a shirt slung about her waist as a makeshift skirt, and a torn Guardian Corps jacket draped over her upper half. “You mind explaining this, Fang?”

“Not much to explain.” Fang had the biggest damn smile on her face. “Lightning came and we talked. And then she came some more. And well, a little more after that. Oh, and then some more.”

Whack.

“Idiot.”
Lebreau gaped as Lightning Farron lowered the hand she’d hit Fang with, and tugged at the shirt that only barely managed to preserve her modesty. Her hair was a mess. In fact, it looked like a pink hedgehog had decided to die on top of her head. But what really got Lebreau’s attention was the silly grin on Lightning’s face.

Oh yeah.

“You two totally got it on, didn’t you?” Lebreau grinned. “Wow. I mean wow.” She looked around at her bar. “Do I even want to know what you two did?”

“Probably not.” Lightning somehow managed to look regal despite the fact that she was practically naked.

“I see.” Lebreau’s lips twitched. “But you know, I’m going to have to ask you to pay for all the damage.”

“Tch.” Lightning scowled. “We’ll pay.” She and Fang shared a look. “It was worth it.”

Lebreau chuckled. “Out of interest, who won?”

“Won?”

“You know, who was on top?” Lebreau’s grin widened. “Who was the one in charge?”

Lightning and Fang stared at each other, and then spoke almost as one.

“Me.”

X X X

Author’s Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

So, this is a contribution to Fangrai February. Check it out at fangrai(dash)February(period)tumblr(period)com. It’s based on Prompt #6: In which Lightning is picking Fang up from closing down Lebreau’s bar, and while she’s there Fang starts talking about other hotties at the bar and Lightning gets jealous and goads her into having bar sex with her.

These prompts are nice, since they give me a chance to just bang something out quickly (if you’ll pardon the pun), without worrying about having to construct a huge, overarching plot that requires tens of thousands of words to bring to fruition (I’m looking at you Wasteland and Whispers of the Gods).

Some of you are probably disappointed that I didn’t include the sex scene. Rest assured that I haven’t cut it out because of the restrictions on this website. In fact, there is no version of this floating around anywhere that has the sex scene. My reasoning for that is as follows: nothing I could ever write could fill in the gaps as wonderfully as your imagination. How exactly did they manage to destroy the bar so completely while, as Lebreau puts it, getting it on? What were they doing (and who was doing who) to uproot the bar?

The ending is my answer to the question of: who is on top? The answer: it depends on who you ask. Either that, or both of them.

If you have the time check out my blog over at razieltwelve(period)wordpress(period)com.
As always, I appreciate your feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Snowball Fights Are Fun (Except When We're Involved)

Chapter Summary

Serah thinks Lightning is in charge. Vanille thinks Fang is in charge. How do they settle their differences? With war. Based on Prompt #21 for Fangrai February: Something that fits the title “Snowball Fights Are Fun (Except when we’re involved)”. Can be shippy or not!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Snowball Fights are Fun (Except When We’re Involved), or A Tale of Two Houses

Listen closely, for I have a story to tell. In the land of New Bodhum, there once lived a fair and lovely young maiden. Vanille they called her, Vanille the Vivacious, for her love of life and cheerfulness were known throughout the land. Only Serah the Spectacular, a young lady with hair as pink as a maiden’s blush could match Vanille’s good cheer.

For many moons, the ladies Vanille and Serah were fine friends, kindred spirits who treasured each other dearly, and through their friendship peace was kept between the noble House of Yun and the august House of Farron. But alas and alack – one day Vanille the Vivacious would fall to victim to treachery most foul, and from that day onward she would be known as Vanille the Vengeful, and never again would there be peace between the House of Yun and the House of Farron.

X     X     X

Vanille stifled a giggle and skipped down the street. It was a chilly winter’s day, and it was so cold that she likely would have frozen in a few minutes if it wasn’t for her thick jacket and gloves. But that was okay. She liked the icy touch of winter, and above all, she liked the snow. Nothing in the world was as much fun as good snowball fight (except, perhaps, for watching Fang bait Lightning), and she was off to Serah’s house to ambush the pink haired woman. Serah would walk out the door and then whack! She’d get a snowball right to face. That would teach Serah to say bad things about Fang.

She skipped the rest of the way to Serah’s house and knocked on the door. As footsteps drew near, she ducked behind the bushes beside the door, a snowball ready and waiting in her right hand. The door opened, and she let out a gleeful cry and hurled her snowball.

“Take that, Serah!”

Whack.

Snow wiped the snow off his face and grimaced. “Vanille?”

Vanille stared. That had not gone to plan. “Uh, do you think you could get Serah to come out?”

She dropped the snowball she was holding. “I’d like to talk to her.”

Snow shrugged. “Well, if you want to talk to her, she’s right behind you.”
Vanille turned. And took a snowball right to the face, and then another and another.

“Not ready to admit you’re wrong yet, Vanille?” Serah grinned. “Eat snow, Dia!”

And with that Vanille went down, her hands raised in a futile effort to block the avalanche of snow headed her way courtesy of the younger Farron. As for Snow, the big man simply shrugged and went back inside, closing the door the behind him. He’d learned a long time ago that it was better to let Serah do what she wanted when she was in one of those moods.

After a good five minutes of being pelted by snow, Vanille managed to drag herself out of the yard.

“Curse you, Serah!” she cried, shaking one fist. “I’ll have my revenge –” Whatever else she would have said was cut off by another perfectly aimed snowball. After that, she decided that perhaps discretion was the better part of valour. Besides, she’d be back later – with reinforcements.

X X X

And thus did Serah the Spectacular reveal her true, treacherous nature. From that day forth, she would be known throughout the land as Serah the Sly, a pink haired shrew of unrivalled duplicity and general malevolence. Wounded by her friend’s betrayal, Vanille swore vengeance and took up her new name: Vanille the Vengeful.

Mindful of her pink haired foe’s skill in the arts of war, Vanille sought refuge in the fortress she shared with her sister, Fang the Ferocious. There, she appealed to her beloved sister to aid her in her quest for vengeance, for to overthrow a foe as dastardly as Serah the Sly, she would need a warrior stout of arm and keen of eye.

X X X

“And then Serah jumped out from behind some bushes and pelted me with snow!” Vanille buried her face in Fang’s chest and wept. “It was so awful. I never even had a chance to defend myself. She ambushed me and I kept asking her to stop hitting me with snowballs, but she just wouldn’t stop, and she kept laughing the whole time.”

Fang and Lightning shared a sceptical look over Vanille’s head. Fang wanted to believe Vanille – the red head was the closest thing she had to family – but she knew the other woman very well, and she had a feeling that things weren’t that simple. Certainly, Serah had never seemed like the evil, homicidal maniac that Vanille’s story painted her as.


And so Vanille again wove a tale of unbridled treachery and woe. Serah, utter villain that she was, had laid a cunning trap and then sprung from her hiding place to accost Vanille with snowballs, some of which the red head swore were nothing more than rocks covered by a thin layer of snow. The red had begged for mercy, even getting down on her knees in a vain bid to stay Serah’s ruthless and tyrannical hand. Only after Vanille had been a bruised and bloody mess had Serah ceased throwing snowballs long enough for Vanille to drag her battered and broken body home, her ears ringing with the haughty sound of Serah’s mocking laughter.

“I see.” Fang wasn’t sure whether she should laugh or cry at the sheer idiocy of what she’d just heard. “So, what exactly do you want me to do?”

Vanille leapt out of Fang’s lap and thrust one fist into the air. “Avenge me! You know the rules of our clans, Fang. As my sister, you have to defend my honour! Serah totally betrayed me, and now she has to pay!”
“Is she actually serious?” Lightning was supposed to be working on some paperwork for the Guardian Corps, but halfway through Vanille’s ridiculously overblown account of things, she’d decided that she could leave her work till later. This was far more interesting, and knowing Vanille, she was only complaining because she’d planned to ambush Serah herself.

Fang shrugged. It was at times like this that she wondered if maybe all that time in crystal stasis hadn’t made Vanille just a little bit odd. “Technically, she’s right. As her sister, I do kind of have to go over there and get revenge for her.”

“Revenge? On Serah? Because of a few snowballs?”

Fang nodded. “Yeah.”

“It wasn’t just a few snowballs,” Vanille insisted. She pointed to a perfectly unblemished portion of skin on her cheek. “See this bruise? I got that from one of the rocks she threw. I’m lucky to be alive. Another moment or two, and I might not have been able to get away.”

“Right.” Lightning reached for her coat. “If you’re going to go over to Serah’s house, I might as well go with you. Someone needs to make sure that things don’t get out of hand.”

X X X

And thus did Vanille the Vengeful sway Fang the Ferocious to her cause, and together, they went to mete out righteous vengeance upon Serah the Sly. But they did not go alone. Lightning the Legendary had heard Vanille’s plea, and moved by her words, she had come to see justice done as well.

As they drew near Serah the Sly’s fortress of wickedness, the clouds darkened, and the chill winter grew colder still. An evil wind swept in from the south, and the whole street trembled in anticipation of the battle that was to come.

X X X

Fang winced as Serah opened the door. The younger Farron wore a very Lightning-like scowl on her face, and with her hands on her hips, and her eyes promising swift, horrible death, it was clear that she was in no mood for mischief.

“So, uh, apparently, I’m here to get revenge on you for…” She glanced back at Vanille, who seemed determined to use her as human shield. “What was it again?”

“Unspeakable acts of despicable treachery.” Vanille glared at Serah from behind Fang. “And general wickedness and malevolence.”

“Yeah, what she said.” Fang looked back at Serah. “So, what do you think?”

“No.” Serah shook her head. “Vanille was planning on ambushing me. She’s just upset that I got her first.”

“Really?” Fang gave Vanille a pointed look. “She didn’t mention that.”

“Of course, I didn’t. It’s a lie!” Vanille jabbed one finger at Serah. “Stop lying!”

“Then why were you hiding behind the bushes?” Serah practically threw Fang out of the way, and Vanille backed up as the younger Farron stomped over to her.
“I could ask you the same thing,” Vanille shot back.

“Guys, that’s enough.” Fang put together a pathetically small snowball and dropped it onto Serah’s head. “There, happy now, Vanille? Let’s go back home. I need to polish my spear.”

The red head was still gaping at Serah when Fang turned and started to walk away. “Kids,” the dark haired woman mouthed at Lightning. Then a snowball struck her right in the back of the head, followed by two more. Fang turned, eyes wide with disbelief, and ate another snowball to the face. She scrubbed the snow away to find Serah smirking at her as Vanille hurried behind her for cover.

“See, Fang!” Vanille ducked behind Fang and shook one fist at Serah. “Treachery!”

Fang’s eyes narrowed. She was almost certain now that Vanille was in the wrong, but she did not appreciate being hit in the face with a handful of snow. Never mind right or wrong, it was time to get revenge. “All right, Vanille. Come with me.”

Lightning watched the pair run off, and she was about to follow them when Serah tugged on the sleeve of her coat.

“Lightning, do you think we could talk for a second?”

X X X

And so, Vanille the Vengeful and Fang the Ferocious were forced back by the base, animal cunning of their enemy. Alas, Lightning the Legendary was caught, and though her heart and countenance were cold as ice, even she could not resist her sister’s plea for aid.

Thus did the war begin – a war between the House of Farron and the House of Yun.

X X X

“You’ll help me, won’t you?” Serah asked. “When they come back.”

Lightning pried her sister’s hand off her arm and looked around. Snow was huddled behind the couch, and the blonde gestured madly for her to run while she still could. “What started all of this?”

“You really want to know?” Serah nodded solemnly. “Then I’ll tell you.”

What followed was the second ridiculously exaggerated account that Lightning had heard that day. Apparently, Vanille had made a vile slur on Lightning’s honour, proclaiming that Fang was in charge of their relationship. As any good sister should, Serah had countered that in fact it was Lightning who was in charge of their relationship.

Things had escalanted from there, and Vanille had sworn vengeance. When she had knocked on Serah’s door earlier that day, Serah had sent Snow to answer it while sneaking around via the backdoor to get behind Vanille. Snow’s noble sacrifice – he’d survived a brutal, and utterly merciless beating from Vanille – had allowed Serah to strike a blow for her beloved sister’s honour. Thus, it was clearly Vanille who was at fault, not Serah, and if Lightning had any sense at all, she would side with Serah and help her strike down Vanille!

“You do realise that you’re being totally idiotic.” Lightning glared at Snow. Perhaps he’d begun to rub off on Serah. Wasn’t that a scary thought?

Serah grinned craftily. “So, was Vanille right? Is Fang really the one in charge?”
Lightning bristled at once. “Of course not.” She scowled. “I’m the one in charge.”

“That you have to help me.” Serah nodded firmly. “Otherwise, it’ll be like admitting that Vanille was right.”

That was some of the most convoluted logic that Lightning had ever heard, but she wasn’t about to let anyone think that Fang was in charge of things. Admittedly, there were times when she let the other woman take charge – Fang was very, very good at taking charge – but Lightning firmly believed that when push came to shove, she was the one in charge.

“Fine.”

But unbeknownst to the House of Farron, Vanille the Vengeful had already put into place a plan most cunning and refined. For Vanille knew that in the art of war, it was not merely skill that counted, but numbers as well.

Thus did Vanille send out a call to all the houses that lay about her own: Let the children come forth and join our quest! Let the youth of the street gather beneath my banner so that we might smite the wicked!

Fang eyed the gaggle of children trailing after her and Vanille like a line of coat-wearing ducklings. “Remind me again, how are we not getting arrested for this?”

Vanille smiled. “Well, while you and Lightning have been busy doing all sorts of things to each other, I’ve made friends with all of our neighbours. I’ve even babysat most of the kids on the street.” She turned and waved at the kids, who all waved back, their cheeks rosy from the cold. “Besides, we’ll need more troops if we’re going to beat Serah and Lightning.”

“I suppose.” Fang made a mental note to keep a closer eye on Vanille. One day she might be taking over the street, the next it could be the world. “So, what’s the plan?”

Vanille stopped and turned to address the children. “Okay, kids, here’s the plan. If you see anyone with pink hair, hit them with as much snow as you can. Got it?”

The kids snapped to attention. “Yes, Miss Dia!”

Fang stared. She really, really needed to keep a closer eye on Vanille.

But the House of Farron would not be outdone so easily. For in her vast and terrible wisdom, Serah the Sly had gathered an army of her own. And with her sister, Lightning the Legendary to command them, her fortress was soon turned into a realm so hostile and so horrible that no enemy could ever hope to overthrow it.

“Who are these kids?” Lightning asked.

“I teach at the local primary school,” Serah explained. “Most of them live nearby, and when I mentioned that there might be a snowball fight, they all decided to come.” She grinned. “And you
have to admit, they’re pretty useful. Look what they’ve done already with you giving all the orders.”

Lightning had to agree. Over the past half an hour, she’d barked orders, wrangled kids, and somehow managed to construct a makeshift system of walls and trenches that would help defend her sister’s house from attack. The kids had loved it, and they’d taken to following orders far better that the latest bunch of Guardian Corps recruits. All it had taken was a few stout glares and the occasional narrowing of her eyes. Maybe one day she’d have kids, and if she did, she could only hope that they’d be this easy to manage. If they were anything like Fang though, she’d have her work cut out for her.

“Look!” Serah pointed down the street. “Here they come, and they’ve brought company.”

And they had. Fang and Vanille were at the head of a column of about a dozen children.

“Serah!” Vanille roared. “Surrender or else!”

“Never!”

Vanille folded her arms over her chest. “I thought you’d say that.” She nodded at the children. “Attack!”

X     X     X

And thus did the Great War begin. It was a time of woe and a time of suffering, a time of courage and a time of honour. Children the size of dwarves fought with the courage of lions, and none who ever laid eyes upon the battle shall ever forget the deeds that were done that day.

And how could they?

For who could forget the valour of Timmy the Terrific, who all of eight years old, stood fast against the endless hordes of Vanille the Vengeful. How swift and keen of eye he was, how bold and unrelenting. For a full five minutes, he held the ramparts of Fort Farron alone, and though he fell at last, buried beneath a dozen snowballs, the children of the street would sing of his deeds for days to come.

And then there was Kelly the… Pretty Good, who stormed the trenches and led her compatriots in a desperate charge that drove Serah the Sly back to the very doors of her abode, and were it not for the cowardly ambush of Serah’s minions, she might have struck down the pink haired enemy herself. Loud were the cries of lamentation that came from her fellows, and great was the vengeance they exacted.

Of such deeds were legends made, and of such legends did all the children speak of at lunchtime until the next term of school began.

X     X     X

Fang ducked as another snowball whizzed by overhead. Children were going down all over the place, nailed by snowballs as they tried to negotiate the intricate systems of trenches that Lightning and her cronies had thrown up. Trust the soldier to turn her sister’s lawn into a minefield.

“What do we do, Miss Yun?” The question came from Leila, a cute little girl a few months shy of her seventh birthday. According to Vanille, she lived two doors down from them. “There’s too many of them!”
Fang put one hand on the girl’s shoulder. “It’s okay. Just stay close to me.”

And with that, Fang leapt out of the trench she was in. Snowballs races toward her, and she dove, rolling into a crouch as she palmed two snowballs and struck a pair of kids square in the chest. They went down, screaming and simulating death of a most gory fashion, and another one of them leapt up, only to be hit right in the back by Leila.

“I got him, Miss Yun, I got him!”

Fang grinned. “Yes, you did. Now, come on, we’re getting close.”

The two of them darted through the snow as the battle continued to rage around them. Out of the corner of her eye, Fang saw Vanille yelling orders from one of the trenches, the children around her hastening to obey as Serah’s minions rained down snowy death. Fang tugged Leila after her, and the pair of them crawled through a low trench before they rose and sprinted toward a wall of snow that a few of their allies had hastily built. She paused for a moment to let Leila capture her breath, and her eyes widened as she realised that at some point, more of the local children had joined the battle along with their parents. Instead of just taking up Serah’s front lawn, the snowball fight had now expanded to take in a good half of the street.

“You’ve gone far enough, Fang.”

Fang turned. Lightning was there. Beside her, Leila trembled. The little girl had seen Lightning mow down half a dozen of the older kids like they were nothing. “It’s okay, Leila. Go help the others.”

“But, Miss Yun –”

Fang ruffled the girl’s hair. “It’s okay. This one’s too tough for you. Let me handle her.” The girl nodded slowly and then ran off. Fang smirked and began to pace in a slow circle. Lightning matched her stride for stride. “You realise that all of this is crazy, right?”

Lightning’s eyes flicked over to where Vanille and some of her children had taken a trench opposite Serah and some of hers. The two sides exchanged insults and snowballs at a frantic pace. “Definitely, but that doesn’t mean I can let you win.”

Fang chuckled. “Well, there is that.” She readied herself for battle. “Do you think you can take me?”

Lightning’s eyes narrowed. “Watch me.”

And then they moved.

X     X     X

Stories would be written, and songs would be sung of the battle between Fang the Ferocious and Lightning the Legendary. Two warriors bound by love, but separated by the feud between their two Houses. Such was their skill that the heavens wept, and such was their grace that even the winds gave pause and for the first time knew true envy.

X     X     X

After several minutes of non-stop combat, neither of them had managed to land a blow. In a last desperate bid to land a decisive attack, Fang lunged for another handful of snow, only to stop short as Lightning crossed the gap between them with impossible speed. She froze, a snarl on her lips as
she eyed the ball of snow in Lightning’s hand.

“Goodbye, Fang.”

“Fang, no!” Vanille screamed and hurled herself in front of the other woman. Her body crashed to the ground, her chest covered in snow. She’d taken Lightning’s snowball for Fang.

Fang grinned. “I won’t let your sacrifice go to waste, Vanille. Take this, Lightning!”

But even as Fang threw her snowball, Serah leapt from her trench, and the younger Farron’s body shuddered as Fang’s attack struck her in the side. She tumbled to the ground next to Lightning.

“Oh.” Vanille and Serah looked at each. “We’re both dead. Truce?”

“Truce?” Serah giggled and sat up as the children in the yard continued to fight. “I’m not sure we can do that.”

“In that case.” Vanille grabbed a handful of snow and smeared it into Serah’s face. “Take that!”

“Gah!” Serah growled and grabbed Vanille by the arm, throwing the other woman into the snow. “How do you like that?”

Fang stared, and then she grinned. “You know, Lightning, I think we’ve done our part for the day.”

“Oh?” Lightning raised one eyebrow and leaned to the side to dodge an errant snowball. “What do you have in mind?”

Fang stepped neatly over Serah and Vanille as they rolled across the ground to the delight of the nearby children. “Since Vanille is here, we’d have the house all to ourselves.”

“You’re right.” Lightning smiled. “Let’s go home.”

As they snuck out of the yard, Fang took Lightning’s hand in hers. “You know why they were arguing right?”

Lightning nodded. “Yes, and for the record, I happen to think that Serah was right.”

“Is that so?” Fang tugged Lightning over until they were walking side-by-side. “I happen to disagree. I guess we’ll just have to settle things when we get home.”

Chapter End Notes

**Author’s Notes**

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

So, this chapter was a little bit different from the one before. Heh. I’m a firm believer in letting the story dictate what style of writing I should use and once I saw the prompt, I just knew that I had to go for something light hearted. This chapter is based on Prompt #21: Something that fits the title “Snowball Fights are Fun (Except when we’re involved)”. Can be shippy or not!
There’s not much to say about this chapter, so I’ll turn to some questions that people asked about the previous chapter. Was that chapter (and for that matter is this one) in the same continuity as Ordinary Heroes and Tell Me A Story? The answer is…. I have no idea. I’ve written these for the prompts, so I haven’t given that too much thought. Once I work things out I’ll let you know. I will say, however, that this one definitely has a tone more similar to Tell Me A Story and Ordinary Heroes than the previous chapter.

If you have the time check out my blog over at razieltwelve(period)wordpress(period)com. I’ve got a piece about H. P. Lovecraft up that you might enjoy. You should also check out at Fangrai February at fangrai(dash)February(period)tumblr(period)com.

As something of a contest, I’ll give an invisible internet hat tip (and an imaginary cookie to boot) to the person who can guess which prompt I’ll be tackling next (since there are a few that have caught my eye).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
A Little Competition

Chapter Summary

As the kids are about to find out, Fang and Lightning are competitive about everything.

Based on Prompt #16 for Fangrai February: Something fluffy: Lightning and Fang are ridiculously competitive at everything - even at the puzzles in the morning paper.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A Little Competition

“Mommy, can you help me with this?”

Fang put her book down on the dining table. It was a treatise on the work Cocoon’s archaeologists had been doing to try and preserve the many ruins that had been found on Gran Pulse. As much as it annoyed her to have people poking around in those sorts of places, she had to admit that it was better than letting them crumble into dust. However, it wasn’t often that Averia asked her – or anyone – for help, so she could always leave the book until later.

“Got a problem, kiddo?” Fang grinned, and just because she knew it would get to Averia, she reached over to ruffle the girl’s hair.

Averia scowled and backed out of Fang’s reach. “Mommy, stop messing with my hair!”

“But it’s fun.” Fang smirked and blocked the punch that Averia aimed at her jaw. It was a good punch, all things considered, but the girl had a long, long way to go before she could land a hit on Fang. Besides, even if she did, it wasn’t like she’d do any damage. Fang had spent the last decade getting clobbered by Lightning for inappropriate remarks, teasing comments, and good old-fashioned Yun wit. “So, what’s bothering you?”

Averia scowled and backed out of Fang’s reach. “Mommy, stop messing with my hair!”

Averia held up part of the Saturday newspaper. Custom in the Yun-Farron household dictated that every newspaper be split up amongst the family. Fang and Lightning got the news and sports, Diana got the comics, and Averia got all the puzzles.

“It’s this.” Averia pointed at a 9 x 9 grid printed on one of the pages. There were some numbers inside it, and thick lines split the overall grid into nine smaller grids, each of them 3 x 3. “It’s called Sudoku, and I can’t solve this one.” She glared at the offending problem. “I hate it when I can’t solve them.”

“A little competition?” Fang studied the puzzle more closely. She vaguely remembered seeing something about Sudoku on television. Apparently, it had become quite popular, but she’d never actually had the chance to play it. “How does it work?”

Averia sat down next to Fang and pointed at the puzzle. “See these empty spaces? You have to fill them up with numbers between 1 and 9. But each number can only appear once in each of the rows and columns, and each number can only appear once in each of the smaller grids.” Averia jabbed
one finger at the problem. “I’ve done all the others already, but there’s something wrong with this one. I can’t get it.”

“I see.” Fang bit back a chuckle. No wonder Averia sounded so annoyed. The idea that something – anything – could get the better of her was not something the girl entertained very often. It also didn’t escape Fang’s notice that all the Sudoku puzzles were graded according to difficulty, and that this last one was labelled ‘brain-meltingly hard’. “Have you tried asking your sister for help?” Diana liked puzzles, although she tended to like them more when she could poke, prod, or jump on them.

“She doesn’t like Sudoku much,” Averia grumbled. She had pulled a pen out of her pocket and was holding it like a sword, the tip pointed at the puzzle. “And she’s watching cartoons now.”

Fang glanced at the clock on the wall. Of course, it was time for the Saturday morning special of Gary the Gorgonopsid – one and a half hours of nauseatingly cheerful fun involving the vaguely educational adventures of a small (but growing) band of ridiculously coloured animals. It was right up Diana’s alley, even if just looking at it made part of Fang’s soul die.

“Well, why don’t we try and solve it together,” Fang suggested. “I haven’t really played Sudoku before, but I’m not bad when it comes to puzzles.”

“Thanks, mommy.” Averia pursed her lips. “Here’s what I’ve worked out so far…”

Over the next fifteen minutes, Averia painstakingly laid out the reasoning that had gotten her about halfway through the problem. Fang was impressed. Heck, she was way more than impressed. Her little girl spoke clearly and efficiently, and her reasoning was frighteningly complex and precise for a girl her age. She grinned. Yep, she and Lightning made awesome kids together, although she would always maintain, if asked, that it was mostly because of her.

“So, what do you think?” Averia asked, once she’d finished explaining.

“I think you’re right about almost everything so far.” Fang pointed to one of the spaces in the grid. “But unless I’m mistaken, we can probably say that space over there is a 2.”

Averia’s eyes widened, and she studied the puzzle for a few moments. “I think you might be right.”

“Of course, I –”

“Actually, that spot should be a 3.” Lightning set her mug of hot chocolate down on the dining table, and slid into the chair beside Averia.

“You think it should be a 3?” Fang’s lips curled. “What makes you think you’re right?”

Lightning shrugged nonchalantly. “I happen to play Sudoku now and then, and I can tell that it should be a 3.”

Fang fought the urge to roll her eyes. What Lightning had just said was Lightning-speak for: I play Sudoku obsessively when nobody is watching, and if you think I’m wrong, you’re clearly insane because Lightning Farron has never been wrong about anything, ever, in the history of the universe.

“No, it’s a 2.” Fang pointed to the numbers that she and Averia had filled in throughout the grid. “Look at all the other numbers. It has to be a 2.”

“What if some of those numbers are wrong?” Lightning pointed to the grid. “That one over there
should be a 5 not a 7, and that one should be a 2 not a 9. If you change those around then it’s obvious it should be a 3 not a 2.”

“Obvious?” Fang smirked. “Well, have you ever considered that maybe…”

As Fang and Lightning continued to bicker, Averia sighed. She loved her parents – they were pretty awesome most of the time – but she knew where this was going. It was going to turn into another one of their crazy competitions. Honestly, people thought she was competitive, and she was, but she had nothing on her parents. One time, they’d even gotten into a competition to see who could fit the most peanut butter into a sandwich.

If things went like they usually would, then her mom and her mommy probably wouldn’t even get around to solving the Sudoku puzzle. Instead, they’d argue a lot, threaten each other, and then somehow get all touchy feely and mushy with each other. It would be horrible to watch, even worse than sitting through the Gary the Gorgonopsid special. She should probably just leave now and come back for her puzzle later.

As stealthily as she could, Averia slipped out from between her parents and headed for the living room. Gary the Gorgonopsid should be almost over by now, and there was a nature documentary coming up that she wanted to see.

Fang watched Averia walk out of the dining room. “Look at that, Lightning. You scared her off.”

“Scared her off?” Lightning took a sip of her hot chocolate. “Not likely.” She smirked. “I think she just didn’t want to see her mommy get proved totally wrong.”

“Is that a challenge?” Fang was not the sort of person to back down from a challenge, especially not when it came from Lightning. The fact that it was over a newspaper puzzle didn’t mean a thing. Rain, hail, or shine, she’d answer any one Lightning’s challenges, any time, anywhere. Naturally, she’d prefer that all of the challenges take place in the bedroom under hot and steamy conditions, but she couldn’t have everything she wanted. Or could she? “Because it sure sounds like a challenge.”

“I suppose it is.” Lightning reached for a paper and copied the Sudoku puzzle onto it. “But you don’t really think you can win, do you? I heard Averia explaining. You barely even know what Sudoku is.”

“You’re that confident?” Fang grinned. Pride cometh before the fall. “Then how about we bet on it.”

“Fine.” Lightning folded her arms over her chest. Naturally, Fang took a quick look. “The loser has to sit with Diana through all of her cartoons next Saturday.”

Fang shuddered. That was a fate almost worst than death, but if Lightning thought that was going to scare her off, she had another thing coming. Besides, there were some things worth the risk of several hours of cartoons. “In that case, the winner gets to take charge for the oh… the next week.” The leer she threw at Lightning, who was wearing a tank top and yoga pants, left precisely zero doubt about what she meant by ‘take charge’. “Unless, of course, you’re afraid you’ll lose.”

Lightning scowled. “I’m not going to lose.” She lifted her chin. “And you’d better brace yourself, because for the next week, I’ll be calling the shots.” Her eyes narrowed. “And you can be sure I have a few things in mind.” Scary. Sexy scary.

Fang bit back a grin. Poor Lightning. She was so easy to manipulate sometimes. Even if Fang lost,
she’d still get a whole week of Lightning taking charge, and that could hardly be called losing. And if she won? Heh. She had a few ideas of her own. Scratch that, she had a lot of ideas, and a week would give her more than enough time to try at least a few of them. She could even have the kids sleep over at Serah’s house with Claire for a night or two.

“Fang, are you fantasising about me again?” Lightning’s eyes sparkled with amusement.

Fang shook her head and grinned. “Maybe. Want me to tell you what I was fantasising?”

Lightning’s cheeks flushed. She’d learned the hard way that asking Fang what she was fantasising about usually led to the other woman demonstrating. “Let’s just start.”

And off they went.

Things started well, but as they passed the half hour mark, it became apparent that neither of them was getting anywhere. Fang was stuck on the last few spaces of the grid, and by the positively murderous expression that Lightning had on her face, it was clear that the pink haired woman wasn’t faring much better. If anything, it looked like Lightning was trying to glare the answer out of the puzzle.

“This is harder that I thought,” Lightning muttered. “What do you think?”

“Oh, I don’t know.” Fang waggled her eyebrows suggestively. “It almost sounds like you’re admitting defeat.”

“Oh, be quiet. I am not admitting defeat.” Lightning scowled. “But I could almost swear there was something wrong with this one. I just can’t get it to work.”

“Excuses, excuses.” Fang glanced back at the puzzle. She wasn’t any closer to solving it, but Lightning was so adorable when she was all frustrated like that. “When I win –”

The doorbell rang, and Vanille’s voice came through the front door. “Hey, guys, it’s me, your favourite auntie.” She paused. “And guess what? I’ve got candy!”

As soon as the word ‘candy’ was spoken, both Averia and Diana raced to answer the front door. A few moments later, the red head stumbled into the kitchen with Diana on her back and Averia grinning from ear-to-ear. Her mom and mommy might have turned the Sudoku puzzle into another competition, but she was sure her Aunt Vanille could help her with it.

“So, Averia tells me that you two are having problems with a Sudoku puzzle.” Vanille reached back and handed Diana a piece of chocolate. “Why don’t you let me have a look?”

“Be my guest.” Lightning waved one hand at the problem. “But you should know that we’ve both been working on it for a while now and –”

Vanille laughed. In fact, she laughed so hard that she barely managed to get Diana off her back before she fell to her knees.

“What’s so funny?” Lightning growled.

“Well, it’s just that this problem is impossible. You two can see that right?” Vanille chuckled and dragged herself back up to her feet.

“Impossible?” Fang and Lightning looked at each other. “What do you mean impossible?”
Vanille settled down at the dining table and pulled chairs out for Averia and Diana. “I mean exactly what I said. It’s impossible.” And then, like it was the most obvious thing in the world, she rattled off an explanation for why the starting numbers made it impossible to fill in the grid while following the rules. “So you see, there’s actually a typo in the starting numbers. If you change those two around then you can solve it, but as it stands, there’s no way to fill in the grid and follow the rules.” She tilted her head to one side. “So… I’m guessing neither of you noticed that… and why do you two look like someone stole your cookies?”

“It’s nothing.” Fang sighed. If the problem was impossible then that meant the bet was off. “Girls, why don’t you take your candy to living room. We’ll be there in a second.” Once the two girls were out of earshot, Fang gave a wry chuckle. “We were sort of betting on which one of us would solve the puzzle first.”

“Betting?” Vanille gave them both a sly grin, and Lightning looked away, her cheeks a rosy pink. “Is that what they call it these days? You perverts.”

“Stop that.” Lightning scowled and reached for her laptop. “How do we even know you’re right about the problem being impossible? I’m going to check the newspaper’s information site.” A few keystrokes later, and her scowl deepened.

Vanille popped a piece of chocolate into her mouth. “I was right, wasn’t I?”

Lightning refused to look at her. “Maybe.”

“Honestly, it’s like you’ve forgotten which one of us built a robot, and which one of us was able to get it working again after five hundred years.” Vanille grinned. “Anyway, who says you can’t bet on something else. There’s always the crossword.”

And with Fang and Lightning were off again.

“I’ll be in the living room with the girls,” Vanille said as she stood and gave Fang a pat on the shoulder. “You can thank me later.”

“Thank you for what?” Fang asked. She wasn’t bad when it came to crosswords, but Lightning was a monster.

“A certain somebody happens to make crossword puzzles for the newspaper,” Vanille whispered. “Look at 41 across.”

Fang’s eyes widened. “21 across: The Dia word for cheater?” She chuckled. “You’re right, I do owe you. Now get out of here before Lightning notices.”

It took two more minutes for Lightning to notice. It took her another two minutes to corner Vanille in the living room, and a further five minutes for her to pry the information out of Vanille after the red head decided to use Averia and Diana as human shields.

And Fang? It took her exactly seven minutes and thirty seconds to finish the crossword, and one minute and thirty seconds to figure out what she wanted Lightning to do for her first. It involved an apron, and very little else.
Author’s Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based on Prompt #16 for Fangrai February: Something fluffy: Lightning and Fang are ridiculously competitive at everything - even at the puzzles in the morning paper.

When I saw this prompt, I thought I’d give it a try, and since none of the chapters thus far have included the kids, I thought I’d slip them in too. This chapter is much more straightforward than the other two in that it’s just a straight up fluff piece with a little bit of innuendo and some mischief (from all the usual suspects).

There are times when I wonder what Averia is thinking. She’s got a slightly crazy (in the best possible way) little sister, one mother who loves to tease and poke at her other mother, and an aunt who is her little sister’s partner in crime most of the time. I really do think she might be the sanest person in the family (although that isn’t saying much).

If you have the time check out my blog over at razieltwelve(period)wordpress(period)com. You should also check out at Fangrai February at fangrai(dash)February(period)tumblr(period)com.

I would also like to apologise to all of you who tried to read Chapter 2 of this story over the weekend. I uploaded it, but due to errors on the part of this website, it was totally inaccessible. As you can imagine, I was kind of annoyed. There’s nothing worse than getting an alert for a new chapter only for that new chapter to not show up. If you haven’t had a look at it, do take a look. It’s (hopefully) humorous, and I think you’ll enjoy it.

Also, an invisible internet hat tip (plus an imaginary cookie) to mcoyne for correctly guessing that I’d give prompt #16 a try. Whoever guesses the next prompt gets an imaginary Gary the Gorgonopsid plush toy. As a bonus, it’ll also have an imaginary signature from Diana on it.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Late Night Snack

Vanille padded down the stairs. Living with Lightning had quite a few advantages, but one of the best was access to a well-stocked fridge. Oh, it wasn't like she'd starve to death if she lived on her own, but Lightning was so good at keeping track of everything. The moment they even started to run low on something – whether it was ice cream, bread, or even toilet paper – Lightning had already bought enough to last another week. It was utterly uncanny, and what made it even more impressive was that Lightning didn't even seem to check on all these things, she just knew.

Of course, Lightning did have another reason to keep the fridge full. The pink haired woman had quite the sweet tooth, and she absolutely hated to be out of ice cream. In fact, the last time they'd run out, things had gotten so bad that Fang, of all people, had run full-pelt to the nearest convenience store to get some more. Lightning's glare was terrifying at the best of time, but when she didn't have any ice cream it was something else entirely. Vanille still had nightmares about it.

So there was always ice cream in the fridge, and that meant there was always ice cream on hand whenever Vanille wanted a little late night snack. It was a pity that Lightning seemed to hate vanilla ice cream, but chocolate wasn't too bad, and strawberry was great with a cherry on top. She'd have to be careful though. If she actually got caught borrowing some of Lightning's ice cream – she preferred not to think of it as stealing – she would most likely end up scrubbing the house's toilets until she died of old age. So rather than whistle a merry tune at the thought of some ice cream, she crept as quietly as she could into the kitchen. The lights were off, and she couldn't risk turning them on, but that was all right. She'd already memorised the layout of the kitchen.

She tiptoed over to the fridge, and opened the freezer. Perfect, the ice cream was right there, and judging by the weight of the container it was still almost full. This was where things got tricky. She needed to take enough to satisfy her own sweet tooth, but not so much that Lightning would notice. The trick was to take a little bit of ice cream from all over the container, rather than scooping all of it out from the same spot. And if she did get caught, she could always blame it on Fang. Lighting and Fang had been stalking each other like hungry dragons for some time now, although Vanille was fairly sure they didn't want to eat each other, at least not in the conventional sense.

Urgh… now that was an interesting mental image. Not that Lightning and Fang were unattractive, on the contrary, they were two of the most attractive people that Vanille knew, but she didn't really think of them that way. Well, she had wondered a few times – and she'd had some really weird dreams – but that was it. She was strictly look but don't touch when it came to those two. And Serah. But that was another matter entirely, and something that she really, really didn't want to think about when it was this late at night.

Setting the ice cream container down on the counter, she wandered over to the other side of the kitchen to get a spoon. It was still too dark to see, but she'd done this enough times to know exactly where the spoons were. All she had to do now was reach out and…

What. The. Hell.

Instead of the kitchen counter, her hand was touching someone's leg. There was someone else in the kitchen.
"Ah! Burglars!" Vanille screeched as she stumbled toward the door out of the kitchen. She fumbled for the lights and turned, ready – and very much willing – to incinerate the horrible criminals that had broken into the house. Never mind the kitchen, she'd pay Lightning back once she turned the burglars into very dead, very unthreatening piles of ash.

Only, when the lights came on, it wasn't burglars in the kitchen with her.

"Uh… hi." Fang waved up at her from the floor. She looked like she wanted to stand, but she wasn't having much luck, not with Lightning on top of her. "Did you come down to get a late night snack?"

Vanille lowered her hand, and gave slow, slow nod. What was going on? Why were Fang and Lightning in the kitchen hiding in the dark? Did they know that she was sneaking ice cream?

And then she noticed how they were dressed.

Lightning was sprawled on top of Fang in her Guardian Corps uniform, or at least, sort of in her Guardian Corps uniform. The pink haired woman's jacket was currently dangling from one of the lighting fixtures, and her shirt looked an awful lot like someone had ripped it in half. Her bra was still on, but only barely, since Fang's left hand seemed very much in the process of taking it off. As for Fang's right hand… that seemed to have hiked Lightning's skirt up above her waist, revealing the soldier's rather interesting choice in underwear. Hmm… black lace. Very nice.

"Yeah, I was hungry so I thought I'd get something to eat."

Vanille couldn't help but stare as Lightning climbed off Fang and did her best to adjust her clothing. Fang, Vanille noted, wasn't wearing a great deal either. In fact, apart from a baggy t-shirt that she was busy tugging back into place, and a pair of shorts, she didn't seem to be wearing anything at all. It didn't help appearances that Lightning still had one of her hands down Fang's shorts. Vanille gave the hand in question a pointed look, and Lightning's face went the most adorable shade of red before she yanked her hand out of Fang's shorts.

"So… what were you two doing?" Vanille smiled, and her smile only widened when Lightning actually began to squirm beneath her gaze. Forget the ice cream, this was much more interesting.

Fang looked at Lightning and then back at Vanille. "We were –"

Lightning cut in. "Fang was helping me with my injury."

"Your injury?" Vanille tilted her head to one side. Oh, this would be fun. "It's funny you should say that since you don't look injured, and I can't think of an injury that would make it necessary for you to rip off your shirt and your bra." She paused and gave Lightning another frank look. "Nice bra, by the way, really matches the panties."

Lightning's jaw clenched. "I had a cut on my side, Vanille. Fang was healing it."

"And I suppose you had a cut on your inner thigh too, since you had your skirt hiked up." Vanille giggled. "You must have been up against quite an animal to get injuries like that." Lightning flushed again, and Vanille bit back a laugh. No wonder Fang liked teasing her so much. She was adorable when she got all flustered.

"I had a busy night." Lightning ground each word out. "Okay."

"I'm sure you did." Vanille skipped over to one of the drawers and pulled out a bowl before she reached past Lightning and Fang to get a spoon. Maybe she would have that ice cream after all. It
wasn't like Lightning could chew her out now, not after what she'd seen. Oh, she couldn't wait to tell Serah. "But what about your hand down Fang's shorts? Did she get injured too?"

"Yes." Lightning eye twitched. "It was a hip injury." She glared at Fang. "Right, Fang?"


"Uh huh." Vanille ignored the terrible scowl that Lightning gave her as she filled her bowl with ice cream. She smiled. "I'm going to go upstairs now, so by all means, keeping tending to each other's injuries." She headed to the kitchen door, bowl of ice cream in hand, and then stopped to toss the last few words over her shoulder. "Oh, and make sure you wipe down that counter you were on when you're done. Some of us make sandwich on that counter."

Lightning's strangled squawk of outrage was music to her ears.

And the ice cream? It had never tasted better.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

So, this is based on Prompt #52 for Fangrai February: Vanille catches Fang and Lightning in a compromising position, leading to very hurried explanations being given.

As soon as I read that, I heard this little voice calling to me… "Write it, Raziel 12… write it…" And so I did. Now that voice might be due to the fact that it's 5 AM over here, but I couldn't stop myself from rattling this off (especially since it pretty much wrote itself in an hour or so).

The astute reader will also notice that ice cream is more than just a sweet treat here (think Chapter 2 of Ordinary Heroes). If we equate Fang to chocolate, Lightning to strawberry, and Vanille to vanilla, well, we get a statement of sorts about pairings. As for strawberry with a cherry on top, that would be Serah.

And for anyone who was wondering: no, Lightning was not injured, and neither was Fang, although something (or somebody) was probably going to get eaten. I have also heard the culmination of the activities they were engaging in (or were about to engage in) referred to as la petite mort (French for 'little death), so I suppose there is that. Yes, my mind is a scary place filled with any number of puns, most of them lame (indeed, I must apologise for this paragraph). I blame my lack of sleep.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
The Knight

There is a field a mile beyond the walls of great Oerba, a field where no flowers grow, nor will ever grow. It was there, a year ago, that the flower of Cocoon's youth failed. It was there, a year ago, that the earth drank deeply of brave men's blood. Not even the birds will cross it now, and not even the wind cares to linger long.

But there is one who lingers.

Her name was Fang, Spear of the Yun, and High Marshal of the Clans. There, upon that barren field she lingered, her eyes drawn to the tall, broken rocks that brooded, still and quiet, another mile away. In the distance, the clouds grew dark, and the echo of thunder rang out across the plains. How well she remembered this place. How well she wished she could forget.

A year ago, the armies of Cocoon had gathered. They came across the plains, marching in flawless lockstep, and threw their might against the wall of old Oerba, walls that had stood for a thousand year and would stand a thousand more. Their flags and banners fluttered in the breeze, and their armour shone pale silver in the sun. Their cries rang out like thunder, and when their archers fired, it was as though a steel cloud had risen, there were so many.

But Oerba had not stood alone. From the ancient city went forth heralds to every clan and kingdom in the land. All of Gran Pulse answered the summons, and Fang was given command. She rode at the head of ten thousand, and through cunning, she caught the enemy by surprise. They fell upon the soldiers of Cocoon from the rear and soon put them to flight. But it was not the soldiers who fled first, but the generals, and then the knights, and then all was sound and fury.

The cries of the dying, the bellows of the living – how clearly she remembered the senseless din of war. Swords rose and fell like waves against some distant, long-forgotten shore, rose and fell until they were blunt from all the flesh they'd split and all the bone they'd broken. Her soldiers waded through bodies piled knee high, and the fields of Oerba would never grow right again.

There would be no ballads sung to honour that battle, no stories told of great deeds. There was no honour in butchery, no great deeds to be found in cutting down an enemy in full flight.

Only a single knight stayed fast to muster the tattered army, only a single knight held firm against the tide of fear and panic. Fang saw her from afar. Her helm was split and cast aside to show pink hair, her brow was cut and bruised, but her eyes still shone. They were the blue of the open sky just shy of summer, and they did not know the meaning of surrender.

That lone knight seized hold of the five hundred that still remained, and led them fighting from the field on which their fellows perished, to a place of jagged rocks and winding paths. For a full two weeks, Fang set her forces upon those five hundred, but she might as well have set them against a mountain for all the luck they had. All around those jagged rocks, and all along those winding paths, her soldiers fell. And soon where only eagerness had been, only fear remained.

"They are not men!" her soldiers cried. "They are demons!"

But Fang did not see demons, she saw men. Brave men. Proud men. Desperate men. And at the
head of them, her eyes aflame and her sword aloft, was that solitary knight. Her armour was broken, her cloak stained and torn, but she was resplendent still, shining with the glory that only hopeless battle could ever bring.

At last, Fang had no choice but to lead the attack herself. So she gathered a thousand of her finest and led them into that place of jagged rocks and winding paths. Almost at once, the soldiers of Cocoon fell upon her, and if they were not demons, they were close.

As the battle raged, the lone knight herself came forward, and with a cry, she threw herself at Fang. They met in a clash of sword and spear, and their blows echoed loud over the chaos of battle. Each blow of the knight's sword threatened to tear Fang from her horse, but she waited, waited keenly for the chance to put her spear to work. Just one strike and the battle would be done.

Fang had fought many battles, and she had earned her rank a hundred times over, but she had never fought anyone like the knight. The knight knew neither doubt nor hesitation, and she cared not at all for her own life. In the end, she would fall before Fang's numbers, but she would sell her life as dearly as she could.

Finally, the knight's long weeks of battle began to take their toll. She tired, and Fang leaped forward, and her spear struck home. The weapon bit deep, and the knight was thrown to the ground. It was a mortal blow, but as Fang sought to pull free her spear, firm hands closed about it. Through lips already pale, the knight spoke.

"Let them go home."

Fang had heard the words of a thousand dying men, but no words like this had ever passed their lips. "Speak again," she whispered. "So that I might hear."

"Let them go home." It was a prayer, spilling from the knight's lips. "Let them go home."

Fang's hold on her spear grew loose. The knight sought for mercy – not for herself – but for her men, for those she had led when all others had deserted them.

"Why?" Fang asked.

And the knight replied, "I am dying, and so must all my men if you do not relent. But if we must die, then we will kill ten for every one of us that falls, and the tears of our people will be matched only by the tears of yours." Fang looked about and saw the knight spoke truly. So many had died again, and so many of them were hers. "You have won the war. Oerba is safe. Let them go home."

"And you?" Fang whispered. "What of you, who cannot go home?"

"This bare earth must be my home now." The knight's grip grew loose upon the shaft of the spear, and her eyes, though they still shone defiance, began to cloud. "But let them go home."

And Fang's heart was moved. All the other knights had fled and the generals also, but this knight had stayed, stayed to fight a hopeless battle that could only end one way. Yet, perhaps there could be a worthy ending, for above all things, the Yun prized valour. How could she deny the knight's request?

"Stop!" Fang cried. "Stop!"

At once, her soldiers fell back into formation, and guardedly, the soldiers of Cocoon did likewise. Fang turned her gaze then to the knight. "I will let them go home."
The knight smiled. "Thank you." And then she was gone.

"You there." Fang looked at the boy who had dropped to his knees beside the knight. "What was her name?"

The boy looked at her, pale hair stained with blood, and green eyes glittering with tears and fury. "Her name was Lightning."

Fang turned on her heel. "You and your fellows shall live because of her. You are free. Go home." Cries of outrage came from her soldiers, but she silenced them with a snarl. "Where is the honour here? Our city is safe. Their dead litter the fields. Let them go home. Let them speak of the courage of their leader, and of the honour of their enemies. Let them say we were warriors not butchers. Let them say that the clans still honour valour." Her men grew quiet, and she turned once more to the boy. "How do you bury your dead?"

"With fire," the boy replied. Others came to take hold of the body, but he would not let it go. "But there is no wood here for a pyre."

"You shall have wood," Fang replied, and with a gesture, she sent some of her men to fetch it. "Not for the earth and the worms so fine a knight, not for the vultures to pick clean. The fire is fitting. Let it burn her. Let it give her to the winds and the sky. That is how a knight should pass."

And so wood was brought, and the knight was carried to the greatest of the jagged rocks. There, they built a pyre and burnt the knight upon it. When it was done, the knight's men went home, and Fang watched the winds scatter the knight's ashes to all the corners of the earth.

A year had passed since then, and Fang stood once again, upon the field looking toward the rocks. Cocoon would come again, and again she would turn them back. But there would be no Lightning this time, for some things and some people only come but once.

Chapter End Notes

As always I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

Well, I'm not sure what to say about this one really. It's definitely a bit more melancholic than the others. With regards to style, I like to mess around a bit, see what works. I've been interested in writing something a bit more archaic for a while now, and this prompt seemed appropriate (it's Prompt #40: Two knights clash weapons. One fights for kingdom of Pulse, the other for Cocoon. Art or fic is cool.).

There is a certain… lyrical quality to some of the older writers (perhaps the most well-known example of this would be Tolkien), and it's something I'd like to add to my writing toolbox. Anyway, let me know if you think it worked or if it fell flat on its face. This chapter (more than the others) is something that is meant to be read aloud. It never hurts to learn how to write in different styles, and this is getting me back in the mood for Whispers of the Gods.

A few people have asked if I'm going to revisit the "steamy" stuff (e.g., Chapter 1). The answer is… probably. There's a particular prompt that's caught my eye, so we'll see how it goes.
As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Surrender

Lightning eased the front door open, and then kicked it shut behind her. It was dark inside, dark and still and quiet, and she was startled by how much that bothered her. After Serah had moved out, she'd gotten used to an empty house. And then Fang and Vanille had moved in, and the house had never felt empty again. At times it even felt crowded.

More often than not, Vanille would still be awake when she got home. The red head would be sprawled on the couch, a bowl of cereal in front of her and another pointless show on the television. Years ago, Lightning probably would have grabbed her by the scruff of her shirt and thrown her off the couch, but things had changed. She had changed. Now, she just padded into the kitchen for a bowl, and sat down beside Vanille to enjoy her own bowl of cereal.

And then? Then they'd talk. It was easy, so easy to talk to Vanille. The Oerban liked to tease and poke and prod, but she always knew when to back away, she always knew how far she could push before Lightning finally decided to push back. And Vanille could see right through her, even if most of the time, she was content to let Lightning hold onto the masks she wore. The cold, aloof, uncaring soldier – Vanille let her have that, let her hold onto it because she understood that there was a part of Lightning that still needed it, would probably always need it. Once upon a time, she'd thought Vanille was a childish, naive fool, but those days were long gone. Vanille was like a sister to her now, another addition to the small, but growing list of people that Lightning actually gave a damn about.

Of course, Fang was on that list too. But Fang never greeted Lightning at the door. Instead, she let Lightning have her time with Vanille, let her bask, at least for a while, in the warm presence of the Dia. Fang always waited until Lightning had finished her first bowl of cereal, and then she'd come in and rest her head on Vanille's lap, her long, shapely legs left to dangle over the arm of the couch. And Vanille would flash Lightning that small, secretive smile. Oh yes, Vanille saw right through her.

Every time Lightning saw Fang's head in Vanille's lap, she shivered. Part of it was genuine mirth – more than once, Vanille had 'accidentally' dropped a spoonful of cereal into Fang's hair – but most of it was because of Fang's eyes. The dark haired woman might have her head in Vanille's lap, but her eyes – those damn eyes that understood exactly who and what Lightning was – never left Lightning. Lightning could feel Fang's gaze on her skin, each look, each glance a lingering caress that sent a shiver through her. Sometimes she dreamed of those eyes, and those dreams always left her dazed and almost feverish with want. She wanted Fang to brand her skin with her lips. She wanted Fang to pin her down and take what was hers – what had been hers almost since the day they'd met.

And all the while, she could feel Vanille watching the two of them, amused and just a little bit awkward. A smile, a smirk, a whisper – how well Vanille knew them both.

But right now, there was no one in the living room, and the stillness and quiet was almost enough to make her scream. She flicked the lights on, and her gaze drifted to the note on the coffee table. It was written in Vanille's playful yet precise hand, the edge tucked away beneath the corner of a half-full box of cereal:
"Went out with Serah. Enjoy yourselves."

And below that were Vanille’s signature and a small smiley face. Her lips twitched. How like Vanille to do that. But what did the red head mean by 'yourselves'? Wait, the note hadn't mentioned Fang, which meant that Fang was still there. So... where was she?

"Fang," Lightning shouted. "Fang."

Nothing.

The other woman must be asleep. Lightning sighed, turned off the lights, and then headed up the stairs. Her boots thudded down on the stairs, and she felt a wave of tiredness sweep through her. Another long shift, another pile of paperwork. And nothing to do with all the money she earned – and it was a lot of money. The Guardian Corps paid very well to keep one of the legendary l'Cie on the books.

Sometimes she wondered why she was still working so hard. In the past, she'd have spent her money on Serah. But now there was only her. Vanille and Fang had their own jobs, and as much as it pained her to admit, Snow could look after her sister. He was a good man – one of the best she'd ever known – even if he could get on her nerves. So her money piled up, and piled up, and piled up. Maybe once Serah had children – and wasn't that a disconcerting thought, her baby sister having kids – she could spend it all on them. But that was still a long way off.

Upstairs, she plodded into her room and shrugged off her clothes. As tired as she was, there was a certain comfort to the routine as she carefully removed each piece of clothing and put it in the proper place. Her shower was hot, and the heat of it was almost enough to lull her into sleep. She pressed her head against the warm tiles, the water sluicing down her body, and tried not to think of Fang. If she did, her hands might wander and…

She hissed and switched the water to cold. But even that couldn't stop her mind from straying. A shudder swept through her. Fang's hands, she'd touched them before, had felt the calluses there from long years of handling weaponry. What would those hands feel like on her? Would Fang be gentle? Would she be rough? Somehow, Lightning suspected she'd be both, each touch accompanied by the press of Fang's full lips against her. But most of all, Lightning wanted to know what it would be like to let Fang just have her, to have all that strength, speed, and power directed at her, not to hurt, but to pleasure. A hoarse groan left her lips. She needed to stop right there. Any more and –

And what?

She still wasn't sure.

But all she'd have to do was give the word, and she'd find out. She knew what the look in Fang's eyes meant. She knew what Fang wanted but refused to take. So why hadn't she said anything? Fear. It hurt to admit, but that was the answer. If something happened, if something went wrong, she'd lose Fang, and most likely Vanille too, because there was no way that the red head would be able to steer clear of the fall out.

She left the bathroom, a towel wrapped around her body, and she was almost to the bed before she noticed that someone else was there. Fang stood in the door of her bedroom, and with a slow, deliberate motion, the dark haired woman pushed it shut behind her. The turning of the lock was as loud as thunder.

Lightning's pulse quickened. She wasn't sure if she should fight or run since the look in Fang's eyes
was absolutely predator. Maybe she wanted to be caught. That might explain why she just stood and watched as Fang strode over, put one hand on her shoulder, and pushed

Lightning sprawled back onto the bed, and her hands went back to stop her fall. The harsh breath that Fang let out told her everything. She was exposed, her chest thrust forward by the position of her arms, and her legs slightly parted. Fang's eyes narrowed and then she stepped forward, pressing Lightning down onto the bed.

This was madness… pure and utter madness… and for a moment Lightning resisted. Then Fang's lips covered hers, and the world melted away in a haze of heat and desire so potent it sapped every bit of strength from her body. She was burning. Maker, she was burning, and Fang was the fire surging through her veins.

When Fang finally pulled away, she had one knee planted firmly between Lightning's thighs, and the pink haired woman's hands were pinned above her head. At some point, the towel had come loose. With her free hand, Fang stroked Lightning's cheek. Lightning had seen what Fang's hands could do, but there such tenderness in that touch, such gentleness that she couldn't help but press back against it. Still, the expression on Fang's face was almost violent, a curious mix of desire and agony.

"Why do we keep doing this, Lightning? Why do we pretend that this – right here – isn't what both of us want?" Fang's voice was a soft, velvet whisper against Lightning's senses. But Fang's eyes… they were so sad.

Lightning dragged in a deep breath. She could feel Fang's knee pressed against the warmth between her legs. Etro, all they'd done was kiss, and already she was so, so ready. Her stomach clenched, heavy with desire. "Because this is a mistake."

"A mistake?"

Fang gave a short, sharp bark of laughter. It grated on Lightning's nerves. Above her, Fang's eyes narrowed, became little more than slits, and the hand that had been on her cheek drifted lower, running gently over her collarbone before drifting down to wander first across one breast and then her toned stomach.

"Does this feel like a mistake?" Fang's words came out as something close to a groan. The hand ventured lower. "Does this feel like it's wrong?"

Lightning quivered. It would be so easy to throw Fang off. Fang's grip on her wrists had loosened. All she had to do was drive one leg up and then yank her arms free. Fang would lose her grip and tumble right off the bed. But she couldn't find the desire to do that, never mind the strength. Everywhere Fang touched her, she felt strange, her muscles loosening and tightening as though they weren't sure what to do. Surrender or fight? In the end, she just let Fang touch her, let Fang roam with eyes and hands over every inch of her.

And Fang was so gentle, like she couldn't quite believe what was happening and wanted to draw it out, to make it last in case it was only a dream.

"You're my best friend," Lightning whispered. "Doing this will change everything."

"Yes, it will." Fang leaned forward, her knee pressing more firmly against Lightning, her hand touching more firmly too, and her lips whispering a prayer against Lightning's throat, her cheeks, her lips. "But is that so bad?"
"I…"

Fang pressed her down into the bed. Somewhere, in the part of her mind that was still trying to make sense of everything, Lightning realised her hands were free. She could shove Fang back. She could –

"Do you love me?" Fang eased back, more vulnerable than Lightning had ever seen her.

In that instant, Lightning knew she could break Fang. Just a word, and the warrior's heart would shatter. What the fal'Cie couldn't do, what a war couldn't do, what nothing had ever been able to do – Lightning could do with one simple word. She had never felt so powerful in her life. Yet seeing the affection – the love – in Fang's eyes, she knew what answer she would give. And she had never felt so humbled.

"Yes."

Fang pressed a kiss to Lightning's cheek, and Lightning realised that somehow, a single, solitary tear had trickled from her eyes.

"Then let me have you." Fang smiled shakily. It was a prayer, and Lightning was her goddess as she tried to show with each touch, each caress, each kiss how much Lightning meant to her. "Just let it happen."

So Lightning did.

Again.

And again.

And again.

X X X

Lightning woke slowly. It was Saturday, one of the few times in the week when she could indulge herself. Vanille would be downstairs making pancakes – it was the red head's way of saying thank you for all the things Lightning did for her during the week – and halfway through the first pancake, Fang would pad into the dining room looking sleepy but utterly delectable.

Only something was different. She was in her room, but she wasn't alone. For a split-second, she wondered if she'd done something stupid. Had she finally gotten drunk enough to take a stranger home? No. She only ever drank at Lebreau's bar, and neither Fang nor Lebreau would ever let her go home with a stranger.

Then she remembered the previous night. Her cheeks flamed. Fang had… had accosted her. And she'd let her. More than that, she'd encouraged her – quite vocally, in fact, and on multiple occasions. She gulped.

"Hey."

She rolled over in Fang's embrace and found herself looking into a pair of emerald eyes. There was vulnerability there, that same look that told Lightning she could, with a word, ruin everything.

"Morning." Fang smiled faintly. "Uh…"

Lightning put one finger on Fang's lips, and then she moved that finger aside and kissed her.
"Morning."

Fang's smile widened, but was still a little shaky. "About last night. If... if you... I mean..."

"I'm glad," Lightning said quietly. How strange. She'd only been in Fang's arms for a night, and already she never wanted to leave them. A wry smile tugged at her lips. "Finally, one of us was stupid enough to make a move. It's a good thing that sometimes stupid works."

Fang stared, and then she began to laugh. It did very nice things to her chest. Slowly, she calmed. "It worked for Snow, didn't it? I figured it might work for me too."

Lightning rolled her eyes. Fang was naked, but strangely, that didn't bother her. Instead, she had to fight the urge to press herself against the other woman. A few seconds later, she stopped fighting it. Fang's chest made for a very comfortable pillow. "This isn't a one time thing, Fang, so I expect you to see it through. Nothing less than the best will do, and neither of us gets to quit."

"I've never quite a thing in my life." Fang chuckled and ran one hand through Lightning's hair. "I don't plan on starting now." Then her stomach gave an angry growl.

Lightning laughed. "Let's go make some breakfast." She stood, utterly aware of Fang's eyes on her, and relishing the feel of it. Maybe Serah had been right. She really did have a lot of pent up aggression, well, not exactly aggression...

She was about to throw on a robe -- it was her house, but she wasn't about to go around naked -- when she heard the front door slam open. A few seconds later, there were some footsteps, or rather a pair of footsteps.

"Hey, Fang, I'm sorry about last night. I tried to call you, but you didn't answer." It was Vanille, and her voice carried easily through the house. "Serah and I kind of hit the town last night, and well... it was a bit late when we were done, I just crashed over at her place." She laughed. "And wouldn't you know it, Snow makes the best omelettes."

A giggle. Serah. "What she means, Fang, is that she didn't want you to see her drunk."

"Hey! I'm not a kid. Besides, I can hold my liquor better than a certain someone." Vanille huffed.

Lightning looked at Fang. "What do we do?"

"No idea." Fang's eyes darted around the room frantically. Damn it, even if they threw on some clothes, anyone with eyes and a nose could tell what they'd been up to. Maybe she could have a shower and then sneak out the window.

"Hmmm..." Vanille sounded worried. "Fang's not in her room."

"That's all right." Serah padded back down the hallway toward Lightning's bedroom. "We can just ask Lightning."

Knock. Knock.

Lightning twitched. "Fang, fix it!"

"How?"

"I don't know... just... think of something. You're the one who's supposed to be good at improvising."
Fang winced. "I think I used up most of my creativity last night." She ignored the glare Lightning sent her and then grinned. "Would it really be so bad if they found out about us?"

Fang's tone was light, but her eyes were serious. Lightning swallowed thickly. "No," she said softly. "I don't think it would."

Fang smiled. "That's my girl." She grinned impishly and raised her voice. "Come back later, we're busy!"

There was a pair of shocked gasps, and then a great deal of giggling.

"Congratulations," Serah shouted through the door. "It took you two long enough."

"Yeah," Vanille added. "And thanks."

"Thanks?" Lightning murmured as a horrible, horrible thought occurred to her. "Vanille, why are you thanking me?"

"Oh, no reason." Vanille sounded very nervous. "Come on, Serah, let's go."

A moment later, the front door slammed shut.

"Fang, is there a betting pool going on about us?" Lightning asked. "And did Vanille just win it?"

Fang smirked. "Maybe, but you can't really argue with results, can you?"

Lightning's lips twitched. No, she couldn't. "I suppose."

"Good, now come back to bed." Fang leaned back into the pillows. "We have the house to ourselves and a whole weekend ahead of us."

Lightning felt what had to be the most idiotic grin slip across her face. "Yes... yes we do. But you're wrong about one thing. We've got a lot more than a weekend ahead of us. We've got a lifetime."

The look on Fang's face was priceless, and Lightning pounced. Last night, she'd let Fang have her way. Now, it was time for some payback of the very best kind.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I own neither Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

So, this is based on Fangrai February Prompt #55: "Just let it happen." When I saw that prompt, I immediately pictured the exact moment that Fang says that line in this chapter (yes, my mind does make occasional trips to the gutter), and I wrote the rest of the chapter around that. It was also nice to get into more serious territory again after going all over the place in the preceding chapters.

As before, I've cut out the exact details of what they get up to in the bedroom. In this case, I think it works for the story, because the story isn't really so much about Lightning and Fang getting it on as it is about what occurs before that. Love is, in some ways, the purest form of surrender, because when you tell someone you love
them, you're basically telling them that they can crush you if they feel like it, and that's something I wanted to get across in this chapter. Fang knows that she's putting herself in a very vulnerably position (even if it is her on top of Lightning), but she trusts Lightning to not hurt her. If that all sounds a bit sappy, I blame my childhood, and the fact that I read anything I could get my hands on, up to and including, romance novels, horror stories, and fairy tales.

While writing this chapter, I also realised that it could actually be interpreted as being at least slightly Neapolitan (if you don't get the reference, just think of ice cream and then of our favourite soldier and her housemates). This wasn't intentional. Rather it's something I only noticed afterward. That said, the first section isn't one I want to change. How Lightning relates to Vanille (the very fact that she can relate to Vanille) is important, because not only is Vanille very important to Fang, she's there to help Lightning manage her separation from Serah better. Lightning isn't someone who'll come out of her shell on her own – someone needs to go in there and drag her out, and while she might be willing to punch Fang in the head, she's not going to do that to Vanille. Anyway, this is a FLight story, and the last section makes that pretty clear.

As an aside, as someone who occasionally suffers insomnia… cereal tastes a lot better at night.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and feedback are welcome.
The Department of Special Affairs

Fang strolled into the conference room and slouched into the chair across the table from the captain. It was tempting to put her feet up, but she'd learned the hard way that there were some things Amodar wouldn't put up with, even from her.

"So, captain, got another case for me?"

To his credit, Amodar didn't seem the least bit bothered by Fang's apparent lack of respect. He'd known Fang for a while now, and she was a little rough around the edges. He'd first run into her when she was just another punk kid for the bad end of town. A few years and a more than few arrests later, she and her sister were out on the street, kicked out of the orphanage they'd grown up in. Those had been bad times, and Fang didn't like to talk about them, but eventually they'd run into each other again, and Amodar had managed to sneak her into the academy.

Fang had cussed him out for the better part of two years for that, but in the end, she'd graduated top of her class. After all, the Department of Special Affairs wasn't interested in tact and decorum. The only thing the department was looking for was people who could get the job done, and that was exactly the sort of thing Fang excelled at. Whatever needed doing, no matter how hard it was, Fang got it done, and quickly too.

"You could say that." Amodar pushed a folder across the table. "The police handed this one over to us earlier today."

"And I'm only getting this now?" It was seven o'clock in the evening, a few minutes shy of sunset. She tugged the folder over and grinned. "This better not be another ghost hunt, Amodar. You know how much I hate those. Sure, you might run into something interesting every now and then, but most of the time it's just a little wall banging and cutlery rattling. You'd be better off sending in one of those civilians exorcists that advertise in the papers."

Amodar chuckled. In theory the department was supposed to handle all instances of supernatural crime, but in practice, they turned a blind eye to civilian operators provided they stuck to the easy stuff. "Read the file. You might even find it interesting."

"Oh?" Fang glanced down at the folder and flipped it open. "If you think it's interesting, then I know it's going to be good. Let's take a look."

With practiced ease, she scanned through all of the relevant details of the file. Standard operating procedure dictated that the police serve as first responders for any and all crime. Once a crime had been confirmed as involving the supernatural, the department brought her in and she got to do her thing.

In this case, three victims had been identified, all young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four. All lived in the crime-riddled downtown area – the same area she and Vanille had come from. The fact that all three were dead didn't mean much, not when the downtown area was almost always involved in some kind of gang war. What did matter was how they had been killed.

The photographs told the story, or at least, part of it. All three of the young men were nothing more
than withered, dried out husks, like the mummies in a museum. Their faces were also drawn into the same mask of absolute terror. According to the file, all three had died in the last week.

"Interesting enough for you?" Amodar asked.

Fang tapped one finger on the folder. Already, her mind was putting together all the details, trying to find something that fit. "At first glance, it looks like something a wraith would do." She flipped to the photographs. "When a wraith kills, it's pretty common for the victim to look absolutely terrified. But I've never seen a wraith shrivel someone up like this, and there's no sign of frostbite or extreme cold." She frowned. "And I know we've had vampire trouble lately, but this is definitely not a vampire." She pursed her lips. "What do you think?"

"I suspect it's a demon." Amodar sighed. "But that's not much help, not when there are so many different kinds of demons."

"That's the truth, all right." Fang reached into her jacket pocket. Oh wait, she'd quit smoking, or rather, Vanille had decided that she should quit smoking. And like she always did – even if she'd never admit it – Fang had folded like a paper bag. It was probably for the best. Smoking wasn't the healthiest habit, although people in her line of work didn't tend to last long enough for smoking to matter. Hell, Amodar was one of the oldest men in the department. "So, do we know what kind of demon it is?"

"No, which is why I've asked the Church of Etro to send one of their experts."

Fang made a disgusted sound. The Church of Etro… they might have centuries of history and tradition behind them, and they might know more about demons than anyone else, but they were the absolute last people Fang would have gone to for help. She could still remember the look on the matron's face when she'd had to throw her and Vanille out of the orphanage. The old woman hadn't wanted to, but the Church hadn't given her a choice. The matron could either get rid of the troublemakers or lose funding for the orphanage. Fang had loved the old woman too much to make her choose, so she'd gone and taken Vanille with her, and somehow they'd survived.

"Fang," Amodar said softly. "I can ask someone else to handle this case."

Fang shook her head. She already owed Amodar enough for all he'd done for her. She didn't need to owe him yet another favour they both knew he'd never cash in. "I can handle it." Her lips curled. "Or you could just let me sort things out my way. It worked last time, didn't it?"

He laughed. "Really? Is that how you'd describe it?"

"Well, yeah." Fang shrugged. "I killed the demon, didn't I?"

Amodar grinned. "Yes, you did. You also levelled two square blocks of property along the waterfront."

"It was a big demon." Fang ignored the flabbergasted look on Amodar's face and pressed on. "And it wasn't like they'd finished building those apartment blocks yet. And with that demon around, they were never going to get anyone to move in. The way I see it, I did them a favour. Besides, they had insurance to cover all the damage."

Amodar bit back a smile. Fang's case report had made for entertaining reading right up until the point the mayor had marched into his office with murder in his eyes. "I never did get the chance to ask you: where on earth did you get an RPG from?"

"The rocket propelled grenade?" Fang smirked. "I always keep one in the trunk for those close
encounters of the demonic kind."

"I see." Amodar made a mental note to have Fang's trunk searched. "In any case, the mayor doesn't want a repeat of that, and I assured him that this time, things will go more smoothly. Hopefully, with the assistance of the Church, we'll have a better idea of what we're up against and reduce the amount of property damage."

"So, who are they sending?" Fang rolled her eyes. "Please tell me it's not another old biddy."

Amodar smiled. "Not exactly." He raised his voice and glanced out the door of the conference room. "Sister Claire, if you could come in now that would be great."

"Sister Claire?" Fang rolled her eyes. She could already imagine her: old, hunched over, and just waiting to lecture Fang on all of her many moral and spiritual failures.

She was half-right.

The woman who walked in through the doors of the conference room to sit beside Amodar wore exactly the kind of severe expression that Fang expected of someone ready and willing to lecture on moral and spiritual failings at the drop of hat. But she couldn't have been a day over twenty-three.

She wasn't dressed like the nuns Fang was used to either. The wimple on her head was the same black and white concoction the Church stipulated, but instead of the usual habit, she wore form-fitting black trousers, a white, long-sleeved shirt and a black jacket modified to vaguely resembled the upper half of the usual nun's habit. Oh, and she had a gun holstered at her right hip and... a sword, of all things, on her left hip.

Well aware of the fact that the nun was watching her – and not the least bit bothered by it – Fang continued her perusal. If the gun and sword weren't clue enough, the modified uniform made things clear – this Sister Claire was someone trained for combat. And from the slender, toned body beneath the clothes, and the smooth, precise way she moved, she was probably very good at it.

"Are you quite finished staring?"

Fang lifted her gaze and grinned. The nun had the bluest eyes she'd ever seen along with full, firm lips. She had strong features too, strong but feminine, and there was definitely a proud sort of look about her as she glared down her nose – and it was quite nice nose – at Fang. Well, she could glare all she wanted, Fang wasn't about to stop staring until she was good and ready to. It was just a shame the wimple hid Sister Claire's hair.

"Why, does it bother you?" Fang replied flippantly. "And seriously, a sword? What do you think this is, the Middle Ages?"

Colour filled the other woman's cheeks, and Fang wondered if perhaps there was a special place in Hell just for her, since it had to be some kind of sin to think a nun looked sexy when she was angry. That and the ogling – that was probably a sin too.

"I beg your pardon." Sister Claire's eyes narrowed, and Fang winced. Maker, the woman could glare. "Could you repeat that? I believe I misheard you."

Fang grinned. So she wanted to play things that way. "I believe I said something about your sword and how useless it is since we have guns now. You know, like the one you're carrying on your right hip except bigger." She put her revolver on the table. "You know, something like this."
"Useless?" Sister Claire scowled. "You think my sword is useless?"

Amodar raised his hands to call for calm. "Look, if we could just –"

There was a metallic hiss, and Fang's eyes widened as she took in the tip of the sword only a hair's breadth from her face. Maybe she'd been wrong about the useless part. She hadn't even seen Sister Claire move. And then, just as quickly, the sword was gone, back in its scabbard, and Sister Claire was back in her seat like nothing had happened. But there was a smirk on her face, one that Fang really, really wanted to get rid of. Amodar must have seen the look in her eyes, because he was up on his feet in an instant.

"That's enough," Amodar said. "You two can kill each other in your own time, but first, let's try and focus. We have a demon to hunt."

Sister Claire gave Fang another small smirk and then reached into her pockets for a data recorder to plug into the display unit on the table. An image sprang up on the wall at the far end of the room. It showed a big, inky ball of darkness punctuated by two red eyes.

"After reviewing the case file, I believe that this is what we are up against." Sister Claire stood with perfect posture, and Fang made a conscious effort to slouch even more in her chair. The nun's eyes narrowed, but she continued with her presentation. "Its name is not important, but suffice it to say, the Church has encountered several demons of this kind before, and we have learned to recognise their handiwork. In the past, demons of this kind have preyed primarily on the dregs of society. They gain strength by consuming the souls of their victims, and by targeting the… undesirables, they can go quite some time before being noticed."

Fang frowned. "Those undesirables are people too, sister, even if they are the dregs of society. I used to be one of them."

The blue-eyed woman smiled serenely. "Used to be?" Fang shot to her feet, but once again, that damn sword stopped her in her tracks. "Sit down, Officer Yun." Sister Claire smiled. "Yes, I know who you are. And yes, I have read your file. Sit down."

Fang sat. Sooner or later, she'd get the jump on the other woman, and once she did, the first thing she was going to do was get rid of that sword. Honestly, what kind of a person used a sword in this day and age? The crazy kind, that's who.

"So how does it kill them?" Fang growled. "And why do they end up all shrivelled?"

Sister Claire pressed a button on the display unit. The next image was clearly taken from an old book. It showed a man suspended in mid air, the black cloud all around him. "The demon kills it victims by devouring their soul. To do this, it requires a large degree of physical contact. The more victims it takes, the stronger it becomes, and the more solid its form. Given that this particular demon has only killed three people, it should still be relatively vulnerable to bright light. That is, I assume, another reason it has confined its predations to the less… reputable parts of town."

"Vulnerable to light, huh?" The thought of working with Sister Claire still didn't sit well with Fang, but the chance to use a few of her old favourites was definitely welcome. "We can use flash bangs. I've got a dozen in the trunk."

Amodar made a disgusted sound. "Really? Is there anything else I should know about?"

"No." It was probably better if he didn't know about the sniper rifle she had hidden behind the back seat, or the shotgun she kept in a special compartment built into the driver's side door. Demon
hunting was dangerous business, and it was usually better to have too many guns than too few. "That's about it."

"How do you plan to find the demon, Sister Claire?" Amodar asked. "The police patrol the area regularly due to the high incidence of normal crime, and none of them have seen a thing."

"I can sense it," Sister Claire replied. "If Officer Yun would be so kind as to drive me through the area, I should be able to locate it."

"Wonderful." Her and Sister Claire in a car for the whole night, could things get any worse? Fang grinned. "I don't suppose Etro herself came down from heaven and gave you that ability, did she?"

"She did." Sister Claire's voice was perfectly flat. "And I have spent most of my life training to use it properly. Now, if there are no more questions, perhaps we could get moving. With each death, the demon will only grow stronger."

"Yay," Fang mumbled as she followed Sister Claire out of the conference room. "We can be car buddies."

Sister Claire's hand went to the sword at her side, and Fang immediately ducked, expecting another attack. However, the nun merely smiled gently. "Well, it seems you can learn."

Behind them, Amodar shook his head. Somehow, he got the feeling that things were not going to work out as he had hoped. Oh well, might as well get started on the paperwork early.

"Can someone get me the mayor's schedule for tomorrow?" Amodar shouted. "I think I'm gong to need it."

X X X

The car ride was definitely not Fang's idea of a good time. Make no mistake, she loved her car, loved the feel of it when she pushed it and herself to the limit, but Sister Claire was the very opposite of good company. The nun sat still and silent in the passenger seat, her eyes roving constantly over their surroundings, her mouth firmed into a thin line. Any question that Fang asked was either ignored or answered with as little room left for conversation as possible. Hell, she'd fought demons that were chattier.

On the upside, all the driving around did give Fang the chance to look at Sister Claire a bit more. Sure, the nun had the personality of an angry hedgehog, but she was very nice to look at. Even her profile was striking, and Fang couldn't help but wonder if maybe the nun shouldn't find another line of work. After all, killing demons didn't pay nearly as well as it should, even if it was a lot of fun. At some point, a lock of Sister Claire's hair slipped free of her wimple, and Fang felt her lips twitch up into a smile. Pink. The scary, sword-wielding nun had pink hair. That was just too good.

She wanted to say something, but the look in Sister Claire's eyes promised a swift, horrible death, and in the close confines of the car, Fang wasn't confident she could dodge the nun's sword.

"It is a sin to ogle those dedicated to Etro's work."

"And your thoughts are so sinful that I feel sullied merely sitting here."

"Oh?" Fang grinned. "And what would you know about sinful thoughts, have you been having any about me?" She was pleased to see the other woman's cheeks redden. It was surprisingly fun teasing her, although getting stabbed would probably put a dampener on that. "Besides, doesn't Etro teach forgiveness and all that... you don't really seem the forgiving type."

"I am more than willing to forgive those who genuinely regret their actions."

"That's about it."
deepened. "You, officer, regret nothing."

"Is that so?"

"Yes." Sister Claire's eyes narrowed. "As I have told you, I have read your file. Theft, assault, drunkenness, debauchery – your list of sins is long and, dare I say, almost impressive. Were it not for all the work you have done providing for your sister, I would conclude that you are a lost cause."

"A lost cause?" Now, this was interesting. "Is that why you're so angry? You think you can save me or something? Well, I've got news for you sister, I don't need saving. I've been doing fine on my own, and I'll keep doing fine on my own." Fang chuckled. "Besides, you should be happy. I'm killing demons now, that's Etro's work, isn't it?"

"In a way." Sister Claire folded her hands in her lap. "You might think the Church has forgotten you, Officer Yun, but there are those who still remember. An old woman who runs an orphanage, perhaps, one whom you have not visited for some time."

Fang stiffened. "That's none of your business."

"Perhaps it is not." Sister Claire looked back out the window. "But the truth is, you should be more than you are." Her voice hardened. "Ever year, your department and the Church have to deal with more cases, and every year, more of the innocent are caught in the conflict. And still you continue to play solider."

"And what would you like me to do?" Fang replied. "Join the Church?"

"No." Sister Claire turned and pinned Fang with her gaze. "We are fighting a war, Officer Yun, and we are losing, slowly perhaps, but surely. Individuals such as you should not be throwing themselves into battle after battle. You should be training others and leading. Ask yourself, how many demons have you killed? Now imagine the difference it would make if there were five others like you."

Fang's hands tightened on the steering wheel. "Amodar set me up, didn't he?" That clever old codger.

"Yes, he did." Sister Claire lips twitched. "The Church and the department are both aware of the state of affairs. Our... partnership is intended to foster greater cooperation between our two forces, and in time, we would be expected to train others to a similar level of skill."

"So, you're good then?" Fang asked. Sister Claire wasn't so bad when she was talking rather than trying to stab her.

"Very much so."

"Still doesn't explain the sword," Fang muttered. "And you trying to stab me with it."

"I assure you, if I wanted you stabbed, you would be." Sister Claire huffed. "As it is, I thought it best to lay down the rules of this partnership. You keep your eyes and hands to yourself, and I will not have to cut them off."

"Come on," Fang grumbled. "You're a nun. I'm not about to jump you."

"Your file is very detailed," Sister Claire said. "Very detailed. I thought it better to be sure." Her eyes widened. "Wait! Stop here!"
Fang slammed her foot on the brake, and before she could even get her door open, Sister Claire was out of the car and headed toward a dark alley across the road. Fang grabbed her shotgun, a handful of flash bangs, and ran after her. As they reached the alley, there was a wet thump and a corpse tumbled to the ground. In the flickering glow of the streetlight, it was very clear that they'd come to the right place.

"Be careful," Sister Claire murmured. "The demon is nearby."

They edged toward the alley, and Fang had to blink to make sure she wasn't seeing things. There, at the back of the alley, was a roiling mass of shadows. When Sister Claire pulled out a flashlight and shone it upon the demon, the seething black cloud shivered and twisted in upon itself. At the centre of it all was a pair of crimson eyes.

"Prepare yourself," Sister Claire said. She put one hand on the hilt of her sword. "It knows what we are."

"Of course it does." Fang bit back a curse. Why were the demons always so well informed? "And don't worry about me, I've fought enough demons to know what I'm doing."

There was a hiss and the air grew thick and heavy. Malice radiated outward from the demon, and for a split-second Fang's mind was overtaken by images of slaughter and murder. She saw bodies stacked high and set aflame, great mounds built of bleached bone. Her jaw clenched and the images vanished. It was another one of the demon's ploys, an attempt to shake her resolve and drive her off.

"Nice try." Fang pulled the pin on a flash bang. "Let's see how much you like this."

She tossed the flash bang, ignoring what sounded almost like a curse from Sister Claire – but that couldn't be because everyone knew nuns didn't swear – and covered her eyes. The resulting flash was blindingly bright, but when it cleared, the demon didn't look the least bit hurt. If anything, it seemed angry, the malice in the air growing ever more oppressive as the cloud of darkness that was the demon's body grew larger and larger.

"We may have been mistaken," Sister Claire said as the demon's growing form cracked the walls on either side of the alley. "For it to have gotten this large and to have such a tangible form, it must have consumed a great many more than three people."

"So, what does that mean?" Fang lifted her shotgun and fired. She might as well have been throwing popcorn for all the good it did. The blast simply disappeared into the demon's billowing form. Damn it, she'd even had those shells properly blessed too. "Well?"

Sister Claire's reply was lost in the din as every single streetlight in the area exploded. Immediately, the street went dark, and all around them houses, shops, and other buildings began to go dark as well. Somehow, Fang doubted this was a coincidence. With only the faint light of the moon shining down on them, the demon grew larger still, until the buildings on either side of the alley came apart in a shower of crushed brick and broken wood.

"Run!" Sister Claire urged. "Go!"

They turned and ran full-tilt for the car. Fang hurled herself into the driver's seat, and the instant Sister Claire was inside, she slammed one foot on the accelerator. The nun lost her balance, and lurched forward. Her head cannoned into Fang's stomach and the dark haired woman hissed.

"Damn it, are you wearing a helmet under your wimple?" Fang pawed at Sister Claire's shoulders
“Be still!” Sister Claire growled right before she lifted her head and caught Fang on the chin. "Watch the road!” she barked.

Fang clutched at her chin. "I would, but you're not making it easy." She glanced into the rear view mirror. The demon was racing down the street, less a cloud now, and more a tide of boiling, inky shadow. Everything it touched withered and died, and she sent a silent prayer to every deity she could think of to keep people off the streets.

"You're the expert," Fang shouted. "What's your plan?"

"The demon's heart lies at the core of those shadows," Sister Claire said. "We need to use light to drive the shadows back long enough for one of us to strike at its heart."

"That sounds simple," Fang said. "But it really, it's not." She glanced into the rear view mirror again. "Are you serious?"

"What?"

"Look!" Fang barely managed to keep the car on the road as they rounded a corner at eighty miles an hour. "That damn demon is going to throw a car at us!"

Sister Claire turned. "Oh."

"Yes, oh!"

There was a crash and a car hurtled through the air. It struck the building in front of them, and Fang jerked the steering wheel to the side. They barely managed to avoid it, and Fang bit back a curse as a cloud of rust enveloped the windscreen. The demon had touched the car for only a second or two, and it had already decayed that badly. Unbelievable.

More cars hurtled toward them, the demon gaining as Fang was forced to swerve all over the road to avoid the projectiles. At least it was the middle of the night, so there wasn't much traffic. Finally, one of the cars clipped the back of hers, and they spun, skidding off the road and into a fire hydrant.

The speed of the crash tore the fire hydrant apart, and a stream of water spewed up as the car imbedded itself in a brick wall. Inside it, Fang groaned and shook her head. Her ears rang, and she was seeing double, but she needed to move. Staying still meant getting killed because if that demon got its hands on her, she was dead. Her eyes widened. Sister Claire, where was the nun?

"Open!" Sister Claire growled as she leaned back and kicked her door. There was a trickle of blood down her brow, but she seemed all right. Certainly, she hadn't taken more than a few seconds to slice the airbags apart with her sword. "Open!"

Finally, the door burst open, and Fang followed her out of it. The demon was only a few seconds away now, and it had grown to be as big as a house. In the twilight, it looked almost completely solid, pitch-black limbs appearing from within the mass of undulating shadows.

"Do you have any more flash bangs?" Sister Claire asked.

"I've got more in the trunk." Fang glanced over at her. "Have you got a plan?"

"Yes." Sister Claire nodded. "Distract it, and when I give the signal. Throw all of them."
"Distract it?" Fang's brows furrowed. "What do you…" She trailed off in shock as Sister Claire turned and ran down the street. No way. No freaking way. The nun had just left her to deal with a house-sized demon. A snarl crossed her lips as she glared up at the demon "Oh, that's it. Never mind the property damage, you killed my car, prepare to die!"

She hobbled to the back of her car and popped open the trunk. Damn it, her head hurt, her car was a wreck, and her guns better still be working otherwise, she was in a lot of trouble. Thank the Maker! The flash bangs were still in one piece, and she quickly tucked them into the tattered pockets of her jacket. Even better, her assault rifle was still in working condition too. It was a pity she hadn't had time to get another RPG – that would have been quite handy to have around now.

"Over here," Fang shouted. "Over here, you stupid demon!"

Bullets streaked through the air as Fang opened fire and stumbled away from the remains of her car. The demon turned to follow her, the bullets simply vanishing into the cavernous shadow around it. But Fang wasn't done yet. As the demon stepped into the large pool of water around the car, Fang turned and shot at the power lines. Sparks flew as the bullets tore through the thick electrical cables. One of them tumbled down and landed smack bang in the middle of the puddle.

For a split-second, the demon flinched as electricity raced through the black miasma that was its body. Then, from the top of the building behind her, Fang heard someone shout.

"Now!" Sister Claire bellowed. "Throw the flash bangs now!"

When had the other woman gotten up there? Fang shook her head. Of course, the nun hadn't run away. She must have been looking for a fire escape. But why would she need one… oh. If the demon's heart was in the centre of the black, twisting cloud, then it would be far out of their reach, which meant that she was planning to jump down and hit it. She smiled. How utterly crazy.

"Right!" Fang grabbed the flash bangs, and threw them toward the demon. "Cover your eyes!"

Even with her eyes closed, and her face turned away, Fang was still hard-pressed not to wince as the blinding light burst outward. The demon roared, howling in pain and fear, and Fang heard Sister Claire yell a few words. Then there was a sound like an overripe tomato bursting before a wave of force lifted Fang and threw her through the window of the shop behind her.

When she finally managed to drag herself to her feet, she couldn't help but let out almost hysterical laughter. Amodar had wanted to reduce the property damage. Boy was he in for a nasty surprise.

With the demon dead, most of the lights had come on, and their light fell upon a scene that looked straight out of a war zone. The street had been torn up for the better part of a few miles. Cars littered the area, some imbedded in nearby buildings, and others rusting by the side of the street. Where the demon had been, there was now a crater about thirty feet across and ten feet deep. Every single window on the street had been blown out.

As for Sister Claire, the woman's was lying on her back in the middle of a small lake as the fire hydrant continued to pour water everywhere. Her wimple had been badly singed, so now her pink hair floated beside her. Fang groaned and staggered over to her.

"Nice." Fang pretended to look carefully around the street. "I think you missed a few things though."

Sister Claire reached for her sword, which was imbedded point first in the cement a few feet away. "If I was not in so much pain, I would stab you."
Fang reached down and helped the other woman up. "Come on, we need to get to a hospital."

Sister Claire made a face. "Keep your hands to yourself, officer. I can stand on my own." She swayed.

"Really? It doesn't look like it?" Fang eased the two of them down onto a bench that had somehow remained unbroken. Sirens rang out in the distances, but they were getting closer. "So... how much trouble are you in with the Church for all this?"

Sister Claire sagged against the bench. "As much as you shall be in with your superiors."

"Not a bad way to start though." Fang grinned.

"Yes, I suppose we could both be dead." Sister Claire closed her eyes. "Wake me when the ambulance arrives, and I promise that if you even think of touching me inappropriately, I will cut your hands off."

"Oh no, you've got a concussion." Fang jabbed Sister Claire in the arm with one finger. "Stay awake." She grinned. "Say, while we're waiting, why don't you tell me about all that horrible stuff I'm supposed to have done."

Sister Claire straightened. "Yes, that would help pass the time. I will start with your debauchery. According to your file..."

As Sister Claire rattled off a rather long – and scarily accurate – list of Fang's indiscretions, Fang felt a smile creep across her lips. Sure, the nun was bossy, violent, and downright sanctimonious a lot of the time, but she couldn't remember the last time she'd had this much fun. And if training a team with Sister Claire meant having this much fun all the time, well, maybe that wouldn't be so bad.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

So, yeah, I can't say exactly where this one came from. It's based on Fangrai February Prompt #78: AU prompt. Fang and Lightning fight the supernatural. I thought to myself, well, if they're going to fight the supernatural then one of them needs to be a priest or something (The Exorcist is one of my favourite movies of all time), and it would be nice if one of them was something a little different, just for a bit of tension. And voila, this is what my mind came up with (for better or for worse). It was also fun to switch a few things around (Fang knowing Amodar, for instance). Besides, it was also a lot of fun to poke at Fang a little. Lightning is a nun (of all things), so yes, there is probably a special place for people who ogle her and think thoughts of a more... sinful nature.

Also, if what I've written doesn't make any sense, you have my apologies. I haven't been sleeping well lately, and in between working on my own stuff, I've been writing stuff like this (it's about 5:00 AM in the morning here...).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Silly Saturday

Cuddled up in her mommy's lap, Diana gave a lazy yawn. Watching movies was fun, but it was quite late now even if she didn't want to admit it. "Wouldn't it be cool if the movie came true, mommy?"

Fang laughed and ran her fingers through her daughter's hair. The movie wasn't the most intellectually engaging thing, but it wasn't too bad for a children's film. Of course Averia hadn't been able to stop herself from pointing out all of the mistakes and logical inconsistencies until Diana had thrown a pillow at her. The older girl was a lot like Lightning when it came to that sort of thing.

"Really?" Fang grinned. "You want to switch places and be me for a day?"

Diana yawned again. "It would be fun. I'd get to be tall and go on adventures and do lots of thing I can't do." She wrapped her arms around Fang's middle. Her mommy was so nice to cuddle up to. "And I could stay up as late as I want and eat lots of junk food. I wouldn't even have to go to school."

"You know, being an adult is a lot of hard work." Fang looked over at the other end of the couch, where Lightning and Averia wore almost identical bemused looks.

"I guess." Diana sighed and closed her eyes. Her mommy could always carry her up to bed later. "But it would be even cooler if you and mom could switch places."

"Oh?" Fang glanced down at Diana. "What makes you think that? Wait… you're asleep, aren't you?" She chuckled and stood up with Diana in her arms. The little girl weighed almost nothing at all. "All right, I think I'll take Diana up to bed." She transferred Diana into one arm and waved at Averia with the other. "Come on, I'll carry you up too."

Averia scowled. "I can walk, mommy."

"I thought you'd say that." Fang headed up toward the girls' bedroom, Averia a few steps behind. "And don't forget, it's Saturday tomorrow, so you can sleep in."

X X X

Lightning woke at the crack of dawn. It might have been a Saturday, but years as a soldier had given her a habit of rising early, and it wasn't something she could easily stop. Fang, however, seemed to come with her own inbuilt alarm clock. The other woman could wake early one morning and sleep in the next without any trouble at all. Sometimes, it made Lightning want to kick her out of bed. But because she loved Fang, and because she'd have to put up with an inordinate amount of whining if she actually did kick her out of bed, Lightning simply stumbled out of bed and into the bathroom to wash her face.

Along the way, she tripped over her own feet twice, and it was only good luck that kept her from running face first into the door. Maker, what was wrong with her? She couldn't be hung over – movie nights with the girls were strictly non-alcoholic – and even if she was still a bit foggy from
waking up, she'd never been this clumsy. With a yawn, she turned on the sink and washed her face. A shiver ran through at how cold the water was, and then she looked up into the mirror. Hopefully, she wouldn't look too horrible.

It took a split-second for what she was seeing to sink in and then she screamed. Loudly.

Half mad with panic, she washed her face again and looked back into the mirror. The face that greeted her was exactly the same: tanned skin, green eyes and dark hair. Not her face – Fang's. There was a rustle of fabric as someone slid out of bed and walked into the bathroom. She turned and came face to face with… herself.

"What's all this screaming about, sunshine?" Fang drawled in Lightning's voice. "It's too early in the morning to…" She trailed off and her blue eyes widened. "What's going on?"

Lightning pressed herself back against the bathroom sink. This was wrong, totally wrong. "I don't know." She flinched at the sound of her – no Fang's voice – coming from her lips. "I woke up and…and…"

Fang grabbed a lock of her hair. It was pink. Then she said what they were both thinking. "Oh, hell, this can't be good."

Ten minutes of frantic panicking later, the two of them were back in the bedroom. Lightning was perched on the edge of the bed, and Fang had one arm wrapped around her to draw her close. Normally, that would have been more than enough to calm her down, but the fact that it was her arm wrapped around Fang's body only made it worse. It didn't help either that she was suddenly taller than the other woman.

"Could we be dreaming?" Lightning whispered.

Fang smirked and the expression was nothing short of eerie on Lightning's features. "I doubt it. The only time two people can dream the same thing is in crystal stasis, and I'm pretty sure I would have noticed that last night."

"Last night." Lightning's mind drifted back to the previous night. There was something about it, something she hadn't thought about – "Wait! Last night, Diana said that it would be cool if we switched places. Maybe –"

Fang held up one hand. Maker – that was Lightning's hand. "Hold it right there, Lightning. I know she can be mischievous, and I know she's good with pranks, but even with Vanille's help, I doubt she can make people switch bodies. If she could, the first thing she'd do is switch bodies with Bahamut for a day and go knock down a few buildings or something."

Lightning nodded slowly and wrapped her arms around herself. No wonder she'd had such a difficult time moving properly. Not only was Fang taller than her, she had a totally different centre of gravity. She was heavier too. "You're right. Unless Diana is secretly the Maker in disguise, I don't think we can blame this on her." She dragged in a deep breath. "Fang, what are we going to do?"

A frown crossed Fang's lips – now there was an expression Lightning was used to seeing on her own face. "Vanille," Fang said at last. "The only things I can think of that can do this kind of thing are the fal'Cie and the Maker, and no one knows more about the old legends and rituals than Vanille. We can call her, ask her to come over, and then see if there's anything she knows that can help us."
"Really? Vanille?" Lightning ground the words out. "Damn it, I think you're right. If this is the fal'Cie or someone like that, she probably does know more than anyone else." She froze. "But what about the kids? Vanille is with an exploration and survey team. She won't be able to get back until this afternoon, even if we call her now."

"Well manage somehow." Fang grinned and Lightning shivered. Her face was not made for grinning like that. "I mean we do know each other very well. I'm sure we can fool the kids for a few hours. Once Vanille gets here, we can hand the kids over to Serah and Snow while we sort this out."

Lightning swallowed thickly. This was not happening. "All right," she said. Her eyes narrowed, and she scowled as she realised that Fang had, at some point, stopped paying attention to what she was saying. Instead, her gaze was considerably lower than her face. "What are you doing?"

Fang's lips twitched. Seeing Lightning's scowl on what was normally her face was definitely not something she saw everyday. It was weird to say the least. "You know," she murmured, eyeing her body appreciatively. "I really do look awesome." Still smiling, she reached over and gave what would normally have been her – but was currently Lightning's – chest a grope. "I feel awesome too."

Lightning slapped Fang's hand away and made a disgusted sound. "Fang! I cannot believe that you're groping yourself at a time like this."

"Well, you know what they say. Sometimes all you can do is laugh or cry – or grope." Fang shrugged. "I could always ogle you, if you want." She reached down and cupped her – or rather Lightning's breasts – with a sunny smile. Face set into an expression of deep and utterly serious contemplation, she weighed the two soft but firm mounds in her hands. "Yep, you definitely feel as incredible as usual."

Lightning grabbed Fang's wrist. "Stop that! And keep your hands to yourself." Fang waggled her eyebrows suggestively, and Lightning threw a punch that went well wide of the mark. Damn it, she needed to practice using this body. "Stop it!"

Fang cackled. Seeing that outraged look, not to mention the blush, on her face almost made this whole disastrous situation worth it. "Why? It's not like I haven't seen them before, and I've definitely touched them before too."

A growl left Lightning's lips. There was no telling what might happen if she strangled Fang. For all she knew, they could end up stuck like this. Besides, they were married and she loved Fang very much, even if the other woman was currently grinning like an idiot. "Fine. Just try not to do it too much. It's weird." Her brows furrowed and she gave her own chest a poke. "Damn it, Serah was right."

"Oh?"

"You really do have bigger breasts than me."

X X X

Over the next hour, Fang and Lightning did their best to get used to their new bodies. Lightning also did her best to fight off Fang's advances. Perhaps it was the other woman's way of coping with a horrible situation, but she absolutely did not want to find out what it would be like 'doing it' while they were in each other's bodies. Okay, maybe she was a little bit curious, but now was not the time. And damn it, did she really look like that when she was flirting? The way Fang could make
her blue eyes darken and grow stormy was well… really hot.

As for the call to Vanille, that went about as well as could be expected.

"Bwahahaha." Vanille's laughter carried clearly to Lightning, even though Fang was the one on the phone. "You're serious, aren't you? You really have switched bodies."

Lightning wrestled the phone out of Fang's hands. "Yes. Get back here. Now."

"Wow." Vanille winced. "Okay, I believe you. I've never heard Fang sound like that. Honestly, Lightning, when it's you talking through Fang's body like that, you sound like a serial killer – a really friendly, crazy serial killer."

"Vanille…" Lightning hissed.

"Fine, fine. Things are about done here, so if I leave now I should be back some time after lunch." Vanille paused. "Can I tell Serah?"

"Why?" The absolute last thing Lightning wanted was for her sister to find about this… debacle. Not only would Serah worry a lot, she would probably also find it utterly hilarious once she'd gotten over her initial concern.

"I remember reading about something like this in one of the ancient texts. I think it was in a book I found in some ruins in an expedition a year or two ago. It matches up with a few other legends I've heard too." Vanille's voice was suddenly deadly serious. "If I'm right, we're going to need a close blood relative to perform the ritual to reverse the switch, and unless you want Averia or Diana to do it then Serah is your best bet."

"Fine." Lightning massaged her temples and tried to ignore the speculative look Fang threw her. "Just… no one else. Not even Hope." For all of his professionalism, Hope could be every bit as bad a gossip as Vanille.

"Fine, fine." Vanille giggled. "I'll see you later. Try not to do anything foolish, so don't listen to anything Fang says."

"Brat," Fang muttered as Vanille hung up. "But that's good, right? It sounds like she has some idea of what to do to fix this."

"Maybe too good of an idea," Lightning whispered. Footsteps rustled down the corridor outside their door. Interesting, Fang's senses were even keener than hers. "I think the kids are up."

"Then let's hope we're ready." Fang stood and went to the door. "Remember, you're me and I'm you. We can't get our names mixed up."

Lightning frowned. "I know that."

While the kids were watching Saturday morning cartoons, they were safe. But things soon took a downward turn.

"Mommy," Averia asked from her position by the kitchen door. "Why are you making breakfast while mom is with us in the living room?"

Lightning twitched. "Uh…"

"Normally, mom makes breakfast and you play with me and Diana." Averia's eyes narrowed. "Are
you in trouble again?"

Lightning bit back a grimace. It was nice to have such an observant daughter, but she wished the girl could have picked a better time to show it. At least, she'd been given an excuse to work with. "Yes, I made your mom mad yesterday, so I have to make breakfast."

"Oh." Averia nodded. "That makes sense." She turned and was about to walk away when she stopped and looked over her shoulder. "Be careful, mommy. If you set the kitchen on fire again, you'll be in trouble for ages."

Was she really that much of a tyrant? Probably. "Don't worry, I'll be careful."

Breakfast didn't go much better either. The first thing that Lightning did was to sit in her usual place at the table, which drew puzzled looks from both of her children. Keen to pass it off as a joke, she put what she hoped was a grin on her face and traded places from Fang. From the frown on Averia's face and the look of horror on Diana's, it was clear the pretence was wearing thin – or that she really wasn't good at grinning.

Somehow, they made it through breakfast, and at the end of the meal, Averia practically leapt out of her chair.

"Come on, mom!" she cried, grabbing Fang's hand. "Let's go!"

Fang gave Lightning a pleading look. What was she supposed to be going off to? After a few moments of wracking her brains, Lightning remembered. "That's right, Lightning," she said with a very pointed look at Fang followed by a kick in the shins. "You were going to do some weapons practice in the backyard with Averia, weren't you? Don't forget, you left your wooden practice sword in the garage."

A fragile smile in place, Fang rubbed her shin. "Thank you, Fang. I will go and… get my practice sword."

Averia looked at Lightning as Fang went to fetch her practice sword. "Is something wrong with mom? She's acting weird."

"No, she's fine."

With Fang and Averia in the backyard, Lightning almost felt safe. And then she felt a gentle tug on her arm.

"Come on, mommy!" Diana beamed at her. "Remember? You bought me the new Gary the Gorgonopsid video yesterday, and you said we'd watch it together!"

Lightning tried her best to smile, she really did, but inside she was already planning fifteen different ways to murder Fang. Where was the fairness? It wasn't bad enough that they were stuck in each other's bodies, but now Fang got to go outside and handle weaponry while she was stuck inside with Gary. Damn that gorgonopsid.

"Sure, kiddo." Lightning nodded. "Let's go watch."

The first five minutes passed easily enough. Even Lightning had to admit that the Gary the Gorgonopsid theme song was very catchy, and Diana was so cute singing along with it, especially since she was a bit tone deaf. Funnily enough, Averia probably had the best singing voice in the family, but it was almost impossible to get her to sing in public.
However, after another ten minutes of Gary and his loveable and brightly coloured friends proclaiming the magic of friendship and the need for cooperation between all animals (carnivorous and herbivorous alike), she was ready to strangle someone. Unbeknownst to her, a vicious, very Lightning-like scowl had spread across her features.

"I'm sorry."

Lightning looked down and blinked. Diana's face was scrunched up and there were tears gathering in the corners of her eyes. Her eyes narrowed. Who had made her little girl sad? She was going to make them pay.

Diana threw herself at Lightning. "Please don't be mad, mommy! I'm sorry I made you watch Gary! We can watch something else."

Utterly confused, Lightning wrapped her arms around Diana and gently rubbed circles on the little girl's back to calm her. "I'm not mad, Diana." But that only increased Diana's wailing.

"You're not?" Diana sniffled miserably and looked up at Lightning with watery eyes. "But… but you were scowling really hard at the television and… and…"

Lightning frowned and Diana quivered in her arms. "I scowl all the time."

"No, you don't!" Diana shook her head vehemently from side to side. "Mom always scowls, so I know she's not mad just because of that. But you never scowl, mommy, not unless you're really mad. Never ever!"

Lightning winced. Damn it. She'd forgotten she was in Fang's body. With a gentle smile, she patted Diana on the head. "It's okay. I wasn't scowling at you or Gary."

"Really?" Diana's lower lip trembled.

Lightning nodded. "Yes, really. I… well… I might have to go on another expedition soon, but I want to spend more time here, so that's why I was scowling."

"Oh, okay." Diana smile was bright enough to strip paint off the side of a house. "Let's watch more Gary then."

Oh the things Lightning endured for her family, the horrible, horrible things.

Outside, Averia was having a similar experience. Practicing with her mom was always something she looked forward to. Wooden practice weapons weren't the same as the real thing, but she relished every chance she got to use her wooden spear against someone who knew how to fight properly. What she wasn't prepared for, however, was the look on her mom's face. Never before had she looked so scary.

"Mom… can you not do that." Averia shuddered and lowered her spear. "It's creepy."

"What?" Fang lowered her sword. It was a good thing she knew how to use a sword. She wasn't as good as Lightning was – and the other woman had a long way to go before being as good as Fang with a spear – but she was still quite skilled in her own right.

Averia jabbed one finger at her. "Smirking and grinning." She shivered. "It's freaky… it makes you look like you're planning something evil."

Fang sighed. Of course the girls wouldn't be used to their mom, Lightning – also known as Colonel
Never Smiles and Colonel Gloomy – smiling and smirking and generally grinning at everything the way Fang often did. "Come on, it's not that bad."

"It is." Averia held her spear up like some kind of talisman against evil. "It looks like you're about to murder me."

A lazy grin crossed Fang's lips, and she winced as Averia very visibly flinched. All right, maybe it was that bad. Time to be more like Lightning then. Setting her face into a faint frown, she looked back at her daughter. "How about now?"

Averia let out a sigh of relief. "That's much better. Let's keep going."

X X X

Lunchtime came and went, and after another very awkward meal, the doorbell rang. In the blink of an eye, Lightning was out of her chair to answer it. If she had to watch any more Gary, she was going to kill someone – either the show's producers or herself. At the door were Vanille and Serah, and the red head had a boxful of books and relics in her arms.

"Thank the Maker," Lightning breathed. She scowled. "What is all that?"

Beside Vanille, Serah raised one hand to her mouth. "It really is true... wow." She raised her voice. "Girls, your Uncle Snow is taking Claire out to watch a movie. Do you want to go?"

"Yes!" Averia and Diana cried.

"Good, then get changed and head next door once you're done." Serah looked back at Lightning. "I can't believe it's really true. Amazing."

"More like terrible." Lightning wrapped her arms around her sister. Suddenly, she was inordinately glad that the other woman was there. "What did you tell Snow?"

"I said that you and Fang wanted the afternoon to yourselves." Serah laughed. "He said you could pay us back next week."

"I didn't need to know that." Lightning sagged against her sister. Serah felt even shorter than usual now that she was in Fang's body. "But thanks."

Changed into some fresh clothes and ready to go, Diana and Averia ran past and went straight to Serah and Snow's house next door.

"You'd better stop hugging Aunt Serah like that, mommy," Averia warned as she darted through the door. "Or mom is going to get mad at you again."

Serah and Vanille had the decency to hold their laughter in until the girls were safely out of earshot. Once they'd recovered, Vanille quickly led Lightning back into the living room.

"All right," Vanille said as she turned to face both Fang and Lightning with grim determination. "Tell me everything, and don't leave anything out."

Lightning and Fang recounted everything, and Lightning felt her gut clench as Vanille's expression grew darker and darker.

"I see." The red head stroked her chin. "It's exactly as I feared." She shook her head. "Almost one thousand years ago, this exact same thing happened in Oerba."
"What?" Fang squawked. "I've never heard of that."

"You wouldn't have." Vanille crossed her arms over her chest. "While you were off fighting, I was busy scouring the library. Based on what I remember and some of the things we've found more recently, there may be a way to fix this. However, you'll need to do exactly as I say." She pointed at the box full of relics and pulled out a piece of paper. "You need to set those up in the backyard and I'll need everything on this list."

Twenty minutes later, and the backyard had been transformed into a miniature outdoor shrine. Relics of various fal'Cie and other things that Lightning couldn't recognise were scattered in a broad circle in the middle of the backyard. Vanille had surrounded that circle with another large circle of salt, and an even larger circle of sugar.

"All right," Vanille said, licking the last of the sugar off her fingers. "Remember my instructions?" Both Fang and Lightning nodded, and Vanille tossed a jar of peanut butter at them. "Start smearing this into your hair."

"Are you serious?" Lightning asked, and for once, Fang looked like she agreed.

"Damn it, there's no time to ask questions!" Vanille yelled. She banged one fist down on her open palm. "Fang can tell you all about how petty the fal'Cie were when it came to tribute. Now, hurry up and get started. According to the information I've gathered, we can't wait too long or the switch will become permanent." Neither Lightning nor Fang moved. "Well? Get going!"

The peanut butter went on first, followed by some mayonnaise smeared onto their faces as some kind of war paint. Then came the necklaces of garlic and the hats made of cabbage. Part of Lightning was certain that this was all some horrible prank, but she wasn't prepared to risk it.

"If Vanille is lying about this," Lightning muttered. "I'm going to kill her."

Fang started wiping some jam onto her arms – apparently the fal'Cie demanded strawberry jam be lathered onto their bodies as tribute – and then nodded. "You know, I love her, but tell you what, if this is all another one of her pranks, then I can hold her down while you punch."

After a few more coats of various condiments, they were done.

"Okay." Vanille handed Serah a piece of paper. "We'll need two people to recite the ritual. I'll recite it for Fang and you can recite it for Lightning." She dragged in a deep breath. "Now pay close attention and try to keep up."

Vanille then proceeded to spout absolute gibberish.

"Vanille –" Fang started.

"Silence!" Vanille waved her hands about. "And close your eyes! We can't afford to mess this up!" She jerked one hand at Serah. "What are you waiting for, Serah? Start chanting or Lightning will be stuck in Fang's body forever!"

With her eyes closed, Lightning could still hear Vanille and Serah babbling what sounded like complete and utter nonsense. In fact, now that she thought about it, it sounded an awful like the theme song of Gary the Gorgonopsid sung backwards. But before she could give the idea too much thought, Vanille and Serah began to let out wild woops and yells, and something that smelled a lot like vinegar began to rain down on her.

"Vanille!" Lightning growled.
"I'm almost done." Vanille stomped the ground. "Come on, Serah, dance like you want to win!" A few frantic seconds of screaming and wailing later, Vanille spoke again. "And we're done."

Whack.

Whack.

As Lightning and Fang slumped to the ground unconscious, Serah turned to Vanille.

"Was all of that really necessary? And did you have to bash Fang over the head with your binding rod." Serah stared at the wooden practice sword in her hands. "And did I really have to hit Lightning with this?"

Vanille took a sip of cola from a half-empty bottle – the other half had already been poured on top of Fang and Lightning earlier in the ritual. "Have you ever had a computer that froze and wouldn't come unstuck no matter what?" Serah nodded. "What did you do then?"

"I turned it off and then back on again… no!" Serah grabbed Vanille by the shoulders and shook her. "Don't tell me that all of this was… was some kind of desperate attempt to, I don't, reboot our sisters?"

"Pretty much." Vanille shrugged. "But I wasn't lying. This really did happen a thousand years ago, and they really did fix the problem by whacking them over the head." She grinned at the condiments scattered on the lawn. "The rest, well, I was kind of curious to see if they'd do everything I said." She pointed to Bhakti who had been included as part of the ceremony. "And this way we'll have proof. I mean it was kind of funny, wasn't it?"

Serah did her best to look stern, but failed miserably. It had been pretty funny.

"Okay then, use these for me, would you?" Vanille tossed Serah some smelling salts.

A few seconds later, Fang and Lightning began to stir. The first thing that Lightning did was look at Fang.

"We're back to normal." Lightning stood and ran her hands over her body. It was great to be back.

"Yes, yes, we are." Fang winced as a big slab of peanut butter oozed over her face. Slowly, she turned to look at the Vanille.

The red head took a slow step back. She could practically feel the evil intentions rolling off Fang and Lightning. With a flick of her wrist, she ordered Bhakti to go hide in Diana's bedroom. The little girl loved the robot, and Vanille needed to preserve the footage of the ritual for, uh, posterity and stuff.

"Get her!" Lightning shouted.

In a flash, Vanille was behind Serah. The pink haired woman was her human shield against Fang and Lightning's wrath. "Wait! Wait!" Vanille crouched behind Serah. "You can't kill me! It worked, didn't it?"

Lightning stilled. Grudgingly, very grudgingly, she lowered the wooden practice sword she'd grabbed hold of. "I guess you're right, and I suppose we should thank you." She glared. "But not a word of this to anyone."

Still safely behind Serah, Vanille nodded eagerly. "Sure, sure, not a word." After all, Bhakti
wouldn't be saying anything, not really.

Fang's eyes narrowed – she knew Vanille very well, and the red head had agreed a little too quickly – but after a moment she sighed and hugged Vanille, careful to rub as much of the mess all over her onto the red head as possible. "Thanks. I don't know how it worked, but thanks."

X X X

Dinner that night was a much more cheerful affair. Rather than cook anything, Fang and Lightning invited everyone over for some pizza and junk food. The girls didn't even think of questioning their good fortune, although both Serah and Vanille were hard pressed to keep straight faces. It did help that Fang and Lightning had washed off the muck they'd lathered themselves in, and even Vanille had managed to grab a shower and a change of clothes.

After dinner, the girls went to the living room while the adults stayed at the dinner table talking.

"Mommy," Averia shouted. "Have you seen the peanut butter? I'm still hungry, and I want to make a sandwich while we're watching this."

Fang twitched at the mention of the peanut butter. "We ran out. We'll get some tomorrow. What are you girls watching? Is it Diana's new Gary video?"

"No," Averia replied. "It's Bhakti. He has something he wants to show us."

"Bhakti?" Fang froze. Bhakti had been at the ritual. Bhakti could record things. Bhakti could… she turned, ready to grab Vanille, but by then the red head and Serah were already gone, the back door slamming shut behind them. A grim smile crossed Fang's face. "Lightning…"

"I know." The pink haired woman stood. "I'll go get my gun blade and your spear." Her eyes narrowed. She looked at Snow and Hope. "Can you watch the kids?"

"Uh, sure." Snow laughed nervously. "You're not going to kill Serah are you? She is my wife, you know, and Vanille is Hope's girlfriend."

"I'm not going to kill her – she's my sister." Lightning took the stairs two at a time. Her gun blade was upstairs along with Fang's spear. "We're just going to talk to her and Vanille. That's all."

A few seconds after Fang and Lightning had left to 'talk' with their younger sisters, the girls came in giggling and only too eager to show Snow and Hope what was on Bhakti.

"Well," Hope said slowly after the video was finished. "That explains a lot."

It took Snow a supreme effort of will to keep from laughing hysterically. "I guess it does." He reached for a glass of water. "Want to go watch television with the girls?"

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based on Fangrai February (now Fangrai Forever!) Prompt #101: Fang and Lightning switch bodies, a la Freaky Friday. I'm currently supposed to be working on something else, but once I saw this prompt, I had to do something on it. This chapter
comes off as a bit ridiculous, but I guess it works considering the idea of people just switching bodies is, in and of itself, not especially serious. Given the nature of Freaky Friday, I also thought it would be great to have the kids involved, since their reactions to their parents were some of the first things I pictured when writing this.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Do We Have Any Strawberry Milk?

Lightning scowled as Fang sauntered in her kitchen like she owned the place. Sure, Lightning let Fang and Vanille live with her, but it was her damn house and her damn kitchen.

Smirking that irksome smirk of hers, Fang grabbed a glass, opened the fridge and then bent over to rummage around in it. Lightning did her best not to stare. Damn that woman's shapely behind!

"Hey, Lightning, do we have any strawberry milk?"

Lightning ruffled her newspaper and did her best to pretend that she hadn't been staring and that she wasn't still staring as Fang wiggled around to try and get to the back of the fridge. "No, we do not have any strawberry milk. Besides, what do you need strawberry milk for? We've got plenty of normal milk."

And that, Lightning thought, would be the end of that. Only it wasn't.

The very next day, Fang traipsed back into the kitchen, that same smirk still firmly in place. Then she grabbed a glass, opened the fridge door and waggled her behind at Lightning.

"Do we have any strawberry milk?"

"I told you yesterday," Lightning muttered, tired after a long shift patrolling the edges of town, and barely able to fight off the urge to just reach over and give Fang's fine rear end a pat or two. "We don't have any strawberry milk. We've never had any strawberry milk, and I swear to Etro if you ask again, I'll get my gun blade and shoot you."

Fang looked over her shoulder and grinned. "We'll see." And just because she'd caught Lightning staring, she made sure to wiggle her hips as she ambled out of the kitchen.

And so, the next day came. Fang grabbed a glass, opened the fridge and then turned to Lightning, but before she could say a thing – or tempt Lightning any further – the pink haired woman cut her off.

"No, we don't have any damn strawberry milk, and if you even think of asking again, I'll shoot you with my gun blade."

Fang grinned and leaned across the counter toward Lightning. "Do you have your gun blade with you?"

Lightning winced. She'd left it upstairs. "No."

A lazy smirk crossed Fang's face. "In that case... do we have any strawberry milk?" As Lightning spluttered in outrage, Fang reached over and took the half-empty glass of normal milk in front of Lightning – the milk Lightning had been halfway through drinking. Still smirking, she drank the rest of the milk down, her eyes on Lightning the entire time. "Tastes good." Her lips twitched. "It's not strawberry milk, but Lightning flavoured milk isn't half bad either."
And with that Fang skipped out of the kitchen, leaving Lightning staring intently at the glass of milk. She was still thirsty… so should she get another glass or use the same one. Maker, she could still see the outlines of Fang's lips on the glass. After taking a quick, surreptitious look around, Lightning poured herself another glass of milk – into the same glass.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based on Fanrai Forever Prompt #108: Fang finds herself drinking strawberry flavored milk and taunting Lightning at the same time. Admittedly, Fang never got her strawberry milk, but she did get something better, so I guess it works out.

As soon as I saw this prompt, I knew I had to do it. When I was younger, I used to read every joke book I could find, and one of my favourites has always been the one about a duck, a barman and some grapes. This chapter is pretty much the Fangrai version of that joke.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
The dread pirate Fang the Ferocious let her gaze wander over the woman tied to her bed. She was quite the pleasing sight, a veritable spitfire who was, even now, doing her very best to glare Fang to death.

"Comfortable, Lady Farron?"

Glacial blue eyes narrowed to little more than slits as Lady Farron thrashed about on the bed. It was pointless of course. Fang had tied her arms to the head of the bed and secured her legs to the bedposts. Not that Fang minded the struggling. On the contrary, she welcomed it. All of that thrashing about did some wonderful things to Lady Farron's already magnificent bosom and slender legs.

"Untie me, pirate scum!" Lady Farron growled.

Fang sat on the end of the bed and ran one hand up the smooth skin of Lady Farron's ankle. To her delight the lady in question shivered and gave a little gasp of surprise. "I think not." She shrugged off her heavy coat but decided to keep her hat on. It was, after all, a very nice hat: soft, jet-black and with the requisite skull and cross bones on it. "For I fear you would simply dash my brains out upon yonder wall."

"I surely would!" Some of Lady Farron's long, pink hair had fallen into her mouth and she had to strain to get the words out. "Now untie me, cur, unless you are too cowardly to face me fairly!"

"Cowardly?" Fang chuckled and let her hand wander up Lady Farron's leg to stroke the firm, toned muscle of her calf. Again the lady shivered and Fang let herself savour the smooth, silken flesh beneath her fingers. "That is such a harsh way of putting things. I prefer to think of myself as rather thoughtful. Oh yes, I know all about you, Lady Farron, and I'm well aware of your exploits with both blade and pistol. I've no desire to add myself to the long list of miscreants you've dealt with." Her lips curled and she bent down to press a gentle kiss to the inside of Lady Farron's knee. The pink haired woman let out a startled cry and Fang had to jerk her head back before Lady Farron could take advantage of the slack in her bonds to knee Fang in the face. "Still, I must confess. I do have more than a little desire to add you to the long list of women I've dealt with."

Lady Farron's eyes grew as wide as saucers as the meaning of Fang's words sunk in. "You... you foul beast!" she cried as she renewed her thrashing. "Let go of me this instant! I will not be the subject of your... your base animal lusts!

Fang grinned and shimmied up the bed until she was sitting between Lady Farron's thighs. The other woman stilled at once and did her best to scoot up the bed, though it was to no avail as Fang followed her until she could move no further. Settling both hands halfway up Lady Farron's thighs, Fang took a moment to appreciate the delightful shivers running through the other woman's body.

"Base animal lusts? You wound me, Lady Farron." Fang smirked. "And you misunderstand me also. I've no intention of simply venting my lusts upon you, quite the opposite, actually." Her eyes gleamed and she trailed her fingertips up toward the juncture of Lady Farron's thighs. "In fact, I
have every intention of helping you enjoy yourself, Lady Farron. And I assure you, you will enjoy yourself."

"Liar!" Lady Farron spat, though the words lacked their usual bite as her breathing grew ragged and a rosy flush spread across her cheeks.

Fang smiled. Lady Farron looked even more fetching than before. And she'd looked quite fetching to begin with. After stealing Lady Farron off her own vessel, Fang had taken a few moments to render the other woman unconscious so she could restrain her and remove all of her attire save for the chemise she still wore. She'd been lucky enough to catch Lady Farron in a gown. The garment had not only been pleasing to the eye – royal blue rather suited her captive – but the other woman hadn't been able to fight properly in it, allowing Fang to get the better of her.

"Liar?" Fang leaned over Lady Farron and let her hands ghost up the woman's sides. "Then why do you tremble so? Well, Lady Farron?"

"It is disgust!" Lady Farron managed to sound impressively angry, though the deepening flush upon her cheeks suggested otherwise. Fang had bedded enough women to know what that meant, nor could she miss the heave of the other woman's bosom. Interesting. Perhaps Lady Farron was not yet used to such pursuits, otherwise she'd have hid her growing desire a little better. "I have a theory, if you would permit me to explain it."

"Silence, pirate!" Lady Farron's words came out in a breathy hiss as Fang stroked the flat plane of her belly through the thin cloth of the chemise. "I do not treat with criminals."

"So you say." Fang almost groaned. The shifting of Lady Farron's legs against her made her sorely tempted to simply cut to the chase, but there were certain customs to these situations, and no self-respecting pirates of means or reputation ignored them. Besides, she had waited some time for this. "Lady Claire Farron – or should I say, High Admiral of the Cocoon Navy – you've sent at least twenty of my brethren to the gallows, and that is only counting the ones of some repute. It's been said that your very gaze can curdle milk from a hundred paces, that your voice alone can make men shiver in their boots and throw themselves overboard in a haze of fear and panic, and –"

Lady Farron scowled. "Fang, focus…"

"Oh." Fang winced. She had been getting a little bit carried away. "Anyway, Lady Farron, it would seem as though you have quite the distaste for pirates. As the queen of the aforementioned group, I believe it is my solemn duty to wreak horrible vengeance upon you and yours. However, I am not a petty woman. I have no desire to harm your family, but restitution must be had." She put one finger on her chin and did her best to look thoughtful. "But there is something that you can give me that no one else can." She leered at Lady Farron's body and let her hands wander up to the lower curves of the woman's breasts. "Can you guess what it might be?"

Lady Farron twisted about in a vain attempt to escape the pirate's touch. The thrice-damned woman seemed to know her body better than she did. Every stroke, every caress, every lingering touch filled her body with a heady fire. Whether it was her belly, her sides or even the sensitive flesh of her bust, the pirate knew exactly how to touch her. Doubtless, the miscreant had honed such skills on any number of helpless, innocent young maidens, but she refused to let herself be the next target. "Never!"

"Silly woman." Fang chuckled. "You've finally outmatched yourself." She continued to tease and stroke, this time running her fingers gently along Lady Farron's cheek and pulling away just in time to avoid having them bitten off. "A fine swordsman you might be and an excellent shot to boot, but I suspect you've had little time for romance or even the pleasures of the flesh. In this battle then, I
have the upper hand." Fang flicked her wrist and a knife appeared in her hand. "And believe me, I intend to enjoy this victory quite thoroughly, and I'll make certain you enjoy it as well."

A few precise cuts later and Fang had the chemise in tatters though there were some startlingly modern undergarments beneath it that covered the woman's more private regions.

"I must say, I am growing fonder of these modern trappings." Fang eyed Lady Farron's chest, which was hidden beneath what she believed was called a 'brassiere'. "It hints quite nicely at what lies beneath." She tilted her head to one side and studied the panties Lady Farron wore. "Those aren't half bad either."

Mustered her sternest look, Lady Farron did her best to ignore the precarious nature of her predicament. "If you cease right now, then I will ensure that you are executed by firing squad rather than hanged."

"No one will be executing me," Fang replied. "Now, be a good girl and enjoy yourself."

And with that, Fang began her ministrations. She started by laying her lips upon the soft, sensitive skin of Lady Farron's throat – careful, again, to avoid a head butt or other such assault – and then, gently stroking the quivering woman's frame, she worked her way down Lady Farron's collarbone and her décolletage.

"It seems a shame to hide such beauty behind those uniforms you favour," Fang murmured. "Though the gown you wore fit you nicely." She unlatched the brassiere and took a moment to admire her prize. "And these are even better."

"Cease your staring!" Lady Farron cried, though the hiss of her breath through her lips and the tremor in her belly spoke of a battle hard fought but swiftly slipping from her grasp – touch by talented touch. "Do not look at me!"

"Do not be embarrassed." Fang continued to stare quite pointedly at the chest before her. "You are pleasing to the eye, though your reaction only furthers my suspicion. You are untouched, Lady Farron, though perhaps that is not true any more."

Lady Farron snarled but there was no heat to it, not angry heat anyway. Of another heat, there was much indeed. "Stop blathering, pirate and unhand me."

Fang smirked and then set her lips and hands to wandering over this fresh new terrain. Like any good pirate, she thought herself an explorer, and the prospect of claiming Lady Farron for herself was more than thrilling.

To the lady at the centre of Fang's attention, the few moments that passed felt like hours of the most tortuous but pleasurable sort. Any number of new and unfamiliar feelings washed through Lady Farron and by the time Fang pulled away, her lips planting one last kiss upon a turgid peak, she was little more than a wreck, scarcely capable of coherent thought. Only the heat of Fang's touch made sense to her now, and though her pride demanded she remain remote, her body refused to give her that luxury. Traitorous thing, it had already given up.

"Who would have thought the fabled ice of Lady Farron hid such fire?" Fang planted a trail of kisses along Lady Farron's chest and then down to her belly button. "Perhaps picking the pristine flower of the Rose of Bodhum will prove to be even more pleasurable than I had thought." Her gaze drifted to the sole remaining garment upon her captive. "But there is a while to go yet, and first I would have you beg for me."
"I will never beg for you." Lady Farron lifted her chin. "A daughter of the House of Farron does not beg."

"Not yet, perhaps. But you will."

And how true those words proved.

Fang was a firm believer in the adage that a fine woman was much like a fine wine, something to be appreciated with almost religious fervour. A fine wine, for instance, offered a unique bouquet, a taste and aroma that might never be experienced again, regardless of the money one possessed. Likewise, Lady Farron offered a tantalising mix of beauty and inexperience, ice and fire. Educating her in the finer points of pleasure was not an opportunity to be missed.

She began again, touching, testing and looking for all the places upon her increasingly willing captive's body that might prove receptive to her touch. Someone else might rush to the end of the matter, but Fang preferred to go slowly. Let the proud woman beneath her learn how much pleasure could be had. A touch here, a taste there and everywhere the heat between their bodies – Fang could be ruthless when she had to be, but rarely had such ruthlessness been so enjoyable.

Soon, Lady Farron was capable of little more than moans and whimpers of the most ardent sort. Fang had teased out every secret of her body, had learned all the spots that made stars come to life behind her eyes and drew the breath from her body. Some Lady Farron had guessed of, or at least heard of from the saucier maids about her house, but others – the spot behind her knee, the edges of her ribs – she had never even dreamed of. Only now, when her eyes were glazed and heavy with a desire that she could barely understand did Fang cease her ministrations.

"What say you now?" Fang asked, one hand drifting to the edges of Lady Farron's panties. "Well, Lady Farron? Shall I cease or shall I continue?" The woman was close, Fang could tell from the rise and fall of her chest and the almost pained expression upon her face.

"I will never – oh!" Lady Farron bucked as Fang pressed one hand down upon the juncture of her thighs.

"Pirate I may be, but I am not without some mercy." Fang let her hand linger a moment longer then reached up to cup Lady Farron's cheek. Before, the other woman might have tried to bite her, now she merely rested against Fang's palm, panting and so very close. "Ask me to shiver your timbers and I will proceed to do exactly that."

For a moment the fog of lust cleared and Lady Farron's eyes flashed fire. "Seriously, Fang? Shiver my timbers?"

"Lightning… stay in character." Fang grinned and went back to teasing her captive. "So, Lady Farron, will you yield?"

Lady Farron fought her desire as best she could, but the damnable pirate's hands were much too skilled for her to resist for long. Again and again the vicious pirate took her up to a place where she could all but sense the peak she had heard of spoken in hushed whispers. Was this the little death the poets spoke of? If it was, she wanted none of it, yet at the same time, she wanted it more than anything in the world.

"Very well," she whispered at last, her face turned away. "Do with me what you will."

Almost gently, the pirate turned her face to hers and locked their lips together. "I will, Lady Farron. Believe me I will."
Insert ridiculously hot Fang/Lightning sex scene. The kind of thing that would get this story pulled off this website. Oh yeah.

Fang laid her head against Lightning's stomach. The scent of the other woman's passion was still heavy in the air and she could hear her wife's breathing slowly return to normal. Affection flooded through her, and she pressed a few more kisses to the smooth skin of Lightning's belly before suddenly, she found herself on her back with her wrists handcuffed to the head of the bed.

"Huh?"

Lady Farron – better known as Lightning Farron, Colonel of the Guardian Corps – flicked her hair over her shoulder and straddled Fang's waist. "Shiver my timbers, Fang? You really couldn't think of anything better?"

Fang looked up at the other woman and grinned. It was quite the view. "Well, I couldn't think of anything else and I'm not exactly up to date on pirate lingo. That's more a Claire and Vanille thing."

Her niece had recently caught onto the awesomeness that was pirates and Vanille had gleefully joined in the ensuing madness.

"I love Claire and Vanille, but please don't mention our niece and your sister when we're in bed and naked." Lightning eyed the clothes Fang wore. The modified pirate outfit looked good on the other woman, but it covered far too much flesh.

"Fine, fine." Fang laughed. "Now, how did you get out of those handcuffs so quickly?"

Lightning's lips twitched. "I'm a colonel in the Guardian Corps. You don't think I've learned a few things?" She smiled. "Besides, I wanted to be in charge for a while. You had your fun –"

"Technically, you were the one having fun, as in mind blowing, screaming to Etro and the Maker fun…"

Lightning blushed and then scowled. "As if you don't like having your way with me." She coughed. "Anyway, it's my turn now."

"Oh?" Fang smiled. "How exactly is that going to work?"

"Let's see…" Lightning smirked. "Yes, how about the dashing navy admiral catches the pirate queen by surprise, turning the tables and getting her revenge."

"Her sexy revenge?"

Whack.

"Ouch!" Fang scowled. "I'm fairly sure this particular scenario didn't involve any hitting, otherwise I'd have spanked you at least once."

Lightning fought the urge to whack Fang over the head again. She'd once tried to hide how much she enjoyed these little games, but she'd failed rather miserably. It was next to impossible to lie to Fang when the other woman was doing her level best to make Lightning pass out from pleasure.

"Maybe next time," Lightning said at last. "But you were being silly." She grinned. "And don't
forgettable, Serah and Snow have got the girls until the day after tomorrow, so we've got the house to ourselves."

"Fine, fine." Fang lay back. "Go on, get your revenge – your sexy revenge!"

X X X

The dread pirate Fang the Ferocious stared up at Lady Farron in shock. Somehow, the other woman had managed to reverse their positions. "What?"

"You've had your fun, pirate." Lady Farron's smile was ruthless. "But I overheard you telling your crew to keep away from your chambers tonight. That means I have you at my mercy, and for what you've done, I will have restitution."

"Sexy restitution –"

Whack.

"Silence, churl." Lady Farron stripped Fang out of her shirt. "The only sounds I will permit from your throat this night will be the cries I draw from you." Her eyes narrowed. "You will scream for me, pirate, I can promise you that."

X X X

Insert super sexy Lightning/Fang sex scene. The kind of thing that would make the censors weep and lead to the permanent banning of my account.

X X X

Fang yawned and grinned a touch stupidly. There was nothing quite like a full weekend of mind blowing sex to make things better. Fang the pirate had tasted the full wrath of Lady Farron and had gone back for seconds – and thirds. And speaking of Lady Farron, Lightning was currently sitting opposite her at the dining table, a cup of coffee held in one hand as she scanned through the newspaper. The girls – who had come back earlier that morning – were playing in the living room with Claire.

"Fun weekend, huh?"

Lightning stretched and Fang was pleased to see her wince just a little. It was good to know she wasn't the only one sore in the most pleasurable of ways. "Yes, and I still have another week off before I have to be back in the office."

"Another week? That's good because I've got another two weeks before I leave on another expedition." Fang smirked. "There were some other things I was thinking about…"

"Get your mind out of the gutter." Lightning hid her grin behind her coffee cup. "The girls might hear us. Tell me later." She looked around to make sure none of the girls were within earshot. "Or better yet, show me later."

"I'll do that."

Just then a loud scream came from the living room. It wasn't a pained scream and it wasn't a horrified scream indicating probable property damage, so the two of them took their time getting to the living room.
On the couch, Claire was wearing what appeared to be Snow's pirate hat from Halloween as she waved a rubber cutlass in the air. As for Averia... Fang stared. That was her pirate hat on the girl's head – as in the pirate hat she'd worn while ravishing Lady Farron senseless. And Diana, well, the youngest of the three was on the floor thrashing and screaming.

"Agghh!"

"What are you doing?" Lightning asked.

"We're playing pirates." Claire brandished her sword. "I'm the captain. Averia is my best mate and Diana tried to mutiny so we made her walk the plank." She pointed at the thrashing girl. "But there were sharks in the water, so now she's getting eaten."

"Agghhh!" Diana wailed again.

But Lightning wasn't interested in that – Diana did tend to take games very seriously – so much as she was interested in the hat on Averia's head. As innocent as it looked on her daughter's head, she couldn't help but think of all the distinctly not-innocent things Fang had done to her while wearing it. "Where did you get that hat, Averia?"

"Diana found it under your bed." Averia shrugged and prodded Diana with one finger, prompting another series of wails and cries from Diana about how a giant squid was now fighting the sharks to see who could eat her the fastest. "Your bedroom door was open and she was walking past and she saw it, so we decided to use it since we're playing pirates."

"Is that so?" Fang struggled not to laugh at the blush spreading across Lightning's cheeks. She knew exactly what the other woman was thinking. "Do you have to use it?"

"Oh, are you using it for something?" Averia tugged the hat off and handed it back to Lightning who, wordlessly, handed it back to Fang.

Fang put the hat on.

On the ground, Diana stopped thrashing and looked at Fang. "Wow, mommy, that hat looks really good on you. Maybe you can come play with us?"

Claire grinned. "Shiver me timbers, you make a good pirate, Aunt Fang!"

Fang had to grab Lightning around the waist to keep the woman from tripping over her own feet.

"Mom?" Averia asked.

"Don't worry about her." Fang settled Lightning back on her feet and gave all three children a grin. "I shivered her timbers earlier."

"What?" Diana's eyes widened and she scowled. "You two were playing pirates without us?"

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**Chapter End Notes**

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #94: In which Fang is a (badass)
I don't even know where to begin with this chapter. A while back someone asked me if I would ever do a pirate AU. Now, I don't have any plans to do a full story in that vein (yet), but the idea sort of stuck with me and upon seeing this prompt, I thought I'd give it a go… but with a twist. You see, a proper pirate story would require a certain amount of high seas action, cutlass-rattling action and so forth, and with everything else I'm writing I don't think I could give such a story the amount of time and attention it deserves (I would rather not put out anything I didn't think was good enough). So I needed something shorter and after a bit of consideration I thought to myself: why not try something a little bit more humorous and perhaps risqué? Thus Fang the BASP (Bad Ass Sexy Pirate) was born!

You have probably noticed that the language in the role-playing scene is somewhat over the top in places. This was a deliberate choice. When I was younger, I used to read everything I could get my hands on. Everything was fair game: historical romances, thrillers, horror, history books, science books… everything. Although reading all of that at a young age probably warped my mind, it did provide me with endless hours of amusement. And one of the things that has always amused me the most is the language used to describe sex/seduction scenes in traditional romances. We have phrases like (and I'm paraphrasing here): "Character X's lips closed around the turgid peaks that signaled the mounting passion and heady flame of arousal that surged through Character Y's inexperienced loins." For some reason a younger me (and in truth, the current me) found such phrases absolutely hilarious, and I've tried to mimic that same language, the kind that is at once very passionate but perhaps also a little bit funny because of how over the top that is. It's how I can very easily see Fang approaching a role-playing scenario: something that she and Lightning can both enjoy, but also something to have a bit of fun with (hence, Lightning getting a little annoyed when she goes way over the top since Lightning will, naturally, treat this all as something that should be done properly and to the same exacting standard as she does everything else).

But that's the nice thing about Fang and Lightning from this universe. They're in a relationship and they're comfortable enough with each other to try new things and have a bit of fun (and they're also sensible enough to make sure the kids aren't around to walk in on them!). As for the "insert sex scene" bits… yeah. I might joke, but I'd rather not get anything purged on this website and I think the lead up let's you imagine for yourselves what they might get up to (and no words cannot adequately describe the awesomeness of BASP Fang).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Little Sister Knows Best

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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Little Sister Knows Best

Lightning wanted to believe she was a considerate person – at least when it came to the people she cared about. For those few, precious people, there wasn't a lot she wouldn't do. But as much as that group had grown over the years – she was almost up to double digits now – Serah would always be right near the top of the list.

So when her sister had asked her if she could take Friday afternoon off, Lightning had agreed. Never mind all of the paperwork she had to do, the recruits she had to train and the shooting range she had to fix. If Serah wanted to have coffee then they were going to have coffee. After everything they'd been through, she couldn't push her sister away, especially since she'd moved in with Snow.

As usual, Lightning arrived at the café early. She made a point of always being on time, and she held everyone else to that same standard, much to the exasperation of her few friends and her many colleagues.

The café had a warm, old fashion charm to it with handmade wooden furniture instead of the usual sterile, mass produced metal or plastic. Rather than sit inside, Lightning opted for a table outside, nestled amongst the trees that lined the sidewalk. It was a good day to be outside: warm but not hot and with a gentle breeze that was well shy of being truly windy. The whisper of the wind through the leaves mixed with the gentle murmur of conversation to blunt the hard edge that lingered even after she'd finished work for the day.

As she waited, she ran a soldier's eye over everything. She might be off duty, and she might be in the mood to relax, but she'd been through too much to ever let her guard all the way down. But even that was an improvement. The first few months after her journey with the others, she'd jumped at every shadow, pointed her gun blade at every phantom that haunted the edges of her vision.

She didn't much care for keeping up with the latest fashions. There wasn't any point. She didn't flaunt her looks, but she knew what clothes looked good on her, and she had more than enough to suit her needs. The stores on either side of the café were thus of only passing interest: they catered more to those with an interest in high fashion or an eye for expensive jewellery. Still, she filed away a few details. Serah's birthday wasn't far, and few things pleased Lightning as much as spoiling her little sister. A new pair of earrings would look good on the younger woman, sapphire perhaps to match her eyes.

As for the café itself, this was Lightning's first time visiting it. She'd heard of it in passing from some of her colleagues. It was, apparently, well known for the quality of its food and drink. More than one fellow officer had mentioned – perhaps not realising she was listening – that it was the ideal place for a casual lunchtime dalliance with a romantic interest.

Imagine all of the surprise then when Lightning had let slip that she planned on going to the café. Her love life – or seeming lack thereof – was the subject of no small amount of speculation amongst the other officers. She could have corrected them, but they wouldn't have believed her anyway, would have interpreted the truth as a lie meant to cover up what was surely a torrid affair with some as yet unnamed lover. If only they could put that much effort into getting their own
work done. At least it helped boost morale.

A few minutes passed with no sign of Serah, and Lightning let her gaze wander over all the passers by. Several sought to catch her eye, but she didn't bother to acknowledge them. Perhaps it was rude, but she was here to meet Serah, not speak with some random stranger. Her lips twitched. Vanille would have talked to at least one of them, maybe even invited a few to sit down and share some cake. The younger woman was a crazier, nosier and altogether more mischievous version of Serah. Once, that would have grated on Lightning's nerves. But after Serah had moved out, it was a relief to share her house with Vanille and Fang. It was never quiet with those two, and there were times when Lightning was almost afraid to be alone with her own thoughts.

Fang… Lightning sighed. Vanille had become her sister in everything but name, but the older Pulsian was something else, something that Lightning wasn't yet ready to put words to. Fang put her on edge, left every nerve tingling and raw, and not necessarily in a bad way. They joked and laughed with each other – or rather Fang laughed and Lightning gave the occasional faint smile – but there was always a certain distance between them, a separation that was as much emotional as it was physical, as though they were afraid of what might happen if they let themselves get to close. It had them walking on eggshells around each other, fumbling their words, unsure of what to say and leave unsaid. It also made Vanille want to strangle both of them, if only her hands were strong enough.

Finally, she caught a flash of pink hair in the crowd. Her eyes softened. Very few people had pink hair, and sure enough, it was Serah. Perhaps she was biased, but Lightning thought Serah cut quite a striking figure against the rest of the crowd. A white sundress hugged her little sister's slim form, and a white, wide-brimmed hat with a blue ribbon was tucked onto her head.

At times, Lightning envied Serah. Her sister had a warm, approachable sort of beauty, the kind of smile that was welcoming with a hint of mischief. Lightning's looks were of a more regal cast, attractive but imposing. Serah could look every inch a lady and still come across as the friendly girl next door. Lightning was unmistakably a soldier, regardless of what she wore. She scowled. Snow had better appreciate how lucky he was.

Serah caught sight of her and with a happy wave, she tucked her purse under her arm and weaved through the crowd to take a seat at the table opposite Lightning.

"You actually took the afternoon off."

"You didn't think I would?" Lightning allowed a touch of amusement to colour her voice. "How is everything? I would have thought you'd be in class right now."

Serah giggled. As a schoolteacher, her work hours were quite different from Lightning's. She did have to deal with monsters though, albeit of a different variety. "Holidays began yesterday."

"I see." Lightning passed the menu to Serah. "Do you want anything?"

"This place is supposed to be very good." Serah opened the menu and studied it with all the care Vanille gave the ancient tomes the surveyors occasionally brought in from the ruins that littered the area. "But look at how expensive everything is."

Lightning shrugged. "Order whatever you want. I'm paying." It was expensive, but that wasn't a problem. She earned a lot as a captain of the Guardian Corps, not to mention all the bonuses she received from those special assignments that only someone with her abilities and knowledge of the terrain could do. And Fang and Vanille did help with the household expenses, Fang by leading expeditions to map and explore Gran Pulse, and Vanille by assisting in the development of new
technology combining the science of Gran Pulse and Cocoon.

"Are you sure?" Serah grinned. "I'm not poor, Lightning, and you never know… I might just order everything on the menu. What then?"

"Then I'll sit here and make sure you eat every last bit of it." Lightning smirked. "I remember when we were kids. You always used to pick at your food. I had to watch you to make sure you ate it all. Maybe that's why you're so short."

"I am not short." Serah huffed. "You're just tall."

"No, I'm not tall. Snow is tall." Lightning poked Serah on the nose and tugged her hand back before the younger woman could grab it. "You're just short."

"Meanie." Serah wrinkled her nose. This sort of playful teasing was a reminder that Claire hadn't died so that Lightning could live – she'd gone away for a while, true, but little by little she was coming back. Lightning would never be Claire again, but she would never again be the cold, cruel Lightning who had all but thrown Serah out after learning she'd become a l'Cie. "But I have got to try some of the cake as well as the coffee. What do you think about chocolate cake?"

"That one?" Lightning frowned at the menu. That wasn't a normal chocolate cake – it was diabetes on a plate: five different kinds of chocolate, fudge, icing and a host of other extras. She could already feel the heart disease taking hold of her. Oh well, she should be all right as long as she didn't make a habit of it. She grinned. When she got home she could tell Vanille all about it. The Dia had an even bigger sweet tooth than Serah, so it would drive her nuts. She probably wouldn't rest until she'd managed to drag Lightning and Fang to the café to try it herself.

Unbidden, a host of images flashed through Lightning's mind: Fang with chocolate smeared across her lips; Lightning leaning over to wipe it off; and Fang taking her hand and oh so slowly bringing it to her lips, sucking the chocolate off first one long, slender digit then another until Lightning –

"Are we going to order or are you going to keep staring into space?" Serah waved one hand in front of Lightning. "Well?"

Lightning hissed. Not good. She'd been having more and more thoughts like that recently, and it was only a matter of time before someone worked out what she was imagining. "Sure." She waved one of the waiters over. "Let's make our order."

"So…" Serah tilted her head to one side and grinned. "Vanille tells me you've been working longer hours lately."

Lightning made a disgusted sound – that little tattletale. "They're thinking of putting up another settlement about two hours away, and I've been clearing out anything dangerous."

"I hope you don't overwork yourself." Serah reached over and poked Lightning in the side. However, all the older woman did was scowl. "Good, you didn't flinch, so at least you're not hurt." Serah could still remember all the times Lightning had come back barely able to walk. On the upside, if Lightning got hurt now, Fang would go off and spear whatever was responsible while Vanille patched her back up.

Lightning pushed Serah's hand away. "I'm fine, and do you and Vanille have to talk about everything?"

"Almost." Serah shrugged. "I worry about you, and now that I've moved out, I can't check on you as often as I'd like."
"So you picked Vanille, who is clearly the sanest, most responsible person we know?" Lightning made a face. "How exactly does that reduce your worrying?"

"Well, it was either her or Fang, and something tells me you wouldn't like Fang watching you too closely." Serah's lips curled up at the edges. "Or maybe you would."

It was that steadily widening grin on Serah's face that did it. Lightning had just walked into a trap, and as usual when it came to Serah, she'd never seen it coming. Stupid filial affection – it made it so easy to forget that her sister was one of the most devious people she knew.

"Vanille says you've been avoiding Fang lately; that you wouldn't let her help you with all that extra work of yours, which is odd since we all know how much you like having Fang around whenever you need to kill anything."

"It's not like that." Lightning looked away, unable to stand the obvious amusement in her sister's eyes. Or maybe it was exactly like that and she didn't want to admit it. When it came to Fang, nothing was simple. She didn't know where she stood with the other woman, and she was afraid to ask in case the answer she got wasn't the one she wanted.

"If you say so."

Lightning's eyes widened. Was Serah actually going to let the matter drop?

"Look, our order is here!"

The coffee was top notch with a deep, rich flavour and a perfect, subtle note of bitterness. Despite the cost, she might have to come here more often, or send some of the new recruits on coffee runs. She could call it urban navigation training. And then there was the cake, and if Serah's reaction was anything to go by, it was amazing.

Serah had taken one long look at the cake – sizing up the kill, so to speak – then cut herself a slice only to let out a low moan of pleasure as the chocolate hit her tongue. Lightning had even found herself blushing at how obvious her sister's enjoyment was. Fang had once asked her, that teasing smirk on her full lips, if she knew what a chocolate orgasm was. After almost choking on her coffee, Lightning had brushed the question aside.

Any sentence involving her, Fang and the word 'orgasm' was not something she wanted to dwell on – not if she wanted to stay sane. Of course, Fang had to have the last word. She'd stared right at Lightning and then lifted a few pieces of chocolate to her lips, devouring the sweets in a way that had to be borderline pornographic, at least to Lightning's lust addled mind. And if Lightning had gone out and bought ten more of those damn chocolate bars and left them where Fang could see them, who could blame her?

But it was amazing how different the two events were. Watching Serah bliss out on chocolate left her feeling awkward as though – dear Maker, please never let it happen – she'd walked in on her sister and Snow in the midst of intimacy. Watching Fang eat chocolate made her want to either join in or take the chocolate's place.

"You've got some on your cheek." Lightning frowned and pulled out a napkin to wipe away a stray bit of chocolate. Her sister usually had excellent table manners – the sugar must already have overwhelmed her brain.

Serah blushed, but made no attempt to stop eating the cake. "You have to try this. It's so good." She licked her lips and then reached into her purse for a magazine. "By the way, just when were you
planning on telling me about your affair with Fang?"

Lightning's hand froze halfway to her slice of cake. "What?"

Serah handed the magazine to Lightning with a smirk. "Take a look." Then she reached for another slice of cake.

Lightning glanced over the offending piece of tabloid filth and her blood began to boil. The magazine had somehow managed to get pictures of when she and Fang had gone to the movies a few months ago. The pictures showed the two of them talking over coffee and sharing popcorn. However, the biggest picture showed Lightning leaning on Fang, one arm draped almost possessively around the taller woman's waist, their bodies side by side. Even now she could remember that moment, along with the frisson of heat that had run all the way down her side to pool deep and low in her belly.

And the accompanying text was even worse.

In a voice that left no doubt about her amusement, Serah summarised. "As these photos show, when two women like Captain Lightning Farron and Oerba Yun Fang are involved, even a night at the movies can be red hot!"

"Those idiots." Lightning fought the urge to rip up the magazine. They had no right to barge into her life, and even less right to try and label whatever it was that she and Fang had. How could Serah enjoy this garbage? "We went to a movie, that's all."

"And you didn't tell me?" Serah's eyes took on a predatory gleam. "And you didn't bring Vanille?"

Lightning was beginning to wonder if Vanille was the source of the story. It would be just like her. She'd started to make increasingly obvious hints to Lightning suggesting that she make her move. In Vanille's words, she wanted someone who could provide for and look after her troublesome big sister and Lightning was the only one who fit the bill.

"Vanille wouldn't have liked the movie." It was a pathetic excuse, but it was all she had. Vanille loved action movies.

"Really?"

Arms folded across her chest, Lightning stood her ground. It was at time like this, she missed the days when her word was law. Not that she missed the resentment that had built up between her and Serah when Lightning had tried to be the younger woman's mother and sister. "Yes, and how can you read this? It's garbage."

In response, Serah flicked to another page. "Maybe, but it can be quite fun to read."

Lightning stared at this latest insult to her intelligence. "What the hell is this?" Her growl had some of the other customers looking their way. "I don't even…"

"I think it's funny." Serah pulled the magazine back before Lightning could destroy it.

"It's not funny at all." Lightning pointed at the magazine. "Explain how that could possibly be funny."

Serah stroked her chin. "Let's see… you are the famous Lightning Farron, leader of the l'Cie, and now, you're a dashing, beautiful and highly decorated member of the Guardian Corps. You're also young and single. Is it really that surprising when the tabloids speculate about your love life? And
is it really that surprising when they try pairing you up with almost everybody you spend any time with?"

"Fang I can understand." Lightning's fists clenched. "But the others… Hope… and Vanille… and Sazh?" She had to force the last name out. "Snow?"

Her sister gave a merry laugh. "We both know that Hope is going to become quite the man one day. He's not there yet, but it won't be long, and whoever he chooses in the future is going to be very lucky."

"You've given this a lot of thought." Lightning scowled. "But according to that garbage, when I'm not busy canoodling with Fang, I'm apparently busy making a man out of Hope and a woman out of Vanille." The 'article' had even used those exact words.

"You mean you haven't seduced the pair of them – at once, mind you – and reduced them to quivering piles of desire, eager for your every touch?"

Serah knew full well that anyone else would have been punched in the head or worse, but being Lightning's favourite (and only) little sister granted her certain privileges. She did wonder sometimes – most recently after a drinking contest with Vanille – what it would take for Lightning to punish her and whether the older woman would have the guts to bend her over her knee. The last time Lightning had done that was when Serah had come back drunk from a party in high school. Neither of them had ever mentioned it again, and she had a feeling Lightning had wiped the whole incident from her memory.

"And you're not secretly raising Dajh with Sazh? He is an eligible widower with a heart of gold." Serah grinned. "And let's not forget Snow. Supposedly, you've already stolen him away from me."

"You can keep him."

"Relax." Serah chuckled and took a sip of her coffee. "No one believes these things, it's just fun to speculate." She turned the page. "But you have to admit, the others do have their good points." A wistful smile crossed her face and she gave a gentle sigh. "Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I'd met Vanille before Snow…"

Lightning gaped.

"I'm joking, I'm joking." Serah held up her engagement ring for emphasis. "You know, there's even people who speculate about the two of us."

"Us?" Lightning had to pry her hands off her coffee cup before she broke it. "What kind of speculation?"

Serah tilted her head to one side and clasped her hands to her chest. Then she gave Lightning her most innocent yet seductive look, something that left Lightning equal parts impressed and disturbed. "Let's see: you're the strong, overly protective older sister, unwilling to share me with anyone else. I'm the innocent younger sister, reliant on you for everything and closer to you than anyone in the world." She waggled her eyebrows suggestively. "But seriously, if we weren't related and you were still on the market, I would totally –"

"Stop right there!" Lightning did not want to hear that, and to make sure her sister couldn't continue she shoved another slice of cake into her mouth. "I refuse to talk about that."

A happy smile spread across Serah's face. The cake got better with every slice, and the rich, sweetness of the chocolate added a unique twist to the look of absolute horror on her sister's face.
Lightning could be so fun to tease. But she wasn't here just to tease the older woman.

"Would it be that bad if some of it were true? I mean, the stuff about you and Fang?" Serah flipped back to the original article. "You look happy here, Lightning, and you deserve to be happy."

"Serah." Lightning dragged in a deep breath. She hated it when her sister got like this. There was no way out of this conversation now.

"Lightning, I love you, but emotionally you're a cripple." Lightning tried to get a word in, but Serah would have none of it. "But that's okay. I get it. You gave up so much for me when we were younger – gave up part of who you were – and I'm grateful, so grateful. I wouldn't be here if you hadn't fought so hard for both of us. But isn't it time you were happy?"

Lightning stared into her coffee. The dark liquid had gone cold, but she couldn't bring herself to care. In all honesty, she'd been lost when Serah moved out. When they were younger and it was just the two of them, and she'd been working herself to the bone to make ends meet, she'd kept herself going by thinking of that far off day when Serah would be grown up and everything would be okay. Now, Serah had moved in with the man she was going to marry and everything was fine.

Snow was a good man: the kind of man Lightning knew would look after her sister no matter what. Sure, there were times when Lightning wanted to bash his head in, but that was true of almost everyone. So now after living for Serah for so long, she had to live for herself – only she wasn't sure she knew how. It was enough to make her laugh and cry at the same time. She finally had the chance to live her own life, to go after what she wanted, but she wasn't sure she deserved that chance, let alone deserved the person she wanted.

Lightning Farron: hero, legend… coward.

"She deserves better." Lightning fiddled with one of the napkins and scrunched it up into a ball. "I'm damaged goods, Serah. You know that."

"Damaged goods?" Serah murmured before she leaned over to whack Lightning upside the head. "Idiot."

"Ouch." When was the last time Serah had hit her? Anyone else would have lost an arm for that.

Serah scowled. "If you ever say something that stupid again, then I'll hit you some more." She raised her hand. "Damaged goods? You're smarter than that, Lightning, and a lot better too."

"She does deserve better though."

Whack.

"I don't know if I can –"

Whack.

"Damn it! Can you stop hitting me so I can explain?" Lightning grabbed her sister's wrist.

"Fine." Serah snatched her arm back. "I'm waiting for my beautiful, intelligent and talented heroic sister to explain to me how she isn't good enough for the woman she loves." She tapped one foot on the sidewalk. "Well?"

Lightning considered arguing for a moment before giving up. Serah would see right through her. "Serah, we both know I'm not good at this." She gestured at all the people around them. "I'm not
good with other people. I can order them around and lead them, but that's not the same as spending time with them; that's not the same as loving them. I have maybe a dozen people I'd call friends and they didn't come easily.

"You've been living with Fang for months now, and I haven't heard any complaints." Serah had, but most of them were related to whether or not Lightning would ever get the stick out of a certain part of her anatomy; in other words, the usual.

"Fang and Vanille, Serah. There's a difference." Lightning stared into her cold coffee. "Fang and I… sometimes we get along so well and sometimes we fight and Vanille… she helps smooth things over." Her lips curled. "She's still a brat though."

"You fight because neither of you can make up your damn mind." Serah threw her hands up in exasperation. "You won't say anything; she won't say anything. But neither of you will even think of letting anyone else come between you. It's no wonder you're so wound up. The two of you should just get a room – you do have several at your house – and just –"

"Finish that sentence and die." Lightning's ferocious scowl had no effect whatsoever on Serah.

"And talk everything over." Serah smirked. "Or was your mind wandering back into the gutter?" She sighed. "We're all sick of watching the two of you. Do you think I don't notice you staring when you think no one is looking? I never thought I'd see my big sister mooning over someone like a lovesick schoolgirl, but I guess I was wrong. It's actually kind of cute."

"I do not moon over Fang like a lovesick schoolgirl."

"Not all the time. Sometimes you look like you want to strangle her, and sometimes you look like you want to do all sorts of wicked things to her." Serah's eyes gleamed as she did her best to impersonate Lightning's voice and expression. "I'm Lightning Farron, and I totally stare at Fang when no one can see me. I also mope around the house whenever she's gone, and I always make sure to cook her favourite food when she comes back."

"How do you even know about that?" Lightning jaw clenched. "Vanille. That little rat."

"Like I said, I asked her to watch you." Serah shrugged. "I pay in her chocolate and ice cream. But seriously, you need to tell Fang. It's not fair on you or her. Get it out into the open."

"What if I ruin everything? I always do." Lightning was ashamed of how small her voice sounded. "What if she moves out? I almost ruined us Serah, and we're sisters. Fang doesn't have any reason to stay. If… if she moves out –"

Whack.

"You're being stupid again. Of course she has a reason to stay – you're there. And you won't ruin everything. You might be blunt and silly and stubborn when it comes to things like this, but she's used to that – she's used to you." Serah chuckled. "I think it's a good sign. She's the only one who can put up with your grouchiness except me."

"I am not grouchy."

Serah raised her hand again.

"Maybe I am a little grouchy."

The hand became a fist.
"Fine, I'm a grouchy, neurotic soldier with a cleaning fixation."

Serah lowered her hand. "Yes, you are, but in case you haven't noticed, Fang doesn't mind. In fact, she thinks it's adorable. Why do you think she teases you so much? Honestly, it's like watching a pair of first graders. I'm just waiting for you to start pushing each other and pulling each other's hair."

Now that was something Lightning hadn't considered. She'd always assumed Fang was good at this sort of thing. But how many serious relationships had Fang been in since she and Vanille got back? None. Maybe Fang wasn't any better at this than her. Maybe they were both bumbling around with no idea of what to do. When she thought about it, Fang never teased the others the way she teased her. There was always amusement when she teased the others, but the jokes were always straightforward. With Lightning, there was always a hidden meaning to Fang's comments, a glint of something more in the other woman's eyes. Not to mention Fang had started to mention how much she liked women in uniform. Damn it, she really was stupid.

"And let's not forget that Fang doesn't mind it when you go off to kill things. Heck, she's usually there with you." Serah rolled her eyes and muttered something about idiots coming in matching pairs. "But that's beside the point. Ask yourself: when you're feeling sad, whom do you go to? When you're tired, who looks after you? And when you want to talk about something – anything – whom do you talk to?"

Silence. "You."

"Not anymore, you don't." Serah's smile was a tad watery. "You go to Fang, and that's okay because I want you to be happy."

For what felt like forever, Lightning stared down at the table. So many times, she'd come back from work to find Fang waiting with a kind word, a teasing comment and dinner on the table. Other times, she'd come home, disgusted with herself for not keeping some of the new recruits out of harm's way, and Fang had dragged her out of the house for some sparring to help her cool down. And then there were all the times she'd wandered through her house wondering what to do now that Serah had moved out, only to find Fang draped over the couch or digging through the fridge. The other woman belonged there with Lightning, looked perfect with one of Lightning's shirts on or one of her books opened on her lap.

"I bet Vanille told you about all of that, didn't she?" Lightning refused to believe her voice was trembling.

"She has a vested interest in this, just like I do. We've got a lot in common too, like sisters with rocks for brains." Serah patted Lightning's hand. "And believe it or not, she's practically adopted you into the family already. To quote: 'My sister deserves the best, even if the best happens to be an uptight, cranky soldier who never keeps enough candy in the house."

"Does everyone think I'm uptight and cranky?"

"You almost murdered her for leaving her clothes on the floor." Serah grinned. "But that's not the point. We all want what's best for you, and if you could maybe get around to sharing some of the money the tabloids would pay to cover your wedding then that would be thanks enough." She paused. "I'll take cash or credit, but Vanille wants cash."

"Serah!" Lightning laughed. "Don't even joke about that." She paused and took a sip of her coffee. It was cold but bracing, which was what she needed. "Thanks, I think. I guess... I needed to hear some of that." She'd come a long way if she could admit that.
The younger woman snagged another slice of cake. "Don't worry, you big sisters can't do everything. Little sisters have their place in the world too."

"Oh? I thought you were just here for me to spoil."

"That too." Serah's eyes softened. "It won't be easy, and you'll make mistakes, and sometimes you won't know what to do, but that true for everyone. Snow and I made our fair share of mistakes too. The thing is, it'll be worth it in the end. Just think: is there anyone else you can see next to you for the rest of your life? Is there anyone else you'd rather wake up to in the morning and come home to at night?"

This time, Lightning didn't hesitate. "No."

"Good. Now get cracking. I want some nieces to spoil."

Lightning gaped. "What?"

Serah clasped her hands together. "You heard me. They'd be so cute. They could have your hair and Fang's eyes or maybe the other way around, and when Snow and I have kids, they could all be friends, and we could live next door to each other and—"

Lightning was still trying to wrap her head around the idea of children. "They'll be monsters. Absolute monsters."

"Probably, and Fang will spoil them rotten."

It was hard not to smile at that. "I guess I'll have to be the tough one then." Lightning looked at her sister. "Are all of our talks going to be like this from now on?"

"I hope not." Serah leaned back in her chair and sighed. "Now that we've got all of that out of the way, we can spend the afternoon doing something fun."

"Like what?"

Serah launched into a good-natured rant about some of the children she had to teach. They were lovable kids but with an eye for trouble. Lightning listened to it all with a faint smile on her lips. She felt… lighter now that she'd finally made up her mind. It was only later, after they'd gone shopping – Serah did most of the shopping while Lightning did most of the carrying – that she realised something. She'd never gotten a chance to taste the cake. Serah had eaten all of it while they were talking.

Clever girl.

X X X

Fang tucked her phone back into her pocket. She'd asked – more like begged – Serah to put in a good word for her. She'd tried everything to get Lightning's attention short of declaring her undying love for the soldier on a giant billboard or ambushing her in bed. Both options had their upsides, but she hadn't wanted to scare the other woman off. When it came to love, Lightning could be as skittish as a newborn chocobo.

Instead of a proper message, Serah had sent back a single emoticon: a smiley face. Vanille had seen it and with wide eyes, the red head had ordered Fang to dress sexy, prepare a romantic, home cooked dinner complete with candles and music, and then dashed off to spend the night at Serah and Snow's house. How on earth could all of that come from one smiley face? Sometimes she
wondered if maybe Serah and Vanille were related.

"I'm home."

The front door opened then shut, and Fang heard Lightning's footsteps as she shrugged off her coat and wandered into the dining room. The pink haired woman looked deliciously rumpled, her uniform a tad untidy and her hair askew.

"What do you want for dinner, Fang…" Lightning trailed off as she finally noticed everything. A wave of satisfaction rippled through Fang as the other woman's eyes lingered on her before going to the table only to come back to her.

"What is all this?" Lightning asked.

Fang swallowed thickly. According to tradition, she should have dragged the dead carcass of the scariest monster she could find to Lightning's family to prove her worth. But that wouldn't work, not here. Not only would Serah not appreciate a dead monster on her lawn, Lightning would probably take one look at it, scoff, and then go off to try and kill a bigger one. This whole wine and dine thing was something new to Fang, and damn it, why was she just standing there and not saying anything?

"Uh… I thought we could have dinner."

"Oh." Lightning looked around. "Where's Vanille?"

"She has some stuff to do, so it's just us. I hope that's okay."

"It's fine." Lightning pulled out Fang's chair and waited for the other woman to sit before taking her place at the table. "This looks good. What is it?"

Fang grinned. "If you must know, it's…"

X X X

"You do realise, they're going to kill us once they find out," Snow said.

"I'm Lightning's little sister and Vanille is Fang's, so we're fine." Serah smiled at her boyfriend. "It's you and Hope who have to worry, although I notice you're both still watching anyway."

"It's interesting." Hope blushed. "I mean… yeah. Way better than normal television."

"Don't come crying to me then when soldier girl comes gunning for you." Sazh was the only one of the adults not watching the television. Instead, he and Dajh were locked in a game of checkers. To his dismay, the boy seemed to be winning.

"How are we seeing this?" Snow asked. The television had what looked to be a live feed from Lightning's dining room. Despite the danger, he couldn't look away. Fang and Lightning were too cute together.

"I may have left a camera in the dining room." Vanille had a bowl of popcorn, which she passed to Hope then Serah. "I've been helping the Guardian Corps work on cameras they can wear on patrol. I left one of my prototypes in the dining room – it's the size of a button."

"I hope that's the only place you left one," Sazh muttered.

"Of course it is. I'm not a pervert." Vanille turned to Serah. "How did Lightning take the tabloid?"
"Like you'd expect." Serah giggled. "I'm glad I didn't show her the rest."

"You mean the story about you and I engaging in a twisted love affair behind Snow's back?" Vanille gave Serah a hug that bordered on lecherous as both Snow and Hope gaped. "Or do you mean the one where all of us got involved in a massive orgy at her house?"

Dajh looked up. "What's an orgy?"

"Nothing." Sazh scowled at Vanille. "Children are present, you know."

"Fine, fine." Vanille waved one hand at Sazh. "And let's not forget the one where Sazh and I are actually secretly married."

"Hey! I'll have you know I'm quite the eligible man."

"Never said you weren't, but I'm not interested in you that way." Vanille gave Dajh a cheeky grin. "Although I'd be happy to have Dajh around." She looked back at the television. "Now, back to –"

Serah reached for the remote and turned off the television. "I think we've seen enough. They'll be fine from here."

"But we still haven't gotten to the best part!" Vanille lobbed a piece of popcorn at the pink haired woman.

"The best part?"

"Well, yeah. As part of the Yun clan's customs, Fang needs to sing Lightning an epic ballad praising her beauty and suitability as a wife."

"You're lying." Serah scowled, but her hand inched back toward the remote.

"Can you risk missing it if I'm not?"

Damn it.

Serah turned the television back on.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

So… this is supposed to be based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #58: The gossip columns have a ball with the growing relationship between world saviours Fang and Lightning. As you can see it kind of took on a life of it's own and spiraled out of control. Oh well.

When I first started thinking about this chapter, I was originally going to have Lightning meet Fang at the coffee shop, but the more I thought about it, the more I thought Serah would be a better choice. In many ways, Lightning has the emotional density of a block of diamond, so she might need a little push to get her going. Unfortunately, she doesn't take to advice very well, but Serah is one of the few people she will actually listen to. I also wanted to write something with a bit more Serah/Lightning in it (I mean Serah/Lightning in a sisterly way!). The relationship
between the two of them is something I really like, and it's nice to write something after they've had the chance to rebuild their relationship.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
For The Fans

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For The Fans

Of all the horrible things that Lightning had anticipated in the aftermath of the Cocoon's fall, the fangirls would not have cracked the top ten. But they should have. In fact, after seeing them in action, she was convinced they should be number one. Yes, even above the food riots and lack of proper toilets.

One fangirl wasn't much of problem. Actually, it was kind of flattering to have someone gush over all the awesome things she'd done (and if Lightning was honest with herself, she was pretty awesome, not that she was the sort of person to toot her own horn). After years of slaving away in the Guardian Corps, it was nice to be acknowledged. But once the fangirls started forming groups (Vanille preferred to call them packs)... that was when things started to get ugly.

Much like a pride of lions stirred into a frenzy of berserk bloodlust by a wounded gazelle, the adoration of one fangirl amplified the adoration of all the other fangirls. Polite requests for an autograph or picture quickly turned into a mad scramble for escape when the fangirl hordes whipped themselves into a mad state of adulation. When that happened, autographs and pictures weren't enough. No, they wanted something more – hugs, kisses, even bits of clothing or hair.

Lightning had barely survived her first encounter with a fangirl pack. She'd gone after her second with a valuable weapon – Snow. The big man made for the perfect human shield, and he'd bought her quite a bit of time to investigate this new, frightening phenomenon before being forced to flee on Shiva.

But the packs weren't the end of it. The fangirls had started to organise... to evolve.

Instead of simply roving New Bodhum in large packs, the fangirls had begun to learn, studying her movements and habits. Some of them had even managed to infiltrate the Guardian Corps if the number of fangirls who knew her patrol schedule was any measure. One especially enterprising fangirl had even made it into her office before being subdued by half a dozen burly Guardian Corps officers wielding what had to be at least a hundred cans of pepper spray.

However, Lightning's fangirls weren't the worst.

Not by a long shot.

Fang's were.

The problem was that Fang was just too damn friendly for her own good. Rather than glaring and generally making herself as unpleasant to be around as possible, Fang smiled, smirked, and sauntered about, much to the delight of her adoring (Lightning preferred the term 'obsessed') public.

It made Lightning want to puke – or punch someone. Possibly even both at the same time.

Those girls had no right to talk to Fang like they knew her, no right to get all cosy with the huntress like they belonged at her side. They didn't know how to hunt or how to fight. They couldn't possibly understand the sacrifices that Fang had made. The only one who deserved to be with Fang
– the only one who should be with Fang – was Lightning. It was just a pity that she hadn't worked up the courage to come out and say that to the huntress yet.

Stupid Fang! And damn that sexy smirk of hers and that stupid, sexy body! Lightning had rehearsed things a thousand times in her head, but every time Fang looked at her, she could never put two decent words together. Instead, she came up with idiotic things like, "Hey, Fang, have you sharpened your spear today?"

If that wasn't pathetic, Lightning wasn't sure what was and that only made Lightning more nervous. Stupid Fang!

But those damn fangirls had no such problems. They sidled up to Fang, smiling and flirting, and it made Lightning's want to shoot or stab all of them. And things were getting worse. After Vanille and Fang had awakened from crystal stasis, they'd moved in with her. Lightning was sure that she'd finally get the chance to make her intentions toward Fang clear. Vanille certainly wanted her to. The red head had done everything to get them together short of dropping a naked Fang right into Lightning's lap. If things continued the way they were, Lightning might just ask Vanille to do that.

Still, it wasn't Vanille's fault that Lightning had all the romantic acumen of a cactus (and the hair of one, too, a lot of the time).

The fangirls had taken to camping out in the park across the street. They'd tried to camp out on the lawn, but a few well-placed bullets had put a stop to that. Lightning might not be able to throw them in prison for being fangirls, but she could absolutely shoot them for trespassing onto her property.

But wasn't Fang such a dear. Rather than join Lightning in her hobby of glaring horrible death at the fangirls, Fang took some time each day to talk with her fangirls. Sure, Lightning could appreciate the kind of manic devotion it took to be a fangirl – if they could only apply that sort of fanaticism to battle, they'd make great soldiers – but Fang should not have been rewarding it by spending time with them. The huntress had even brought some food over when a few of the more hard-core fangirls collapsed from hunger after maintaining a week long vigil at the park.

Of course, Fang's fangirls weren't the only ones at the park. Lightning's fangirls were there too. For the most part, the two groups got along fairly well, but when the questions of who was better came up, things took a turn for the violent. Like two ragtag groups of militia, the opposing fangirls had gathered on opposite ends of the street before engaging in pitched battle in front of their house. It was equal parts hilarious and terrifying. What made it worse was that during the course of the battle, Lightning discovered who was running each fanclub.

Vanille was in charge of Fang's fangirls. Serah was in charge of Lightning's. And to keep the two from trading blows, Lightning had been forced to wade into the middle of the melee to grab the two other women. She'd brought them back into her house and given them what she thought was one of her better lectures. It involved a great deal of glaring, shouting, and at least seventeen threats of dismemberment and death.

Yet Fang hadn't been the least bit bothered by the whole thing. Instead, she'd given both Serah and Vanille a pat on the head before sauntering off to her bedroom, her hips swaying in a way that took all the heat out of Lightning's lecture and dumped it somewhere else. And all Lightning could do was gawp at her like a guppy. Stupid Fang and her stupid, sexy ways!

More recently, a third group had emerged, and despite her previous experiences, Lightning was almost tempted to give these fangirls a chance.
They called themselves the "FLight Shipper Fangirls of Gran Pulse". Apparently, obsessing over the former l'Cie wasn't enough. People had begun to obsess over their relationships as well. There were, much to Lightning's horror, many different groups advocating a host of different possible relationships amongst the former l'Cie and their associates.

One group was convinced that Lightning and Snow were secretly having an affair. Two weeks after Lightning heard about that, their headquarters were burnt to the ground. The Guardian Corps had no suspects, and Lightning had an ironclad alibi. There was even some weird group calling itself the "Neapolitan Shippers" that seemed to think she was romantically involved with ice cream or something. And what was this about a cherry on top?

But as crazy as all of those groups were, and they were crazy, she couldn't bring herself to dislike the FLight Shippers, a group who believed she and Fang were destined for everlasting love and devotion. She hadn't managed to identify their leader yet, but she did know they were fanatically loyal to the idea of their chosen couple. A few of them had even taken to slipping suggestions into her mailbox. Most of those suggestions were in the trash, but she'd kept a few of the others – some of those perverted fangirls had some wonderful ideas.

In the midst of all this chaos, Lightning's patience was fast reaching its end. Every day, Fang's fangirls grew more brazen. Some of them had even taken to inviting Fang over for tea in the park, and Fang had even accepted a few times. Lightning wasn't stupid. Fang was a very, very desirable woman, and other people were perfectly free to pursue her if they wanted. Sure, Lightning would put them in a body bag, but sooner or later, Fang would meet that special someone. And with the way things were going, it wouldn't be Lightning.

All of which explained why Lightning was staring out the window with murder in her eyes.

"Lightning, you really shouldn't sit at the window like that." Serah looked across the dining table at Vanille. They were supposed to be having coffee and exchanging gossip, but it was hard to do that with her older sister doing her best impression of a gorgon over by the window. "Does she do that a lot? Because if she does, I should probably come over more often."

Vanille sipped her coffee. "Sometimes, she's there all day. I don't worry about it too much unless she had her gun blade with her." She pointed at a sign hanging proudly on the wall beside the window. It read: shooting fangirls is a crime. There were a few bullet holes in the sign. "Fang thought it would be a good to put that up, I'm not sure that Lightning agreed."

"I see." Serah looked back at Lightning. "You know, if you can't get the words out, you could always just jump Fang."

"She wouldn't mind." Vanille smirked. "Believe me."

"Oh, shut up." Lightning scowled and glared out the window. Fang was out there having tea with one of her fangirls, and one of those idiots was stroking her arm. Her jaw clenched. Her eyes narrowed. Her blood pressure skyrocketed to a million. "That's it! I've had enough of this!"

Lightning stomped out of the house and headed straight for Fang, a gaggle of her own fangirls trailing after her.

"Oh, hey, Lightning ~"

Lightning didn't give her time to say anything else. With a low growl, she yanked Fang up onto her feet and into a kiss that held enough pent up romantic and sexual frustration to set an iceberg on fire. The dark haired woman went totally stiff for a moment before giving a low moan as her knees
buckled and her body went weak.

Sometime later – Lightning couldn't give a crap about the time when she was kissing Fang – Lightning pulled away. She glared at all of Fang's fangirls and said the one word they had all feared for months. "Mine."

Then she threw Fang over her shoulder and stalked back toward the house. She didn't even bother to disguise the fact that she was staring at Fang's ass the whole way either.


"And me?" Fang asked, still slung over Lightning's shoulder. Lightning wasn't stupid, if Fang didn't want to be there, she could easily have escaped.

Lightning's lips curled into a snarl. "Bedroom. Now."

"Sure. Yours or mine?"

The front door slammed shut. They were alone. And the living room had a very big couch. "Screw the bedroom. We'll start our way here and work our way up."

"Screw the bedroom?" Fang smirked as Lightning tossed her onto the couch and started ripping off her shirt. "Don't you mean, 'screw you'?"

X X X

Outside the house, Vanille and Serah exchanged happy smiles.

"We did it!" Vanille said.

Serah nodded sagely and turned to give the thumbs up to the FLight Shippers in the park. "Success!"

A great cheer went up from the FLight Shippers, and they rushed forward to congratulate their two vice-presidents on their ultimate victory. Their president, however, remained inside the house. After all, it wasn't everyday someone got to have sex with Lightning Farron.

X X X

Years later…

Lightning liked sorting through the mail. It was oddly relaxing. However, things were a little different today. Diana had mail. Who would send her daughter mail? Still, it should be all right. Lightning had made sure that all of their mail passed through the strictest Guardian Corps screening procedures. There were people out there who didn't like the former l'Cie, but there was no way she'd ever let any of them come after her family.

Diana ambled into the room, and her eyes lit up as she saw the letter in Lightning's hands. "My mail arrived!"

Giggling like the little girl she was, Diana tore open the letter. Inside was a shiny card. "Look, mom! It's my FLight Shippers membership card!"

"What?" Lightning did a double take. The fangirls were still around, but she'd made it very clear to them that any attempt to get at her children would be met with torture and death. "How did you get that?"
Averia came into the dining room, drawn by all the giggling. "Oh, you got yours, Diana?" She smirked. "You know, I got mine before you."

"Meanie! You were born first, so of course, you got yours before me."

"Wait!" Lightning held up one hand for quiet. "Tell me again, how do you even know about that club?"

Averia shrugged. "Aunt Serah is a member and so is Aunt Vanille." She paused and pulled out her own membership card. "See the number at the bottom? It tells you when you joined. Aunt Vanille is #0000002 and Aunt Serah is #0000003."

In that moment, Lightning knew where all of the inside information had come from when she and Fang had been dating.

"Fang!" Lightning shouted as she grabbed her coat. "Watch the kids. I need to go out for a second."

When Lightning was gone, Fang walked into the dining room. Her smirk was almost too big to fit onto her face.

"Mommy, does mom know that you run the FLight Shippers club?" Averia asked.

Fang pulled out her membership card (#0000001) and grinned. "Nope, and if you two like having me around, you won't tell her either."

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #144: Lightning has to deal with Fang's fangirls.

Every now and then, I get the urge to go off and write something crazy. This sort of chapter is the result. I won't even pretend that this is serious. On the contrary, once I saw the prompt, I knew that I had to do something cracktacular. A chapter with Lightning slowly being driven insane by fangirls was too good to pass up.

And yes, there was a joke about Neapolitan shipping and ice cream in the middle there. I was going to have a bunch of fangirls drool while watching Lightning eat ice cream, but I thought it would be a little too ridiculous. Another idea I discarded was having Lightning try to practice winning Fang over on the unofficial FLight Shipper club produced former l'Cie dating simulator game. But that was just too crazy, even for me (if it isn't actually too crazy for you all, let me know…).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
"Deeper" Meaning

Lightning lay on the couch, her head on Fang's lap. She was supposed to be doing some paperwork. But after a long week of patrols and training, paperwork was the last thing on her mind. Instead, she was content to drowse off with Fang's lap for a pillow while the other woman watched the afternoon news.

"I've always liked your hair." Fang ran her fingers through Lightning's hair before letting her fingertips glide along the soft plane of Lightning's cheek. She ended with a gentle but firm stroke of Lightning's collarbone, her index finger lingering on the mark she'd left there. "Although I've always wondered what you'd look like with pigtails."

"Don't even think about it." Lightning shifted slightly to press a kiss to Fang's belly. "I love you, but if you put my hair into pigtails, I will kill you." She opened her eyes. "Say, do we have any ice cream left in the fridge? I could use some sugar after the week I've had."

"We do, but we're out of chocolate."

Lightning made a disgusted sound. "Please tell me that you're joking."

"Nope." Fang returned to stroking Lightning's hair. "Not joking."

"Damn it." Lightning sat up and scowled. "We need to go out and get some."

"I really don't understand why you like chocolate ice cream so much." Fang's lips twitched up into a mischievous smile. "But I guess it makes sense."

Lightning knew that look. Whatever came out of Fang's mouth next would either be unbridled genius or complete stupidity. Perhaps even a combination of both. "Explain."

"Well, it's something Vanille joked about once." Fang chuckled. The red head shared the house with them, but lately, she'd been making noises about moving out. Apparently, she'd walked in on them making out on the couch one too many times. Then there had been the times she'd caught them going at in the laundry room, not to mention the – she grinned. Good times. Great times. "Anyway, Vanille said that I'm like chocolate ice cream."

"You're like chocolate ice cream? Really?"

"That's what she said, and you would be strawberry ice cream." Fang pointed at Lightning's hair. "Get it?"

"And let me guess, Vanille is vanilla because of her name." Lightning rolled her eyes. Trust Vanille to come up with something like that. "So what does that make Serah?"

"Strawberry with the cherry on top."

"Vanille has way too much time on her hands. And that still doesn't explain what makes you chocolate although you do have dark hair so…"
"Look, it makes perfect sense." Fang waggled her eyebrows. "After all, we've all seen the way you go at your chocolate ice cream. You just get in there and dig in." She leaned in close, lips almost touching Lightning's. "The way you just go after that chocolate ice cream and eat –"

"Do not finish that sentence."

For someone so passionate in bed, Lightning was oddly prudish when it came to talking about it. Naturally, that only made Fang more eager to poke at her girlfriend. An angry Lightning could be wonderfully assertive, and Fang didn't mind a bruise or two if it came from Lightning having her wicked way with her in the most delightful sense. "Come on, Lightning. You know I'm right. And you've seen how much I like strawberry ice cream." She grinned. "You don't think it's a bit strange that I like strawberry so much? Sure, strawberry ice cream doesn't taste as nice as –"

"Stop talking."

"You said that last night too." Fang grinned. "And I bet I can make you say that again tonight."

Lightning breathed a sigh of relief as the front door swung open with a bang bringing an end to Fang's teasing. She loved the other woman, but she could do without some of the teasing. Sometimes, she thought Fang did it just to get her riled up. A few moments passed, sounds coming from the kitchen first, before a familiar voice rang out.

"We're back!" Vanille shouted. "Please tell me you aren't naked." The red head stuck her head around the corner into the living room and let out the breath she'd been holding. "Phew, I was worried I was going to walk in on you guys again."

"Really? They're that bad?" Serah smiled, pushing Vanille into the living room.

"I would tell them to get a room, but they have one already. The problem is, they don't use it."

"That's funny." Serah grinned at Lightning. "Because I distinctly remember a certain someone complaining when she saw me and Snow making out. It looks like that certain someone should take some of her own advice." She shook her head. "You've probably corrupted poor Vanille here with your sexual escapades."

"I do not have sexual escapades." Lightning ground the words out. Okay, maybe she did, but she wasn't about to let her sister know that.

"You so do." Vanille rolled her eyes. "And that's fine. I just wished you wouldn't have them right in the open where I can see them. Sure, you and Fang are both good looking but…" She put on a thoughtful look. "I really don't need to see, well, unless you ask me to join in, then maybe…"

"Vanille!" Lightning lobbed a couch cushion at her.

"Yeah, yeah. I was joking, get over it." Vanille dodged the couch cushion. "Anyway, Serah and I have finished shopping, and we were thinking of getting some ice cream from that fancy store near the supermarket. Do you guys want to come?"

Lightning looked at Vanille. The little Dia could be even worse than Fang, but ice cream did sound good. "Fine, but I'm driving." She headed for the door. "Come on."

As she opened the front door, she could hear Serah talking to Vanille and Fang in what had to be the fakest stage whisper ever.

"She's always been like this. When we were young, she used to horde her ice cream like she was
afraid someone would steal it. And you know what? She's only ever gotten chocolate or strawberry. Weird, huh?"

"Hear that, Lightning?" Fang shouted. "It looks like we were meant to be. Either that or you and your sister have some explaining to do."

"Gah!"

It was only Fang's quick reflexes that let her catch the velocycle keys before they could get her in the face.

"I love you too, snuggle bunny." Fang grinned at the two younger women. "Looks like I'll be driving today."

"I guess." Serah shrugged. "But what does ice cream have to do with what you just said?"

Vanille giggled. "I'll tell you later."

X X X

Lightning stared at the sign hanging above the counter of the ice cream store in absolute horror. This could not be real. This had to be some kind of nightmare. Fang was going to kill her with teasing.

"Well, would you look at that?" Fang draped one arm around Lightning's shoulder and leaned over to whisper in her ear. "I've always wanted to eat a strawberry blonde."

Lightning knew that her face was on fire, but there was nothing she could do about it. What kind of ice cream shop had a signature scoop called the "strawberry blonde?" The universe was out to get her. "Fang…"

"What?" Fang pressed a quick kiss to Lightning's ear. "It's true, isn't it? In fact, unless I'm mistaken, I get to do it practically every night."

With a growl, Lightning shoved Fang away.

"Is there a problem, you two?" Serah tapped her foot on the ground and then turned back to the counter. "Stop mucking around, so we can order." She tilted her head to one side. "Hey, look at that!" She pointed at the strawberry blonde ice cream. "It's like you, Lightning."

Lightning's voice held the enthusiasm of a thousand children sentenced to an eternity of homework. "Yay, isn't that wonderful? Let's just order."

But ordering didn't make things better. If anything, it made them worse. After what Fang had told her about ice cream flavours, Lightning was struggling very hard to keep her mind out of the gutter. Fang had ordered a strawberry blonde with obvious relish, giving Lightning a searing look as she took her first lick of the sugary treat. In the meantime, Serah had ordered some vanilla ice cream while Vanille… Vanille had opted for a strawberry blonde with a cherry on top. Lightning wasn't sure whether to strangle the red head or warn Snow that he had competition. She couldn't even work out who would be worse to have as an in-law, Snow or Vanille.

"So, how is your ice cream?" Serah smiled. "Mine is delicious." The last word was almost a moan.

Lightning's reply died in her mouth as she watched her sister feast on the vanilla ice cream. Now that Fang had told her that Vanille was vanilla, she had no way of stopping her mind from
imagining things it really didn't want to. The way her sister ran her tongue around the vanilla ice cream, the way it smudged around her lips before being brushed aside by another movement of her tongue. Dear Maker, the images were already forming in her mind: Serah pinning Vanille to the bed, the red head whimpering softly as Serah peeled off one article of clothing after another, her eyes alight with mischief, before she bent to kiss her way down Vanille stomach right down the juncture of her thighs where she lowered her head to lap at –

"How do you eat your ice cream?"

Serah's next question broke Lightning out of what was simultaneous one of the hottest and most disturbing fantasies she'd ever had. She did not want to know what Serah and Vanille would look like tangled up in bed. But watching Serah eat her vanilla ice cream with such obvious relish had Lightning's mind back in the gutter: Vanille, back arched, Serah holding her firmly in place –

"Well," Fang said, giving Lightning a knowing look. She knew exactly what was going through the pink haired woman's mind. Naughty. Eyes twinkling, she held Lightning's gaze. "I like to start from the top." Her tongue darted out to caress the top of the ice cream. Lightning forgot how to breathe. "And then I like to work my way down, bit by bit."

Lightning's mind was no longer in the gutter – it was the gutter. She knew exactly how much Lightning liked to start at the top. And how much she liked to take the scenic route. Damn, Lightning loved it when Fang took her time.

"And sometimes I like to bite." Lightning's mouth went dry as Fang took a small bite out of her ice cream before smoothing over the missing section with her tongue. Lightning had a mark on her collarbone from something just like that. "But I hate to rush. When it comes to strawberry, you just have to savour it." She smirked. "I love the way it tastes in my mouth, the way it starts off all tense and then just comes apart and melts all over my tongue. It has such a unique… taste."

Even Serah couldn't miss the blatant desire in Fang's voice. The younger Farron twitched and eyed her sister and Fang warily. "Please tell me that you're talking about the ice cream."

"Of course I am." Fang's eyes never left Lightning's as her tongue swirled gracefully over the strawberry ice cream. "What else would I have been talking about?"

"See what I have to put up with?" Vanille rolled her eyes at Serah and took a big, hearty bite out of her ice cream. "They're like rabbits, I tell you."

Any nasty reply that Lightning had prepared vanished. Her traitorous mind was already back at work constructing another image: Vanille in charge this time, Serah pushed back, Vanille smirking as she grabbed hold of Serah's thighs, pulled them apart and –

"Vanille, stop eating that ice cream!" The words were out of Lightning's mouth before she could stop them.

"What?" Vanille asked before a sudden change came over her. Lightning winced. Uh oh. Vanille knew that she knew. "Oh, this?" Vanille's eyes twinkled. "But I love strawberry ice cream with a cherry on top. It's like normal strawberry but better." She lifted her ice cream to her lips. "I could eat it all night long."

"Vanille!"

Lightning's shout was enough to make Serah drop her ice cream, but Vanille was there to save it. Grinning at Lightning, she held the ice cream out to Serah. "Say ah."
Watching Vanille feed Serah vanilla ice cream brought a twitch to Lightning's eye. Serah looked at her – Maker, Lightning thought, there was vanilla ice cream smeared all over her lips since Vanille had been quite messy and...

"Are you okay?" Serah asked. "You look like you're having a stroke."

"Do you love Snow?"

"What are you talking about? Of course I love him." Serah reached over to feel Lightning's forehead. "Are you sure you're okay? You're not making a lot of sense, and you've worked a lot of hours this week."

"Stop eating that ice cream!"

"Okay, now I'm really worried." Serah obediently opened her mouth as Vanille lifted the vanilla ice cream to her lips. A low moan left her. It was so, so good. "It's just ice cream."

"It's – it's!" Lightning sagged. "Fine. I guess it is just ice cream."

Fang snatched Lightning's chocolate ice cream out of her hands and raised it to Lightning's lips. "I can't believe Vanille is the one feeding Serah. Aren't we supposed to be the ones going out?" She smirked. "Now, come on, eat up. I know how much you love the taste of chocolate."

Cheeks flushed, Lightning found herself opening her mouth. The taste of the chocolate ice cream on her tongue was sinfully good. For a moment, her mind was somewhere else: Fang spread out before her, body slick with sweat as Lightning lifted her up by her hips to take a nice, long taste of –

"See, I knew you'd like it." Fang's gaze was hot. "We could even have some more when we get home."

X X X

"You are a terrible human being." Lightning had her back to Fang as she stomped through the kitchen.

"But you love me anyway."

Lightning's reply was a growl, but then Fang's arms were around her, holding her firmly in place.

"I'm sorry if the teasing got out of hand. You know I was only trying to have a bit of fun." Fang pressed her face into Lightning's hair, and the pink haired woman felt her anger fade. "I only do it because you're so beautiful when you're mad… and so frisky too."

Lightning laughed and shoved Fang away. "Pervert."

"Only for you." Fang ducked under Lightning's lazy punch and opened the fridge. "Anyway, we've got the house to ourselves for the weekend."

"I still don't know how I feel about Vanille spending the weekend with Serah. I know they're friends, and I know that Serah can get lonely sometimes when Snow is out helping an expedition, but the way Vanille ate that ice cream –" Lightning clamped down on her mind before it could give her another slow motion replay of what things might look like between Vanille and Serah. Maybe Fang was right, maybe she did think about Serah too much?
"It was ice cream; you're reading too much into it." Fang reached into the fridge and pulled out her prize. "I had Vanille pick this up for me while she and Serah were out shopping." She gestured at the tub of chocolate ice cream. "I know how you get when you don't have any chocolate ice cream to eat." She grinned and lifted something off the counter. "And look, we even have chocolate sauce."

In years gone by, Lightning would still have been ticked off about all the teasing. Her relationship with Fang had taught her a few things about letting things go. With a speed equalled only by her namesake, Lightning shoveled the ice cream back into the fridge and hoisted Fang up onto the kitchen counter. Fang moaned as Lightning grabbed hold of the bottle of chocolate sauce and got to work on mixing her two favourite flavours: Fang and chocolate.

Neither of them heard the front door open.

"Don't mind me," Serah shouted. "I'm just getting the tub of vanilla ice cream I bought from the supermarket. I was supposed to get it after we went out for ice cream, but I forgot and – ah!"

Fang and Lightning jerked apart. Somehow, Fang ended up underneath Lightning as the pink haired woman struggled to protect her girlfriend’s modesty. Chocolate sauce was everywhere.

Near the door of the kitchen, Serah slapped one hand over her face. "Ah!" Groping blindly for the door, all she did was grab hold of Vanille's chest as the red head walked into the kitchen. "Ah!"

For Lightning, seeing her sister groping Vanille was like the fulfilment of every twisted fantasy she’d had over the past few hours. "Ah!"

And then there was Vanille. Perhaps she had considered what things might be like with Serah – they may even have almost kissed a few times when they’d gotten really, really drunk – but that was neither here nor there. But the hand on her chest was most definitely there. "Ah!"

As always, it was Fang who took charge. Grinning, she grabbed her sari and wrapped it around herself as she pushed Serah and Vanille out of the kitchen. "You two, out!" She looked back at Lightning. "And you…" She dropped the sari. "Get me back on that counter and finish what you started."

A few minutes later, with their younger siblings safely back outside and most likely scarred for life, it was Fang who was screaming.

"Ah!"

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based off Fanragi Forever Prompt #167: Fang and Lightning (and others, if you wish) go out for some ice cream. Their local creamery has a signature scoop known as "Our Strawberry Blonde." Innuendos ensue.

I am a bad person. I had this great plan of how I would spend tonight working on one of my more serious stories (Wasteland, I'm looking at you), but then I wandered over to the Fangrai Forever page and saw this prompt. My plan went out the window, and I
got this hammered out (drafts and all) in about two hours. In case it isn't obvious, I've always been a fan of the ice cream joke, and this prompt was an excuse to go all in on it. I've also been on something of a productive streak, so I thought I'd take advantage of it while the going is good.

It also occurs to me as I write this that I do seem to have quite a lot of Serah/Vanille subtext here (okay fine, it's not subtext, it's more like bold text). It's not that I don't support Serah/Snow as a couple. I do. However, I can't help but wonder what would have happened if Vanille had met Serah first. Oh well. I'll just have to fight off the urge to imagine what might have been. And speaking of that, Lightning is a bit of a pervert in this chapter. The chance to make another jab at her occasionally overly deep feelings about her sister was too good to pass up. Like I said, I'm a bad person.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Awkward Fantasy XIII-Something

Contrary to popular opinion, Lightning didn't actually mind sharing her house with Fang and Vanille that much. Ever since Serah had moved in with Snow, her house had been far too large and far, far too quiet. All of that time alone in the silence had given her too much time to think, and her thoughts had rarely been pleasant. Fang and Vanille, however, had brought the house back to life. As much as she complained about it, Lightning liked coming back to a house bustling with activity even if some of the things her two housemates got up to beggared belief.

But one thing she'd learned to be especially wary of was Vanille's laughter. The red head had at least three different kind of laughter, and each required a different response.

#1 The Giggle. The giggle was usually a sign of impending mischief, especially if Serah was around. Whenever Lightning heard it, she knew that something was about to happen, probably something that would make her want to strangle Vanille. The last time she'd heard it, Vanille had been plotting with Serah to take Lightning out shopping for clothes. Apparently, Lightning was the ultimate dress up doll – complete with glare and functioning gun blade.

#2 The Chuckle. The chuckle was the least threatening kind of laughter. It normally came out when Vanille was genuinely amused by something; for example, when she was watching Lightning and Fang argue about Fang's habit of drinking milk out of the bottle, or when she was watching Lightning and Fang bicker over whose turn it was to take out the garbage, or when she was watching Lightning and Fang fight over who should be in charge of the television remote. Actually, now that Lightning thought about it, Vanille seemed to spend most of her time just chuckling at the two of them.

#3 The Cackle. The cackle was the most dangerous of all of Vanille's laughs. It was a harbinger of doom. When Vanille cackled, it meant that she was either going to do – or was already engaged in – something evil. Lightning didn't say that lightly, but there was no arguing with facts. The last time that Vanille had cackled, she'd been in the middle of explaining what Lightning should do to win Fang's affection. Her explanation had been extremely graphic and had come complete with diagrams, videos, and two life-sized dummies that bore a disturbing resemblance to Lightning and Fang. With Serah sitting there watching the whole debacle, Lightning had been convinced that things couldn't get any worse – and then Serah had cut in to provide her own, equally graphic, suggestions.

So when Lightning got home to find Vanille cackling in front of her laptop in the living room, she was confronted by a horrible choice: turn around and flee, leaving the house to suffer through Vanille's machinations; or confront the red head and hope that a vicious glare would be enough to put a stop to things. Lightning quite like her house, so she was forced to go with the latter.

Lightning struck her most threatening pose and glared. The mug of coffee next to Vanille froze solid. "Vanille," she barked. "What are you cackling about?"

Vanille's smile was bright enough to melt the frozen coffee. "Oh, I was just reading something." Sparkle. Sparkle.
"Really?" Lightning had to force herself to hold her ground. Vanille's smile had morphed into an evil grin, the likes of which Lightning had only ever seen in her worst nightmares. Her hand twitched. Surely, Fang wouldn't mind if she drew her gun blade on Vanille. The huntress would understand. Vanille was evil.

"Yep." Vanille looked at the computer screen and then back at Lightning. To Lightning's horror, Vanille seemed to be sizing her up, her green eyes lingering on Lightning's chest. "It's quite interesting."

"What are you reading?" Lightning fought the urge to cover her chest. Vanille did not just molest her with her eyes. Wait… she shouldn't have asked. Vanille might tell her.

"A story." Vanille cackled and with surprising strength, hauled Lightning onto the couch beside her. "Why don't I read you a bit of it?"

Lightning tried to stand up, but Vanille's grip was like iron. "Uh… sure." She reached for her gun blade, but the weapon was gone. Somehow, Vanille had disarmed her without her noticing.

Vanille took a deep breathing and stared deep into Lightning's eyes. "Fang pushed Lightning against the wall, her mouth hot and needy against the slender, ivory column of the soldier's throat. Lightning moaned, vainly trying to put distance between them, but the pleasure was too much, robbing her of her strength as the huntress went swiftly to work, her agile hands gliding down Lightning's stomach before dipping lower to tease the moist, heated flesh between her –"

"What?" Lightning screeched. It had taken her a few seconds to actually register what Vanille was saying, but when she did, she wasn't sure whether she should yell, blush, or beat Vanille's head in with her laptop. "What did you just say?"

"Well, if you didn't hear me: Fang pushed Lightning against the wall, her mouth hot and needy –"

"Don't say it again!" Lightning snatched the laptop away from Vanille. Barely aware of what she was doing, she skimmed through the story, her eyes steadily widening as she encountered a few… interesting sentences.

"Oh, do you like that bit?" Vanille nodded cheerfully. "I like that bit too. But I think this part is better." She pointed at a passage further down the screen. "And then Lightning moaned, back arched as she gave into the wanton carnality of Fang's molten desire for her sweet, untainted, womanly centre – a centre that Fang would now claim for her own." Vanille tilted her head to one side. "It's a bit wordy, but I think it's pretty poetic."

"It's crazy!" Lightning lurched to her feet, ready to smash the offending laptop, but Vanille was too fast. In the blink of an eye, the red head had the laptop clutched against her chest.

"No breaking my laptop! And it's not crazy – it's fan fiction."

Lightning eyed the laptop. Short of breaking both of Vanille's arms (always an option) there was no way she could get to it. "Fan fiction?"

"Uh huh." Vanille backed away, putting the coffee table between the two of them. "See, we're all famous, and apart from making movies about us, people like to write stories too." She pointed to a logo at the top of the screen. "See, there's a whole website about us. And you and Fang are like the most popular pairing ever. People totally ship FLight." Vanille struck a pose. "Time to get aboard, because the FLight train is about to leave the station. Choo choo!"

Temporarily ignoring Vanille's horrible attempts to mimic a steam engine, Lightning chose to focus...
"Yeah, Fang plus Lightning equals FLight. Some people call it Fangrai, but I have no idea where that comes from." Vanille grinned. "Anyway, you two are the most popular romantic pairing, and there's loads of smut fics about you two as well. Some of them are really good."

"Smut… fics?" Lightning fell back onto the couch. Had she fallen into some kind of bizarre parallel universe? And what did Vanille mean about some of those stories being good?

"Yeah, those are stories where you and Fang totally get it on. The one I showed you earlier was just one of them. Here, take a look at this one."

Like a zombie, Lightning found herself reading through what seemed like a badly written porn story about her and Fang. And much like watching a train wreck unfold, it was impossible to look away from, no matter how much she wanted to. Dimly, she registered the name of the author, IceCreamInTheMiddle, and made a mental note to find and kill them. Painfully.

"Oh no you don't," Fang drawled. "You've made me wait long enough."

Lightning whimpered and tried to pull the torn halves of her shirt back together. "Fang… wait"

The huntress smirked and crossed the gap between them, her emerald eyes aflame with desire and lust. She'd been denied long enough. "Not this time, Lightning."

With several sure, swift movements, Fang stripped the soldier out of her clothes. "So fierce in battle, Lightning, but so quiet in bed. I'll have to change that." Fang pushed the soldier back onto the bed and spread her legs. "I'm going to make you scream."

And Lightning did. Over and over again as the huntress had her wicked, sinful way with her, introducing her innocent, untouched body to a seemingly endless array of dark, forbidden pleasures. Lightning's cries rose as she crested her peak over and over, a ragged wail of surrender and release that built into a symphonic crescendo, an avalanche of unadulterated bliss that washed away any sense of responsibility or guilt as her whole world was reduced to a shining, blazing orb of climactic, Fang-induced pleasure.

"Yes, Fang," Lightning wailed. "Oh yes, do me harder! Uh… oh…. Ghahaajkhfhkjafgj!"

Vanille must have seen the look on Lightning's face – and sensed the aura of sheer, unbridled rage – because she leapt away, laptop help protectively against her. "Don't even think about it! If you break my laptop I'll… I'll tell Fang you were picking on me, and I'll tell Serah too! I'll tell Serah you were totally wailing on me for no reason!"

Lightning got to her feet. Her fists clenched. "And this is all over the internet? This… this crap?"

"It's not crap!" Vanille sighed. "It's really romantic the way you let Fang have her way with you."

She took a few steps back. "And you know, Fang could totally rock your world if you let her."

Lightning twitched. Even if she did want Fang to 'totally rock her world,' she did not want to hear about Fang's sex life from Vanille. No, Lightning would have preferred to be Fang's sex life. Unfortunately, courage in battle did not equate to courage in love, and her current progress with the huntress in a romantic sense could be summed up quite accurately using only a single word: zero. Or two: absolutely zero.

"How can you read that stuff, Vanille?"
"Well, I kind of read everything else in the house and... I love Fang, Lightning, and I think you'd be good together. I'm just looking out for my own interests here since if Fang is happy then I'm happy too."

"But those stories..." Lightning shuddered. Badly written pornography or not, some of those sentences were already stuck in her head.

"And I'll be honest with you, Lightning. You are kind of hot." Vanille giggled. "There's even stories where the two of us get together."

"Oh, good grief."

"And stories where Fang and I get together, and even Serah and I."

"Wouldn't that be weird?"

"Maybe, but then again, there are stories where you and Serah get it on."

"Please, stop talking."

"And then there are the stories where you, me, and Fang get it on. Oh, and there are also stories where you, me, Fang, and Serah get together." She shrugged. "Those are pretty cool."

"You did not just say that." Lightning was going to start sleeping with her door locked and barricaded shut.

"Yes, I did." Vanille cackled and hurried out of the room. "You really should read a few more, you might find some that you like."

Lightning scowled. "As if that would happen."

X X X

Later in the evening, Lightning found herself trawling through fan fiction. Despite what she'd said to Vanille, she couldn't help but be a bit curious. And if she was being completely honest, she was so desperate for help winning Fang over that she'd take whatever advice she could get – even advice that seemed to have been written by a bunch of hormone soaked teenagers.

Lightning watched Fang out of the corner of one eye. Each movement of the huntress's lithe, athletic body was like a raw wound. She wanted to run over there, pin Fang against the wall, and have her – have her hard and fast and without restraint. But she couldn't. Fang wasn't hers. Not yet.

In the end, she couldn't take it anymore. Eyes flashing, she shoved Fang against the wall. The huntress's eyes widened in surprise before she surrendered, parting her legs as Lightning knelt down and –

Lightning gulped. She'd be lying if she said she'd never thought of doing some of those things. But not all of the stories were like that. Some of them were humorous. Some were angst-ridden. And some were so sweet her teeth had begun to ache. The worst offender was an author called ThunderSister.

"I love you, Fang," Lightning whispered, cupping the other woman's cheeks with supreme affection as her eyes shone with unsurpassed love and affection.

"I love you more, Lightning." Fang replied. Her lips curved up into a shy smile as her hands came
to a rest on Lightning's hips.

"Don't be silly. There's no way you could possibly love me more than I love you." Lightning giggled and pressed a chaste kiss to Fang's lips before pulling away. "My love for you is as vast and boundless as the ocean."

Fang laughed softly and reached up to catch Lightning's hands in hers. Gently, she kissed the pink haired woman's knuckles. "That's where you're wrong, strawberry of my heart. For my love for you is like the sky, and the sky is bigger than the ocean. No matter how large the ocean, there will always be a shore, but the sky has no end."

Lightning smiled. "You always did have a way with words, Fang."

"Didn't know you were into this sort of thing."

"Gah!" Lightning would have fallen out of her chair if it weren't for Fang's quick hands.

Easing Lightning back into a sitting position, Fang grabbed the laptop. "I never thought you'd go for the sugary stuff." She skimmed over the story as Lightning tried to will herself invisible. "But I don't know why you think you need to read this stuff when you could easily live it."

"What?" Lightning looked up, heart pounding.

"You're not exactly subtle, Lightning. And even if you were, Serah and Vanille aren't. I think your sister's exact words were 'I demand you rock my sister's world, Fang.' And Vanille said something along the lines of 'Just jump her already, but make sure I'm out of the house first.'"

"Uh…" Lightning was speechless.

"Look, I know it's a bit late, but I haven't had dinner yet. How about we drive down to the convenience store and get something?"

"Uh…"

"Come on." Fang tugged Lightning to her feet. "Let's go."

X X X

Vanille watched Lightning and Fang walk out hand in hand. Success! Smiling, she went back to her computer just in time to see a little alert pop up.

"Cool, another review!" Vanille opened the message and scowled. "Not that stupid ThunderSister again! What does she have against smut?" She began to type furiously. "As if that saccharine crap she writes is any better!"

In another house, Serah banged one hand down on her desk. That stupid IceCreamInTheMiddle was putting out more smut again. As if her sister would ever let Fang take charge! Besides, everyone knew fluff was the way to go!

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.
This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #175: Lightning comes home one day and sees Vanille glued to the computer screen. Why is she giggling? And what's fanfiction?

I kind of had to do this prompt after seeing it. It's the kind of thing that makes me chuckle, and it fits in with my recent run of humour-oriented chapters (I just finished the first draft of the next chapter of Wasteland, so this was a bit of a change in tone).

I hope that I didn't offend anyone with this chapter. I have no problems with smut or fluff (the latter being extremely obvious from my own stories and the former from my flirtations with the more raunchy side of storytelling). Instead, Lightning's reaction is based on the common response most people have when they first come across fan fiction. Namely, how on earth is there so much smut? To someone with Lightning's, ahem, delicate sensibilities, it must have come as quite a shock.

In case it isn't clear from the ending, Vanille is IceCreamInTheMiddle and Serah is ThunderSister. Vanille's name comes from the fact that she is (in the ice cream scheme of things) vanilla, and in a Neapolitan ice cream, vanilla is always in the middle. Serah's name comes from the fact that Farron in Gaelic means Thunder. Hence, ThunderSister is a reference to her last name and the fact that she is Lightning's sister. Yes, these puns are a bit lame, but please indulge me – I'm easily amused. And yes, this means that Vanille writes smut and Serah writes fluff – about people they know.

As for the content of the fan fics that Lightning reads, I went out of my way to go a bit over the top. Vanille's passage (sweet Maker that's a bad unintentional pun) is the best example for this. Sex is many things, but I doubt that terribly many people are led to let loose "a ragged wail of surrender and release that built into a symphonic crescendo, an avalanche of unadulterated bliss that washed away any sense of responsibility or guilt as her whole world was reduced to a shining, blazing orb of climactic, Fang-induced pleasure." Despite being the one who wrote this, I can't help but imagine something quite bizarre; namely, Lightning wailing like a banshee while an avalanche thunders down on her and Fang with an orchestra playing the background and a strobe light flashing in their eyes. Yes, that is quite a disturbing image. Serah's little scene is there as homage to one of the greatest moments in cinematic history: Padme and Anakin's (from Star Wars) bizarre argument as to who loves whom more.

Finally, unless I'm mistaken, this prompt came from someone who read one of my previous chapters. If you have an idea you'd like to see tackled in this story, your best bet is to either include it in your review, message me, or suggest it to the good folks over at Fangrai Forever. Vanille's little dig about Fangrai is a reference to the fact that Fangrai is actually just a variation of FLight (in Japanese, Lightning's name is pronounced Raito).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
The Ultimate Weapon

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Ultimate Weapon

It wasn't everyday that Fang got to spend lunch with Serah Farron, but maybe she should do something to change that. One glance was all it took to know that Serah and Lightning were sisters, but the younger of the two was different in so many ways.

Lightning was quiet for the most part and reserved. Fang knew she felt things so keenly, but Lightning was always careful to hide those emotions away. It had taken a long time for Fang to earn Lightning's trust, and she cherished every small smile or tender touch that Lightning gave her. The scarcity of such things only made them more precious.

But Serah was warm and open. If she was angry with someone, then she had no qualms about making her displeasure known. During Fang's courtship of Lightning, she had found herself on the receiving end of Serah's ire more than once. Even the smallest mistake when it came to handling Lightning's affections was enough to send Serah into a protective fury. The younger Farron might be small, but Fang's jaw was all too familiar with the knuckles of Serah's right hand. It seemed that the sisters shared more than their looks – they had the same knack for cracking jaws too.

However, now that Fang had successfully proven her affections from the older Farron, she and Serah were on much better terms. It was a good thing too. Lightning was overworking herself again, and Fang could use some advice from the only person in the world capable of bossing around Lightning Farron.

It didn't hurt Fang's cause that she'd invited Serah to one of the better cafes in New Bodhum, one renowned for the quality of its cake and coffee. Of course, Vanille had decided to tag along. Any mention of sugar was sure to pique the red head's interest. The thought of getting Fang to pay for it all probably helped too.

"So, let me get this straight." Fang pursed her lips. "All you need to do to get Lightning to give in is pout." This had to be some kind of joke. There was no way her adorably grumpy soldier would give in to a mere pout.

Serah took a long sip of her vanilla milkshake. "Pretty much. Okay, it doesn't work all the time. I mean it didn't work when I dated Snow, but most of the time she caves in less than a minute. It's actually kind of cool." She grinned. "Last week, I even got her to buy me ice cream. I didn't even want ice cream that much, I was only curious to know if it would work."

"You're an evil little thing, aren't you?" Fang reached over to ruffle Serah's hair. The younger woman hated it, especially since the difference in reach made it impossible for her to ruffle Fang's hair in return. "But you're lucky that Lightning is a big softie inside. You won't catch me falling for that sort of thing."

"Oh really?" Vanille plucked the cherry off her strawberry sundae. "Are you sure about that?"

"Of course I am." Fang gave them both her most confident smile. "The Yun are masters of control. There is nothing – and no one – who can get the better of me when it comes to a contest of wills."

Serah and Vanille shared a look. It's meaning was clear: Fang was a chump.
"Fang." Vanille gave her older sister the most pathetic look imaginable as she clasped her hands together and pouted. Her green eyes were wide and innocent, and her lower lip trembled sweetly. "I'm really sorry, but I forgot my wallet today. Do you think you could pay for my lunch?"

"Uh… sure." Fang reached for her wallet to see if she had enough money. Only Serah's giggle gave the game away. The gears in her mind started to turn. "Wait! I saw your wallet earlier. You used it to buy a bottle of cola on the way here."

Vanille gave one of Fang's cheeks a playful squeeze. "Now, who's a big a softie?" She smirked and helped herself to a slice of Fang's cake. The huntress tried to protest only to fall silent as Vanille levelled another pout at her. "See? You're just as bad as Lightning is." She fluttered her eyelashes. "Please, Fang, can you buy me some candy?"

"Gah." Fang covered her eyes with one hand. "Can you stop doing that? And don't ask me to buy you candy. I know you've got a sweet tooth, but you make me sound like some kind of pervert."

"But you are a pervert. Remember last week? I spent an hour looking for the chocolate sauce only to find in your room. I don't even want to know what you and Lightning were doing with it."

Serah waggled her eyebrows. "I can guess. Lightning always has liked chocolate, and chocolate flavoured Fang does sound nice."

"Quiet you." Fang jabbed one finger at Serah. "Or do I have to worry about you sneaking into my and Lightning's bed?"

"As if she'd have to sneak in," Vanille muttered. "Get Lightning drunk enough, and she'd probably invite Serah in herself."

Serah opened her mouth. Then she closed it. Everyone at the table knew that Vanille was right.

"And why are you even asking about Serah's pout?" Vanille went back to devouring her strawberry sundae. The cherry lay on the side of her plate, saved for last like always. After all, the cherry was the best part. "The pout isn't something that an older sister can wield. Only a younger sister can use it."

"Actually, that's not quite true." Serah looked about furtively as she lowered voice to barely more than a whisper. Fang and Vanille had to lean forward to catch her words. "You see, Lightning does have a pout. In fact, I learn how to pout from her."

"No. Freaking. Way." Fang leaned back and shook her head. She knew that Lightning was good at a lot of things, but there was no way she could be good at pouting. Heck, it was hard getting the soldier to smile sometimes, never mind pout. When Lightning wanted something, she didn't pout. No, she either snarled or pointed a gun. "You're making this up."

"Nope. She was our mom's favourite growing up. All she had to do was pout and mom would get her anything. She was really, really good at it. But after our mom died, well, she stopped. She had to take care of me, and there wasn't anyone else left to spoil her. That's when I started pouting. I know it seems silly, but she liked spoiling me. If acting a little childish made things easier for her, then that was okay with me."

Fang's fists clenched. She loved the woman that Lightning had become, she only wished it hadn't hurt so much for Lightning to get that way. If only she and Vanille had awakened from crystal sleep earlier, then maybe she could have met Lightning sooner. They would have fallen in love anyway – Fang was sure of that – and then Lightning wouldn't have felt so alone for so long.
"Of course, that wasn't the only reason I pouted." Serah grinned at Fang. "I did get a lot of stuff I wanted."

"I bet you did. But I still don't believe you. There is no way that Lightning knows how to pull off a pout."

"You don't have to believe me. It's true." Serah's voice deepened and took on a dark, haunted tone. Each word fell from her lips like a peal of thunder. "If you want, you could ask her to show you. But be careful. If she does pout… it's over. You're dead."

"We'll see about that. I might have a teeny, tiny weakness when it comes to Vanille's pout, but I can handle your sister just fine. In fact, I handle her very well. Every night. And sometimes twice before lunch."

Serah ignored the obvious innuendo. She already knew about Lightning and Fang's vigorous sex life. In fact, she was pretty sure their neighbours knew too. "Fine, but it's your funeral."

X X X

Fang hadn't gone straight home after lunch. An expedition had returned with a number of unfamiliar plants, and they wanted Fang's opinion. It was a good thing they asked. Two of the plants were highly toxic, and the third was a rather exotic hallucinogen. Had they eaten them together, the expedition party would have ended up close to death while imagining the Maker had returned in a blaze of divine glory.

As for Vanille and Serah, the pair had gone for a quick spot of shopping after lunch. However, it was already mid-afternoon, so Vanille should already be home. Fang opened the front door and paused. She could hear the vacuum cleaner going. Lightning must be home then – perhaps she was finally taking a day off after weeks without a proper break.

Fang felt a pang of what felt very much like guilt. Lightning should be resting not cleaning. Admittedly, Fang didn't always do as much housework as she should. She didn't particularly like doing it, and Lightning was so good at it. Plus, Lightning had this thing about how it needed to be done. The cleaning had to be done exactly the way she wanted it to otherwise it wasn't good enough.

Yes, Lightning had a cleaning problem, but Fang didn't mind. The soldier never let it get too out of hand, and Fang continued to make a conscious effort to be tidier. Relationships were all about give and take, and when it came to Lightning, there wasn't much that Fang wasn't willing to give. Considering what – or whom – she got to take, Fang thought it was more than fair.

All the cleaning might pose another problem, however. Lightning's busy schedule hadn't left them with very much time to themselves. And they were both such physical people that not being able to indulge in some of the more physical aspects of their relationship was only half a step shy of painful. Fang needed her daily dose of Lightning, but after all the cleaning, Lightning might end up too tired to do anything but cuddle. Oh well, cuddling was nice in its own way, and at least Vanille wouldn't have anything else to complain about.

But as Fang stepped into the living room, she saw something horrible. Lightning wasn't using the vacuum cleaner. Vanille was.

Vanille never vacuumed, not if she could possibly find a way to squirm out of it or foist it off on Fang. Something was very, very wrong, and suddenly Fang was very, very scared. Serah's words echoed in her ears.
"Vanille?" Fang asked.

The younger woman turned to Fang. "Run!" She dropped the vacuum cleaner and clutched at Fang's sari. "Run, Fang. Run far and run fast! Go while you still can. Go before she –"

"Good afternoon, Fang."

Never before had Fang been so afraid of Lightning. Her beloved's voice was soft and saccharine, the very antithesis of the cool, collected soldier that Fang had fallen in love with. It was cute, and it was beyond terrifying. Still, she had to turn around, and so she did. Slowly. Lightning had shrugged off her Guardian Corps uniform. In its place, the pink haired woman wore a baggy t-shirt and a pair of shorts.

"Uh, hi." Fang pushed Vanille behind her. Every one of her instincts screamed danger.

"Vanille told me an interesting story." Lightning lifted a mug of hot chocolate to her lips. Her fingernails looked as though they'd received a fresh manicure. "She said that you don't think I can pout."

"Well, no." Fang tried to shake Vanille off, but her sister had latched onto her like a barnacle. Vanille was trembling – she was terrified.

"She made me give her a manicure…" Despite Fang's keen hearing, she could scarcely hear Vanille's words. "I tried to say no, but then she pouted and… and…"

This was bad.

"We were having lunch," Fang explained. "Since you were busy with work again, and I was going to ask Serah about how to convince you take some time off and…" Dimly, Fang realised she was babbling. "Anyway, you're good a lot of things, but pouting? Remember how long it was before I could get you to smile? Not that I mind. I like you the way you are all growly and –"

Fang tailed off. Lightning had set her mug down on a nearby table and clasped her hands together under her chin. Almost in slow motion, Lightning's lower lip began to quiver, and the crystalline depths of her eyes grew a tad watery. The glimmer of tears wrenched at Fang's heart, and Lightning's voice, when she spoke, was so soft, demure, and disappointed that Fang's will could only crumble like a wooden shack in the path of the world's mightiest volcanic eruption.

"Cover your eyes!" Vanille screamed. "Quick!"

But it was too late.

"I've been so busy at work this week, Fang." Lightning gently tugged Fang's hands away from her face as she forced the huntress to meet her gaze. Step-by-step, Fang backed up until she flopped onto the couch. Lighting followed her, her pouting face only inches away. "And I haven't had any time to clean the house. It would be really, really nice if someone could clean the toilet and the shower, and I'd be so happy. I was hoping that maybe… if you weren't too busy… could you do it?"

"I… I…" Fang grit her teeth. Generations of Yun pride flowed through her. She was the greatest huntress the Yun had ever produced, a warrior without peer, a paragon of mental and physical strength and – "Sure."

Lightning's eyes twinkled and her pout vanished. "Thank you so much. I'll even supervise you, so that you do it right."
Serah prided herself on her loyalty to her friends. So when she'd gotten a panicked call from Fang, she'd steeled herself for the worst and headed over to the house her sister shared with Fang and Vanille. It didn't take her long to realise that she was too late.

The afternoon sun shone upon a tableau straight out of a horror movie: Vanille was mowing the lawn, Fang was clearing out the gutters of the roof, and Lightning was watching it all from a deckchair with a glass of wine in one hand.

Lightning must have used her pout. It was the only explanation. She needed to run. Now.

"Serah." Fang waved frantically. "Run!"

"Save yourself!" Vanille wailed.

Barely able to control her mounting terror, Serah turned.

"Hi." Lightning was right there. And she was pouting. "Do you think that maybe…"

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Lightning took another sip of her wine. It was a lovely day for a glass of good red. And after the week she'd had, she could certainly use it. Perhaps she had been a little mean to the others, but the house did need a bit of a clean.


The younger woman turned back to the hedge she was trimming and sighed. "Thanks."

A small smile crossed Lightning's face. Life was good.

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Some years later…

"Why is Diana cleaning up the living room on her own?" Fang asked.

Averia glanced up from her book. She had her legs draped over one arm of the couch and a glass of cola on the coffee table beside her. "Because she's the one who made a mess with all those blocks."

"I know that, but you always help her clean up. All she has to do is pout at you, and you fold like a paper bag." Fang knew the pattern quite well. She'd lived it with Vanille, and Serah still had Lightning wrapped around her finger.

"Yeah." Averia smirked. "But not this time. This time, I pouted."

Fang froze. Had Lightning taught Averia her deadly pout? Memories from years ago – an afternoon spent cleaning, scrubbing, washing – flooded back. She needed to get out here now. She –

Averia pouted at Fang.

And less than a minute later it was Diana and Fang cleaning up the living room.

Watching the whole thing unfold from the door of the living room, Lightning smiled. She'd taught
Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #190: Serah and Vanille are both masters of the pout to get their way with their older sister, but in a surprising conversation it is revealed that Serah learned everything she knows, body posture, facial expression, and tone of voice, from her very own sister, Claire, long before their parents died and she changed. Now Fang is determined to get Lightning to reveal this so-called super pout. She succeeds, but to devastating effect.

I don't know if love at first sight exists, but when I saw this prompt, I knew what I had to do. Silliness aside, I thought it would be nice to let Lightning get the upper hand against Serah for once, to say nothing of her getting the upper hand on everyone else. What makes things even worse (for Fang and the others) is that Lightning already does so much for them. How can they refuse without seeming like jerks?

The bit at the end (with Averia and Diana) wasn't included in the first draft, but it felt like it would be a nice touch. Averia is largely putty in Diana's hands, so it's good to see her take control for once. And of course, Fang is still a big softie when it comes to her kids, especially when they're pouting.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Love Hurts Sometimes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Love Hurts Sometimes

"Are you sure you want another drink?"

Lebreau wasn't normally one to question the drinking habits of her patrons, especially not on slow afternoon like this one. However, Lightning wasn't one of her regulars. In fact, she couldn't remember the last time the soldier had indulged in more than a couple of drinks. Right now, though, Lightning had already polished off one bottle of whiskey and was making inroads on a second.

"Just give me the bottle." Lightning waved one hand in Lebreau's general direction. It was equal parts troubling and amusing to see the normally graceful woman look so clumsy. And then the elbow of the arm Lightning was using to hold up her chin slipped, and her head thumped down onto the bar. "Ouch! Damn it!"

Lebreau bit back a chuckle. She'd seen a lot worse in her time, but the fact that it was Lightning made it at least fifteen and a half time funnier. But she was starting to get worried. What on earth could have driven the soldier to drink like this?

"You're making quite a mess out of this, aren't you?"

Lightning eyed the whiskey she'd spilt when her head hit the bar. "That's all I can do isn't it? I can't do anything right. I'm a useless, hopeless…"

And then to Lebreau's absolute horror, Lightning began to sniffle as she buried her face in her arms. Okay, this wasn't the least bit funny anymore. This was downright terrifying.

"Calm down." Lebreau knew all about talking things through over alcohol. She was, after all, a bartender. But she never thought she'd be talking things over with Lightning of all people. Still, Lightning was her friend. She'd do whatever she could. "Look, why don't you tell me what's wrong?" She hopped over the bar and settled onto a stool next to Lightning. "It might help to talk things through."

Lightning sniffled some more, and Lebreau gave her a gentle pat on the shoulder. "Do you really think it will help?"

"Uh, sure. Probably."

"And you won't tell anybody? You won't tell Snow or Fang or my sister or… or… Vanille?"

Lightning spat the last name out almost like a curse, but Lebreau couldn't blame her. Vanille did have an ear for gossip, not that Lebreau ever turned her away when there was a juicy story to be shared.

"I promise I won't tell anybody." Lebreau meant it too. "I happen you enjoy living, so you can rest assured that your secrets are safe with me." She reached over and poured herself a glass of whiskey. "So, what's got you feeling down?"

"It's Fang."
Aw, hell. Lebreau was not equipped to deal with this. She – along with most of New Bodhum – had watched the soldier and the huntress dance circles around each other before they both finally realised the completely obvious: yes, they were a couple. And what a couple they were. Lebreau was pretty sure they hadn't left their bedroom for a week after getting together. The two of them practically glowed, they were that happy. And it wasn't just the sex. Not a day went by without either Vanille or Serah regaling her with some sickeningly romantic anecdote about the couple.

If something bad had happened between Fang and Lightning, something so bad it had Lightning drinking herself stupid in a bar, Lebreau wasn't sure it could be fixed by talking. But that wasn't what she said. "So… are you two having problems?"

"No. Fang is perfect. I'm the one having problems."

"Oh." Lebreau tilted her head to one side. "Are you having trouble…. uh… performing?"

"What?" Lightning's cheeks flushed, and she banged one hand down on the bar. "No! Our sex is great. Awesome. Damn it, what am I saying?"

Lebreau coughed politely. "Well, what is the problem then?"

Lightning's head dropped back onto the bar. "I keep messing everything up."

"Are you sure? The last time I saw Fang, she looked pretty happy." Lebreau imagined that anyone getting regular doses of sex with Lightning Farron would look pretty happy. "How about you start from the beginning? What exactly are you messing up?"

"Everything."

"Try to be a little bit more specific."

Lightning grabbed her head. "It's… I want to do special things for her, you know. I want to show her that I care, but nothing ever works out."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing. Not one single thing."

"You have to be exaggerating." Lebreau gulped down her whiskey and poured herself another. She had a feeling that she'd be needing it. "You're good at everything – it's one of the things everyone loves and hates about you."

"I'm not good at love." Lightning sighed. "It's like this…"

X X X

Lightning was not a woman given to extravagant displays of affection, but for Fang she could make an exception. Even now, exactly three months after the start of their relationship, thinking of Fang as her girlfriend still sent a shiver through Lightning. That was why she'd bought a dozen of the freshest, most beautiful roses in all of New Bodhum on her way home.

Lightning knocked on the front door. Fang answered the door looking deliciously rumpled in a baggy t-shirt that left her long, toned legs bare. "Hey. Did you forget your key again?"

"For you." Lightning smiled and handed the bouquet of roses to Fang. "I thought you might like them."
"Well, aren't you the charmer?" Fang grinned and reached over to take the roses. "I – ouch!"

Lightning's eyes widened. Those were supposed to be thornless roses. She'd specifically asked for thornless roses. And now one of them had poked Fang right in the thumb. Even worse, the thorn must have hit something vital because now blood was going everywhere. "Wait –" A spray of blood caught Lightning right in the face.

"Oh, sweet Maker." Fang dropped the roses and grabbed at her thumb. "Damn it, that really hurts. Did you hide a knife in there or something?" She glanced at Lightning. "You've got blood on your face." However, her attempts to wipe the blood off only resulted in getting more of it on Lightning.

Finally – and after a few healing spells – the fountain of blood coming from Fang's thumb came to an end. The roses had been trampled amidst all the scuffling.

"I am so sorry." Lightning's fists clenched.

"Lightning." Fang wrapped her arms around the pink haired woman. "It's fine. It's the thought that counts." She tilted Lightning's chin up and planted a quick kiss on her lips. "Besides, you can always make it up to me later. Say, in the bedroom?"

X X X

Lebreau bit her lip so hard she almost drew blood. She was not going to laugh because if she laughed, Lightning would kill her. But seriously, the mighty former l'Cie almost undone by a bouquet of roses, wasn't that a laugh?

"It's not funny!" Lightning growled.

"Look, it's not that bad. Things like that happen all the time." Lebreau had once received the mother of all paper cuts from a birthday card that Snow and the other members of NORA had given her.

"It gets worse." Lightning knocked back another glass of whiskey. "I got her a box of chocolates the next day as an apology for the roses and…"

X X X

Lightning pushed the box of chocolates across the dinner table. "Here. Sorry about the roses."

"It's fine, and you did make it up to me." Fang grinned. "And it was an accident. Accidents happen." She smirked and reached across the table to rub her thumb along the back of Lightning's hand. "Besides, you're a lot like a rose yourself, but I happen to like your thorns." She opened the box of chocolates and popped one into her mouth. "But I won't say no to some chocolate – gah!"

Fang clutched at her throat as Lightning stared. This could not be happening. But it was. Fang was choking – choking on her apology chocolates.

X X X

"Wow, that is some seriously bad luck." Lebreau shook her head. "I mean… how many people choke on chocolate?"

Lightning laughed bitterly. "She almost died. I almost killed the love of my life with chocolate. I have to be the worst girlfriend ever."
"And that's why you're drinking?"

"There's more."

"Oh boy, lay it on me."

X X X

After the debacle involving the roses and the near-death experience that was apology chocolate, Lightning knew she needed to up the ante. So she had taken a day off to get things ready. When Fang got home, she arrived to find a candle lit, home cooked dinner waiting for her along with a very sexy girlfriend in a very sexy dress. Everything was perfect. Lightning even had champagne.

"I don't know what I did to deserve this, but I'm not complaining." Fang pulled Lightning onto her lap and nuzzled her favourite soldier's throat. "Dinner looks great, so how about you open the champagne and we can get started." She smiled rakishly. "Trust me, you're going to need your strength for later."

Lightning eased the cork out of the bottle – POP!

"Agh!" Fang jerked back and the two of them tumbled to the ground. "My eye!"

No.

NO.

NOOOOOOOOOO.

"Fang!" Lightning cupped Fang's cheeks in her hands as she cast one healing spell after another. Had she really managed to blind the great Oerba Yun Fang with a champagne cork?

X X X

"Okay, you're making that up. There is no way you can be that unlucky."

"I am that unlucky." Lightning's grip on her glass was so tight that it was a miracle it didn't break. "Vanille tells me Fang would have lost the eye if I'd been any slower to heal it. It's fine now but… yeah."

"Wow." Lebreau reached for some more whiskey.

"But that's not it."

"Okay, this I have to hear." Lebreau poured herself and Lightning some more whiskey. "Bring it on."

X X X

Lightning refused to accept defeat, and she had learned well from her mistakes. No more fancy dinners. No more champagne bottles with eye-killing corks included. It was time for something nice and simple: a picnic on the plains outside Oerba. It was her and Fang along with a basket of sandwich and few bottles (plastic only) of juice. Everything would be fine.

"I never thought of you as the picnicking kind." Fang grinned and leaned back to put her head on Lightning's lap. She loved it when Lightning ran her fingers through her hair, and the soldier obliged her immediately.
"I wanted to spend some time with you, that's all." Lightning smiled. "And I know you like it out here."

"New Bodhum is fine, but the plains are better." Fang waved one arm at the land around them. "I wouldn't mind spending my whole life out here with you."

"Kweh."

Fang looked up. "Look, a little chocobo." She ripped off a small piece of her sandwich and tossed it at the bird. "Here you go, kiddo. Enjoy."

"Kweh."

"Kweh."

"Kweh."

Three not so little chocobos appeared followed by another dozen. That made for sixteen chocobos, and all of them were eyeing the picnic basket.

"Oh hell." Fang lurched out of Lightning's lap and grabbed her spear. "I think we're in trouble."

X X X

"You got attacked by chocobos?" Lebreau pounded her fist on the bar. "That's hilarious."

Lightning's glare lacked its usual force due to the alcohol, so she made up for it by punching Lebreau in the arm – hard. "They were evil. I swear they were like l'Cie chocobos or something. One of them dodged my Army of One."

"Please, tell me you've got more."

"Oh, I've got more. Now pass the whiskey."

X X X

"See something you like?"

Lightning smirked inwardly as Fang screeched to a stop at the bathroom door and stared. She'd come home a little early to set all of this up. So instead of Fang coming home to find Lightning sweaty and tired from a long patrol, Fang had come home to find Lightning already ensconced in the warm, relaxing waters of a bath seasoned with scented oils. It didn't hurt that rather than use the lights Lightning had chosen to leave a few lit candles out. The change in lighting did interesting things to the water, hiding some parts of her body in shadow and throwing the warm candlelight upon others.

Fang didn't bother to reply in words. Instead, she started taking off her clothes. Lightning crooked one finger and gave Fang her best 'come hither' look. In her haste to get into the bath, Fang knocked one of the candles into the water. Water, of course, was not particularly flammable. The same, unfortunately, could not be said for some of the scented oils.

"Ah!"

The surface of the water went up like a Christmas tree doused in napalm. In true heroic fashion, Fang grabbed her girlfriend, hustled Lightning over to the shower, and turned the shower to full blast before Lightning could lose so much as an eyebrow.
"I imagine that would kill the mood."

"It did. And then some." Lightning sniffled again. "And that wasn't even the worst one."

"Okay, forget what I said earlier. This isn't funny anymore."

It was their fourth month together, and Lightning was determined to mark the occasion with something special. After how badly everything else had gone, this had to go better. And there was nothing quite like their own, personal fireworks display to smooth things over.

With the remote control in hand, Lightning climbed up onto the roof beside Fang.

"So, why are we here again?" Fang grinned. "Are you going to propose?"

Lightning twitched and nearly fell off the roof. "Just watch."

She pressed the button to start the show.

Nothing.

She pressed the button again.

Still nothing.

She pressed all the buttons.

BOOM.

Her carefully prepared fireworks display turned into New Bodhum's worst ever fireworks-related disaster as every single firework went off at once. Sparks flew every which way, fireworks smashed through windows and set cars alight. And she and Fang had no choice but to dive into a neighbour's swimming pool as a barrage of fireworks turned the roof into something out of a warzone.

To top it all off, a Guardian Corps patrol car pulled in as they got out of the pool. Apparently, they were there to investigate reports of a bomb going off.

"Oh, honey." Lebreau wrapped her arms around Lightning and stroked the other woman's hair. "Fang knows you love her. You don't need to do all these crazy things."

"I know she knows. But I want to do something special for her. She deserves something special for her."

This had gone from amusing to sad very quickly. "There's more?"

"Lots more."

"Ah." Lebreau reached for the whiskey. "Let's have another drink then."
Lightning had secured a rowboat for her and Fang to use on a small lake near New Bodhum. It was the middle of spring and the flowers were in full bloom. Brightly coloured birds skimmed the surface of the water and bobbed up and down in search of fish.

Naturally, they ran aground. And naturally, one of Gran Pulse's fabled monsters had to make an appearance. As they turned their weapons on what had to be the meanest and largest catfish in existence, Fang took a moment to pat Lightning on the back.

"Well, at least we get to kill something."

X X X

Lebreau was speechless.

"It gets worse," Lightning muttered. "We actually got through that one without any injuries."

X X X

Normally, Lightning wouldn't even contemplate dressing up in a maid outfit, but she had noticed Fang ogling her whenever she wore an apron. It wasn't quite the same, but she had a feeling the maid outfit would go down (and hopefully come off) even better than an apron. Balancing Fang's breakfast on a tray, Lightning opened their bedroom door. Nothing like breakfast in bed served with a good helping of sexy.

"Promise me you'll serve breakfast like this everyday."

Lightning blushed and leaned forward to put the tray down on the bedside table. Unfortunately, Fang had chosen that exact moment to try and lean over to help her. The end result: Fang ended up with a lapful of breakfast. The breakfast happened to include coffee.

"Ahhhh!" Fang scrambled out of bed, throwing herself into the en suite bathroom's shower and dousing her lap in cold water.

Lightning spent the next few minutes healing Fang and banging her head on the wall. She was the worst girlfriend ever.

X X X

Lebreau wasn't sure whether she should laugh or cry. She'd never really believed in luck before, but she did now, and Lightning had absolutely none of it.

"And then this morning…" Lightning sighed, knocked back another glass of whiskey, and covered her face with her hands. "I did it again…"

X X X

Lightning couldn't wait to meet Fang at the front door. The huntress had been gone for almost a week on an expedition, and Lightning had a surprise in store for her – a very nice surprise. Fang's familiar knock echoed through the house, and Lightning all but skipped to the door. A quick look through the door confirmed that it was Fang, and Lightning threw the door open, ready and more than willing to pounce (or be pounced upon).

"Surprise!"

Serah and Vanille leapt out from behind a bush with several containers of food in hand.
"We thought you could use breakfast," Vanille said. "And it's been ages since we all ate together."

"But…" Serah made a face. Lightning's robe had fallen open. "We're going to go now. Have fun."

X X X

"Wow." Lebreau shook her head. "Wow."

"See?" Lightning shook one fist. "It's like I'm cursed."

"I don't know about that. You have a girlfriend who loves you, friends and family who think the world of you, and you have a prestigious, highly paid job."

"You make it sound so simple."

"Sometimes it is simple." Fang grinned and slipped onto the stool on the other side of Lightning. "Hey, beautiful."

"How did you know I was here?" Lightning glared at Lebreau. "Did you tell on me?"

"I didn't tell Fang anything. I just told her you were here." Lebreau smirked. Lightning hadn't even noticed her messaging Fang in the middle of all her ranting.

"How long have you been here?" Lightning bit back a curse. All the alcohol had dulled her senses. She should have noticed Fang ages ago.

"A while." Fang pulled the whiskey away from Lightning. "I've been listening in since you started raving about the rowboat. That was actually pretty fun."

"It was supposed to be romantic!"

"Lightning… look, I appreciate all the effort you've gone to, but you need to stop beating yourself up about this. I don't care if things don't always work out right. All those horrible things you talked about? They weren't horrible because I was doing them with you?"

"You mean it?"

"Let's start with the roses. That was hilarious once I knew I wasn't going to bleed to death. Come on, we laughed about it the next day, and we'll laugh about it later. It'll make a great story to tell the kids when we have some. And all those other things were great too. Maybe they weren't great the way you expected them to be, but sometimes life doesn't work out the way you expect. I never thought I'd fall in love with someone from Cocoon, and I bet you never thought you'd fall in love with someone from Gran Pulse."

"I wasn't really planning on falling in love at all."

"But you did, and I couldn't be gladder. Lightning, I don't mind that you make mistakes. Hell, I've made more than a few of my own. Remember when I tried to polish your gun blade for you and ended up jamming it? Or what about the time I tried to use that gravity altering thingy you have and broke all the dishes? Did you love me any less when I messed up?"

"Of course not."

"Well, I don't love you any less when you mess up. If anything, I love you more because you're willing to keep trying." Fang grinned. "So please, please don't think you're making a mess of things because you're not."
"I'm not?" A smile tugged at the edges of Lightning's lips.

"Okay, maybe a little, but we're both still learning how the whole true love thing works. We can learn together." Fang stood and nodded at the door. "Come home with me."

Lightning wobbled to her feet and barely managed to keep from hitting the ground face first. Smiling in truly dashing fashion, Fang scooped Lightning into her arms and turned to face the door.

Whack.

"Ouch!" Lightning rubbed the side of her head. Fang had swung her head right into the edge of the bar. "I think I'm bleeding."

"Damn it." Fang growled. "Looks like I'm not much good at this either."

Lightning stared and then she started to laugh. She laughed so hard that Fang lost her balance and tripped into a nearby table. The huntress banged the back of her head on the table. But despite that, she was laughing too.

"We make quite a pair, don't we?"

Lightning tried to keep from laughing, but the all the whiskey made it impossible. "Yes, we do."

"All right, you two." Lebreau helped both of them back to her feet. "Go home before you kill yourselves or my bar."

"Will do." Fang picked Lightning up again and managed to make it out of the bar without further incident.

"Those idiots." Lebreau smiled fondly. But idiots or not, she was glad to call them her friends. "They better remember this and name one of their kids after me or something." She reached for the whiskey and then froze. "Wait… Lightning never paid. Damn it!"

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #169: Lightning attempts traditionally romantic gestures in order to get Fang's attention, and fails hilariously each time.

Remember, if you have an idea you'd like someone to try, you need to submit it to the Fangrai Forever tumblr. Keep the prompts flowing and the stories will keeping flowing too.

So, this chapter was another light-hearted piece (as so many of these chapters seem to be). I've always thought that as awkward as Lightning might be sometimes, she would do her best to make any romantic relationship she was a part of work. In the case of Fang, this would involve a concerted effort to be more demonstrative about her affection. This being a humorous chapter (and the prompt being what it is), Lightning was bound to run into a few bumps along the road.
Of course, the nice thing about being with someone who you love (and who really loves you back) is that you don't have to deal with the bumps alone. Plus, there's nothing quite like shared difficulty to bring people together since Fang (in this chapter) isn't the smoothest person either.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Dragon Slayer

Fang gazed out over the plains. A sea of fire greeted her. Waves of flame and ash rippled across the scorched earth in time with the wind. A cloud of black smoke spanned the horizon. Her jaw tightened. No spell in the world could create this much fire. There was only one thing that could: a dragon, and a very big one at that.

It had to be stopped. If this dragon was left unchallenged, it would burn everything from the plains right through to the base of the western mountains. Even the rivers and lakes would boil, and the towns and cities in its path would be left as nothing more than burnt out ruins. And anything foolish enough to stand in its path would die. Still, someone needed to fight it.

Fang was that someone.

She reached for the belt slung about the waist of her armour and tugged loose a small crystal. The gem shone a deep blue before a pulse of her magic transformed it into an ornate spyglass. She grinned. Magic was such a handy thing to have. It beat lugging around all of her equipment the old fashioned way.

Carefully, she brought the spyglass up to her eye. The seals carved onto the instrument flared to life, and she felt a gentle tug on her magic. The intricately carved lenses already magnified everything several times over, but the seals added that little bit extra she needed in her line of work. A host of symbols danced across the image she saw through the spyglass. She was looking for two things: magic and heat.

“Come on,” she whispered. “Where are you?”

The symbols on the spyglass urged her to look west where the concentration of heat and magic was greatest. Finally, she found what she was looking for. Increasing the amount of magic she fed into the spyglass, she magnified the image of the dragon. Its scales were a deep, bloody red, and it was enormous, at least three hundred feet long. She couldn’t even remember the last time she’d seen a dragon that big. The largest she’d ever killed was tiny in comparison, a mere one hundred and fifty feet long.

But she’d hunted alone then – except for Bahamut – but not anymore.

Fang stopped the flow of magic into the spyglass and crushed it in her hand. The instrument collapsed into its crystal form, and she tucked it back into place on her belt. Then she broke into a run, the interlocking plates of her armour clanking as she leapt over the edge of the cliff.

“Bahamut!”

The wind whistled past her before something huge flashed through the air at the edges of her vision. A moment later and she wasn’t falling anymore, she was flying. Bahamut had caught her. The black dragon was one of the largest that had ever been raised with humans. She’d brought him up herself, watching over his egg until he hatched and then feeding him by hand until he was strong enough to fly and bring down his own prey. She’d even slept next to him, curled up against the hard warmth of his scales.
Now, however, Bahamut was a full hundred feet of winged, fiery death. He didn’t need anyone to look after him, and he could have swallowed her whole. But he wouldn’t. She was his family. Wherever she went, he went. Whatever she did, he did.

“Come on, Bahamut!” Fang pressed herself against her dragon and activated the spells in her boots and gauntlets. Given how fast a dragon could fly, the only sure way to keep from falling off was to use magic to stick on. “Pour on the speed. We need to catch that thing.”

With a low growl, Bahamut beat his wings against the air and surged forward. The race was on. Little by little, they closed the gap, and Fang urged Bahamut higher. Dragons were the world’s greatest killing machines. To go with their enormous strength, size, and fire, they had exceptional sight, smell, hearing, and taste. They could spot prey from miles away and could see as well at night as they could during the day.

The only safe place – as safe as any place could be against a dragon – was the small blind spot located just behind and above a dragon’s head. It wasn’t much, but it was something. And the bigger a dragon got, the less likely it was to check that blind spot. Why should they? Large dragons didn’t have predators. Everything else was prey.

They settled into position hundreds of feet above the massive, red dragon. It was time to get ready. Fang unclipped another crystal from her belt. A brief pulse of magic was enough to transform it into a helmet. A dragon’s scales were incredibly hard, but the spells on the helmet’s visor would help her find a few weak points. Then she palmed one more crystal and jumped off Bahamut.

The roar of the wind filled Fang’s ears as she plummeted toward the red dragon. Symbols flashed through her visor, a hundred different things to keep track of. She adjusted for all of them instinctively and angled herself toward the base of the dragon’s skull. Her magic flared again, and she picked up speed until the world below her was reduced to nothing more than the crimson blur of her target’s scales.

At the last possible moment, Fang took another crystal from her belt and crushed it in her hand. A six feet long spear appeared in its place. The weapon gleamed almost black in the light cast by the inferno below. It had cost her a fortune to buy all of the exotic materials needed to forge it, and it had taken Vanille almost a month of hard work and research to come up with the proper spells. But the spear could pierce through almost anything, and more importantly it conducted and amplified magic.

Fang hit the dragon spear first and drove the weapon down into the slightly thinner scales where its neck met the base of its head.

SCREECH.

Sparks flew and the force of the impact almost broke both of Fang’s arms despite the protective spells on her armour. But even with all of her weight and the weight of her fall behind it, the spear only sank in about four feet. Her lips curled. It wasn’t perfect, but it would probably do.

And then the wind had her. Fang lost her grip on the spear and tumbled back, end over end. Desperately, she clawed at the dragon’s scales and activated the spells on her gauntlets and boots. She jerked to a stop. The dragon’s scales were almost scorching hot beneath her, and the beast let loose a roar of pain and fury. Its head whipped back, and she found herself staring into eyes the colour of molten gold. Its eyes narrowed, and then its mouth opened. Her whole world caught fire.

The dragon’s fire slammed into her with enough force to dent the breastplate of her armour. Warnings flashed all over her visor, and she felt little jolts of electricity run up and down her spine.
as protective spell after protective spell failed in the face of the dragon’s fury. The finest Yun
smiths had forged her armour, and it had been enchanted by arguably the greatest Dia mage in
centuries. But not even her clan’s skill and Vanille’s magic could stand up to dragon fire. Nothing
could, not for long.

“No choice then.” Fang stopped the flow of magic to her gauntlets and boots. “I really hope this
works.”

Without her magic to stick her onto the dragon, she tumbled backward through the air, away from
the dragon’s fire. The world spun crazily, and she summoned another one of her spears and drove it
down into the scales above the dragon’s spine. Her shoulder almost popped out of its socket as she
screeched to a halt. Without the added force of her fall behind her, she could only dig the spear
about a foot into the dragon’s scales. She grit her teeth and dragged herself down the shaft of the
spear. A burst of magic had her sticking to the dragon again, and she jammed her weight down
onto the spear again and again.

One and a half feet.

Two feet.

Two and half feet.

Three feet.

That would have to be enough because the dragon was rounding on her again. There was no fire
this time. It intended to swallow her whole. It never got the chance. A dark shape raced down
through the clouds of smoke. Bahamut rammed into the bigger dragon’s side, and the two dragons
pin-wheeled through the sky. It was all Fang could do to hold on as Bahamut bit and clawed at the
bigger dragon.

The two dragons split the sky with their cries and the shriek of claws on scales. Then suddenly, the
world began to spin as the two dragons tangled together. Fang held onto the spear in the dragon’s
back for dear life. Even with the spells on her gauntlets and boots, another big jolt would probably
be enough to throw her off.

And then the world was right side up again as the red dragon knocked Bahamut away. Fang
chanced a quick glance over the dragon’s side and breathed a sigh of relief. Bahamut was bleeding
in a few places, but he hadn’t taken any serious wounds. But the red dragon wasn’t done yet.
Deciding that Bahamut was the bigger threat, it raced after the smaller dragon.

“Damn it.” Fang clenched her jaw. Bahamut was tough, but he didn’t stand a chance against the
bigger dragon in a fair fight. This needed to end. She moved across the dragon’s back, rhythmically
engaging and disengaging the magic in her boots to let her run down its spine. She drove in a third
spear and then a fourth and a fifth before the massive dragon beneath her finally caught up to
Bahamut.

“Bahamut!”

Fang snarled as the bigger dragon raked its claws across Bahamut’s chest. The blow sheared right
through the metal armour around Bahamut’s chest, and the black dragon bellowed in pain and fury.
But he was lucky. The armour had borne the brunt of the attack. Without it, the battle might have
ended right there.

But the red dragon was far from done. It drew its head back, and Fang heard a sound like a
hurricane as it drew in a deep, deep breath. The scales beneath her feet burned almost molten hot before the dragon let loose a blast of flame big enough to swallow a city. The fire wouldn’t kill Bahamut – no fire could ever kill a dragon – but the sheer power of the blast hurled him back. He was a kite caught in a storm, and with him out of the way the red dragon turned its attention back to Fang.

The dragon turned to look at her, and she felt the scales beneath her grow hot again. Her armour wouldn’t hold up against another blast of its fire. There was only one choice then. She grabbed another crystal from her belt and tossed it at the dragon’s face. There was a flash – a blinding spell – and she leapt off its back. Falling from this height would probably kill her, but staying on the dragon’s back would definitely kill her.

She dropped like a rock, and she poured all of the magic she could spare into hastening her fall. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Bahamut recover and give chase. But he’d never reach her in time. Above her the red dragon folded its wings and opened its mouth. Nothing was faster than a dragon in full flight.

Well, except for one thing.

There was no mistaking the white-feathered wings in the black, smoke-strewn sky above the dragon. Her backup had arrived. Like a bolt of lightning streaking down from the sky, those white wings surged past the dragon, sweeping, cutting, slicing right through the air until Fang felt a strong pair of arms wrap around her middle.

“Hold on.” The voice was soft, husky, and wonderfully familiar. “This is going to be close.”

They were only a few hundred feet above the ground now – close enough to see the leaves burning on the smouldering treetops below. And then they were pulling up. Fang’s stomach did somersaults as the pull of gravity seemed to double, triple, and then more. Pink hair filled Fang’s vision along with eyes the colour of the summer sky. White wings beat the air, and they soared up with impossible speed.

Below them, the red dragon crashed into the blazing forest, too big to pull up in time. It carved a swathe of absolute devastation as it through smashed trees, crushed rocks, and brought down a hill. The dragon came to a rest hidden in a thick, grey cloud of smoke and ash.

“You really took your time.” Fang grinned and reached up to run her fingers along her saviour’s cheek. “I almost got eaten there.”

“But you weren’t.” Regal features gave way to a scowl. “I don’t suppose it’s dead, is it?”

Fang shifted to take a closer look at the cloud of debris through her visor. “When have we ever been that lucky, Lightning? I’m still getting a lot of magic and heat. It might be hurt, but it’s more angry than anything else.”

“Perfect.” Lightning tightened her hold on Fang. “Hold on, I’m taking us higher.”

Fang nodded. “By all means.”

As they rose up over the ruined forest, Fang’s mind drifted from the thrill of the hunt to a thrill of an altogether different kind. The people of Gran Pulse had never had an easy relationship with the winged denizens of Cocoon, the crystal moon that hung over their world. Centuries of intermittent conflict had bred nothing but resentment and fear.

Then Fang had found Lightning. The pink haired woman had fallen defending a small village along
the outskirts of Yun territory from a dragon. She’d killed the beast, but the battle had left her with a pair of broken wings. Fang had stumbled across her a few days after that battle, huddled in a cave near the village.

But despite the agony she must have been in, Lightning had met Fang’s intrusion without a shred of fear. Instead, there had been raw defiance and a fierce, unwavering pride. Fang had never intended to harm Lightning. Whatever the relationship between the Yun and Cocoon, she had saved a village of their clansmen, and the Yun always repaid their debts. But staring into the winged woman’s eyes, she’d seen something that intrigued her. Something that refused to let her simply walk away.

Fang had gone back to the village for supplies and after no small amount of arguing and cajoling, she had finally convinced Lightning to go with her for treatment. The other woman had been understandably reluctant, but Fang had given her word. And Fang wasn’t just some random Yun. She was the daughter of their chieftain, and her word was law.

It had taken less than a month for Lightning’s wings to heal, but it was another two months before she left. Somehow, over the course of that first month, she and Fang had forged a strange, but seemingly unshakable bond. Some of the Yun were certain that it was nothing more than vile sorcery, and Fang was sure that many of Lightning’s people felt the same way, but it felt right to them.

Lightning had gone back to Cocoon, but she still visited regularly. Whenever Fang had a particularly dangerous dragon to hunt, she always made sure to invite Lightning along. And if Lightning sometimes stayed for a few days afterward, she certainly wasn’t going to complain.

“Sometimes, I think you enjoy flying more than me.” Lightning continued to ascend.

“You might be used to flying, but I’m not.” Fang glanced back down. “Wait… Lightning look out!”

There was a surge heat from the cloud of smoke below and a blast of flame ripped through the air toward them. But Lightning was already moving. She banked left and then jerked hard to the right as a second blast raced upward.

“It’s still alive.”

“I can see that.” Fang winced. That last blast had gotten a little too close for comfort. “Bahamut!”

The black dragon flew toward them. Fang jumped out of Lightning’s arms and landed on her dragon’s back.

“We’ll go distract it. Get your spell ready.”

Lightning nodded, turned, and then leaned back to press a quick kiss to Fang’s lips. “Be careful and try not to fall again. I won’t be there to catch you this time.”

“I’ll be fine. And falling is kind of fun too.”

“You Yun and your attempts to fly. Good luck.”

Fang watched Lightning vanish upward into the clouds of smoke above them. The other woman would need a few minutes to set up her spell. It was up to her and Bahamut to get Lightning those few minutes. Below them, the red dragon took to the air once more.
“Come on, Bahamut.” Fang patted her dragon’s back. “I know you’ve got a score to settle. Let’s go!”

Dragons burned all the time. It wasn’t just their fire. It was their soul. In battle, they fought with unmatched rage and ferocity. That was why a smaller dragon rarely beat a larger one. But with Fang whispering in his ear, Bahamut fought with more than fury. He fought with guile.

Instead of trying to fight the larger dragon head-on, Fang urged Bahamut to aim for his wings and his flanks. Neither area would result in a quick kill, but the wounds would add up eventually. Again and again, Bahamut darted in to land one or two quick blows before he wheeled away. With each pass, the red dragon grew more and more frustrated. The magic gathering in the sky above them didn’t matter. The only thing that mattered was ripping Fang and Bahamut limb from limb.

As the bigger dragon chased after them again, Fang glanced up. The people of Gran Pulse had learned to combined technology and magic. But the people of Cocoon had taken a different route. Naturally gifted in magic, they had turned spell casting into an art form. A deadly art form.

Lightning floated in the middle of the smoky skies, surrounded by several colossal, glowing seals of power. Her voice moved swiftly through verse after verse of her spell as her hands moved back forth to further shape her magic in conjunction with her words. She finished the last words of her spell and raised one hand.

“Fang!” she screamed. “Now!”

“Dive!” Fang shouted. “Bahamut, dive now!”

The black dragon folded his wings and dove to put distance between them and the larger dragon. The instant, they were clear, Lightning lowered her hand and pointed it squarely at the red dragon. The effect was instantaneous. There was a flash of light so bright it seemed the sky was bleached pure white before all the clouds for a dozen miles shattered. A single, tremendous bolt of lightning cracked the heavens and hammered down on the red dragon.

On its own, even Lightning’s spell wouldn’t have been enough. Dragons were naturally resistant to most forms of magic. But Lightning’s spell wasn’t on its own. Fang had driven five spears – spears that amplified and conducted magic – through the dragon’s scales into vulnerable points along its back. Lightning’s magic found the spears and crackled through them into the dragon’s spine. Enough electricity to melt a mountain blasted into the dragon’s body.

The dragon roared, but the roar soon turned into a shriek. Its body convulsed. Its wings flailed. And then it was falling, falling, falling to break upon a hillside far below. Blood leaked from its mouth and smoke rose from its body. Fang gazed at it through her visor. The readings were unmistakable. It was dead.

Fang patted Bahamut on the back and the pair went up to meet Lightning as she drifted down toward them.

“That was a close one. But it worked. And you also left quite a bit to salvage.” A dragon’s scales, teeth, and claws were all exceedingly useful – and valuable.

“Enough lightning will kill almost anything.” Lightning smiled. “And it did almost eat you.”

“Remind me never to get you angry. All right, Bahamut. Take us down. I want to get a closer look.”

Bahamut glided back toward the ground. Lightning folded her wings and rode the rest of the way
on his back behind Fang, her arms wrapped around the taller woman.

Another day.

Another hunt.

Another victory.

Together.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #180: Alt universe, FLight as dragon hunters.

I’ve wanted to do something with this prompt for a while now, but I could never quite seem to latch onto an idea that I liked. However, I’m currently working on some original stuff that has dragons in it, and it sort of got the creative gears turning again, which is where this chapter comes from.

I’ve always liked dragons. They’re big, scary, fly, and breathe fire. What’s not to like? So I wanted to depict the hunting of a dragon as a very dangerous exercise requiring skill, luck, and a lot of hard work. It also helps if you have your own, albeit smaller, dragon to give you a hand. I know I hinted at a lot of backstory here, but for the moment this is a one shot. Much like the supernatural prompt in one of the earlier chapters, I may revisit this later when I’ve got fewer things to work on.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Destiny Is A Plush Toy

Over the course of her life, Fang had experienced several epiphanies. Some of these had been of the joyful variety: understanding that Vanille really was her sister, by heart if not by blood; admitting that she was in love with Lightning Farron, grumpy scowling and all; and realising that she was the mother of not one, but two, amazing children. However, not all of her epiphanies were that nice. Some were actually quite depressing, like accepting that she was forever doomed to be ordered around by bossy little sisters.

"Put your backs into it!" Serah waved one fist at the unfortunate group trudging out of the attic with boxes. "Come on, I could do better than that!"

Fang scowled. "Then why aren't you?"

Vanille slung one arm over Serah's shoulder and grinned. "Because you're doing it. You guys are the muscle, and we're the brains."

The muscle in question – Hope, Snow, Fang, and Lightning – all stopped and glared. Naturally, Vanille and Serah were completely unaffected. Years of bossing around their older sisters, friends, and significant others through a combination of pouting, fake crying, and sheer stubbornness had left them utterly confident of their victory. And they were right to be confident. After a few more moments of glaring, the others went back to emptying the attic – but not without a bit of grumbling.

"What did you put in these boxes?" Snow muttered. "Rocks?"

Serah waved off his concerns. "Ask Lightning. She's the one who packed them."

"These are some of the things we were able to salvage from our house on Cocoon." Lightning tried to shift the box in her arms into a more comfortable position. "But I don't remember them being this heavy."

"Because you weren't the one carrying them," Fang said. Years ago, the two of them had gone back into the ruins of Cocoon to salvage what they could. A quick stop at Lightning and Serah's house had led to an... interesting afternoon. Afterward, Lightning had asked Fang to do her a teensy, tiny, little favour, and Fang, being the utterly besotted fool that she was, had agreed without as second thought. She'd found herself lugging box after box out of the house and onto the ship they'd brought. And now she was doing it again. Oh, the things she did for love.

"That's right." Lightning rolled her eyes. "Don't frown like that, Fang. You weren't complaining at the time."

"That's because of what happened beforehand." Fang smirked. "So unless you're about to get naked sometime soon, you can look forward to me frowning all afternoon, and you wouldn't want that, would you?"

Lightning's response was to glare, which wiped the frown right off Fang's face. There was nothing to ease the suffering of lugging heavy boxes around like sharing that suffering with a loved one.
They carried the boxes down to the living room and were promptly mobbed by the source of the whole ordeal: the three girls. Averia, Diana, and Claire had overheard Lightning and Serah talking about the boxes in the attic. They had asked – more like pleaded – for the chance to take a look at it all since none of them had ever been to Cocoon. After a bit of arguing amongst the adults, Serah had declared that it was about time they went through everything.

"Cool." Diana poked at the boxes. "There's so much stuff here. Maybe there's even treasure."

"There better be." Hope groaned and slumped onto the couch. "I think I damaged my spine."

"Poor baby." Vanille laughed and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. "You did a great job getting that heavy box down."

Fang could only shake her head as Hope smiled back at Vanille. That poor, lovesick fool. Had she been that bad? Probably.

"I'm feeling better now." Hope tried to pull Vanille into his lap, but she danced out of reach.

"Good. Then go back up there. I think there are still a few more boxes."

The look on Hope's face drew a snicker from both Lightning and Snow. As Hope walked back toward the attic, Snow even made a few whipping motions at his back. Vanille glared, and Serah jabbed her husband in the ribs with one finger.

"What?"

"Don't be mean."

Lightning didn't say a word although the twinkle in her eyes said plenty, as did the whipping motions she made at Snow. Fang fought the urge to make a snide remark. Lightning was hardly one to talk.

"So, how about we go through all of these?" Fang asked once Hope had returned with the last box. "You girls can look at the…"

She trailed off as the three girls dove at one of the boxes, and then dove away from it almost as quickly.

"Spider!" Diana screamed, climbing up Averia and slinging her arms around her sister's neck. "Make it go away! Shoot it!"

The spider in question was a tiny, harmless, little thing. Fang took one look at it, scooped it up, and then tipped it out one of the windows. Diana gave a sigh of relief and released the inadvertent chokehold she'd locked into place around Averia's neck. The older girl sagged to the ground, face slowly returning to its normal colour after going an alarming shade of purple.

"Want a little help there?" Fang asked.

"I'm fine." Averia wheezed and dragged herself toward the box. "Just give me a second."

Soon enough, Averia was back on her feet, and the three girls returned to trawling through the box. It was actually rather amusing to watch. Diana tore through the box like a miniature tornado. She was an absolute pack rat, eagerly sifting through the box in search of anything that looked interesting or collectible. Her side of the bedroom she shared with Averia was a testament to how much she liked to collect things.
In contrast, Averia sorted through the box in a much more orderly fashion. She split everything up into two piles: one pile for things that needed to be kept and another for things that should be thrown away. Old clothes that were too moth-eaten to salvage were put to one side along with mouldy books and tattered newspapers. Claire paid close attention to both of the other girls, gently easing things out of Diana's hands when the younger girl wanted to keep something that was clearly not in good enough condition to keep and taking a few things back from the pile to throw away when Averia got overzealous.

"Averia takes after you, Lightning," Serah murmured, eyes sparkling with mirth. "Remember those regular clean ups you made us do?"

"Clean ups?" Diana emerged from the box – she'd been practically swimming in it. "What do you mean?"

"You know how your mom can be a bit of a neat freak?" Lightning scowled, but both children nodded. Averia and Diana had experienced Hurricane Lightning's cleaning jags several times. So far, however, they had been spared the worst of it. But Fang had not. For the sake of her love and her marriage, Fang had learned exactly how to clean everything in the house to Lightning's exacting standards. "Back when we were younger, she used to go on these big cleaning campaigns. She made me help her too – and not just with my room. I had to help clean the whole house."

Diana and Averia looked at Lightning in slowly dawning horror. If their mom could do that to their beloved Aunt Serah, then she could easily do it to them. Lightning simply studied her nails, looked up, and nodded. Her meaning was clear. One day, the children would be roped into cleaning the whole house, just like their Aunt Serah.

"No!" Diana latched onto Averia. "Save me from mom!"

Averia sighed. "We're both doomed. Accept it." Claire patted her on the back. "Come on, let's go back to the boxes."

As the girls continued to go through the boxes, the adults started in on a few of their own. Without doubt, the girls would want to look at everything, but they could definitely get rid of a few things before then. It would also be quicker this way, and Fang could tell by the faint scowl Lightning wore that the other woman dislike the sight of the old, dusty boxes in the middle of their living room.

Fang picked out her own box, and it wasn't long before she was going through it with great care and interest. It held clothes – teenage clothes that she would bet money had belonged to a certain Lightning Farron. Of particular interest was the high school uniform she found.

"What are you – oh!" Lightning's cheeks flushed, and she tried to snatch the uniform out of Fang's hands. But Fang was ready, and she darted out of reach.

"See something of yours?" Fang kept her distance, holding the uniform up between them with a speculative expression. "I wish I could have seen you in this."

Serah giggled. "You would have liked that. All the boys and some of the girls definitely did. Lightning used to get people coming up to her all the time, but she turned all of them down."

"Really?" Fang waggled her eyebrows. "How about you model it for me sometime." She could have her very own schoolgirl Lightning. Wasn't that a pleasant thought? And a sexy one…

That prompted a muffled chuckle from Snow and Hope, who quailed under the vicious glare that
Lightning sent them. Diana simply looked puzzled.

"But, mommy," she said, all innocence and sweetness. "Those won't fit her. She's bigger now. It'll be way too tight." She gestured vaguely at Lightning's body. "See?"

"I think that's the point," Averia muttered with a horrified expression.

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind."

Fang ignored her kids – they'd understand one day, preferably many, many years from now – and raked her gaze over Lightning. The pink haired woman stiffened, eyes growing wide as Fang perused her figure with frank admiration. Smirking, Fang put the uniform in the pile of things to keep. Lightning would be modelling it, and if she didn't enjoy wearing it, then Fang would be only too happy to take it off her. Slowly.

There were other discoveries. Lightning teased Serah while waving around some old snowflake print pyjamas the younger Farron had worn as a child. Serah returned the favour later by proudly displaying a picture of a young Lightning wrestling another child in the middle of a big puddle. The girls had looked at the picture in awe. They couldn't even imagine Lightning doing something as childish as fighting another kid in a puddle.

However, the biggest surprise came when Hope pulled something soft and fluffy out of one of the boxes. It was a plush gorgonopsid. And although it was faded and weathered, there was something familiar about it…

"Gary!" Diana leapt over her sister and grabbed the plush toy. "You had a Gary doll, mom?" She paused, frowning faintly. "Wait… he's the wrong colour." And sure enough, the plush gorgonopsid had the more sombre colours of a real gorgonopsid as opposed to the bright orange of Diana's favourite cartoon character. Still, the resemblance was uncanny. Other than the colour, the toy looked exactly like Gary.

"No way…" Serah gasped. "You found Mr Sharp Tooth."

"Mr Sharp Tooth?" Vanille snickered. "Nice name, Serah. Or should we call you Ms Pink Hair?"

Serah gave Vanille a playful punch on the arm. "Don't be dumb. Mr Sharp Tooth wasn't my toy, although I wanted him so much. He was Lightning's, and he was pretty much the only thing she never shared with me. I can't remember it that well, but she carried him everywhere with her. He was like her best friend for years."

Silence.

Dead silence.

And then every eye in the room looked Lightning's way.

"You had a toy?" Diana's eyes were wide with disbelief, an expression mirrored on the faces of Averia and Claire. She handed the plush toy to Lightning. "He's your then, mom. Here."

Lightning looked at the others and then looked back at the toy. Slowly, she lifted it into her arms. Then it was like the others weren't even there. With one of the gentlest looks that Fang had ever seen, Lightning ran her fingers through the toy's fur and rubbed it against her cheek. Her eyes softened.
"I don't even remember packing him away." Lightning closed her eyes and breathed in the dusty but familiar smell of the old toy. "I thought I'd lost him."

"Well, he found his way back to you." Fang smiled, but something tugged at the edges of her mind. There was something familiar about that toy…

"You know, Fang, he looks kind of like your toy," Vanille said. "What was his name again?"

"Gorgy." Fang flushed as the others all directed incredulous looks her way. The Oerba Yun Fang had named a plush toy 'Gorgy'? "Oh, come on. It's not that weird. I was a kid. Even Lightning had one."

"Yeah, but we all know that Lightning wasn't always a super soldier." Snow shrugged. "I kind of figured you were a little bad ass when you were a kid." He winced. "I mean I always figured you were tough as a kid."

"I was pretty tough, but even tough kids need toys." Fang sighed. "The matron made Gorgy for me when I was little. She said even a Yun should have a toy, but since I was a Yun I should have something a little bit fiercer than the other kids. But Gorgy wasn't fierce at all. He was nice and soft and…" And he'd been the only friend she'd had until Vanille turned up. "You know, the matron even stitched my name on his stomach, so all the other kids would know he was mine."

Lightning's brow furrowed, and she turned Mr Sharp Tooth over. Brushing back the fur on his stomach, she gasped. "Look at this."

"Wow." Fang's eyes widened. There, stitched in Pulsian on Mr Sharp Tooth's stomach, was her name. "That's… that's Gorgy."

"Mr Sharp Tooth!" Lightning snapped. "I mean…"

Vanille chuckled. "Talk about destiny. You two even had the same favourite toy. But how did you even get that, Lightning? Unless I'm remembering wrong, Fang, you left Gorgy in Oerba."

"Every now and then, people went down to Gran Pulse." Lightning frowned. "My parents bought this in a shop. Someone must have brought it back. I… it was my favourite toy. I used to keep it in my room until… until my parents passed away. I didn't have any time for toys after that."

"It's okay, mom." Averia hugged Lightning. "You can keep it now."

Lightning smiled, but the look in her eyes was anything but happy, and Fang hated seeing Lightning sad. With a smirk on her lips, she grabbed the toy. "Oh no. I had Gorgy first. He's mine!"

Lightning growled in outrage before she realised what Fang was doing. Grinning, she shook her head. "His name is Mr Sharp Tooth. Give him back."

Fang clutched the toy to her chest. "Make me."

Lightning tackled Fang to the ground, and the pair rolled across the floor, wrestling for control of the plush toy. Somewhere in the middle, the toy slipped loose, and they ended up wrestling with each other. The others laughed right up until the point the wrestling took a turn for something a little less humorous and decidedly less child-friendly.

"Guys." Snow poked them with his foot. "There are children present."

They came up for air, cheeks flushed.
"Uh…"

Averia sighed and shook her head at Lightning. "Mom, I expect this from mommy, but you?"

"I think it's romantic." Claire laughed. "They are married."

Diana couldn't care less about what they'd been up to – kissing people was weird. Instead, she picked up Mr Sharp Tooth. "Can I have him? He and Mr Snaggles would be great friends."

Lightning and Fang shared a look. "Sure, but what are you going to call him?"

"Mr Sharp Tooth," Lightning suggested.

"Gorgy," Fang countered.

Diana pursed her lips, deep in thought. This was an important decision. A toy's name was a big, big deal. "His name will be… Mr Gorgy Sharp Tooth."

Fang laughed and pulled Lightning up onto her feet and into her arms. "That works, I guess. But that still doesn't explain why he looks so much like Gary."

Diana rubbed her chin. "Maybe Gary can travel through time, and he told the matron to make you a toy that looked like him so that one day I could have it. Yeah, that's definitely it."

Averia ruffled Diana's hair. "Gary can't travel through time."

"Maybe not…" Serah paused. "But that does remind me of something." She rifled through one of the boxes and came up with a notebook. "Here, it is. Our parents were quite friendly with our neighbours when we were growing up. They even used to leave us with them when they wanted a night out." She flipped through the pages. "Aha!" She looked at Diana. "Can you give me one of your Gary books?"

The little girl pulled out a Gary the Gorgonopsid picture book from seemingly nowhere. "Here, Aunt Serah."

Serah looked at the name on the front. "I was right! Remember that little boy who used to live next door?" Lightning shrugged. "The one who had the biggest crush on you? He used to draw a lot – he wanted to be an artist one day. He's the man who created Gary the Gorgonopsid!"

Diana jumped onto Lightning. "You know the guy who made Gary?" Despite the fact that Diana personally knew several people who'd helped saved the world, this was a much, much bigger deal. "Apparently."

"It makes sense," Serah said. "He had that crush on you, and you carried Mr Gorgy Sharp Tooth everywhere. It must have inspired him to make Gary."

"You're the coolest mom ever!" Diana hugged Lightning. "You helped him make Gary!"

"Hey, what about me?"

Diana hugged Fang too. "You're awesome too. You have the original Gary!" She looked at Mr Gorgy Sharp Tooth in awe. "He's the only one in the whole, wide world! He's the original, super, duper special Gary! Wow!"

Things calmed down a bit after that although the box sorting would probably take another day to
finish. The others stayed over for dinner, and then it was bedtime. But late at night, Averia found herself back in the living room with Diana.

"What are we doing down here?" Averia asked.

Diana had Mr Gorgy Sharp Tooth and Mr Snaggles tucked under one arm. She used the other to point at the boxes. "There are heaps of boxes we haven't looked at yet. There might be even more cool stuff in them. What if there's an Adam the Adamantoise toy in there too?"

Averia shrugged. "I guess. Maybe we'll even find one of mom's old gun blades or something. Wait… where did that school uniform go?"

X X X

Lightning looked in the mirror. She looked absolutely ridiculous. They'd washed the school uniform, and Fang had somehow convinced her to wear it along with school shoes, knee high socks, and hair ties. Not only was the skirt too short – it barely covered her at all – but the shirt was so tight that she could barely breathe and it left part of her midriff bare. She looked more like astripper than a schoolgirl.

"Fang," she said as she walked out of their bathroom. "I look like an idiot."

"Mind your language, Ms Farron." Fang sat on the edge of their bed in a black pencil skirt and white blouse, her legs crossed. She was also wearing glasses, and her hair was done up into a tight bun. Lightning forgot how to breathe as Fang leaned forward to peer at her over her glasses, the top two buttons of her blouse undone to reveal a hint of black lace and cleavage. "If you continue to use such vulgar language, I might have to punish you."

Throat dry, Lightning could only nod. "What is this, Fang?"

"It's Ms Yun, to you." Fang beckoned Lightning over. "And if you insist on being rude, I'll be forced to discipline you very, very thoroughly. " She sauntered over, and guided Lightning over to the bed. "Now, bend over, Ms Farron." Fang's voice was a wicked whisper in Lightning's ear that sent a wave of liquid heat rushing through the pink haired woman. "And take your punishment like a good girl."

Lightning opened her mouth to argue, but her words turned into a ragged moan as Fang used one hand to bend her over the mattress, the other roaming the expanse of flesh left bare by Lightning's far too short skirt. She should probably argue – this was more than a little kinky – but she couldn't seem to find the words. Instead, she bent over and pressed her face into the mattress.

Fang chuckled and turned Lightning's head so she could see her face. "Don't think you'll be hiding anything from me, Ms Farron. How am I supposed to know that you're taking your punishment properly if I can't see you or hear you."

"Fang –" Lightning groaned as Fang's fingers wandered higher, the other woman leaning over to kiss the back of her neck.

"You will address me as Ms Yun." Fang watched Lightning melt under her touch. "Or do you want me to stop?"

"I…" Lightning swallowed thickly and pressed back against Fang. She wanted – needed – more. "All right." She pulled one of Fang's fingers into her mouth and bit, ever so lightly. "I'm all yours, Ms Yun."
"Biting the teacher?" Fang smirked. "You're only making your punishment worse."

Contrary to Fang’s words, Lightning’s punishment turned out to be rather pleasant – for both of them.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #203: (AU(AU-ish?) Basically, Light has had a favorite toy since childhood. This toy is of great quality, if a bit old. Her parents bought it in Gran Pulse. The twist? That toy actually belonged to Fang and was HER favorite toy from when she was in the orphanage in Oerba! (Maybe I'm stretching the 500 year duration of the toy a bit, but meh... It's fiction. :P) It somehow survived all these years! Then, one day, Fang and Light (whether the relationship is established or not is up to the author) go through Light's old things and... voila!

I liked the look of this prompt when I saw it, and I have been wondering for a while now where Gary the Gorgonopsid might have come from. It's only fitting that the source of Lightning and Fang's eternal suffering be something of their own (accidental) creation. Plus, I think it's nice if there's a little something that ties them both together. Some cultures have lovers tied together by a red string – Lightning and Fang are bound together by a plush toy of a vicious animal, which is altogether more fitting, I think.

As for the final part... yeah, it wasn't exactly needed. But once I'd settled on having them trawl through old boxes, I thought the school uniform thing would be a fun gag. Then I thought it would be a shame to tease you all with it without actually using it, but then I ended up teasing you all anyway (and no, there isn't secretly a version of this on AO3 or deviant art with the naughty bits included... although the thought had crossed my mind). Out of interest, which do you think is more interesting: Lightning as the student and Fang as the teacher, or Lightning as the teacher and Fang as the student?

One can only hope that Averia and Diana don't hear what their parents are getting up to.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Serah shoved her way through the crowd of Guardian Corps officers in the hallways of the infirmary. She hadn’t known what to think when Vanille had called and all but ordered her to come in. The expressions on the faces of the officers here did little to assuage her worry. They were terrified, their faces masks of shock and horror as they whispered frantically amongst themselves. Something horrible must have happened, and from what little she could make out, it involved Lightning and Fang.

But how could something have happened? Lightning and Fang were the best there was, and they hadn’t been on their own either. Vanille had been with them. Between the three of them, they should have been able to handle anything.

“It’ll be okay.” Snow wrapped one arm around her and helped her push through the crowd. “I’m sure it’s nothing serious. You know those two – they can handle anything.”

Serah nodded. She wanted – needed – to believe Snow. But despite the reassuring smile on his face, he couldn’t hide the worry in his eyes. They both knew something was wrong. Vanille wouldn’t have called them in unless it was something serious.

Finally, they reached the room where Lightning and Fang were. Vanille was outside the door, and she stopped them before they could go inside.

“Serah. Snow.” Vanille shivered. Her eyes had a faraway look in them, the look of someone who’d seen something truly terrible. “It’s good that you could make it. I – well – you have to see it for yourself.” She tried to smile as she opened the door, but all she could manage was a grimace. “See?”

Serah stared.

Snow’s hand dropped from her shoulder.

Then she stared some more and rubbed at her eyes.

No, what this was definitely real.

Lightning was draped across Fang’s lap on one of the beds, her arms wrapped around the taller woman’s neck as she ran her fingers through Fang’s hair. The pair rubbed noses, their expressions mirror images of unabashed warmth and affection.

“I love you, my pink-haired cuddle bunny of justice.” Fang pressed a little kiss to the tip of Lightning’s nose. “My crystal beauty.”

Rather than rolling her eyes or gagging, Lightning giggled – giggled – and fiddled with the edges of Fang’s sari like a lovesick schoolgirl. “Well, I love you more, my green-eyed warrior of love and affection.”

“I don’t know about that.” Fang smirked and nuzzled Lightning’s throat. “I love you quite a lot.
you perfect flower of femininity, you soldier of scowls and snuggles.”

“Scowls? How could I scowl with you around?” Lightning laughed and nuzzled Fang back. “But you’re so wild and fierce, my gallant knight in sari armour, my little, Gran Pulsian puppy.”

The pair moved into a chaste but loving kiss.

“You taste like freedom,” Lightning whispered tenderly, cupping Fang’s cheek. “Like the wind across the plains or the sea breeze against the shore.”

Fang cupped Lightning’s cheek in return. “You taste like strawberries, like the first rains of spring.”

“Sweet Maker.” Snow stumbled back and almost knocked over a shelf. “This has to be some kind of nightmare. That can’t be Fang, and there’s no way that’s Lightning.”

“Do you see?” Vanille grabbed Serah and shook her. “Do you see? Look at them!” She jabbed one finger at Lightning and Fang. The pair seemed completely oblivious to everyone else in the room as they continued to cuddle and exchange loving gibberish. “It’s horrible!”

Serah ignored the wailing Dia and turned her attention back to the two people on the bed. She had to agree with Snow. This didn’t seem real. She knew Lightning, and her sister would never act like that and – had Lightning made an origami flower out of her medical chart to put in Fang’s hair?

“What happened?” Serah whispered. Fang had tucked the origami flower into her hair and had grabbed her own medical chart to make one for Lightning. Normally, she would have expected the two women to roll their medical charts up and engage in an impromptu sword fight.

Vanille buried her face in Serah’s shoulder and latched onto Snow as soon as the big man came over to hug them. At times like this, they needed to stick together. It was the only way they’d make it through. “It was so horrible, Serah. So, so horrible.”

Serah tried to listen to Vanille, but it was hard. Her eyes were repeatedly drawn to the couple on the bed. Lightning had begun to feed Fang some of the infirmary’s food. The dark-haired woman accepted the bland food like it was a gift from the gods and kissed the tips of each of Lightning’s fingers after every bite. And they giggled, both of them, every time Lightning went back for more food. This was bad.

The tale that Vanille wove was a tragic one. She, Lightning, and Fang had gone out on patrol after one of the Guardian Corps’ frontier scouts reported a Cie’th not far away. They had expected something easy, but they’d gotten something out of a nightmare. The Cie’th was ancient, a monster of unparalleled evil and malice that had once been worshipped by several dark cults during the War of Transgression.

They’d gone after the Cie’th together. However, their early success soon turned into abject failure when the monster managed to strike both Lightning and Fang with its enchanted arrows. The two women had been turned into helpless paragons of disgustingly cute love. With her two companions more interested in gazing into each other’s eyes than fighting, Vanille had been forced to beat a hasty retreat. She’d managed to get Lightning and Fang back to the infirmary but nothing, magical or otherwise, had been able to cure them of their affliction.

She’d called Serah after the pair had busted out of the infirmary to roll through a bed of flowers outside. The Guardian Corps officers had been convinced that the world was about to end. Why else would Captain Farron act like a besotted teenager?
“So, what can we do?” Snow shook his head. “I mean this is scary stuff.”

As if to emphasise his point, Lightning wiped a bit of stray chocolate pudding away from Fang’s mouth with a napkin only to use her lips instead when the time came to wipe off the last bit. Fang, of course, was not to be outdone. She stuck one finger into the chocolate pudding and pressed it against Lightning’s mouth. The pink-haired woman held Fang’s gaze as her tongue darted out to clean up the pudding.

It was so out of character that Serah wanted to scream.

“We could leave them like this,” Vanille said. “I’m sure it’ll wear off eventually.”

For a moment, Serah considered that option. The only ones who didn’t know how crazy Fang and Lightning were for each other were the two women involved. But how else could anyone explain the way that Lightning chased off anyone who so much as looked at Fang twice. The soldier had staked her claim, even if she hadn’t quite realised it. And Fang was hardly any better. The huntress spent as much time with Lightning as she could. If she wasn’t at Lightning’s office, then she was either out with the other woman on patrol or training with her. Anyone who tried to work their way into Lightning’s schedule was met with a smirk and a not so subtle jab of Fang’s spear.

And that wasn’t all. Lightning and Fang already shared a house – albeit with Vanille – but there were times when the pair sparred when Serah couldn’t believe that the two weren’t already together. Vanille even had a counter to keep track of all the heated looks the pair shared each day.

So, yes, she believed Lightning and Fang were in love. They were made for each other. But she couldn’t let this go on. Whatever this was, it wasn’t honest. It wasn’t real. Lightning and Fang weren’t themselves, and the longer this went on, the worse it would be once it wore off. They needed to form a real relationship, not one based on a Cie’th’s magic.

Another glance at Lightning and Fang only hardened her resolve. Lightning had taken a slip of paper and had begun to write a poem that compared Fang’s beauty to everything from the flowers, the sun, the moon, the stars, and even the ocean. It was touching – but it was nothing like her sister.

“We can’t wait.” Serah took a deep breath. “We need to stop this now. Vanille, what can we do?”

“The only way to stop this for sure is to kill the Cie’th.”

“Then that’s what we’ll do.” Serah’s eyes widened. Lightning and Fang had started to undress each other. “But first, do something about that!”

Vanille yelped and pawed through a few cabinets. “Distract them!” With Lightning and Fang occupied, Vanille jabbed both women with a healthy dose of tranquilliser. They were out for at least a few hours. “All right. Snow, I need you to call NORA. Get them over here. We need someone to watch these two that we can trust. The three of us are going to go after the Cie’th.”

“What about Hope and Sazh?” Serah asked.

Vanille shook her head. "No, they won’t be back until the end of the week. Sazh is teaching Hope how to pilot a ship properly.”

“Then we’ll have to manage.”

They took one of the Guardian Corps’ patrol cars out to where Vanille had last seen the Cie’th. Along the way, she explained things in more detail.
“That thing uses a bow like you, Serah.” Vanille’s eyes narrowed. “I can’t be sure, but if it hits you, then it’s possible that you fall in love with the next person it hits. If that person is Snow, well, you’ll end up like Fang and Lightning. If that person is me… it’ll be awkward.”

Serah gulped. It would definitely be awkward. “What if it hits Snow first and then you?”

Vanille and Snow shared a look and paled.

“Let’s hope that doesn’t happen,” Vanille said. “No offence.”

“None taken.” Snow swallowed thickly. “You’re not my type either.”

“Very funny.” Vanille frowned and looked out the window. “Stay sharp. I think we’re –”

An arrow made of glowing pink energy slammed into the hood the car. The vehicle lurched to one side, and Vanille fought to keep it on the road. She failed, and the car rolled off the edge of the road. It thumped its way down a steep embankment before it finally came to a rest against a large rock.

“Everyone alive?” Vanille asked.

“Now I know why Lightning does all the driving when you guys are out on patrol.” Snow groaned and kicked out his window. The big man squirmed through and then darted over to Serah’s side to help her out as well. In the meantime, Vanille wriggled out of her seat and through the driver’s side window.

“Come on.” Vanille glanced up toward the road. There was no sign of the Cie’th yet, but it couldn’t be far. “We need to find cover now.”

Another arrow lanced through the air, and Vanille ducked behind the body of the car. That was close. And now they could see the Cie’th. It stood on the edge of the road above them. It was twice the size of Snow and vaguely humanoid, its body made of black, rock-like material. Two white, metallic wings jutted out of its shoulders. And in its deformed, claw-like hands, it held a large, metal bow.

“Is that it?” Snow asked.

“Yes.” Vanille wanted to laugh at the question. How many other Cie’th could there be that walked around with energy bows? “Come on, move!”

As the Cie’th readied another glowing arrow, the three of them ran for better cover. There were several large boulders nearby, and at least there the Cie’th wouldn’t be able to fire almost directly down on them.

There was almost a second between each of the first few arrows, but it wasn’t long before the Cie’th picked up the pace. By the time they reached the boulders, the Cie’th was up to several arrows a second.

“This is bad.” Snow was crouched behind one boulder. The rock had begun to crack beneath the assault. “We can’t get at it from down here.”

Serah was tucked away behind the boulder next to Snow. “We have to get it. We have to help Lightning and Fang.”

“I know that.” Snow grimaced. “Serah, can you hit it from down here?”
“Of course I can.” Serah scowled. At this distance, she could put an arrow through the Cie’th’s eye if she wanted to. “But not when it’s shooting like this.” A hail of arrows sheared almost a foot of rock off Serah’s boulder. “You need to distract if for a second.”

“She’s right,” Vanille said. “Snow, if you can distract it long enough, Serah can bring it down. Once it’s down here, I can hit it with my magic. And trust me, it won’t get up. I won’t let it.”

“Fine.” Snow took a deep breath. “Here I go!”

For someone so large, Snow could be incredibly agile. The big man zigzagged away from them beneath a storm of pink arrows. A few came within inches of hitting him, but he seemed to know exactly when to twist away. Serah bit back a smile. She was sure Lightning had something to do with that.

The older Farron’s idea of agility training was to shoot an assortment of painful, but non-lethal, blank ammunition at Snow on a regular basis. Serah waited until she was certain that the Cie’th was focused on Snow before she pushed out from behind her boulder and raised her bow.

Stop.

Look.

Breathe.

Release.

Her arrow had a thundaga wrapped around it, and the Cie’th gave a high-pitched wail as the projectile dug deep into its right eye. Its body thrashed, and its wings flailed, before it lurched forward and rolled down the embankment toward them. It smashed through their overturned car and came to a stop a dozen yards away.

But somehow, it wasn’t dead. No, it staggered to its feet and lifted its bow once more. What was Vanille waiting for?

BOOM.

Fire enveloped the Cie’th and blasted upward in a gigantic pillar of raw heat. Serah looked to the side, and there was Vanille. The red head had stepped out from behind her boulder, and now her hands were raised, the air around her awash with the raw force of her magic.

BOOM.

A bolt of lightning tore out of the cloudless sky and smashed into the Cie’th.

BOOM.

More fire.

BOOM.

More lightning.

The Cie’th staggered beneath the assault, the ground around it scorched into glass. But it refused to die. Instead, it raised its bow and took aim at Vanille.

THUD.
Serah’s first arrow caught the Cie’th in its one remaining eye. Her next three broke its bow to pieces and ruined its hands. It roared, but Vanille stopped it in its track with another spell. The red head continued until finally the Cie’th vanished in a haze of magical energy.

“Is it over?” Snow winced as he eyed the large patch of molten glass. Note to self: never piss of Vanille.

“I think so.” Vanille sagged back against her boulder. “But I don’t think we’ll be able to drive back.”

Serah reached for the phone in her pocket. “Get some rest. I’ll call for someone to pick us up.”

X X X

To say that Lightning felt awkward when she woke up would have been an understatement of incredible proportions. She remembered every single detail of what she’d done right up until Vanille had knocked her out. The first thing she did was kick out NORA and dismiss all of the worried Guardian Corps officers camped outside. When a few of them expressed concern that she wasn’t back to her normal self, she allayed those concerns with a few threats. Anyone who stayed could clean toilets for the next six months. If that wasn’t enough, anyone who still refused to leave could do some agility training. They’d run and she would shoot at them – with live ammunition.

After that, it didn’t take long for the room and the corridors around it to empty.

When they were gone, she turned her attention to the only other person in the room: Fang. Lightning grabbed a chair and settled down next to the still unconscious huntress. What a mess she’d made of things. It was bad enough that the Cie’th had managed to hit her, but she’d acted like a complete idiot, a besotted fool who wouldn’t have been out of place in one of those cheesy romance novels that Serah liked so much.

If only the last few hours had been make believe.

But it went beyond simple embarrassment. Lightning hurt. She had never been able to tell Fang how she felt. How could she? If Fang didn’t feel the same, Lightning would lose more than the woman she loved – she’d lose her best friend too. She wanted to believe that she could handle Fang not caring for her the same way, but she knew she wouldn’t be able to stand it if she lost Fang as a friend as well. Somehow the other woman had worked her way into every facet of Lightning’s life.

When Lightning came home, it was Fang she came home to. When she went out on patrol, it was Fang she wanted with her. And when she lay in bed at night – alone – it was Fang she wished was beside her.

Lightning put her head in her hands and dragged in a ragged breath. What a big, damn mess this all was. And how pathetic was it that the lovesick, idiotic version of her had been able to say the three simple words that she, the legendary Captain Lightning Farron, had never been able to say.

Serah was right. Lightning was an idiot when it came to love. Hell, she’d always given Snow a lot of grief over the years for getting all lovey-dovey with Serah, but right now, she envied him. He wasn’t afraid to tell Serah that he loved her. He said it everyday, no matter who was around.

So, what now?

Lightning knew she loved Fang, but how much of what Fang had said and done was based on something real and how much was because of the damn Cie’th’s powers? She had no idea what she’d do if it was all fake. She could still remember the fondness in Fang’s eyes, the tenderness of
her hands and lips, and the simple joy of just holding her and being held by her. If Lightning couldn’t have that again, if she had to go back to being nothing more than Fang’s friend, she would –

“What are you crying for?”

Lightning scrubbed at her cheeks. “I’m not crying!” And then she realised what had happened. “Fang!”

“Hey.” Fang groaned and sat up. “Remind me to strangle Vanille when she comes back. She could have used a sleep spell or something instead of dosing us up with whatever the hell that was.”

Lightning bit her lip. “Fang… about what happened –”

Fang put one finger on Lightning’s lips. “I think we can both agree that I’m better when it comes to talking about stuff like this. So, why don’t you let me start off?”

Lightning nodded.

“Look, about what happened. We weren’t acting normally. All that stuff we were doing – that’s not us. We’re not some lovey-dovey couple that feeds each other and writes awful poetry.” Fang reached up and fiddled with the origami flower in her hair. Lightning did her best to pretend that her heart hadn’t broken in two. She failed miserably.

“Fang –”

“You didn’t let me finish.” Fang reached up with one hand and wiped away Lightning’s tears before she cupped the pink-haired woman’s cheek. “Like I was saying, we’re not one of those lovey-dovey couples, but there’s no reason we couldn’t be.” She smiled gently. “I mean… if you wanted to. I meant all those things I said, Lightning. I probably wouldn’t have said them like that, but I did mean them. Every word.”

“So I really am your beloved grumpy guts?”

“You bet you are.”

That was too much. Lightning threw herself at Fang. She pressed the taller woman back onto the bed and kissed her. Under the Cie’th’s spell, their kisses had been chaste and almost naively romantic. This kiss was hot and wet, born from months of pent-up love and desire. Fang returned the kiss with equal fervour until finally they had to part. The bed creaked beneath them, and Lightning realised that somehow she’d ended up straddling Fang.

“I love you so much,” Lightning whispered.

“I love you too.” Fang had her hands on Lightning’s hips. “I love you so damn much. I –”

There was a cry of alarm from the door.

“It didn’t work!” Vanille shouted. “Snow, grab Lightning!”

Before Lightning could react, Snow hauled her off Fang as Vanille looked for more tranquiliser.

“Snow.” Lightning’s voice was so cold that it stopped him and Vanille right in their tracks. “If you don’t let me go right now, I’m going to break every bone of your body. You will rue the day you ever touched me. You will wish that you’d never been born. And Vanille, if you even think of
jabbing me with that syringe, I’m going to take your binding rod and beat you to death with it. Am I clear?”

Snow let Lightning go.

Vanille dropped the syringes.

“You’re back!” Serah ran forward and threw her arms around Lightning. Her grouchy, semi-psychotic sister was back! Unable to stop herself, she pressed her face into Lightning’s shoulder and wept. “I was so worried.”

Lightning stroked Serah’s hair. “Yeah, I’m back. It’s okay.” She glanced over and shared a look with Fang. They had a lot to talk about, but she wasn’t afraid anymore. She knew how she felt, and more importantly she knew how Fang felt too. Oh, screw it. She’d waited long enough. She wasn’t going to wait any longer. “All right, you three. Thanks for fixing whatever this was, but Fang and I have something very important to talk about.”

“Oh?” Serah pulled back, eyes widening before she let out a cry of delight. “OH!” She grabbed Snow and Vanille and dragged them out of the room. “Enjoy your talk!”

Lightning and Fang had their talk.

Then they had each other. Twice.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Pomppt #202: An enemy casts a powerful love spell on our heroines as a means to distract them from their battle. It works and the pair become the most sickeningly loving couple the world has ever seen; they’re so cute and ardent it’s almost obnoxious. Can Vanille find a cure in time to defeat their enemy and does she really want to use it.

Things didn’t really go according to plan with this chapter. I had originally intended for this to be a completely light-hearted and humorous piece. However, the first draft didn’t feel right. There was something missing. After a bit of tinkering, I came to the conclusion that a completely humorous chapter didn’t feel balanced. What I decided to do was to keep the humour but add in a few more serious moments (e.g., Serah’s thoughts about Lightning and Fang’s relationship and the last section with Lightning and Fang talking). I think the end result is much better, and I hope you guys agree.

For those of you curious about the Cie’th’s identity, their appearance should be a bit of a clue. White wings, a bow, arrows that make people fall in love? Yes, the Cie’th is basically an evil version of cupid. Heh.

I would also like to thank all of the people who helped me come up with some of the disgustingly sweet nicknames that Fang and Lightning had for each other. So thank you to RoxyRoxas1313, SibenSins, habalah, and antifabrony for their suggestions. My apologies if I’ve missed anyone. There’s nothing like a ridiculously saccharine nickname. And if any of you have any overly sweet nicknames to suggest, please leave
them in your review. You never know when they might come in handy.

And remember, if you want to see more Fangrai Forever prompt fills, you need to suggest more prompts!

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Lightning wasn’t the sort of person to be easily bothered. She wouldn’t have risen to the rank of captain in the Guardian Corps if she couldn’t keep a handle on things. But she really, really didn’t like people touching her stuff. Whether it was her food, her clothes, or even just her stationery, she wanted everything to be a certain way. Some people might have called it obsessive – and Fang called it crazy – but she preferred to think of it as organised.

Being in a committed – and very much sexual – relationship with Fang had necessitated a few changes to what felt like a lifetime of routine. Lightning was used to having her bed entirely to herself. But now she shared it with someone who seemed to think that she was the greatest body-pillow in the universe. It would have bothered Lightning more, but it was hard to get annoyed with Fang curled up against her.

Fang’s bedside table was a little harder to overlook. Lightning’s bedside table was a paragon of order. Everything had its own place, and not a day passed without her checking at least twice to make sure that everything was as it should be. Fang’s bedside table was a disaster zone. It wasn’t unusual to find half a dozen articles of clothing piled on top of it, and Lightning had once found several hundred pages of paperwork shoved under what looked to be an old sweater. She had almost had a heart attack, and Fang had walked in several hours later to find Lightning in the midst of yet another cleaning spree.

But rather than call her weird, Fang had merely laughed and slung one arm around Lightning’s shoulder.

“Can’t stand the mess, huh?” Fang had whispered, a smile on her lips and her eyes warm with mirth. “How about I give you a hand then?”

If Lightning hadn’t already been in love with Fang, she would have been after that. Fang had helped her tidy up and even listened to a few of her suggestions about how to keep the mess on her bedside table to a minimum. Not even Serah handled her quirks that well.

Then there was the en suite bathroom. Lightning had taken years to perfect the best way to get washed and ready in the shortest amount of time possible. She might pamper herself now and then, but she had a plan for that too. Fang ripped her schedule to bits without even realising what she’d done.

Not only did Fang ignore the plan that Lightning had devised for where each of them could put their toiletries to both maximise ease of use but also minimise confusion, the huntress had absolutely no respect for Lightning’s schedule. It wasn’t the least bit unusual for the other woman to waltz into the bathroom, yank open the shower door, and join Lightning.

The first time Fang had done it, Lightning had been three sentences into a lecture on the importance of routine before Fang had silence her with a kiss. More kisses had followed along with a great dealing of touching, and suddenly routine hadn’t seemed so important after all. Nowadays, Lightning allocated herself an extra fifteen minutes – minimum – to get ready, in case Fang wanted to join her.
But lately, things had gotten out of hand, and not in a good way.

Someone had been moving her stuff. It started with a few little things. She might put her pen down near her paperwork to go get a drink out of the fridge only to come back and find that her pen was suddenly on the other side of her desk. Then it got worse. Her shoes started moving around. Sometimes she’d find them near the front door. Other times, she’d find them in the living room. And the shoe rack – she’d almost cried when she came home to find that someone had rearranged all the shoes.

And the less she thought about her favourite leather jacket, the better. It was supposed to be waiting on the coat rack by the front door. But twice now, she’d come home from patrol to find it hanging from a different hook. Someone had worn it, and they hadn’t put it back in the right place.

Her first instinct was to blame Vanille. Her redheaded housemate was nothing if not observant. She knew that Lightning had issues, and she was mischievious to boot. It didn’t help Vanille’s case that she was a serial ice cream stealer. Oh, she thought that Lightning didn’t know about her little trips to the fridge in the middle of the night, but Lightning noticed everything. And Vanille never put the ice cream scooper back in the proper drawer.

Unfortunately, several days of observation had led Lightning to one inescapable conclusion: it wasn’t Vanille. Lightning’s next guess was Serah. The younger woman had keys to Lightning’s house, and it wouldn’t have surprised her to find out that Serah had borrowed a few of her things. But Serah knew how Lightning felt about people touching her stuff – she’d endured years of it – so she always, always put things back exactly how she’d found them. And Serah always called afterward to let Lightning know what she’d borrowed and why.

That left only one person: Fang.

Over the next few days, Lightning kept a close eye on Fang. The other woman was sneaky, Lighting would give her that, but it was only a matter of time before she slipped up. And when she did, Lightning would be waiting.

Then at breakfast one morning, Lightning stared across the table and there was Fang, nibbling on the end of Lightning’s pen as she pored over the morning crossword.

“It was you!” Lightning shot to her feet and jabbed one finger at Fang. In the kitchen, Vanille gave a cry of surprise at Lightning’s sudden shout and tripped over her own feet. The clatter of pots and pans almost drowned out Lightning’s next words. “You’re the one who has been stealing all my stuff!”

Fang glanced up from her crossword. To Lightning’s horror, she bit down – hard – on the pen and then gave it a thoughtful suck. Lightning wasn’t sure if she should feel angry or aroused. “I haven’t been stealing your stuff, I’ve been borrowing a few things.” She grinned and waved the pen at Lightning. “Do you want your pen back?”

“I... uh...” Lightning banged slapped one hand down on the table. “Wipe it first!”

Fang wiped the pen off with a napkin and smirked. “Does it really bother you that much?”

“You know it does!”

“Yeah, I do. But what are you going to do about it?”

And with that, Fang sauntered out of the dining room. Lightning could only scowl at the door before she went into the kitchen to grab some coffee. Needless to say, she was not pleased to find
that Vanille had put all the pots and pans back in the wrong places. Fang was up to something. All she had to do was find out what.

Lightning continued to keep track of all the little things Fang did to annoy her. She wasn’t the least bit surprised to find out that Fang was the one who’d been wearing her jacket when she wasn’t around.

“Why are you wearing my jacket?” Lightning confronted the taller woman over dinner. Vanille wisely chose that exact moment to go into the kitchen to get dessert. “And why don’t you ever put it back on the right hook?”

“It’s a nice jacket.” Fang took a sip of her wine and smirked at Lightning over her glass. “Besides, you know how much I miss you when you’re on patrol. That jacket smells like you.”

Well, it was hard for Lightning to stay mad at Fang after that. Especially when she’d stolen one of Fang’s scarves for that exact same purpose. She kept it in a locked drawer in her office at the Guardian Corps. It was right next to all the other little keepsakes she had of Fang. Even there, Lightning had a system.

“Well… put it back properly next time.”

“I will.”

Fang didn’t.

It got worse. Fang seemed determined to get on Lightning’s nerves. It all came to a head one morning when Lightning woke up, got dressed, and went downstairs to leave for work. Except her sunglasses weren’t on the table by the door. In fact, none of her sunglasses seemed to be anywhere. Someone had taken them, and she knew exactly who to blame.

“No.” Lightning stomped into the living room with murder in her eyes. “Have you seen my sunglasses?”

Vanille dropped the bag of potato chips she was munching on. She hadn’t been this scared in a long, long time. Lightning was dressed in her Guardian Corps uniform, complete with gun blade, and the pink-haired woman had turned the full force of her glare on Vanille. “No.”

“Did Fang take them?”

Vanille didn’t even think twice before throwing her sister under the bus. Fang would understand. “This morning before you woke up.”

“I see.” Lightning pulled out her wallet and threw some money at Vanille. “You’re going to watch a movie with Serah this afternoon, understand?”

“Yes.” Lightning turned on her heel. “Not exactly.”

Fang yawned and scratched her leg – or she tried to. Something cold and metallic was wrapped around her right wrist. No, something was wrapped around both her wrists. Her eyes opened, but only darkness greeted her – a blindfold? Her breathing quickened, and she strained to free her hands. But the handcuffs – and she was certain they were handcuffs – around her wrists refused to
What was going on?

She’d come home late in the afternoon wearing a pair of Lightning’s sunglasses and fallen asleep on the couch. And now… now she was tied up and blindfolded.

“You’re awake I see.”

She froze. That was Lightning’s voice, but not as she’d come to know it. Lightning’s voice was cold and hard with an edge that promised no small amount of pain if Fang didn’t do exactly as she was told.

Fang bit back a moan. Lightning had tied her up and blindfolded her, and from the sound of it, her girlfriend was pissed. “I’m guessing you’re the one who got me all tied up.”

Something rough touched Fang’s jaw before Lightning’s familiar fingertips ghosted along her cheek. Those were gloves. Lightning was wearing fingerless gloves. Fang dragged in a deep breath as heat pooled in her belly. Lightning had taken charge before, but never like this.

“Yes, I am.” Lightning’s voice darkened and took on an icy, velvety tone that sent a wave of shivers through Fang’s body before she reached down and cupped one of Fang’s breasts in her hand. Even through her shirt, Fang could feel the contrast between how soft Lightning’s fingertips were and how rough her gloves were. It was almost enough to make her moan. And then she did moan when Lightning’s hand began to move. “You’ve been messing with me, Fang.”

“Maybe.” Fang hissed when Lightning’s grip tightened until it was almost painful.

“I want to know why.” Fang felt Lightning straddle her. “So tell me, Fang, why did you take my sunglasses?”

“What do I get if I tell you?” Fang tried to smirk, but Lightning wiped that expression right off her face when she shifted to press one knee up between Fang’s legs. Maker – Lightning was still wearing her uniform, Fang could feel the other woman’s boots against her bare calves. Lightning must have taken her pants off already, which meant…

“Stop trying to be tough.” Lightning lowered one hand and ran her fingers along the edges of Fang’s panties. Fang hadn’t stirred at all when Lightning had carried her back up to their room and handcuffed her to the bed. She hadn’t even awakened when Lightning had tugged off her pants leaving her in nothing more than her shirt, her bra, and her panties. Either Fang was very, very tired, or she trusted Lightning enough to completely let her guard down around her. “You’re in no position to be teasing.”

“Aren’t I?”

“No.” Lightning cupped Fang through her panties, and she had to bite back a groan when she felt how wet the other woman was. Who’d have thought Fang would get off on being tied up so much? “So answer the question, why did you take all of my sunglasses, and why have you been messing with all my stuff?”

Fang fought to keep her hips still. She wanted nothing more than to buck up against Lightning’s touch, but she refused to give in that easily. Lightning would have to work for her win. “Well, you look pretty good in your sunglasses –”

“I look great in my sunglasses.”
“So I thought I’d give them a try. You know, see what the world looks like through the sunglasses of Captain Lightning Farron.”

“And the rest of my stuff?”

“I –” Fang thrashed as Lightning bent down to press her lips to the cloth over Fang’s chest. Etro – Fang could feel the heat and moisture of Lightning’s lips through her shirt and… was that Lightning’s tongue? “I –”

“You’re not making any sense, Fang.” Lightning pulled away. “Start making sense.”

Fang gasped and sagged back onto the bed only to cry out as Lightning scooted down the bed to lift Fang’s legs and press a kiss to the inside of each thigh. Almost without thinking, she hooked her legs over Lightning’s shoulders. “I wanted to see what you would do.”

“I see.” Lightning kissed her way up Fang’s right thigh only to stop just shy of where Fang wanted her lips the most. Then she repeated the process on Fang’s left thigh, trailing hot, wet kisses from Fang’s knee up to the edge of her panties. “And what do you think of what I’m doing?”

Fang bucked her hips upward. The position put no small amount of strain on her wrists, but she didn’t care. Couldn’t Lightning tell what she wanted? “I think you’re doing a damn good job.”

“In that case.” Lightning moved, and Fang could only shake her head from side to side when she found herself completely and utterly alone on the bed. “I’d better stop what I’m doing.” The words came from the side of bed near Fang’s head. “After all, bad behaviour should not be rewarded.”

It took a few seconds for Fang to realise what had happened. “What? What? Are you serious?”

There was a rustle of cloth before Lightning tugged off Fang’s blindfold. “Do I look like I’m joking?”

Fang blinked as her eyes adjusted to the light. Lightning stood beside the bed, dressed in her Guardian Corps uniform. Her mouth had firmed into a thin line, and there was a hint of pink about her cheeks. But it was impossible to see the other woman’s eyes. Lightning was wearing her favourite pair of sunglasses, and in the reflective surface, Fang could see herself spread out on the bed, face flushed and body almost trembling with need.

“Are you seriously doing this?” Fang couldn’t keep the whine out of her voice. “You have your girlfriend all tied up and completely helpless on a bed in nothing more than a few scraps of clothing, and you’re just going to stand there?”

“Yes.” Lightning tilted her head to one side before she reached over and tore off Fang’s shirt with one sharp tug. “There, that’s better. You make quite the pretty picture, Fang.”

Fang’s eyes narrowed. “Is this your revenge?”

“Part of it.” Lightning settled down on the bed next to Fang and let her hands go back to wandering. “I have a whole list of things planned out actually. I’m very organised, you see. And I do believe in fairness. You need to be punished for each of your crimes.”

Oh sweet Maker, Fang thought as Lightning touched, stroked, and caressed. She’d miscalculated. She’d been morbidly curious about how far she could push Lightning and about what the other woman would do when she snapped. She’d expected a bit of angry sex or a good sparring session but not this… this torture.
“Let’s start with the beginning.” Lightning tapped her cheek and then reached down to unclasp Fang’s bra. “You started with my pens, didn’t you?”

Fang groaned as Lightning let her hands wander over her chest. The pink-haired woman knew exactly how Fang wanted to be touched, and it wasn’t long before all she could do was whimper plaintively when Lightning added her lips as well. “M… maybe.”

“There’s no maybe about it.” Lightning pulled away entirely, leaving Fang utterly bereft of her touch. It was all Fang could do not to scream in frustration. “And then there were my shoes, Fang. Did you know, I almost cried when I saw that someone had rearranged all my shoes.”

Fang winced. “I didn’t think you’d take it that badly.”

“Well, I did.” Lightning reached down for something at her waist, and Fang’s eyes widened when Lightning pulled out a knife. There was a flash of movement, and Fang’s panties came off, leaving her completely bare to the soldier. “You really need to pay for that and for my stealing my jacket too.”

“And how exactly are you going to make me pay?” Fang was proud of how much bravado she managed to get into her voice.

“Oh, you’ll pay.” Lightning’s lips curved up into an almost cruel smirk. “Believe me, you’ll pay.” And Fang did. Oh, how she paid.

Lightning might not be especially talkative, but she knew exactly how to use her tongue – and her hands. The greatest warrior the Yun had ever produced was left barely able to think as Lightning settled in between her thighs. The contrast in sensations was what did it. There was Lightning’s tongue, her fingers, and the roughness of the gloves. And Lightning’s hair – Maker – the soldier’s hair rustled over Fang’s thighs and belly, as smooth and light as silk.

In almost no time at all, Fang was bucking upward, desperate for release. Lightning seemed determined to give it to her. The soldier set up a hard, fast rhythm, touching Fang with an expertise that was almost criminal. Lightning knew exactly how to touch her and when: the stroke of her tongue across and inside her, the thrust and curl of her fingers, the whispered endearments against her sex telling Fang how beautiful she was, how good she tasted, and how she should just let go…

For once in her life, Fang didn’t even think about disobeying orders. She arched up, looking for that one last touch, that one last caress that would send her into what she knew, instinctively, would be one of the most powerful orgasms she’d ever had in her life –

And then Lightning pulled away.

Fang almost wept.

“What the hell?” Fang’s chest heaved as she fought back tears and snarled. “Lightning!”

Lightning smirked and licked her fingers clean. “I told you, Fang. It wouldn’t be right for you to benefit from all your misdeeds. And you have committed so many misdeeds.”

Once again, Lightning leaned in close, and Fang caught another glimpse of herself in those damn sunglasses. She could barely recognise the person she saw. Was this flushed, needy, whimpering mess of a person really her? If her hands weren’t handcuffed to the bed, she’d have shoved Lightning onto her back and shown her exactly what sort of misdeeds she was capable of.
“You can be a real bitch sometimes, you know that?”

Lightning chuckled and licked her lips. The sight drew another groan from Fang. “And so can you.” She bit her lip. “I could leave you like this.”

“I’d call for help.”

“Really?”

“If it mean getting free so I could get revenge on you, then, yes, I would call for help.” Fang swallowed thickly. So this was what Lightning was like when Fang really pushed her. Her brain wasn’t sure whether she should get down on her knees and thank the Maker or run for her life. The rest of her knew exactly what it wanted – and that was Lightning between her legs. “It’s not like Vanille hasn’t gotten me out of stranger situations.”

“Oh?” Lightning’s voice was as cold as the dead of winter. “So you’ve had other women tie you up? I guess I can add that to the list of things you need to be punished for.”

Fang stared. “Are you seriously going to get angry at me for being with someone else before we even met.”

“I can and I am. You’re mine, Fang.” Lightning bared her teeth. “You’ve been mine since before we met. But we can get to that.” She smiled thinly. “And you can scream all you like. Vanille and Serah are watching a movie. We have the whole night, Fang, the whole night. And I still have to punish you for taking my sunglasses.”

Fang’s throat went dry. “What are you going to do to me?”

“That’s the wrong question, Fang. The right question is: what aren’t I going to do to you.” Lightning moved back between Fang’s legs. “And the answer is: I’m going to do whatever the hell I want, and you’re going to enjoy it – but not too much.”

Fang trembled. “Would it help if I apologised?”

“It’s too late for apologies.” Lightning lowered her head. “Far, far too late.”

X X X

Fang learned several things that night:

1. Pissing off Lightning that much was both the worst thing she’d ever done and the best thing she’d ever done.
2. Apparently, it was possible to pass out from too much awesome sex. Luckily, Lightning was right there to wake her up for more.
3. Lightning could be very forgiving once Fang confessed to all her crimes and agreed never to mess with her stuff again.

X X X

Serah reached for another handful of popcorn as a massive explosion rocked the research facility. Bodies went flying every which way, and huge columns of flame shot up into the sky. “The special effects for this movie are really good.”

Next to Serah, Vanille nodded. “Yep, but we’re not even to the best part. There’s supposed to be this awesome scene with about a million killer robots in it fighting a giant space dragon.”
“That doesn’t even make sense.” Serah laughed. “Not that I mind, but why did you want to watch a movie? It’s a Friday night. Normally, we’d watch a movie on a Saturday with the rest of the gang.”

Vanille waved one hand. “Your sister’s orders. I should probably crash at your place tonight too.”

“Oh?”

“Fang’s been messing with her stuff. I mean really messing with her stuff.”

“OH.”

“So, I’m guessing that either Lightning is going to kill her or…”

“Have lots of scary sex with her?”

“Yeah.” Vanille grinned as the skies above the research facility tore open to reveal a massive space dragon. “So, can I crash at your place tonight?”

“Sure.” Serah paused. “And you’re certain that Lightning isn’t just going to kill Fang.”

“Pretty sure.” Vanille’s grin widened as an army of killer robot emerged from the burning ruins of the research facility. “I guess we’ll find out if there’s a Guardian Corps crime report tomorrow.”

X X X

As a matter of fact, a crime report was filed with the Guardian Corps.

The next morning, Lightning got a call from the Guardian Corps. They wanted her to investigate the possibility of a homicide in the vicinity of her home after one of her neighbours reported “screams, yelling, and loud banging and thumping sounds for most of the night.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is (loosely) based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #171: Fang steals Lightning’s sunglasses and Lightning can’t seem to get them back.

In the past, I’ve joked about Lightning being slightly neurotic. In this chapter, I decided to play up that angle and see what would happen if Fang pushed her too far. The answer, I suppose, is that lots of really awesome stuff happens (at least, really awesome for Fang).

Seriously though, I do think that Lightning would have to make a lot of adjustments to her routine if she and Fang committed to a romantic relationship. For all that they are similar in some ways, they are also different in many others. But relationships are all about compromise. Fang puts up with Lighting’s quirksiness because she loves her, and Lightning does her best to not freak out at how untidy Fang can be because she loves her too.

But Fang, being Fang, would want to know exactly how far she could push Lightning and what would happen if Lightning snapped. Lightning’s response is, to put it bluntly,
the result of weeks of being on edge. She’s sick of Fang messing with her stuff, and she’s out for payback. And what better way to get back at Fang than by giving her most of what she wants – but not all of it.

Hehehehe.

You can only imagine what would happen if Fang stole Lightning’s car or her cape.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Arguing Is Half The Fun (Making Up Is The Other Half)

Fang loved a good argument. She also loved Lightning. So a good argument with Lightning was like Christmas come early. It didn’t matter what they argued about. It could be about tomorrow’s weather. It could be about what brand of toothpaste they should buy. Heck, it could even be about whether they spent enough time in bed.

Lightning, of course, wanted them to spend more time in bed. Fang disagreed – if only because she thought Lightning looked good in the throes of passion in the kitchen… the shower… the couch… hell, Lightning looked pretty awesome in the throes of passion anywhere.

Lightning had a certain glow about her during an argument, and Fang couldn’t get enough of it. Perhaps it was the imminent threat of bodily injury. Fang always had loved danger. Or perhaps it was the way Lightning’s cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled when she was doing her level best to prove Fang wrong because she couldn’t stand to lose. Well, neither could Fang.

An argument was good. Lightning was good. An argument with Lightning was very good. But an argument with Lightning that Fang won? There weren’t too many things better than that, and most of them couldn’t be done in public or in the presence of their friends. They could, however, be done in Lightning’s office at the Guardian Corps head quarters. Call Fang a little kinky, but there was something so… hot about Lightning taking charge. Hopefully, next time Lightning would remember to throw her stapler off her desk because Fang still had a stapler-shaped bruise on her back.

The only bruises she wanted were in the shape of Lightning’s fingers.

Fang didn’t mind it too much when Lightning won their arguments. Lightning was always happy when she won, and a happy Lightning was a frisky Lightning. However, there were times when Fang simply could not bear to lose. Now was one of those times. Nobody, not even Lightning, got to make fun of her sari.

“Look.” Lightning was draped over Fang’s lap. “It’s not that I don’t like how your sari looks, I do.” She proved it by taking a long look at Fang’s sari and the toned body beneath it. “I just don’t think it’s very practical. It probably gets caught on things all the time.”

Fang willed herself to be strong. Lightning was clearly trying to use her feminine wiles to win the argument. It would be so easy to give in, but her sari was not something people got to make fun of. “Lightning, I’ve been fighting in my sari for years. Have you ever seen it get caught on anything?”

“No, but I bet it’s happened before. The fact that you’ve been lucky so far is no reason to avoid changing into something more practical.” Lightning leaned over, and Fang’s face was suddenly only a few inches from her bust. Damn her feminine wiles!

“And what would be more practical?” Fang forced herself to meet Lightning’s eyes. Oh, Lightning knew exactly what she was doing. That minx. “I could always fight naked if you don’t want my clothes to catch on anything.”

Something dark stirred in Lightning’s gaze. Fang’s belly clenched at the sight of it. “Fang, you are
not fighting naked. The only who gets to see you naked is me.” Lightning’s voice was all silken menace and velvet steel. She patted Fang on the cheek. “Understand?”

Fang bit back a smirk. Possessive and murderous Lightning was so cute and cuddly. But she did have a sneaking suspicion that Lightning probably was crazy enough to carry out some of her threats. Oh well, Fang liked to live dangerously. Fang tugged Lightning’s hand over to her lips and kissed her knuckles.

“Fine, fine.” Fang leered at Lightning’s clothing. “But I don’t think I should be taking fashion advice from you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lightning pulled away and glared.

“You wear a skirt into battle, Lightning, a skirt. And you wear a cape too, an honest to Etro cape. I know it looks cool and everything, but those are way more likely to get caught on stuff than my sari.”

Lightning glanced down at her skirt. It had ridden up quite high due to the way she was sitting. Fang had decided, as she so often did, to replace Lightning’s skirt with her hand. She stroking Lightning’s thigh gently but firmly. Lightning frowned and pushed Fang’s hand back down before it could venture up into more dangerous – and distracting – territory. As for her cape, it hung over the end of the couch.

“This would be the first time I’ve ever heard you complain about my skirt. And there’s nothing wrong with my cape.”

“I didn’t say it looked bad.” Fang tried to move her hand up again only for Lightning to slap the back of her wrist. “Ouch. Damn it. Look, I’m not saying it looks bad. I’m saying it isn’t very practical.”

“Really?” Lightning slapped the back of Fang’s wrist again. Fang was nothing if not persistent. Not that Lightning minded much.

“Yes, really. I love you, you know that, but my sari is at least as practical as your outfit, maybe more.” Fang succeeded in getting her hand where she wanted only for Lightning to hop off her lap.

“I see.” Lightning adjusted her skirt and cape. Fang was very good with her hands. “We’ll see about that.” She pointed toward the backyard. “You and me, right now, Yun.”

“Right now?” Fang waggled her eyebrows and started to take off her sari. “But it’s only three o’clock in the afternoon.”

Lightning blushed and threw a couch cushion at Fang’s head. “You know damn well what I meant, and we both know that you don’t care what times it is or where we are.”

“Neither do you.” Fang lips curled. “Or have you forgotten that time in your office? You had to redo all your paperwork.”

“Shut up.” Lightning looked for something else to throw. The only thing was the coffee table, and she liked it too much to break it over Fang’s head. “What was I supposed to do with you prancing around in front of my office?”

“I don’t know. Maybe not drag me into your office and throw me onto your desk so you could have your wicked way with me.” Fang cackled. Lightning was equal parts adorable and sexy when she blushed. “Not that I complained. In fact, I remember encouraging you very loudly.”
Lightning took a deep breath. It was at time likes this that she had to remind herself how much she loved Fang. Plus, the coffee table had been a gift from Serah. Fang’s head was thick enough that the table probably wouldn’t even kill her. “Fang, we’re going to go outside right now to settle this the old-fashioned way. Last one into the backyard has to fight with their off hand.”

Fang’s eyes widened. Since becoming a couple, their sparring had not only become more frequent, it had also gotten more interesting. They often added extra rules to spice up the battle. One day, it would mean fighting without weapons. Another day, someone would have to fight with certain restrictions. What made their sparring even more fun was that the winner usually got a reward – a very sexy reward. Well, most of the time. Sometimes, Lightning had her clean the shower. At least, Lightning usually joined her in it afterward.

“What?” Fang asked.

“You heard me.” And then Lightning was running through the house toward the backyard.

If there was one thing that Fang hated about Lightning when it came to these little competitions, it was how damn fast she was. Once Lightning got in front of her, it was rare for Fang to catch her. Fang vaulted over the couch, leapt over a chair, twisted around the dining table, and stumbled through the assortment of baskets in the laundry room.

Lightning was already in the backyard.

As Fang ran out – she could still win their spar if she jumped Lightning while she was celebrating – a powerful gust of wind blew the laundry room door shut. The door slammed shut… right on the end of Fang’s sari.

Fang had a split-second to realise what had happened before her forward momentum screeched to a halt. The durable fabric of her sari held firm, and Fang went down like she’d been clotheslined. She gave a strangled yell before her legs went up and her head jerked back.

A few seconds later, Fang became aware of Lightning peering down at her.

“Are you okay?”

Fang nodded slowly. She’d been hit harder than that before. Then she followed Lightning’s gaze back to where her sari had gotten caught on the door.

“No.” Fang tried to slap her hands over Lightning’s mouth. “Not one word.”

Lightning didn’t say a thing. She laughed her ass off instead.

X X X

Serah Farron loved spending time with Snow after a week of teaching at the local primary school. She enjoyed teaching, but there were times when she was tempted to hogtie a few of the children and use them for target practice. Luckily, she had yet to snap. Cuddling up to Snow and watching the sunset while drinking a few glasses of wine and enjoying the dinner they’d cooked together was a wonderful way to spend the evening. As for how they’d spend the night… well, Serah had a few ideas. Snow probably had a few of his own too.

Their peaceful meal came to an abrupt end when Fang stomped onto their porch with murder in her eyes. This could only mean that another pointless argument with Lightning had gone too far. Serah sighed and gave Snow an apologetic glance. He smiled back and went inside to get some more wine. They would probably need it.
“You! Little Farron!” Fang grabbed Serah and threw her over her shoulder. “I need advice.”

“Whoa, whoa! Hold on.” Snow ran back out of the house. “Serah isn’t going anywhere.”

Fang seemed to notice the set up on the porch for the first time. She scowled and tightened her hold on Serah. “Can I bring her back later? I kind of need her for something.”

“Oh no.” Serah squirmed out of Fang’s grasp and glared at the taller woman. For good measure, she jabbed one finger at Fang’s face. “I’ll help you win whatever idiotic argument you’re having with my sister, but I’m staying right here.”

Fang leaned back to avoid Serah’s finger. “Planning on getting busy after dinner, huh?”

“That was the plan, yes.” Serah poked Fang in the chest. “We are engaged you know, and it’s not like you can complain. I hear all about the things that you and my sister get up to from Vanille. Honestly, the dining table, Fang? You eat there.”

Fang snickered. “You bet I ate there.”

“Gah!” Serah would have slugged Fang across the jaw – she did not need to know about her sister’s sex life – but Snow managed to grab her in time.

“What?” Fang chuckled. “Are you saying that you and Snow haven’t thought about…” The blush on Serah’s face and the silly grin on Snow’s said it all. “Heh. You’ve done more than think about it, haven’t you? Wait until your sister finds out – gah!”

Snow might have been able to hold Serah’s arms back, but he hadn’t counted on her landing a solid kick to Fang’s gut.

“Damn it, did you have to kick me?” Fang rubbed her stomach. At least Serah hadn’t been able to put her weight behind that kick.

“Yes, I did.” Serah stalked back toward the porch and grabbed her glass of wine. “I plan on marrying Snow, and I plan on marrying him without my sister turning him into a eunuch. So, I’ll thank you to keep quiet about what we get up. Or don’t you want my help?”

“Fine. I’ll keep quiet.” Fang settled down onto the porch across the table from Serah. “Pass me some of that wine. I could use it right about now.”

Serah grumbled under her breath. Her “Snow time” was rapidly decreasing. However, she wasn’t annoyed for very long. By the end of Fang’s story, she and Snow were barely able to breathe through their laughter. Okay, Fang’s story might have changed the mood from romantic to hilarious, but how often did the pride of the Yun clan almost kill herself with her own sari?

“Let me get this straight.” Snow slapped his knee and ducked the punch Fang threw at his head. Fang was fast, but Snow had spent years getting punched in the head by Lightning. “You got beaten up by a door.”

“I did not get beaten up by a door.” Fang bared her teeth. “I simply ran into a brief, one-time, technical difficulty.”

“No.” Snow laughed. “You got beaten up by a door.”

Serah finally managed to stop laughing. “Why were you two even arguing about what you were wearing? Snow has told me all about your journey. I’m under the impression that one of the
reasons you let Lightning take the lead was so you could stare at her ass.”

“It is a very fine ass,” Fang said archly. Serah had the annoying habit of being right most of the time. It must be a Farron thing.

“She once ran into a tree, she was staring so hard.” Snow ignored the vicious frown on Fang’s face. “And then there was that time we got caught in the rain. Lightning got soaking wet, and all Fang could stare at was –”

“Hey!” Fang banged her fist on the table. “Aren’t you two supposed to be helping me?”

“I guess.” Snow folded his arms behind his head and leaned back. “But why are we helping you? Serah, isn’t Lightning your sister?”

“You’re helping me because I need dirt on Lightning,” Fang leaned forward. “And Serah is the only one who has it. Besides, we all know how much Serah likes messing with her sister.” She smirked at Serah. “Isn’t that right?”

“It might be.” Serah and Lightning had argued a lot over the years since both of them could be incredibly stubborn. With the exception of few, truly horrible arguments, they enjoyed arguing with each other. Now that Fang and Lightning were a couple, they did most of their arguing with each other. As the person who had previously done most of the arguing with Lightning, Serah felt a certain kinship with Fang. Besides, Fang winning some of her arguments with Lightning would keep Lightning from getting too big a head.

Serah also loved the way that Fang’s eyes would light up whenever she found out something new about Lightning. It made Serah feel so much better to know that someone loved her sister that much. She took another sip of her wine and then crossed her legs. “How would you like to know why Lightning wears her cape?”

Fang smiled toothily. “This sounds good.”

Serah lips twitched. “Believe me, it is.”

Snow looked from Serah to Fang. Oh hell, this wasn’t going to end well. It might be best if he went inside for a bit. That way, when Lightning came around looking for revenge, he could honestly claim that he knew nothing. If he needed to, he could always ask Serah to tell him later.

X X X

Lightning wasn’t the sort of person to revel in victory – okay, she totally was – but she knew she’d probably gone a little too far in making fun of Fang’s sari. It probably wasn’t all that nice to laugh at her after she’d almost strangled herself with it either. But come on, it was funny. She was pretty sure that Fang would have laughed too if their positions were reversed. Heck, Fang laughed whenever Lightning dropped her toast although she was always happy to share hers while Lightning made some more.

What she hadn’t expected was for Fang to run off to Serah and Snow’s place. Her significant other and her sister were probably conspiring against her right now. Who knew what kind of horrible schemes they’d already concocted? Oh well, at least she knew that Fang got on with her family.

Lightning was startled out of her musings when the door slammed open and Fang sauntered in. That was her first warning. The way Fang sidled over to sit next to Lightning on the couch was her second warning. The smirk that spread across Fang’s face was her third and final warning. By the time Fang had one arm draped around her, it was far, far too late. Lightning was screwed – or about
to be screwed, one way or the other.

“I had an interesting conversation with Serah.” Fang tilted Lightning’s face toward her and pulled something out of the folds of her sari. “She told me a few intriguing little things about you.” Fang twirled the photograph in her hand and then showed it to Lightning. “For instance, why you wear that cape of yours.”

Lightning stared at the photograph. Her jaw clenched. Never mind sisterly love, she was going to kill Serah. She tried to jump off the couch, but Fang’s arm held her firmly in place. It also copped a bit of a feel while it was there.

“Not so fast.” Fang tugged Lightning onto her lap. She leaned over to rest her forehead against Lightning’s. “So, you liked comics when you were young?”

Lightning made a grab for the photo and missed horribly. Fang had seen that coming from a mile away. Damn it. Where had Serah even found that photo? She was sure they’d lost it when Cocoon fell. It showed a much younger Lightning running around their front yard dressed as Spectaculargirl, one of Cocoon’s most famous comic book superheroes. Her uniform was mostly blue, but hanging from her back was a very familiar red cape.

“Maybe.” Lightning was definitely going to kill Serah. Yep, she’d shoot her with her own bow.

“You look pretty cute in that.” Fang tucked the photograph back into her sari and cupped Lightning’s cheek. “But you really shouldn’t be lecturing me on practicality. You wear your cape because of a comic you liked when you were a kid.”

Lightning did her best to ignore Fang’s amusement, which was much harder than she liked. Fang looked really good when she was amused. The cape had been a safety blanket of sorts when she’d joined the Guardian Corps. She’d known full well what she’d given up when she joined – her childhood, amongst other things – and the cape had been a reminder of better times. It also looked cool.

As Lightning opened her mouth to reply, Fang cut her off.


“Seriously?” Fang pulled back a fraction, more than a little suspicious. “You’re going to give up just like that?”

“Maybe.”

“Oh, no.” Fang shook her head. “You’re planning something – mmmph!”

Lightning was indeed planning something. That was why she had decided to put her feminine wiles to work. Fang was an absolute sucker for her feminine wiles.

Besides, it was the weekend. They could afford to get up late in the morning. They could even stay in bed all day if they wanted to.

X X X

Vanille wondered, and not for the first time, why she hadn’t found her own place to live. Then she remembered why: Fang and Lightning hadn’t exactly been getting it on everywhere when she and
Fang had moved in. In fact, they hadn’t been together then. Instead, they’d been circling each other like a pair of hungry sharks.

Lightning’s house was also in a very convenient place, and looking for a new place was such a hassle. Not to mention, all of her previous attempts to move out had been interrupted by Fang. Her older sister wanted to keep an eye on her – when she wasn’t keeping an eye on Lightning, or rather Lightning’s “assets”. No wonder Vanille and Serah got along so well. They had a pair of overprotective – but loveable – psychos for sisters.

On the upside, Fang and Lightning were two of her favourite people, and Serah’s house was within walking distance. Lightning also kept a fantastically well-stocked fridge and pantry. The only downside, really, apart from walking in on Fang and Lightning, was Lightning’s tendency to come running to her for help when she needed revenge against Fang. As Fang’s younger sister, Vanille knew all about the skeletons in Fang’s closet. And it wasn’t so much a closet as a vault, and there weren’t a few skeletons so much as there was an entire freaking graveyard in there.

“What do you need this time?” Vanille hadn’t taken her eyes off her computer. She was playing the latest MMO, World of Crystal.

“What is that?” Lightning leaned over her shoulder. There was a brief pause followed by an almost physical drop in the temperature of the room. Vanille had to grab Lightning before she could rip the computer monitor off the table. “Are you serious?”

“Let go!” Vanille pried Lightning’s hands off the monitor. “So they made an MMO about our journey, what’s the big deal? There are already action figures and toys. Why not a video game? Besides, it’s paying for half a dozen new hospitals.” Lightning stared. “It’s popular.”

“It’s a video game about our journey.” Lightning said the words slowly as though that would somehow force them to make more sense.

“I know,” Vanille replied, equally slowly. She pointed at her character. “See, that’s me. I’m a level 99 warrior.”

“You look like Fang.” Lightning shook her head in disbelief.

“Well, yeah.” Vanille turned back to the monitor but remained ready to grab it in case Lightning tried anything. “Fang is a warrior, so it makes sense to make my character look like her.” She cackled. “I’m the highest level warrior on the server. In fact, there’s only one other person who has hit the level cap and – there she is!”

Vanille growled as the familiar visage of PrincessPinky appeared on screen. The other player was a level 99 soldier who used the Lightning model. She was the only other level 99 on the server, and she and Vanille were mortal enemies.

Once again, they engaged in an epic battle. Vanille refused to believe that she could lose to someone dressed as Lightning, not when she was dressed as Fang. But she did lose. Badly.

“Damn it!” Vanille logged out and stifled the urge to put her keyboard through the screen. “That Army of One move is such crap. I’ve seen your Army of One, that thing does not hit the whole screen. And as if you can dodge Fang’s Highwind! Boo! Boo! Whoever made this game is full of crap.”

Suddenly aware of the fact that Lightning was staring at her like she’d grown a second head, Vanille switched her screen back to the document she’d been working on. It was a proposal for
some modifications to Guardian Corps equipment to better suit the climate and conditions around New Bodhum.

“So,” Vanille said in her most serious voice. “What did you need?” She had to act cool. Nobody would suspect a thing.

“I need dirt on Fang.”

And there it was.

Vanille pretended to study her fingernails. “What can you give me in exchange?”

“A chance to not get strangled in the next five seconds.”

“That’s not a bad start.” Vanille put both hands on her desk and pushed her chair away from Lightning. Chairs with wheels were awesome. “But you’ll have to do better.” Lightning’s expression darkened, but Vanille played her trump card. “We both know how pissed Serah would be if you strangled her best friend.” Heh. Using Serah as a human shield was part of Lightning Psychology 101.

Lightning made a disgusted sound. “Fang may have found an embarrassing picture of me.”

“Oh, sweet Etro, please don’t tell you’ve been taking sex pictures of each other.” Vanille covered her eyes with her hands. Lightning and Fang were both beautiful women, but she did not need to see any more of them than she already had.

“No!” Lightning pulled Vanille’s hands off her face. “There are no sex pictures. She found a photograph of me when I was a kid.”

“Oh, it’s one of those pictures.” Vanille scratched her chin in what she believed was a sagely manner. It didn’t look very sagely at all to Lightning. “So, you want one of Fang?”

“Yes!”

“Well, I haven’t got any.”

Lightning took one step forward. She reached for Vanille’s neck…

“Wait!” Vanille grabbed Lightning’s wrists. “Don’t blame me. I didn’t build Bhakti until later and photographs don’t last for hundreds of years.” She waited for Lightning to calm down. “But I do have something else.”

“Is it good?”

“The best.”

“Then give it to me.”

Vanille waved one finger in the air. “That’s not how it works. What can you give me?”

“I know you’ve been stealing my chocolate.” Lightning glared. “I also know that you took my car out for a spin last week.”

Vanille froze. How did Lightning even know about the chocolate? She’d taken the ones from the back of the pantry. Did Lightning take inventory every week or something? Probably. And as for the car… she’d gotten it back into the garage in the exact same spot before Lightning had come
home. “Uh…”

“I will continue to ignore both of those if you give me what I want.” Lightning folded her arms over her chest. “I’ll even throw in an embarrassing picture of Serah when she was younger.”

“Deal.” Vanille put one hand out. “Picture first.”

Lightning took the picture out of her pocket. “Enjoy.”

Vanille studied the picture and then burst out laughing. “Serah dressed up as a chocobo when she was little? Mwahahahaha. I am so bringing this with me the next time I go over. Well, not the original, but copies. Lots of copies.”

It took five minutes for Vanille to calm down. Lightning tried to ignore the feeling she’d done a deal with the devil. “She always wanted to be a chocobo when she was younger.”

“She wanted to be a chocobo? No wonder she and Chirpy get along so well.”

“All right, enough laughing.” Lightning grabbed the sides of Vanille’s chair. The red head wasn’t going anywhere. “Give me what you have.”

Vanille wiped a few tears from her eyes. “All right. In the garage you can find a hidden compartment built into the floor near the back wall. It’s about halfway along. In that compartment you’ll find a box. Trust me, you can’t lose if you open that box.” She bit her lip. “And for the record, I totally didn’t have anything to do with anything in that box.”

X X X

Lightning went into the garage. There was a box in a hidden compartment exactly where Vanille said there would be. She was almost afraid of what she would find. Fang did have some weird habits although not all of them were bad – like Fang’s nonchalant attitude to walking around nude when they were alone.

The box was locked, but it didn’t take long for Lightning to get it open. There might be a password involved, but she knew Fang better than anyone.

Inside the box were…

Action figures.

Action figures of Lightning.

Since the Fall of Cocoon, the former l’Cie had become celebrities of a sort. Lightning had become especially famous due to her looks and position. Countless action figures of her had been made, and Fang seemed to have all of them.

There were action figures of Lightning in her Guardian Corps uniform along with a host of other costumes. One had her in camouflage gear. Another had her in full battle armour. One of them even had her in a cocktail dress – and that wasn’t even the strangest one. Her lips curled. As if she’d ever wear something like that into battle.

Now she realised why Vanille had sworn to have nothing to do with it. The red head was in charge of handling all of this kind of stuff. People were going to make merchandise one way or another, so it was up to Vanille to ensure they all got their fair share of the profits and that some of it was used to fund worthy causes. Lightning and Fang’s personal cause was an orphanage that both of them
Vanille had definitely known about this though. Lightning might have to talk her later. Depending on how Vanille answered, there might be more than talking involved.

At the bottom of the box – still in their original packaging like all of the others – was a special commemorative edition Fang and Lightning set that Lightning had never seen before. Her hands trembled as she took in the clothes the figures were wearing. One set of figures had Fang in a suit and Lightning in a dress. The other was the opposite. What made Lightning’s hands tremble was the kind of dresses they wore: wedding dresses.

Lightning felt something deep inside her clench as she read the title on the box: Oerba Yun Fang and Lightning Farron Special Marriage Edition Action Figures.

Was… was this what Fang wanted? Lightning had thought about it – she’d thought about it a lot – but she hadn’t known if Fang was ready to get married yet. Did the Yun even marry the way the people of Cocoon did? And what kind of ceremony –

Lightning shook her head. She could think about this later. Carefully, she put everything away and lifted the box into her arms. She had an argument to win.

What Lightning didn’t notice was that on the back of the packaging was a personal guarantee from one Oerba Dia Vanille promising the upcoming nuptials of two of the most important people in her life. She’d personally designed the action figures with the help of a certain Serah Farron. Accuracy, after all, was very important.

Fang got back from Lebreau’s bar and sagged onto the couch. The other woman had been short one bouncer, and Fang had decided to help her out. She hadn’t needed to do much. Her reputation preceded her, and it only took one decisive ass kicking for everyone else to realise that she did, in fact, live up to the stories.

The smile on Lightning’s face as she walked into the room put Fang on edge. Then she saw the box in Lightning’s arms. The thoughts that went through Fang’s head were the very opposite of coherent.

Oh crap.
Oh crap.
Damn Vanille.
Oh crap.
Oh crap.
Kill Vanille.
Oh crap.
Oh crap.

“Oh crap.”

“It seems I’m not the only one who likes some interesting things.” Lightning gently took a few of
the action figures out and put them on the coffee table. “There’s me in my normal outfit. There is me as a combat medic. And here I am in camouflage gear, a cocktail dress… and is that me as a catgirl?” Lightning chuckled and then pulled out one last set of action figures. “And there’s the two of us getting married.”

Fang had to force the words out of her mouth. “How about we call it a draw?”

Lightning laughed. “I don’t know.” Fang was certain that Lightning just wanted to see her sweat, which was fair since she also liked seeing Lightning sweat. Not out nervousness maybe, but hey, all’s fair in love and war. “I guess we can call it draw. I’ll ignore the fact that you apparently like collecting Lightning action figures when you have the real one if you pretend you never heard a thing about my wanting to be a superhero.”

Fang gave a sigh of relief and pulled Lightning into her arms. “Deal.”

A light blush covered Lightning’s cheeks as Fang drew her into a kiss. When they parted, she gave the other woman a nervous smile. “Fang… about those action figures…”

“Oh, come on.” Fang didn’t want to talk about action figures now that she had the real thing in her arms. “I thought we were going to call it a draw?”

“You do realise that most of those would never come true, right? I am never going into battle in a cocktail dress.”

“I get that, yeah.”

“But that last set of action figures.” Lightning bit her lip. “How would you feel if maybe that came true?”

Fang could have sworn that her heart skipped a beat – or maybe ten. “Are you serious? Because if you’re joking…”

“Not just yet,” Lightning said quietly. “But soon maybe.” She pressed her lips against Fang’s. It was a chaste kiss this time, gentle. “If… if you wanted to.”

“Are you kidding?” Fang’s kiss was decidedly not chaste. “My only question is who wears the suit?”

Lightning’s eyes gleamed and Fang couldn’t fight the smile forming on her face. “I will.”

“No, I will.”

“No, I will.”

“Don’t make me go to Serah again,” Fang warned. “You know how much she wants to see you in a dress.”

Lightning laughed. “And you don’t think Vanille wants to see you in a dress?”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.
This chapter was based on Fangraii Forever Prompt #211: Fang loses a (silly) argument to Lightning. She goes seeking advice from Serah to get advantage. Serah lets Fang know there might be a way to win. It can be a ticklish lightning or goofy childhood picture.

Strangely enough, this chapter didn’t start off with much romantic content in it at all. The original idea was simply to have Fang and Lightning engage in another game of one-upmanship with Serah and Vanille getting dragged into things. As I wrote the chapter, however, it occurred to me that I could probably insert more romance into it and still get the whole thing to work.

The original set of ideas didn’t include Lightning’s scene with Vanille or the ending scene with Lightning and Fang. However, I think the story reads much better with those scenes included.

One of the best things, I think, about being close to someone (romantically, filially, or platonically) is being able to argue with them. I argue with people close to me all the time. I still remember an argument on the train with one of my friends that ended with a stranger asking me if I was okay. I was, of course, perfectly fine - our argument was in good fun – but my friend is much larger and taller than I am, which could have made the whole thing seem a bit threatening to someone on the outside of the argument. I also argue with my sister about all sorts of petty things. It’s fun, and neither of us feels any guilt about occasionally kicking the other in the back or pushing them into a bush.

I can easily imagine Lightning and Fang as old women still arguing over the most trivial things because they can. Heck, I can even imagine them racing their wheelchairs if it ever comes to that. Love is all about compromise – and occasional acts of petty revenge. At least it is when Lightning and Fang are involved.

Also, the Lightning action figures are a nod to her new outfits in Lightning Returns. And, yes, PrincessPinky is Serah (World of Crystal is a poorly disguised reference to World of Warcraft).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Lightning took a deep breath and fixed her posture. She’d spent two months in the field at one of the newest settlements. The people of Cocoon had a lot to learn before they were ready to thrive, and not simply survive, on Gran Pulse. From there, she’d gone straight to New Eden for a conference that brought together the most senior officers in the Guardian Corps.

The Guardian Corps had been founded on Cocoon, but the policies that had worked so well there didn’t work on Gran Pulse. Change was needed if performance in the field was to improve. As one of the only experts they had, Lightning had been asked to provide a series of recommendations for consideration.

After the conference, she’d flown straight back to New Bodhum. She hadn’t even had time to change out of her dress uniform. The garment wasn’t well suited for combat, but it was definitely impressive. The style and cut lent her a certain stateliness that her usual outfit could not. It was ideal given all of the media coverage of the conference in New Eden. People wanted heroes to protect them. They wanted the Guardian Corps to tell them that everything would be all right.

That was far from the truth. Not everyone had adjusted to life on Gran Pulse. Casualties amongst officers were at an all time high. That was why Lightning had proposed a radical shift in the way officers were trained: more rigorous selection procedures, more focus on combat, more fieldwork, and closer working relationships between senior and junior officers.

Combat on Gran Pulse was swift, brutal, and deadly. It also involved an incredibly diverse array of threats. There was no way to train newly minted officers for all of the situations they would encounter. What they needed were mentors: highly skilled individuals who could take a few junior officers under their wing and provide specialised training.

Lightning hadn’t come up with her recommendations alone. She’d spent countless hours with Fang, adding detail to her proposals and making changes where necessary. The clans of Gran Pulse had survived for centuries before the War of Transgression. Lightning could think of no one better to help the people of Cocoon survive than a warrior of the Yun clan.

Fang was also the reason Lightning had been in such a hurry to return to New Bodhum. A faint smile crossed her lips. The two of them had been together for almost six months now, albeit in secret. Two months away from Fang had left Lightning on edge, wanting – needing – to be around the other woman again. She wanted to tell Fang everything, to share every single little detail of the past two months. But only after she’d dragged Fang into the bedroom.

Unfortunately for Lightning’s libido, Serah had called last night to invite her to a get together at Serah and Snow’s house. It wasn’t an invitation Lightning could refuse, no matter how much she wanted to go home and fall into Fang’s arms. Lightning had hidden her relationship with Fang, but she’d inadvertently pushed the others away to do it. After all the hard work she and Serah had put into rebuilding their relationship, she couldn’t afford to miss this dinner. Her time with Fang would have to wait.

The battlefield had taught Lightning how to shake off exhaustion. She squared her shoulders and
rang the doorbell. A few seconds passed, and then Serah opened the door.

“You made it!” Serah threw herself at Lightning. Lightning caught her and took a step back to keep from falling over. This was why she fought so hard. The smile on Serah’s face was enough to get Lightning through a thousand long patrols. “I wasn’t sure you’d get here in time.”

“I always have time for you.” Lightning eased away from Serah. Her sister had a bright pink apron on. “What are you cooking? It smells delicious.”

“Oh, this and that.” Serah grinned. “You’ll find out soon enough. I saw you on television. You looked very dashing.”

Lightning raised one eyebrow. “And I don’t right now?”

Serah giggled. “You look more tired than dashing.” She pulled Lightning through the door and shut it behind them. “I’m sorry for dragging you to something so soon after your mission and the conference, but this was the only night everyone was free.”

Lightning stopped and turned Serah around to face her. “Serah, it’s no trouble. Really.” Lightning meant every word. For the longest time it had been her and Serah against the world. Now the former l’Cie were part of her family too. “So, is everyone here now?”

“Yes, except for Dajh. He’s spending the weekend at a friend’s house. But Sazh is here. He even arrived early to help me with the baking.” Serah winked. “He’s surprisingly good when it comes to cakes, you know.”

Sazh knew how to bake? Well, well, Lightning learned something new everyday. Serah said something else, but Lightning never heard the words. Fang had come into the room. Her mouth went dry, and two months of pent-up longing settled low and deep in her belly. Fang must have come right out of the shower. The green-eyed woman’s hair was still damp, and her skin was still slightly flushed. Fang had her sari on, but she was adjusting it. In the meantime, Lightning was treated to several tantalising glimpses of skin. Maker, she had to be staring.

As if Lightning had spoken her desire aloud, Fang turned and met her gaze. Neither of them said a word. They didn’t have to. The raw heat in Fang’s gaze kindled something hot and hungry in Lightning. It made Lightning want to shove Fang up against the wall and take her until the only word on her lips was Lightning’s name.

It didn’t help matters one bit that Fang did nothing at all to hide her frank perusal of Lightning’s uniform. She started from the bottom: perfectly polished black formal shoes, light grey trousers with a red stripe along one side, a white belt tied around the waist of a long-sleeved, dark grey coat with gold trim, and a white hat perched on top of Lightning’s head. Her gaze flicked back down for a moment, and her lips curved up at the edges as she took in the medals of honour pinned to Lightning’s chest and the insignia of rank on her shoulders.

Then Fang noticed the sole blemish in Lightning’s attire: Lightning had undone the top two buttons of her coat along with the top two buttons of the white shirt beneath. It wasn’t much, but after two months without Lightning, all Fang could think about was what she would see if she undid a few more buttons and stripped Lightning out of that uniform.

Lightning shivered under Fang’s gaze. The dark-haired woman didn’t have to say a thing. The look in her eyes was enough to tell Lightning what she wanted to do. Fang licked her lips, and Lightning almost groaned at the sight. A stray drop of moisture dripped out of Fang’s hair and down the side of her throat. It took every ounce of willpower Lightning had to not cross the gap between them.
and lick it off. Fang met her eyes and then ran one finger along her throat.

Maker.

“Lightning?”

Lightning jerked her eyes away from Fang. “Serah? Sorry, do you think you could say that again?”

Serah frowned. “You must really be tired. I asked if you could maybe go into the kitchen and help Vanille finish a few things off. I need to go run to the store around the corner to get some things.”

“Where’s Snow?” Lightning wanted nothing more than to get some alone time with Fang.

“He and Sazh are doing some barbecuing outside.”

“All right. I can help Vanille in the kitchen.” Lightning strode toward the kitchen and then stopped in front of Fang. “Hi.” She was close enough to breathe in the other woman’s scent. A little closer and she’d be able to feel Fang’s breath against her lips. “It’s been a while.”

“You could say that.” Fang reached up and redid the buttons of Lightning’s shirt and coat. “Can’t have you looking untidy, now can we?”

Lightning bit back a hiss as Fang smoothed her coat and shirt back into place. She stifled the urge to reach up and hold Fang’s hands. Serah had stopped to stare – she knew how much Lightning disliked other people touching her. Touching Fang back would only draw more attention.

“Thanks.”

“Fang,” Serah said slowly. “You said you were going to come with me to the store, remember? Let’s go.”

Lightning felt a shiver run down her spine as Fang gave her one last, scorching look. “All right, Serah. Lead the way.”

X X X

For Fang, dinner was torture of the most exquisite sort. If she was honest, she couldn’t remember exactly how she’d gotten to the table. The only thing on her mind was the only thing she could not afford to stare too openly at: Lightning.

Dinner was served around a large table. Fang sat opposite Lightning. Everything looked and smelled wonderful, and it wasn’t long before the others were deep in conversation. Normally, Fang would have savoured all of the talking and joking around. These people were her family. But tonight, all she could think about was Lightning.

It would have been generous – and wrong – to call their relationship conventional. Neither of them was entirely sure how or why they’d ended up in bed after a mission together, but both of them agreed that it felt right. Fang had never given much through to romance. True, she’d had her fair share of dalliances in the past, but never like this, never with someone like Lightning. She didn’t want one month or one year or one decade with Lightning. She wanted forever. It would have terrified her, except she knew that Lightning felt the same way.

And then they’d been sent out on separate missions. It was hard trying to hide their relationship when Vanille shared the house, but at least they could sneak a few nights together here and there. Two months – two whole months – without Lightning had been torture. Fang had woken up on more than one occasion, hot and wet and aching with need. Her dreams became collages of
sensations – sights, sounds, tastes, textures, scents – all of them Lightning’s, and all of them so vivid that Fang almost wept when she awakened to find herself alone again.

She’d wondered, sometimes angrily, why Lightning wanted to keep their relationship a secret. It wasn’t because Lightning was ashamed. No, Fang had a feeling it had more to do with the attention they would receive. It was funny, in a way. Despite how much attention Lightning naturally drew because of her looks, her position, and her fighting skills, she despised being the centre of attention. If it ever got out that they were together, they would find themselves at the centre of an absolute storm of scrutiny. For someone who treasured her privacy as much as Lightning, it would be a nightmare. So Fang would continue to play along, at least for now.

The food was delicious. Serah was quite a cook, and Snow, Sazh, Hope, and Vanille had all made admirable contributions. It was just a pity that Fang couldn’t focus on the food, not with Lightning staring at her like that.

When Fang had first met Lightning, she’d thought the other woman only had two expressions: pissed off and cold. It had taken her a long time to grasp all the nuances of Lightning’s expressions, but now that she had, she realised how wonderfully expressive Lightning really was. This dinner was a perfect example. Lightning hardly said a word aloud, but her face and posture spoke volumes.

Lightning had perfect posture. It didn’t matter how tired she was, her back could double as a ruler. But around her family, she relaxed a little. She didn’t slouch – Fang doubted Lightning even knew how – but she allowed herself to loosen up a little. It was something that only they had the privilege to see, and it showed how much Lightning trusted them.

There was the minute twitch at the corner of Lightning’s mouth whenever Hope shared a funny anecdote about his classes and training. On anyone else, it would have been a broad grin, but Hope recognised it for what it was and beamed. Then there was the small, but genuine, smile on Lightning’s face as Serah explained all of the miniature disasters that had gone into preparing everything with Snow and the others. Even the faint frown Lightning gave Snow when he threw one arm around Serah was actually an expression of affection if you looked past the downward slant of her lips to the amused twinkle in her eyes.

Fang had looked at Lightning’s face so much, she felt like she could have painted it from memory if she’d possessed any artistic talent whatsoever. Since she couldn’t draw worth a damn, she had to content herself with visualising it and studying it more closely when she could. And right now, she didn’t care if the others noticed her staring. If she couldn’t hold Lightning, then she could at least look at her.

As always, Fang started by simply letting her eyes take in the whole picture. She loved the way Lightning’s hair frame her features. It was a little rumpled now because of Lightning’s frantic schedule, but Fang had to keep her fingers wrapped firmly around her cutlery lest she reach across the table and touch it.

Lightning’s features had always fascinated Fang. Lightning looked regal. There weren’t kings or queens anymore, but if there were, Lightning was what Fang thought a queen should look like: proud but not arrogant, calm yet stern, strong but undeniably feminine. Lightning had the sort of refined features that Fang had come to associate more with the marble statues in an art gallery than actual people.

Fang’s gaze lingered on Lightning’s lips. She knew that Lightning took very good care of them. Lightning carried a tube of lip-gloss with her everywhere, not out of vanity, but as a concession to the often dry and windy weather of Gran Pulse. Fang loved the fact that Lightning never got
flavoured lip-gloss. Fang got to taste Lightning each time they kissed.

And finally there were Lightning’s eyes. They were such expressive eyes. They could narrow in displeasure, widen in surprise, and the heavy-lidded look Lightning sometimes gave her – and was giving her right now – was enough to make Fang squirm in her seat. With just a glance, Fang could tell how Lightning felt, and despite how beautiful the rest of Lightning was – inside and out – there was something devastatingly alluring about the stormy look in Lightning’s eyes when they made a love. It was a passion that was almost frightening in its intensity. Lightning fought with ruthless precision and deadly grace, but she loved with reckless fury.

Throughout dinner, Fang and Lightning hardly spoke to each other at all. What they wanted to say wasn’t for other people to hear. However, they kept up a more than healthy dose of eye contact. Fang savoured the slight twitch above Lightning’s eye when she made a show of licking some of her food off her spoon. Her mirth lasted until Lightning returned the favour, never breaking eye contact as her tongue cleaned the food off her spoon.

Fang had never thought of eating as particularly sexy, but Lightning made it work. They locked eyes again over a glass of wine. Fang watched Lightning’s long, slender fingers wrap around her wine glass before she lifted it to her lips and took a sip. Fang knew exactly what those fingers could do, and the thought was enough to make her reach for her own glass of wine. When Lightning’s tongue poked out to lick a drop of wine off her lips, Fang couldn’t pour her another glass fast enough.

As dinner went on, Fang found another way to keep occupied. She brushed her foot against Lightning’s calf and watched the other woman shudder. Across the table, Lightning’s eyes met Fang’s and darkened with tightly leashed passion. Fang ignored the warning buried beneath Lightning’s desire and eased her foot up Lightning’s calf toward her knee.

Lightning stiffened and Fang bit back a laugh. The pink haired woman had a death grip on her spoon. A slight shift of Fang’s foot let her stroke along the inside of one slim thigh. Lightning shivered so hard that even Serah noticed.

“Lightning?” Serah’s eyes were wide with concern. Fang’s eyes twinkled as Lightning finally broke their stare to look at her sister. “Are you all right?”

“It’s nothing.” Lightning bit her lip to swallow a groan. Fang’s foot was still stroking her thigh. A glance at the other woman let Lightning know how much Fang was enjoying this. And Maker, Lightning was enjoying it too. Two months without Fang had left her aching for the other woman’s touch. “I’m just tired.”

“Oh.” Serah smiled. “Well, at least you have the next week off, right?”


As the conversations around the table resumed, Fang met Lightning’s eyes again. There was something dark and hungry in Lightning’s gaze, something impatient. She was done waiting. Calmly, like nothing was amiss, Lightning got up and excused herself to go to the bathroom. She tossed one last look over her shoulder at Fang. Two minutes. She was going to give Fang two minutes to go after her.

Fang waited one minute and then got up to get some more soda out of the fridge. At least, that’s what she told everyone else.

X X X
Lightning didn’t need to open the bathroom door to know it was Fang. She’d memorised everything about the huntress from her scent to the sound of her walk. Fang stepped inside the bathroom, locked the door, and smirked.

“So, did you miss me?” The words were teasing. Fang’s voice and eyes were not. There was raw hunger there, the kind that had haunted Lightning’s dreams for two months now.

Lightning didn’t bother to reply. Instead, she yanked Fang over and kissed her. It was a harsh kiss, bruising in its intensity, and through the haze of scents, textures and tastes, all of them so uniquely Fang, she felt Fang lifting her up off her feet. Lightning didn’t hesitate. She wrapped her legs around Fang’s waist and melted into their kiss.

Fang made a sound deep in her throat – a growl or a snarl – and hoisted Lightning up onto the counter beside the sink. Her eyes were a deep, savage green as she pulled away and licked her lips.

“I take it that’s a yes.”

Lightning pulled Fang closer. “Are you going to stand there teasing me, or are you going to fuck me?”

Fang’s lips twitched. Her smile was heartbreaking in its honesty. “I’d rather make love to you.”

Despite the ache between her thighs, Lightning smiled back. “We can do that later, but right now, we’re a little short on time.”

“Still so bossy.” Fang eyed Lightning’s uniform intently. It looked wonderful on Lightning, but it would have to go. She wanted her Lightning nice and naked.

“Fang.” Lightning’s eyes narrowed. “Stop talking.”

Fang flashed Lightning a jaunty salute and then leaned forward to press a kiss to Lightning’s throat. “Yes, ma’am.”

X X X

“Did you see that?” Vanille let loose a girlish squeal and grabbed Sazh’s arm. “Did you? Did you?”

Sazh pried Vanille’s hand off his arm. Vanille wasn’t exactly the biggest person in the group, but damn, she had a strong grip. “What am I supposed to have seen?”

“Fang and Lightning!” Vanille nearly swooned. “It was so obvious. Come on!”

“I think I know what you’re talking about.” Serah brows furrowed. “At least, I think I do.”

“All right, can someone please tell me what we’re all supposed to be seeing?” Sazh asked.

“Fang and Lightning, they were totally having crazy eye sex!” Vanille squealed again and wrapped her arms around herself. “They were totally getting it on with their eyes.”

“Eye sex?” Sazh raised one eyebrow. “Is that some kind of new-fangled thing that you kids are doing these days?”

Vanille punched him in the arm. “Don’t be dense! You were married before. You have to know what eye sex is.”
Serah bit back a grin as Sazh leaned out of Vanille’s reach. “Sazh, you must have seen it. They barely even noticed what was going on at dinner. They looked like they wanted to eat each other.”

Snow snickered. “They still might, actually.”

“Snow!” Serah gasped. “That’s my sister.” She gaped as Vanille reached over to give Snow a fist bump. “What are you doing? Aren’t you annoyed by what he just said?”

“Hell no.” Vanille smirked. “If Fang managed to snag Lightning, then she’s definitely got her game on.”

“But why didn’t they tell us?” Serah asked. “Assuming they’re together.”

Silence fell. Everyone around the table had a pretty good idea of why Lightning had wanted to keep things a secret. In the end, it was left to Hope to speak up. He was on the opposite end of the table, so he was safe from Serah’s wrath. Probably.

“Because you’re kind of as bad as Lightning is,” Hope said. Serah’s eyes narrowed, and he pressed on before he could lose his nerve. “We all know that Lightning is an overprotective psycho when it comes to you. But you’re the same way with her. Remember the last time someone asked for her number while she was having lunch with us at a cafe? We almost had to drag you away.”

“But –”

“And you know how private Lightning is. She wants to do things her own way at her own pace. She was probably worried that you’d start planning her wedding the moment you found out she and Fang were together.”

“I –” Serah took a deep breath. “I’m not that bad, am I?”

Vanille shrugged. “Serah, you’re my best friend. You know I love you. But yes, you are that bad.”

“Damn it.” Serah pouted. “I would not have started planning her wedding as soon as I found out.” The others look entirely unconvinced. “Okay, fine, but only a little.”

Throughout the conversation, all of them had failed to notice one very important fact. All of them, that is, except Sazh.

“You know,” Sazh said. “Fang still hasn’t come back from the kitchen with that soda.”

There was a brief moment of silence before Serah shot to her feet.

“Oh no!” Serah grabbed Vanille and dragged her out of her seat. “Come with me.”

“What are you doing?” Snow asked.

“Knowing Fang and Lightning,” Vanille said. “They’ve probably progressed from having crazy eye sex at the table to having crazy actual sex in your bathroom.”

Serah scowled. “I love my sister, and I think Fang might actually be a good match for her. But they are not going to have sex in my bathroom. I cleaned it yesterday.” She pushed Vanille in the general direction of the bathroom. “You, go knock on the bathroom door. I’m going outside.”

“What?”

“Do it. Now.”
Fang loved Lightning’s dress uniform. It added to that regal air she had and was tailored to fit her in a way that was somehow alluring and dignified at the same time. A warrior queen, that’s what Lightning looked like. The only thing Fang didn’t like was how long it took to get off.

A low moan left Fang’s lips as she pulled away from Lightning. She needed time to catch her breath and think. More importantly, she needed to actually see what was doing if she wanted to get Lightning’s uniform off. Lightning was not helping. The come hither look in the soldier’s eyes combined with the pretty flush on her cheeks was almost enough to draw Fang in for another taste.

“Fang, what are you doing?”

“Give me one second.” Fang finally managed to get the belt around the waist of Lightning’s coat undone. She dropped it off to one side and went to work on the buttons of Lightning’s coat and shirt.

“I thought you said you were good with your hands,” Lightning grumbled. Fang was not touching her nearly enough for her liking.

“I am.” Fang got Lightning’s coat and shirt off and removed her bra. She now had Lightning topless in front of her, and she took a moment to savour the view. Then she let her hands and mouth wander as she undid Lightning’s trousers and snuck one hand along her hip and the hem of her underwear. Lace? Fang groaned. The thought of Lightning wearing lingerie under her uniform was such a damn turn on.

Her fingers were about to slip past Lightning’s underwear when someone hammered away on the door.

“Knock it off, you two!” Vanille banged on the door. “I know you’re having crazy sex in there.”

Fang jerked away. Lightning snarled.

“Don’t say anything,” Lightning whispered. She clenched her thighs around Fang’s hand. She wasn’t about to let Fang go anywhere. “Maybe she’ll go away.”

“Now I get why Serah wanted to go outside. Fine, pretend that you’re not getting busy in there.” Vanille cackled. “It’s up to you Serah.”

Lightning’s gaze snapped to the window as it slid open. There was nothing but darkness beyond the panes, and then Serah appeared. She had a stick in one hand and the other thrown over her face.

“Don’t make me poke you with this.” Serah brandished her stick. “We’re supposed to be having dinner. We’re supposed to be eating.”

Lightning wasn’t sure whether to scream, laugh, or cry.

Fang chuckled. “Technically, I was about to – ouch!”

Serah had poked her with the stick.

“Out!” Serah waved the stick in the air. “Now!”

Sazh had seen a lot of funny things in his life, but this had to be one of the funniest. Lightning
refused to look at any of them. The fact that they all knew what she and Fang had been up to in the 
bathroom may have had something to do with that. After all, it was one thing to know that your 
friends had sex – he knew that Snow and Serah had sex, for example – it was quite another to know 
they’d been in the middle of it only a few minutes ago.

“Look, I’m not going to ask what you two were doing in there,” Sazh said. “But I will say 
congratulations. I think you two are good for each other. It’s about damn time.”

The others echoed his sentiments.

Lightning swallowed back the lump in her throat. Intellectually, she’d know the others would 
accept her and Fang. But having it actually happen meant so much to her. “Thanks.” She chanced a 
quick look at Serah. Her sister still looked angry. “Serah, I –”

Serah held up one hand. Her expression softened into a smile. “I won’t lie. I’m a little angry you 
didn’t tell me, but I can understand why you didn’t.” She gave the others a mock glare.

“Apparently, I’m the kind of person who doesn’t think anyone is good enough for her sister and 
who would also start planning her sister’s wedding at the drop of a hat.”

Lightning’s lips twitched. “We’re both a little overprotective, I think.”

“I’m happy for you.” Serah patted Lightning’s hand. “You deserve to be happy, and if Fang makes 
you happy, that’s fine with me.” She scowled at Fang. “She does make you happy, right?”

Lightning grinned. Her sister could be very scary when she wanted to be. “Very much so.”

“Good.” Serah giggled. “Besides, it’s not like I can complain about you keeping your relationship 
with Fang a secret. I did kind of do the same thing for a while when it came to Snow.”

Fang gave a small sigh of relief. Serah had taken this very well. “So, Vanille…”

“I already knew.” The red head shrugged and ignored the death glare that Serah sent her way. 
Serah could be scary, but Vanille shared a house with Fang and Lightning. The older Farron was a 
million times scarier, plus Vanille was at least moderately confident she could take Serah in a fight. 
“You two aren’t as quiet as you think. Plus, I saw you sneaking out of Lightning’s room a couple 
of times when I got up for a midnight snack.”

“So… you’re okay with us being together?” Fang scratched the back of her head. Vanille had 
known an interesting piece of gossip and actually kept it a secret?

“Of course I am!” Vanille clasped her hands together. “You two are great together. I figure you’ll 
either stay married till the day you die or kill each other. Maybe even both.”

Lightning and Fang shared a look.

“All right.” Hope stood up and lifted a knife. “That’s enough serious stuff for the evening. I think 
we can all agree that Lightning and Fang being together is a good thing. Now, who wants some 
cake?”

X X X

Snow draped one arm around Serah and settled down on the couch. Everything had been cleaned 
up, and the others had all gone home. It was late, but they’d picked up a few new movies 
yesterday. They could watch one and then head up to bed. However, they were only a few minutes 
into the romantic comedy that Serah had chosen when there was a knock on the door.
It was Vanille. The red head had a pillow in one arm and a bag full of clothes and toiletries in the other. A blanket was draped over her shoulders like a cape.

“Can I please, please stay here for the weekend?”


Vanille pushed past him, closed the door, and then tossed her things down beside the couch. “You should have seen them in the car, Snow. I had to drive them back, remember. And then when they got home… yeah. When we said they didn’t have to hide things anymore, we should have added that they didn’t have to show us everything either.”

“You’re still not making much sense.” Snow shrugged his shoulders at Serah as Vanille settled down on the couch beside her. He went back to his own spot on the couch on Serah’s other side.

“I’ll put it this way. Neither Fang nor Lightning will be getting much sleep this weekend. And if you don’t let me stay here, neither will I.”

“Oh.” Snow chuckled. “Oh.”

Serah sighed. “You can stay in the guestroom.”

“Awesome.” Vanille looked at the television. “What is this?”

“It’s a romantic comedy,” Snow said. “I wanted the movie with giant robots in it, but…”

“Let’s switch to that.” Vanille tugged on Serah’s arm. “Please.”

“I’m already letting you stay at my house.” Serah gave Vanille a mock scowl. “Don’t push it.”

“Let’s vote on it.” Vanille stuck her hand up in the air. “I vote for giant robots.”

“So do I.” Snow sniggered at the putout expression Serah’s face. “What? It’s democracy in action.”

Serah grabbed hold of the remote control. “This house is not a democracy.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #218: Eyesex: Fang and Lightning sexing each other with looks. On seperate missions, the two secret lovers have been away from each other for months. the night they finally had a chance to be together, something comes up and they are forced to participate in a group get-together. their only recourse is scathing glances and steamy gazes.

Eyes are odd things. They can say so much or so little. It all depends on whom they belong to and how well we know them. In this chapter, I wanted to have a good mix of humour, romance, and some (almost) sexy times. I don’t know if it’s a subconscious thing, but I’ve interrupted Fang and Lightning a number of times during these prompt fills. Fang must hate me for that, Lightning too, I suspect.
I do think that the former l’Cie would accept a relationship between Fang and Lightning quite easily. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised if they had a little bet going during their journey about how long it would take. I also think that Serah is every bit as much an overprotective psycho as Lightning, albeit with a different modus operandi. Vanille, of course, has had time to get used to the idea, and if she wanted to revenge on Lightning for hurting Fang, she wouldn’t bother to tell her. She’d probably just slip poison in her coffee or something.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Sex Is Never Simple

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sex Is Never Simple

Lightning was in a state of bliss. Admittedly, it wasn’t a state of orgasmic bliss, but Fang was working on that. After months of dating, neither of them could bear to hold back any longer. They’d sent Vanille over to Serah and Snow’s house for the weekend and headed right up to the bedroom. They could always break in the rest of the house later.

Fast forward a few minutes, and Lightning was pinned down on her bed with Fang’s head nestled in between her thighs. Lightning liked to be in charge, but the dark, almost violent gleam in Fang’s eyes had convinced her that maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to leave things up to the huntress. Fang loved to boast, but she always – absolutely always – backed up her boasts.

Fang had promised to fuck Lightning until she passed out from the pleasure.

Lightning groaned as Fang’s lips, fingers, and tongue settled into a ragged, heady rhythm. Her back arched and beads of sweat trickled down her body to settle along the curves of her breasts and belly. The tension inside her built and built. A little more, oh yes, just a little –

“RAAAAAAAAARGGGGHHHHH!”

People made all sorts of sounds during sex. That was not one of them. Lightning opened her eyes and then threw herself off the bed.

Ragnarok licked her lips and grinned back at Lightning from on top of the bed. Her tail flicked lazily through the air.

Was this seriously happening? Lightning had no idea how it had happened, but Fang had somehow turned into Ragnarok. Naturally, the dark-haired woman had picked the worst possible time to do it.

Ragnarok stepped forward and eyed Lightning with all the hunger and desire that Fang felt. Oh no, Lightning had absolutely no problems having sex with Fang – in fact, she’d been right in the middle of that less than a minute ago – but she was not having sex with Ragnarok.

But where were her clothes? Lightning looked around and then scowled. Ragnarok had picked her clothes up with its tail. The beast fated to destroy Cocoon smirked and waved Lightning’s clothes around in the air. Well, there went that idea. At least there was still some of Fang in there. Only Fang would have the guts to wave Lightning’s clothes around and then smirk like an idiot.

How about her gun blade? The weapon was on the opposite side of the room. Damn it. Lightning would have to handle this the old-fashioned way. As Ragnarok stepped forward, Lightning grabbed a pillow and whacked her over the head.

“We are not having sex!”

X X X

Vanille glanced down at her cards and had to fight the urge to dance a merry jig around the room.
Contrary to common opinion, she wasn’t upset that Lightning and Fang had kicked her out of the house for the weekend. Those two had a lot of pent-up sexual frustration to work through. As a loving sister to Fang (and a sort-of sister to Lightning), it was practically Vanilly’s duty to get out of the way, so they could screw each other’s brains out. Besides, it wasn’t like she’d get bored – she got to hang out with Serah and Snow for the weekend.

Right now they were in the middle of a poker game with a difference. Dinner had included the tastiest little spring rolls that Vanille had ever tasted. The three of them had divided the spring rolls up evenly. However, Vanille wanted to have more fun and more spring rolls. Her solution: a poker game with spring rolls instead of money.

“All right.” Snow grinned. “Let’s see what you ladies have got.” He laid his cards down on the table. He’d put together a pretty decent hand: a flush. “How’s that?” He eyed the spring rolls hungrily. A total of ten spring rolls were at stake. “I can practically taste them already.”

“Not so fast.” Serah smirked and put her cards on the table. “I’ve got a full house.” She reached for the spring rolls. “I’m afraid you’ll be going hungry tonight –”

“Heh.” Vanille cackled and tossed her cards onto the table. “Never mess with a Dia when it comes to food or money.”

She had a straight flush.

Vanille went for the spring rolls. Serah grabbed her wrist. “Hey, what’s the deal? I won. Those are my spring rolls.”

“That’s the fifth straight flush you’ve had tonight.” The Farron’s eyes narrowed ominously. Across the table, Snow nodded in agreement. “There is no way that you are that lucky.”

“I am so that lucky.”

“Snow,” Serah said. “Turn her upside down and shake her. I swear she’s cheating.”

“Wait, wait!” Vanille held up her other hand and then gestured down at her clothing. “Look at what I’m wearing. How can I possibly be cheating? You two have been watching me the whole time. I don’t even have any sleeves to hide cards in.”

For a brief moment, Vanille was certain that logic and sanity had prevailed. Then Serah tackled her to the floor and started groping her.

“I know you’re hiding cards somewhere, Vanille. I –”

BOOM!

“That came from down the street.” Snow hurried to the window. “I think it’s from Lightning’s house.”

“Lightning’s house?” Vanille shoved Serah off and ran outside. “My stuff!” she wailed. Suddenly aware of the fact that both Serah and Snow had come outside to stare at her, she gave a polite cough. “I mean… let’s go over there and see what happened. Lightning and Fang might need our help.”

“Yes,” Serah said dryly. “Let’s.”

Snow snickered. “Trust Lightning and Fang to make things explode while having sex.”
Vanille snickered back. “You could say that it was quite an... explosive encounter.”

The two of them giggled like schoolgirls until Serah slapped each of them over the back of the head. She had to jump to reach the back of Snow’s head.

“Knock it off, you two! Honestly.” Serah grabbed her bow and tossed Vanille’s binding rod at her. “Let’s go.”

X X X

Snow prided himself on his affability and generally good nature. That was probably why he and Vanille got along so well. But even though he didn’t hold a grudge against Lightning for years of attempted murder, he could still enjoy the occasional chuckle at her expense.

Now was one of those times.

“Hahahaha!” Snow fell onto his knees and clutched at his side. He was laughing so hard it hurt. He was vaguely aware of Serah glaring daggers at his back while Lightning glared daggers at his front. Vanille, however, was right beside him laughing her ass off.

Lightning was bundled up in a bed sheet as she whacked Ragnarok – freaking Ragnarok – over the head with a pillow. The legendary monster had grabbed hold of Lightning’s leg and was busy nuzzling her calf.

“I’m going to kill you,” Lightning snarled at Snow and Vanille. “I swear to the Maker, I’ll kill you both.” She tried to shove Ragnarok away with one hand. The monster simply started to nuzzle her palm. “Vanille! Do something!”

Snow dragged in a few deep breaths as Vanille pawed through the wreckage of the house. The red head emerged with what looked to be a bazooka.

“What is that?” Snow asked.

“It’s the world’s most powerful tranquiliser gun.”

“You keep something like that in your room?” Serah needed to find somewhere to sit down. Vanille was her best friend, but, really, a bazooka-shaped tranquiliser gun?

Snow didn’t see what the big deal was. Given how strange their lives could be, he should probably ask Vanille if she had a spare. He could keep it in the closet in his and Serah’s bedroom.

“Now, hold still.” Vanille took aim at Ragnarok. “And there.” She fired.

All the tranquiliser did was piss Ragnarok off. The beast uncoiled herself from Lightning’s leg and stalked over to Vanille. Vanille managed a startled “Oh crap!” before Ragnarok began to subject her to the world’s mightiest noogie.

“Help!” Vanille threw the tranquiliser bazooka at Snow. “Shoot her with it!”

Several shots later – Serah had been forced to dig through the rubble for more ammunition – and Ragnarok finally went down.

“Phew.” Vanille straightened her hair. “I hate it when Fang does that.”

Lightning managed to look menacing despite the fact that all she had on was a bed sheet. The soldier grabbed Vanille and lifted her off her feet. “I don’t care what it takes. Fix this.”
Snow had to pry Lightning’s hands off. “She can’t fix anything if she can’t breathe.”

“Damn it.” Lightning stalked off, muttering under her breath as she looked for some clothes. “I can’t even have sex without some kind of disaster happening.”

Snow swallowed a chuckle. Maybe it was karma for all the times that he and Serah had been interrupted by a certain overprotective, gun-blade-wielding, psycho of an older sister.

X X X

“Is this really necessary?” Sazh was used to being the voice of reason. Given who was in their group, who else was going to be? Still, this was something new, even for them.

Vanille had called a meeting of the former l’Cie in a heavily fortified bunker deep underground. Normally, Sazh would have taken a rain check. Anything that involved Vanille and a fortified underground bunker was probably trouble. But then Lightning had called to promise all sorts of bodily harm if he didn’t come help them with whatever problem they had.

Since Sazh didn’t want Dajh to grow up an orphan, he’d agreed to come along. He and the others – sans Fang – were in a control room at the heart of the bunker. A host of screens covered the walls. All of them showed Fang inside a heavily reinforced room. She had her eyes closed and her feet up on the table in front of her.

“This is all completely necessary.” Vanille shot to her feet and gesticulated wildly. “At any moment, Fang could transform into Ragnarok. There have already been casualties. Lightning’s house – and my stuff – have already been blown up. Who knows what might happen next? We have to take precautions.”

Snow scratched the back of his head. “Let’s be fair. I don’t think Fang transformed at random.”

Sazh still hadn’t heard the full story. He turned to Lightning for an explanation. For want of a better word, the soldier looked twitchy, very twitchy. She also looked pissed off, really pissed off. “So, mind telling me what happened?”

“We were together –”

“They were having sex,” Vanille clarified.

“When Fang transformed.” Lightning reached for Vanille, but the red head wisely grabbed Serah to use as a human shield.

Well, Sazh thought. That explained a lot. “Right… so… what are we doing here?”

Vanille folded her arms over her chest and gave them all a look of supreme confidence and self-importance. “For the sake of Lightning and Fang’s relationship, we need to fix this. Relationships aren’t built solely on sex, but Lightning and Fang probably want to have heaps of it, so it’s up to us to make sure that Fang doesn’t go all scary monster mode in the middle of doing Lightning. Otherwise, Lightning is going to stay pissed off and frustrated for the rest of her life.” The woman in question gave Vanille a murderous glare. Vanille winced. “Plus, Lightning said she would kill me if I don’t fix this. As if it’s my fault! This is probably one of the few times it isn’t my fault.”

Lightning’s smile was as brittle as glass. “Just fix it.”

“Look,” Sazh said. “How do we even know that Fang will turn into Ragnarok again? It could have been a one off.”
“That is an excellent point.” Vanille nodded sagely and stroked her imaginary beard with one hand. “That’s why we have to turn to science! Because science can solve anything.”

Oh, good grief. Sazh shook his head. Vanille was about to go off on one of her little tangents. Beside him, Hope shuddered. As a trainee in the Guardian Corps, Hope was always happy to help, which meant testing lots of Vanille’s inventions. He was lucky not to have lost a limb yet.

“You guys, wait here,” Vanille said. “Serah, Lightning, you two need to come with me.”

“Wait a second.” Sazh held up his hands. “What are we supposed to do while you three are gone?”

“Talk to Fang.” Vanille pointed at the computer. “Switch on the speakers and you’ll be able to hear her and talk to her. Try to keep her spirits up. We won’t be long.”

As the three women left the room, Sazh switched on the speakers.

“So… Fang… seen any good movies lately?”

Fang banged her head on the table.

“I guess not.”

X X X

Lightning was used to Vanille’s crazy ideas. There was even a part of her that liked them. She didn’t enjoy boredom, and Vanille was never boring. But she didn’t like this idea. No, she didn’t like it one bit.

“You want me to what?”

Vanille sighed and lowered the video camera. “I need you to strip for the camera.” She paused. “And you’ll probably have to do it multiple times, changing the order in which you take your clothes off.” She paused again. “And we might have to film you in different positions and stuff.” There was another pause, the longest so far. “You may also need to, you know, get busy with yourself a little.”

Before Lightning could get across the room to wring Vanille’s neck, Serah did it for her. The younger Farron grabbed her best friend and shook her around like a ragdoll.

“Are you trying to film pornography of my sister?” Serah growled. “Well, are you?”

“Gah… choking…” Vanille squirmed out of Serah’s grasp. With the camera held in front of her like a sword, she explained. “It’s all for science, Serah.”

Serah took a deep breath and then turned to Lightning. “You’re stronger than me. I’ll hold her, and you can punch.”

“Wait, wait, wait!” Vanille backed away. She was pretty sure she could take Serah in a fight. It might require a bit of cheating, but, yeah, she could do it. Lightning was another story. Lightning would murder her. “Remember what Sazh said? We don’t even know if Fang will turn into Ragnarok again. We need to find out if we can reproduce the transformation. I have a theory that Fang’s… arousal was what caused her to transform. So, we need to try and get her aroused to see if it will happen again.”

“And that means filming my sister stripping?” Serah asked. Her bow was still in the control room,
but she could probably strangle Vanille with her bare hands.

“We can’t take any chances,” Vanille said. “We have to approach this systematically. Maybe there’s a certain part of Lightning’s body that is responsible, or maybe it’s about what clothes she is or isn’t wearing. We have to do this carefully... for science and for Fang.”

Lightning’s teeth gnashed so hard she could have crushed granite. Vanille’s theory was one of the most aggravating things she’d ever heard because it might actually be true. Fang’s transformation into Ragnarok during their battle against Orphan had been driven by some powerful emotions. Vanille’s suggestion: a systematic striptease followed by... other things would provide them with a way of steadily increasing Fang’s arousal until she transformed. It would also give them stimuli to test the theory in more detail if it proved correct.

“Fine,” Lightning ground out. “But we are destroying the footage afterward. If I even think it has survived, I will kill you.”

“Okay.”

“And you won’t be the one filming it.”

“Uh, okay.” Vanille’s brows furrowed. She didn’t like Lightning in that way, as nice looking as she was. “But that means someone else will have to control the camera and stuff.” She glanced at Serah.

“No way.” Serah and Lightning had a host of issues, many of which were not for discussion in polite company. Being the camerawoman while her sister stripped down was the very furthest thing from a good idea. “Absolutely not.”

“Well, it’s either you or one of the guys.”

Lightning’s fists clenched. “You’re doing it, Serah. There is no way that I’m going to let Snow, Sazh, or Hope see me stripping.”

Serah dragged in a deep breath. “Fine.”

Vanille skipped over to the door. “I’ll give you two fifteen minutes.”

Fifteen minutes later, Lightning emerged, straightening her clothes. Serah was a step behind her. Both of them refused to look eat each other. Both of them looked utterly traumatised.

“So, how far did you actually go?” Vanille asked.

Lightning hissed. She and Serah had already sworn a pact never to speak of what had happened in that room. It was all for Fang, Lightning told herself, all for Fang. “Far enough.”

X X X

“All right, Fang.”

Fang sat up. That was Vanille. “Finally. What took you guys so long?”

“We were working on something important.” Vanille’s voice came through the speakers. A screen on the far side of the room lit up. “Please look at the screen, Fang.”

“Okay.” Fang wasn’t sure why she’d turned into Ragnarok, but she trusted Vanille to fix it. Of course, Vanille’s fix would probably be something crazy, but at least it would work. Chatting with
Sazh, Snow, and Hope had also cheered her up a little. These people were her family. They would look after her. Then she could have heaps of awesome sex with Lightning.

An image formed on the screen. It was Lightning, and she was blushing. Fang smirked. Cute. Then Lightning began to undress. Her cape came off first, followed by her pauldrons and gloves. Then she began to undo her belt. Fang leapt in front of the screen.

“What the hell is this?” Fang tried to cover the screen. She knew they had cameras in there. She wasn’t about to let anyone see her Lightning getting undressed. And how the hell had they even gotten this kind of footage?

“It’s okay,” Vanille said. “I’ve already disabled the cameras and audio sensors that cover that part of the room. We can’t see or hear what’s on the screen, only you can.” She paused. “It’s for science, Fang. We need to know exactly what makes you transform before we can fix it. So, sit back and, well, enjoy the show – ouch!”

“Fang.” It was Lightning talking. “Just watch it. The sooner this gets fixed…”

“The sooner we can pick up where we left off.” Fang grinned. That was a cause she could get behind although, really, she’d rather be behind Lightning. Or on top of her. Hell being under Lightning was pretty good too. And being inside her…

Fang turned around and watched the screen. Despite the awkward expression on Lightning’s face, Fang couldn’t deny how much the sight of the other woman undressing turned her on. Each inch of flesh that Lightning uncovered left her wanting more. As Lightning started to shimmy out of her skirt, Fang’s mind went back to what they’d been doing before she transformed: Lightning arching her back, Lightning’s smell, her taste, her…

“RAAAARRRGGGGHHHHH!”

X X X

“And now for the knockout gas.” Vanille flipped a switch. A few seconds later, Ragnarok was down. Slowly, she transformed back into Fang. “Well, that answers part of the question.” She pursed her lips and ignored the death glare Lightning sent her way. “But we may need to repeat the experiment a few times to be sure.”

After several more repetitions, the results were clear: once Fang saw or started thinking about Lightning naked, she went all crazy monster. To Vanille, the solution was obvious.

“We need to use gradual exposure,” Vanille explained to the others. “We’ll start off with a fully clothed Lightning and work our way up. Each time she starts feeling like she is about to transform, we’ll give her some time to get it under control before moving on. Our goal would be to work up to a fully naked Lightning without a transformation. It’s like how they cure phobias and stuff. You know, with science.”

Lightning scowled. “And how long will that take?”

“Anywhere from a few hours to a couple of weeks.”

It could take a couple of weeks? Lightning snarled. “I am not waiting a couple of weeks.”

“Fine, fine.” Vanille waved her hands about. “The important thing is that Fang needs to stay in control of her feelings and emotions. If she can do that, then she should be able to stay as herself, and you two can have as much sex as you can. We don’t have to do things my way. We just need to
get it done. So, if any of you have ideas, now is the time.”

Sazh knew he was going to regret this. He raised his hand. “I might have an idea.”

X X X

“Okay, Fang, we’ve worked out how to help you.” Sazh spoke in his most calming ‘father voice’.
“What you need to do is to stay calm and focused even when you have a naked Lightning in front of you. What we’re going to do is show you some film again. But this time, I’ll be talking as well. I want you to watch what’s on screen but also to listen to what I’m saying. Can you do that?”

“For sex with Lightning?” Fang asked. The others snickered. “You bet I can.”

“All right. Here we go.”

The screen came to life.

“Fang, I want you to focus on feeling your body and your breathing. I want you to take deep, slow breaths. Make them nice and even.”

Fang did as he asked.

“That’s good. You’re doing well. Now, try to find a nice, calm place inside yourself. Even if Lightning is naked in front of you, you need to stay in that calm, special place.”

“What is this?” Fang asked.

“It’s how I got through our journey without freaking out,” Sazh replied. “Think of it as meditation.” He paused. “You know when I was stuck with Vanille? I perfected it then. Chirpy too.”

“What?” Vanille grabbed Sazh. “You told me you were listening to all of my funny anecdotes!”

“I was – from my special place.” Sazh spoke to Fang. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m feeling calm.” Fang sighed. “I’m feeling – oh sweet Maker, is this new footage? What is Lightning doing – RAAAARRRRRGHHHH!”

Sazh sighed. “Vanille, turn the knockout gas back on.”

X X X

Snow was up next.

“Fang, is it possible that you have commitment issues?” Snow asked. Immediately, the temperature in the control room dropped. Lightning tried to kill him with her eyes. “It’s not unusual for people to panic when faced with commitment. I mean I love Serah – Maker, I love her – but before I proposed, I spent days freaking out about it. I think she found me curled up in a ball in the bathroom once. I was so nervous. Is it possible that fear is what’s making you transform, fear that once you have sex with Lightning, you’ll be in a real committed relationship?”

Serah yanked Snow down to her level. “Snow, you said you had food poisoning when I found you in the bathroom. I was guilt for days. I thought I’d poisoned you with my casserole.”

He winced. “Oops.”

“That’s not it.” Fang scowled at the camera. “I love Lightning. I know that. I’d marry her today if I
knew she’d agree.”

The others all looked at Lightning. Snow had to hand it to Fang. She had balls – gigantic, metaphorical balls.

“I love you too.” Lightning sighed. “And, yes, I would marry you if you asked.”

Serah rolled her eyes at Snow. “A commitment problem? Really?”

Snow shrugged. “Maybe it’s fear about something else. Fang, are you worried that maybe you won’t be able to, you know, please Lightning in bed?”

“That’s it!” Fang stomped over to one of the cameras. “You get your ass in here, Snow, so that I can kick it. You better believe I can please Lightning in bed. I was doing a damn good job of it until I turned into Ragnarok.”

That prompted quite a few curious looks.

Lightning folded her arms over her chest. “She was.”


“Look.” Hope ran his hands through his hair. “It’s late. Why don’t we all take a break? We can get something to eat and try again on a full stomach.”

“Please listen to the kid.” Fang’s stomach grumbled. “I’m starving.”

X X X

As the others continued to puzzle out their next course of action in the control room, Hope sat down with Fang to have some sandwiches. Lightning wanted to come, but she’d been banned in case Fang turned into a monster again.

“Thanks for keeping me company,” Fang said.

“It’s no problem.” Hope shrugged. “I thought you could use some.”

Fang laughed softly and took another bite of her sandwich. “Some mess I’m in, right?”

“It is a bit of a mess.” Hope grinned. “But look what we’ve been through? We saved the world. We can fix this.” He paused. “And even if we don’t, you’d still be with Lightning, right?”

Fang stared at him for a moment. Hope met her gaze evenly. The kid had guts, and Lightning was family to him. “Yeah, I wouldn’t leave her over something like this. Still, I would like to have sex, you know.” Hope flushed. Fang’s eyes widened. “Wait… you do know, don’t you? Who was she? When?”

Hope prayed to the Maker that no one in the control room was listening in. “This girl at Guardian Corps training camp. We were in school together back before Cocoon fell. When we met again, everything kind of clicked. We started going out and… yeah.”

Fang laughed and threw one arm over his shoulders. “You’re pretty smooth, Estheim, pretty smooth.” She waggled her eyebrows. “So, how’d it go?”

“Do we really have to talk about this?” Hope was taking one for the team here. They owed him big.
“If talking about your sex life gets my mind off the fact that I turn into a monster whenever I try to improve my sex life, then, yes, we do have to talk about this.”

“Fine.” Hope looked at his sandwich. “It didn’t exactly go great the first time. Neither of us, you know, had, well, kind of… done it before.”

“First times are always tough.” Fang’s voice was gentle.

“But it was better the second time, and…” Hope had a silly grin on his face. “Yeah.”

“Practice makes perfect.” Fang snickered. “So, you don’t have some kind of crazy scheme to try and fix me up?”

“Nope.” Hope bit his sandwich. “I’m leaving that to the others.”

Fang ruffled his hair. “I guess we can’t call you ‘kid’ anymore, can we?”

“I guess not.”

“Hope.” It was Vanille talking through the speakers. “Can you please come back here? Serah has a plan.”

“See you later, Fang.”

Hope returned to the control room and was promptly swept up into the manliest of manly hugs by Snow. Lightning demanded to know whom the girl was. A smile spread across Hope’s lips. There was nothing quite like family.

X X X

Serah was convinced that her plan would work. Fang was a peerless warrior, a perfect match for her sister on the battlefield. A warrior that skilled must have a mind as sharp as a razor and as strong as steel.

“How about we flood her with images of a naked Lightning?” Serah asked. “Kind of like throwing someone into the deep end to learn how to swim.”

Vanille bit her lip. “It’s worth a shot.”

Thirty seconds later…

“RAAAAAARRRRRGGGHHHHHH!”

Lightning took one look at the snarling beast on the screen. This had gone on long enough. “Damn it. I’m going in there.”

“Wait!”

X X X

Ragnarok was a creature driven by emotion. For the longest time, anger and hate had driven her. But when she’d awakened this time, it was by different emotions: love and desire. Lightning. The name was seared into Fang’s soul and burned into Ragnarok’s heart.

The door of the room exploded off its hinges. Ragnarok rounded on the threat. It was Lightning. Ragnarok bounded forward, ready to claim what was hers, and received a punch right to the jaw.
She stumbled back. Another attempt to reach Lightning was met with the same response.

Ragnarok snarled. She would have torn almost anyone else limb from limb for striking her, but Lightning was special. Much like Vanille, her place in Fang’s heart was so enormous that it carried over through the transformation. Lightning was to be treasured and protected at all costs. Unable to lash out, Ragnarok growled.

“I know you’re in there, Fang.” Lightning glared. “So, I’m going to make this very clear, simple enough for even Ragnarok to understand. I’m running out of patience. If you can’t get a handle on this right now, we are never going to have sex.”

Ragnarok froze.

Never… going… to… have… sex.

Never going to have sex.

Never Going To Have Sex.

NEVER.

GOING.

TO.

HAVE.

SEX.

“RAAAAAARRRRGHHHH!”

With a supreme effort of will, Ragnarok forced the change back. A few seconds later, Fang stood there.

“Did you just say that we are never going to have sex?”

Lightning’s lips curled, and she turned to face one of the cameras. “That’s how you do it.”

X X X

Several things occurred in the aftermath of Fang solving her not-so-little problem:

1. Fang and Lightning had plenty of sex. Nobody turned into a monster.
2. The tape of Lightning disappeared and then somehow ended up in Fang’s hands. Lightning might have been embarrassed filming it, but she had no problems giving Fang a live re-enactment before they destroyed it. The next day, Vanille received a box of chocolates from her sister and a death threat from her soon-to-be sister-in-law.
3. Hope and his girlfriend went out for six more months before breaking up. It was amicable, and the pair remained friends. However, she did receive a visit from one Captain Farron for breaking his heart. It was a terrifying visit.
4. Sazh released a book on meditation. It was a bestseller.
5. Serah and Snow made a habit of inviting Vanille over. They’ve yet to beat her at poker. The only reason Vanille hasn’t put on weight from all of her winnings is that she spends most of the time after running away from Serah.
As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #222: Lightning has a bit of a problem. Every time Fang gets flustered, she transforms into Ragnarok.

When I saw this prompt, I knew I had to write it. It lends itself so magnificently to humour. As you can see, I decided to go all in on the humour. Another thing that inspired me for this chapter was a post I made on tumblr (you can find a link to my tumblr in my profile) about how Vanille would make an awesome GLaDOS with the others are her test subjects (it would all be for the science).

And don’t forget to keep those prompts rolling in. I’ve worked out that I’m filling roughly 10% of the prompts, so the odds aren’t too bad. A few enterprising readers have even messaged requests. I don’t mind that, but I can’t guarantee anything either.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Fang didn’t understand the whole Christmas thing. Sure, she was used to weird Cocoon customs, but a jolly, fat man who flew around in the world’s fastest sleigh, breaking into people’s houses to deliver toys was maybe – just maybe – a little on the creepy side. Hell, it was pretty much her definition of creepy.

Vanille, of course, had fallen in love with the whole thing. How couldn’t she? Santa had magical, flying reindeer – Fang to repeat the words in her head several times before they sank in – magical, flying reindeer. She also had a sneaking suspicion that Vanille wished she were Santa. Fang could picture it now: the petite, redhead sneaking into people’s houses, leaving toys and candy for the good children and lumps of coal and the occasional grenade for the misbehavers.

New Bodhum became a hive of activity as Christmas drew near. Only two other people seemed immune to the almost nauseating surge in good cheer and enthusiasm.

One of them was Sazh. The dark-haired man approached the whole thing with the weary air of a man on his way to the gallows. It might have had something to do with all the squealing and giggling. When Serah and Vanille weren’t trying to bully everyone – and Fang meant everyone – into taking Christmas super seriously, they were going absolutely nuts over all the decorations, the gift ideas, and the party plans.

If Fang wasn’t already convinced that Serah and Vanille were long-lost sisters, Christmas would have convinced her. The look on Serah’s face when Vanille had modelled her elf costume had been priceless. Apparently, Lightning wasn’t the only sister figure Serah might have a thing for.

Sazh hadn’t taken to all the squealing and giggling very well. In fact, he’d done his very best to avoid it. But as Christmas got closer and closer – and Serah and Vanille got harder and harder to avoid – he’d been left with no choice but to endure it.

The only time Sazh seemed to enjoy Christmas was when Dajh was around. Sazh might not have cared for all the fuss, but Dajh did. Whenever the boy was there, Sazh was only too happy to participate. Serah and Vanille had noticed and had taken ruthless advantage of it. Dajh was now their partner in crime.

The other person who hadn’t taken too well to Christmas was everyone’s favourite Grinch (Fang knew all about the Grinch because Serah had explained things to Vanille who had then explained them to Fang… for about three hours… with diagrams, an instructional video, and five lavishly illustrated children’s books). Ever since Serah and Vanille had seized control of Lightning’s house for the celebrations, the soldier had taken extra shifts to avoid the chaos.

And what excuse did Serah and Vanille give for commandeering Lightning’s house? Apparently, Lightning’s house was the only one with a yard large enough to fit all of the decorations. It made Fang wonder what the duo had in store for them.

As the final countdown to Christmas began, Fang was treated to the amusing sight of her girlfriend being pressganged into helping. Not even a Grinch like Lightning could resist Serah and Vanille
when they put their minds to it.

The front yard was transformed first. The tree near the fence was painstakingly trimmed via gun blade to resemble a real Christmas tree. Lightning’s unmatched agility was then put to use decorating every single branch with enough lights and ornaments for a dozen normal Christmas trees.

The front of the house was next. Not even Fang could get out of helping with that. Christmas lights, signs, and a host of other decorations left passers by in absolutely no doubt as to the importance of Christmas. Lightning had made an offhand remark about how they could probably see everything from the air. Fang had gone up on Bahamut. Lightning was right.

The crown achievement of the season, however, was the life-sized robotic Santa complete with reindeer on the front yard. If that wasn’t enough, the damn thing actually hovered a few feet off the ground. It was terrifying, and almost certainly a horrible misuse of Guardian Corps equipment. The only consolation came when Lightning managed to persuade Vanille not to build her own flying sleigh. The pink-haired woman had no desire to arrest Vanille, especially since Serah would throw a fit if she did – either that or get arrested with Vanille.

The inside of the house was subjected to the same treatment. Fang could barely recognise it by the time they were done. Lightning had always been more of a minimalist when it came to home décor. Everything had its place, and everything was useful. Not anymore. Decorations hung everywhere, and another Christmas tree dominated the living room. A second life-sized Santa waved at people from the foyer.

Probably the only thing that Fang didn’t find annoying was mistletoe. Fang didn’t need an excuse to kiss Lightning, but she certainly wasn’t about to complain. She might have taken to carrying some in her pocket. She might also have covered the entire ceiling of their bedroom in it too… and the ceiling above their shower. Lightning had taken one look at their newly decorated ceiling and rolled her eyes before dragging Fang into bed.

For a parasitic plant that was also poisonous, mistletoe wasn’t half bad.

Christmas presents were another thing that Fang wasn’t sure how to approach. Serah and Vanille were obviously insane, and as Christmas got closer, it became increasingly clear that they had somehow managed to infect the others. Still, she’d play along. If they wanted presents, she’d give them presents. The only one she couldn’t get a good read on was Lightning.

Lightning hadn’t said a word about wanting anything, and all of Fang’s inquiries were met with a look of bland disinterest. Christmas must be just another day for Lightning. If that was the case, then Fang didn’t want to get Lightning anything too extravagant. The absolute last thing she wanted was to embarrass her girlfriend by splurging too much. Lightning would probably get her something nice and practical, and Fang had no problems returning the favour. Besides, it wasn’t like they needed to show off to each other. Fang knew exactly how Lightning felt about her, and she made sure to show and tell Lightning as often as she could.

Getting something practical for Lightning made the whole ordeal of shopping a lot easier. It also let Fang worry about the others. Vanille had made her desire for the largest Christmas tree in town very clear. Fang loved her little sister, but she was not about to try and steal the Christmas tree standing in the middle of New Bodhum.

Christmas Eve arrived.

The former l’Cie all piled into Lightning’s house. They sang Christmas songs, talked, and ate a lot
of good food. Fang also learned that Lightning had a surprisingly good singing voice – but it took a lot of eggnog to actually get her singing. As day turned to night, Fang made sure to slip her presents to Lightning and the others underneath the Christmas tree in the living room.

Finally, Christmas Eve gave way to Christmas itself. They’d partied all through the day, and despite how tired he was, Dajh was up one second after midnight. He leapt off the couch, Chirpy on his heels, and dove for the presents under the tree. The adults were a little slower to get there.

“He’s an eager little thing, isn’t he?” Fang asked.

Sazh watched Dajh tear the wrapping paper off his first present. It was from Vanille, and it was a custom-built robot. Thankfully, she’d actually listened to Sazh and ensured that the robot’s lasers were strictly for show. “Christmas is good for the kids. It’s supposed to be a happy time. That’s why I put up with all of Serah and Vanille’s craziness. Dajh had heaps of fun.”

“Really?” Fang raised one eyebrow. “You didn’t look too eager yourself most of the time. Probably the only one less into this whole thing was Lightning.”

Sazh smiled and waved back at Dajh as the boy held up his new robot. Once Dajh had turned away, Sazh’s expression sobered. “You’d be surprised about Lightning. And… you guys have been great, but I can’t help thinking about my wife. I keep thinking she should be here…”

Fang put one hand on his shoulder. “I’m sure she’d be proud of you, Sazh. You’re a great father. Dajh is a lucky kid.”

He took a deep breath. “Thanks. It was tough losing my wife, but you guys… I don’t know where I’d be without all of you.”

Fang grinned. “That’s what friends are for.” Still, what had he meant about Lightning?”

Dajh opened each of his presents, although it looked like Lightning’s was missing. By the time he was done, his smile was almost too big to fit on his face. His favourite present came from Sazh – a toy airplane that could really fly. Even Chirpy got presents, and the chocobo was only too happy to show off the pair of sunglasses he’d gotten from Lightning. Fang had to hand it to him – he looked pretty sharp for a chocobo.

And so it went. Each of the former l’Cie passed out the presents they’d bought for the others. Some of the presents were touching, and some were definitely silly. Serah had given Lightning a pair of earrings styled to match the pair their mother had worn when they were younger. The younger Farron also gave Vanille some earplugs – so the redhead wouldn’t have to put up with hearing Lightning and Fang getting busy anymore – before handing over her real present: a silver necklace to go with all the others that Vanille wore.

Fang watched everything unfold with a smile on her face. For the longest time it had been her and Vanille against the world. But they weren’t alone anymore. These people were family, and she’d give her life for any one of them. But being family didn’t stop them from messing with each other. Vanille responded to Serah’s gag gift by handing Serah and Snow a big box of condoms. The implication was very clear, and Lightning was only half-joking when she threatened to murder Snow.

Yet as fun as all of this was, Fang felt a cold, heavy weight settle in her gut as Lightning began to give her gifts out. Fang had been certain – absolutely certain – that Lightning would approach Christmas the same, grudging way she approached most holidays. She was wrong. Lightning had gone the whole nine yards and then some for her gifts.
Serah giggled and grabbed Fang’s arm.

“I knew it! I knew my sister was faking. She told us she was taking extra shifts, but she was looking for gifts instead.” Serah stuck her tongue out at Vanille. “Now whose sister is the Grinch?”

Aw, hell. Fang broke out into a sweat. This was bad, really, really bad. Lightning had fooled her. Fang had gotten the others the gifts they’d hinted at, but Lightning hadn’t hinted at anything. She’d thought that Lightning wanted to keep everything simple, but she was wrong. Damn it. She was so screwed.

Serah got a beautiful locket that held a picture of the Farron family from back when she and Lightning had been children. Serah hadn’t said a word after getting it. She’d just thrown herself at Lightning and pressed her face into the crook of the older woman’s neck. When she finally pulled away, her eyes were misty.

“Thank you.” Serah’s lip trembled. “Claire.”

Dajh got that toy gun blade he’d been hoping for – the one that all of the stores had sold out of. It was a miniature replica of Lightning’s own. The boy accepted the gift and quickly set about putting it to use, brandishing it in threatening fashion at a small army of imaginary enemies.

Sazh got something that brought a tear to his eye – an old photo album of his wife. Lightning had used her authority as a high-ranking member of the Guardian Corps to go up into Cocoon and get it.

“You ever need anything,” Sazh said gruffly. “Just ask.”

Lightning nodded. “It’s fine. It was the least I could do.”

Snow’s gift was a new trench coat. If he was going to be part of the family, he could at least look good.

Hope got a letter of recommendation for the Guardian Corps. The young man had been dreaming of joining the Corps for a while now. With Lightning’s letter of recommendation, that door would always be open to him.

Vanille got a letter too. Every year, the craftsmen of New Bodhum made decorations for the town’s tree. It was a great way for them to promote their work, and afterward the decorations were auctioned off for charity. Vanille wouldn’t be able to get the tree, but Lightning had managed to get her the star that went on top.

And Fang’s present? It was a new spear, one that had been crafted to match the colour and aesthetics of Lightning’s gun blade.

“Here, try it out.” Lightning handed the weapon over.

Fang accepted the spear. The balance of the weapon was perfect, exactly how she liked it. It fit just right in her hands too, like she’d been there to supervise the construction. But of course, she hadn’t been there. Lightning knew her so well that she’d all but memorised the weight and feel of Fang’s weapons.

“I hope you like it.” Lightning’s lips curled. “You’re always complaining about my weapon being too complicated, but I thought you should know – this spear transforms too. Press this button and it turns into a whip.”
Vanille snickered and made whipping motions at the pair of them. “Oh, kinky.”

Fang was in such deep crap. “It’s great, Lightning. Thanks.”

Then it was time for Fang to give out her gifts. She’d gotten the others the gifts she thought they wanted. That went fine right up until she got to Lightning’s: a gun blade maintenance kit. Damn it, Fang had been so sure that Lightning wouldn’t go big on the gifts. She hadn’t wanted to show the other woman up and now it was coming back to bite her in the ass like an angry gorgonopsid.

Lightning examined the gift. “It’s wonderful, Fang.” Lightning smiled, but it didn’t quite reach her eyes. “I could really use one of these.”

Fang felt like the worst girlfriend in the world.

Lightning took a deep breath. “I think I drank too much eggnog. I’m going to get a bit of fresh air.” As the other woman walked outside, Fang bit her lip. Lightning had tried to hide it, but Fang knew her too well. She’d seen the flash of pain in Lightning’s eyes before the other woman’s expression had clamped down into that inscrutable look that Fang knew all too well.

But Fang didn’t have much time to think about how everything had gone wrong because Serah and Vanille grabbed her and hauled her into the kitchen.

“What the hell was that?” Vanille backed Fang up against the counter. Not for the first time, Fang wondered how her little sister managed to be so scary despite being so small. Behind Vanille, Serah had picked up a frying pan. Fang was in serious, serious danger.

“What was what?” Fang needed to play for time. The look in Lightning’s eyes… damn it, she needed to get out of here and fix things.

“You know what I’m talking about!” Vanille hissed and jabbed Fang in the chest with one finger. “Your gift sucked – it sucked worse than some kind of sucking machine!”

“You mean a vacuum cleaner?”

“Yes! It sucked worse than a vacuum cleaner.” Vanille scowled. “And Lightning’s gift was awesome. What the hell is wrong with you?” She threw her hands up in frustration. “A gun blade cleaning kit? Why not just get her a toilet scrubber and be done with it?”

Fang bristled. She knew she’d made a mistake, but she didn’t like having it shoved down her throat. She also didn’t like being cornered in the kitchen when she could have been outside explaining things to Lightning. “Hey –”

“Why did you get my sister that?” Serah asked quietly. She was testing the weight of the frying pan.

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“Why did you get my sister that?” Serah asked quietly. She was testing the weight of the frying pan.

“Look,” Fang said. “You’re hardly one to talk. You got her a survival knife for her birthday.”

Serah flinched as though struck, and Fang bit back a curse. She hadn’t meant for that to come out so harshly. “Fang…”

“Gah!” Vanille grabbed Fang. “This is supposed to be Christmas! You’re supposed to give people awesome stuff.” She gestured at Serah. “Put down that frying pan, it’ll be too messy. I’ll hold Fang, and you can punch her in the gut. You’re a Farron, so I bet you’re good at that.”

Serah was just about to start throwing punches when Lightning walked in. She took one look at
them and shook her head.

“We were about to have some hot chocolate and marshmallows.” Lightning sighed. “Why don’t the three of you join us?”

The two younger women nodded guiltily. Fang wanted to say something, but suddenly, she didn’t know what to say. Besides, the way Lightning refused to meet her gaze said more than enough. It would be bad enough if Fang got Lightning mad over something like this, but Lightning was sad, which was a million times worse.

Seeing Lightning sad, the downcast eyes, the slump in her shoulders, was a kick in the guts for Fang. She’d done that, and it didn’t feel good at all, even if she hadn’t meant for things to turn out this way.

They went into the living room and had some hot chocolate and marshmallows before the others went to different parts of the house to get some sleep. The last person to head off was Chirpy. The chocobo took one look at Fang and glared before jerking his head at the back porch. Great, even the chocobo had turned against her.

“Kweh.”

Fang scowled. The chocobo’s message was clear: fix it. Fang rubbed her hands over her face. The bird was right. She needed to fix it, and she needed to fix it now. Silently, she padded out of the house and onto the back porch. Lightning was there, cleaning her gun blade with the maintenance kit Fang had gotten her. The soldier was cleaning the gun blade so fanatically that it was a wonder she didn’t break it.

Damn it all to hell. Fang turned on her heel. She couldn’t go out there with nothing. She had to make this right.

A few minutes later, she sat down next to Lightning on the porch. Gently, she eased the gun blade out of her girlfriend’s hands.

“I’m sorry.”

“No, I’m sorry. I really mean it. I thought you didn’t want to make a big deal out of Christmas. I didn’t want to go overboard and show you up or anything like that. I know that’s not an excuse, but that’s what happened. I was worried that if I got you something big and you didn’t get me something big, then… but you’re so good at hiding things when you want to.”

Lightning chuckled softly. “That was kind of the point. I was trying to surprise you.”

“You did, and I feel like a jerk.” Fang shook her head. “I still don’t know what I was thinking. I should have asked you or something.”

“I’m not the easiest person to talk to.” Lightning patted Fang’s knee. “And I guess you were trying to do the right thing, sort of.”

Fang wrapped one arm around Lightning and pulled her close. “I know this is our first Christmas together as a couple, and I’m sorry I stuffed it up. But if you let me stick around, I’ll do better next time.”

“Fang, I’d never break up with you over something like this.” Lightning leaned against Fang.
“Besides, I haven’t been perfect either.” She grinned. “Although I did kind of win Christmas.”

“You kind of did.”

“Fang, Christmas isn’t just about gifts. It’s supposed to be about family.” Lightning looked up at Fang. “I won’t lie. I was a little disappointed, but I’m not disappointed about being able to spend time with everyone. That’s the best present I could have asked for.” She smiled. “Were Vanille and Serah about to beat you up in the kitchen?”

“They were defending your honour, I believe.”

“You should watch out for Serah – she can throw a mean hook.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Fang handed Lightning a box. “Here. I know it’s not much, but I thought I’d give you something else to make up for my less than stellar present.”

Lightning opened the box. It was filled with handwritten vouchers. “What are these for?”

“Take a look.” Fang lifted one up. “This one is a voucher for winning an argument. Whenever you think I’m being too much of a snark, you can cash this in, and I’ll stop. You win the argument, no questions asked.”

Lightning raised one eyebrow. “Really, no questions asked?”

“Absolutely none, but please try to be reasonable.” Fang laughed. “And remember you only have a limited supply.”

“Fang…”

“And these ones are for breakfast in bed. I know I’m not really a morning person, and you always make breakfast. So you can use these to get me out of bed and into the kitchen.”

“What about these ones?”

“For whenever you need a massage.” Fang leered.

“Why do I get the feeling that you might enjoy that part of your present more than me?”

“Maybe because I will.”

“And this?” Lightning lifted another voucher. “Seriously?”

“Yes, you read that right. That is one voucher of awesome sex. Feel free to cash that one in anytime.”

“Fang, are you trying to give me sex as a Christmas present?”

“Es.”

Lightning put on a thoughtful look. “Well, it’s definitely better than a gun blade maintenance kit.” She paused. “But I might have to save that one for later.”

“Don’t worry too much – there’s plenty more of that kind in there.”

“Fang…” Lightning rolled her eyes. She put the box down. “You’re forgiven. Now, come here.” She pulled the other woman into a kiss. “Merry Christmas, Fang.”
“Merry Christmas, Lightning.” Fang’s eyes twinkled. “So…do you want to head upstairs now? We could give Vanille a chance to test out her earplugs.”

Lightning punched her on the arm. “Let’s stay out here for a bit, you and me.”

“Sure.” Fang wrapped her arms around Lightning. “Whatever you want.”

Lightning snuggled up to Fang. It was cold outside, but warm against Fang. “Do you know what I really want for Christmas?”

“Whatever it is, I’ll get it for you.”

Lightning closed her eyes and leaned into Fang’s embrace. “To spend the rest of my Christmases with you.”

Fang’s heart skipped a beat. She tightened her hold on Lightning. “Consider it done.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #232: Ever got a bad Christmas present and had to pretend you liked it? What if Fang got Lightning a truly awful Christmas gift. I wonder how good are stoic soldier would be at faking enthusiasm. After all, she doesn’t want to hurt her girlfriends feelings.

Christmas gifts are an absolute minefield, and I know exactly how Fang feels. There is nothing worse than splurging on a gift for someone only to discover that due to budgetary constraints or whatever, they haven’t been able to get you a similarly impressive gift. Then they feel bad, which makes you feel bad, and the whole thing kind of sucks. In my family, we have a kind of unspoken limit as to how much we can spend on gifts for each other to avoid precisely this situation.

Finding the correct gift is also tricky. There are practical people who want something useful. My mother is somewhat famous in our family for never wanting flowers since they’ll die after a few days. Instead, get her a plant – that can last for years. Other people want something emotionally charged and showy. Me? I’m a practical person. Probably the only person I don’t have problems getting a gift for is my sister. Not only do we know each other very well, our similar views on gift giving have led to us just asking each other what we want. No muss, no fuss.

But Fang is in a much trickier position. Lightning’s personality doesn’t exactly suggest she’ll go big on gift giving, and the last thing Fang wants to do is make her look bad. Of course, Lightning is faking her disinterest, but Fang had no way of knowing that. Throw in Lightning’s practical approach to life, and it is no wonder Fang went the practical route.

As to why Lightning was hurt by Fang’s gift, think about it. She’d gone to all that trouble, and Fang hadn’t reciprocated. She forgave Fang because she realised what I’ve been alluding to all along – Fang isn’t psychic, she can’t read minds. And Fang immediately tried to make up for it. Remember, people: relationships require
communication!

For those of you who’ve been reading the author’s notes (and have a cookie if you’ve been doing that all year!) I’ve been promising a Christmas story. This isn’t it. This is something I put together last night because the prompt got my attention. The real Christmas chapter is something I’ve been planning for a while (and I really hope I get it done in time). The whole family, Diana and the gang included, is meeting for Christmas. And guess who’s coming to Christmas dinner? Averia’s girlfriend. Prepare for some overprotective mothers.

I also write original fiction. If you're interested, you can a link to it in my profile.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome (along with guesses as to whom Averia’s girlfriend might be).
The Plan

Serah loved Vanille – in a totally platonic way. The mischievous redhead was her best friend. But sometimes, the things that came out of Vanille’s mouth were just plain stupid. It was incredibly tempting to reach across the table, drape one arm around Vanille’s neck, and then bang her head on the table. Repeatedly.

However, being the kind and generally wonderful person that she was, Serah didn’t resort to violence. Instead, she decided to tell Vanille in no uncertain terms exactly what she thought about her latest, and allegedly most brilliant plan yet, for making their sisters fall in love.

“That is the most idiotic thing I’ve ever heard. If you weren’t my best friend, I would punch you in the face for even suggesting it.” Serah scowled. “Or maybe kick you.”

Vanille smirked. “Ah, but I am your best friend, so you totally can’t punch me in the face or kick me.” She folded her arms over her chest. “And it’s not idiotic. It’s brilliant. Remember, Serah, there is a fine line between genius and insanity.”

“You’re nowhere near that line, Vanille. You’re about twenty miles in on the crazy side.”

“I am not. If I were, I’d have invented some kind of evil death ray by now.” Vanille said as she made a mental note to make sure that Serah never the plans she’d drawn up for a death ray. It wasn’t an evil death ray, but people had this horrible tendency to discriminate against death rays. “Instead, I’ve been inventing good things. You know that new toaster of yours? Snow didn’t buy it in a store. I built it. That’s why it comes complete with hundreds of useful settings.”

The toaster in question had been the subject of at least three of Serah’s nightmares in the past month. The only reason she hadn’t thrown it away was because she’d thought that Snow had bought it for her. The fact that Vanille had built it explained a lot – like why it could incinerate stray breadcrumbs and hack the crust off bread with lasers. Serah was also certain the damn thing was alive. Any day now it would transform into some kind of killer robot and go on a rampage.

“Your toaster nearly melted a hole in the wall of the kitchen.”

“Nearly isn’t the same as it actually happening. Besides, did you even read the instruction manual?”

Serah had not. The instruction manual was more than five-hundred-pages long. “That wasn’t an instruction manual. That was an encyclopaedia.”

“Never mind that. Let’s get back to the plan. So –”

Serah cut in before Vanille could go off on another long, overly graphic explanation of her plan and what would hopefully occur once it succeeded. “So, let me get this straight. Your plan to get our sisters together involves the two of us faking incestuous fixations so that…” She picked up Vanille’s notes – the redhead had notes, for crying out loud, with pictures – and flicked to the appropriate page. Wonderful, more diagrams. Explicit diagrams. “They can realise their true and undying affections for each other via the shared trauma of being forced to overcome their sister
fixations. Is that right?"

“Yep.” Serah fought the urge to put on some sunglasses. Vanille’s smile was as bright as the sun. “That’s right.”

“And you really think this is going to work?” Serah’s eye twitched. She pushed her butter knife away before she could pick it up and stab Vanille with it. They were at a café. Maybe she could murder her friend once they were out of the public eye.

“Of course it will work. My plans always work. And it’s better than your plan, Little Ms Lock Fang and Lightning in a Closet and Hope They Magically Fall in Love.”

“It almost did.” Blue eyes narrowed, and Serah tried to melt Vanille with her eyes. “And I did get my sister to come out of the closet, so it wasn’t a complete failure.”

Vanille snorted. “Serah, she punched a hole through the closet. That’s not the same thing. And her having a thing for Fang is not a secret. I share a house with those two. I’ve seen how they are. When they’re not arguing, they’re having sex with their eyes. Dirty, kinky, scary eye sex.”

“Don’t talk about my sister that way.”

“What not? It’s true. You know it is.”

It was, in fact, very true. Serah had seen her sister and Fang together. They were definitely having lots of eye sex. Even so, she had to defend her sister’s honour. “Keep trash talking my sister, and I will poke you with my fork. So help me, I’ll do it. You know I will.” Serah jabbed the aforementioned piece of cutlery at Vanille with as much menace as she could muster.

“Put that down.” Vanille brandished her own fork. “We tried your plan last time. It failed. This time, it’s my turn.” Her lips curled into a sly smirk. “Or maybe you’re afraid that there’s something behind all the teasing. Maybe Lightning’s not the one with a thing for her sister – maybe you are.”

“I do not have a thing for my sister!” Serah growled. “Fine. I’ll show you. We’ll go with your plan.”

The big, big grin on Vanille’s face was all Serah needed to see to know that she’d been completely played – played like a bongo drum. Damn it.

X X X

If Serah was honest, she’d always wondered about her sister. Not that she genuinely believe her sister had a thing for her, but Lightning could be a tad obsessive. It was because of their parents. For the longest time, Serah had been the only person in the world Lightning could call family. It was no wonder Lightning had watched over her like a hawk. But the older woman had eased up in recent years, thanks to her growing bonds with the other former l’Cie. It was sweet, and now Serah no longer had to worry about Lightning trailing her in a squad car every time she went out or on a date with Snow.

But how was she supposed to put the moves on her sister? She’d stomped out of the café after Vanille had suggested she walk in, pin her sister to the couch, and jump her. That was the second stupidest thing that Serah had ever heard. Lightning would see right through her if she did that. Serah needed to be subtler. She needed to catch Lightning off guard without giving herself away. Her best bet was to catch Lightning at home. The older woman wouldn’t be suspicious if Serah came over to visit.
Serah used her spare key to get the front door open. No one was in the living room, but she could hear someone opening and closing cupboards in the kitchen. She headed over to the kitchen and then froze at the door. Lightning must have just gotten back from a run because all she was wearing was a pair of shorts and a sports bra. Her shirt was tossed over on one of the counters.

“Serah?” Lightning smiled. “I thought you were having lunch with Vanille?”

A thin sheen of sweat covered Lightning’s body, and Serah’s throat went dry as the older woman opened the fridge and then bent over to pull out a can of juice. Maker, her sister was gorgeous. Fang had to be either crazy or blind to not make a move.

“Oh, yeah. We just finished.”

“Where is she? I didn’t hear her come in with you.”

“She had a few errands to run. She should be back soon,” Serah said. Lightning was in spectacular shape. She probably ran every day. Serah frowned faintly. She hadn’t let her skills with a bow slip, but she didn’t run around as much as she used to now that she had a class of children to teach even though it was sometimes as bad as herding cats. Maybe she could go running with Lightning each day.

“She’s probably coming up with something crazy again.” Lightning’s lips twitched. “Have you seen what she’s done to our lawnmower? It’s closer to a tank now.”

“She ‘fixed’ my toaster too.”

“I see.” Lightning rummaged through the fridge and came up with a tub of yogurt. “I’m going to grab a quick bite to eat and then go upstairs and shower. I hope you don’t mind waiting. Fang’s upstairs if you want to talk to her.”

This wasn’t good. Serah bit her lip. She needed to make her move now before Lightning vanished upstairs. She put on her most serious expression and stepped into the kitchen. “If it’s okay, I’d like to talk to you first.”

“Sure.” Lightning lifted a spoonful of yoghurt to her lips. The muscles of her stomach flexed ever so slightly as she lifted herself up onto the counter. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong.” Serah took a deep breath and then walked over to her sister. She stopped a foot away from the other woman. It was true what they said about Lightning. They weren’t touching, but Lightning’s presence seemed to fill the kitchen. Serah didn’t have to fake her nervousness as she continued. This was such a stupid, stupid plan. But if it worked… “I’ve been thinking, Lightning.”

“About what?” Lightning put the tub of yoghurt down and licked her lips. Serah found herself unable to look away. “Serah?”

“I’ve been thinking about us.”

“Us?” The smile on Lightning’s face vanished. In its place was a wary, closed-off expression that made Serah’s heart ache.

“Not in a bad way.” Serah bit her lip. They’d done their best to repair the damage after everything was said and done, but it was clear they had a long way to go. It didn’t help that both of them had tempers although Lightning hid hers better. “I was thinking… we fit together, don’t we?”
Lightning relaxed ever so slightly. A tentative smile returned to her lips. “I think so.”

“I mean we understand each other, we know all about each other, and we even have a lot of shared interests.”

“I guess.” Lightning chuckled. “I like chasing after criminals, and you like chasing after children…”

“Sometimes I wonder if there’s a difference.” Serah giggled. “Some of them are a handful.”

“Where are you going with this, Serah?”

“Well… I was thinking we should be closer.” Please let this work, Serah thought. Please let her sound convincing.

“Closer?” Lightning frowned. “I know we’re still trying to make up for all the… unpleasantness, but –”

“I’m not talking about that.” Serah steeled herself and closed the gap between them, putting one hand on either side of Lightning. The older woman raised one eyebrow. “I meant… closer.” Serah leaned forward into Lightning’s space.

“Is that so?” Lightning moved so quickly that Serah didn’t even realise what had happened until Lightning reversed their positions. Now Serah was the one sitting on the counter with her legs either side of Lightning’s hips. “Was this what you were thinking about?”

“Uh…” This was not how it was supposed to go. Serah gulped. “Uh…”

Lightning smirked and settled her hands on Serah’s waist. “I’ve been thinking about it too. I always wondered why I disliked Snow so much. He’s a good guy.”

“Yes, he is.” Serah had to fight back a wave of panic. How had things gotten out of control so quickly, and why was her sister eyeing her like… like she was prey?

“And then I realised why.” Lightning eased forward, her lips only a hair’s breadth from Serah’s. “I was jealous.”

Serah leaned back as far as she could. “Jealous?” It came out as a croak.

“Jealous?” Lightning had no intention of letting Serah escape. She put one hand on the small of Serah’s back and pulled her forward until Serah’s front was pressed against her own. She rested her forehead against her sister’s and stared deep into Serah’s eyes. “I was jealous because I didn’t want anyone else to have you. I want you all to myself.”

“What?” Serah searched frantically for a way out of the situation. Lightning was stronger than her, faster too. She needed something – a weapon. Her hand fumbled over the counter and closed around the spoon. A spoon? That wasn’t going to help!

“You know, all to myself.” Lightning’s hand had begun to rub circles along Serah’s back. The younger woman’s eyes widened in horror as Lightning’s other hand tightened around her waist. “That’s why I’m so glad you feel the same way. I want us to be closer too, Serah. Much, much closer.”

Oh Maker… Serah’s heart pounded in her chest. Her sister really did have a thing for her. This was bad, really bad. Lightning appeared to be about thirty seconds from trying to have sex with her.
right on the kitchen counter. That was horrible. People made food here. Wait… why was she worrying about that? Her sister was trying to have sex with her. That was what she should be worried about.

“But… but…”

“Don’t you love me?” Lightning asked quietly. Her eyes gleamed with something dark and hungry.

“I do.” Serah’s mind boggled at how quickly things had gotten out of control. “But…”

“Then let big sister take care of you.” Lightning’s hand stroked Serah’s hip. “You know I will.”

That was the last straw. Serah shrieked and shoved Lightning out of the way before she ran for the door, muttering something about a doctor’s appointment. Lightning watched her go, lips curled in amusement. Then she began to laugh. Did Serah really think she’d fooled her? Lightning knew exactly what Serah had tried to pull – she and Vanille had made the mistake of plotting at Lightning’s favourite café. Lightning had overheard every word and come home early to spring a trap of her own.

A few minutes later, Vanille came home. Lightning gave the redhead a cheerful wave and then went upstairs to have a shower. If things went according to plan, Serah would be too traumatised to call Vanille. Now, it was up to Fang to handle her end of things.

X X X

Vanille giggled and poked Fang in the forehead. She had the taller woman’s head on her lap as she continued to come through her unruly hair. Despite how fierce she could be sometimes, Fang was surprisingly cuddly. More than almost anything, Fang enjoyed having her hair combed. Vanille had combed Fang’s hair so many times that couldn’t help but notice that it looked as though someone else had already combed it. But that was crazy. Who else would have done it?

As Fang’s eyes drifted shut, she gave a small sigh of contentment. Vanille took a deep breath. She hadn’t heard from Serah yet, and Lightning hadn’t looked any different when she’d run into her downstairs. Maybe the younger Farron was waiting until tomorrow to make her move? Vanille had no intention of waiting that long.

Slowly but surely, Vanille let her fingers wander through Fang’s hair and then down across the back of her neck before they came to rest over the sensitive skin of her collarbone. Fang gave a low hum of approval and then opened her eyes.

“What are you doing, Vanille?” Fang’s voice was warm, husky silk.

With her own imaginary cheer squad egging her on, Vanille put on what she hoped was a seductive expression. Unbeknownst to her, it took Fang everything she had not to laugh at the grimace on Vanille’s face. “I’ve been thinking.”

Fang snickered. “Really?”

“Hey! I think about a lot of things.” Vanille coughed. “I’ve been thinking about us.”

“Right…” Fang poked Vanille in the side. “Is this about you stealing all of Lightning’s chocolate? I know she threatened to kill you, but she isn’t going to evict you over that.”

“No!” Vanille pinched Fang’s cheek. “I’ve been thinking about how much I love you.”
Fang could be adorably dense. “I love you too. Why do you think I put up with you? Most sisters would have at least put you on probation after what you did to the lawnmower.”

“That’s not what I mean. I’m talking about a different kind of love.” Vanille swallowed thickly and took hold of Fang’s wrist. She put one of Fang’s hands on her breast. “Something… less sisterly.”

“Is that so?” Fang’s voice had gone for teasing to beguiling. Vanille shivered.

With all the grace of a big cat, Fang changed their positions. Suddenly, Vanille was pinned down on the bed beneath her, both her wrists held in one of Fang’s hands. The older woman bared her teeth as her eyes raked over Vanille’s body. Vanille cursed the fact that she’d come up to Fang’s room in a skirt and blouse. She should have come in a full suit of armour.

Could it be that Fang had a thing for her? Vanille didn’t want to believe that was true because if it was, she was in a whole lot of trouble. Her jaw clenched. No, she had to keep going. Lightning and Fang’s future love life was at stake!

“We match, Fang. Who else could possible understand you?” Vanille desperately hoped that Fang took the hint she was about to leave. “It’s not like Lightning could. Sure, you’re both strong women who like beating things up, arguing, and the outdoors. It’s not as if your personalities complement each other perfectly or anything.”

Fang paused, and Vanille did a mental victory dance as her imaginary cheer squad bowed to her greatness. Then Fang came closer and all thoughts of victory faded. Her imaginary cheer squad ran for the hills. “You’re right. You and I do go together much better than Lightning and I ever would.” She slipped one hand under Vanille’s blouse. “And since we’ve known each other so long, why wait? We should hurry up and consummate our love right now. Don’t you agree?”

As Fang’s fingers stroked her stomach, Vanille’s eyes grew to the size of dinner plates. Screw the plan. This was too weird, even for her. “Ah!” She squirmed out of Fang’s grip. “I’m sorry! I said I’d meet Serah for afternoon tea! Bye!”

Vanille stumbled out of Fang’s room and ran for the front door. She was so focused on getting out of the house – and away from Fang – that she never noticed Lightning watching her from the top of the stairs.

The few minutes that it took Vanille to run down the street to Serah and Snow’s house felt like a lifetime. She knocked on the door and then practically kicked it open when Snow unlocked it.

“Where’s Serah?”

Snow looked over his shoulder. “In the living room. Say, did something happen because –”

Vanille shoved him out of the way. Serah was huddled under a blanket looking utterly traumatised. Vanille latched onto the other woman.

“I’m so sorry!” Vanille wailed. “I tried to go with my plan, but…. but… Fang got all weird on me, and –”

“Lightning got all weird on me too.” Serah sniffled. “It was horrible.”

Snow stared at the pair of women on the couch and sighed. He didn’t even want to know what those two had gotten up to this time. Oh well, he should probably go and make them some hot chocolate or something. Or maybe he should get some wine out? They both looked as though they could use a drink.
Back at Lightning’s house…

Fang and Lightning exchanged grins over cups of coffee at the dining table. Under the table, Fang’s foot stroked its way up the inside of Lightning’s calf. The soldier’s expression remained unchanged, but the slight shift of her posture made it clear that she relished the contact.

“I’m glad you overhead those two at the café.” Fang took a sip of her coffee. “Otherwise I would have freaked out when Vanille started hitting on me.”

Lightning waved one hand. “Please, you would have seen right through her. You’re as mischievous as she is.”

“But I thought you loved my mischief.” Fang gave Lightning her puppy dog eyes.

Lightning huffed. “I’m not sure I love your mischief, but I do love you.”

That was exactly what Fang wanted to hear. She and Lightning had been together for months now. They’d hidden their relationship because they knew how their extended family would act. They’d probably find themselves at the altar and in wedding dresses before they could even blink. She wanted to marry Lightning, and she was sure the other woman felt the same about her, but they wanted to take things at their own pace.

“So… we have the house to ourselves tonight. Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

Lightning nodded at the pile of papers on the other side of the table. “I can finally catch up on my paperwork.”

“Oh, no. No paperwork for you.” Fang got to her feet, pulled Lightning out of her chair, and scooped the pink-haired woman into her arms. “I have other plans for you.”

“And what would those plans be?”

“Most of them include the bedroom. A few include the shower. One of them includes the kitchen.”

Lightning pursed her lips and pretended to be deep in thought. Then she leaned up to kiss Fang. “I could always catch up on my paperwork later.”

“Damn straight.”

“Not exactly.” Lightning raised one eyebrow. “All things considered.”

It took Fang a second to grasp her meaning. The huntress burst into laughter. “You’ve got me there.” She strode out of the dining room and up the stairs. “And with nobody at home, we won’t have to worry about how much noise we make.”

When Serah and Vanille came back the next day, armed to the teeth and ready to discuss their sisters’ problems, they barged into Lightning’s room only to find Lightning and Fang in bed. Naked.

Vanille, of course, took full credit for it. Obviously, her plan had succeeded in getting Lightning and Fang together where all other plans had failed. Serah had a different opinion, and it took both Fang and Lightning to pry her off Vanille before she could murder the redhead.
As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #240: Lightning hates fanille as much as fang hates farroncest. Their younger Sisters are willing to get a bit traumatized if it gets them to stop being so dense about each other.

I stumbled across this prompt a few days after I posted my omake chapter about Lightning’s multiple dreams (nightmares). Not only is this prompt fun but it also gives Lightning a chance to get a little revenge on the others.

Clearly, Vanille’s plan is crazy. But Vanille is the kind of person who can convince other people (Serah) to go along with her schemes. Unfortunately (or fortunately) they ran into someone who completely outplayed them. Call it luck, but Lightning overhead what they were plotting and acted accordingly. Either way, I doubt Lightning would have fallen for it. Her playing along is the perfect revenge, and, naturally, Fang wouldn’t need much encouragement to go along with it too.

It’s been a good year for these prompts, so keep them coming. I realised the other day that I’ve worked through roughly 10% of the prompts. That’s actually pretty cool. I wasn’t sure I’d even get one prompt done, never mind more than twenty. Oh well, you guys have been so good with feedback that I haven’t been able to keep away. Kudos to you!

If you're interested in my original fiction, you can find a link to that in my profile.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Uxorial Affectations

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Uxorial Affectations

The smell that greeted Lightning when she opened the door was absolutely mouth watering. It was a combination of scents – roast meat, hot soup, and finely seasoned roast vegetables. But the lovely smell had nothing on the sight before her: Fang in a demure housedress and apron, her hair tied back in a loose ponytail that she draped over one shoulder.

“Good evening, darling.” Fang smiled and eased Lightning’s coat off, so she could hang it on the rack beside the door. Slack-jawed, Lightning let the other woman undo the top two buttons of her shirt. She wanted to say something – anything – but her mouth refused to work. What was going on? “Would you like dinner, a bath… or me?”

The words were tempting enough, but the look in Fang’s eyes was something else. Lightning’s brain ground to a halt. “…

Fang chuckled softly and took Lightning by the arm, steering her into the dining room. Along the way, she divested the pink-haired woman of her briefcase and put it on the couch. It was filled with paperwork from one of the most horrible months of Lightning’s working life.

“Have a seat, dear.” Fang settled Lightning into a chair. “I’ll be with you shortly. I have a few things to finish off in the kitchen.” The innocence of the words was at stark odds with the way Fang raked her gaze over Lightning’s exposed collarbone. The sway the huntress added to her hips as she walked away only added to the contrast. Lightning stared, unable to look away. She needed to get Fang into a dress more often.

With Fang in the kitchen, Lightning finally turned her attention to the dinner table. It was covered with food, most of it her favourite dishes. It took everything she had not to grab something and start eating. Work had been killing her for the past month. The Guardian Corps was in desperate need of restructuring to cope with the challenges of living on Gran Pulse, and someone had decided that she should help supervise the changes.

It had taken Lightning a full month to bring the sharp increase in her workload under control. She’d been forced to work much longer hours than usual – she’d even slept in her office on several occasions. Now, all she wanted was to spend a nice weekend with Fang. They could spend the weekend at home or perhaps go hunting. She wasn’t sure what to make of this.

And the food wasn’t the only thing she noticed. The house, as far as she could tell, was absolutely spotless. It was utterly uncanny. Fang wasn’t an untidy person, but she wasn’t a neat freak like Lightning. One of the very first hurdles they’d had to get over in their relationship was the cleaning situation. Lightning had learned to stop nagging, and Fang had learned to go along with the occasional cleaning spree. This was different. The dining room – and the living room – was completely spotless. Fang hadn’t simply met Lightning’s exacting – arguably obsessive – standards. She’d surpassed them.

Several minutes later, Fang came back with a bottle of wine on ice. Smiling gently, she poured a glass of wine for Lightning and then gestured at the food on the table. “Dinner is served, honey. What would you like to have first?”
Okay. This was getting too weird. Lightning took a deep breath and caught Fang’s wrist as the taller woman reached for the roast vegetables. “Fang, not that I don’t appreciate the effort, but what’s going on? Did you lose a bet with Vanille or Serah?”

Fang let the reserved mask slip away and grinned. “I know how rough work has been for you lately. It’s been out of control, to say the least. I also know how much you hate it when things get out of control, so I thought I’d give a bit of that control back to you. For tonight, you’re in charge. I’ll be the perfect, obedient housewife. All you have to do is ask, and I’ll do it. No questions asked.”

Right. That was interesting. “And the house?”

“Hey. You’re the one who said I should help out more. Maybe now, you’ll let me since it should be clear that I can meet your crazy standards.” Fang softened her voice, slipping back into the role of quiet, dutiful housewife. “Besides, what sort of wife would I be if I couldn’t have a clean house and a nice, delicious meal waiting for you after work?”

If Fang wanted to play things this way, Lightning wasn’t about to complain. Relaxing back onto her chair, she let Fang prepare a plate of food for her. It was strange, but she’d never noticed how graceful Fang was when handling food. She carved several thin slices of roast meat and added some roast vegetables. A small portion of gravy went on top.

Lightning took a second to savour the sight of the food. It looked wonderful. Then she started to eat. A low groan left her lips. It was perfect.

“You need to cook more often.” Lightning tried to eat politely before giving in. It was just too good. She finished her first helping in record time and reached for more, but Fang tutted quietly and took her plate.

“Tonight, I’m serving you.” Fang added some more vegetables and meat along with a bowl of soup. There was even freshly baked bread to go with the soup. If Lightning weren’t already convinced that she was the luckiest woman on the planet, this would definitely do the job. “

“How did you do all this?” Lightning asked. She had to stifle another groan. What had she been thinking? She’d spent a whole month bringing sandwiches to work and eating takeaway food. She should have been coming home earlier to this.

Fang’s eyes twinkled. “Uxorial secrets, dear.” Lightning raised one eyebrow. “All right, I think we both know that kitchen appliances don’t like me.” Lightning snickered. “Okay, our toaster hates me, and the microwaves had already tried to murder me twice. But I’m perfectly fine when it comes to doing things the traditional way. Everything here was made on a stove or in an oven. Nothing fancy. Simple, honest cooking is something I can do.”

“It’s perfect.” Lightning brought a roasted carrot to her lips. It was sweet yet spicy. “And you look… beautiful.”

A light flush crossed Fang’s cheeks. “Thanks. I wasn’t sure how I’d look in a dress. I don’t wear them too often.”

“You should.” Lightning had blurted the words out. She winced at the look of amusement on Fang’s face. “I mean I think you look great in your sari, but you look great in a dress too. The apron is a nice touch.” She paused. “But where did you get them?”

“Oh, here and there. I might not like everything that comes from Cocoon, but a shopping mall does
“Come in handy every now and then.” Fang patted Lightning on the arm. “Now, stop asking questions and enjoy yourself. That’s an order.”

“I thought I was in charge.”

“Ah, that’s right.” Fang fluttered her eyelashes and then lowered her gaze. “What do you want, dear?”

“I want another serving of roast vegetables.” Lightning took a deep breath. She had no problems expressing herself in the bedroom, but this was different. Still, she intended to take advantage of it while she could. And she was very, very hungry. “And some more soup. Another glass of wine would be good too.”

“Is that all?”

An idea occurred to Lightning. How far was Fang willing to take this? “No. I want you to serve them to me while sitting on my lap.”

“If that’s what you want, darling, then that’s what you’ll get.”

A shiver ran through Lightning as Fang leaned over the table, slowly putting vegetables onto Lightning’s plate. Then she moved to the soup. Lighting had never found soup sexy before, but watching Fang take a small spoonful of the soup and raise it to her lips had Lightning reconsidering her opinion. When Fang’s tongue darted out to lick a drop of soup from the corner of her lips, Lightning felt as though she’d had an epiphany: Fang made everything sexy.

Fang turned a glass of wine into something even more tantalising. Fang settled down onto Lightning’s lap, a pleasant weight marked with a familiar scent. It took a split-second for Lightning to place the fragrance that Fang wore: it was the same perfume Lightning herself had worn on the night she’d proposed to Fang. The memory of Fang’s answer – a resounding yes – and the night that followed sent a dizzying wave of heat through Lightning. Fang didn’t help one bit when she reached across Lightning for the bottle of wine. Lightning found her face only inches from Fang’s bust. The fact that Fang’s body was completely covered only seemed to make her more alluring. Lightning knew exactly what the dress covered, and she knew that all she had to do was reach over and –

“Sorry, dear.” Fang caught her hand. “But we’re having dinner.”

Lightning hadn’t even realised that she’d reached for the buttons of Fang’s dress. Then Fang poured more wine into Lightning’s glass, her foot rubbing up against Lightning’s trouser-covered leg. That was when Lightning noticed another detail that only thickened the haze of desire that had settled over her. Fang was wearing high heels. Maker. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d managed to get Fang into heels.

“Are those heels?” Lightning croaked.

“They might be.” Fang slid off Lightning’s lap. She stepped back, and Lightning’s eyes went to her feet. There, tucked underneath the edges of Fang’s dress, was a pair of high heels the same colour as Lightning’s eyes. To give Lightning a better view, Fang put one foot up on another chair and hiked up her dress. What Lightning saw then made her throat go dry.

“You’re wearing stockings and garters.” The black garters and stockings that outlined Fang’s long, perfect legs were the only things in Lightning’s world. Fang didn’t dress in this sort of clothing often, but she knew – damn it – she knew what sort of effect she had on Lightning when she did.
Lightning lurched forward.

“Not yet.” Fang pushed Lightning back onto her chair and settled onto her lap again. “We have to finish dinner first.”

“What happened to me being in charge?” Lightning put her hands on Fang’s hips as the other woman brought a roast vegetable to Lightning’s mouth. “Wasn’t I supposed to be in charge?”

“Yes, but we’re eating dinner.” Fang laughed, eyes twinkling. “So, we have to finish dinner first. Come on, eat up.”

The food was marvellous, but Lightning couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty. She could barely taste any of it. All she wanted was to get Fang out of those clothes and onto her back. What else was Fang wearing under that dress? Lightning had to know if Fang had a matching bra to go with everything else. She had to.

They wouldn’t even have to go up to the bedroom. Lightning could clear a spot on the table and have Fang right there. But each time Lightning’s muscles tensed, Fang would settle her back down and offer her some more food or some more wine.

Perhaps it was the wine, or perhaps it was the agony of being so close to Fang but being unable to do what she wanted, but Lightning felt lightheaded, drunk. She pressed herself against Fang and breathed in her scent. How had the two of them taken so long to fall in love and get married? If their first date had gone like this, Lightning would have married Fang on the spot.

“More wine?” Fang murmured. The teasing had left her voice now. She wanted what was coming as much as Lightning. But unlike Lightning, she wanted to draw this out a little longer. Fang shifted to straddle Lightning, their body pressed together. Lightning’s hands had gone from Fang’s hips to rubbing circles on the small of her back.

“Yes.” Lightning swallowed thickly. She couldn’t think straight. “But not in the glass. I want you to give me the wine from your mouth.”

The kiss that followed was one of the stranger and more awkward ones that Lightning had ever shared with Fang. The taste of the wine combined with the taste of Fang to produce a dizzying flavour that left Lightning wanting, needing more. But not even their best efforts could stop some of the wine from spilling out. Lightning pulled back. Her eyes drifted to where some of the wine had spilled onto her uniform and Fang’s dress.

“That’s going to stain.” Fang’s voice was a whisper.

Lightning tugged Fang back toward her and licked the last drops of wine from her lips. “I don’t care. I’ll buy you another one – or a dozen. Just promise you’ll wear them.”

“I’ll hold you to that.” Fang ran her fingers over Lightning’s collarbone and then began to undo more of the buttons of her shirt. “Still, we should get you out of those clothes. A good wife would never let you walk around with wine on your shirt.”

“Does that mean I get to have you now?”

“The bath first, darling.” Fang wrapped her arms around Lightning’s neck. “You’ve had a very long day at work. A nice, hot bath would be just the thing before bed, don’t you think?”

“Please tell me you’ll be joining me.” Lightning was going to go crazy if Fang didn’t let her do something soon.
“Of course.” Fang’s expression was supposed to be one of maidenly shyness, but the raw heat in her gaze made the expression look anything but innocent. “Someone has to wash your back.”

The bath was one of the most tortuous yet wonderful experiences in Lightning’s entire life. Fang led her upstairs, drew a hot bath, and then helped her into it. There, Lightning learned a number of very important things: Fang’s lingerie was indeed a matching set, Yun massage was good for more than just muscle pain, and she really wasn’t in charge of anything at all.

In the end, Lightning’s had no choice but to give in to temptation. Fang’s plan was for dinner, a bath, and then her. Lightning decided to multitask – she had a bath and Fang at the same time.

X X X

Later, Lightning drifted on the edge of sleep, nestled in Fang’s arms. “Fang, are you awake?”

“Yes.” Fang yawned. “ Somehow.” She chuckled. “I think I might have teased you too much during dinner. It’s a miracle neither of us drowned in the bath.” She groaned. “And after what you did, I’ll be lucky if I can walk tomorrow.”

“It’s your fault. If you weren’t so… so you, I wouldn’t get that worked up.” Lightning turned, easing her face into the crook of Fang’s shoulder. “But thank you. I… I needed this. Work has been so hard lately, and…”

“It’s okay.” Fang kissed Lightning’s forehead and stroked her back. “I get it. Besides, you’re not the only one who got something out of this.” Her lips twitched. “I recall enjoying myself quite thoroughly too.”

Pride filled Lightning’s chest. “You were quite vocal.”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself.” Fang grinned in the darkness. “I wasn’t the only one screaming my head off.”

Lightning blushed and buried her face in Fang’s shoulder. “You know, Fang, if… if you ever want me to do something like this for you…”

“Don’t worry, I’ll let you know.” Fang yawned again. Sleeping with Lightning felt so natural now that she wondered how she’d ever managed to get to sleep without Lightning curled up against her. “Now, go to sleep. We’ve got a whole week ahead of us.”

“A whole week? Fang, I have work on Monday.”

“No, you don’t.” Fang closed her eyes. “I called Amodar, let him know you’d go on a murderous rampage if you didn’t get some time off.”

“You did not tell him that.”

“No. But I did tell him how much work you’ve been doing. He’s giving you a week off.” Fang sighed. “Be a good girl and say thank you.”

Lightning pulled back just far enough to look Fang in the eyes. “Thank you.”

Then they slept.

X X X

A few months later…
Fang had just come back from arguably her worst expedition ever. If it wasn’t roving packs of rabid gorgonopsids, it was avalanches and Behemoth Kings. In between keeping overzealous researchers from bringing ancient ruins down on their heads, fending off the local wildlife, and grappling with malfunctioning communications equipment, she hadn’t gotten a chance to call Lightning.

In fact, the first – and only – words she’d exchanged with the other woman in the past month had been over the static-filled radio on the ship back to New Bodhum.

Thank the Maker that Snow and Vanille had gone along too. Otherwise, Fang would never have made it through the trip. After arriving back at New Bodhum, they’d all gone their separate ways. Snow had gone straight for the house he shared with Serah while Vanille was headed back to her apartment to crash and binge on television and sugar, two commodities she’d been denied during the expedition.

Fang, meanwhile, knew exactly where she wanted to be: home. She trudged to the front door of the house she and Lightning shared and opened it. If she were lucky, maybe Lightning would be there to greet her.

She was way more than lucky.

Lightning was there in a housedress and apron. The scent of dinner filled the air.

“Welcome home.” Lightning blushed. “Would you like dinner, a bath, or me?”

Fang stepped through the door and kicked it shut behind her. “How about all three?”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompts #36: Fang arrives home to find Lightning acting very strangely. In fact, it would seem that Lightning had transformed into a 1950’s housewife (apron and all). Reason why is up to the writer. Since it’s February, theme is Valentines. Internet lightning bolt cookie if one or all of these appear: cactus liquor, penguins, guitar and an Adamantortoise.

I must, I’m afraid, apologise for meeting the spirit, but not the letter, of the prompt. However, when I was throwing around ideas for this particular prompt, I could not shake the feeling that a reversal was in order. As strikingly odd as it would be to see Lightning playing the part of the perfect 1950s housewife, I do think it would be even stranger to see Fang acting like that. I also think Lightning would be far more perturbed by the change that Fang would (Fang would likely find it hilarious from the start). Fang’s line to Lightning about dinner, a bath or her, is an old anime cliché.

This chapter only went through one draft before this final version, but there were actually quite a few changes. The most important of these was the tone of the chapter. In the draft, there was a much lighter, more whimsical tone. The tension – sexual and otherwise – between Fang and Lightning took a backseat to the humour. However, while writing the final version, it occurred to me that adopting a more heated tone might serve the chapter better. I changed things as I went along, keeping the overall
structure of events the same but altering the mood, and so here we are. Hopefully, it worked.

I won’t comment on the issues of stereotyping and gender roles here. This is not the place for it, and my positions should be clear based on my writing. That said, it was fun to mess around with Fang and Lightning in this chapter. I’ve always enjoyed poking at Lightning with a proverbial stick, and Fang acting the part of a demure housewife is one of the pointiest sticks available. Watchful readers will also notice that this chapter represents something of a departure from the norm: most of the chapters are roughly ordered in terms of prompts (i.e., the earlier chapters represent earlier prompts, and the later chapters are drawn from later prompts). Every now and then, I do skim through earlier prompts. So if you’ve submitted something earlier and I haven’t gotten around to it, don’t lose hope. And keep sending in prompts! I like to think of writing as a locomotive: the more I write, the easier it is to write more. And every locomotive needs fuel – more prompts increases the likelihood of something catching my fancy. You may also have noticed the RWBY story I have up now – don’t worry. I’m still a card-carrying member of the FLight/Fangrai brigade.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Every now and then, Vanille came up with some truly brilliant ideas. But now was not one of those times – not even close. In fact, as she watched the disaster in front of her unfold, Serah was quite certain that this whole thing was one of Vanille’s worst ideas ever.

Yes, it was that bad – even worse than the time Vanille had built a coffee machine that combined the wonders of caffeine with the glories of vodka.

“Hah! Don’t make me laugh. You couldn’t keep a beat to save your life.” Fang put her hands on her hips and flashed her trademark smirk. All she needed was a cape and she’d look just like a superhero. “I’ll wipe the floor with you, soldier girl.”

Lightning smirked right back at Fang. Serah thought the expression looked more psychotic than overconfident. “You’ll try, Fang, and you’ll fail. And when you do, you’ll be scrubbing our toilets, washing our dishes, and vacuuming our house for a month.”

“Oh, I’ll take that bet.” Fang marched over to Lightning and leaned in until they were nose to nose. “But if I win, you’ll be walking around the house in nothing but an apron for the next month. How does that sound?”

Lightning’s eye twitched. Serah sighed. Her sister was about three seconds from a rage-induced stroke. “Bring it on.”

Sometimes, Serah wondered what her sister and Fang saw in each other. True, both of them were intelligent and attractive women, but both of them were also… well… crazy. Take the nature of today’s challenge, for example. Dance Dance Revolution was a video game – it was supposed to be fun. Each player had a dance pad, which they used by stepping onto the various buttons. The aim of the game was simple: dance along to a song by stepping onto the buttons that corresponded to the symbols that appeared on screen. Points were given out for doing the right steps at the right time.

What followed was not the breathtaking display of agility, speed, and timing that Serah had expected. On the contrary, what followed was a display of breathtaking stupidity. There was, as Vanille had once put it, stupid – and then there was Fang-and-Lightning-level stupid. Personally, Serah preferred the term supreme idiocy while Vanille had since opted for transcendental insanity. Sazh, smart man that he was, usually just ran for cover.

For two such wonderfully gifted fighters, both Lightning and Fang sucked at Dance Dance Revolution. No, Serah thought, that wasn’t going far enough. Mere sucking could not begin to describe the amount of failure currently on display. She needed a better metaphor, something that really drove home the heights of their stupidity. Ah yes. Vacuuming. They both vacuumed at Dance Dance Revolution. That was better.

Perhaps it was the alcohol they’d had. That might have explained why Lightning had a hard time keeping upright, and why Fang seemed to be squinting down at her feet in a vain effort to put them in the right spot.
Or perhaps it was the fact that neither of them had ever played the game before. Serah had played it a few times with Vanille, and it was harder than it looked, especially if you were playing a difficult song on a high level of difficulty. Naturally, Lightning and Fang had opted for one of the fastest, most complicated songs imaginable on the highest difficult setting the game allowed.

They were idiots, Fang and Lightning, sweet, lovable idiots.

Then again, the sheer amount of merciless cheating involved might have had something to do with their poor performance. Yep, that was probably it.

Whack.

That was the sound Fang made when she hit the floor after Lightning pushed her off her dance pad.

Thwack.

That was the sound Lightning made when Fang tripped her over and then her hit her on the head with a couch cushion.

As the pair rolled around on the ground, Vanille began to giggle like it was the funniest thing in the entire world. Her giggling only got louder when Lightning managed to grab Fang’s sari and use it to try and strangle her. What was Fang’s response? She returned the favour with Lightning’s cape.

“I wonder who’ll run out of oxygen first?” Vanille reached for a pen. “Whoever it is, we can draw on their face.”

Serah made a surreptitious attempt to move any and all alcohol away from her redheaded friend. No luck. Vanille saw her attempt coming from a mile away and slapped her hand.

“Mine!” Vanille snapped. She scowled. “Get your own.”

This was turning into another disaster. After the mentally scarring debacle that was Twister night – the further Serah stayed from her sister’s cleavage and crotch, the better – Serah had thought that a night of video games could only be a good thing. Surely that couldn’t go horribly wrong. But it had. It really, really had.

Serah sighed. And to think it had all started with a first-person shooter.

X X X

“Fang, you kind of suck at this.” Vanille pointed at the score screen and frowned. “No, really, you suck. How can you be so good at killing things in real life and so bad at a video game that is all about killing things?”

Fang took a deep, deep breath, and Serah had a feeling that it was only the other woman’s incredible love for Vanille that kept her from reaching over and choking the life out of the redhead. Well, there was also the fact that Lightning was currently laughing her ass off at Fang’s misfortune. They two of them might be in a relationship now, but that had done absolutely nothing to curb their competitiveness.

“I’m trying, Vanille.” Fang’s jaw clenched, and she jabbed one finger at Lightning. “But pinky over there is some kind of video game ninja.”

It was true. Serah was okay when it came to video games – they were more Snow’s thing – but Lightning was, apparently, some kind of idiot savant at them. They were playing a first-person
shooter with Lightning and Serah on one team and Vanille and Fang on the other. Serah knew that Vanille was good at video games, but she’d never suspected that her sister would actually be able to challenge Vanille at one of her favourite pastimes.

As for Fang… well, she was basically just cannon fodder.

If Lightning wasn’t blowing Fang’s head off with a machine gun, she was making Fang eat grenade after grenade. It was actually pretty funny, especially when Vanille had tried to trade Fang for Serah since at least Serah did something other than die. Vanille had even offered to throw in a chocolate bar to sweeten the deal.

“Fang,” Lightning said. “Just admit it. You’re not good at video games. It’s okay. Nobody can be good at everything.” Lightning giggled. Serah suspected it was due to the alcohol. In her infinite wisdom, Fang had decided to challenge Lightning to a drinking contest before they started playing. “Except maybe me. I’m kind of awesome at everything. Even sex. Especially when it’s with you.”

Serah grimaced. That was too much detail.

Normally, Fang would have been amused by any mention of sex involving her and Lightning, but not this time.

“Let’s change games,” Fang said. “Let’s see how awesome you really are.”

X X X

And things had gone downhill from there.

They’d tried shooting games, racing games, fighting games, and even puzzle games. And apparently, Lightning really was awesome at everything. Regardless of what game they played, Lightning crushed Fang, and Fang had only gotten more and more pissed off. It didn’t help that the breaks between each video game had been punctuated by more alcohol, silly stories, and –

And now, Fang had unplugged Lightning’s dance pad. But even with it unplugged, she was still losing.

And, of course, Lightning had to pick up her dance pad and swing it around like a club. After all, talking and negotiating was for cowards. Why not try to bash her girlfriend’s head in? And it wasn’t like Fang was helpless. She was using her own dance pad to return the favour.

“You know,” Vanille said. “This is way better than a movie.” She took another sip of… was that vodka? “Like way better than a movie. We need to have more girls’ nights in. Lots more.”

Serah tried to disagree, but she couldn’t. This was better than a movie. The only thing missing was a proper soundtrack – or not – Vanille had switched the song of the game to something more appropriate. Now they got to watch Lightning and Fang make idiots of themselves to epic music.

After several more minutes of bickering, Lightning and Fang finally got back to the business of playing the game – and promptly returned to sucking. Neither of them was doing well at all. In fact, Serah was beginning to think that she might see two people get a score of zero for the very first time.

She was right. Two zeroes had to be some kind of world record.

“Wow.” Lightning sat on the floor. “You suck at this game, Fang.”
Fang, for once, did not get pissed off. “You suck just as much.”

Vanille, never one to leave things well enough alone, felt the need to add her two cents. “So, who won the bet?”

And that kicked off another round of squabbling.

Serah reached for some alcohol. This was going to be a long, long night.

X X X

Lightning woke up with a groan. Her head ached and her mouth tasted like carpet. Wait… there was a reason for that. She’d been sleeping on the floor. She stumbled to her feet and then cursed as she tripped over one of Fang’s legs. The other woman grumbled in her sleep and curled up into a ball. Lightning smiled. It was cute, in a way. On the couch, Vanille had draped herself all over Serah.

Last night…

These girls’ nights in were going to be the death of her. She shouldn’t have picked on Fang so much over video games – she knew how much Fang hated to lose at anything – but she was sick of Fang making fun of how fancy her gun blade was. Sure, it was a sword that turned into a gun, but that didn’t make it extravagant – that made it useful. And, to be honest, Fang was horrible at video games.

Lightning staggered into the bathroom to brush her teeth. That last video game, the dancing one, man, they were both terrible at that one – as in train wreck terrible. No wonder Vanille had been laughing so much. She just hoped that nothing weird had happened between Serah and Vanille after she and Fang fell asleep on the floor.

She thought back to the sight on the couch. It should be okay. Both Serah and Vanile still had their clothes on even if Vanille was groping Serah in her sleep.

On her way back to the living room, Lightning almost ran into Fang. The other woman yawned.

“Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

“So… about last night.” Fang smiled. “Crazy night, huh? It looks like I might need to work a tiny bit more on my video game skills.”

“You might.” Lightning’s lips twitched. Neither of them was good at apologies. “And we both need to work on our dancing, I think.”

Fang chuckled. “Yeah. Say, did you see those two on the couch?”

“I did.”

“I seem to remember them laughing at us a lot. Let me brush my teeth first, and then we can take pictures.” Fang smirked. “It’ll be perfect blackmail material.”

That was a very, very good point. Lightning grinned. “I’ll go get the camera.”

If there was one thing that Lightning was grateful to Fang for, it was for teaching her how to lighten up. Instead of getting angry with Vanille for coming up with the idea of a night in playing
video games or Serah for not stopping her, Lightning was simply going to get even. When Vanille came back, the two of them crept over to the couch.

Heh. Time to show their little sisters whom the boss was.

It was adorable. Vanille was draped over Serah like a blanket, and she had assumed a death grip on the pink-haired woman. Serah was lucky it was Vanille – if it had been Snow, she probably would have been crushed. Readying the camera, Lightning sniggered. She would be able to hold this over Serah for years.

Lightning took half a dozen pictures before Serah woke up.

“Huh?”

This was trouble. Serah took one look at Lightning and, in a surprisingly display of strength, shoved Vanille off.

“What are you doing?” Serah wailed.

Lightning backed away, grinning from ear to ear. Serah tackled her to the ground and went for the camera. The younger woman caught a glimpse of the pictures.

“You are not keeping those pictures, Lightning! Give me the camera!”

“Not a chance!” Lightning managed to pry Serah off, but Serah was not about to give up so easily. Using a perfect scissors takedown, she drove Lightning back onto the ground.

In the meantime, the doorbell rang. Vanille stumbled to her feet. All of the screaming was killing her ears, and she was still shaking off the effects of being thrown onto the ground. However, she was nothing if not polite. She went to the door and answered it. It was Sazh and Snow.

“Morning, guys.” Vanille rubbed her eyes and yawned. Despite her small stature, her resilience to alcohol was impressive. It helped that she’d spent years working out how to cure hangovers with magic. “Um… why are you here?”

“I figured Serah might need a ride home.” Snow took in Vanille’s bedraggled state and reached out to steady her before she could fall over. “Knowing you four, I didn’t want her trying to get home on her own. Plus, Lightning is a scary enough driver when she’s sober – I don’t think Serah could survive hitching a ride with a hung over Lightning.”

“Sure, sure. Come in.” Vanille yawned again. “I’m going to go brush my teeth.” She paused. “Just ignore everything you see – and if you don’t, remember that none of it was my fault.”

X X X

Sazh shook his head as he took in the carnage in the living room. How much alcohol had those four managed to get through? It was a miracle that no one was dead. At least he’d had the good sense to leave Dajh at the park with Hope. When Snow had asked for back up, Sazh had agreed to spare Hope the horror of seeing his heroes acting like squabbling children – which was exactly what was happening now.

Serah and Lightning were wrestling on the ground while Fang egged them on. Vanille was still brushing her teeth, but she’d come out of the bathroom with a glass of water to watch.

“Ahem.” Sazh cleared his throat. “We can always come back later if you’re busy.”
The two Farrons froze. Snow laughed. Serah blushed. Lightning glared.

“I thought you could use a ride home, Serah.” Snow waggled his eyebrows. “But it seems like you’re already occupied.”

Serah looked down to find her hand squarely on her sister’s chest. She snatched it back. She hadn’t been trying to cop a feel – she’d been trying to push Lightning away. “Snow…”

“So, what were you two fighting about?” The camera at the heart of the squabble had spilled loose in the melee. Sazh picked it up and flicked through the pictures. “It looks like you might have some competition, Snow.”

“Really?” Snow looked through the pictures and then grinned at Vanille. “Should I be worried?”

“Grargh gragh.” Vanille tried to talk through the mouthful of water she was gargling. “Grargh gragh!”

“I’ll take that as a no.” Snow turned back to Serah. “But you know, if you two ever do do anything… can I watch?”

His attempt at a joke immediately resulted in two Farron glares directed right at him. It was almost enough to turn him into an ice block where he stood.

“All right,” Sazh said. “Enough of that. I don’t want anybody to get killed. How about you guys get showered and changed, and we can all go out and grab breakfast somewhere? Sound good?”

Lightning had a quick shower – it was only quick because she’d banished Fang from the bathroom while she bathed. Otherwise, Fang would have hopped in and her quick shower would have turned into something altogether longer and noisier. She waited for Fang to finish showering and changing before the two of them headed downstairs. They arrived to find Vanille already changed and cheering on Sazh.

Wait.

Sazh was playing Dance Dance Revolution.

And he was getting a perfect score… on the hardest level of difficulty… on the toughest song in the game.

“Is this real?” Fang grabbed Lightning’s arm. “Or am I in crystal stasis or something?”

“It can’t be.” Lightning pinched her own cheek. “Can it?”

Sazh finished the song with a fleet-footed flourish and then turned and winked at them. “Vanille and Serah were telling me how much you two sucked. I thought I’d show them what a real player looks like.”

“What?”

“Dajh has this game. He thought it was funny. Chirpy likes it too – I swear that chocobo has music in his blood or something. So, I decided to learn how to play. It turns out that I’m pretty good at it.” Sazh struck a pose. “What, you guys didn’t think I had a few moves? How do you think I met my wife? I can still boogie if I need to.”
“Boogie? Nobody says boogie anymore.” Lightning and Fang both turned toward the door. “Let’s go get breakfast.”

“Oh, I see how it is.” Sazh lifted his chin. “You’re not sure you can beat me, are you?”

“That’s it.” Fang turned. “Prepare to die, old man.”

Lightning pushed in front of Fang. “Get in line.”

It was another hour before they went to get breakfast. And the score? Sazh – 10. Lightning and Fang – 0.

X X X

As for the bet between Lightning and Fang… Lightning wasn’t about to walk around the house in nothing more than an apron. Her only choice was to admit that rather than both of them losing, both she and Fang had won.

It wasn’t quite as fun as seeing Lightning in an apron, but Fang had to admit Lightning was cute when she was sulking.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #245: Light and fang have a dance dance revolution competition.

This prompt being what it is, I decided to adopt a much less serious approach than in some of the other chapters. In other words, I opted for the Lightning and Fang are crazy approach. That said, I think video games bring out the best and worst in people, especially when it comes to competition. As an aside, the Twister night that Serah refers to can be found in Chapter 23 of Final Fantasy XIII Omake Theatre.

Having Lightning and Fang being horrible at the game was a logical choice – it set up a lot of the humour. However, I couldn’t resist making Sazh really good at it. I’ve got a soft spot for him, and he doesn’t get enough credit. Plus, the image of Sazh, Dajh, and Chirpy all playing video games together is too cute (DDR is one of the only games Chirpy can actually play despite lacking hands).

If you like my writing, you might want to check out my original fiction. You can find links to it in my profile.

Finally, some readers have contacted me with concerns that I’m abandoning FF XIII. Rest assured that is not the case. Although I am now also writing stories for RWBY (and I’d love it if you guys took a look at those too), I am still very much a card-carrying member of the FLight ship (also known as the HMAS Fangrai). There’s plenty more FF XIII stuff to come.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Action

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Action

Lightning levelled her pistol at the tall woman beside the helipad. How had everything gone so wrong? “Step away from the helicopter, Fang.”

A low chuckle came from the other woman. It sent a shiver down Lightning’s spine. Then Fang turned. Her lips curled up into a faint smirk, and the corners of her eyes crinkled. “I’m glad you made it. But you sure took your time. I’d have thought the Guardian Corps’ finest officer could have gotten here a little faster.”

Lightning’s finger tightened ever so slightly on the trigger. She stepped forward, closing the gap until they were only thirty feet apart. Even now, after everything, that smirk could still get to her. Her chest tightened, and it was suddenly hard to breathe. She’d tried so hard not think about what that smirk really meant. It looked so genuine, so real, but had anything about Fang been real?

Well, there was one thing about Fang that Lightning was sure of – Fang was a traitor.

“It’s over.” Lightning flinched as another harsh wind swept over the rooftop.

“No, it’s not.” Fang took a step forward. Lightning took a step back. The gun shook in her hands. “We both know it’s not.”

“Don’t make me shoot you!” Lightning’s jaw clenched, as Fang continued to close the gap. “Stop! Stop right there!”

“What’s the matter?” Fang held her hands up in mocking surrender. And still she smirked. “You’re all riled up.”

“Of course I am.” Lightning grit her teeth. The warmth in Fang’s voice was a lie. Fang’s smile was a lie. Everything about Fang was a lie. She had to tell herself that. She had to believe that. Otherwise, she wouldn’t be able to pull the trigger. And still, her voice came out hoarse. “We were partners, and you threw it all away. And for what – for money?”

“Well, aren’t you just a little ray of sunshine.” Fang laughed. The sound was harsh and wild. It was the fakest sound Lightning had ever heard. “What’s the matter? Did you fall in love with me?”

“Shut up!” Lightning fired a warning shot. The bullet streaked past Fang’s head, so close the other woman’s hair shifted in the breeze of its passage. “Just shut up!”

“Why?” Fang stepped forward again, voice quiet and hard and filled with that raw intensity that Lightning had never been able to ignore. “Aren’t you sick of playing by the rules when nobody else does? How many years are you going to rot away in the Guardian Corps, risking your life for people who don’t give a damn about? Haven’t you ever wanted something more, something better? You could have it, you know.”

“You think becoming a mercenary is better?” Lightning swallowed thickly. She’d told herself a hundred times that she was over all the hurt, that nothing Fang said could reach her. But she was wrong. Just hearing Fang’s voice again, seeing her in the flesh, was almost more than she could
bear. “Do you have any idea what Orphan is going to do with the information you’re giving them?”

“I know exactly what they’re going to do, but I don’t care.” Fang’s hand drifted down to her side. “They’re paying me more than enough to not care.” Her voice softened and turned pleading. The want in it sounded so real. “Come with me. We were the best. We can be the best again – together. We’ll find somewhere – anywhere you want – and we can be together. We can live however we want, do whatever we want, without any of those stupid rules or obligations to hold us back. We can be free.”

“And how many lives will our freedom cost? How many corpses are we going to have step over?” Lightning shook her head. “I made my choice a long time ago. I swore an oath to serve and protect. I can’t let you give that information to Orphan. They’re terrorists. One way or the other, I’m going to stop you. If you ever cared about me, give yourself up peacefully. Don’t make me kill you.”

“I see.” Fang closed her eyes. A single tear trickled down her cheek. She reached up to brush it away. Her eyes opened. There was such warmth there, such affection, but it drained away leaving only a mournful cold. “You know, I wasn’t lying about everything. I loved you too.”

“Don’t try it. Don’t test me.”

Fang’s hand dipped toward the pistol at her side. “Do you really think you can shoot me?”

Lightning’s answer came a split-second later. Fang drew her pistol – Lightning hesitated. Her shot came a millisecond too late. It lanced through the air above Fang’s shoulder as the other woman dropped into a crouch and fired. Lightning jerked away and ran for the metal crates nearby as Fang shot twice more in quick succession.

“Do you remember when we were in the academy?” Fang asked. Lightning listened, trying to hear Fang over the wind. The other woman was close. She peered over her crate and missed Fang by inches. The other woman ducked behind another crate. “We used to practice together all the time.”

“Shit.” Lightning took a deep breath. “Shit.” Her hands were shaking. Her mind had ground to a halt. This was Fang – Fang – that she was shooting at. She had to calm down, had to get her wits back. Fang was good – as good as she was. If she panicked, she was dead. She needed to get it together. “I remember,” she shouted back. “And I remember winning more than you.”

Laughter. “Maybe, but we’re not practicing anymore. This is for real.”

Lightning’s eyes widened as she caught a flash of movement in the edges of her vision. Fang had somehow managed to sneak around the crates between them. Lightning threw herself over the crates as Fang opened fire. Bullets clattered off the crates, and Lightning stumbled to her feet and shot back.

Fang ducked, disappearing back into the maze of crates. Lightning did the same, her mind whirling. How many shots had Fang already fired? Shit. She hadn’t counted. Fang’s favourite pistol held fifteen rounds, but that didn’t mean a damn thing if she couldn’t remember how many had been fired.

“I meant what I said.” Fang voice seemed to come from everywhere, and Lightning lurched to the side as a trio of bullets cracked the concrete where she’d been standing only a moment ago. Had Fang gotten above her? She turned, pistol coming up, and Fang leapt off a crate to dodge the attack. “Come with me. Orphan just wants the information. You don’t have to be their enemy so long as you stay out of my way.”
“I can’t do that. I’m a member of the Guardian Corps.” Lightning hissed as another shot clipped the edge of the crate beside her head. She darted out and fired twice, driving Fang back. No matter what happened, she had to keep Fang away from the helicopter. “I can’t go with you.”

The time for words was over. They fought a deadly game of cat and mouse across the rooftop. Fang knew Lightning as well as she knew herself. Lightning had to scramble to keep up. She was on the back foot, never able to get off a clean shot. But Fang couldn’t hit her either. Familiarity was a sword that cut both ways.

The decisive moment came several minutes later. Fang and Lightning found themselves on opposite sides of the same crate. The dark-haired woman shoved it over, and Lightning had no choice but to dart out into the open. There was a low growl, and Lightning found herself shoved up against another crate, a gun pressed to the side of her head. Her own weapon was tucked snugly against Fang’s chest.

“Put the gun down. I’ll shoot you this time. You know I will.”

Fang grinned, teeth flashing. Her scent made Lightning’s head spin. “I know. But I also know that you’re out of bullets. I’ve been counting. Have you?”

Lightning stiffened. They’d both reloaded several times, and Fang was right. Lightning was out. And based on her count of Fang’s ammunition…

“And you’ve still got one in the chamber.” Lightning’s lips curled. “You always were lucky.”

“I won’t argue with you there. Lady Luck has always been kind to me.” Fang stepped forward, trapping Lightning against the crate. “Don’t make me kill you. I really, really don’t want to. But I will if I have to.”

Fang was so close that Lightning could actually feel every breath she took. It reminded her of another time, a better time, before Fang had turned her back on everything. It had been a time of stolen glances and lingering touches, of a friendship that was on the brink of becoming something more. If only Fang hadn’t turned out to be a damn traitor.

The silence stretched on, the pair of them looking into each other’s eyes. It was too much for Lightning. Fang’s smell, the feel of her, the sound of her, the sight of her. It wasn’t fair. Lightning had lost the battle before they’d even begun. With a hoarse cry, she lunged forward. Fang gave a startled yelp, and then they tumbled back onto the ground, Fang’s gun slipping loose and sliding across the roof.

“Are you crazy – umph!”

Lightning kissed Fang hard. There was nothing romantic about it. It was frustrated and angry and filled with hurt. It was all clashing teeth and bruised lips. But Lightning needed it, and she needed Fang to need it too. Fang tried to shove her off, but Lightning grabbed her wrists and pinned them above her head.

A shudder ran through Fang, and she tried to buck Lightning off, but Lightning refused to be moved. She bit down on Fang’s lip, and the other woman gave a hiss of pain, allowing Lightning to deepen the kiss. And somewhere along the line, the kiss stopped being so frustrated, so angry, so filled with hurt. Fang was kissing her back now, their lips and tongues moving gently against each other’s, first one hand and then the other slipping free to ghost along Lightning’s cheek and stroke the small of her back.
Lightning could taste blood and something else that was uniquely Fang. Then she was falling as Fang flipped them over. For a moment, Fang loomed over her, poised and beautiful and deadly. Perfect. Fang could have thrown a punch, an elbow, anything, really, but she didn’t. Instead, her head dipped down again as her lips sought out the slender column of Lightning’s throat. Lightning’s sigh became a groan as Fang first kissed and licked and then bit down, marking the juncture of her neck and shoulder.

Months, Lightning thought dazedly, months of working together. How many times had she thought about this? Her eyes drifted shut. Hundreds. She’d thought about this hundreds of time. Everywhere she touched Fang, she burned. But this wasn’t right. They had to stop. It wasn’t supposed to like this.

It –

“Cut! Cut, damn it. Cut!”

Lightning’s eyes opened, the spell broken, and she and Fang shared a look that was equal parts stunned, horrified, and needy. The other woman froze, her lips only a hair’s breadth from Lightning’s. And then Vanille was there, whacking both of them over the head with a rolled up copy of the script.

“What the hell are you two doing?” Vanille bopped Lightning over the head again. In the interests of fairness, she hit Fang too. “I mean I like the chemistry, but this is supposed to be an action movie, not a porno!”

Belatedly, Lightning realised that Fang was still straddling her. Both of them had flushed cheeks, and they were both still staring into each other’s eyes. There was no mistaking the desire in Fang’s gaze, the tension that wracked her frame. Lightning trembled.

A giggle came from somewhere behind them.

“I don’t know, Vanille,” Lebreau said. The first assistant director waggled her eyebrows. “We could always slip in a love scene or two. I’m sure audiences would love that.”

“Quiet, you.” Vanille brandished the script at Lebreau and then grabbed Fang by the collar of her shirt. In a stunning display of strength for someone her size, she dragged the taller woman off Lightning. Putting herself between the pair in case they tried any more off-script canoodling, she stamped her foot.

“Can I get makeup over here?” Vanille scowled. “Damn it, Lightning. Look at Fang’s lip. It looks like you tried to eat her. And your neck! Fang, you know how pale Lightning’s skin is. We’re going to need a tonne of makeup to cover that… that hickey!” Vanille growled. “Come on. I said I need makeup over here!”

As a makeup artist finally reached them, Vanille stomped off. “We’ll reshoot the scene in half an hour. Try to resolve some of that unresolved sexual tension by then. You’re supposed to be kissing her as a distraction, Lightning, not so you can have freaky roof sex in front of a film crew.” She grabbed her hair. “And can someone please get me some chocolate? I need some sugar.”

Fang bit back a chuckle as her younger sister slumped into her director’s chair, pouting like a small child until one of her minions came over with some chocolate. It was nice to know that some things never changed.

“So…” Fang stared as the makeup artist struggled to disguise the hickey she’d just given
Lightning. What had she been thinking? Oh wait, she hadn’t been thinking at all. When Lightning had kissed her, it hadn’t been about acting or following the script. It had been all about kissing her back. “Do you have something you want to tell me, Lightning? Or do you kiss all of your co-stars like that?”

Lightning huffed, all too aware of the interested film crew and the even more interested makeup artists. “It was in the script.” She had things to say to Fang, but she’d say them in private.

“The script says you kiss me to distract me and then punch me in the face.” Fang smirked. “I don’t think we followed the script.”

Lightning lifted her chin. Fang thought it was amazing how regal she could look, even with a hickey. “I was improvising.”

“Really? Maybe… if you don’t mind… we could do some more improvising some time.”

Lightning smiled. “I’d like that.”

X X X

Lightning reached up to make sure the blonde wig on her head was still in place. Going out for coffee was hard enough for most movie stars. But her unique hair colour made it all but impossible for her to go anywhere without being mobbed unless disguised it. She didn’t have to wait long before her date showed up wearing a wig of her own.

“Hey.” Fang eased into the chair opposite Lightning and ordered a cup of coffee to match the one Lightning already had in front of her. “Glad that it’s all over?”

Filming on their movie had wrapped up a few days ago. It was going to be a great movie, Lightning was sure of it. But while she was glad to have finished another movie, there was something else that she most definitely did not want to finish.

“I guess.” Lightning tapped one finger on the side of her coffee cup. “Vanille was kind of a tyrant.”

“Heh.” Fang shrugged. “She’s my little sister, and even I’m scared of her when she goes off into ‘director mode’.”

“Still, she is good at what she does. Very good.” Lightning would give Vanille that. In between all of her ranting, screaming, threatening, and plain craziness, Vanille had a knack for getting the absolute best out of her actors and crew. This didn’t apply to just the leads – Vanille made everybody better, from the extras to the costume staff.

“Why do you think all the studios throw money at her.” Fang grinned. “Her movies make truckloads of money and win heaps of awards. If she asked for a giant golden statue to be built in her honour, they’d probably do it for her if they could get her to sign a five movie deal.”

“So…” Lightning bit her lip. How was she supposed to do this? She and Fang had gone out several times since that… incident on set, but now that the movie was over… “What are you planning on doing now?”

“Well, I was thinking of taking a break for a few weeks. I need some time to recharge.” Fang nodded at the waiter as he brought her coffee over. “I hear that Bodhum is pretty nice this time of year.”

Lightning lived in Bodhum. “It is. I didn’t know you had a house there.”
“I don’t. But I have this friend… okay, she’s more than a friend, at least, I’m hoping she is. And I was thinking that maybe she could let me stay over for a few weeks. We’ve been seeing each other, and I’d really like to get to know her better, but I don’t want to scare her off. She’s a little… skittish about relationships, you see.”

“I suppose I could put up with you for a few more weeks.” Lightning’s lips twitched. “And what makes you think I’m skittish about relationships?”

“ Apart from the fact that the paparazzi stalk you like ninjas and the only thing they’ve ever managed to get on your love life is an alleged love affair with Jihl Nabaat?” Fang laughed. “Absolutely nothing.”

“Please don’t remind me about that.” Lightning took a sip of her coffee.

“Consider it done.” Fang reached across the table and took one of Lightning’s hands in hers. “It’ll be nice to spend some time with you without worrying about filming.”

“That’s true.” Lightning smiled. “You’ll like Bodhum, Fang. The beach is wonderful and –” Her phone rang. It was Serah. “Can you give me one second? It’s my sister.”

“Sure. I know how little sisters can be. The last time I didn’t answer one of Vanille’s calls, she sent one of her minions after me.”

Lightning was one of the most famous film stars in the world, but Serah was no slouch. Apart from a leading role in Cocoon’s most popular soap opera, she’d also starred in more than a dozen successful dramas, historical romances, and romantic comedies.

“Lightning!” Serah squealed. “Why didn’t you tell me you were seeing someone?”

“What?” Lightning winced and moved the phone away from her ear. How could Serah be so loud? “What are you talking about?” She and Fang hadn’t told anyone they were going out yet. They both wanted to keep this as quiet as they could. They’d also threatened everyone on set with horrible death if they breathed so much as a word about what had happened to the tabloids.

“There’s an article about you and Oerba Yun Fang in the Cocoon Inquirer.”

Lightning paled. “Fang, can you get me a copy of Cocoon Inquirer? There’s one on the table over there.” She turned back to the phone. “Uh…”

“I can’t believe you didn’t call your little sister to tell her you were going out with someone – and Oerba Yun Fang, of all people!”

Fang came back with the tabloid. Right there, on the front page, was a massive picture of her and Fang kissing. It must have been taken during their improvised make out session. And it didn’t stop there. Oh no, the picture was accompanied by almost fifteen pages of incredibly wild – and salacious – gossip and speculation. There was even a quote from ‘an anonymous source close to the Farron family’ stating that she was pregnant! What? She and Fang hadn’t even had sex – although they’d come pretty damn close a couple of times.

“Well, crap.” Fang stared. “So much for keeping things secret.”

“Is that Fang?” Serah gasped over the phone. “Are with her right now? Oh Sweet Maker, it’s true! What are you going to name the baby? I hope it’s a girl. I –”

“I’ll call you later, bye.” Lightning hung up. She was going to pay for that later. “Fang, what are
Fang shrugged. “Well, I guess we should read it first. At least that way, we’ll know what we’re up against. We might even be able to figure out who we should kill.” She smiled. “You do have security at your house in Bodhum, right?”

“How to keep out an army of paparazzi.”

“Good. Now, look at this. Apparently…”

X X X

Summer’s Hottest Action Movie Heats Up!

Things have been heating up on the set of Guardian Corps III, the latest film by legendary – some would say psychotic – director, Oerba Dia Vanille.

Rumours have been flying ever since leading actresses Oerba Yun Fang and Lightning Farron were cast in the leading roles. Would the two actresses, one famous for her surliness and the other for her good cheer, be able to get along? Or would their clashing personalities derail what is rapidly becoming one of the most successful movie franchises in history?

As these exclusive photos show, Lightning and Fang have more than gotten along – they’ve been getting it on! Insiders have been raving about the chemistry between the pair, chemistry that got totally out of control during the filming of one of the movie’s most important scenes.

After months of heated looks and lingering touches, Lightning and Fang turned a simple action scene into a smoking hot love scene. Here’s hoping it makes it onto the special features when the movie hit Blu-Ray! The Guardian Corps series is famous for its big-budget, high-octane action. But I don’t think anyone would mind a love scene or two with these stars!

Director Dia was forced to take action, bodily dragging the two apart. In fact, things got so steamy that Vanille was forced to ban Lightning and Fang from each other’s trailers. Apparently, they were holding up the film with their constant “private rehearsals”.

Guardian Corps III is shaping up to be another smash hit, and Lightning continues to cement her place as one of Cocoon’s most bankable stars. Her most recent movie, the epic fantasy Etro’s Daughter, topped the box office for three months before being knocked off the top spot by Fang’s action-comedy, The Unexpected Soldier.

Read on for more exclusive coverage, including analysis of the photos by our exclusive body language expert. Will Lightning and Fang become Cocoon’s newest power couple? And how will they manage the long-standing bad blood between Gran Pulse and Cocoon? And what about Jihl Nabaat – will she go down without a fight, or will she try to win Lightning back?

In other Farron-related news, insiders say that Serah Farron has secretly gotten engaged. Turn to page 15 for exclusive photos of the hunky builder who has stolen her heart! But it doesn’t end there. We’ve also obtained surveillance camera footage from one of Cocoon’s trendiest nightclubs showing that Vanille and Serah may well be more than friends! Who will the younger Farron choose, the hunky heartthrob or the mercurial director?

Chapter End Notes
I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #261: Fang and Lightning are actresses working together on the latest action blockbuster. Things get exciting… in more ways than one.

I have a confession to make: I was actually the one who submitted Prompt #261. So I’m actually filling out my own prompt. But I really, really like it, and no one else was doing it…

I spent a lot of time cackling while I was writing this chapter. The characters as actors idea isn’t a new one, but I thought it would be nice to give it a try anyway. I think that both Lightning and Fang have the kind of presence that would translate well onto film. I certainly wouldn’t say no to an action movie starring them!

Originally, I cast Vanille as another actor, but I decided to go with the crazy director route in the end. I think it suits her better. Fang might be her older sister, but nobody – absolutely nobody – is going to get in the way of Vanille’s masterpiece. As for Serah, the first (very rough) draft had her on set. However, that turned to be quite clunky. Having her make an appearance over the phone at the end led to a much smoother chapter (and a bit of humour at the end).

The little article extract at the end was another thing that made its appearance toward the end. The first draft actually finishes right after Lightning and Fang talk about more “improvisation”. And, yes, Snow is the hunky builder that the tabloid talks about.

If you like my writing, you might also want to check out my original fiction. You can find a link to it in my profile.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Winter Games

Chapter Notes

Winter Games

The first time that Oerba Yun Fang laid eyes on Lightning Farron, she didn’t even know her name. That didn’t stop her from falling in love.

It happened on a Thursday, the first Thursday of the Winter Olympics. Fang had just finished qualifying for the semi-finals of the snowboarding half-pipe when Vanille decided to drag her around the Olympic village. Filled with the familiar thrill of victory, Fang saw no reason not to humour her little sister. Besides, it was kind of hard to refuse someone who carried a curling broom everywhere.

They grabbed something quick to eat and drink, and then Vanille was dragging her from one end of the Olympic village to the next. It was bewildering how many people stopped to say hello. Had Vanille already managed to make friends with everybody? It wouldn’t have surprised Fang – Vanille was just good at that sort of thing.

It was only when Vanille tugged her toward one of the slopes that Fang began to worry.

“Vanille, this better not be another case of you wanting to see me do cool stuff while you film everything.” Fang pinched her sister’s cheek. “The semi-finals are the day after tomorrow.”

“You make it sound like all I do is watch other people compete.” Vanille brandished her curling broom in impressive fashion. “But don’t forget, you’re looking at the four-time curling world champion.”

How Vanille had ever managed that, Fang would never know. But somehow the redhead had. And not only did she carry that damn broom everywhere but she was also not afraid to use it. In fact, she seemed to look for excuses to whack people with it. She’d already received one warning from an official, and she probably would have received another if Fang hadn’t managed to grab her before she could whack him too.

“Yeah, yeah. Look, where are we going?”

Vanille’s eyes gleamed. That was not a good sign. “Oh, I got a tip from a little princess that I’d get to see something really cool if I came here today.”

“Something cool, huh? And what exactly would that be?”

A few minutes later, Fang found out what that something was. And as much as it killed her to admit it, Vanille was absolutely right. It was really cool.

There was someone practicing aerial skiing tricks on the slope, a woman, by the looks of it. Fang had always thought that skiing was boring – snowboarding was where all the fun was – but there was nothing boring about what she was seeing.

It was awe-inspiring.

The woman started off at the top of the slope and then sped downhill toward a ramp before being
launched high into the air. Then she’d pull off what seemed like a million twists and turns before she landed on the slanted slope below. Fang had caught some serious air on the half-pipe, but nothing quite like that. It was incredible.

“Who is that?” Fang whispered. “She’s awesome.”

Vanille was about to answer when her phone rang. She pressed the phone to her ear and then let out shriek. “What? Seriously?” She bounced up and down, waving her curling broom around. “Are you serious? Is she really going to try it?”

Fang ducked under Vanille’s curling broom. “What is she going to try?”

Vanille put her phone away and shook her head. “A quadruple twisting quadruple back. Is she crazy?”

“That sounds pretty hard.”

“It is – it’s four back somersaults with four twists.” Vanille pursed her lips. “There’s maybe a handful of people in the world that are good enough to even think of trying one. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone land it at the Olympics.”

Fang’s interest was now very much more than piqued. “That sounds dangerous, and she’s going to try that now?”

“Yes.” Vanille frowned. “She doesn’t just want to win, Fang. She wants to crush everyone. You know how that feels, right?”

Fang did. She’d pushed herself harder than anyone to get where she was. She couldn’t count the number of times she’d fallen or gotten injured. She didn’t want to be the best female snowboarder or the best snowboarder in Gran Pulse – she wanted to be the best in the entire world, bar none.

She grinned. “I do. Believe me, I do.”

The woman at the top of the slope took a moment to steady herself, and then she began her descent. Fang’s breath caught. Vanille shifted her weight from one foot to the other, babbling an uninterrupted stream of technical jargon.

Up… up… up…

Crunch.

The woman had missed her landing. Fang hissed, and Vanille screamed. The woman hit her head – hard – and slid through the snow, coming to a rest dozens of yards later. For a moment, she was completely still – far, far too still – and members of her team at the base of the slope rushed up to help her. They reached her and then hung back, afraid to move her.

The stillness didn’t last long. The woman lurched to her feet and tore off her helmet. It came apart in her hands, broken cleanly in two. Fang’s eyes widened. Pink hair? She hadn’t expected that. Then the woman was shouting, gesturing furiously for another helmet as she stomped back toward the lift to the top of the slope. The others trailed after her, seemingly arguing for her to rest, but the pink-haired woman refused to back down.

“Wow.” Fang didn’t realise she was smiling. “She’s something, all right.”

An alarm went off on Vanille’s phone.
“What is that? Oh! Come on, Fang, we have to go! My semi-final is coming up.” Vanille grabbed Fang’s arm with one hand and used her other to twirl around her curling broom. “Come on!”

“Wait!” Fang stared up at the top of the slope to where the woman was once again getting ready. “Who is that?”

Vanille tugged Fang along. “Lightning Farron. The women’s aerials final is tomorrow. We can watch her then.”

Vanille and her team won their semi-final in dominant fashion. Regardless of how immature she could act, Vanille really was a giant in the noble and ancient sport of curling. Fang had no doubt whatsoever that they’d win gold.

But in truth, what Fang was really waiting for was the final of the women’s aerial. Vanille had managed to secure them excellent spots at the event courtesy of a friend of a friend of a friend. They might both be from Gran Pulse, but there was no question as to whom Vanille supported. Like many of the people in the crowd, she was waving around a ‘Go Farron!’ flag.

The competition was ferocious. The first set of jumps passed by with only a handful of points separating the top five competitors. The last jump belonged to Lightning, the defending world champion. The previous jump had come from the defending Olympic champion, and her score meant that Lightning needed an enormously high score to win gold.

A tense hush settled over the spectators, all of them wondering what Lightning could do to claw back the gold medal. Fang found herself grabbing onto Vanille’s hand. Their eyes met. They both knew what Lightning was going to try.

Then it was time.

Lightning set off down the slope and then arced up, up, up into the air. For a moment, time seemed to stand still. A thousand cameras flashed, but Fang had eyes only for Lightning. The other woman shot through the air, twisting and turning and flipping. Lightning was silhouetted against the evening sky, her lithe form alongside the moon before gravity took hold and she began her descent.

The landing was flawless, and the roar that came from the crowd shook the whole mountain to its foundations. Fang found herself swept up in it, ears ringing, body shaking as cheers erupted all along the mountain.

“Farron! Farron! Farron!”

Lightning eased to a stop at the bottom of the slope and just stood there, perhaps not quite realising that she’d managed to land her quadruple twisting quadruple back. She tugged off her helmet and stared, blue eye unreadable, back up to the top of the mountain. And then she was tumbling to the ground, crash-tackled by a pair of her competitors and a pink-haired woman that had to be her sister.

Finally, the judge’s scores came back – Lightning had won.

Vanille giggled and grabbed Fang’s arm. “Not too shabby for someone on skis, huh?”

“Oh, shut up.” Fang laughed. “You know what I think about skiing, but she’s an exception to the rule.” She paused, remembering that Vanille had known when Lightning would be practicing. “Hey, do you know her?”

“Oh? Do you want to meet her or something, Fang?” Vanille’s smile turned crafty. “As a matter of
fact, I know her sister. Would you like me to introduce you?”

“I think so.” Fang bit back a smile as Lightning tried to push her sister off, but the younger woman was too busy hugging her to be dislodged.

“Good, because we’re meeting them for dinner.”

Wait… “What?”

X X X

Fang was unexpectedly nervous as she walked into the restaurant with Vanille. She wanted to meet Lightning, but being thrown into the deep end like this was not something she was ready for. She needed time to think and plan, time to make sure she didn’t come across as some kind of idiot.

The already miniscule amount of time she had to mentally prepare herself shrank to virtually nothing when Vanille hauled her over to one of the tables. They weren’t the only ones there. There was the young pink-haired woman they’d seen hugging Lightning, a young blonde man, an older dark-skinned man and a boy who had to be his son, and another blonde, probably the biggest man that Fang had ever met.

Vanille greeted the pink-haired woman with a squeal, throwing her arms around her. “Serah!”

The other woman responded in kind, drawing a wince from the dark-skinned man beside her. “Vanille!”

“Lightning was so awesome today.” Vanille grabbed Serah’s hands. “I was a little worried, but I knew she’d nail that last jump.” She let go of Serah and shoved Fang forward. “Oh, and this is my older sister, Fang. You know, the one I’ve been telling you about. Please forgive her if she’s a little quiet today – she’s normally really friendly. She can be weird sometimes though.”

“Hey –” Fang didn’t want to be called weird by someone who’d brought a curling broom into a restaurant.

“It’s nice to meet you.” Serah hugged Fang. “And don’t worry – my sister can be a little weird too.” She smiled. “By the way, I saw your qualifying round on the TV. You’re very good.”

Fang smirked. “Well, I am sort of the gold medal favourite.”

Serah giggled. “You definitely sound like my sister.” She waved at the people around the table. “That’s Sazh – he’s one of the Cocoon team’s officials, and that’s his son Dajh. That big guy over there is Snow, and the other guy is Hope.”

“Snow and Hope, huh?” Fang waved back. “Are you guys athletes too?”

“I’m here for the snowboarding,” Hope said. “Half-pipe and slope style. I’m hoping to at least make the finals in both.”

“Ice hockey.” Snow chuckled. “But you probably guessed that already.”

“I was thinking along those lines.” Fang gave Snow another look. Yep, the guy could definitely do some damage on the skating rink. “So, where is the lady of the day?” She looked back at Serah. “And I notice that you didn’t say what you’re here for.”

“Figure skating and moral support.” Serah turned, looking toward the bathrooms. “And my sister is
Fang watched as Lightning walked over to the table. She was a little tired, but there was no mistaking the natural ease in her gait. Not even the cut over one eye that must have come from her broken helmet could detract from her appeal. If anything, it only served to draw attention to her eyes, which were a sharp, piercing blue.

Well aware of the fact that she was staring, Fang continued her perusal. Lightning’s full lips were curved up ever so slightly into a ghost of a smile, and the warm lighting of the restaurant illuminated features that held a stern but classical beauty. Her t-shirt and jeans covered a fit, toned body with legs that Fang was having a very hard time looking away from.

“You must be Fang.” Lightning stopped a few feet away, and Fang’s pulse quickened. What a voice! “Vanille and Serah talk about you all the time, which means I’ve heard a lot about you too.” Lightning extended one hand. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“It’s nice to meet you too.” Fang took Lightning’s hand. The skin was a curious mix of feminine softness and calluses that could only have come from hard training. “Little sisters, huh? You can’t live with them and…”

“You can’t live without them.” Lightning’s lips twitched. “That’s about right.”

“Well, now that you two are acquainted, how about we sit down and eat?” Vanille made a show of patting her stomach. “Watching all those people flipping through the air has made me hungry.”

There were no arguments about that, and it wasn’t long before the food began to arrive. Fang was surprised by how well she got along with the others. They’d only just met, and within a few minutes, she was joking with them like she’d known them her whole life.

“So, you’re a team official, Sazh?” Fang raised one eyebrow. “Not competing in any of the events?”

“Not a chance.” Sazh chuckled and passed some of his leftover French fries to Dajh. “These old bones of mine prefer nice, solid ground. I’m just here to make sure none of our athletes run into trouble – we’ve got a few young ones like Hope this year, and it can be tough on them. I can ice skate though.”

Dajh laughed. “Serah is way better at skating than you, daddy.”

“That’s because she’s a figure skater.”

“And so is Snow.”

“And that’s because he plays ice hockey.”

Dajh’s smile widened. “Then why am I better at ice skating than you, daddy?”

“Because you take after your mother – and because I’m hopeless.” Sazh ruffled Dajh’s hair. “So, Fang, how was the half-pipe? I’ve heard a few complaints, but I don’t know enough about the sport to know if they’re true or not.”

Fang shrugged. “It’s not the best, let’s just put it that way. But you make do.” She looked across the table at Lightning. “I saw you practicing. You took quite a fall.”

Lightning reached up to run one finger along the cut above her eye. “It’s how things are –
competing is dangerous, but you can’t win without taking risks.” She smiled. “The half-pipe can be dangerous too – I’ve seen what you lot get up to.”

“Fair enough.” Fang snickered. “The first time I broke my arm, they had to pull Vanille off me. She was trying to beat me to death with her curling broom for being so stupid.”

“Well, you were being stupid.” Vanille scowled playfully. “And I wasn’t trying to beat you all the way to death – maybe half to death.”

“Serah was the same.” Lightning took a sip of her wine, her gaze meeting Fang’s. “The first time I knocked myself unconscious trying a trick, I woke up to her screaming at me. She wanted me to quit.”

“It was scary.” Serah folded her arms over her chest. “But you loved it too much to quit. And then when I knocked myself out skating… yeah.”

“You couldn’t exactly tell her off anymore?” Fang laughed. “Well, Vanille should be safe. Curling isn’t exactly the most dangerous sport in the world.”

That drew a chuckle from the others, and a good-natured frown from Vanille.

“I’ll have you know that I tripped over on the ice yesterday and bruised my elbow.” Vanille pulled her sleeve up to reveal the smallest, most pathetic-looking bruise in the world. “I’m lucky they didn’t have to amputate my arm.”

“If you want to see a bruise, I’ll show you one.” Snow tugged up his shirt to reveal an impressively muscled body along with a huge bruise. “I got that from Kimahri. That guy is a beast.”

Dajh stared with wide eyes. “That bruise is bigger than me.”

“And that’s why you’re never playing ice hockey.” Sazh patted Dajh on the shoulder. “You’re going to become a world champion curler like Vanille.”

“What about you, Hope? Have you got any injuries to share?” Fang asked.

The young man shook his head. He seemed to be the shyest out of the group. “I’ve been lucky so far. I am a little worried about the half-pipe though. A few of the others in my heat took a tumble.”

“You’ll be fine,” Lightning said firmly. “You’ve done well to get this far at your age, and I’m sure you’ll make the final.”

“Thanks.” Hope beamed. “I wasn’t sure I’d even make it to the Olympics, so this is kind of a dream.”

“That’s the spirit.” Fang reached over to pat him on the back. “Don’t worry about what the others are doing. Go out and do your best – that’s all that matters.”

“You say that, but you’re kind of obsessed with winning.” Vanille hid her smile behind another glass of wine. “I remember when you came second at that tournament over in Mt Nibel – you got so annoyed.”

“Hey! I should have won that. It wasn’t my fault that the judges were blind –” Fang laughed. “Okay, fine, maybe I did get a little annoyed, but sometimes you can’t help it.”

“That’s true.” Lightning set her fork down at the edge of her plate. “It’s hard not to be frustrated
when you’ve done your best and the judges seem to disagree. That’s why sometimes it’s better to
do something that no judge could possibly disagree with.”

“I can get behind that.” Fang nodded at Lightning. “And you definitely did that today.”

As the evening went on, the others excused themselves one by one. Sazh had to put Dajh to bed,
and both Hope and Snow had early starts the following morning. Not too much later, Vanille
dragged Serah off to explain some of the intricacies of curling, which left Fang and Lightning on
their own. Fang would definitely have to thank Vanille later.

“You’ve been staring at me a lot,” Lightning murmured. They’d both had wine – not enough to be
truly drunk, but their tongues were a little looser than they should be. It gave Lightning’s cheeks an
alluring flush, and Fang wondered what else she could do to put that flush there. “I want to know
why.”

Fang met Lightning’s gaze over the table. The other woman’s eyes were very blue. She didn’t
seem angry either, so much as curious. “Why not? It’s hard not to look at you. I bet you get a lot of
attention all the time.”

“Maybe.” Lightning leaned forward ever so slightly. “But I don’t always like the attention that I
get. In fact, most of the time I hate it.” She laughed softly, setting her wing glass down and fiddling
with her napkin. “The only reason I put up with it at first was because Serah and I needed the
money. Apparently, the sponsors love me.”

“I’m sure they do.” Fang could see why. Lightning had the sort of cool beauty that was just perfect
for winter sports. Then, of course, there was her tendency to win. She hadn’t been ready to
compete in the last Olympics, but she’d won the past three world championships. Now that she
held the Olympic title, the world was her oyster, so to speak.

“The sponsors must love you too, Fang.” Lightning gave Fang a frank, appraising look, and Fang
shivered. There was nothing cool and clinical about that gaze. “Two-time world champion, gold
medal favourite, and good looking to boot.”

“You think I’m good looking?”

“Don’t fish for compliments.” Lightning smiled faintly. “You know exactly how attractive you
are.”

“You’re not so bad yourself.” Fang smiled back. “We’re pretty similar, actually. Vanille and I…
we really needed the money. Don’t get me wrong – I absolutely love snowboarding – but I
probably would have quit by now if I wasn’t earning the money I am. I loved doing it, but Vanille
comes first. She always has.”

“Being a world champion curler doesn’t pay that well?”

“You’d be surprised, actually. It’s gotten a lot more popular since the last Olympics. She can
probably live off the sponsorship money she gets now. But before that, she used to help by filming
me and handling all the promotion stuff. She still does. Sure, she can be a little childish sometimes,
but she’s good at that kind of thing. I have a whole clothing line in the works – Vanille was the one
who pushed for that. She might have threatened an executive or two with that curling broom of
hers too, while she was at it.”

“I can imagine.” Lightning took another sip of her wine. “That’s how she and Serah first met,
actually.”
“Oh?”

“Serah saw Vanille wandering around with a camera during one of her practice sessions. At first she was worried that Vanille was a spy for one of the other skaters, but they kind of hit it off.”

“That’s typical Vanille, all right.” Fang chuckled. “You know, when I saw you take that fall, I wasn’t sure you’d get back up. It was a heck of a fall. And I don’t know many people who would’ve gotten back up and then tried again so quickly, especially after breaking their helmet.”

“You would have, wouldn’t you?” Lightning caught Fang’s gaze again and held it. Fang found herself unable to look away.

“I think so. But that’s when I first started wondering about you.” Fang shrugged. “I’ve never been a big fan of skiing – I think snowboarding is better – but after seeing you, I think I might make an exception. That jump you did at the finals… it was beautiful.”

“Thank you.” Lightning smiled. “It’s different when you’re up there, Fang. When you’re up there, the jump is the only thing that matters. The rest of the world just fades away. For a few seconds, you’re absolutely free.”

“I know how you feel.” Fang grinned. “And then you hit the ground.”

“And then you hit the ground.” Lightning grinned back. “And sometimes you land on your head. I’ve seen you too, on the television. Serah made me watch.”

“And what did you think?”

“You’re good. But it’s not just a technical thing. You belong out there, if you understand what I mean. It’s like… you were meant to be there.” Lightning flushed. “I wonder if I’ve drunk too much. I don’t normally talk this much.”

“Is that so? Well, I don’t mind. I like talking to you.” Fang glanced at the clock on the wall. She had her semi-final coming up tomorrow afternoon, but she didn’t want to leave yet. “I…”

“Your semi-final is tomorrow afternoon.” Lightning sighed. “Serah mentioned it to me earlier. I guess you need to go and get some sleep.”

“I do.” Fang hesitated, not wanting to be too forward, but wanting to make her intentions clear as well. “I… would you mind it if I walked you back to your room? Like you said, you’ve had a bit to drink, and I’d hate it if something happened to you.”

“You aren’t going to take advantage of me, are you?” The words were spoken playfully, but there was an undercurrent of something more in there as well.

“I’d never take advantage of you,” Fang replied. Her lips curved up into a smirk. “But maybe when you’re completely sober, we could talk about it again.”

The walk back to Lightning’s room went by far too quickly for Fang’s taste. They talked about all the little things on the way back, from their favourite brand of cereal to what it was like sharing a room with their little sister.

“I had a great time tonight,” Fang said, knocking on the door for Lightning.

“So did I.” Lightning fidgeted, looking from the door to Fang. “I…”
“I’d like it if you could come watch me tomorrow,” Fang said. “If you’re not busy.”

“I could do that.”

“Are you in any of the other events?”

“I’m in the downhill as well.” Lightning bit her lip. “The heats start in three days.”

“I’ll be sure to watch you.” The door opened, and Serah gave Fang a smile.

“Oh, you’ve come to return my sister.” Serah smiled and reached back to pull Vanille into view.

“I’ll trade you then. Yours for mine.”

“Hey, Fang.” Vanille yawned. “Serah’s bed is comfy.”

That got Fang’s attention, all right, and Lightning’s.

“Serah?” Lightning turned to her sister. “What is she talking about?”

The younger Farron blushed. “It’s not like that! We were just talking, but Vanille felt sleepy, so I thought I’d let her have a nap.”

“Ah, well, it’s been a long day.” Fang hefted Vanille up onto her shoulder. “I can carry her back to our room. She’s light as a feather.”

“Don’t forget my curling broom!” Vanille waved one arm in the direction of the room. “I need that for… stuff.” Then she was out, snoring softly as the others stared at her in a mix of awe and disbelief.

“Wow.” Lightning stepped inside her room and then turned back to Fang. “I… I guess I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“I guess so.”

Then the door closed, and Fang set off down the corridor with Vanille draped over her shoulder.

“The things I do for you.” Fang gave Vanille an affectionate pat. “But I don’t mind. Besides, you did introduce me to Lightning.” She laughed softly, fighting the urge to skip down the corridor. “Maybe I should buy you an ice cream or something when you wake up.”

X X X

Fang wasn’t normally one to show off too much during a semi-final – she liked to have a trick or two up her sleeve for the final – but when she saw a shock of pink hair amongst the crowd, she couldn’t help herself. Lightning had put on quite a show, how could she do any less?

She stomped both her runs, throwing the gauntlet down to the other competitors. Even the commentators were surprised by how aggressive she was. She qualified for the final with the highest score and then ran off to get something to eat with a certain pink-haired spectator.

“That was quite a show you put on.” Lightning said. They were sitting on a bench overlooking one of the slopes. “I was under the impression that you normally hold back a bit during the semi-finals.”

“Usually, but I didn’t want you to come all this way for nothing.” Fang grinned. “I always perform better when I’ve got an audience.”
“You always have an audience.”

“Yeah, but it’s different when I know the people who are watching me.” Fang sipped her hot chocolate.

“And you know me?”

“Well, I’d like to.” Fang bit back a laugh at the blush that provoked. “I mean I want to get to know you. You’re interesting, and I like you.” She paused. “You know, I’m usually better at talking to people than this. Seriously, I must sound like a teenager.”

“I don’t mind. And it’s not like I’m much better.” Lightning fiddled with her jacket. “I was actually worried that I might distract you.”

“Distract me?” Fang grinned. “You’re wonderful and all, but isn’t that a little much?”

“That wasn’t what I meant.” Lightning scowled playfully. “It’s just, most athletes have a routine – I know I do – and changing that doesn’t always work out well. You might have noticed when you watched me. I always take a few seconds to focus and study the slope before I go.”

“I was just kidding. But you’re right. I do have a routine. Still, those scores were the highest I’ve posted in months. Maybe I should add you to my routine.” Fang waggled her eyebrows. “Maybe you’re my good luck charm.”

Lightning looked away. “I could say the same. I never did land that jump in practice. The final was the first time I landed it.”

“Well, I’ll just have to go to all of your events from now on,” Fang said.

Lightning froze for a moment. “Are you serious?”

“I wouldn’t mind. But you’d have to go to all of mine too. Fair is fair.”

“I see.” Lightning nodded slowly and leaned back onto the bench. “I guess I could do that.”

They fell into a companionable silence after that. Fang considered it a major victory when she snuck one arm around Lightning and the other woman didn’t pull away.

X X X

As it turned out, Fang was right. Lightning was her lucky charm. She won both her events in dominating fashion, setting a new record in the half-pipe with a run that left the crowd in silent awe before they broke into thunderous cheering and applause.

Fang gained a new appreciation for skiing as she watched Lightning fight her way through to the finals of the downhill. The event was marked by several crashes, and Lightning was a hair’s breadth from disaster on several occasions, but the risk-taking paid off. Lightning won the event by the thinnest of margins.

X X X

The games came to an end far faster than Fang would have liked. She and the others had gone out together almost every night, and she’d spent as much of her free time with Lightning as she could. It had gotten to the point where some members of the press had begun to speculate on it. Fang didn’t care what they thought, what she cared about was the fact that she and Lightning would
soon be going their separate ways.

“So, you’re heading home tomorrow.” They were sitting on a bench again, drinking hot chocolate.

Lightning nodded. She was quieter than usual today. “Yes, the Cocoon team leaves tomorrow. It’s been a good games for us.”

“It has.” Serah had won gold as had Snow’s hockey team. Hope had impressed everyone by managing to win bronze in a stacked men’s half-pipe final. “The Gran Pulse team leaves tomorrow as well.”

“Oh.” Lightning looked into her hot chocolate. “You have my phone number, so you can call me if you want…”

“Yeah, I will. And you’ve got my number too.” Fang’s hand tightened around her hot chocolate. Why did this have to be so damn awkward? She knew what she wanted to ask but… oh hell, she’d just go for it. “How about you come visit me?”

Lightning turned and stared.

“It’s winter in the Yun mountains right now,” Fang said, the words coming out in a rush. “And I’ve been told that it’s great skiing there although I wouldn’t know since I snowboard. But Vanille and I have a place up there, and I’d love it if you could come. You could teach me how to ski, and I could teach you how to snowboard, and –”

Lightning put one finger on Fang’s lips. “I’d love to. I’ll have to go back to Bodhum to handle a few things, but… in a week maybe?”

“A week?” Fang nodded quickly. “Yeah, a week would be fine.” She reached out to take Lightning’s hand. “I’ve really enjoyed the past two weeks, Lightning. I… I like you a lot.”

“I like you a lot too.” Lightning flushed. “Uh…”

She leaned forward, and Fang’s pulse quickened. Was Lightning going to…

She was.

Their lips met. It wasn’t the most romantic kiss – the cold had left their lips slightly chapped and none-too-soft, but it was Lightning, and that was all that matter. They parted a moment later, and Fang was certain that the rosy blush on Lightning’s cheeks was mirrored on her own.

“I… I haven’t had too much practice with that,” Lightning confessed.

“We can always work on that.” Fang smiled. “You know what they say, practice makes perfect.”

Lightning laughed and got to her feet. “Come on, the team bus leaves in fifteen minutes. Want to walk me over there?”

“I’d be happy to.” Fang put one arm around Lightning. She’d won two gold medals, but she had a feeling that meeting Lightning would turn out to be far more precious.

X X X

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Do you need a broom that never quits?

Do you need a broom so tough that it can even sweep ice?

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Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter isn’t based on a specific prompt. Instead, it’s more of a nod at the Winter Olympics-themed prompts that have been filtering in over the past few weeks.

This chapter was a little funny to work with for two reasons. I’ll discuss one of those now before getting onto the other one a little later. Most of my chapters are written with at least a vague plan or structure in mind. This chapter was written without any real sort of plan. I just knew that I wanted it to involve the Winter Olympics, and I let myself just go from there, typing whatever came to mind.

As a result, I think it’s a little rougher than some of my previous chapters, but I also think it’s a bit more free-flowing as well. The conversations, I think, have the slight awkwardness to them that so often occurs when two people are attracted to one another but are still getting to know each other.

The choice of events was something that just came to mind. I didn’t have a hard time at all imagining Lightning in the aerials and the downhill, and Fang with a snowboard just seemed to fit. Serah as a figure skater was another easy choice, as was Snow as an ice hockey player. Hope and Sazh were the most difficult to place, but I think they worked out all right. And Vanille… yeah, as much as I joked about it in this chapter, I really do think curling is awesome. And having Vanille as a world champion? Even better.

So, I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter.

I would also like to mention something fairly big that happened to me this week (more details can be found in my profile). On Tuesday, I blew out my right knee and had to go to hospital. This isn’t the first time I’ve been hospitalised because of my right knee, but I wasn’t doing anything remarkable at the time. I simply crouched down and then tried to stand up when my knee decided to do its thing.

For those of you wondering if it hurt – yes it did. I’ve broken an arm, a hand, blown out my right knee before, and done a host of other things that have resulted in my being in a lot of pain. But blowing my knee out this time hurt far worse than any of those things. I almost passed out before getting back into my house (I was outside) and calling an ambulance. They injected morphine into a vein before trying to move me, and I still almost passed out from the pain – and I’m not normally one to complain. I’ve got an MRI scheduled for Sunday and a Thursday appointment with a specialist. I’m currently on crutches and painkillers.
Like I said, this isn’t the first knee injury I’ve had. This same knee has sent me to hospital before, and it took me years to get to a point where I felt the knee was feeling really good again. And then this happened. So, I guess I’ll just have to rebuild it again.

As a result of my injury, things are going to be very awkward. Having a bath and going to the toilet are now the very opposite of convenient. Somewhat hilariously, one of the few positions my leg is even moderately comfortable in is one I like to write in. Is this a coincidence or a not so subtle hint from above? You decide.

But that’s enough of my injury woes. I just thought I’d let you guys know in case you’re wondering why my schedule is falling apart.

Finally, if you like my writing, you might want to take a few moments to check out my original fiction. You can find a link to it in my profile. Also, this Sunday 16th February (Pacific Standard Time), *The Last Huntress* (one of my original stories) will be available on Amazon for free! So, if you’re not sure you’ll like it, wait till then and give it a try! You can get to it via the link in my profile.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
The Race

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Race

It was the race that no one would ever forget, the race that brought together two nations that had only ever known centuries of war. It wasn’t planned. It was a simple act of human kindness, a visible reminder of the respect and dignity that athletes afford each other. It didn’t take long, but the whole world stopped and took notice.

The race was one of the marquee events of the Olympics— the women’s 100 metre sprint. The two favourites for the race were Gran Pulse’s Oerba Yun Fang and Cocoon’s Claire “Lightning” Farron. Between the two of them, they had won the past four world championships and set more than a dozen world records. Fang was the defending Olympic champion. Lightning was the defending world champion and current world record holder.

Lightning was thus the favourite, if only slightly.

The two women each did their part in the lead up to the final. Fang qualified fastest out of her semi-final, equalling Lightning’s world record. Lightning responded in brilliant fashion, finishing first in her semi-final and setting a new world record. The stage was set for a scintillating final— the two fastest women in history running side by side for gold.

On the night of the final, the Olympic stadium was filled to absolute capacity, and the atmosphere was electric. For centuries, Gran Pulse and Cocoon had waged war. A peace treaty had only recently been signed, but a piece of paper wasn’t going to kill centuries of animosity. The race had evolved into something more— a proxy for the war that had never reached a decisive conclusion.

There were, of course, other competitors. But none of them were expected to win. Fang and Lightning had thus far shown themselves to be a cut above the competition. It was all supposed to come down to the two of them. It was a race for gold. Anything else— anything less— would be considered utter failure.

Many observers were surprised by the civility that Fang and Lightning maintained toward each other. They couldn’t have been more different. Lightning was known for her icy demeanour and her otherworldly acceleration and top speed. In contrast, Fang was known for her brash, almost arrogant, personality and her raw running style.

Fang and Lightning had spoken to each other during several of their previous encounters. It was a well-known fact amongst their fellow sprinters that Fang had a way of getting on Lightning’s nerves. But Fang’s teasing was never done with malice. It was a form of gamesmanship, a way for them to amuse themselves between races. They brought out the best in each other— each of them driving the other to train harder, practice longer, and run faster. It is often said that the best way to judge someone is by their enemies. If that is the case, then both Fang and Lightning are excellent women indeed.

As the start of the final drew near, the tension in the stadium built to a fever pitch. After what seemed like an eternity, the race began.

Lightning shot out of the blocks, accelerating in that impossibly smooth, almost inhuman, way of
hers. In what seemed like only a heartbeat, she had built a seemingly insurmountable lead. But Fang did what she had always done – she chipped away and chipped away, pegging back Lightning’s lead step by step.

And then the unthinkable happened.

At the 70 metre mark, Lightning fell. And no one in that stadium will ever forget the announcer’s voice echoing out over the speakers.

“And Farron is down! Farron is down!”

Lightning tried to rise and finish the race, but it was clear to everyone that her knee had buckled. Her race was done, and all Fang had to do to defend her gold medal was keep on running. It would be another win in a career full of them, and it would give her countrymen exactly what they wanted – something to hold over Cocoon.

Everyone expected Fang to do just that. No one would have blamed her. Injuries are a part of sport. But that wasn’t what Fang did.

To the disbelief of the entire stadium, she slowed to a stop just shy of the finish line and then turned around and ran back to Lightning. Supporting the other woman as best she could, Fang helped Lightning hobble across the finish line ahead of her.

You could have heard a pin drop, it was that quiet.

Fang had given up a sure-fire Olympic gold medal to help her greatest rival across the line. A stretcher was already rushing onto the track for Lightning when the applause finally started. And then it grew and grew and grew. It was a magnificent display of sportsmanship, and for one night, Gran Pulse and Cocoon managed to put aside their hate.

As the stretcher left with Lightning on it, Fang bent down to whisper something to Lightning. The words, which a nearby microphone just barely caught, were very simple:

“Get better. We’ll settle this for real in four years.”

When asked about her actions, Fang was very blunt.

“Winning wouldn’t have meant a damn thing if I hadn’t beaten her fairly. And Lightning deserved better than to break down like that. She deserved to finish. Life isn’t always fair, but out there, I could make it fair.”

When asked about why she had let Lightning cross the line first, Fang was equally blunt, replying with a ghost of a smile:

“I wouldn’t have caught her. We both knew that. She was too far in front. She would have beaten me by half a step, that’s all, half a step.”

But the story didn’t end there. Four years later, Fang and Lightning did get their rematch. There was a different atmosphere about it this time. Fang had spent much of the past four years helping Lightning with her rehabilitation, and rumours were rife about the extent of their relationship.

They put an end to all those rumours after the race.

It was the fastest race ever run, and Lightning beat Fang in a photo finish. But neither of them
cared. They were too busy kissing.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

You can think of this as a short companion to the previous chapter (and thus not attached to any particular prompt). I wanted to go for a slightly different tone, which is why this reads closer to a newspaper article than one of my usual stories. Hopefully, it was okay. It isn’t quite as full of Fang/Lightning goodness as some of my other chapters, but I thought I’d try this format and see how it goes. There is, I think, some utility to describing things from a more detached point of view. I also just wanted to write something that wasn’t enormously long since I do have the tendency to go overboard.

If you enjoy my writing, you might want to check out my original fiction. I’m sure you’ll love it. You can find links to it in my profile.

In other news, I am going to have an operation. My right knee is a bit of a disaster zone. I tore my lateral meniscus so badly that most of it is now on the wrong side of my knee (I saw the MRI and it was equal parts fascinating and horrifying). So they’re going to go in, get it back into the correct place and salvage what they can. This happens next Wednesday, after which I can look forward to weeks in a knee brace followed by months of physiotherapy.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Fang looked away from the stove and smiled. “Good morning, sunshine.”

Despite the fact that Fang was actually making breakfast for once, Lightning had to fight the urge to grab the frying pan out of her hand and beat her to death with it. Honestly, she loved Fang, but she hated that damn nickname.

“Oh, what’s with the frown?” Fang asked. “Did my little ray of sunshine have a bad dream?”

Lightning’s gaze drifted from the frying pan – nice and heavy – to the knife on the kitchen counter – wonderfully sharp. Why did people have to call her sunshine? Her hair wasn’t a golden blonde; her personality was the complete opposite; and her nickname was the opposite too. Her jaw clenched. If it wasn’t for the fact that Fang was so damn sincere, Lightning would have thought it was sarcasm.

Fang finally seemed to notice her unease. “Sunshine?”

“Fang… could you please not call me sunshine?”

“Huh?” Fang tilted her head to one side. “Uh, sure. I mean if it bothers you that much.”

Lightning breathed a sigh of relief. “Really? You’ll stop… just like that?”

“Well, that was simple, Lightning thought. “Okay then.”

Naturally, it wasn’t that simple. Nothing ever was with Fang.

X X X

“Hey, my cute, little storm cloud.”

Lightning twitched and almost spilled her coffee as Fang bustled into her office. Her subordinates all turned to stare, doing their best to hide their interest. Not one of them had the guts to address her as anything other than ‘captain’ or ‘ma’am’. “What did you call me?”

“My cute, little storm cloud.” Fang handed Lightning the sandwich she’d bought from a nearby café. “Here, I thought you might be hungry.”

“Fang…”

“Yes?” Fang sat down on the edge of Lightning’s desk, lips curving up into a smile. “What is it?”

“Don’t call me that.”

X X X
Lightning settled down on the couch and waited for Fang to come back with the popcorn – if she didn’t destroy the microwave first. As usual, Serah and Vanille were bickering over who should get more of the couch. And, as usual, Serah was winning. Never one to let a victory go uncelebrated, Serah was subjecting Vanille to the mother of all noogies.

“Help!” Vanille shouted as she tried to squirm out of Serah’s grasp. “Fang, help! Serah’s picking on me!”

“Seriously? How old are you two, five?” Fang came in with a bowl of popcorn. “All right, that’s enough bickering.” She settled the bowl of popcorn on the table, pried the two younger women apart, and then turned to Lightning. “So, do you want some, my lovely lady of lightning?”

Serah and Vanille both stopped their squabbling to stare.

“What did you just call my sister?” Serah asked.

“I think that Fang just called her a ‘lovely lady of lightning’.” Vanille giggled. “At least, that’s what it sounded like.”


Vanille fluttered her eyelashes back. “Sickeningly so.”

Fang draped one arm around Lightning. “Well, she is my lovely lady of lightning.”

“Fang…” Lightning scowled and reached for the remote to start the movie. “Please, don’t call me that.”

X X X

Lightning tried her hardest to glare when Fang climbed into bed beside her. But it was hard to be mad at the other woman when it was so cold and Fang was such a wonderful source of warmth. The huntress curled up against her.

“Are you still mad?”

“Maybe.” Lightning leaned against Fang. “Do you have to keep coming up with those ridiculous nicknames for me?”

“Oh, hush.” Fang rested her head on Lightning’s shoulder. “You’re my precious cuddle bunny, and nothing will ever change that.”

Lightning stiffened, and Fang put one arm around her. “Really? Precious cuddle bunny?”

“You are pretty cuddly.” Fang chuckled, ignoring Lightning’s attempts to pry her off. “And you are very precious to me.”

“And the bunny part?”

Fang laughed and reached up to run one hand through Lightning’s hair. “Sometimes when you wake up, your hair sticks up like a pair of rabbit ears.”

“Fang.” Lightning sighed. “Please, don’t call me that.”

X X X
Lightning leaned over to pull her apple pie out of the oven. She wasn’t quite the baker that Serah was, but after seeing Fang devour some of Serah’s apple pie, she needed to try it. The only person whose pie Fang was going to devour was hers.

“Lightning?”

She straightened, turning as Fang ambled into the kitchen. The brunette had a folder in her arms, most likely related to her most recent expedition into the mountains.

“Hi.” Lightning put the pie on the kitchen counter and smiled. It smelled perfect. A closer examination confirmed that everything had gone well. “I made you some apple pie.”

“Did you?” Fang put her folder down and walked over to Lightning, cutting herself a slice of the pie and wrapping her arms around Lightning’s waist. She waited a few moments for the slice of pie to cool and then took a bite. “Perfect. Absolutely perfect.”

“Thanks.”

“You know, you’re my wonderful snuggle pie.”

“Wonderful snuggle pie?” Lightning raised one eyebrow. “Fang?”

“Yes.” Fang buried her face in Lightning’s hair. “You’re wonderful, you give out snuggles, and you made pie. See, it all makes sense.”

Lightning rolled her eyes. “Fang…”

“Yes?” Fang was on the verge of laughter.

“Don’t call me that.”

X X X

Lightning wanted to be angry with Fang. But trust Fang to find a way to take the edge off her ire. The other woman had turned up at her office with a bunch of her favourite flowers.

“Hey.”

“Fang…” Lightning had to fight to keep the smile off her face. “What are you doing?”

“Trying to make up for all the names I’ve been calling you.” Fang grinned and then added, smiling impishly, “My emotionally stunted hedgehog.”

“What?” Lightning hissed.

“Well, it’s true, isn’t it?” Fang ducked as Lightning hurled a sheaf of papers at her head. “You are kind of emotionally stunted, and your hair does make you look like a hedgehog when you wake up in the morning.” Fang ducked a folder. “And have you ever heard of the hedgehog’s dilemma?”

Lightning sank back into her chair. She’d need something more aerodynamic to hit Fang. “I suppose I do have a few emotional problems. But even so…”

“Yeah, yeah. Don’t call you that.”

X X X
If the sparring session went awry, Fang had only herself to blame. Lightning had to bite back a cackle as she chased after her significant other with her gun blade.

“Come back here!” Lightning shouted, leaping after Fang.

“Not a chance.” Fang dodged another swipe of Lightning’s weapon. “Not until you calm down.”

“I am calm.” The laughter that came from Lightning was equal parts crazed and amused. “Get back here!”

“Oh no.” Fang turned, flipping away from another one of Lightning’s attacks. “Not yet, my sword-loving psychopath.”

Lightning growled. “Don’t call me that!”

X X X

After their somewhat less than normal sparring session, Lightning and Fang drove home to eat dinner. The huntress had barely survived with all of her limbs intact. Lightning’s maniacal laughter hadn’t helped matters either. A scowling Lightning was scary enough – a giggling and cackling Lightning was downright terrifying.

“What are you laughing about?” Lightning asked, eyes on the road.

“Oh, just something.” Fang glanced at Lightning out of the corner of her eye. “My grumpy, giggle goat.”

The car swerved as Lightning used one hand to whack Fang over the head. “What did you call me?”

“My grumpy, giggle goat.” Fang smirked. “Because you’re ill-tempered like a goat and you giggle. So…”

“Fang.” Lightning pulled over and glared. “Don’t call me that.”

X X X

Dinner passed by without any further problems, but afterward…

“Lightning…”

“Yes?” Lightning took a deep breath. She loved Fang. Murdering Fang was not something she wanted to do. Maybe.

“How would you like it if I called you the radiant, moonlight of my life?”

Lightning ignored the mirth in Fang’s eyes and sighed. Some battles, she couldn’t win. “Look… just call me sunshine.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.
This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #293: Inspired by the great sunshine debate here on tumblr Lightning loves Fang, she really does! but dammit she is getting sick and tired of Fang’s incessant need to call her sunshine. she pleads with the Huntress to stop, but soon regrets her words when the pet name alternatives Fang comes up with are a billion times worse. Extra points for the most ludicrous pet names ever!

This was a nice, light-hearted chapter to write. There’s nothing quite like pet names, the more ridiculous the better. Personally, I’m not too big on pet names – I tend to just shorten people’s names, if I do anything at all. Still, I can easily see Lightning getting more and more annoyed as Fang becomes more and more amused. They’re funny that way.

Also, I have some very big news. My newest original story, Durendal, is now available on Amazon! It runs to ~80,000 words, making it the first novel-length original story that I’ve made available to the public! It’s a coming-of-age story and a Western with elements of science fiction. If you’ve enjoyed my other stories, I know you’ll love this one. You can find links to it in my profile (along with a blurb and a longer preview on Amazon).

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Fire and Ice

It had been a very long time since Serah and Lightning had shared a bed – and with good reason. But when Vanille and Fang had awakened from crystal stasis, the Farron sisters had immediately offered to take them in. Their house only had two bedrooms, but that shouldn’t have been a problem. Serah could share with Lightning, and Vanille could share with Fang. After all, they were sisters. Everything would work out.

Things were never that simple.

It was only mid-autumn, so the nights were cool but far from cold. However, that didn’t stop Lightning from acting like their room was caught in a blizzard. Each night, the older Farron would cover their bed with enough blankets to build a circus tent. To make matters worse, Lightning was also one of the clingiest people that Serah knew, which made it impossible for her to get out from under the mass of blankets.

That’s right, Lightning Farron liked to cuddle while she slept. That meant Serah spent each night trapped in her sister’s embrace under a mountain of blankets. It got incredibly hot under there, and Serah spent more time trying to wriggle out for her sister’s arms than she did sleeping. Then there was the matter of Lightning’s wandering hands. Maybe Vanille was right about Lightning having a sister fixation.

Tonight was the last straw. Serah had woken up boiling hot and with her sister groping her. That was just too much. She needed to find somewhere else to sleep.

Serah pried herself out of Lightning’s arms, grabbed her pillow and a thin blanket, and then headed downstairs. The couch wasn’t the most comfortable place in the world to sleep, but it had to be better than getting fried and groped. Besides, it was a pretty big couch, and Serah wasn’t exactly the biggest person in the world.

But she was out of luck – there was already someone on the living room couch. Vanille was there, sprawled across the couch with all the grace of a hippopotamus rolling in mud. The redhead’s limbs were askew, and she had a blanket tangled around her. Serah bit back a scream of frustration. She didn’t want to sleep on the floor, but Vanille was on the couch.

But then again… maybe they could both fit, and she was so tired.

Serah gently pushed Vanille away from the edge of the couch so that she could slide in beside her. She had about five seconds to enjoy the comforts of the couch before Vanille woke with a muffled cry and took a clumsy swing at her head. The pair of them tumbled off the couch.

“Serah?” Vanille blinked and tried to push herself off the other woman, but the blanket tangled around her legs almost sent her into the coffee table.

Serah managed to grab Vanille before she could break her head open on the coffee table. “Careful.”

“What are you doing here?” Vanille asked as she kicked the blanket off her legs. “You weren’t trying to murder me in my sleep were you? I already promised not to try and improve the oven
again.”

Sarah grinned. Vanille’s improvement to the oven had turned it into something that better resembled a forge. “I already forgave you for that. Come on. Let’s get back on the couch.” She yanked Vanille up onto the couch beside her. “I was just looking for somewhere else to sleep.”

“How about your bed?”

“Well…” Serah winced. “It’s like this…”

As Serah had expected, Vanille found the whole thing hilarious. “You know, I did warn you about what might happen if you shared a bed with your sister. Who knows what horrible things she’s doing to you at night.” Vanille made a face. “But you’ve got it easy compared to me.”

“Oh?” Serah’s lips curled. “Don’t tell me you’re having sister troubles too.”

Vanille shuddered. “Believe me, I love Fang very much, but there are times when I’d gladly bash her head in with my binding rod.”

“You know, I did warn you about what might happen if you shared a bed with your sister. Who knows what horrible things she’s doing to you at night.” Vanille made a face. “But you’ve got it easy compared to me.”

“Oh?” Serah’s lips curled. “Don’t tell me you’re having sister troubles too.”

Vanille shuddered. “Believe me, I love Fang very much, but there are times when I’d gladly bash her head in with my binding rod.”

“Your binding rod? The first time I saw it, I thought it was a fishing rod.”

“Oh, give me a break. Not everybody can have an awesome transforming weapon.” Vanille reached down and picked up the rod in question. Serah scooted over to the opposite end of the couch. Her friend had a bit of a temper at times. “Seriously, why does everybody get something cool except me? My binding rod should be able to transform into a bazooka or something.”

That was one of the scariest things that Serah had ever heard. If Vanille had a bazooka, they’d probably all be dead inside of ten minutes.

“Anyway,” Serah said, changing the topic. “What’s wrong with Fang? Don’t tell me that she has a sister fixation too.”

“Are you kidding? She’s the only person in the world as bad as your sister. It’s bad enough that she’s clingier than a boa constrictor, but she’s the opposite of your sister when it comes to warmth. Fang is like a furnace, so not only does she not like blankets but also she wears almost nothing to bed.”

Serah flushed. An image of naked Fang pinning a squirming Vanille to the bed flashed through her mind. “What?”

Vanille rolled her eyes and slapped Serah over the back of the head. “Get your mind out of the gutter, Serah. She doesn’t sleep naked, but it is pretty awkward having your sister wrap herself around you when she’s wearing nothing more than a tank top and some panties.”

“Ah, that would be awkward, especially when you’re so well dressed.” Serah gave Vanille’s sleeping clothes an amused look. The redhead was wearing an adorable set of chocobo print pajamas.

“Hey! There is nothing wrong with my pyjamas.” Vanille scowled at Serah. “And what about your clothes?”

“What about them?” Serah glanced down at her nightgown. “They’re perfectly fine.”

“Serah, that nightgown of yours looks like it’s from a period drama.” Vanille sighed and glanced at the clock on the wall. It was way too early in the morning. “Look, how about we go back to sleep.
I guess we could share the couch for today.”

After a bit of grumbling about who would go where, the two women settled into a comfortable position on the couch. It was surprisingly easy for Serah to fall asleep next to Vanille. The other woman seemed perfectly happy with just one thin blanket, a welcome contrast to Lightning. Besides, it was only for tonight.

Only it wasn’t.

Serah ended up back on the couch the very next night and the night after that too.

“This is getting ridiculous,” Serah muttered. Vanille was wearing Odin print pyjamas this time. “We should be sleeping in a bed, not on the couch.”

“I know.” Vanille’s eyes narrowed. “We need to do something.”

“We will,” Serah said. “We will.”

Vanille shuddered. She knew that tone of voice. Serah had already come up with something, and it wouldn’t be pleasant.

X X X

Lightning yawned and headed downstairs for breakfast. This was the third day in a row when she’d woken up to find Serah had left their bed. It was odd for her sister to get up so early, but maybe she was extra busy with work. Right now, Lightning was more concerned about the lovely smell coming out of the kitchen – pancakes, freshly made.

“Are those pancakes I smell?”

Serah stuck her head out of the kitchen door. “Good morning, Lightning. Did you sleep well?”

“Yes, thank you.” Lightning could have sworn her sister glared, but the look was replaced by a sweet smile so quickly that Lightning couldn’t be sure she’d really seen it.

“Have a seat at the table, Lightning. Vanille and I are almost done here. Oh, I almost forgot. I put a mug of hot chocolate on the table for you.”

“Vanille is cooking with you?” Lightning froze. The last thing she wanted was to eat another one of Vanille’s experiments. Even Fang had been brought down by the last one: a bizarre version of curry that could have been used as a biological weapon.

“Oh, relax. Vanille knows how to make normal pancakes, and I’ve been keeping a close eye on her. Just sit down.”

Lightning took a seat at the table. She could hardly wait to get stuck into the pancakes. In the meantime, she contented herself with watching the morning news. To her relief, there was nothing going on that might drag her into work on a weekend. Fang wandered in a few minutes later. Her face took on a hunted look as she took note of the cup of hot chocolate waiting for her on the table and the smell of pancakes that filled the air.

“All right, Lightning,” Fang asked. “What did you do?”

“What are you talking about?” Lightning couldn’t see why Fang was so worried. “I haven’t done anything. They’re making us pancakes, that’s all.”
“Yes, because Serah and Vanille just make pancakes out of the goodness of their hearts.” Fang took a small sip of her hot chocolate and then recoiled.

“Is it bad?” Lightning asked.

“No.” Fang’s frown deepened. “It’s perfectly made.”

“And…?”

“When was the last time that Serah and Vanille made pancakes and gave us hot chocolate?”

Lightning froze halfway through her sip of hot chocolate. Slowly, she lowered her mug. Now that she thought about it, Fang was right. The last time that Serah and Vanille had done this was after Fang and Lightning had come back from a hunt late and missed movie night. Their two sisters had made them pancakes and hot chocolate and then proceeded to berate them all the way through breakfast. What worried Lightning was that she couldn’t remember having done anything to anger her sister, which meant that she’d probably done something absolutely horrible without noticing.

“Crap.”

Fang snorted. “Yeah. Crap.” She nodded firmly. “All right, we have to stick together. Remember, they’re going to try and get us to turn on each other. Either that, or they’ll separate us and then double-team us one by one. We have to present a united front.”

“Right.” Lightning knew how her sister and Vanille could be. It was easier trying to fight off a pack of rabid gorgonopsids. The only way she and Fang would get out of breakfast alive was by sticking together. “We stick together. No matter what.”

Vanille skipped into the dining room with a smile on her face and a plate of pancakes in each hand. “Good morning, guys. Here are you pancakes, Fang. Look, I even put strawberries on them, just the way you like. And here are yours, Lightning. Serah made sure to add extra chocolate sauce.”

Lightning and Fang shared a look. This was even worse than they’d feared.

“What are you waiting for?” Serah asked as she came in carrying a plate of scrambled eggs. “Go on and eat.”

Specially made pancakes, hot chocolate, and scrambled eggs – they were screwed.

The food was cooked to perfection, utterly lovely, but neither Fang nor Lightning could taste it. Instead, they spent all of breakfast waiting for the hammer to fall. They knew that the moment they let their guard down, Serah and Vanille would strike. But somehow, they made it through breakfast. Lightning had finished the last of her pancakes and was about to leave when Serah spoke.

“Lightning, there’s something I want to talk to you about.”

Lightning sank back into her seat. She was suddenly aware of the fact that Serah had chosen a spot at the table that put her between Lightning and the door. “Uh… sure.”

Contrary to her earlier appeals for solidarity, Fang chose that moment to try and make a run for it. She didn’t get far. Vanille stopped her with a hand around her wrist.

“Actually, Fang, what Serah has to say involves you too.” Vanille’s smile was scarily bright. And when had that steak knife appeared in her hand? “So, please, sit down.”
“I’m sure Serah won’t mind telling me all about it later…” The steak knife had suddenly been replaced by a cleaver. “Or I could stay here.”

“Thank you.” Vanille patted Fang’s arm with the blunt side of the cleaver.

“Lightning, I want to talk to you about your sleeping habits,” Serah began.

“Let me guess,” Fang said. “She gropes you in her sleep.”

“Actually, she does.” Serah gave Vanille a look, and the redhead brandished the cleaver. “But that’s not what really worries me. You see, Lightning, it’s hard to sleep in the same bed as you. You act like it’s freezing cold all the time.”

“It is cold.” Lightning folded her arms over her chest. “There’s nothing wrong with a few blankets.”

“If it were only a few, I wouldn’t be complaining. I counted how many blankets you had last night, Lightning. You had ten – ten blankets!” Serah’s voice was close to a shriek. “And since you’re grabbing me all the time, I was stuck under there with you. I almost died of heat exhaustion. I’ve spent the last three nights on the couch.”

“Oh.” Lightning winced. She hadn’t thought it was that bad. “Serah…”

Fang chose that exact moment to try and be witty. “Hah. I knew it –”

“Fang, stop talking.” Vanille had lowered the cleaver and exchanged it for a spoon so that she could whack Fang over the back of the head without seriously injuring her. “I’ve got something to say to you too. You’re as clingy as Lightning is. It’s like I’m sharing the bed with a boa constrictor. And you’re hot as a furnace to. It’s a miracle I’m not dead.”

“Let me guess,” Lightning said. “You’ve been sleeping on the couch too.”

“Yes.” Vanille huffed. “And I’m sick of it. I want to sleep in a proper bed.”

“And that’s why you two are going to listen to a little proposal that Vanille and I have come up with. You see, the couch isn’t big enough for the two of us to sleep properly. That’s why Vanille and I are going to share one of the bedrooms, and you and Fang are going to share the other one.”

There was absolute silence.

Fang broke it. “Uh… what?”

“Were you not listening?” Vanille huffed. “You and Lightning are going to be sleeping the same bed from now on. Got it?”

“…”

“You can’t be serious!” Lightning shot to her feet only to be shoved back into her chair by Serah, who had borrowed Vanille’s cleaver.

“Sit down!” Lightning stared at the cleaver. Serah knew how to use knives – Lightning had taught her how. “You might think this is ridiculous, but I haven’t had a decent night’s sleep in months. Do you want to know what happened last week? One of the children I teach asked me if I’m sleeping well, and I almost picked him up and used him to club one of the other children over the head. I actually thought I’d done it until I realised I was hallucinating due to lack of sleep.”
“Oh.”

“And don’t even think of giving me that crap about how you can’t share a bed with someone you’re not related to. I know for a fact that you and Fang shared a tent a few times during your journey, and you’re always going on about how you and Fang are good friends. Well, if you’re such good friends, you can definitely share a bed!”

“Serah-”

“You can either do what Vanille and I are suggesting, or you can wait until I go on a murderous rampage due to lack of sleep. It’s your choice.”

By this point even Vanille was staring at Serah. The pink-haired woman had gotten to her feet and was waving the cleaver around.

“Uh, Serah, put that cleaver down.” Lightning gently reached for the knife. “Slowly.”

“Ah.” Serah sat back down and smiled sunnily. “So, are you going to give it a try?”

“Serah,” Fang said. “I know you’ve had a tough time, but you can’t just make people do what you want.”

Serah’s eye twitched, and there was a flash of metal before the cleaver imbedded itself in the wall behind Fang. A long, dark hair fluttered to the ground. “Really? Watch me.” She got to her feet and practically dragged Vanille after her. “I expect you to have your things in Lightning’s room by the end of the day.”

Discussion over.

X X X

The first night that Lightning and Fang shared a bed was beyond awkward. Admittedly, Lightning had thought – perhaps even repeatedly fantasised – that it would be under different circumstances. She’d never thought it would be because of her sister’s inner tyrant.

Lightning looked over at the bed and then at Fang. Then she looked at the bed again. She’d never had a problem with its size before, but now it seemed far too small. Even the fact that she was rugged up in pyjamas didn’t calm the butterflies in her stomach – not when Fang was standing there in nothing more than a skimpy tank top and panties. Maker, it was hard not to stare.

And then there was the thought of what would happen once they got into the bed. Vanille had claimed that Fang was incredibly clingy, and Lightning knew she had a tendency to grab whoever she was sharing a bed with. The thought of ending up wrapped around a scantily clad Fang was equal parts intriguing and terrifying.

“Um…” Fang eyed the bed like it was made of molten lava. “It’s getting late. Maybe we should, you know, get some sleep.”

Lightning swallowed thickly. How could Fang manage to look even better when she was nervous? And why were they even nervous to begin with? They’d shared a tent before. In fact, they’d even slept next to each other a few times. But this wasn’t like those times was it? This wasn’t some rocky outcrop in the middle of nowhere, and they weren’t fighting for their lives. This was a soft, warm bed, and they were more than friends but less than lovers.

“Right… we should get to sleep.”
Lightning climbed into bed as Fang turned off the lights. The room seemed somehow both incredibly large and unbearably small as Fang slipped into the other side of the bed. They weren’t touching, but Lightning could almost feel Fang’s shoulder brushing against hers.

“Good night, Lightning.” Fang’s voice was a whisper in the dark. Lightning shivered.

“Good night, Fang.” Lightning sighed. “Our sisters are crazy, aren’t they?”

“They are.” Fang laughed, and Lightning felt the bed shift as Fang stretched, kicking off a few of the blankets. “But we love them anyway, don’t we?”

“So long as they’re not holding cleavers.”

“Heh.”

Despite how nervous she was, Lightning found herself falling asleep. Either she was tireder than she thought, or the rhythmic murmur of Fang’s breathing so close by was incredibly soothing. Perhaps it was a bit of both.

Lightning awakened a little before dawn, but for the first time in what felt like forever, she wasn’t buried under a pile of blankets. Instead, those blankets had been tossed aside and replaced by a warm body. It was Fang, she realised. At some point during the night, the two of them had met at the centre of the bed. Fang’s arms were wrapped firmly around her, and Lightning’s face was tucked into the crook of Fang’s shoulder.

She should have been cold without all her blankets, but she wasn’t. Fang positively radiated heat, and the way the other woman’s hands occasionally rubbed up and down Lightning’s back added to the warmth. Lightning knew they shouldn’t be doing this – Fang might not even realise what she was doing – but she couldn’t bring herself to care.

She felt warm and safe in a way she hadn’t for a long time. So rather than wonder about the how and why of it, Lightning decided to tighten her own grip on Fang and go back to sleep. Besides, she could always blame it all on Fang later if she needed to.

Both Lightning and Fang were asleep when the bedroom door creaked open a fraction. Two pairs of curious eyes peered into the room.

“I knew it!” Vanille clutched at Serah’s nightgown. “Are we awesome or what?”

Serah giggled. “We are the best little sisters ever. Not only can we enjoy a proper night’s sleep now, but maybe those two will finally wake up to the fact they’re more than friends.” She yawned. “Okay, let’s go back to sleep.”

Vanille shook her. “Wait! We should take a picture first.”

“Ah, of course.” Serah grinned. “I’ll hold the door open, you go get the camera!”

X X X

Omake: Not What It Sounds Like (Put on your Verah goggles)

Despite what Serah and Vanille wanted to believe, simply sharing a bed did not magically make Lightning and Fang profess their undying love for each other amidst the clanging of wedding bells. It did, however, get the ball rolling. Now, when they had the time, they were content to spend the evenings curled up against each other. Lightning usually did her paperwork while Fang read a book
or did a few of her own reports.

On this particular evening, however, their attention was drawn elsewhere – to the loud moans and groans coming from the bedroom next door, a bedroom that, to their knowledge, was occupied only by Serah and Vanille.

Lightning looked up from her paperwork. “You don’t think…”

Fang pursed her lips. “They do spend a lot of time together, and it would explain why they were so eager to get their own room… let’s go have a look.”

They crept over to the next room and eased the door open a fraction, so they could peer inside. There was indeed a great deal of groaning and moaning coming from the bed.

“Hah!” Serah crowed. “I win again.”

Lightning and Fang stared. Vanille and Serah were arm wrestling.

Vanille clutched at her arm and scowled. “It must be all the archery. There’s no way that you’re stronger than me.”

Serah flexed her bicep and grinned. “I’m tougher than I look.”

Lightning and Fang backed away from the door.

“Arm wrestling.” Fang gave a sigh of relief. “For a moment there…”

“I know.” Lightning smiled. “Let’s go back to bed.”

Back inside the room, Vanille glanced at the door.

“Are they gone yet?” Serah asked.

“Yes.” The redhead smirked. “They’re gone.”

“Good.” And then Serah pushed Vanille onto her back and went right back to kissing her. “It’s nice having our own room, isn’t it?”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #299: After Fang and Vanille wake up from crystal they move in with Serah and Lightning while New Bodhum is being built. The house, however, only has two bedrooms. They end up sharing with their respective sisters, only for the younger siblings to realize they don’t like sharing with them. Serah hates that Lightning gets cold and layers on the covers, while Vanille hates that Fang overheats and sleeps in barely anything. They force a trade, against their older siblings will, only for Fang and Lightning to have the best sleep they’ve had in a while.

I’ve had several prompts on my mind this week, but I decided to go with this one since
I thought it would be one I could knock off in about a thousand words. As you can see, that wasn’t quite what happened.

In many of my scenarios, Fang and Vanille move in with Lightning and Serah. The prompt itself leads to a pretty natural series of events. A pissed off Vanille is dangerous, but a pissed off Serah would be terribly bossy. And Lightning and Fang being who they are, they don’t really have any natural defences against their sisters. Having Serah and Vanille alternate between bribing and threatening their sister is just icing on the cake (the cuddles between Fang and Lightning are the cherry on top – and you might have noticed my oblique references to flavours with the pancakes too).

The omake is pure fan service since I’ve noticed quite a few of my readers ship Verah.

Also, I have some very big news. My newest original story, Durendal, is now available on Amazon! It runs to ~80,000 words, making it the first novel-length original story that I’ve made available to the public! It’s a coming-of-age story and a Western with elements of science fiction. If you’ve enjoyed my other stories, I know you’ll love this one. You can find links to it in my profile.

And finally, last but not least, my original short story The Last Huntress will be available for free on Amazon this Sunday 23rd March (Pacific Standard Time). If you enjoy fantasy with a healthy dose of atmosphere and action, I’m sure you love it.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Pros and Cons

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Pros and Cons

The first clue that Fang had that she was in serious trouble was when she woke up tied to a chair with a gag in her mouth. Her second – and much scarier – clue was when Serah Farron skipped into the room with a knife in her hand and a smile on her lips. This was bad. This was very, very bad.

“Mphh!” Fang thrashed and tried to cry out.

Serah smiled sweetly and reached over to pull the gag out of Fang’s mouth. “Perhaps you could repeat that. I’m afraid that I couldn’t hear you through your gag.”

“I said: what the hell are you doing – mph!” Fang’s eyes widened in disbelief as Serah shoved the gag back into her mouth.

“If you’re going to be rude, Fang, I can just leave the gag in there.” Serah pulled a chair over and sat down in front of Fang. “And you really shouldn’t bother struggling. You’re just wasting your energy.”

Fang had never been one to give up easily, but Serah had clearly taken knot-tying lessons from Lightning. There was no way she’d be getting out of this chair anytime soon. To make matters worse, the chair was also bolted to the ground. Damn it. Getting tied up by Lightning was kinky – getting tied up by Serah was just scary.

“Now that you’ve confirmed that you’re not going anywhere, how about we talk, Fang.” Serah handled her knife with far too much familiarity for Fang’s liking. “You will be polite, won’t you?”

Fang glared but forced herself to calm down. She could take Serah in a fair fight, but this wasn’t a fair fight. She needed to play along until Serah made a mistake. Then she’d show the little Farron who was boss. Slowly, she nodded. Serah took the gag out.

“Why am I here, Serah?”

“Oh, Fang, you’re so naïve.” There was something genuinely terrifying about the glint in Serah’s eyes. It reminded Fang of the way a lion might eye a baby deer, or the way Vanille eyed strawberry ice cream. “You’re here because you’re dating my sister.”

“And…?” Fang had always pegged Lightning for the crazy one, but clearly she’d underestimated the younger Farron.

Serah smiled sunnily. “I need to make sure that you’re worthy of her.”

Oh crap. This was bad. Fang knew this look. It was the same look Lightning had given Snow when he’d come over to formally ask for Serah’s hand in marriage. Lightning had given her consent, but Snow had left looking utterly traumatised. “What happens if you don’t think I’m worthy?”

Serah folded her arms over her chest and shook her head. “Then I’m afraid that I’ll have to do some very bad, very unpleasant, things to you. After all, Lightning is my sister. But you don’t have to
worry about me.” Fang was definitely not worrying about Serah. “I don’t think I’ll get arrested, no matter what I do. My sister loves me too much for that. And that’s assuming she finds out what I’ve done. I’m very good at disposing of evidence.”

And now Fang was wondering what evidence Serah had disposed of in the past. Was the other woman secretly some kind of serial killer? It would certainly explain a lot. “So… uh… how are you going to check if I’m worthy of your sister?” Damn it. If only she could get some leverage, she might be able to work her way out of the ropes, but Serah had done a perfect job of tying her up.

“I’m going to ask you some questions and…”

The door of the room burst open.

“Hey, Serah, do you have any soda anywhere…” Vanille glanced from her best friend to her sister. “Oh… I thought you’d be done by now. Don’t worry. I can come back later.”


“No can do, Fang. Sorry.” Vanille shrugged. Fang’s eyes narrowed as she took in the big slice of cake on the plate that Vanille carried. “I kind of promised Serah I wouldn’t interfere.”

“Are you serious?” Fang would have given almost anything to reach over and slap Vanille upside the head. After everything she’d done for her, was Vanille really going to leave her in the hands of this pink-haired psychopath?

“She bribed me with cake.” Vanille had the decency to look ashamed, even if she didn’t have the decency to actually help. “It is really good cake, Fang. Plus, I’m totally confident that you’ll be worthy, so she won’t have any reason to stab you, dump your body in a barrel of acid, and tip the remains into the sea.” She winced. “I mean… she won’t have any reason to scold you. Yeah… uh… forget everything I said about her murdering you and stuff.” She waved. “Anyway, I’ll see you later, Fang.”

“Don’t you dare walk out that door!”

“You can have as much cake as you want, Vanille,” Serah said. “And thanks for slipping the sedative into Fang’s soda earlier.”

“You did what?” Fang was trying to kill Vanille with her eyes. Unfortunately, only Lightning possessed that kind of glare. “Why would you do that?”

“It got me some cookies to go with the cake.” Vanille waved. “See you later, Fang. Please try not to make Serah mad. She can get kind of… crazy.”

That, Fang thought, was a massive, massive understatement. Fang spent a good thirty seconds just staring at the door in utter amazement. What kind of little sister was Vanille? The redhead had delivered her into the hands of arguably the craziest person that Fang knew. When – if – she ever got out of this room, she was going to beat her sister to death with a cake or maybe stab her to death with some cookies. But first things first – she needed to deal with Serah.

“So, Fang… I can call you Fang, right?”

“Sure. We’re friends, aren’t we?” Step one: do not antagonise the psycho.

“I think we are, yes.” Serah rolled the knife back and forth over her fingers. “You know, I’ve been thinking about what I would ask you ever since I found out that you and my sister were going out.
The way I see it, there are four things that people bring to a relationship: personality, intelligence, looks, and power."

"Okay…” Trust Serah to have categories. Being crazy and obsessive must be a Farron family trait. If only Fang had been able to meet their parents. “And?”

"Let me give you an example.” Serah tossed the knife into the air and caught it without even bothering to look. “Take my sister. Clearly, her personality isn’t the greatest thing in the world. I love her and everything, but she’s one of the grumpiest people I know. And let’s not even get started on how she handles emotional attachment. But she is extremely attractive – and if you make even one joke about my liking her in a socially inappropriate way, I’ll stab you. Then there’s her intelligence. My sister is one of the smartest people I know, both in a practical sense and a purely intellectual sense. And finally, we get to power. My sister is – or will be – one of the most politically powerful individuals in the world. She’s already scheduled to succeed Amodar as head of the Guardian Corps in New Bodhum, and we both know that he’d like her to take over the whole organisation one day. There’s also the not-so-small amount of money that my sister has.”

Lightning’s position paid well, and she’d made a lot of money providing advice to private organisation about how best to manage the transition to Gran Pulse. “So, according to my system, my sister scores very highly on three out of four categories, and you could even argue that she scores highly on all four if you happen to be the kind of person that enjoys having a girlfriend with a prickly personality.”

Fang couldn’t help it. She snickered. “I might like that about her.”

“Then she does score highly on all four categories.” Serah scowled. “And now we get to you. Tell me, Fang. How do you think you rate on those four categories? Let’s start with personality. How do you rate your personality?”

Well, wasn’t that a loaded question. But she had to answer it. Serah had stopped playing with her knife so that she could watch her like a hawk.

“I think I’ve got a good personality.” Fang stuck out her chin. “I’m very confident.”

“Arrogant.”

“I’m outgoing.”

“Brash.”

Was Serah trying to pick a fight? “I’m engaging.”

“Incorrigible.”

“Come on.” Fang pouted. “I thought you liked me.”

“I like you as a friend.” Serah leaned forward. Her eyes gleamed with absolute malevolence. “But as my sister’s girlfriend? I have much, much higher standards for that, Fang.”

Higher standards. Right. It was more like crazier standards.

“Well, I’m affectionate.”

“Perverted.”

“Stop doing that!”
“How about we move on to your intelligence.” Serah walked over to a table and came back with a thick file. “Let’s see…”

“What’s that?” Fang tried to look, but Serah kept the file completely to herself.

“I may have done some research on your background using my own resources, my contacts in the Guardian Corps, and a few friends I have in the government.” Serah frowned and shut the folder. “And I’ve uncovered some very interesting things. For instance, I found out that you’ve never attended a registered elementary school, high school, or university. What do have to say for yourself?”

“You do realise that they didn’t have registered schools during the War of Transgression.” Serah was nit picking, and they both knew it. Fang was more than capable from an intellectual standpoint. She’d led more than her fair share of expeditions. And at Lightning’s urging, she’d also taken a test to get the equivalent of a Cocoon high school diploma before attending night school and correspondence school to add to her qualifications. Lightning knew that she was smart, and she wanted to make sure that Fang wouldn’t have any problems putting those smarts to good use. “Besides, you know I’ve got other qualifications.”

“I suppose you do.” Serah bit her lip. “But school isn’t the only measure of intelligence. I’ve had the chance to watch you, and I have good reason to think that you’re a little… slow.”

“Slow?” Fang tried to lurch forward, but she froze as the knife came to a rest against her throat. “Let me tell you something –”

“I recall a certain someone being too oblivious to notice that my sister returned her affections.” Serah glared, and the knife traced the air a hair’s breadth from Fang’s cheek. The dark-haired woman winced – she had taken a while to realise that Lightning loved her back. “And I seem to recall that same someone thinking that it was appropriate to make out with my sister on my couch.”

That hadn’t been one of Fang’s finer moments, especially since she’d been caught with one hand up Lightning’s shirt and the other down the soldier’s pants. The only good thing was that it had been Serah who walked in on them and not Snow or Hope.

“So, yes, Fang, I am questioning your intelligence.” Serah reached out to brush some of Fang’s hair back, and Fang had to stifle the urge to try and bite her. “As for your looks…”

“Wait just a second, Serah. Even you have to admit that I look good.”

“You’re decent enough.”

“Decent?” Fang gaped. She was a lot more than decent – she was damn smoking hot. “I’m a lot more than decent.”

“Let’s see.” Serah tapped her cheek. “Your hair is nice enough, I suppose.”

Fang twitched. Lightning loved her hair.

“And your eyes are okay too.”

Another twitch. Lightning loved her eyes.

“And your figure isn’t bad.”

Not bad? Lightning definitely loved her figure.
“And you do have that exotic thing going for you.”

And that was yet another thing that Lightning loved about her.

“I might even give you a five out of ten.”

Fang’s jaw dropped. Her eyes bulged. “A five out of ten? Is that some kind of joke? If I’m a five out of ten, then you must be a two, you –”

“Need I remind you that I’m the one holding the knife?” Serah’s eyes narrowed, and the knife suddenly looked a hundred times sharper. “And that you’re currently defenceless.”

“…”

And that was when the door opened, and Hope walked in.

“Hey, Serah, I was looking for the soda and….” Hope trailed off. His eyes darted frantically from Serah to Fang. Then he backed away very slowly, his hands held up in what he hoped was a placating manner. “Okay… I’m just going to leave now.”

Serah got to her feet, as quick and graceful as a viper. “I’m afraid that I can’t let you do that, Hope.”


Hope tried to escape – he tried his absolute hardest. He even managed to reach the door. But although Serah wasn’t as fast as Lightning, she was no slouch in the speed department, and she had the whole maniacal strength thing going on. After a quick scuffle, Hope ended up tied to a chair on the other side of the room, a gag shoved into his mouth. His chair wasn’t bolted to the floor, so Serah had tied it to the table.

“Mphh!” Hope thrashed. “Mphhhh!”

“I’m sorry I had to do that, Hope. But you gave me no choice.” The scary thing was how reasonable Serah managed to sound. No wonder no one had realised how crazy she was. “But I can’t have you running to my sister until I’m finished talking to Fang.” She noticed that his gaze had dropped to her knife. “Oh, don’t worry. I’m not going to use this on you.” She paused, and her voice took on that hard edge that was so reminiscent of Lightning. “Unless you make me, anyway. So relax.”

Hope did the complete opposite of relax. He struggled until he finally realised how hopeless the situation was. “Mphh! Mphh!”

“Anyway,” Serah said as she ignored the struggling, young man in the corner. “What do you think you bring to the table in terms of power, Fang?”

“You’re crazy, you know that right?” Fang hissed as the knife stopped next to her throat again. “One of these days, you might actually cut me with that. What are you going to do if I actually die?”

“Use a Phoenix Down and start over.” Serah reached into her pocket. “See, I brought some with me. Now, answer the question.”

“Well… I bring stuff to the table.”
“Be specific, Fang.” Serah scowled. “Never mind. Let me explain it for you. I suppose that you make a decent living, but you’re hardly drowning in money.” Fang’s eyes narrowed. She was actually making quite a good living leading expeditions and passing on her knowledge. “And you don’t hold a high rank in the Guardian Corps or the government.” That was also true, but Fang had quite a lot of informal pull. She might not hold a rank, but when she talked, people listened. “In fact, I don’t think there’s anything you bring to the table in terms of power that Lightning couldn’t find elsewhere.”

Fang’s jaw clenched. She didn’t like Serah’s tone, and she’d put up with enough already. “This stopped being funny about five minutes ago, Serah.”

In the corner, Hope sensed the change in atmosphere. The smile had dropped off Fang’s face, and the gleam in her eyes was distinctly predatory. Once she got out of that chair, there was going to be trouble.

“You’re right. It isn’t funny. It’s very serious.” Serah didn’t seem the least bit perturbed by the change in Fang’s posture. “We’re talking about my sister’s life here. I take my sister’s life very seriously.”

“I can see that.” Fang had finally managed, somehow, to get a little bit of leverage. That was all she needed. In the blink of an eye, she’d managed to get out of the ropes and pin Serah against the wall. “So, what now, little Farron?”

Serah met her gaze without flinching – her knife had come to rest against Fang’s throat. “Now, you’re going to let me finish my assessment.”

“So finish.” Fang glared. “Tell me I’m not good enough for your sister.”

“And what makes you think that’s what I’m going to say?”

“Serah, you tied me to a chair and threatened me with a knife. Those are not the actions of someone who approves.” Fang tightened her hold on Serah’s shoulder.

“Maybe, but there’s one thing I haven’t mentioned yet.” Serah lowered the knife. “Something that matters more than all the other things I’ve mentioned. It’s the same thing that made my sister accept Snow.”

“Oh, and what is that?”

“My sister loves you and you love her – and you’re both willing to do anything for each other, even die for each other.” Serah smiled faintly. “And that, I suppose, is enough for me.” She winked. “Plus any kids you have will be so adorable.”


“You pass.” Serah smiled one more time and then skipped out the door. Fang could only stare after her.

“I pass?” Fang shook her head. “I pass?” Then she began to laugh. “I pass! Hear that, Hope?” She grinned at the young man tied to the chair. “I pass!”

“Mph!” Hope was happy for Fang and all, but he would have preferred it if she untied him. “Mphhh!”

“I pass!” Fang’s smile was almost too big to fit on her face. “I pass! I think I’m going to have some
of that cake now.” She smirked. “And kill two younger sisters while I’m at it too.”

And with that Fang left the room – leaving Hope still tied to the chair.

“Mphh! Mphh!”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #315: Over-protectiveness is obviously a family trait, and Serah’s first instinct was to put Fang under the microscope to figure out whether Fang was right for her sister. (Cookies will rain for established FLight!!!)

I’ve already done a chapter where Serah got to interrogate Fang, but I kind of glossed over the interrogation itself. So in this chapter, I decided to go all the way and unleash Serah in all her crazy, overprotective glory. Lightning might be considered the crazy one, but Serah is no slouch in the insanity department either. But Serah does understand that not everything is easy to quantify, that what makes people fit together isn’t as easy as $A + B = C$. After all, she’s in love with Snow.

I also write original fiction. If you like my fanfiction, I’m sure you’ll love my original stuff too. You can find links to it in my profile. If you like fantasy, give The Last Huntress Series a try. I’ve also recently released my first novel-length original story, Durendal. And today, Sunday 27th April (Pacific Standard Time), The Last Huntress will be available for free on Amazon. Check it out! You can find a link to my original fiction in my profile.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Serah watched her older sister limp into the café. Her lips twitched. Well, well, well – wasn’t that interesting? But there was more. Lightning also had swollen lips and what looked a lot like hickeys on her neck. Then there was the ridiculously wide smile on her face. It was nothing short of terrifying since Lightning wasn’t usually big on the whole smiling thing.

Lightning ordered a coffee and then sank into the chair opposite Serah with a wince. “Hey.”

“Hey, yourself.” Serah giggled. “What happened to you? Did you and Fang finally decide to go have some crazy sex?”

Serah knew exactly what Lightning would say. It would be the exact same thing she’d said ever since Fang and Vanille had awakened from crystal stasis and Serah had started teasing her. No, Lightning would say, she and Fang were not having crazy sex. It was just another spar that had gotten out of hand.

The first few times that Serah had heard that excuse, she’d thought it was a bunch of crap. But then she’d actually gone to one of Lightning and Fang’s sparring sessions. Suddenly, all of the limping and bruises made sense. Lightning and Fang sparred the same way they argued – hard, full on, and without a sliver of mercy. Their sparring also had a disturbing tendency to degenerate into something that was closer to really kinky foreplay than actual fighting.

But as amazing as it seemed, there wasn’t any sex involved. Indeed, Fang and Lightning continued to claim that they were only friends – friends who happened to enjoy writhing on the ground together on a regular basis.

Vanille, of course, had her own theories, each one wilder than the last. But Serah, who prided herself on being the more rational of the two little sisters, preferred to follow the evidence. Lightning and Fang might have been a hair’s breadth from getting it on, but the getting it on had yet to happen. And given how utterly oblivious her sister could be when it came to anything even remotely related to affection, the getting it on might never actually happen. That would be a huge shame since Serah would have loved a crazy niece or two to spoil – and any children that Fang and Lightning had were bound to end up at least a little bit demented.

Thus Serah was completely ready for the answer that she thought Lightning would give. Unfortunately, Lightning had other plans.

“As a matter of fact, we did have crazy sex.” Lightning grinned, lost in her own private dream world where, no doubt, she and Fang were still involved in wanton acts of carnality. “You know, I thought I knew what an orgasm was – until Fang came along and rocked my world. She really blew my… mind.” Lightning giggled – giggled! – and sighed dreamily. “It was awesome.”

It took Serah a few seconds to process what she’d heard, another few seconds to confirm that she’d heard her sister correctly, and then a few more seconds to check for hidden cameras and microphones since this was exactly the kind of prank that Vanille would have come up with. But no, she’d heard Lightning correctly, and there were no hidden cameras or microphones. This was
actually happening.

She tried to say something, but her brain – which was currently trying to reboot itself after being crashed by Lightning’s revelation – tried to buy her more time to think by telling her to take a sip of coffee. The end result was that Serah tried to talk while pouring coffee into her mouth. It was absolutely glorious – and she was lucky not to choke or scald herself.

Serah gagged as Lightning passed her a tissue. “Gablargh?” Serah shook her head. Her brain hadn’t quite finished rebooting. “I mean excuse me? Did you just say what I thought you did?”

“Yes, I did.” Lightning was still smiling that radiant, fulfilled smile. It was, Serah thought, the smile of a woman who’d finally gotten what she wanted and had absolutely no intention of letting it go. Indeed, it was the smile of a woman who couldn’t wait to hop back into bed to engage in the kind of activity that a horny teenager couldn’t even begin to imagine – and now Serah was imagining what her sister and Fang having sex looked like. Great – no, not great! So not great! No wonder Vanille thought she was depraved.

Serah shook her head to clear away the images – and there were a great many images there, including some that were, strictly speaking, anatomically improbable, if not impossible. “But… but I didn’t even know you could have sex!”

Lightning raised one eyebrow. “Serah, contrary to common belief, I am not a robot. I do have urges like everyone else, sexual urges, that…”

As Lightning explained how she felt, and how she had, in fact, indulged in sex on several occasions prior to meeting Fang, Serah went to her happy place. It had started off as a little cupboard tucked away in the back of her mind that she could go to when she needed somewhere safe from the outside world. Following the deaths of her parents, her sister’s transformation into the world’s biggest Grinch, and all the subsequent horror, it had grown to become its own continent. Serah hadn’t had much need to visit her happy place lately, but it was still there, filled with dolphins, unicorns, fluffy chocobo chicks, and rainbows.

Serah managed to frolic through the open meadows of her happy place for all of three seconds, accompanied by a small army of cute and cuddly things, before some of what Lightning was saying managed to penetrate her self-protective haze. And now… now Fang and Lightning were in Serah’s happy place, and they were busy defiling it. Who knew that Lightning could contort her body like that?

Serah shook herself and returned to reality just in time to hear Lightning launch into a spiel about how she’d indulged in a few affairs during her younger days to try and satisfy her urges – urges that Serah wished she knew nothing about but was learning more about with every passing second. But apparently, none of those affairs had come close to the emotional and physical connection she had with Fang.

Lightning’s spiel forced Serah to reconsider all those times her sister had invited another fit, young woman from the Guardian Corps over to their house for training. How oddly brilliant of her sister to be so devoted to training that she could go off to her room with someone, make lots of noise, and emerge all sweaty, only for Serah to assume that she’d been training. It was either that or Serah was as dumb as rock.

Who would have thought, Lightning was actually a ninja at having secret sex? Was her sister really that good at everything? Apparently.

Serah tried to go to her happy place again, but imaginary Fang and imaginary Lightning were still
there getting busy. All the imaginary dolphins, unicorns, and chocobo chicks could only look on in a combination of horror and fascination. Maker, Serah thought, even her imagination was perverted!

And then Lightning started going into details, not about her relationships on an emotional level – that Serah could have taken, even encouraged. No, Lightning started going into details about sex – with Fang. And that was when Serah’s mind went into self-preservation mode. Her vision began to blur, and her ears began to ring, as her mind did what it could to block out all the wet, squishy, sordid details. Serah started veering in and out of consciousness.

She did not need to know what her sister and Fang did in the privacy of her sister’s bedroom – or the much less private spaces of her kitchen, her living room, the corridor, the stairs… Maker, was there anywhere in Lightning’s house that the pair hadn’t had sex? Serah would have to make her next visit in a biohazard suit or risk sitting down somewhere Lightning and Fang had screwed each other’s brains out. No wonder Lightning was limping. It was a miracle she still had a pelvis given everything that Fang had apparently done to her.

“And Fang does this thing with her tongue,” Lightning said, sticking out her tongue and mimicking the thing in question. “You wouldn’t believe what –”

Serah’s vision blurred. She blacked out and then regained consciousness to find that Lightning was still going.

“And then there’s this thing she does with her hand.” Lightning made several horribly explicit gestures with her hand that sent Serah’s mind into lightless abysses filled with pornographic imagery of her sister and Fang. “I think it might even be illegal, but you wouldn’t believe how good…”

And then Serah blacked out again. Please, she thought, please let her regain consciousness after her sister was done detailing the adventures of Lightning and Fang in the Magical World of Over-Enthusiastic Sex.

She was not that lucky. Not even close.

“And you’d be amazed by what two flexible people can do when…”

Finally – finally – sweet, blissful unconsciousness claimed Serah. She continued to smile and nod – her body moving on autopilot – but that was all. When Serah finally came back to herself, Lightning had stopped talking. Instead, she was stirring her coffee with that same dreamy expression as before. Serah took a deep breath. Her sister was undoubtedly thinking of all the unrivalled debauchery that she and Fang could get up to later.

“So, uh, congratulations.” Serah chugged down her coffee. If only it was vodka, she might be able to drink herself into a forgetful stupor. She glanced down at her cake. There was no way she could eat it, not after Lightning had mentioned something about cake and the way it could be used. Yes, Fang had eaten plenty of cake – and plenty of Lightning too. “I’m glad you’re happy.”

“Thanks.” Lightning’s smile was blindingly bright. “I am happy.”

“Well, that’s good.” Serah’s hands shook as she waved the waiter over to order another cup of coffee. “By the way, where is Fang?”

“Oh, she had to break the news to Vanille.” Serah checked her phone. At some point during Lightning’s lecture about the glories of sex with Fang, Vanille had sent her a message: run, run,
save yourself! Well, it was too late for that. “She should be here any second.”

Fang arrived right on cue. She walked in and gave Lightning a long and lingering kiss. Then she walked over to Serah and put one hand on her shoulder. “Hey, Serah.”

Serah stared at the hand on her shoulder. Then she thought about what that hand had been doing – whom it had been doing. It was too much. She lurched out of her chair and ran. She needed to go find Vanille, grab some alcohol, and try to drink all the bad memories away.

Fang watched the younger Farron run and shrugged. “Oh well.” She sat down in Serah’s seat. “Look, cake for me!” She glanced at Lightning and grinned. “Remember that thing I did with the cake?” Lightning chuckled. “So, what’s on your schedule today?”

“Nothing much.” Lightning made a show of being deep in thought. “I’ve also called in a few day’s leave. I don’t have to come in to work until Wednesday.”

“So… what will you be doing with all your free time?” Fang asked.


Chapter End Notes

As always I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is dedicated to everyone who has ever wondered just how competitive Fang and Lightning are. The answer, of course, is that they are competitive to the point of being complete idiots. This chapter takes that idea and ratchets it up to eleven. This chapter is what happens when I turn off the internal filter I have that prevents me from acting like too much of an idiot. I hope you enjoyed it in all of its crack-ish, crazy goodness. I just hope I didn’t mentally scar Serah too much.

I also write original fiction. My newest original story, Durendal, is now available on Amazon! It runs to ~80,000 words, making it the first novel-length original story that I’ve made available to the public! It’s a coming-of-age story and a Western with elements of science fiction. If you’ve enjoyed my other stories, I know you’ll love this one. You can find links to my original fiction in my profile.

If you’re not into Westerns, you don’t have to worry (although you can always have a look at The Gunslinger and the Necromancer if you’re after a paranormal Western with a good sense of humour). Most of my other original stuff is fantasy. If you like fantasy with plenty of atmosphere and action, check out The Last Huntress, I’m sure you’ll love it. If you’re in the mood for fantasy with a more ‘old-fashioned’ feel, then take a look at The Burning Mountains.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
An Oddly Familiar Ceiling

It wasn’t the first time that Lightning had woken up in an infirmary – and it certainly wouldn’t be the last – but it was the first time that she’d woken up with something latched onto her middle. She tried to pry the thing off only to discover that the thing was actually a little girl with dark, spiky hair and blue eyes.

The girl grinned up at her. “You’re finally awake, mom!”

Mom? Had she heard that correctly? Lightning gaped and tried not to stare. There was no way this child was hers. The last thing she remembered was going out on patrol with Fang a few months after the other woman had awakened from crystal stasis.

“Why are you looking at me like that, mom?” The little girl giggled and climbed up Lightning so that she could put one hand on her forehead. “Maybe you’re still sick… or maybe I’ve got something on my face.” She scrubbed her face with her other hand. “Nope, there’s nothing on my face.”

“Uh…” Lightning leaned back and held the girl out at arm’s length. The girl giggled again and squirmed. Evidently, she was ticklish. Lightning marvelled at how small and light she was. “Who are you, exactly?”

“Who am I?” The girl’s eyes darted from side to side in a way that reminded Lightning a little too much of Vanille when the redhead was at her shiftiest. “I’m… Kid Awesome.”

Right…

Lightning tilted her head to one side. This had to be some kind of crazy dream. There was no way that the Guardian Corps would allow some crazy kid who thought they were a superhero into the infirmary – even if that kid was incredibly cute. “Somehow, I don’t think that’s really your name.”

“You’re too clever, mom.” The girl wriggled out of Lightning’s grasp and struck a pose on the far end of the bed. Lighting’s eye twitched. That pose was the same one Snow struck whenever he’d had too much to drink. “I am… Kid Awesome.”

Right…

Lightning tilted her head to one side. This had to be some kind of crazy dream. There was no way that the Guardian Corps would allow some crazy kid who thought they were a superhero into the infirmary – even if that kid was incredibly cute. “Somehow, I don’t think that’s really your name.”

“You’re too clever, mom.” The girl wriggled out of Lightning’s grasp and struck a pose on the far end of the bed. Lighting’s eye twitched. That pose was the same one Snow struck whenever he’d had too much to drink. “I am… Diana.”

“Diana? So that’s your name.” There was something vaguely familiar about the name. Lightning must have heard it somewhere before. “But why do you keep calling me your mom?”

“Because you are my mom.” Diana clambered back into Lightning’s lap. When Lightning made no move to hug her, Diana simply grabbed hold of Lightning’s arms and moved them into place herself. Strange. Lightning wasn’t usually a physically affectionate person, but this was quite comfortable. Diana was very cuddly.

“I can’t be your mom. I don’t have any children.” Lightning would have remembered if she’d had children.

Diana’s eyes narrowed, and she stretched up to peer into Lightning’s eyes. “Maybe you’re still feeling sick, mom. You’ve got two kids. There’s me and then there’s Averia.” Diana gave the
room another one of those shifty looks and then lowered her voice to a whisper. “In case you don’t remember, I’m your favourite… and you promised to buy me candy later. Lots of candy.”

Lightning scoffed. Even if she had kids, she could hardly imagine stuffing them full of sugar. She was about to reply when the door to her room opened. A young pink-haired girl walked in, and Lightning’s mind screeched to a halt. Now that she thought about it, the girl in her arms did resemble a much cuter and cuddlier version of Fang. As for the girl who’d walked in – apart from her green eyes, Lightning could have been looking at a younger version of herself.

And it was those eyes that worried her the most. Lightning was observant when it came to those she cared about, and she’d know those eyes anywhere. Those were Fang’s eyes. And the girl in her lap had blue eyes – her eyes. Lightning slumped back onto the bed. If this was real – and it seemed more and more likely that it was – then these two children were –

“Hey, Lightning, nice to see you awake.” Fang breezed into the room. She was older than Lightning remembered, no longer a young woman but a woman in her prime. Fang ruffled the pink-haired girl’s hair, drawing a scowl that Lightning had only ever seen in the mirror, and then went over to give the dark-haired girl an affection kiss on the forehead. Then Fang leaned over and pressed a quick kiss to Lightning’s lips.

Lightning’s brain shut down. This was beyond weird. She and Fang had grown closer during their journey with the others, and maybe Lightning had been considering what it would be like pursuing something more than friendship with the huntress, but she’d never done anything about it. The closest she’d come was sharing a can of cola with Fang for an indirect kiss.

Fang pulled away, and Lightning forced her brain to resume operations. “What’s wrong, Lightning? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“Fang…” Lightning took a deep breath. Her gaze flicked from the two children to Fang. “Are they… are they our children?”

“Come on.” Fang laughed and gave Lightning’s shoulder an affectionate squeeze. “I know they can be a handful, but there’s no need to disown them. Plus, they are kind of nice to have around. They make great slave labour when we have to clean the house.”

“Mommy!” Diana leapt at Fang. The green-eyed woman caught the girl and hefted her over her shoulder. “Don’t say stuff like that – we’re awesome kids!”

Lightning watched the scene in front of her unfold. Diana had abandoned trying to squirm out of Fang grip in favour of trying to crush Fang in a bear hug, which was no easy feat considering the fact that she was hanging upside down off Fang’s shoulder and was way, way too small to get any real damage done. What Lightning was about to say made her feel like an absolute jerk.

“Fang… I don’t remember them. I don’t remember anything after the patrol you and I went on a few months after you woke up from crystal stasis.”

Fang froze. “Please tell me you’re joking.”

“I’m not.”

Slowly, Fang lowered Diana to the ground. She glanced at the other child. “Averia, take your sister and get your Aunt Vanille and your Uncle Hope.” She turned back to Lightning as the two kids went off to get help. “What was the last thing you remember?”

Lightning told Fang what she remembered. Her gut clenched as Fang paled and her hands tightened
on the back of the chair beside the bed.

“So you don’t remember anything after that? You don’t remember us dating, getting married, having kids?” Fang sank into the chair. Lightning knew she should do something – anything – to comfort her, but she couldn’t quite bring herself to reach over and touch her. This was all so strange, and nothing made any sense. “Are you absolutely sure?”

“I’m sorry.” Lightning put one hand awkwardly on Fang’s shoulder. “What happened? Why don’t I remember anything?”

“We were on a patrol last night.” Fang got up and paced. Her shoulders were tense, and the muscles there were bunched up into knots. “We ran into a few nasties. One of them must have poisoned you because you went down with a fever. I got you back here as fast as I could. Damn it.” Fang snarled. “Sorry… it’s – you were supposed to be fine once your fever broke. The medics all said you’d be okay.”

“But I’m not okay.” Lightning bit her lip and wrapped her arms around herself. In an instant, Fang was there, one hand running through her hair in what Lightning guessed was a soothing gesture. But Lightning couldn’t keep herself from stiffening. From what she could remember, Fang didn’t touch her like this. Fang jerked away as if she’d been struck, and Lightning bit back a curse. “Sorry.”

“No, don’t be sorry.” Fang went back to pacing. “If you can’t remember us, then it’s no wonder that you get all tense when I touch you. It’s…” Fang’s fists clenched, and she punched the wall. “Damn it. Ouch.”

“Fang…”

“Look… we’ve been married for years, Lightning. We’ve got two crazy but wonderful kids, and now you’ve forgotten so much. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t scared right now. What if you don’t remember?”

“It’s okay.” Lightning climbed out of bed, glad that she was at least steady on her feet. “I’m sure I’ll remember.” It was strange. She’d never been this open with her emotions or so quick to give comfort. But something inside her demanded that she do something, that she not leave Fang the way she was. It was only her natural reticence that kept her from embracing the other woman, but she forced herself to hold Fang’s hands. “It’ll work out.”

“Lightning…” Fang’s lips trembled. “I –” She pulled Lightning into her arms. Lightning stiffened again for a moment before she relaxed. This… this felt right. “Don’t worry. I’ll look after you.”

“I believe you.”

The door burst open, and Lightning all but leapt away from Fang. She didn’t miss the looks of surprise from her visitors. Vanille looked a little bit older, but the big surprise was Hope. He wasn’t a teenager anymore. He was a grown man, and he moved with the self-assured ease of someone who’d seen plenty of time in the field.

“So,” Vanille said. “I heard you’re having some problems remembering things.”

“Yeah. Uh… what about the kids?”

“They’re hanging out with Snow and Claire,” Hope replied. “Serah is still at work, but she should be hear soon.” He made a face. “If you are having memory problems, she’s going to freak out.”
Lightning was doing a bit of freaking out herself. “Who is Claire?”

“A…” Hope and Vanille shared a look before he spoke. “Claire is Snow and Serah’s daughter. She’s nine years old, and she looks a lot like her mother.”

“I see.” Lightning sank back onto the bed. Serah had a daughter too? She’d grown to respect Snow – but a daughter? She wasn’t sure if she should congratulate him or punch him in the face. “What can you do about my memory?”

Hope kicked things off by asking her a battery of questions. Lightning was horrified by how many of the answers eluded her. A few of the things he mentioned sounded familiar – apparently, she was an absolute taskmaster at work – but most of it was new. It didn’t help that Fang continued to pace the edges of the room, the tension in her frame growing with each confused reply that Lightning gave. Next up was Vanille. The redhead pulled out charts and scanned her with an impressive array of devices.

“Well, if it helps, I don’t think you’ve got brain damage.” Vanille shrugged. “And everything else seems to be working okay.”

“So, why can’t she remember?” Fang asked.

“It might have something to do with the poison she ingested. The lab is still looking at those, and you know how the critters around here can be, Fang. The brain is a delicate thing. The poison might have thrown it out of whack. The important thing is that it seems to be okay now. There’s a good chance that she’ll remember on her own. What we need to do now is look after her. It might help if we put her in a more familiar environment.”

“What about the kids?”

“We can tell them the truth. They’re smart. They can handle it. Besides, it wouldn’t take them long to work out that something was wrong.”

“I don’t want to hurt them,” Lightning said. The others stared. “I mean they’re my children. Even if I don’t remember them, I don’t want to hurt them.”

“It’s okay.” Fang sighed. “They’ll understand. They’ve seen stranger things anyway.”

“It’s decided then.” Vanille smiled and patted Lightning on the back. “A few of the other doctors are going to come around and take a look at you, but I think they’ll agree with me. Once that’s out of the way, we’ll get you home. Hopefully, that’ll get your memory going again.”

X X X

Lightning felt that same eerie sense of dislocation she’d felt in the infirmary when they finally arrived back at the home that she apparently shared with Fang and their children. It had a white picket fence in front of it, and a big tree in one corner with some haphazardly trimmed bushes and flowers nearby.

Fang pulled into the driveway and followed Lightning’s gaze. “Ah, you’re wondering about the bushes. We decided to let Diana and Averia look after those.”

“We did?” Lightning glanced back at the two children behind them. The smaller of the two grinned and waved while the older one continued to watch her with the same pensive expression she’d worn for the past ten minutes. “Was that a good idea?” She couldn’t imagine letting her children run around with anything sharp and pointy.
“I was in charge of the gardening shears,” Averia said. “But then Diana distracted me, and I made some mistakes.” She peered at Lightning intently, studying every nuance of her expression. “You always let me and Diana do stuff like that since we take care of each other.”

“I see.” Lightning breathed a sigh of relief. It was nice to know that her kids cared about each other. She didn’t want a repeat of what had happened between her and Serah.

“All right, guys. Time to go inside. Aunt Serah said she’d be brining some takeout over.”

Lightning straightened. “Serah? Fang, is there anything I need to know about Serah?” She and her sister had ruined their relationship once. She needed to know if they’d done something like that again.

“Relax.” Fang squeezed Lightning’s leg. Lightning twitched, and Fang gave her an apologetic look. “You two are doing fine. Heck, you’re practically attached at the hip again. I have to pry you two apart on the weekends.” She pointed at the house beside theirs. “She lives next door, actually.”

“Oh.” Lightning relaxed. That was one less thing to worry about. “Let’s go inside then.”

The moment they set foot inside the house, Lightning found herself swept up into a warm hug. It was Serah.

“Lightning.” Serah held her so tightly that Lightning could barely breathe. “They told me what happened. Are you okay?”

“Apart from the lack of memory, I think so.” Lightning pried Serah off. “How about you? Fang told me some of what I’m forgetting but…”

“I’m happy.” Serah smiled, and some of the tension in Lightning’s gut eased at the sight. Serah truly was happy. Serah reached back and moved a girl in front of her. Lightning didn’t have to be told to know who it was – the resemblance was uncanny. “This is Claire. We named her after you – Snow insisted.”

“Hi.” Lightning nodded at the girl, who gave her the kind of sunny smile that could only have come from Snow.

“Hi.” Claire grinned and shook Lightning’s hand. “Is it true that Diana climbed all over you when you woke up?”

“She did.” In the background, Diana gave a cry of protest. She looked past Claire to the tall, blond man behind her. “Snow? It seems that you’ve made my sister very happy.”

He chuckled. “I’m not sure if you remember, but you were very clear on how you would mangle certain parts of my anatomy if I didn’t.”

“Ah, that does sound like something I’d say.”

“Right.” Serah steered Lightning into a large dining room with a big table. “It’s time for us to eat.”

Dinner was pizza, and Lightning was struck once again by how familiar everything was, even if she couldn’t place it all. The pizza was divvied up with a minimum of fuss except for the children, who were determined to secure the largest portions for themselves. Diana, who Lightning had quickly learned was obsessed about her lack of height, did her best to sneak some pizza off Averia’s plate.
The older girl glared and caught Diana’s wrist only to cave and hand over a piece of pizza when Diana pouted and put on what had to be the fakest sad look ever. It reminded her a lot of – and now Serah was pouting at her, and Lightning found herself handing over a piece of pizza too. She didn’t talk much, which seemed to worry the others, but she couldn’t remember being all that talkative. It also gave her a chance to watch them interact.

There was an ease amongst them that hadn’t been there during their journey. Their journey had brought them together as comrades, as brothers and sisters in arms. But the time that Lightning had forgotten had turned them first into friends and then into family. A gentle smile crossed her lips as she watched Vanille and Serah bicker over which kind of pizza was best before Hope stepped in to play peacemaker. Naturally, they turned on him, and it was left to Fang to put her metaphorical foot down while Snow contented himself with making whipping motions at Hope. The only ones missing were Sazh, Dajh, and Chirpy.

“Where are Sazh, Dajh, and Chirpy? Did… did something happen to them?”

“No, they’re fine.” Fang gave her a quick hug, and Lightning forced herself to relax. She didn’t do a good enough job of it, however, since the others all turned to stare. Apparently, she and Fang were very affectionate. “They’re off on a camping trip. We gave them a call, and they should be back tomorrow.”

“Oh. Good. Dinner has been… nice.”

“Well, it’s not like you let the kids eat pizza every day. From what I’ve seen, you’re kind of a tyrannical monster.” Serah smirked.

“I am?”

“You are.” Fang and the kids all nodded together. “You’re the one who makes sure the kids eat their vegetables, drink their milk, and don’t spend too much time watching television.”

Lightning raised one eyebrow. “So, what do you do then?”

Fang gave her one of those smirks, and Lightning’s heart skipped a beat. “You keep me around for the awesome sex.”

“Mommy!” Diana and Averia gave mutual cries of outrage while the others around the table sniggered. “Don’t say stuff like that!”

Lightning gave Fang an amused look. The other woman held her gaze. “Is that why we got married?”

“Amongst other things. But I do help with the kids. Whenever you need someone to wade into a muddy puddle to retrieve one of them, I’m the one who goes. And whenever the bogeyman needs to get speared, I’m the one for the job.”

“Wonderful.” Lightning’s lips twitched. She had to ask Fang about that bogeyman remark later.

X X X

After dinner, the others headed off, leaving Lightning with Fang and the girls. Intellectually, she knew she didn’t have to be nervous. Even if she couldn’t remember marrying Fang, the other woman was still her friend. But the girls were another story. She didn’t know anything about them at all. But somehow, she couldn’t help but like them. Diana was adorable, and Lightning wondered if Fang had been the same as a child. Averia was so similar to her that it was scary. She even doted
on Diana the way that Lightning doted on Serah.

“Do you want to see some of the photos we have?” Fang asked as she took out a laptop. The images on the screen appeared on the television. “It might help jog your memory.”

“Sure.” Lightning settled down onto the couch, and it wasn’t long before Diana found her way onto Fang’s lap with Averia sitting next to Lightning. Without realising what she was doing, she put one arm around Averia. The girl startled for a moment and then relaxed. There was something right about this, Lightning thought. Even the mug on the coffee table with the weird orange gorgonopsid on it seemed to fit. “Where do you want to start?”

“I thought we might skip the wedding.” Fang caught the frown on Lightning’s face and gave her an apologetic look. “I can show it to you later, but the kids will riot.” She tapped a few keys. “How about… baby pictures?”

Lightning gasped as a picture of herself holding a newborn baby appeared. From the bright green eyes and shock of pink hair, it had to be Averia. The Lightning in the picture was exhausted but happy. She began to chuckle as she noticed something in particular about the photo, drawing an angry scowl from Averia. “Look at her, she’s scowling – just like she is now.”

“She gets it from you.” Fang smirked. “It’s a Farron thing.” They moved onto the next photo. It showed all three Farrons – Lightning, Serah, and Averia – scowling at each other. However, the next photo showed that it was only a joke, as Lightning and Serah grinned at each other. Averia, however, continued to scowl. “But don’t let that scowl fool you. Averia does know how to smile.”

“Yeah, she does.” Diana reached over and pulled Averia’s lips up into a smile. The pink-haired girl tried to resist, but she found herself smiling, even as she pushed her little sister’s hands away. “See, mom? Her face isn’t broken – she can smile.”

“Hey! I smile all the time. The only reason I frown is because I have to keep saving you from yourself.”

“When do you ever save me from myself?” Diana huffed. “I can look after myself.”

“I’m glad you asked that question,” Fang said. “Here are a few pictures of your big sister saving you.”

The first photo showed a toddler-aged Diana being grabbed by Averia as she almost tipped off the couch and onto her head. The next photo showed Averia catching Diana as she leapt off her bed in completely uncoordinated fashion. The third photo showed Averia pulling Diana out of the way before she walked into a pole.

“Those have to be fake.” Diana scowled. “I don’t remember those at all.”

“That’s because of how often I save you.” Averia poked Diana in the cheek. “So be grateful.”

Lightning shook her head in disbelief. “Fang… is this normal?”

“For the two of them? Yes.” Fang rubbed her hands together. “Do you want to see something really weird? Then take a look at this.”

The photo showed her Eidolon – the mighty Odin – rolling around on the ground as it tried to strangle Bahamut. Her Eidolon had always carried himself with such dignity. What could have happened to make him act like this? The answer came in the next photo, one that had zoomed out a little to show two familiar children cheering the Eidolons on.
“Diana and Averia both think that Bahamut is the coolest Eidolon.” Fang’s eyes twinkled.

“Is that so?” Lightning gave her children a mock scowl. “What about Odin?”

“He’s cool, but Bahamut is super cool,” Diana said.

“Bahamut is a dragon.” Averia nodded firmly. “Dragons are neat.”

“I guess.” Lightning almost reached out to ruffle her daughter’s hair. “Show me more. I’m not remembering anything yet, but I’d like to see more. It… it feels familiar.”

They spent the rest of that evening sifting through old photographs. What struck Lightning most was how different her life was from what she could remember. The last thing she remembered, she’d spent almost all of her time on patrol or at work, helping to get civilisation back on track.

But she wasn’t in her uniform in most of these photos. Most of the time she was with the others or with the kids. Even more surprising was how often she was smiling. It was a small smile, sure, but it happened far more frequently than she expected. Her favourite photo was one of her wrestling on the ground with Diana and Averia while Fang shouted encouragement.

“Okay, girls. It’s time for you to head to bed.”

“Not without a story.” Diana folded her arms over her chest and did her best impression of an immovable rock. “Mom always tells us a story before we go to sleep.”

“I’m too big for stories now.” Averia lifted her chin.

“But you always listen anyway.”

“I do not!” Averia’s cheeks flushed. “You keep asking me questions about mom’s stories, so I have to listen. That’s all.”

“I don’t know if your mom can tell you a story tonight, but I can tell you one.” Fang paused dramatically. “It’s a story about two girls who always do their homework and their chores.”

“That doesn’t sound good at all, mommy.” Diana looked distinctly unimpressed.

Lightning snickered.

“Fine, fine. I’ll tell you a different story. Now, come on, get upstairs. You still need to have a bath.”

As they followed the girls upstairs, Lightning fell into step beside Averia. The girl was tall for her age, and she moved with natural grace. She had a feeling that if she asked Fang what Averia could do, the girl would already know a lot about how to handle a weapon. She was observant too, her green eyes constantly studying Lightning.

“You take care of your sister, don’t you?” Lightning asked quietly. She could remember doing the same for Serah although her sister hadn’t gotten into half the trouble that Diana did. And speaking of trouble – Diana had discarded all of her clothing except her underwear in the corridor as she made a beeline for the shower.

“Someone has to.” Averia’s voice softened. “You and mommy always told me to take care of her.”

“But it’s more than that, right?”
“She’s my sister.” Averia shrugged. “I won’t let anything happen to her even if she is a bit of a brat sometimes.”

When the girls had finally bathed and changed, it was time for bed. Averia had chosen a sensible set of blue pyjamas, but Diana was dressed in a way that made Lightning’s eyes bleed. The little girl was dressed in bright pink pyjamas that were covered in bright orange gorgonopsids. To complete the insanity, her blankets and pillows were equally garish shades of green and yellow.

“What is that thing?” Lightning recoiled. “And were we blind when we picked out the colours?”

Averia shuddered. “You’re lucky, mom. It sounds like you don’t remember Gary.”

“Hey! Gary is awesome.” Diana patted the spot beside her on the bed. “Come on, mom. I’ll tell you all about him.” Out of Diana’s line of sight, Averia made several frantic gestures. The meaning of them was clear: run now while you can.

“Maybe you could tell mom later,” Averia said. “We won’t have time for a story if you talk about Gary.”

Diana considered the situation for a moment and then nodded. “Later then.”

Lightning hung back as Fang settled down on a chair beside Diana’s bed. At Diana’s urging, Averia was dragged out of her bed to lie down next to Diana. The story that Fang told was an old Yun tale about dragons and monsters and heroes. Lightning followed it, but she was more interested in Fang.

Despite Fang’s outward warmth and easy-going nature, Lightning had always known that there was something cold, hard, and ugly inside her. There was no way she could have survived everything she had without developing that side of her. Lightning had glimpsed it a few times when Vanille was threatened – she was the same way when it came to Serah. But she’d never seen this side of Fang, not even with Vanille, this softness and gentleness, almost like Fang couldn’t quite believe how lucky she was to be there with the kids.

It was there in the way that Fang’s eyes softened when she watched Diana and Averia bicker. It was there in the way that Fang patted Diana’s hair and gave Averia an amused smirk. And it was there in the way that she carefully tucked Diana in when the story was done and then tucked in Averia too, the older girl complaining about it the whole time.

Lightning had seen Fang the warrior, Fang the friend, and Fang the sister. Now, she’d seen Fang the mother. Warmth spread through her. It was easy to see now why she’d fallen in love with Fang.

And then, just like that, it was only the two of them.

“Uh… I’m going to bed now.” Fang paused half a step away, uncertain. “You can have the bedroom. It’s down the corridor. I can sleep in the guest room…”

Lightning pursed her lips. Fang was her friend, and even if she couldn’t remember the past decade or so, it was obvious from everything that had gone on today that Fang would never hurt her. But there was more to it than that. She’d become comfortable around Fang, more comfortable than she’d thought possible, over the course of a single day. There was something right about being near her, as if her body remembered what her mind had forgotten.

“You don’t have to sleep in the guest room. We can share the bed. You can have your side, and I’ll have mine.”
Fang’s eyes took on that tender look, and Lightning knew she’d done the right thing. “Lightning… you don’t have to –”

“It’s okay.” Lightning took a deep breath. “And… it would help. This place, it isn’t familiar to me yet. Having you next to me… would make it easier to adjust.”

To say that the next half an hour was awkward would have been a massive understatement. Lightning showered first, and she took careful note of all the shampoos, conditioners, and other products in the shower. It was strange seeing the brands that Fang preferred right next to her favourites. Even the sight of their toothbrushes near the sink gave her pause.

Lightning changed into some pyjamas and then waited, flipping through a day-old newspaper while Fang showered. When Fang emerged from the bathroom, she was in a tank top and shorts.

“Oh.” Lightning stared. She knew it was rude, but she couldn’t look away. Fang’s hair was still damp from the shower, and a few stray drops of water had gathered on her bare shoulders. Involuntarily, Lightning’s gaze lingered on Fang’s long, toned legs before shifting to the flat plane of her stomach hidden behind the thin material of the tank top. Then there was the other woman’s chest and the gleam of moisture at her collarbone.

Heat gathered in Lightning’s belly, and she wondered once again how much her body remembered on instinct alone. She’d always felt a certain degree of attraction to Fang, but this was ridiculous. Finally, her eyes met Fang’s, and for a long, long moment neither of them said anything. How often, Lightning wondered, would a moment like this have led to more? She could almost picture it now: Fang pressing her down into the sheets, her hand undoing the buttons of Lightning’s pyjamas one by one as she kissed each inch of bare skin and –

“I think I’ll take this side of the bed,” Fang said.

Lightning swallowed thickly. Had that been a fantasy or a memory? “Right. I’ll take this side then.”

With the lights off, Lightning grew keenly aware of everything around her. It was one of the things that made her a good soldier. But right now, she cursed it. She could hear Fang’s breathing and feel the subtle shifting of the mattress as Fang rolled onto her side. She could practically feel the warmth radiating off the other woman.

But something was wrong. Even with the blanket over her, Lightning couldn’t get comfortable. Her body wanted something else, and she had a feeling that she knew what it was.

“Fang,” Lightning whispered. “How do we normally sleep?”

Fang groaned, and Lightning twitched as the sound called out to something primal inside her. “Lightning, I know that you can’t remember anything over the past decade, so I’m going to pretend you didn’t ask that questions. This is hard enough as it is.”

“What do you mean?”

Fang moved so fast that Lightning barely had time to register what was happening until Fang loomed over her, face only inches from hers. In the dim light of the bedroom, Fang’s eyes gleamed. She was so close that Lightning could feel her breath on her lips, feel the warmth of her legs as they settled in between Lightning’s.

“I know I shouldn’t do this – you don’t remember – but it’s so hard.” Fang slumped against her, laying her head down on Lightning’s chest. “It wasn’t so hard when the others were here. But,
damn it, Lightning, I need you. You’re my wife. I’m happiest when I’m with you and the girls. If you’ve forgotten all of that then –”

“Fang, it’s okay.” Lightning slowly, haltingly began to stroke the other woman’s hair. “I’m sure I’ll remember. And even if… even if I don’t, I do care about you, Fang. I… I don’t know if I love you the way that you love me, but I do care.” She relaxed and let Fang wrap her arms around her. “You’re very easy to care about, you know. I don’t mind if we stay like this.”

“Are you sure?” Fang trembled, and Lightning smiled. She’d made the right choice.

“Yes. Now, go to sleep.” Lightning chuckled. “That’s an order. I’m a colonel now, if I remember right.”

Fang laughed and pressed a kiss to Lightning’s hand. The pink-haired woman shuddered. “Yes, ma’am.”

X X X

Lightning woke up the next morning with Fang in her arms. It was a good feeling – a familiar feeling – and she savoured it for a few moments before she slipped out of bed. Fang was still snoring softly when she got out of the bathroom, so she headed downstairs. She wasn’t the only one there. Diana was in the living room watching cartoons with a bowl of cereal on her lap.

Diana saw her and gasped. The girl made a futile attempt to hide her cereal behind her back. “Uh… hi, mom.”

“I’m guessing that I don’t normally let you eat cereal while you’re on the couch.”

“No.” Diana sighed. “I’ll go eat it in the dining room.”

“It’s okay. I’ll let you get away with it this time.” Lightning ruffled Diana’s hair. “But you’re up early, Diana. How about your sister?”

“Averia?” Diana went back to eating her cereal and pointed at the front door. “She’s outside watering her plant.” She pulled Lightning down and whispered in her ear. “Be careful, mom. She can get pretty cranky when it comes to plants.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah. Her plants always die.”

Lightning found Averia on the porch staring at the most pathetic, hideously shrivelled plant that Lightning had ever seen. It was completely impossible to tell what it was. The pink-haired girl was trying to glare it back to life.

“Oh, mom.” Averia growled. “My plant died – again.”

How many plants had met a similar fate? It was probably better not to ask. But as amusing as it was, Lightning didn’t want Averia to feel sad. “How about we have pancakes for breakfast?”

Averia perked up. “Sure.”

Lightning was halfway through the first batch of pancakes before she realised that Averia was staring at her. “What?”

“How did you know where everything was?”
Lightning paused, deep in thought. No one had shown her where all the ingredients and utensils were — she’d just known. “I don’t know.” Maybe she’d done this so many times that her body could do it on instinct alone.

“That’s okay. I guess you still remember some stuff.” Averia reached for some of the ingredients. “Here, let me help.”

As the pancakes neared completion, Diana padded into the kitchen with her plush toy, a plush Bahamut. She eyed the pancakes with something akin to rapture and then rushed upstairs to get Fang. Apparently, Lightning’s pancakes were legendarily good.

“What is it?” Lightning asked. Averia had gone back to staring at her.

“You made them the same way we always eat them. You even added a bit of chocolate to them, but Aunt Serah always says that you didn’t start doing that until you married mommy.” Averia grinned. “You’re definitely remembering some stuff.”

“This does feel familiar. But let’s eat first.”

Fang came to the dining room with Diana clinging onto her back, but Lightning had eyes only for her wife. Fang looked deliciously rumpled, hair askew, and clothes out of order. There was a broad grin on her lips as Diana nuzzled her cheek.

“Thanks for making breakfast.” Fang made a show of smelling the pancakes. “Smells good.”

“I woke up early.” Lightning pulled a chair out for Fang as the other woman pulled Diana off her back and settled her back on the ground. “Averia said that I made them the way I usually do. I think it might help if I do more of the things I usually do.”

“You could be on to something there.” Fang licked her lips, and Lightning fought not to stare. “Let’s eat.”

After breakfast, Fang took Lightning around town. It was strange seeing New Bodhum like this. It was so much bigger than she remembered. It was a thriving settlement now with its own shopping centres and other facilities. But despite the fact that she couldn’t remember much, the layout of the town felt familiar. On a whim, Fang decided to let her drive, and Lightning manoeuvred around New Bodhum with an ease that could only have come from years of familiarity.

“Is this helping?” Fang asked.

Lightning pursed her lips. She was in the mood for something sweet. Without even thinking about it, she eased the car off the main road and into a quiet street. She knew, somehow, that there was a café there that served the most wonderful muffins. “I think so.”

X X X

Lightning spent the next fortnight trying to get her memory back. It was hard. She got bits and pieces — flashes of places and times that she recognised but couldn’t quite place. It was so frustrating. The memories were there, she knew they were, but they kept slipping out of her grasp. It was like trying to catch the wind.

Yet, little by little, she began to settle in. She took time off work and asked Hope to bring over some of her notes and files. She was a colonel now. And from the looks of it, she’d been heavily involved in drafting the current Guardian Corps regulations.
Sparring was yet another surprise. Her body moved almost on autopilot, and it moved with a strength and speed that startled her. She must have spent countless hours in the field and in the sparring yards to develop her skills even further. But the biggest surprise was that she knew how to use a spear now. Fang had tossed one at her head and then attacked.

Lightning had caught the spear and responded without hesitating. Apparently, Fang had made a point of teaching her how to use her favourite weapon. Lightning must have done the same because Fang was only too happy to show off a few moves with a gun blade. It made Lightning want her memories back even more. How many moments with Fang and the others was she missing?

The kids were interesting to say the least. She couldn’t remember having them, but after only a few days, she couldn’t imagine not having them around. Lightning loved everything about them, from Averia’s cool but steady presence to Diana’s warmth and hyperactivity. She even went with Averia to a gardening store to pick up another plant.

And then there was Fang.

Lightning wasn’t sure if it was her body remembering something that her mind had forgotten, but Lightning’s attraction to the other woman grew with every day. She found herself watching Fang with the kids and thinking about what a wonderful mother she was. And when she got back early from a trip around town with Hope to find Fang coming out of the shower in just a towel, Lightning’s mouth went dry and she had to remind herself how to breathe.

Fang was so damn perfect.

It was scary. Lightning had always wondered if she and Fang would make a good couple, but the proof was right there in front of her, in their house with its white picket fence and its two crazy, but loveable, kids. They were great for each other, and Lightning was falling in love Fang all over again, and she didn’t know what to do about it.

She wanted to kiss Fang and hold her, but the last thing she wanted was to tempt Fang with something she couldn’t truly give. Fang deserved the best, and Lightning couldn’t even remember their wedding.

It all came to a head one evening after Lightning and Fang had put the kids to bed. As usual, Lightning let Fang curl up against her. It was selfish, but she wanted at least this much for herself. Even if she couldn’t give Fang what she deserved, she could give her this.

But it was too much. A string of memories rustled through her mind, bits and pieces of the life she’d forgotten: Fang moving against her in desperate need, Fang whimpering as Lightning traced the full curve of one breast with her lips, and the moist, shuddering heat as Lightning slipped two fingers into Fang and curled them just so.

Lightning growled, low and deep in her throat, and then rolled them over so that she was straddling Fang’s waist. The other woman stared up at her, hands tightening on Lightning’s hips. Yes, Lightning thought, Fang had always loved to trace small circles on her hips with those wonderfully skilled fingers.

“Lightning…” Fang’s voice cracked. “What are you doing?”

Lightning’s response was to lean down and kiss Fang. The other woman’s taste stirred a host of memories inside her along with emotions that Lightning had never known she could feel. Fang was hers, and the urge to remind her of that fact became almost overwhelming. She needed to taste Fang again, to feel her come apart in her arms. But Fang pushed her away.
“Lightning, you don’t have to do this.” Fang’s breathing came in harsh, ragged gasps. Lightning could hear the raw need in her voice. “I know we’re still married, but you don’t have to make yourself –”

“I want this.” Lightning paused, dragging in a deep breath to try and calm down. But it was impossible with Fang still tracing those little circles on her hip. “I want you.”

And then Fang moved. She bucked, and Lightning found herself trapped beneath the huntress. The room close in, all warm, molten shadows, as Fang’s hands and mouth laid claim to every inch of exposed flesh. Lightning was vaguely aware of her pyjamas being unbuttoned and tossed aside, of her panties following suit. She should be anxious – she couldn’t remember doing this with Fang – but it felt so natural, so right, that all she could do was cry out and let it happen, lost in a haze of sensations.

Fang stopped for a second, eyes gleaming in the dark. They were narrowed into little more than slits now, filled with a darkness that bordered on violence. “Quiet, Lightning. We wouldn’t want the kids to wake up, would we?”

“No… we wouldn’t.” Was this what Fang had been holding inside her these past two weeks? “Please… don’t stop.”

“I’m not going to.” Fang snarled. “Do you know what it was like not touching you for two weeks? Not being able to kiss you or touch you the way I wanted?” Teeth nipped at Lightning’s throat. “It was torture, and now you’re going to pay.”

Then there was no more time for thinking. Memories blurred with the present, and Lightning wondered, in the few, fleeting moments of coherent thought that she had, about how many times she and Fang had done this because her body knew exactly what to do. Lightning’s back arched, and she cried out, hips bucking frantically as Fang pushed her over the edge and held her there, drawing out her pleasure until Lightning shoved her away and lay, gasping and broken, on the bed.

“Lightning…” The darkness was gone from Fang’s eyes, replaced by something infinitely tender.

But Lightning was in no mood for tenderness – later, perhaps, but not now. She sat up, and Fang stilled, seeing the same darkness that had been in her eyes filling Lightning’s. In what felt like the most natural motion in the world, Lightning shoved Fang onto her back, hands and mouth already in motion.

She didn’t stop even when Fang was crying out in release. Instead, she pressed on, wanting, needing to burn at least this memory into her mind: the taste of Fang on her lips, the feel of Fang tightening around her fingers ever more weakly as the strength left her muscles, and the taste of salt on Fang’s cheeks, whether from tears or sweat, Lightning couldn’t be sure.

Later, much, much later, Lightning lingered on the edge of sleep. Fang had pulled the sheets over them both and the dark-haired woman’s face was pressed into the crook of Lightning’s shoulder. There had always been a hint of tension in Fang’s frame when they shared a bed, but now there was only a bone-deep relaxation that drew Lightning’s hands into tracing lazy patterns on Fang’s back.

Even if she remembered nothing else, Lightning would always remember this.

X X X

Lightning yawned and got out of bed. As usual, Fang was busy snoozing away although she had a
silly smile on her face that either indicated a very nice dream or that she was thinking about last
night. Lightning chuckled. Their sex life was definitely not something they needed to work on. She
considered inviting Fang into the shower before discarding the idea – she was sore enough as it
was, and she didn’t need the other officers wondering why she had a limp.

She went downstairs and caught sight of Diana munching away on some toast on the couch as she
watched cartoons. Her lips twitched. She’d always told Diana not to eat cereal on the couch, but
she’d never said anything about toast.

“Enjoying your cartoons?” Lightning sat next to Diana and gave her a quick hug. The little girl
giggled.

“Yeah. Do you want some of my toast, mom?” Diana held up a piece of toast. It was rather
liberally slathered in jam.

“Sure.” Lightning glanced at the television. Gary and his friends were in the midst of defeating
something evil with the power of friendship and smiles. “What episode is that?”

The front door opened, and Averia came in. She must have been watering her new plant. Averia sat
next to Lightning and frowned.

“Not this episode again.” Averia rolled her eyes. “It’s a repeat.”

“It’s still awesome.” Diana nodded sagely. “Every episode of Gary is awesome.”

“Isn’t this the one where it turns out that the bad guy is really being controlled by a giant squid?
And then Gary makes friends with the squid and they all go snorkelling?” Lightning asked.

“Yeah, it is, mom.” Diana grinned. “I knew you’d like –”

“Mom.” Averia ignored Diana’s scowl. “This episode was on a few months ago. You shouldn’t
remember it properly.”

“Yes…” Lightning had only ever gotten bits and pieces, nothing this coherent before. But as she
thought about it, her mind drifted seamlessly back to the day in question. Diana had watched
cartoons and then gone to the park where she’d met Rikku and Yuffie –

It all came crashing back, a tidal wave of memories that drove Lightning to her knees.

“Mommy!” Diana screamed, running up the stairs. “Mommy, come quick! I think Gary broke
mom’s brain!”

Lightning was dimly aware of Averia helping her back onto the couch and holding her steady.

Fang arrived a moment later, practically tripping over in her haste to get to Lightning. “Lightning
-”

Lightning smiled and pulled Fang into a kiss. “I remember everything.”

X X X

**Omake: The Perfect Solution**

Vanille and Serah stared at Lightning and Fang.

The younger Farron shook her head. “So, you’re telling me that you two… got busy and then the
very next morning, Lightning magically remembered everything.”

“I did watch some Gary with Diana,” Lightning said.

“That might have something to do with it.” Vanille shuddered. “I’m convinced that cartoon is evil. Diana would be the perfect minion if I could just get her to stop watching it.”

“Look.” Lightning sighed. “It was probably a whole combination of things. I’d been getting bits and pieces before that. Maybe it was that little bit extra I needed to remember. What do you think, Fang?”

Fang smirked. “I think that this proves something very important.”

“And what would that be?” Lightning had a feeling she was about to regret asking.

“That sex with you can fix anything.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt # 335: Lightning and Fang are out in the plains on gran pulse and get ambushed by wild animals. Fang has to take care of a feverish Lightning while waiting for emergency lift. When Lightning wakes up she has temporary amnesia and doesn’t remember anything before the fall of Cocoon/Vanille& Fang are not crystallized and their kids, etc…

I’ve taken a bit of liberty with the prompt, but I think it worked out for the best.

The past few chapters I’ve done have been more humorous in nature, so it was nice to work with something that was a bit more serious. That isn’t to say that this is dark, but this isn’t nearly as tongue in cheek as some of the other chapters. I wanted to have more of a mix of humour, angst, romance, and comfort.

Throughout the chapter, Lightning makes references to how things feel familiar. This is not that unusual a phenomenon. We all have experiences when we recognise something or someone but can’t quite remember where we’ve seen them before. Lightning might not have conscious access to her memories, but there is a part of her mind that still recognises the kids and her daily routines. It’s why she was able to make the pancakes. It’s what you might call a division between episodic and procedural memory.

As for the smuttier sections – well, I won’t lie to you. It’s been a while since I wrote something of that kind, and I wanted to make sure that I still knew how. Hopefully, it wasn’t hideously awkward.

I also write original fiction. Most of my original stuff is fantasy. If you like fantasy with plenty of atmosphere, action, and strong female characters, check out The Last Huntress, I’m sure you’ll love it. If you’re in the mood for fantasy with a more ‘old-fashioned’ feel, then take a look at The Burning Mountains. You can find a link to my original fiction in my profile. Here’s the blurb of The Last Huntress:
Scarlett is the last of her line – a huntress sworn to kill all monsters.

Rose is a girl searching for the power to take back her homeland.

In the icy forests of the north, on the trail of the only werewolf to escape her, Scarlett will teach Rose what it means to be a huntress. There can be no room for softness in a huntress’s heart, no room for weakness. And a huntress must be willing to kill anything – and anyone – that poses a threat to the innocent.

I’ve also released my newest original story, Durendal. It runs to ~80,000 words, making it the first novel-length original story that I’ve made available to the public! It’s a coming-of-age story and a Western with elements of science fiction. If you’ve enjoyed my other stories, I know you’ll love this one. You can find links to it in my profile. If you want a paranormal Western with a good sense of humour, you might want to check out The Gunslinger and the Necromancer.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Fang wasn’t scheduled to film any scenes today, but she wanted to spend some time on the set anyway. She’d made her name in action movies before branching out into other genres, but this was her first time co-starring in an action movie with another actress who’d never been part of a big-budget action film before.

Still, Fang couldn’t blame the executives for wanting this actress. Serah Farron was a star on the rise. The pink-haired woman had cut her teeth on a few low-budget indie films before catching a break as the star of a historical romance that had done surprisingly well. Serah had parlayed that success into more roles in bigger films, usually dramas or romances, establishing herself as one of the industry’s most bankable leading ladies.

But now the studio wanted to give her a shot at an action movie, and Serah had agreed. Naturally, they’d lined her up for a role beside Fang. If something went horribly wrong and Serah turned out to be terrible at action, the executives were confident that Fang would be able to carry the movie herself.

In the few weeks of filming that they’d done so far, Serah had proven herself to be dependable and hard working. She arrived on time each day with a minimum of fuss and with all of her lines memorised. The only problem was that Serah wasn’t particularly good at punching people in the head or kicking them out of windows.

So far, it hadn’t been too big of an issue. They’d decided to film some of the smaller fight scenes to try to give Serah a chance to ease into the role. Today, however, they would be filming one of the film’s most difficult fight scenes, and Fang wanted to see how Serah would handle it.

The scene in question had Serah’s character arriving at an abandoned factory on a motorbike before she fought a small army of thugs and their leader. It was a chance for Serah’s character to prove what a bad ass she was, and it was vital that Serah carve her way through the thugs in as intimidating a manner as possible.

Fang waved at a few of the crewmembers and then walked over to Sazh. The man was an experienced director with a military background, and he could make almost anything into a good film. She’d worked with him several times before, and he’d even taken on Vanille as one of his assistants after seeing a few of the short films that the redhead had put together.

“So, how is it looking?” Fang accepted a cup of coffee from one of the crewmembers and took a sip.

Sazh grinned. “Oh, I think you’re in for a surprise.”

“Really?” Fang gave him a teasing smirk. “There isn’t much that surprises me anymore, Sazh.”

But he was right. Fang was in for a surprise – a big surprise.

As soon as Sazh gave the call to start filming the scene, a motorbike roared down from the end of the street and screeched to a halt in front of the warehouse, right in front of the camera. Fang’s eyes
widened. This was the first time she’d seen Serah in anything form-fitting. The leather motorbike suit was mostly black with blue highlights, and it fit the other woman’s body perfectly, outlining long, toned legs, a flat stomach, and a fit but feminine frame. Fang had to fight the urge to drool, and she doubted she was the only one. There was just something about the way Serah held herself now that commanded the attention of every single person on set. It was electric.

That was when Fang noticed the set up. The cameras had already begun to follow Serah as she advanced on the warehouse with her helmet still on. Sazh was going to try and film the whole scene in a single, unbroken take – one of the hardest things to do in an action movie. Fang chuckled. This was going to be interesting, all right.

The first two thugs at the door of the warehouse snapped into motion as soon as they saw Serah. One of them lunged forward and swung a baseball bat at her head as the other pulled a knife. Serah ducked under the bat, drove one fist into the man’s gut, and then yanked his head into her knee. With an almost contemptuous motion, she shoved him at the man with a knife. The man with a knife stumbled, and Serah skipped forward to deliver a kick that hurled him back into the warehouse with a resounding clang.

Fang was spellbound. It had all looked so smooth, so real. Fang didn’t have to think about what she did next. She followed the camera crew, careful to keep out of the way as they trailed after Serah into the warehouse. This was shaping up to be something very special.

More thugs rushed out to stop Serah. She dealt with them in the same brutally efficient manner that she’d deal with the first two. She blocked a punch with her forearm and then yanked her opponent forward into a head butt. Another thug tried to grab her from behind, and she stepped to the side, pivoting into a spinning kick that tossed him back like a sack of potatoes.

Serah reached the stairs leading up toward the top of the warehouse, and Fang’s breath rushed out of her lungs as thugs armed with baseball bats, knives, crowbars, and even Tasers swarmed the other woman. But Serah was equal to the task. She fought her way through a handful of them before disarming a pair of crowbar-wielding men.

“You’re going to want to watch this,” one of the crewmembers whispered to Fang. “I saw her practicing earlier. It’s kind of awesome.”

And it was.

Wielding the two crowbars like swords, Serah blazed through the remaining thugs, blocking, parrying, and striking with unbelievable speed. She must have had unbelievable control too because those blows would have seriously injured – maybe even killed – a few of the other actors if they’d hit properly. Instead, each blow was pulled just before the moment of impact, reducing it to little more than a tap.

Finally, Serah reached the top of the warehouse. Waiting for her there was the head of the gang, a trench-coated villain played by Tifa Lockhart. Fang had worked with Tifa several times before, and she was eager to see how Serah fared. Tifa was one of the best-trained martial artists in the business – in fact, she was the only person Fang knew in the industry who’d actually been instructed by Zangan, a world-famous martial artist.

“So, you made it this far.” Tifa beckoned Serah forward. “Unfortunately, this is where it ends.”

Serah tossed the crowbars aside and pulled off her helmet. Her back was to Fang, so Fang couldn’t see her face, but the air was charged with tension. Then she spoke.
“You’re dead.” Fang froze. That wasn’t Serah’s voice. That low, menacing growl couldn’t possibly belong to Serah. And now that Fang thought about it, this woman was taller than Serah was. But that hair – how many other people could have hair that colour?

“We’ll see about that.” Tifa took up a fighting stance. “Come on!”

The fight that followed was one of the best that Fang had ever seen. Tifa was beautiful to watch, all smooth, flowing movements – grace that hid unbelievable power. Fang had heard rumours that Tifa had won a few underground tournaments before making it as a movie star. Seeing her like this, it was easy to believe those rumours.

But the pink-haired woman who wasn’t Serah was able to keep up. She was graceful in her own way, in the economy and speed of her movements, in the simplicity that was interspersed with the kind of agility that only a seasoned martial artist could have. It was a study in contrasts: Tifa’s fluid, seamless transition from offence to defence pitted against this other woman’s almost unearthly stillness that was punctuated by moments of breathtaking lethality.

Tifa was doing her best to hide it, but Fang knew the other woman well enough to see that she was enjoying this. She might have become a movie star, but Tifa was a martial artist. It wasn’t often that she met someone skilled enough to keep up, and she wanted to see just how far her opponent could go.

“They’re going off script,” one of the crewmembers muttered as Tifa and her opponent began to improvise, extending the fight scene.

“Keep on them,” Sazh said, eyes never leaving the battle. “This is great.”

But as much as Tifa was enjoying the fight, she knew that she couldn’t drag it out too much longer. With an almost imperceptible nod at her opponent, she shifted into what Fang recognised as the final scripted sequence of blows. The fight ended with Tifa forced to retreat down an emergency fire escape as her opponent looked on from the roof.

“And cut!” Sazh was grinning from ear to ear. “Great take!”

The pink-haired woman breathed a sigh of relief and glanced at some of the extras that had stayed to watch. “Thank the Maker. I didn’t hurt any of you did I?”

The extras – the men who had played the thugs – all flashed her a crisp salute. “No, ma’am!”

Fang stared. Who was this woman? The resemblance to Serah was undeniable. The face was slightly different – cooler perhaps, and more regal than Serah’s – but the eyes and hair were almost the same.

“So… what did you think?”

Fang turned. Serah was right there, giving her one of those impish smiles that reminded her so much of Vanille. “Serah?” She glanced at the other pink-haired woman. “Who is that?”

“Well…” Serah drew the word out and scratched the back of her head. “You know how I was having trouble with some of the fight scenes? I happen to know someone who can help me with those and work as my stunt double too.”

“Right.” Fang tried not to stare as the woman she’d been watching stretched to work some of the kinks out of her back. Maker, she was beautiful. “So… who is she?”
“Oh?” Serah giggled and looked very much like the cat that ate the canary. “Are you interested in her?”

“Maybe.” Fang wasn’t able to stop herself from staring as the other pink-haired woman shook hands with Tifa and started to chat about a few of the moves they’d used. She wiped some of the sweat off her brow, and Fang followed a bead of the liquid as it trickled down her temple and along her collarbone. “She’s definitely something.”

“That she is.” Serah grinned and grabbed Fang by the arm, dragging her toward the other pink-haired woman. “Come on then, I’ll introduce you.”

“Wait!” Fang tried to break free, but Serah had suddenly acquired the strength of ten men. “Serah—”

“Fang.” Serah pushed Fang forward. “This is my big sister – Lightning Farron.”

Her sister? Fang hadn’t even known that Serah had a sister. The Farron had remained tight-lipped about her private life, and not even the media had been able to pry much out of her. But looking at the two of them now, the family resemblance was undeniable. Lightning’s gaze met hers, and Fang had to remember how to breathe.

“So, you’re the one who has been punching my little sister in the face.”

Fang gaped. Technically, it was true. The movie had called for her to punch Serah in the face multiple times. “Uh…”

The woman’s lips curled up into a faint smile. “I’m joking. Serah has told me a lot about you, Fang. You’ve been very kind to her.” The smile turned hard for a moment. “Although, I’ve read a lot about you too. You’re very popular with the ladies.”

Fang winced. That was true. She liked the ladies, and the ladies liked her. However, she’d always been careful about the women she was with. They all knew what to expect, and she’d never been stupid enough to make a move on one of her co-stars. “Serah reminds me a lot of my little sister.” She pointed at Vanille who was deep in conversation with Sazh. “Mischievous but nice to have around.”

It was the right thing to say. Lightning smiled that faint smile again. “She can be a handful.”

“You’re supposed to be on my side, Lightning.” Serah grinned. “Look, I need to speak to Sazh about a few of my scenes. Fang, how about you take my sister to lunch? She must be hungry after beating up so many people.”

“I’d love to.” Fang flashed Lightning her most winning smile. To her delight, Lightning merely raised one eyebrow as if to ask if that was all Fang had.

The two of them made their way over to one of the tables nearby as Fang sent a few of the crewmembers – Vanille called them her minions – to go grab them some lunch. Sitting across from Lightning, Fang did her best to act nonchalant. Damn it, why had she turned up in nothing more than a baggy t-shirt and some jeans?

“So, you’re Serah’s sister?” Fang said. “She doesn’t talk about her family much.”

“That would be my fault, I’m afraid.” Lightning nodded in thanks as the crewmembers came back with some sandwiches and bottled water. “I don’t like to draw too much attention to myself, so I’ve asked her not to mention me. If she did, the media would be all over me the way they’re all over
“I’m sure they would be.” Fang took a sip of her water. “But for someone who doesn’t like drawing attention, you sure know how to get it.” She gave a low whistle of approval. “You’re a heck of a fighter.”

“Thank you.” Lightning leaned forward slightly and tilted her head to one side. Something that might have been mischief flickered through her gaze, but it was replaced by measured calm so quickly that Fang couldn’t be sure she’d even seen it. “You were staring at me a lot earlier.”

Fang flushed. Damn, she hadn’t been as discrete as she hoped. Oh well. “I was, yes.” Fang shrugged. “Does that bother you?”

“No, not really.” Lightning’s lips twitched. “And are you flirting with me now?”


Lightning laughed. “You’re not what I expected, actually.”

“And what did you expect?”

“According to the tabloids, you’re an irredeemable flirt who has dated every actress you’ve ever co-starred with. You’re also supposed to be quite the horror to work with. However, Serah has had nothing but good things to say about you, and the crew seem to love you too.”

Fang waved one finger in the air in a warning gesture. “Don’t believe everything you read, Lightning. The tabloids always need a story, and when they can’t find a real one, they invent one. To set the record straight: I’ve never had any problems working with other people, and I’ve never gone out with any of my co-stars.” She leaned forward. “But it seems a little unfair. You already know a lot about me, but I don’t know a thing about you. What do you do for a living? And don’t say you’re a stuntwoman – I would have heard about you before now if you were.”

Lightning laughed again. Fang thought it was a wonderful sound. “I’ve been in the military ever since I got out of high school.”

“The military?” Fang pursed her lips. “That would explain a lot, like why they all called you ma’am and why you know how to fight. Still, I don’t know too many people in the military who can fight the way you do.”

Lightning shrugged and took another bite of her sandwich. Fang tried not to feel jealous of the sandwich. “It’s all about practice. I’ve done a lot of fighting.”

“That sounds like a story.” Fang caught the gaze of a crewmember who was walking past with a plate of muffins and snagged two for them. “Care to share?” Lightning eased away from the table, and Fang bit back a wince. She must have pushed for too much. “Okay, how about I go first? We can trade.”

Lightning nodded. “That sounds fair.”

“If you’ve read the tabloids, you’ve probably heard the story of how I made it big.”

“Everyone knows that story.” Lightning made a face. “You’re the park ranger who was discovered by director Sazh Katzroy after you fought off a bear that was about to eat him while he was filming a documentary.” Lightning chuckled. “I’m not sure I believe it, but Serah has assured me that you are a certifiable bad ass.”
“She said that? Well, that was nice of her.” Fang would have to thank the other woman for putting in a good word for her. “But the story you’ve heard isn’t exactly right.”

“Oh?”

“It wasn’t a bear that I fought off – it was two.”

Lightning laughed.

“I’m serious.” Fang held up her hands and mimicked claws. “You should have seen it. Sazh was running for his life with his son thrown over his shoulder and his pet chocobo in his jacket pocket, and there were two bears right on his heels. Over in the Yun Mountains, park rangers carry a gun whenever they go outside. I fired a few warning shots to scare one of the bears off and then gave the other one a whack over the head with the butt of my rifle.”

“That doesn’t sound like standard operating procedure to me.” Lightning’s eyes sparkled with amusement. “I would think that you’d want to stay as far away from a bear as possible, not get close enough to hit it with your rifle.”

“Ah, well, they’re an endangered species, so I didn’t want to kill either of them. Besides, the bears up there are as scared of us as we are of them.” Fang fiddled with the lid of her bottle of water. Talking about the past was always tricky, but she wanted to know about Lightning, and sharing was the only way to find out more about the other woman. “I’ll be honest with you, life was tough up in the mountains. Vanille – that’s my little sister – and I were orphans, so we didn’t have a lot growing up. I took a job as a park ranger because I’ve always been comfortable outdoors and around animals, and it was the only place that would take me and still pay a decent wage. It’s beautiful up there, don’t get me wrong, but we had so many bills to pay, and I couldn’t see a future for her there. After I saved Sazh, he offered me a role in a film he had coming up, an action movie. Apparently, I had the right look, and he felt that anyone crazy enough to bash a bear over the head with a rifle would make a decent action hero. I guess he was right, since I’ve been doing movies ever since.”

Fang’s eyes were drawn to Sazh. The man was deep in conversation with Serah and Vanille. “Vanille got interested in making films, and when Sazh saw some of her work, he decided to make her his assistant. He’s been good to us, you know, and that kid of his, Dajh, has pretty much adopted us as aunts. If I ever meet those bears again, I’ll have to thank them for introducing us to Sazh.” She sighed. “So, enough about me. How about you? What’s your story?”

Lightning’s gaze drifted over to Serah. The pink-haired woman had grabbed Vanille and pulled her into a headlock. She must not have liked some of Vanille’s proposed changes to her scenes. “It’s not that different from yours actually. Our parents passed away when I was in high school. We had some money left over to pay the bills, at least for a while, but I needed to get a job as soon as I graduated. The Guardian Corps had a local branch where we lived, and they were looking for new recruits, so I joined. I thought I’d join the local patrol unit for a few years and then look for a different job once we were financially secure.” She shrugged. “But one thing led to another, and I kept on going until I found myself in the Cavalry.”

“You’re special forces?” Fang shook her head in amazement. “You’re really something. What should I be calling you?”

“I can’t give my full title, but Captain Farron will do.”

“Captain Farron? That has a nice ring to it.” Fang flashed her a quick salute. “They should use you as a recruitment tool.”
Lightning shuddered. “I’d rather they didn’t. Anyway, I’m on leave, so I was going to spend some
time with Serah. But then she called me and told me about how she was doing an action movie and
how she would like some help with all the fighting.” She made a face and took a rather vicious bite
out of her muffin. “The next thing I know, she has me working as her stunt double.”

“Little sisters.” Fang grinned. “Can’t live with them…”

“Can’t live without them.” Lightning rolled her eyes. “I’ve never been able to say no to her.”

“You’re sticking around then?”

“For a while.” Lightning took a deep breath and ran one hand through her hair. For the first time,
Fang saw a hint of tiredness in her gaze. “My last op was… tricky. I can’t get into the specifics of
it, but the higher ups want my entire squad on leave for a while.”

“If you tell me more about that last op, will you have to kill me?” Fang smiled teasingly. “Or is
torture an option?”

Lightning gave her a mock glare. “Unfortunately, I would have to kill you.”

“Then I won’t ask.” Fang lifted both hands into a rough boxing guard. “Do you think you could tell
me a bit about those moves you used? I know a thing or two about fighting, and I’ve never seen
anyone fight like that before.”

They spent the next two hours talking shop about martial arts. Fang had learned everything she
could about the traditional Yun methods of fighting while growing up before adding to her
repertoire once she began earning enough money to hire specialised instructors. Lightning,
however, had done things differently. She’d been in a few brawls during high school before
learning how to fight properly in the military. Everything she’d learned was designed to be as
effective as possible in a real combat situation.

After that, Fang had even managed to get a few heavily edited war stories out of Lightning. It was
one thing being a movie action hero, but Lightning sounded like a real life action hero. But as
dangerous as some of her missions sounded, there was no mistaking the way that Lightning’s face
lit up when she talked about her squad. Serah was her family, but her squad had become part of her
family too.

“You guys look like you’re having fun.” Serah pulled up a chair and immediately reached for the
half-eaten muffin that was still on Lightning’s plate. The older woman rolled her eyes and handed
it over. “Fang, Sazh wants to start filming one of your scenes. Can you head over to makeup?”

“Sure.” Fang glanced over at Lightning. She had barely noticed the time going by. “Are you going
to head off now, Lightning, or are you going to stay and watch?”

“I think I’ll watch.” Lightning’s eyes met Fang’s. “I want to see what you’re made of.”

“Those are fighting words.” Fang glared playfully. “I’ll try not to disappoint you.”

X X X

Over the next several weeks of filming, Lightning became a common sight on the set. When she
wasn’t with Serah, she was helping Sazh make the film as realistic as possible or working with Tifa
and Fang to sharpen some of their fight scenes. Both Tifa and Fang relished the opportunity, and
there was a bit of good-natured competition over who would get more of the soldier’s time.
But what impressed Fang the most was the way the two Farron sisters interacted. Serah had always been bubbly and engaging, but Lightning brought out another side of her. Serah attacked her fitness and training regime with renewed fervour, improving quickly under her sister’s firm but gentle guidance. At the same time, Lightning was endlessly patient with her sister, breaking each of her fight scenes down into manageable pieces.

For the most part, Lightning was polite and respectful to everyone on set. The only time she showed any real anger was when someone stepped out of line with Serah. Fang shivered, remembering what had happened when two of the crewmembers had been stupid enough to mention one of the more salacious rumours about Serah sleeping her way to success.

Lightning had stopped what she was doing and had gone eerily still. Then she’d turned to glare at the people who had spoken. She didn’t say a word, but the raw menace rolling off her was enough to make the crewmembers press themselves flat against one of the trailers. Lightning had taken one step toward them, looking very much like a lion about to pounce, before Serah had put one hand on her arm.

“Lightning…” Serah had whispered softly. “They’re not worth it.”

Lightning’s eyes had narrowed, and her voice had come out in a genuine growl that sent a shiver up Fang’s spine. “Apologise. Now.”

The crewmembers had apologised and everyone else had remembered how to breathe again. Needless to say, no one had been dumb enough to insult Serah where Lightning could hear them.

Right now, however, Lightning was watching Serah go through one of the more difficult action sequences in the film. It involved the younger Farron leaping across a series of platforms before shimmying up a drainpipe to fight a few terrorists. Serah might still have been working on her fighting technique, but she was surprisingly agile. It must be a Farron thing.

“Your sister is doing well.” Fang watched the younger Farron leap from one platform to another, pausing just long enough to kick a terrorist in the gut before jumping to the next platform. “You’re a miracle worker.”

“Serah has always enjoyed punching things.” Lightning chuckled as Serah grabbed hold of the drainpipe and darted up it like a pink-haired rat. “All I had to do was show her how.”

“I can see that.” Fang studied the other woman out of the corner of her eye. Even now, there was a certain alertness about Lightning. Fang had seen it before in some of the other soldiers she’d spoken to when preparing for her roles. It made her even more curious about what Lightning had gone through. “Will you be playing the stunt double for Serah’s fight scene against me?”

Lightning nodded. “It’s a tough scene. Serah has gotten a lot better. Sazh wants her to film the scene against you, but he also wants me to film a scene against you as well, just to be on the safe side.”

Fang grinned toothily. “I’m looking forward to it.”

X X X

Fang’s fight scene against Serah was one of the turning points of the movie. The rogue agent, played by Serah, would finally come face to face with the agent sent to track her down, Fang. It was scripted to happen on another rooftop, with Serah dressed in jeans and a t-shirt and Fang dressed in a suit and tie.
In a few days, Fang would film the scene against with Serah. Today, however, she would be filming the scene with Lightning. The other woman moved through the last of her stretches and then turned to nod at Fang. Fang nodded back and waited for Sazh to start filming.

It was go time.

Fang inched around the corner, her gun drawn. Right on cue, Lightning opened fire. She flinched back, pressing herself flat against the wall.

“Give yourself up,” Fang shouted. “The Agency just wants to bring you in for questioning. It doesn’t have to be like this.”

“We both know that’s a lie.” Lightning squeezed off a few more rounds and then began to circle around to try and get behind Fang. The dark-haired woman fired back. “The Agency doesn’t leave loose ends.”

“So, you’re not coming in then.” Fang darted across the rooftop, shooting as she caught a glimpse of Lightning. “Then I’ll have to take you in.”

Even though they were both firing blanks, there was something thrilling about exchanging shots with Lightning. The pink-haired woman was like a ghost, darting in and out of cover. Lightning was following the script, but it took every ounce of Fang’s speed and agility to keep up with her as the two of them slowly whittled down their supplies of ammunition until…

“You’re out.” Lightning stepped out into the open, her pistol levelled at Fang’s head.

Fang chuckled and twirled her gun around her finger. “So are you.”

Lightning snarled, and Fang had to jerk her head to the side as Lightning tossed her pistol at her. Fang returned the favour and then brought her hands up just in time to catch a punch aimed straight at her face. Damn! She and Lightning had sparred a few times over the past couple of weeks, but the soldier wasn’t holding much – if anything – back today. The punch turned into a grab, and Lightning yanked Fang’s head down toward her knee.

Fang shoved both hands down to stop herself from taking a knee to the face and then tackled Lightning, driving her back into one of the air vents that littered the rooftop. Lightning’s grip loosened for a fraction of a second, and Fang twisted free, throwing a kick at Lightning’s side followed by a blindingly fast series of blows aimed high and low.

Lightning was equal to the task, dodging the blows that she could and parrying or blocking the others. As Fang threw another kick to try and shove Lightning back, the blue-eyed woman dodged to the side and grabbed her tie. Fang’s eyes widened. This wasn’t in the script! But she went with it, trying to get the tie out of Lightning’s hands before the soldier could strangle her with it.

The tie came off, and Lightning wrapped it around one fist, leaving enough out to use it as a garrotte. Fang backed away, letting Lightning come forward, punching and kicking. A missed punch from Fang let Lightning get behind her, and the tie came down around her throat – or it tried to. Fang wedged one arm between her throat and the tie and drove her elbow back into Lightning’s gut. A quick shift in her weight was enough to toss Lightning over her shoulder, but Lightning was fast enough to roll out of the way before Fang could take advantage of the throw.

Lightning got back to her feet. Fang watched her slip into a fighting stance and slipped into one of her own. The script gave them a reasonable amount of room to improvise, and she intended to take advantage of that. Tifa had always talked about getting to know people through fighting them.
Fang had never really bought into that until now. She wanted to get to know Lightning, and she had a feeling that this was how she was going to do it.

They stepped forward together.

The fight would have looked brutal – even vicious – to those watching it. Neither of them were holding back more than was necessary, and they set a punishing pace as they fought back and forth across the rooftop. Lightning attacked with speed and efficiency, pushing Fang to the very limits of her ability. But Fang refused to let Lightning get the upper hand. She wanted – needed – to show Lightning that she could keep up.

Fang couldn’t read Lightning perfectly – she doubted anyone could – but she was beginning to understand how the other woman fought. Lightning had unreal reflexes, and she leveraged those to do her fighting. Lightning could attack first, wait for her opponent to respond, and then change her plans to take advantage of her opponent’s actions. And all of Lightning’s moves – the ones that were meant to connect – were designed to end the fight or cause serious damage to her opponent.

Fang wasn’t like Lightning. Fang preferred to set the tone of a fight, to drive her opponent back with her speed and strength. But she’d never fought someone – apart from perhaps Tifa – with the kind of training that Lightning had. And while Fang was extremely confident in her fitness and training, she wasn’t a soldier, not like Lightning.

The fight reached its conclusion, with Lightning kicking Fang off the roof and then retreating, and Sazh called a halt.

“That was great!” Sazh helped Fang climb off the large crash mat she’d landed on. “I’d still like to see if Serah can film that scene, but this is definitely going in the extras.”

“I hope so.” Fang chuckled and waved at Lightning, who was watching her from the rooftop, an unreadable expression on her face. “Because that was fun.”

X X X

Filming was going well, and it wouldn’t be more than another month or so before it was done. Fang had gotten used to seeing Lightning around each day, and she’d taken to eating lunch with the other woman. She’d even invited Lightning to dinner a few times although she was never quite sure what those dinners meant. Lightning hadn’t mentioned Fang’s reputation as a heartthrob again, but Fang wondered if maybe that was playing on Lightning’s mind. She hoped it wasn’t.

They were taking another break in filming, and Fang was looking for Lightning so the two of them could have lunch with Serah and Vanille.

“Have any of you seen Lightning?” Fang asked.

One of the crewmembers nearby pointed to Serah’s trailer. “She and Serah went off to have a talk or something.” He winced. “They didn’t look happy.”

Fang bit her lip. Had the sisters had an argument? Whatever was going on, it might be better if she stayed out of it. Then again, she’d always been a very curious person. She crept over to the trailer and pressed her head against the door – then almost got her head taken off as the door burst open and Lightning stomped out of the trailer.

“Fang?” Lightning’s eyes widened. “What are you doing standing in front of the door like that?”

“Uh… I was wondering if you wanted to have lunch?”
Lightning sighed. “I’m sorry. I’ve got to go.”

“Oh, does Sazh need you for something?”

“No, I mean I have to go.” Lightning’s shoulder’s sagged. “I just got a call from my commanding officer. My leave is over. They need my team for something.”

“Another mission then.”

“That’s right.” Lightning glanced back at the trailer. “Serah and I… well, she’d prefer it if I found something less dangerous to do for a living.”

“I can understand where she’s coming from, but it’s your choice.” Fang tried to process what she was hearing. Lightning was going to leave on another mission. “When… when are you going to have leave again?”

“I’m not sure,” Lightning replied. “Fang… I have to leave now. It’s urgent.”

“I see.” Fang fumbled in her pockets for something, anything, to write on. She came up with an old parking ticket. She shouted for a pen and hurriedly wrote down her details. “Look, I don’t normally do things this way, but I really like you, and I’d like to see you again so… here’s my email, phone number, and address. When you have leave –”

“I’ll call you, I promise.” Lightning took the parking ticket and tucked it into her wallet. She turned, stopped, and then darted forward to press a kiss to Fang’s cheek. “Take care, Fang.”

Fang was speechless. Finally, she managed to force the words out. “Uh… take care, Lightning.”

Then Lightning was gone. It was another minute or two before Serah came out of her trailer. Fang was still standing there staring in the direction the older Farron had gone.

“Please tell me you gave her your number,” Serah said.

Fang shook herself and smiled. “I did, Serah, don’t worry. I did.” She paused. “And thank you for putting in a good word for me with your sister. She’s great – but why did you do that? I mean… I haven’t known you for that long.”

Serah shrugged. “I wasn’t sure what to think of you at first – but the more I got to know you, the nicer you seemed.” She giggled. “Besides, I think you two make a good couple, and she’s always loved your movies.”

X X X

The transport came to a rest, and Lightning got to her feet. She took a moment to run her eyes over the rest of her squad. They’d done well, even the rookie. She was proud of them. And perhaps most importantly of all, they’d all made it back home. They were banged up, bruised, and some of them were still bleeding, but they were alive.

“Good work, all of you.” Lightning caught and held the gaze of each of them in turn. “This was one of the toughest missions we’ve ever had, and we came through it with flying colours.”

Lebreau smirked and lifted her sniper rifle. “You mean that we kicked ass and took names, ma’am.”

“We did indeed.” Lightning favoured the rookie of the squad with a faint smile. “You held your
Hope Estheim was still shaking. She couldn’t blame him. He was young, but he’d already seen combat several times. However, he’d never been through anything like the past few days. It was a search and destroy mission – locate the targets, take them out, and avoid engaging enemy forces unless necessary.

To make matters worse, their orders had changed halfway through the mission. A top priority target had been spotted moving into their vicinity. They’d received orders to eliminate him and had tracked him to a previously unknown base that held large quantities of enemy equipment, prompting another change to their orders. They had to eliminate the target and destroy the base while securing any information they could.

It was like something out of the movie, and it was a lot to ask of any squad, even a squad as talented as Lightning’s. If the orders had come from anyone but Amodar, she might have refused. But she trusted the man with her life. If he thought she could do it, then she would put her faith in his judgement.

Somehow, they’d gotten it done. There were parts of the mission that were still a blur to her. The last confrontation in particular was little more than a haze of sights and sounds. The target had barricaded himself inside the most heavily fortified part of the base. They’d used charges to blow apart the fortifications and then struck from multiple points at once, overwhelming their opponents through skill, speed, and surprise.

Lightning had gotten through that battle on little more than her reflexes, her mind moving at a million miles a second, putting a bullet or a knife in anyone that wasn’t a member of her squad. One moment in particular stood out in her mind: the target running down a catwalk as she sprinted after him, trying to line up a shot. There had been enemies all around her, but she hadn’t paid them any undue attention, certain that her squad would take care of them. And they had, knocking them off one after the other before they could shoot Lightning until she finally found her shot and took it, dropping her target with a bullet to the chest before she caught up to him and put several more in his skull.

“I know protocol says that you all need to turn in your reports as soon as possible, but I’ve spoken to General Amodar. Those reports can wait. You’ve got the night off. I expect you to use it wisely.” Lightning smiled. “Sleep, eat, drink – I don’t care. You’ve earned it.”

“Well, I know what I’m going to do.” Lebreau punched the air. “I’m grabbing a shower and then hitting the town. Who’s with me?” There was a chorus of cheers from the others.

“Will you be joining us, ma’am?” Noel asked. “You know you’re always welcome.”

“Maybe next time.”

“You always say that.” Lebreau grinned. “Are you going to be checking in with your sister?”

“Maybe.” Lightning chuckled.

It had become a running joke in their squad. All of the others would head off with Lebreau to get horribly drunk while Lightning spent the evening checking in with her sister. The one time that Lightning had broken the routine, the younger Farron had somehow managed to contact General Amodar to inquire about Lightning’s health. To Lightning’s eternal embarrassment, the general
had used the public announcement system to summon Lightning to his office so that he could prove that she was still alive to her sister. As Serah had gotten more famous, the story had only grown more and more popular amongst the others, to the point that Serah was now the squad’s equivalent of the bogeyman – any injury suffered on a mission was now accompanied by teasing about what Serah would say if she knew.

“Good luck, ma’am.” Lebreau pointed at Lightning’s forehead. “You might want to clean that up then.”

Lightning reached up. There was dried blood on her forehead and matted in her hair. “Damn. I’ll just leave it. She always finds out anyway.”

Lightning made her way into the base and over into the building where secure calls to the outside could be made. The operators there cleared a spot for her – they were used to her routine – and then went about their business. It took a few seconds for the call to connect, but even though it was the middle of the night, Serah answered.

Serah had insisted that Lightning call her as soon as she was able to, no matter what time it was.

“Lightning.” Serah’s face came through clearly on the screen. “How are you? Are you okay? Did your mission work out?”

“I’m fine. The mission went well, all things considered.” Lightning tried to settle into a more comfortable position and winced.

“You’re hurt!” Serah wailed. She pressed herself closer to the screen as if that would let her take a closer look at Lightning. “What happened to you?” Her eyes widened. “And is that blood on your forehead and in your hair? Lightning, say something!”

“Serah, it’s okay. I’m fine.” Lightning paused, seeing the scepticism in her sister’s gaze. “Look, I’ve got a few cuts and bruises, but nothing that won’t be fine in a week or two.” She smiled. “And given how tough this mission was, I think I’ll be picking up some more leave once I’ve settled all of my paperwork here.”

“That’s wonderful!” Serah gasped. “We need to start planning what we’ll do, Lightning.”

Lightning talked with her sister for two hours. They would have talked for longer, but Serah had to catch a flight to the set of her newest movie, a historical drama with a good dose of action. That left Lightning with little to do except have a long soak in a bathtub before getting some sleep.

Unless…

There was another number she could call, one that she’d already memorised. It was late, and she might be busy but…

Lightning dialled the number.

“Hey.”

Lightning bit back a smile as Fang blinked at her sleepily and then shot to attention. She tried to get up too fast and ended up falling out of bed.

“Damn it. Ouch.” Fang popped back into the picture. She gave Lightning a deliberately flirtatious look. “Hey, beautiful. I was hoping you’d call.”
“Fang…” Lightning bit her lip. “I hope I’m not disturbing you…”

“It’s fine.” Fang glanced at the clock. “It’s only, uh… three o’clock in the morning. Anyway, what’s going on? Did your mission go okay?”

“It went fine.” Lightning relaxed, leaning back into her chair. “I always call Serah after a mission, and I thought that maybe I should call you too.” She stopped, searching for the right words. “I’ve got some leave coming up, I think, and maybe…”

“That’s great.” Fang smiled. “I know you probably want to spend some time with your sister, but I’ve got the next two months free. If you want to spend some time with her while she’s filming, I could come along.” She pressed on before she could lose her nerve. “She’s filming pretty close to the Yun mountains, so I was thinking that maybe you and I could spend some time there and –”

“I’d like that, Fang. I’d like that a lot.” Lightning yawned.

“You look pretty tired, Lightning.” Fang sighed. “You could always call me back later. Your missions must be tough, and I don’t want to keep you away from a shower and a bed.”

“It’s fine.” Lightning was surprised by how true the words were. “I like talking to you.”

“In that case,” Fang said with a wide, wide smile. “I could always tell you about how editing went for the movie. You’d be surprised how scary Serah can look with a bit of editing.”

“I believe you.” Lightning settled back into her chair. “But go on…”

X X X

Omake: You’re Dating Her?

Lightning knew that she in trouble the moment she saw who was waiting for her next to the podium. It had been a year since her squad’s most difficult mission, and the whole lot of them were getting medals. Their mission had, apparently, been the decisive blow in wiping out an extremely dangerous terrorist group. So although the military wasn’t about to reveal the exact reason for them getting medals – no need to put a target on their back – they were going to trot them out in front of the media as heroes.

Wonderful.

Some of the higher ups involved in the decision-making had pressed for a flashier ceremony. Each medal would be presented by a military official and a well-known celebrity. Lightning had expected Serah. In fact, she’d been told that Serah would be presenting her medal. But that wasn’t who was standing there.

Fang was standing there, an impish smile on her face. The two of them had been together for almost eleven months now. They had kept their relationship quiet, but the mischievous light in Fang’s eyes all but guaranteed that wouldn’t be the case for much longer. It was only a matter of time before the media found out, and it was just like Fang to want to do things with a flourish.

Lightning waited for her name to be called and then strode up to the podium to shake hands with General Amodar and pose with her plaque. Then she leaned forward so that Fang could hang her medal around her neck.

“What are you up to?” Lightning whispered.
Fang’s eyes twinkled. “Nothing – except this.”

And there, in front of the rest of Lightning’s squad and the media, Fang leaned forward and planted a quick kiss on Lightning’s lips. Fang pulled away with another one of those teasing smiles, and complete silence fell over the ceremony.

Lebreau was the one to break it.

“You’re dating her? Way to go, major!”

Lightning sighed as the media went into a frenzy. This was going to end up all over the news, so she might as well do it properly. “Come here.” And with that, she yanked Fang over and gave her a proper, thorough kissing.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter was based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #330: Lightning is a stunt double on her sister’s latest blockbuster, where she comes across Serah’s latest co-star, the notorious heartthrob Fang.

I’ll admit that I’ve taken a few liberties with the prompt, but I thought it worked out better this way. This chapter is also similar to one of the previous chapters in which Fang and Lightning are both movie stars. However, I thought the two prompts were different enough to make it worth giving this a go.

Anyway, I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. It’s always fun writing about Fang and Lightning in different situations, and I had a lot of fun writing the opening sequence where Fang is admiring Lightning’s prowess for pummeling people. This chapter does feel more like a beginning, though, so I might revisit it again with a continuation. It would be interesting to see how Lightning and Fang juggle their relationship, and it would also be interesting to see whether or not Lightning continues to stay in the military.

If you’ve got any prompts you’d like to see me try, let me know. Better yet, submit more ideas to the Fangrai Forever tumblr. The more ideas people submit, the more likely I am to find one that tickles my fancy. More Fang/Lightning stories make the world a better place.

I also write original fiction. Most of my original stuff is fantasy. If you like fantasy with plenty of atmosphere and action, check out The Last Huntress, I’m sure you’ll love it. If you’re in the mood for fantasy with a more ‘old-fashioned’ feel, then take a look at The Burning Mountains. You can find links to everything in my profile. Here’s the blurb of The Last Huntress:

Scarlett is the last of her line – a huntress sworn to kill all monsters.

Rose is a girl searching for the power to take back her homeland.

In the icy forests of the north, on the trail of the only werewolf to escape her, Scarlett
will teach Rose what it means to be a huntress. There can be no room for softness in a huntress’s heart, no room for weakness. And a huntress must be willing to kill anything – and anyone – that poses a threat to the innocent.

I’ve also released my newest original story, Durendal. It runs to ~80,000 words, making it the first novel-length original story that I’ve made available to the public! It’s a coming-of-age story and a Western with elements of science fiction. If you’ve enjoyed my other stories, I know you’ll love this one. You can find links to it in my profile. If you want a paranormal Western with a good sense of humour, you might want to check out The Gunslinger and the Necromancer.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
Fang knew all about temptation, but she’d never been this tempted before. There was something about watching Lightning dance only feet away – her body moving to the music – that did horrible things to her self-control.

As the pink-haired woman ran her hands up and down her sides, Fang couldn’t help but wish that those were her hands touching Lightning. An image came to her mind, unbidden and perhaps unwelcome: her hands ghosting along Lightning’s sides and then settling on her hips, easing the soldier back against her as they let the music guide them. It would be so easy then to tilt Lightning’s head back, to watch surprise fill those stormy blue eyes before they fluttered shut in surrender, Lightning melting in her arms as Fang finally kissed her after so many months of waiting and wanting.

Damn it.

Fang swallowed thickly and shook her head. This was why she hated drinking so much. She could hold her liquor, but she was definitely buzzed now, and it was getting harder and harder to keep her mind focused and away from the one subject it always wandered back to – Lightning.

It had all started hours ago. It was Vanille’s birthday, and the redhead had kicked things off with a picnic at the park that was okay for all of them – even Dajh – to attend. In the evening, they had moved things to Lebreau’s bar. Lightning hadn’t drunk anything there – she hated to drink around people she didn’t know – and Fang had been too busy watching over Vanille to drink either. The redhead was good enough at getting into trouble when she was sober. There was no telling what kind of mischief she might get up to when she was drunk.

In the early hours of the morning, they’d headed back home with a few of the others. So here they were at Lightning’s house – a house that Lightning, Fang, and Vanille had shared since the two Pulsians had awakened from crystal stasis – and Vanille was still going strong, fuelled by a mix of alcohol, sugar, and general good cheer.

Vanille had also broken out a case of Oerban spirits that she’d brewed up for the occasion. The Dia had always been an inventive bunch, and Vanille had somehow managed to get her hands on the recipe for one of Gran Pulse’s most notorious liquors.

In many ways, Oerban spirits were a wonderful drink. It started off cool, almost icy, in the mouth before settling into a kind of warm, heady heat that filled the mouth and then left the whole drinker’s body in the grips of a dreamy, languid haze. Lightning had tried some and quickly developed a taste for it. But Fang had felt a twinge of concern for the other woman. Lightning could handle alcohol, but Oerban spirits were deceptively strong.

To see the effects the spirits could have, all Fang had to do was look at Vanille. While Lightning had taken to dancing to the music, the redhead had challenged Snow to perhaps the world’s most awkward arm-wrestling contest. It was obvious to anyone with a brain that Vanille had precisely zero chance of beating Snow. The man was enormously strong, and from what Fang had seen, he could hold his liquor with the best of them.
Ten attempts later, and Vanille had finally given up in favour of encouraging Serah to try her luck. The younger Farron had to be at least a little buzzed because she sat down opposite Snow with a look of utter determination on her face. Then there was Hope. The young man was most definitely drunk, struggling to keep his head off the table as he watched Serah huff and puff as she tried to force Snow’s arm down.

That left Fang almost alone with Lightning, and Lightning’s dancing was doing things to her libido that she wasn’t at all comfortable with. And now Lightning was walking toward her, a sway in her hips and something dark and dangerous in her eyes. It was no secret that they were attracted to each other. Too much had happened for them to deny that – too many stolen glances, too many lingering looks, too many touches that were too intimate for friends.

But they’d never acted on that attraction, not really, too afraid of what it would cost them if things didn’t work out. Fang wasn’t sure how or when it had happened, but Lightning had gone from being one of her friends to being her best friend. Vanille would always be in a class of her own, but Lightning had laid claim to parts of Fang’s heart that she’d never thought someone could touch. It terrified her as much as it thrilled her.

Fang had tried dating a few other women, but that had never gone anywhere. It wasn’t their fault. She was supposed to see those women for themselves, but all she could ever see were women who couldn’t stack up to Lightning. They didn’t have the same fire that Lightning had. They couldn’t match her in all the ways that Lightning could. And they couldn’t possibly understand why Fang sometimes woke up in the middle of the night with one hand clamped down over her mouth, so she wouldn’t scream and scream and scream.

There were still times when that happened. There was an old Yun saying that Fang had come to appreciate: in the dead of the night, everyone is a child. The dreams didn’t care how strong Fang was. Sometimes, she would close her eyes and all she could see was Cocoon shattered on the ground, her friends dead, and a field of corpses that went on and on and on. And all of it was her fault.

Then she’d wake, one hand over her mouth to hold back the scream, the other clawing at the darkness. But that never lasted long. Lightning always seemed to know when Fang had those dreams. There would be a knock on the door, and the lights would turn on. Lightning wouldn’t say a word. She would just look at Fang with eyes that saw far too much. Lightning had those dreams too, Fang was sure of it.

Then Lightning would turn on her heel and go downstairs to do paperwork – she always seemed to have paperwork. Fang would follow because, really, she’d follow Lightning anywhere. And then she’d fall asleep with her head on Lightning’s lap, soothed by the tapping of fingers on keys or the scratch-scratch of a pen on paper. When she slept like that, she never dreamed of all the mistakes she could have made. No, her dreams were of Lightning, always of Lightning and a future she wanted so much but couldn’t quite bring herself to reach for.

So here Lightning was, so beautiful that Fang ached just looking at her, and she was getting closer with each step. She stopped in front of Fang, slightly ungainly in the way that most inebriated people were yet still graceful because she was Lightning Farron, and Lightning Farron had perhaps the finest sense of balance of anyone that Fang knew.

Lightning reached down, one hand closing around Fang’s wrist, and tugged gently. The calluses on Lightning’s hand were works of art, Fang thought, cataloguing a life of hard work and combat. Some people preferred soft hands, but Fang wanted hands like Lightning’s. These weren’t innocent hands, the hands of someone who’d be scared off the moment they saw the ghosts behind Fang’s
eyes and the monster under her skin. No, these were the hands of a warrior, of a woman who understood that Fang didn’t want pity so much as understanding.

“You look bored.” Lightning said. Liquid heat shimmered in her gaze, and the shirt she wore was damp with sweat. “Dance with me.”

Fang knew she should say no. Lightning would never have acted this way if it wasn’t for how much she’d drunk, but it was so, so hard to refuse her. A good woman would have anyway, but Fang wasn’t sure she was a good woman. She let herself get pulled to her feel and let Lightning smile over her shoulder as she started to dance, guiding Fang’s hands to her waist.

“Don’t just stand there.” Lightning leaned toward Fang, her back pressing against Fang’s front. There were several pieces of fabric between them, but Fang’s skin still burned. “Do something.”

But Fang couldn’t do anything. Dancing required coordination, and all of her coordination had fled the moment Lightning touched her. It was impossible for her to think – or maybe thinking was all she could do – and now she realised how much the alcohol was affecting her too. All she could see was the blue of Lightning’s eyes, her gaze flicking back over her shoulder every now and then, burning a hole right through Fang’s soul.

All Fang could feel was the slim waist she held and the muscles in Lightning’s back as the other woman rubbed against her. Even her senses of smell and hearing were overwhelmed. She was so close she could smell Lightning, smell the scent that was uniquely the soldier’s. It made her think of blood and battlefields, silk sheets and tender lips. And the sound – the music shook the world every time Lightning moved to it, and the whisper of Lightning’s shirt against her own was going to drive her insane. Maker, Fang was going to fall apart, and it had everything to do with what she shouldn’t be doing but was.

Only her sense of taste was left unsatisfied, and it would have been so easy to lean forward and lick the sweat off Lightning’s throat before capturing her lips.

Somehow, they changed positions. Lightning was facing her now, arms slung around Fang’s neck. She pulled Fang down until their lips were almost close enough to touch. Every moment stretched out into eternity, and Fang could have sworn she saw the rest of her life spread out before her, all of it hinging on this moment. Lightning spoke, but Fang barely heard the words, unable to focus on anything but how good Lightning felt in her arms, how soft her lips looked.

“Fang.” It was Serah’s voice that broke the spell. The younger Farron’s eyes were surprisingly clear, and there was no small amount of concern in them. “Do you think you could take my sister up to her room? I’d do it, but…” She trailed off and nodded at Vanille, who had latched onto her arm like a barnacle.

When Fang looked back at Lightning, she finally noticed the exhaustion beneath the other woman’s fiery gaze, the weariness that the alcohol had uncovered as surely as the desire. Fang thought of Lightning’s shifts – too many, but the Guardian Corps needed her, so many people needed her – and realised that Lightning must have been running on empty. She always was these days.

But Lightning was in no mood to leave. Instead, she pressed closer to Fang, let Fang feel every inch of that perfect body, before she slipped away, dancing to the music in a way that made it seem more like the music was following her than the other way around. It was driving Fang mad, one beat, one movement at a time.

Fang forced herself to think through the haze of want that clouded her mind. Lightning would wake
up with a heck of a headache tomorrow – Oerban spirits were like that – and it didn’t help that she was reaching for another glass of alcohol. Oerban spirits did that. They chipped away at a person’s inhibitions while still leaving them with the illusion of control. That’s why Vanille had only started drinking Oerba spirits here. She trusted everyone here to look after her and not take advantage of the situation.

“Keep an eye on Vanille,” Fang said at last. “I’ll take Lightning to her room. She can sleep it off, I guess.”

Serah nodded and resumed trying to pry Vanille off. “Thanks.”

Fang eased the glass out of Lightning’s hand. It was half full. Maker, had Lightning been drinking Oerban spirits by the glass? It was a miracle she could still stand, never mind dance. “Come on, we need to get you up to bed, Lightning.”

“Yes, we do.” Lightning’s smile smouldered, and Fang nearly flinched away. She couldn’t do this. But who else was there? Serah had Vanille to worry about, Hope was about three seconds from unconsciousness, and Lightning probably wouldn’t react well to Snow trying to get her upstairs. So Fang gathered the tattered remnants of her will, put one arm around Lightning’s shoulders, and steered her toward the stairs.

They made it up the stairs and then moved down the corridor to Lightning’s room. Fang had been in there before, but there was something different about it now. It had always been Spartan. Lightning didn’t have many possessions, but she treasured the few she did have. Two photographs held pride of place on her bedside table: one of her, Serah, and their parents and another showing all of the former l’Cie together.

Lightning pulled away from Fang and ambled toward the bed, kicking off her shoes and then sitting on the edge of the bed. It would almost have looked innocent – how many times had Lightning grumbled about a bad day at work while Fang listened from the doorway – were it not for the raw desire in Lightning’s gaze. Suddenly, the emptiness in the room took a new meaning. There was nothing for Fang to distract herself with. There was only Lightning. The soldier beckoned with one hand, and Fang found herself walking over, powerless to resist her.

Fang stopped in front of Lightning, and this time, it was the other woman who put her hands on Fang’s waist. For a split-second, Fang was struck by a vision of how this could go. She could have Lightning. She could press the other woman into the bed, tear the clothes from her body, and take and take and take until the only word on Lightning’s lips was Fang’s name. It would be so easy, and she would make it so good for both of them.

She blinked, brought back to the present, as Lightning yanked her down onto the bed.

“I’ve wanted to do this for a long time,” Lightning whispered. The room seemed smaller somehow, the walls closing in and spinning, the warmth of Lightning’s body sapping all of the strength from Fang’s limbs. “I’ve watched you, wanted you, needed you.”

“Lightning…” Fang forced herself to push the other woman away. The alcohol was making it hard to think – her thoughts moved with all the speed of molasses – but this was wrong. “Not like this.”

“You don’t want me?”

“I do. But…” Fang took a deep breath and stood, forcing herself to walk to the door. “But not like this, not when you aren’t yourself. Get some sleep.” And then she closed the door, stumbling away before she could change her mind and do something they would both regret. She staggered down to
the bottom of the stairs and held her head in her hands, wondering if she’d just done the stupidest thing in her life.

But as tempting as it would have been to say yes to Lightning, she couldn’t regret saying no. Whatever they were to each other – and Fang still wasn’t sure where they stood – they deserved to do things properly, when both of them were in the right frame of mind to choose what happened next, for better or for worse.

She fell asleep on the stairs.

X X X

Breakfast the next morning was interesting. Fang hadn’t drunk quite as much as the others, and she had some experience with Oerban spirits. She went upstairs to check who was sleeping in which bedroom and then headed back downstairs. Serah and Vanille had ended up in the redhead’s bedroom while Hope had passed out on the couch. She poked him to make sure he was alive, and the young man groaned and rolled over again.

Snow, of course, was perfectly fine and ridiculously chipper for a man who’d drunk so much the night before. He was in the kitchen making pancakes.

“Hey.” Fang blinked blearily and winced as Snow banged a few pans against each other. “You’re up early.”

“Not really.” Snow glanced at the clock on the wall. “Actually, you’re up rather late.” He laughed, and Fang fought the urge to take one of the pans and cave in his skull. “That stuff Vanille served was something else, but you know me…”

“You’re huge, you can hold your liquor, and you’re largely impervious to criticism.” Fang started making some coffee and glared. “Yes, I know you.”

Snow grinned, proving that he really was largely impervious to criticism. “That’s right.”

“So… where did you sleep? I saw Serah and Vanille sleeping upstairs. Please tell me that you guys did not have a three way, otherwise I’m going to have to kill you.”

“Fang!” Snow dropped one of the pans. “Seriously? Don’t even joke about that. But, yeah, Vanille kind of passed out a little after you took Lightning upstairs. She must have finally run out of energy. Serah tried to pry her off, but you know how Vanille is. Serah conked out pretty soon after that, so I just carried the two of them upstairs. It was tricky getting around you though since you decided to sleep on the stairs. As for me, I took the recliner chair. It wasn’t too bad.” He chuckled and glanced at the living room. “Hope is going to have one heck of a headache when he wakes up. How about you? Why did you decide to sleep on the stairs? Did something happen with Lighting?”

“Nothing happened.” Fang winced at how hard her voice was. It wasn’t Snow’s fault that things between her and Lightning were so weird. “Look, I’m sorry.”

“Hey, it’s okay.” Snow’s easy-going nature made it easy to forget how observant he really was. “I know how things are between you two. I think… I think you did the right thing sleeping on the stairs.”


“That I am.” He nodded at one of the pancakes he’d made. “You can start eating those if you…” He trailed off as Lightning stumbled into the kitchen.
The other woman looked like death warmed over. She took one look at the pancakes, grabbed one for herself, and then stalked back into the dining room to eat, looking more like a zombie with pink hair than Cocoon’s most famous soldier.

“Okay, that was just scary.” Snow patted Fang on the shoulder. “Good luck, Fang.”

“Thanks.” Fang took a sip of her coffee for courage. “I’ll need it.”

Lightning didn’t mention what had happened, and perhaps that was for the best. Maybe she couldn’t remember. If that wasn’t the case, then Fang wasn’t about to say anything. They were so close now that something like that was bound to change everything. Fang wasn’t sure if either of them were ready for that.

It was another two days before Lightning finally said something, and it happened in the kitchen. Vanille had gone to work early, leaving the two of them eating breakfast together. Fang turned and found herself boxed in, Lightning moving forward until Fang was trapped in one corner of the kitchen.

“Fang, about Vanille’s birthday party…”

“Uh…” Fang wasn’t sure what to say. What could she say?

“Why did you say no?” Lightning asked, eyes intense, her hands on either side of Fang to trap her in place. The soldier looked almost nothing like she had that night. Now, she was in full command of her senses, gaze razor-sharp, every muscle poised to explode into action if Fang tried to get away.

Fang thought long and hard about trying to get away, but there would be no escaping without a fight. “It wouldn’t have been right. You’d been drinking, and you weren’t yourself and…”

“Did you think I didn’t really want you?” Lightning asked. “Is that it? Were you worried that I wouldn’t have enjoyed going to bed with you?” Lightning’s gaze had softened now, settling into something that was half concern and half something that Fang refused to speculate about.

“That’s part of it.” Fang bit her lip. “I… I don’t know what we are, Lightning. But whatever we are, it’s better than a quick roll in bed when we’re both drunk. And it wouldn’t have been right.” She held up one hand, cutting off Lightning’s protests. “I know you can handle alcohol, but you don’t know how Oerban spirits are. They loosen you up. They can… make you do things you wouldn’t normally do.” She sighed. “I didn’t want to force you into anything.”

“What if you weren’t forcing me into anything?” Lightning leaned forward. “What if that’s what I really wanted?”

“I… I don’t know.”

Lightning moved closer, pressing into Fang’s space. Then she was kissing Fang, hard and deep, and it was the most perfect thing in the world. They pulled away, foreheads resting against each other. “I haven’t touched a drop of alcohol since Vanille’s birthday. But I know what I want – it’s what I’ve wanted for a long time now.”

“And what is that?” Fang wanted to burn this image into her memory: Lightning gazing at her with so much love.

“You.” Lightning took a deep breath. “It’s always been you.” She kissed Fang again and then pulled back, fighting to steady her breathing. “I know you don’t want to rush things, but we’ve
wasted so much time already.” She touched Fang again, seemingly unwilling – or unable – to let go. “I’m not saying we should jump into bed right now, but we can’t go back to the way we were, too afraid of moving forward to do anything.”

“I know.” Fang nodded slowly. “We have to start somewhere. We could… start with breakfast, I guess.”

“We’ve had breakfast before, Fang.”

“Not like this, not knowing what we know now. It’s a start.” Fang gulped. “Love has to start somewhere.”

“Do you love me, Fang?”

“Yes.” Fang tried to keep her voice steady. “I love you.”

“Good.” Lightning’s cheeks flushed slightly. “Because I love you too.” She kissed Fang again and then laughed nervously. “I can’t seem to stop doing that.”

“You don’t have to.” Fang laughed, pulling Lightning against her and kissing her. “In fact, I’d prefer it if you never stopped.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #351: Drunk Lightning is a tease. She’s acting nonchalant about it, but oh she is such a tease. Drunk Fang is torn, and so turned on. She can almost feel the sexual tensions thunder in the air.

I’ll start off by pointing out the obvious: alcohol can have a definite impact on people’s ability to make good decisions. If you’re going to hit the bars, always look out for your friends. Never take advantage of someone who is drunk. And if you think someone might be in trouble, don’t be afraid to ask for help. It’s better to be safe than sorry. Finally, don’t drink and drive.

When I saw this prompt, I was immediately reminded of the very first prompt that I filled (i.e., Chapter One of this story). I wanted to capture the same kind of feel, the same languid, almost dreamy sort of atmosphere. Hopefully, I did that. I think Fang explained her reasons for saying no well enough, so I’m not going to go into that anymore. I’ll just say that Fang would prefer that whatever they have be based off something genuine, as opposed to a quick alcohol-fuelled roll in the proverbial hay.

Despite the fact that I’ve filled several prompts based on alcohol, I’m really not much of a drinker. I don’t even really drink coffee. Possibly the only thing I’ve developed an addiction to is Pepsi Max, which is my drink of choice when I’m writing late at night. Scarily enough, I’m currently out of Pepsi Max. I might even have dropped down onto my knees and screamed “No!!!!!” at the sky.

Finally, my newest original story Two Necromancers, a Bureaucrat, and an Elf is now available on Amazon! It weighs in at 35,000 words and goes for $1.99. You can find a
link to it (and the rest of my original fiction) in my profile. Most of my previous stories have been fairly serious (e.g., *The Last Huntress*), but this one is different.

If you’ve been looking forward to something humorous from me, then your wait is finally over. *Two Necromancers, a Bureaucrat, and an Elf* is a fantasy with plenty of humour, warmth, action, and a healthy dose of craziness (the kind you’ve come to expect from me).

Here is the blurb:

Two necromancers, a bureaucrat, and an elf – it sounds like the start of a bad joke, only the joke is on Timmy.

Timothy Walter Bolton – better known as Timmy – has spent most of his life as a necromancer. When he isn’t terrorising his enemies, he’s plotting inside his castle, which is built on top of lightless chasms filled with nameless horrors and beings of a generally malevolent and megalomaniacal nature. But after one of his latest creations, a zombie hydra-dragon-bear, tries to eat him, he decides that maybe it’s time to find a new, less dangerous, career.

But that’s easier said than done. He’s a wanted criminal with no shortage of powerful (and crazy) enemies, and he has a bone or two to pick with the Everton Council of Mages.

Hope arrives in the form of a new law. War is coming to Everton, and the Council is desperate. In exchange for providing some help, Timmy might just earn that pardon he’s been looking for. Of course, just because it’s possible to earn a pardon doesn’t mean that it’s going to be easy.

To earn his pardon, Timmy is going to have to take down some of Everton’s most dangerous enemies and put together a quirky group of unconventional heroes, most of whom want nothing more than to mangle him and/or the Council in as vicious a way as possible. It’s a good thing that he’s got some help: an obnoxious ten-year-old apprentice who thinks that pink glasses are appropriate for a budding necromancer and a bumbling bureaucrat who may or may not make it through their first real fight without puking his guts up.

Wonderful.

Still, Timmy’s never been one to back down from a challenge even if their first recruit is basically the elf version of the bogeyman.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
She’s Got The Voice

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She’s Got The Voice

Lightning stared at her phone.

And then she stared at it some more.

But despite her best efforts, a solid hour of staring had not magically inspired Fang to call her although she wasn’t about to stop. Perhaps glaring might work better than staring? Damn it. Two weeks without the other woman had left Lightning feeling all… fidgety. Oh, whom was she kidding? She wasn’t feeling fidgety at all. She was feeling horny. Really. Damn. Horny.

And it was all Fang’s fault, that stupid, sexy, loveable idiot. It made Lightning want to do all sorts of extremely wicked things to her and bash her head in – possibly at the same time. No, she’d do the horribly wicked things first.

Lightning had never been this way in any of her previous relationships. Oh, she’d had girlfriends in the past. She’d even had sex with a few of them. But she’d never craved any of them the way she craved Fang, and she’d certainly never spent an hour staring at her phone hoping they would call.

It was pathetic, and she felt like a damn lovesick teenager. Stupid Fang. This was all her fault. If she hadn’t been so… so Fang, then Lightning wouldn’t be feeling this way, and everything would be fine. She’d able to crash in front of the television, put her feet up, and spend the night watching some brainless action movie without constantly looking at her phone.

Of course, it wasn’t enough that just looking at Fang did all kinds of things to her libido, and of course, Fang just had to be as good in bed as she was on the battlefield – and Fang was very, very awesome on the battlefield. No, Fang had to have more than that – she had to have a voice that turned Lightning’s knees to jelly and sent her mind on a collision course with the gutter.

It. Wasn’t. Fair.

All Fang had to do was lean over and whisper in her ear, and Lightning was hers. What made it even worse was that Fang knew exactly what her voice did to Lightning. She had even gone so far as to prove her point by making love to Lightning while reciting the bus timetable in Pulsian.

Lightning had practically passed out from the orgasm she’d had – and she still couldn’t look at a bus without blushing. On the upside, she could now recite the bus timetable with perfect accuracy. Stupid Fang and her stupid sexy voice – sounding so good should have been a crime. Then Lightning could arrest her, throw in handcuffs, and – and now her mind was back in the gutter again. Damn it.

But why wasn’t Fang calling her? Sure, the other woman was out on an expedition, but she had a phone, and she’d promised to call when she could. Lightning had memorised her itinerary. Fang should be close enough to one of the major relays to get proper reception. Just hearing Fang’s voice would do a lot to satisfy her cravings although the only way to really satisfy her craving for a good, hard dose of Fang would be to take a transport out there herself, abduct Fang, and turn on the auto-pilot for the rest of the trip home, giving the two of them plenty of time to themselves.
And that idea was getting more tempting by the minute. She was the commanding officer of the Guardian Corps in New Bodhum. No one would question her. She could even call in a bit of bad weather and delay their return by a few hours – maybe even a day. Probably the only reason she hadn’t done that already was Vanille. The redhead would know exactly what she was doing, and she wouldn’t hesitate to share that knowledge with Serah. Then Lightning would have to put up with their teasing for weeks, and she couldn’t really kill either of them.

Still, if Fang didn’t call soon, she was going to do something horribly romantic but pathetic, like call Fang’s phone, so she could listen to her voice on the answering machine. Damn it. What was wrong with her? She couldn’t remember Serah acting this idiotic when she’d been going out with Snow. But what if Snow had been the idiotic one? Did that make her more like him? No. There was no way she was like Snow, absolutely no way.

The phone rang.

Lightning made a grab for it, knocked it off her bed, reached down to get it and then promptly fell onto the floor. She hit the floor with a dull thump and bit back a curse as her phone dug into her back.

The phone kept ringing.

She rolled over onto her stomach, picked up her phone, and climbed back into bed. She took a deep breath to compose herself and then answered.

“This is Lightning.” That was it. Sound cool. Sound in command. Do not sound like a lovesick teenager.

“Hey.” Lightning tried not to groan as that all-too familiar voice sent a frisson of heat through her whole body. “How are things over there? I hope I’m not disturbing you.” Fang chuckled throatily, and Lightning fought the urge to toss off her uniform and slip into something more comfortable. “I know it’s late over there.”

“Oh, I just at home.” Lightning tossed a glance at some of the paperwork on the table beside the bed. She hadn’t done any of it. “I was reading through a few files, actually.” That was a lie, but she wasn’t about to tell Fang that she’d spent the past hour watching her phone and waiting for a call.

“Really?” Fang’s voice dripped with amusement. “Are you sure that’s what you were doing?”

“Yes, really.”

“Really, really?”

Lightning knew Fang was smirking, but that only made it worse. She loved Fang’s smirk, and it would have been so much better to see it right there in front of her as the other woman pinned her to the bed and –

“…..” Lightning bit her lip and looked down. One of her traitorous hands had slipped down toward the waistband of her trousers. Stupid hand. “Uh…”

“Lightning.” Fang laughed. “Are you trying to get off to the sound of my voice?”

Lightning twitched and then realised that after switching her phone over to speaker, her other hand had settled on her chest. “No… why would you even say something like that?” She totally wasn’t stroking her own chest or seriously considering taking off her own trousers.
“Ah, so you are.” Fang gave a low growl of approval, and Lightning moaned. Oh, what did it matter? She was the only one home right now, and she was in her bedroom. “You were just waiting for me to call, weren’t you? That’s cute.”

“Oh, shut up.” Lightning scowled. Fang knew her far too well. “I’d punch you, but you’re a little too far away for that.”

“You can always punch me when I get home, although I don’t think that’s what you want to do to me.” Fang’s laugh turned into something darker, lower, and her voice took on the edge that Lightning loved so much. “Besides, I know that you don’t want me to stop talking.”

“Fang…”

“Hey, it’s okay.” Fang’s voice softened, and Lightning was struck, once again, by how expressive the huntress could be with just her voice. “I’ve been waiting all day to call you too. I was supposed to call you earlier, but one of the researchers lost one of the samples. We had to double back to get another one, so we’ve only just gotten to the outpost.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, oh. I was tempted to tell them to go back and get it on their own, but you were pretty clear on how I shouldn’t let anyone get eaten on this trip.” Fang’s tone turned playful. Lightning could easily imagine her winking. “So… Lightning… what are you wearing?”

“Fang!” Lightning flushed. “We are not going to have phone sex.”

“Says the person who’s been groping herself to sound of my voice.” Fang chuckled. “And it sounds to me like you’ve already started – and don’t even try to tell me that you breathe this heavily normally, Lightning. We both know you don’t. Like I said, don’t worry. We’re at one of the outposts. I’ve got my own room and everything.” Her tone darkened. “We can go all night, Lightning.”

Lightning opened her mouth to refuse, but her traitorous hands had already resumed their wandering. Thank the Maker for the hands-free option on her phone. Damn. Fang’s voice was just too much. “Fine.” Lightning tried to sound reluctant, she really did. “If you must know, I’m still in my dress uniform. We had an induction ceremony today for the new recruits.”

“Your dress uniform?” Fang’s voice was wonderfully rough. Lighting quivered. “I love that uniform. It makes you look so… dashing.” Fang’s voice dropped lower, and Lightning could practically see her green eyes darkening with desire. “Tell me you’re alone.”

Lightning gulped. “Yes, I’m in our bedroom.”

“Good.” Fang’s voice was a velvet whisper, rustling through Lightning’s senses. “I’m alone too, and we’re not going to stop until I’m done with you.”

“Fang…” Lightning whimpered. “Tell me about your day.”

“Oh no.” Fang’s voice was teasing, the same way it was when she left Lightning dangling on the edge, so close, but not quite there. She loved seeing Lightning liked that, loved watching the soldier come apart and knowing it was because of her. “You’re going to tell me about your day.”

“Fang –”

“I love your voice too, Lightning.” Fang’s words oozed sensuality. Lightning took a deep breath.
“So talk, soldier.”

Lightning talked. She told Fang about the rookie induction ceremony and about the paperwork she’d brought home. And all the while, Fang talked back, whispering, cajoling, ordering, her voice moving seamlessly through all the registers that Lightning loved, from velvet steel to languid silk, building the coil of tension inside Lightning higher and higher. It was completely ridiculous. They were talking about the weather now, and all Lightning could think about was how much she wanted Fang beside her, the other woman touching her, tasting her. She’d never understood what it was like to lose herself in someone else before, but she did now. Every one of her senses wanted Fang, from the sight of her, the taste of her, the feel of her, the scent of her, and the sound of her.

Without even realising what she was doing, Lightning unbuttoned her jacket and shirt and undid her bra. The belt of her trousers was next, and she tossed the trousers aside.

“So, what are you wearing now?” Fang asked. The time for talking about their day was over. She was demanding now, insistent. Had they been in the same room, Fang would have been leaning over, so close that her presence filled every one of Lightning’s senses. Her hair would have framed Lightning’s entire world as Fang cupped her cheek, drawing her closer… “Tell me.”

“I’m… I’m wearing my dress shirt and jacket, but they’re unbuttoned. I’m not wearing my trousers.” Lightning dragged in a deep breath. “I’m still wearing my panties, but I’ve already taken my bra off.” It was a clinical description, but her mind wasn’t working well enough to try to make it romantic or alluring.

“Lightning.” Fang actually groaned, and Lightning felt the fire inside her quiver. “I need to see you. You have got to send me a picture. I don’t care if I have to talk to you all night, but I have to see you the way you are now. Please.”

It was the ‘please’ that did it. Lightning lifted her phone with trembling hands. She knew how much Fang loved seeing her in uniform, or rather, mostly out of uniform. She hurried, taking the picture and then sending it to Fang. “There, I sent it. It should be there in a second.”

A few seconds passed.

And then a few more seconds passed.

“Did you get it?”

“No.” Fang’s voice was full of disappointment. “Are you sure you sent it?”

“I’m sure I did.” Lightning picked up her phone again. “Let me just check – CRAP!”

“Crap?” Fang asked. “What does ‘crap’ mean?”

Lightning looked at her phone in horror. She had all of the others on speed dial. Fang was one of the two most important people in her life. But she hadn’t sent her picture to Fang. She’d sent her picture to the other most important person in her life: Serah. She’d sent a half-naked picture of herself to her sister.

Lightning did the only thing she could think of. She threw her phone at the wall and screamed.

“Lightning, that didn’t sound like a good kind of scream.”

Lightning stumbled out of bed and picked up the phone. “I sent the picture to Serah by accident.”

“Yes, it is and – wait. I’ve got an incoming call.” Lightning paused, covering her face with her hands. “It’s Serah.” How could things have gone so wrong? How was it that she could save the whole world but not have phone sex with her girlfriend? “Fang… I need to take this call.”

“You’d better.” Fang winced. “Put me on hold and work things out with Serah.”

“I’ll try to make it quick. I’ll tell her it was a mistake.” Lightning switched the call over to Serah. “So, uh, hi, Serah.”

“Um… Lightning, I got a very interesting picture from you.” Serah coughed. “Uh…”

“Look –”

“I know Fang’s been away for a couple of weeks, and I love you a lot, I really do, but I don’t love you that way.” Serah coughed again. “And I’m engaged to Snow, so I don’t think it’s appropriate for you to –”

“Serah!” Lightning cut through her sister’s rambling. “I didn’t mean to send that picture to you.”

“Oh thank the Maker.” Serah breathed a long sigh of relief. “Wait… were you going to send that to Fang?” She giggled evilly, and Lightning shuddered. This was going to be trouble. “Do you two normally exchange those sorts of pictures, or was this a one time only thing?” Serah snickered. “Were you two in the middle of something?”

“Serah…” Lightning had to remind herself that she loved her sister. Killing her would be wrong.

“Oh, you were.” Serah cackled. “Who would have thought, the great Lightning Farron indulging in phone sex.”

“Serah, please shut up.” Lightning wished she could strangle her sister through the phone. “It’s not funny.”

“But it is.” Serah giggled some more and then paused. “Wait… if you were in the middle of having phone sex with Fang when you sent that picture… do you have her on hold right now?”

“I am not answering that.”

“You do!” Serah laughed. “Quick, put her on.”

“Serah, I am not putting her on.”

“Come on, put her on. And it’s not like you’re going to go back to having phone sex, are you? I mean you’ve just finished talking to me. Wouldn’t that be, I don’t know, weird?”

“Fine.” Lightning’s jaw clenched as she patched Fang through. “Fang, Serah wants to talk to you.”

“Oh.” Fang made a tired sound. “Hi, Serah.”

“Hi, Fang. So, is this the first time you and my sister have had phone sex?”

“What?” Fang snarled. Lightning covered her face with a pillow. “Who said we were doing that?”

“My sister did, but don’t blame her. I don’t think she meant to let it slip.” Serah chortled. “I think it’s great. You two can’t keep your hands off each other, and now you’re getting together on the
phone. I never thought I’d see the day my sister tried to have phone sex. It’s adorable.”

“Serah, good night.” Lightning was done with this. Her sister was insane. Since when was attempted – and very much failed – phone sex adorable?

“Wait –”

“Bye.” Lightning hung up on Serah. “I’m sorry about that Fang. You know how she is.”

“Yeah, I know. Vanille is the same way. Remember that time she walked in on us?”

Lightning laughed. “She acted like she’d never seen a pair of breasts before.”

“Which is funny since she’s got her own pair, and don’t even get me started on some of the things I’ve caught her doing in the past.” Fang snorted. “Let’s just say that it’s a major case of the pot calling the kettle black.”

“Really? You’ll have to tell me about that sometime.” Lightning could always use more dirt on Vanille, if only to keep the other woman from getting out of control. “So… what now?”

“I’ll be honest. The mood is kind of gone.”

“Yeah.” Lightning sighed – so much for having phone sex with Fang. “Why don’t you tell me about your plans for tomorrow then?”

“I guess – no!” Fang growled. “I am not letting your little sister spoil our first attempt at phone sex.”

“Fang…”

“Stay right where you are, and take the rest of your clothes off, damn it! I’m going to send you a picture.” There was the sound of clothing being removed. “There. That should help bring the mood back.”

Lightning checked her phone, and then she checked it again. “Fang… I didn’t get the picture.”

“What?” Fang croaked. There was muffled cursing and then the sound of her banging her head on what Lightning assumed was the wall. “Crap! Crap! Crap!”

“What now?” Lightning asked. How could this day possibly get any worse?

“You know how you sent your picture to Serah by accident?”

“Yes. Please tell me that you didn’t send yours to her too.”

“No… but I might have sent mine to Vanille by accident.”

“Are you joking?” Lightning contemplated suffocating herself with her own pillow. “Please tell me you’re joking.”

“No, I’m not.”

Lightning bit her lip. This wasn’t going well at all. Oh, screw protocol. “Fang, inform the rest of the research party that an emergency has come up. A transport will be arriving at the outpost shortly to take you back to New Bodhum while dropping off officers who can escort the research team the rest of the way.”
“What?”

“Clearly, we suck at phone sex.” Lightning started putting her clothes back on. “So I am going to come over there with that transport, drop off some officers so that those researchers don’t get eaten on the way home and then bring you back with me. That means you and me on a transport, alone. On the way back, we are going to run into some unexpected bad weather, so we won’t be back until tomorrow afternoon. We are going to have lots of sex. Understood?”

“Yes, ma’am.” Fang chuckled. “Oh, wait, Vanille’s trying to call me. What do I tell her?”

“Tell her to put a sock in it.” Lightning yanked her trousers back on. “I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

X X X

Omake: Not Again

Fang banged her head on the wall. Not again. After the debacle involving their last attempt to have phone sex, she and Lightning had decided to put off trying again for a little while. So naturally, when they finally did get around to trying again, it had to go wrong.

“Fang, you don’t have to get so freaked out.” Vanille’s voice came through the phone absolutely filled with amusement. “It’s not like I haven’t seen you without a few of your clothes on before. We did grow up together, you know.”

“Vanille, can you please just hang up.” Fang covered her face with her hands. “This is already embarrassing enough.”

“You have absolutely nothing to be embarrassed about, Fang.” Even though she couldn’t see Vanille, Fang was certain that the redhead was nodding her head in what she assumed was supposed to be a sage-like manner. “It’s completely understandable that you’d want to have phone sex with very attractive girlfriend who has been away for two weeks. I get that. What I don’t get is why you’re dressed like a pirate in this picture – a very sexy pirate, I might add.”

“Vanille…”

“Although it is good that you and Lightning are comfortable enough to do some roleplaying. Are you the evil pirate who has come to raid Lightning’s booty and shiver her timbers? Or is she the dashing admiral who has captured you and is determined to get the information she wants from you by any means possible – especially any sexy means possible.”

“I will kill you. The Maker is my witness, I will kill you if you keep talking.”

Vanille laughed. “Fine, fine, I’ll leave you alone. But seriously, you two need to double-check who you’re sending things to before you send any pictures.” She paused. “Say… I don’t suppose you have any pictures of Lightning as a pirate do you –”

Fang hung up – and then made a mental note to ask Lightning to be the pirate the next time they tried this.

Chapter End Notes
As always, I neither own Final Fantasy, nor am I making any money off of this.

This chapter is based on Fangrai Forever Prompt #359: Fang and Lightning get snapchat, and while Light is at work, Fang decides to snapchat nudes to her.

Yeah, I kind of cheated by changing the prompt around a bit, so I hope you can forgive me. It’s kind of funny, but I’ve had a draft of this on my computer for a couple of weeks now, and I’ve only just gotten around to finishing it up. For some reason or another, I thought I’d already posted it. Oops.

It’s also nice to be back doing some FF XIII stuff after a detour into Frozen and RWBY. Anyway, I’ve always been fascinated by how much someone’s voice plays a part in how we perceive them. Even if all we know about a person is their voice, we already start building up a mental image of them. In Fang’s case, I think her voice matches her appearance very well, and it’s not hard to imagine Lightning developing a very strong attachment to Fang’s voice. Hearing Fang’s voice doesn’t just remind Lightning of her, it brings to mind all of the experiences (many of them sexy) that they’ve shared.

As for phone sex – if you’re going to indulge in this particular pastime, be careful! As Fang and Lightning discovered, it’s very easy for things to go wrong. And those two being who they are, it is no surprise that things do go wrong. Still, they got off lightly, all things considered. Imagine if Lightning had sent her picture to Snow by accident? She’d have to kill him then. As for the Omake, it’s a reference to an earlier chapter in which Fang does, in fact, play a BASP (bad ass sexy pirate). Still, I do think Vanille is onto something. Who do you think would make a better BASP, Lightning or Fang?

Finally, I also write original fiction, mostly fantasy. I’ve recently released my newest original story on Amazon. It’s called Two Necromancers, a Bureaucrat, and an Elf. If you have enjoyed my more light-hearted and humorous stories, you will absolutely love this one. Trust me. It’s a fantasy with plenty of humour, warmth, action, and a healthy dose of craziness (the kind you’ve come to expect from me). You can find links to it (and the rest of my original fiction) in my profile. If you’re after something a bit more serious, try The Last Huntress. It has plenty of atmosphere and action.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.
A Lesson In Yun Tradition

Lightning yawned and headed outside to get the newspaper. One of the best parts of her weekend was reading the newspaper while enjoying a mug of hot chocolate and some pancakes. However, she’d barely gotten through the front door before she tripped over something.

It was only her superb sense of balance that allowed her to stay upright instead of falling flat on her face. She turned to look at what she’d tripped over and scowled. There was another dead animal on her doorstep. It was a big one too – one of the deadly predators that stalked the plains near New Bodhum.

That was the third dead animal she’d tripped over this week. Where on earth were they all coming from? This thing couldn’t be more than a few hours old, and she knew for a fact that there was no way it could have gotten this far into New Bodhum without being spotted and dealt with. Someone or something must have brought it there.

If the dead animals had been smaller – birds or squirrels, for example – she would have blamed one of the neighbourhood’s cats. But there was no reason for a cat to leave an animal on her doorstep, and these animals were big enough to eat a cat in one bite. The last one had been an especially menacing specimen, complete with dagger-teeth and spikes.

“This is ridiculous.” Lightning poked the dead animal with a stick. It was an impressive animal, large and imposing. It was, if she recalled her discussions about native wildlife with Fang correctly, also very tasty. Well, it would be a shame to let it go to waste. She grabbed the animal and lugged it into the backyard. She could cook it for dinner, and she didn’t want to terrify the neighbours.

Wait, it was probably too late for that. The kind, old lady next door was peeking over her fence with wide eyes. Lightning grimaced and then waved in what she hoped was a reassuring manner. She dragged the animal under a tree to keep it out of the sun and then headed back inside.

Vanille opened the backdoor. “What are you doing?”

Lighting nodded at the animal under the tree. It really was quite vicious looking – exactly the sort of thing to give little children nightmares. “I found another animal on the doorstep.”

“I see.” Vanille giggled and smiled. Lightning frowned. That wasn’t Vanille’s usual giggle or her usual smile. That was Vanille’s I-know-something-you-don’t-know giggle and her I’m-going-to-watch-you-make-an-idiot-out-of-yourself smile. She knew something, and she wasn’t going to tell Lightning a thing just so that she could watch Lightning make a fool of herself. “Isn’t that interesting. Maybe you should ask Fang about it.”

“Fang?” Lightning’s brows furrowed. “Why would Fang know anything about it?” Maybe the huntress would find it interesting, but she doubted it. Fang must have killed at least a dozen of these beasts over the years.

“Just ask her.” Vanille skipped back inside. “I’ll get started on the pancakes – that way I can add extra sugar, you health freak!”
Lightning snorted. “Unlike some people, I would rather not give myself diabetes.” Still, she couldn’t help but smile. Vanille’s pancakes were always fun to eat – she always put a smiley face on hers in chocolate sauce, a smirk on Fang’s, and a scowl on Lightning’s.

It was another half an hour before the smell of freshly cooked pancakes and freshly brewed hot chocolate finally lured Fang out of her bedroom – or as Lightning liked to call it, her lair. The brunette stumbled down the stairs looking deliciously rumpled in a baggy t-shirt and a pair of boy-shorts.

Lightning took a deep breath and fought to keep her attention on the newspaper in front of her instead of on Fang’s long, toned legs. It was criminal how good Fang looked, even with her hair sticking out every which way and her eyes half-closed in an effort to block out the sunlight coming through the window.

“Hey.” Fang slumped into her chair. She must not have gotten much sleep at all. “So… we’re having pancakes and hot chocolate again, huh?”

“Of course we are!” Vanille breezed into the room, pulling a comb out and wrangling Fang’s hair into some semblance of order before putting a pancake on her plate and handing her a mug of hot chocolate. Sometimes, it was hard to tell which one of them was supposed to be the older sister. “Why fix it if it isn’t broken?”

“You mean why change it when it’s got all that sugar in it?” Fang took a sip of her hot chocolate. “Right, Vanille?”

“You know me too well.” Vanille grinned. “By the way, Lightning found something interesting on our doorstep again. But I don’t think she understand what it means.”

Lightning glanced at Fang. “Vanille said I should ask you about it. Do you know what’s going on?”

And then the most remarkable thing happened. Fang blushed. The Oerba Yun Fang actually blushed. Lightning almost spit out her hot chocolate. Either the world was ending or this was one incredibly realistic dream. Fang did not blush – that was one of the rules of the universe.

“Fang?”

“Uh…” Fang made a choking sound and downed some of her hot chocolate before shoving some more pancake into her mouth. “Uh… I can’t talk now – eating.”

Lightning pursed her lips. That was… the most obvious and lame excuse ever. “Fang –”

“Eating.”

And that was how the rest of breakfast went. Each of Lightning’s attempts to ask Fang about the dead animal were deflected with all the subtlety of a grenade to the face as the other woman found all manner of interesting things to talk about. First Fang wanted to talk about the gardening that needed to be done. Then she wanted to talk about the provisions that she’d be taking on her next expedition. She even tried to move the conversation to the implications of tax reform on exports between cities. Yes, Fang was more than happy to talk, so long as it wasn’t about the dead animals that kept turning up on their doorstep.

It was the second most suspicious thing that Lightning had ever seen, coming in just behind the time she’d caught Vanille and Serah skulking around the living room with a camera and some mistletoe during Christmas.
After breakfast, Fang hurried off, claiming that she had something important to do. Lightning was left staring at the door, a hollow feeling in her chest. It was the weekend. Fang was supposed to spend it with them.

“Relax.” Vanille patted Lightning on the shoulder. She would have hugged the soldier, but hugging Lightning was like hugging a hedgehog – likely to result in pain. “She does have some important stuff to do.”

“Like what?” Lightning asked. Fang wasn’t usually this secretive. She normally shared everything she did with Lightning.

“I can’t tell you exactly, but I can say it’s clan business – you could even say that it’s vital to the survival of the Yun clan.” Vanille snickered. “Trust me, it’s important.”

“It better be.” Lightning hadn’t spent much time with Fang at all during the week. She missed the other woman – she missed her best friend.

“Calm down. It’ll all make sense soon.” Vanille did her best to appear wise, nodding sagely and striking a serious pose as she continued to pat Lightning on the shoulder.

“Vanille.”

“Yes?”

“Get your hand off my shoulder.”

X X X

Lightning spent most of the day working through her backlog of paperwork. As evening drew near, she roasted the dead animal in the backyard using a recipe that Fang had taught her. It smelled mouth watering, but she couldn’t bring herself to eat it until Fang came home. Still, it surprised her when Vanille refused to eat it as well. Normally, she’d be fighting the redhead off with a stick.

“Don’t you want any?” Lightning asked.

“No.” Vanille smiled that secretive smile of hers.

“I’ve seen you eat this before, Vanille. You practically inhaled it.”

“Yeah, but that was different.” Vanille smiled that smile again. “Besides, I’ve got some stuff to do.”

Lightning went back to her paperwork, and Vanille went into the garage to tinker with her latest project. Later in the evening, Lightning headed to the kitchen to get a glass of juice. On her way there, she spotted a large, hardcover book sitting on the dining table. It wasn’t one she’d seen before. In fact, it appeared to be brand new. She was about to walk past it when she caught sight of the title: A Guide to the Customs, Traditions, and Laws of the Yun.

And the author?

Oerba Dia Vanille.

Lightning shook her head. Of course Vanille was the author. There were only two people in the world qualified to talk about the Yun, and Fang had chosen to stay silent on most things related to her clan. Perhaps it hurt her to talk about it. In contrast, Vanille had written several books on life
during the War of Transgression. She’d even published several dictionaries to help the archaeologists that were currently scouring the planet for old settlements and technology.

Still, it hadn’t been Vanille who’d taught Lightning how to speak and read the languages of Gran Pulse – it had been Fang. It was through her lessons with Fang that Lightning had truly begun to appreciate the beauty of the languages of Gran Pulse. The huntress could make an old bus timetable sound like poetry, and her recitation of a recipe for bread had sounded like the very pinnacle of lyrical brilliance.

Knowing Vanille, this book hadn’t been left on the dining table by accident. There was even a bright orange bookmark with a post-it attached. Lightning read the note: start reading here.

Lightning picked up the book and went back to her bedroom. There was a reason Fang didn’t want to talk about the dead animals. Perhaps it reminded her of one of her clan’s old customs? Whatever it was, it was probably in the book. And if reading the book could help Lightning make Fang feel better, then she would read the book – even if Vanille had written it.

If Lightning had been less preoccupied with thoughts of Fang, she might have noticed Vanille stick her head out of her bedroom and smile, a bowl of strawberry ice cream in one hand and a cherry in the other. As usual, everything was going exactly the way Vanille had planned.

X X X

The section that Vanille – and it had to be Vanille – had bookmarked was not quite what Lightning had expected. She’d expected some blood-and-guts chapter about the long and, quite frankly, horrific history of the Yun. What she got was the complete opposite: A Brief Overview of the Courtship Customs of the Yun.

Lightning stared at the page in front of her. What the? Vanille had to be making this up. But then again, this was Fang’s heritage. As playful as Vanille could be, she would not lie about something like this. Lightning took a deep breath. She’d just have to read it then. She could always interrogate Vanille about it later.

The Yun are a clan that values competency in combat above all other things. Some have mistaken this to mean that they are warlike, but that is not the case. Certainly, the Yun do not shy away from war and will not hesitate to fight if they believe their cause is just, but their alliances with other clans, such as the Dia, show that they are also capable of co-existing peacefully with others.

Instead, the Yun prize competency in combat because of the harsh nature of life on Gran Pulse. A skilled warrior can protect both their clan and family while also providing food. Indeed, it is not uncommon for members of the Yun clan to draw what seems, to others, a disproportionate amount of their self-esteem from their skills in combat.

As such, Yun courtship traditions focus heavily on proving competency in combat. This remains true even if the Yun involved is courting someone from outside the clan although such relationships are relatively uncommon. Few individuals raised outside of the forge that is the Yun clan can meet the stringent standards of the typical Yun warrior.

The first step in a Yun courtship involves the hunt. An expert warrior must be able to hunt well, providing for their family and ensuring their safety from the dangerous predators of Gran Pulse. It is thus not unusual for a Yun to begin courting in a relatively innocuous fashion: by inviting the person they are interested in to accompany them on as many hunts as possible. The intent, of course, is to demonstrate their prowess in hunting, and it is customary that the Yun warrior offers the spoils of each hunt to the one they desire. Slaying and then offering a particularly dangerous
beast is considered a mark of great affection and esteem.

Lightning’s brows furrowed. Maybe she was overthinking things, but Fang had invited her on more than a dozen hunts in the past few months. In fact, it was hard to remember a hunt that the brunette hadn’t invited her on. Then again, who else was there for Fang to ask? Snow, Hope, and Sazh had never been big on the whole hunting thing, and although Vanille was more than happy to blast things with her magic or bash them with her binding rod, she preferred fishing. Yes, Fang must have asked Lightning because she was the only one who would be interested, and Lightning was probably the only one who could actually keep up when Fang really pushed herself.

Still, Fang had always offered her the spoils after each hunt, but surely that just politeness. Lightning was Fang’s guest on those hunts, so it made sense for Fang to give her something. Heck, Lightning always gave Fang the spoils when she invited Fang to go with her on a hunt, so that had to be it.

There was no way that Fang could be courting her. None. Zero. Zip. They were friends, that was all – even if the looks they sometimes gave each other were far more than friendly.

The hunt also serves another purpose. In the event that the Yun’s affections are reciprocated, it gives both parties the chance to see how well they fit together in combat. It is a common belief amongst the Yun that the closest bonds are those forged on the battlefield, and most Yun seek out a partner than can match them in battle.

However, it goes even further than that. The Yun believe that only in battle is a person’s true nature – their heart – revealed. They believe that those who can match them in combat are destined to either be dear friends (often referred to as Sword-Sisters or Sword-Brothers) or someone they can share the rest of their life with. In fact, the few romantic tales that the Yun have focus on the moment that the hero or heroine meets their perfect match upon the battlefield.

Lightning’s eyes widened. Was that why Fang had made such a strong effort to get to know her, right from the start? From the very moment they’d met, they’d fit together in battle. It was as if Lightning knew exactly what Fang wanted her to do and vice versa, and their teamwork had only improved since then. Fang had once remarked that Lightning was the only one who understood her fighting style better than Vanille. There had been a light blush on her cheeks at the time, but Lightning had attributed it to the searing heat on the plains. Had she been wrong about that too?

The first sign that a courtship is likely to succeed is usually the exchange of hunting spoils. A Yun offering the spoils of the hunt is making an overture – responding in kind is a way of encouraging the Yun to continue. It is at this point that family usually becomes involved. The Yun will generally challenge a member of their loved one’s family in order to demonstrate their prowess in combat. Such challenges present an interesting situation – the Yun must prove their worth but avoid shaming or otherwise seriously injuring the family of their loved one. It is also not unusual for a Yun warrior to invite members of their loved one’s family to accompany them on several hunts.

This was starting to sound far too familiar. Fang had indeed challenged Serah to some sparring not that long ago. Serah had always respected Fang’s skills in battle — she trusted Lightning’s judgement — but she had returned from those spars filled with praise for the huntress. And now that she thought about it, Fang had invited Serah to join her on a few hunts when Lightning was busy.

Once the Yun has gained the approval of their loved one’s family, the courtship becomes a matter of public record. The Yun encourage clan members to seek out partners that can further increase the strength of the clan. A Yun warrior who is proud of the choice they have made will make their affections public while providing further evidence of their skill in battle. Such displays are intended
to secure the approval of the clan.

Lightning pursed her lips. Had the Yun possessed the technology to allow two women to have children? Cocoon did, so it was quite possible that the Yun had it as well. It would explain why Fang was so open about her preferences – there was no reason for the clan to care if two women got married if they could still produce strong children. The Yun texts that Lightning had read didn’t seem to find the idea unusual – one of their stories even mentioned such a pairing.

What Lightning didn’t like was all this talk of getting the clan involved. Lightning was a private person, so the thought of having a bunch of people sticking their noses into her private life was an unsettling one. But Fang had always handled that sort of thing better. Not even the sordid rumours that occasionally circulated in the press about them had dented her good cheer.

She turned her eyes to the next section and then froze.

To demonstrate their affection and prowess in a more public manner, a Yun warrior will typically hunt down and kill the most dangerous beast available before leaving it on the doorstep of their intended. Such a display is meant to show both commitment and ability. If the intended accepts the Yun’s affections, then they will allow the slain beast to remain on their doorstep briefly, so that the rest of the clan can see it.

It is also customary for the intended to show their esteem for their suitor by cooking the slain animal and serving it back to the Yun that is courting them. Such a meal is typically shared between only the Yun warrior and their intended. Not even other family members are allowed to partake in it.

There was no ignoring it now. Fang had left those dead animals on the doorstep. Fang was courting her. And Lightning… Lightning had taken those animals, cooked them, and served them back to Fang. And each time she’d cooked one of those animals, Vanille had refused to eat.

Sweet Maker.

Lightning felt like bashing her head on the wall. There was no way she could have known. After all, this was the first time she’d ever heard about these customs – most of what she’d asked Fang about was related to combat and day-to-day life. It had never even occurred to her that the Yun might have such unusual courtship customs.

No wonder Fang hadn’t wanted to answer Lightning’s questions. How could she? Lightning wasn’t exactly the smartest person in the world when it came to matters of the heart, and Fang must have been worried about Lightning rejecting her. They were best friends now, and a rejection would undoubtedly damage that friendship.

Lightning sighed. This was such a mess. She had to do something about it, but what? Fang wasn’t back home, so she still had some time to think, but –

A noise came from downstairs. It was Fang. Lightning crept downstairs and watched as Fang stared at the food on the dining table – at the animal that she’d killed, which Lightning had cooked. Lightning’s gut clenched as Fang’s expression fell. It must have been horrible for her – Lightning was responding as though she returned Fang’s affections, but Fang must have known that she didn’t really understand what she was doing.

Damn it.

Lightning snuck back into her room. Fang was courting her. Fang must… love her. What was she
supposed to do? The answer came with surprising quickness. When was she happiest? When she was with Fang. Who did she want to spend the rest of her life with? Fang. Who made her heart race? Fang.

She loved Fang. It was a simple realisation, but it shook Lightning to the core. True, she loved the others – even that goofball Snow – but Fang was different. She had always been different. Lightning had simply been too dense to understand how she was different. She took a deep, deep breath. She knew exactly what to do.

X X X

When Fang woke up the next morning, she was surprised to find herself alone in the kitchen. It was still a little early for Vanille to be out and about, but Lightning was usually up by now. Lightning must have pulled another all nighter doing paperwork. She sighed. She was such an idiot. Of course, Lightning didn’t understand what all those dead animals on the doorstep meant. How could she? But Fang couldn’t bring herself to just come out and say how she felt. What if Lightning rejected her? She’d be losing her best friend.

Oh well. It would work out somehow. It had to.

Fang made her way over to the front door and opened it to find Lightning there, dragging one the scariest, most vicious beasts from the plains behind her. The pink-haired woman looked like she hadn’t slept a wink.

“Lightning?” Fang gaped.

“Here.” Lightning heaved the dead animal onto the doorstep. “That’s for you.”

Fang’s mouth went dry. “Do you… do you what you’re doing?”

“Yes, I do. Someone explained a few things to me.” Lightning nodded firmly. “I don’t know… I don’t know how everything will work out between us, but I’d like to try.”

Fang’s brain was barely functioning. Lightning was saying that she wanted to… “The neighbours are staring.” And they were. The old woman who lived next door was peering over the fence at both of them.

“Let them,” Lightning replied. “I don’t care.”

“Who told you?” Fang whispered.

“Who do you think?” Lightning smiled and shook her head. “Vanille likes to meddle. So… I never finished her chapter on Yun courtship. I stopped reading after I got to the part where you dump a dead animal on someone’s doorstep. Care to show me what happens after that?”

Fang yanked Lightning into a kiss. “Gladly.”

X X X

Omake: The Way of the Dia

“Please tell me this is a joke.” Hope stared in abject horror at the book in front of him. “Fang, say something. This cannot be real.”

“Oh, but it is.”
“Then…”

“Yes.” Fang smirked evilly. “If you want to court Vanille, you must first defeat a giant squid using nothing more than a binding rod while balancing a bowl of acid on your head before taming a wild wyvern and flying it around New Bodhum proclaiming your love as loudly as you can while dressed as a chocobo.”

“You can’t be serious.” Hope covered his face with his hands.

“I am very serious. In fact – ouch!”

“Don’t be stupid!” Vanille lowered her binding rod. “He doesn’t have to do any of those things.”

“I don’t?” Hope breathed a sigh of relief.

“No, but you do have to fight one of my relatives to prove your worthiness. Pretty much anything goes except killing each other.”

Hope paled as Fang cracked her knuckles.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I do not own Final Fantasy. I’m not making any money off of this either.

This chapter is based on Prompt #267: Pulsian dating etiquette is a little different to those of Cocoon. Lightning doesn’t really know how to react when Fang keeps giving her pelts and leaving her kills on the doorstep. Inspired by a conversation in the Korra fic “An unstoppable force” by jlbrady.

I was skimming through the prompts the other day when I came across this one. I actually thought I’d already done a chapter on this prompt, but when I checked, I hadn’t. Naturally, I just had to fix that.

Anyway, this is a bit of light-hearted fun. I can definitely see the Yun having some quirky courtship customs, and I can also see Fang falling back on those when confronted with the problem of how, exactly, to court Lightning. As for Lightning’s response at the end, I think that she’s not the most emotionally aware person, but once she’s made up her mind about something, she’ll go after it with everything she has.

Keep submitting prompts, guys! And if you’ve got any suggestions as to which prompt I should do next, let me know.

I also write original fiction, mostly fantasy. You can find links to it in my profile. If you’re looking for something fun to read, try Two Necromancers, a Bureaucrat, and an Elf, or, if you want something more serious, try The Last Huntress.

As always, I appreciate feedback. Reviews and comments are welcome.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!