

Chapter Six: The War

“Strength without determination means nothing and determination without strength is equally useless...!” - *Godo Kisaragi*

The beaches of Wutai were famous for their plentiful flora and fauna. The sand glistened like gold and the blades of grass were bright, vivid shades of green. The continent as a whole was considered a paradise the Planet over. Anyone who had visited Wutai would have nothing but praise and flustered expressions from the sights and sounds of this Heaven on Earth.

But that is not what Wutai looked like now. Gray sand replaced the gold, and the blades of grass that still pushed up through the earth were shades of black and brown. The air was polluted with smoke so thick the remaining animals choked at the taste of their surroundings. The peaceful atmosphere was replaced with explosions and the cries of war. Shinra mortars erupted on the beachheads as gunboats pelted the coastline. The shoreline was abuzz with soldiers from the Shinra and warriors from Wutai.

A Shinra cutter dredged up on shore and a platoon of Shinra infantry ascended the beach.

“Private Gainsborough!” An old war-dog at the front of the pack hollered back to his troops, “Get them foxholes ready! This is where we’re settin’ up shop!”

A green soldier broke from the rest of the troops, “Sir YES Sir!”

“And the rest of you dandies start layin’ us some cover fire! Move it! Move it! Move it!” The entire platoon jumped at the sound of the Sargent’s cries.

The village of Wutai started to show the signs of war. The clans had united almost instantly when war broke out between the Shinra and their village. The outskirts of the bustling town was littered with craters and debris. Wutai was holding its own, but the Shinra’s forces outnumbered them.

A pagoda near a large temple at the end of town lightly trembled with the sound of distant explosions. The doors were barricaded shut with large timbers. Inside there was held a meeting of the utmost importance. A large statue stood in a room surrounded by candles. It was here that the village elders gathered.

“Godo, you must reconsider!”

“No!” Godo Kisaragi stood before the crowd gathered in his house. His face wore a stern and angry expression. “We will not surrender to the Shinra! We can still win this battle!”

“But Godo,” An old man spoke up from the group, “The Shinra have almost limitless resources. We cannot hope to defeat them.”

Godo glared at the elder, “Fourteen years ago, the Shinra killed our dear friend Shake. The riot that broke out afterwards almost ripped this town apart. The Shinra have been pressing us ever since. Drilling operations. Hostile trading. Brutality by their soldiers. They have tried their best to spit on our traditions and undermine our entire way of life! And now that they have found an ample vein of this new source of energy on the southern region of the continent, they simply want to rape our land of its resources! That is why we are at war!!”

“But, Godo, surely it is not too late to talk -”

“NO!” Godo turned his back to the assembled elders. “The Shinra are not interested in talking! The time for peace has passed! We will fight the Shinra and we will win!” His voice echoed through the pagoda. His mind was made up. Godo Kisaragi was going to win this war or die trying.

“Highwind!!! I’m gonna ship your ass back to Midgar in a sling!!!”

A Shinra aircraft carrier broke the waves of the ocean en route to the Wutai continent. The deck was littered with troops, readying themselves for the onslaught ahead. Some tended to fighter planes, the Shinra F-7s, and several were assigned the prestigious honor of “swabbing the deck”. One such lucky soul was Cadet Cid Highwind, at the moment in the middle of being bawled out by his commanding officer.

“Damn! What is your problem, boy?!” Sargent Kreetz could feel his grey hairs multiply as he hollered at the top of his lungs. Several blood vessels bulged out of his forehead as he mounted his verbal assault. “You’ve been out of flight school a grand total of two months and you presume to strut around this damn boat like you own the place!!”

The cadet in question simply leaned on a mop handle looking at the puddles of water at his feet. The hollering Sargent didn’t seem to affect him in the least. This only made Kreetz madder.

“Arrgghh!!! That’s it!! You and your entire squad are on scrub until further notice!!” The Sargent turned and stormed away from the gathered cadets.

“Way ta go, Highwind!” A second cadet approached the first, “As if we don’t suffer enough just being in the same squad as you.” His next words were cut short as he was thrown off the side of the carrier into the cold ocean water below.

“Any of you pansy-ass flunkies want to discuss the matter further?!” Cid glared at the rest of his squad, who feverishly went back to their work. “Damn!!” And the young man resumed his duties.

Suddenly, a huge tidal wave arose from the sea off the starboard bow of the ship!! The water struck the side of the Shinra carrier, almost tipping it over! Those of the crew that were unlucky enough to be on deck at the time were knocked off their feet! Some of the Shinra fighter planes broke from their secures and slid off the opposite side of the ship.

“What the hell was that?!” Cid lodged his mop into an iron drain on the deck and held on as a second large wave struck the ship! “Damn crap hell?!!” The helmsman struggled to right the carrier now resting at a 45 degree angle, as a third wave washed over the deck! Cid hung like a trapeze artist on the handle of his mop, watching helplessly as most of his squad were washed into the ocean! Above, he saw Sargent Kreetz sliding down towards him! Cid desperately reached out and grabbed Kreetz by the collar and hoisted him onto his mop. “Hiya, Sarge,” Cid sneered at the older man, “I’d finish my moppin’ but you’d have to swim for it.”

As his commanding officer shot steam out of his ears, Cid looked to the general area where the waves were coming from and noticed strange bubbles on the surface of the water. Suddenly the ocean was broken by a huge splash as the source of the carrier’s problems surfaced! A gigantic blue eel squealed an ear-shattering screech at the helpless forces still hanging onto the deck. It was roughly the size of a bus, with the length of a freight train. It curled its body like a cobra, ready to strike.

On the southern tip of Wutai, a Shinra camp was filled with soldiers running back and forth preparing for the battles ahead. Inside the main tent, a small gathering of men poured over some maps on a wooden table.

“Tseng, bring that light over here.”

A larger man in a blue suit motioned to a second man as he stared down at the map before him. Malcom had been a Turk most of his life, while Tseng was a rookie new to his command of Shinra police. Tseng quickly brought a lamp to his superior who held it over the map.

"Alright, Heidegger's plan requires that we send a small platoon of soldiers here," And here he ran his finger along the map, "Behind the Wutai mountains on the western coastline." Malcom looked up at Tseng, who was paying strict attention. His trademark serious expression reminded Malcom of his old comrade Vincent, who disappeared mysteriously fourteen years ago. That year he lost the rest of the Turks. Yuriko was killed by an unidentified beast, and Reece and Lions also seemed to disappear. Malcom often caught himself thinking of his old friends, and this time was no different. He snapped alert and continued talking to Tseng, who was now looking at him with a puzzled expression. "-While Heidegger, camped on the northern shore, will send two small platoons on either side of the Da-Chao mountains."

"So who will lead our force to Wutai?" Tseng looked hopeful at Malcom. He was fresh out of the Turk special training, and hungry for action.

"I will." Malcom glared at Tseng. "I owe Godo Kisaragi. I personally want to see the look on his face when we tear his little hamlet apart."

Tseng was shocked to hear such sentiments from a man who so rarely showed any emotion behind his dark sunglasses. If the other two Turks had been here to see this display, they would surely be as surprised as he.

"Okay," Malcom ran a hand through his short, dark hair. "You will be in charge of the forces here, coordinating the troops to march towards Wutai. While their warriors are occupied with these soldiers, the three platoons will unite and strike from within the village."

Cid made his way along the slanted deck, using a seam between two metal pieces as his handholds. He made his way to a nearby Shinra F-7 that hadn't broken free from its secures. Cid climbed towards the cockpit as he heard the banshee-like shriek from the sea monster attacking the carrier. Once inside, he fastened his seatbelt and activated the plane's systems. The jet engines roared to life as lights on the instrument panels began to flash and flicker in readiness. It was then that he remembered the plane's secures. They were operated from a master control panel mounted several yards away. Cid looked back to Kreetz, who was still hanging onto his mop for dear life, screaming like a little girl. Cid turned back to the controls cursing under his breath. He would have to take the engines up to full power and try to break the moorings. If he could pull this off, there'd be plenty of smoked eel in the mess tonight!

Out in the ocean, the giant sea monster sunk its teeth into the Shinra carrier, damaging the hull beyond acceptable levels. Water rushed into parts of the ship through cracks and broken seams. Cid fired the jet's afterburners and the metal wheellocks strained and groaned under their power. A loud snap echoed above the roar of the giant eel, who turned its head to see Cid's plane soar above!

Cid pulled back on the stick and brought the plane high into the air. He turned hard and plummeted toward the beast. Cid fired on the beast with machine guns mounted on the plane, and the creature exploded in a flash of light and energy!

"Yeehaw!!" Cid pulled back on the stick and returned to the clouds above. He looked back down to the ship and choked at what he saw: The giant eel. Back and unharmed. "Damn! What the hell is that thing made of?!"

Cid turned back again towards the creature and launched all six Shinra sidewinder missiles. The projectile rockets tore through the sea air and struck their target dead on! The resulting explosions rocked the carrier, and the helmsman frantically struggled with the wheel. Cid strafed the smoke-filled area and swung around for another pass.

Suddenly, something else caught the young pilot's eye. A small fishing boat drifted aimlessly near the carrier. The craft's sole occupant was an old man, who held a red orb into the air and called out to the sky. Just as before, the giant eel broke the surface of the ocean and renewed its assault!

"Damn, a Summon spell," Cid circled the area at a low altitude. "I heard o' them in school but I ain't never expected to see one." The light blue creature shrieked at the passing aircraft and the sound made the hairs on the back of Cid's neck stand up. "Okay, ugly, you're about to get a taste of some Highwind brand whoop-ass!!" Cid gunned the plane's engines and circled toward the towering beast! The creature faced the approaching craft and roared with hunger. Warning lights all over the plane's instrument panel flashed and buzzed with alarm, as the Shinra fighter plane nose-dived towards the ocean below. Cid stared into the eyes of the great beast and gritted his teeth hard. The plane groaned through the air like a bomb on a battlefield. The creature squealed at the rapidly-approaching projectile. Cid narrowed his gaze. The fighter jet struck the creature with a tremendous force! The resulting explosion of light and energy lit the sky with a pure white haze! The resulting explosion created a huge hole in the carrier's hull where the creature had attacked it. Crew members deployed launches and small escape rafts as the carrier began taking on gallons of water by the second! A green smoke filled the area where the eel was last seen, and the lone man on the Wutai fishing boat began to row towards Wutai. The old man strained under the weight of the water behind the oars.

"Hey!! I ain't done with you!"

The old man quickly looked up to see Cid Highwind, suspended by a parachute, floating down towards him. The young pilot hit the water and released his chute. He briskly swam to the small boat and climbed inside. Cid slapped the side of his head to remove the water from his ear and stared up at the old man.

"Alright, take this piece o' junk back to shore." The old man looked puzzled at Cid. "Move out!!" And the small boat was on its way.

The village of Wutai shuddered under the impact of the surrounding war. Heidegger's two squadrons approached the opposite corners of the village around the Da-Chao mountains. On the opposite end of the village, Malcom led a third squadron on the western coast. The Turk was eager to engage Godo and his warriors in battle. He remembered the severe wound he received the last time he set foot in Wutai. But there was more to it than that. Somehow he held Godo responsible for his fellow Turks' disappearances. There was no proof, or even reason to believe this. But Malcom blamed the trouble with Wutai for his friends' mysterious removal from the face of the planet.

::BREET::

Malcom took out his PHS and held it to his ear. "Malcom."

"Malcom," Colonel Heidegger sounded hollow and muffled through the static created by the Da-Chao mountains. "Is your team in position?"

"Yes, Colonel."

"Gyah ha ha! Excellent! This will be my greatest victory yet!"

The Colonel's horse laugh always irritated Malcom, but he never mentioned it. "When will the attack begin, Colonel?"

"When I give the signal and not a second before! Heidegger out."

Malcom replaced his PHS into his jacket and turned back to his squad. "Move into position, troops! We'll attack on the Colonel's command!"

"BOLT3!!"

The sky above Malcom and his troops opened up and white hot fury poured out of the sky! The Shinra soldiers were assaulted with countless bolts of lightning from seeming out of nowhere! The electrical storm crackled through the sky as rain showered from the gathering thick, dark clouds. Malcom frantically looked around for the source of the bolt spells and saw nothing but trees and bushes.

"Where are you?!!" He screamed to the surrounding foliage, "Cowards! Show yourselves!!!"

And they did.

The surrounding forest erupted with Wutai warriors, samurai, ninja and bushido, united clans fighting a single company, Shinra weapons, with a relentless fury bestowed upon them by their gods. The small squad was surrounded and outnumbered, but they fought on. Not for God or Country, but for their very lives. Shinra issued rifles discharged at the surrounding mass of materia-studded swords and weapons but their bullets seemed to pass harmlessly through the Wutai warriors, whose agility was unmatched by any others on the Planet.

Malcom fired his gun hopelessly at the attacking demons, already bleeding from wounds he was not aware he had. This was not the glorious end he imagined he would meet as a Turk, but there was nothing glorious about war. As his vision faded, and his body grew numb, his thoughts drifted to his friends for the last time. Turks forever.

Cid squinted at the approaching Wutai coastline. The atmosphere above the land was tarnished with smoke and ash from the battles fought there. He cursed under his breath at the meaninglessness of the war. The old man noticed the pilot's behavior, and this surprised him.

"You actually care?" The old man rasped at the young cadet.

"What?" Cid looked up at the elder.

"You," He raised a finger to Cid, "You actually care about other people, don't you?"

"Shut the hell up and row, old geezer."

"Then how can you ally yourself with... them! With the Shinra?"

"Shut up!!"

The elder looked thoughtfully at the cadet, "You try to hide your true emotions behind a rough exterior, but you do have a heart, this I can see."

"You're really nuts, you know that?"

"How can you fight - - for THEM?"

"Dammit, if you don't clamp your piehole, I'm gonna play anchors away with your ass!"

The old man smiled and continued rowing. No sound except the call of surrounding seagulls and the splashing of water against the accompanied the setting sun. In his mind, Cid could still hear the blood-curdling screech of the giant blue eel.

"So what the hell was that thing, anyway? That big eel?"

"That was our water god, the Leviathan. It is one of our village's protectors. It represents the embodiment of the hopes and dreams of the people of Wutai. Our dreams to live in peace and prosperity.

Do you have any such dreams?"

"No!" Cid looked back to the coastline. "Well, one. I always wanted to be the first man in space. Visit the stars. Maybe even explore new worlds. But the Shinra ain't nowhere near ready to start blastin' people off the Planet."

"Maybe someday they will."

"I doubt it. Forget I said anything, it's stupid."

The old man stopped rowing and looked directly into Cid's eyes. "Never give up your dreams, young man, the future is built on them."

"Shut the hell up an' row!"

"Sephiroth, I know you can do better!"

In the center of the bustling city of Midgar, the towering Shinra building cast a great shadow over the people below. The building itself was the very nerve center of the structured metropolis. On one of its upper floors, a training session had just ended. A small boy kneeled in the center of the floor, with a handful of soldiers littered at his feet. The boy held a sword twice as long as he was, and three times as heavy. His face was flushed and he panted deeply. A thin man in a lab coat walked over to him carrying a white towel.

"But it's too hard, Hojo," The boy wiped some sweat from his forehead. "I'm only fourteen years old, how could I fight any better than this?"

The narrow faced Hojo frowned, "You will do better. It is your birthright. Never forget that. You will be the greatest warrior of all time. Worlds will tremble at your feet."

"How do you know that?" The boy's face became sad, "We don't even know who my mom and dad were..." Hojo looked down at the boy for what seemed like an eternity. The boy was tall for his age, had long, white hair, big green eyes - not an ordinary young man, to be sure. He was in unbelievable shape for such a child, but there was nothing ordinary about Sephiroth. And there never would be. Most children his age would be wasting their time with friends or family, but he was destined for greater things. He would lead the Shinra to the promised land. And Hojo would be by his son's side to see it. But petty sentiments could cloud his path. Sephiroth must have no earthly connections to weigh him down. He must not know who his parents really are. He must remain focused. These and others were the thoughts that filled Professor Hojo's twisted mind.

"If I tell you what I know about your parents, will you resume your training?"

Sephiroth's eyes lit up, "Yeah Mr. Hojo, yeah!"

"Your mother's name," Hojo's lips curled in a twisted sneer, "is Jenova."

Deep beneath the Northern Crater, something stirred. And trembled.

"Grandfather, what is the matter?"

Bugenhagen sat in his observatory with a look of concern on his face. Even though his face was hidden behind his dark sunglasses, Nanaki could tell his adopted grandparent was deeply upset about something. The only sounds in the quiet room in Cosmo Canyon came from the steady beating of drums in the night air.

"They've found it, Nanaki," The elder looked back to the couch where the puma sat, "They've discovered a way to tap the Lifestream. Mako energy."

"But how is that possible?" The beast's eyes grew wide.

"They've allowed their greed to lead them to their own oblivion." The elder sighed heavily. "The only thing that stands in their way now is the people of Wutai. May the Planet help us all if they lose."

"Isn't Aeris beautiful?"

A woman with long, brown hair stood over the cradle of a sleeping child. She wore a bright red dress with a colorful sash tied in the front. The man she spoke to was walking down a set of stairs towards her and the cradle. He wore a long white lab coat, with dark hair and thick glasses.

"Yes, Ifalna," Professor Gast spoke softly, "She is just as beautiful as her mother." The two held hands and stared in wonder at their sleeping child. No prouder parents could be found on the Planet or beyond.

"Each day I thank the Planet that - "

Gast looked up quickly, "What is it, darling?"

Ifalna bit her lower lip, "I felt something stir in the Planet. Something evil."

Gast's face whitened. "Is it the Weapons you told me about? Or the creature we found in the Northern crater?"

"No... I - I don't know exactly," Ifalna led her husband away from the sleeping joy. "I don't think it was the Weapons." Gast's first thought was to get the camera to record this, but then he cursed himself for thinking of his work over his wife's well-being.

"Those were the creatures you told me about.... How many were there?"

“Six. Ultima, Sapphire, Diamond, Emerald, Ruby and Onyx. The minerals of the Planet given form and purpose. I don’t know if we’re safe here being so close to the Crater.”

Gast pulled her head to rest on his shoulder. “There, there. I chose this location to keep you from the Shinra. Their influence doesn’t yet reach this part of the world. Whatever happens, I’ll keep you safe. I promise.”

Author’s Notes: Whoa, Nelson!!! I know what you’re all thinking out there: “Damn! What the hell’s an Onyx Weapon?!” Well, I decided that if Square USA could manufacture two new Weapons, I could slide one in myself. This one doesn’t awaken with the first ones, and the reason why will cause you to break all the furniture in your house! Really! Another Turk bites the dust with this chapter. I don’t hate them, I just wanted the War to be as bloody as possible!!

The people of Wutai seem to be holding their own so far, but wait until little Sephiroth joins the fray!

GODO vs SEPHIROTH : the bout to knock the other guy out!

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All this and Vincent’s nightmares, be there and be SQUARE!