

Rufus's Twin
By Jen

Chapter 4: Cid's Dream

Cid sat up in bed, the sheets a tangle around his waist, and lit a cigarette. He inhaled the nicotine like a drowning man gasping for air, and then lowered his head with relief. The damned nightmares were back again, only they were whole lot more vivid and a whole lot worse than before. Just thinking about it made him break out in a cold sweat.

He tossed the sheets aside and reached for his robe. He wasn't going to be able to go back to sleep, and he didn't want to wake Shera, so he headed for the kitchen to make coffee and peruse the leftovers.

Cigarette dangling from his lips, he stuck his head into the fridge and fished around. In the very back, he found a bowl with an unidentified substance taking up residence. Curiosity got the better of him, and he opened it.

"Damn, that's evil!!"

Whatever the hell it was, it wasn't fit for eating. This discovery led to an interesting thought though, Shera was usually very meticulous when it came to the state of the house, and that included the fridge. So, he was coming to the conclusion that Mandie had something to do with this. Pinching his nose, and summoning up the courage, he took a closer look. It appeared to be a whole lot of black \$#%& with a damned forest growing on it. He had seen all kinds of crap through his years in the Air Force and all the fighting he had done with Cloud and the gang, but this was making his stomach turn like Yuffie's on the Highwind.

Well hell, he wasn't sure what Mandie was up to, but he'd tolerate this being in the fridge if it was another of her crazy experiments. That girl had her Mama's brains, that was for sure. She also had her Mama's eyes, and her little waist and...hell, it wasn't a good idea to be thinking about Shera that way without her right here next to him.

He was damn proud of his little girl; she was ahead of everyone in her second grade class, and a little bit of mischief maker, but the teacher was willing to overlook that when Mandie took such an interest in everything that was being taught to her and even things that weren't. Mandie loved learning and did a great deal of it at the library he made Reeve build for her in Rocket Town. She also loved flying as much as her old man, and that pleased him more than anything.

He grabbed the mustard, mayo, and roast beef and tossed it on the counter. The coffee was percolating away, and he hoped to hell it got done soon. There were only two things he needed to get his body functioning in the morning, and that was caffeine and nicotine. Granted, this was a little bit earlier than he wanted to be up, but thanks to his twisted mind, he didn't have a choice.

"Cid?"

He turned from the counter to see Shera in the doorway, wearing his old robe. He didn't know why in the hell she didn't get rid of it and get herself a new one. The damned thing was about ten times too big and just a little worse for wear. But she liked it, and he had to admit she looked kinda cute in it.

"I didn't wake ya with all my rattlin' around did I?"

She shook her head, "No. I woke up because I knew you weren't there. Are the nightmares back?"

He nodded, holding out his arm for her. She snuggled against his side and hugged her arms around his waist. He rubbed his chin across the top of her head, grateful, as always, for her comfort.

"You should have woke me."

"How often do you get a full nights sleep?"

She grinned up at him, "As often as you'll let me."

Cid tried to feign shock, but his cheeks took on a little color, and he couldn't quite suppress a smile.

"Dammit woman, I was talkin' about you havin' to go to work so early every mornin'!"

She giggled, "I know. But I want to be with you when you need me."

Cid sobered, "I need you all the time."

Shera sighed, resting her head on his chest. He squeezed her tightly, his nightmare returning with horrifying clarity.

Shera felt the tremor twist through him and asked, "What is it?"

"That damned nightmare."

After the way Cid had treated Shera in the beginning, most people were surprised by how close they were now. But, Shera wasn't really surprised at all. She had always known Cid had the capacity to love the hell out of someone. Unfortunately, that also meant he was good at carrying a grudge. It was never half way with him, it was all or nothing. It was that quality that made him such a good friend and a good lover.

"Where the hell are you?" Cid asked, interrupting her thoughts.

"Hmm? Oh, sorry, I was just thinking. You weren't saying anything to me were you?"

"No. But it's a good thing. I don't think you would have heard me if I had."

Shera clucked at him, "Sit down. Let me fix that for you."

"I can fix the damn thing for myself!! God gave me these hands, and I can damn well use them."

"Oh knock it off Cid Highwind. You'll sit your butt down in that chair and let me fix this for you if I want to."

He grinned and saluted her, "Yes Ma'am!"

"Damn right." Shera grumbled.

He watched her fix his sandwich in the shapeless robe and said, "You need a new damn robe. I can't even find you in that one."

"Don't start that again. I like this. It's yours."

"\$#%&! Stop sayin' stuff like that. Get's me right here," he added, laying his hand over his heart.

She sat his snack and coffee on the table and was about to sit in the chair next to him, when he grabbed her and pulled her into his lap. She wrapped her arms around his neck and rubbed her soft cheek against his rough one.

"Scratchy." she said.

"Yeah, well, I ain't shavin' at five in the mornin'."

"How are you supposed to eat with me in the way?" she said in reply.

"Who said anything 'bout eatin'?" he replied, his eyes taking on a feral gleam.

"Stop that. Tell me about your nightmare right now. I know it's bothering you."

He heaved a sigh over the knot of nerves in his gut and muttered, "\$%&#. This is the first one I've had in over seven years."

"Is it the same as the old one?"

"Yeah, but with a few new twists."

He took a sip of his coffee to steady his nerves, but all he really needed for that was to look into Shera's big, brown eyes. How the hell could he feel like the world was comin' to an end when she looked at him like that?

"Still the same. I'm on board the Highwind, and it's flyin' all by itself. Somethin' crashes into it and I hit my head on the control deck a good one. Then that damned monster Sephiroth starts cacklin'. Only difference is, and you won't believe this \$#@, but what I thought was Weapon crashin' into me and peakin' in the damn window wasn't really Weapon at all. How the hell my twisted brain cooked this one up, is beyond me, but that damned eye belongs to Rufus Shinra! I hear his voice an' he tells me he's got you and Mandie and he's gonna kill you to make me pay for my sins. What the hell he's talkin' about, I don't know. I didn't kill the bastard, it was Weapon! Then I see him takin' you guys away an' it's like I grew roots or somethin', 'cause I can't stop him. By the time I can finally move, it's too late 'cause the little @\$!%*%s already killed you an' Mandie. Then I woke up and couldn't get back to sleep."

Shera squeezed him tightly, not sure how to respond.

"It was so damn real, Shera. It was like I wasn't dreamin' at all."

She felt the tension drain out of him and she knew that it had helped to have him tell her. Cid was such, that he held things in for too long, so that when he finally let them out, someone was liable to get hurt.

"I don't understand why, after all this time, I'd start havin' nightmares again."

"Hmm. Last time it was when I was pregnant. Maybe that has something to do with it."

"Huh? Sorry babe, but I don't think that makes sense. You ain't pregnant with Mandie now."

"Who said anything about being pregnant with Mandie?"

Cid looked down at her. Was she saying what he thought she was saying?

"Shera?"

Shera grinned, "Yes. I am."

"HOLY \$@#!!" Cid yelled, almost dumping her off his lap and then almost squeezing the life out of her.

"Cid? I can't breathe."

"Jesus. Sorry. Are you sure?!"

"Yes. Doctor Thomas confirmed it yesterday. I was going to tell you this morning, since I didn't get the chance last night."

What she didn't add, was that she felt he needed to know now to take his mind off of his nightmares.

"How long?"

"Three weeks."

"Damn. Wait 'till Mandie hears this. She's been buggin' me about havin' a brother or sister for about a year now."

"Yes I know. She keeps finding ways to insert it into every conversation we have."

"Wait 'till I hear what?" a very sleepy voice asked from the doorway.

"What're you doin' up?" Cid asked his daughter, who was dressed in a pair of flannel Chocobo p.j.s.

"You woke me up with your yellin' Daddy."

Cid grinned sheepishly, "Sorry munchkin'."

"So, what're you goin' to tell me?"

"Just like her Mama, bites onto somethin' and won't let go until she gets what she wants."

Shera hit him, and Mandie threw her stuffed Moogle at him.

"Tell me, tell me!" Mandie asked, hanging onto his arm.

"You're Mama's goin' to have a baby."

"You mean I getta brother or sister?!"

"Yep."

"WOO HOO!"

"Amanda Cid, shush. You're going to wake up the whole town."

"Sorry Mama."

But, she crawled up into her Daddies lap and hugged both of her parents and much as was possible with her little arms.

"Wow. Wait 'til I tell Aunt Yuffie. She said she was lonely when she was little 'cause she never had a brother or sister either."

Yuffie stood at the northern most point of Da-chao, surveying Wutai with a mixture of pride and joy. It had taken her and Godo, her father, five years, but with the materia the others had given her after the defeat of Sephiroth, they had brought back a prosperity that Wutai hadn't seen since the wars. It wasn't only her father that had been given a sense of purpose those eight years ago though, all of the people in the town had been assigned materia to master. Over the years, Wutai had become the number one place for materia, and Yuffie gave tours of Da-Chao during the week. It was Saturday afternoon now, and she had Da-Chao all to herself.

As time had passed, Yuffie had matured and tamed her wild streak somewhat. She had long since shed her shorts and tank top, trading them in for form fitting black pants and a short-sleeved, green sweater. Her glossy, ebony hair now hung to her waist in a thick braid. When she had become a Ninja of the highest rank, the shield once used to protect her arm was abandoned also. She still craved materia, but after all, that was in her blood. And, when it suited her, she was quite annoying.

Wutai was an amazingly beautiful town. Each house was a brilliant array of startling colors that reflected the culture and personality of the people. From here, she could also see the Pagoda where her father once forced himself to live, ashamed at the state of Wutai. Even now, Yuffie fought her way up the ranks of the Pagoda to test her skills. She kind of enjoyed fighting her father. And, she was proud of the strength he still had at the age of 51.

Turtles Paradise, Wutai's bar, had more business than the owner could handle. Due to that, he had expanded the bar and

hired outside help. She watched as a regular patron walked cockily across the bridge and through the doors. Even from this distance, she could see the unmistakably bright red hair of his. Of all the former Turks, she liked Reno the least. There were bars all over Midgar, and yet, he chose to come here. She had a sneaking suspicion he did it just to irritate her.

The sounds of labored breathing interrupted her reverie and without turning around, she said, "You aren't as young as you used to be."

"Neither are you." her father replied, coming to stand next to her.

He wore his hair in the traditional bun and was clothed in a black and white robe.

"What's that supposed to mean?!"

"You have done much for Wutai. Thanks to the materia you brought back, we are once again prosperous."

"Yeah. I'm proud of Wutai. But what has that gotta do with my age?"

"You are a woman now. You cannot stay here and give tours of Da-Chao forever."

Yuffie had a distinct sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach. She knew exactly where this conversation was heading.

"Dad-"

"You need to settle down and have a family of your own."

Godo struck a pathetic pose and lamented, "I'm not getting any younger. I need grandchildren to bounce on my knees."

"HA! You didn't even bounce me on your knees! You just want someone to teach your fightin' skills to!"

Godo became serious, "You and I are the last descendants of the Shinobi. Our only hope for carrying on the traditions of our ancestors is through your children."

"What if I don't want to get married?"

Her father shook his head and sighed, "You have not grown up as much as I had hoped."

Yuffie narrowed her eyes and clenched her fists. Her father recognized this as her fighting stance, and chose to leave.

Yuffie watched her father retreat, not willing to admit how much his words had affected her. If she was honest with herself, she knew that she was jealous of Cid and Shera's relationship. They were completely devoted to each other and they had a great kid to show for it; and now, they were going to have another one. She grew amused again, thinking of Mandie's loud call over the PHS, at 5:30 in the morning. Didn't anyone sleep over there?

She sighed as her thoughts turned back to the conversation with her father. He made it sound like getting married was a simple thing. Well, she didn't want to marry just anyone for the sake of keeping traditions alive. She wanted the kind of love that Cid felt for Shera and Cloud felt for Tifa.

Reno took a swig of his beer and stared blankly at the walls of Turtle's Paradise. Reeve had given everyone the weekend off, and he had nothing to do. Now that Rude was married, he hardly ever wanted to go drinking, or go anywhere else, but home to his wife, for that matter. He was starting to wish Rude hadn't got married. Not that he had anything against Elena, but he missed having his best bud go with him everywhere.

He felt a slight breeze from the open doorway, and caught Yuffie's form out of the corner of his eye. She looked like she was in a sour mood, and consequently, his mood brightened considerably. Maybe he could make her angry enough to fight him.

"Hey Brat, sit over here," he called to her.

She looked at him like he was a bug stuck on the bottom of her shoe and promptly pushed him off of the bar stool. Reno lay stunned for a few moments, unable to quite believe she had done that.

Yuffie sat down on Reno's bar stool and looked down at his inert form, "You know I hate it when you call me that."

Reno stood up and inspected himself for injuries.

"Jesus Yuffie, was that really necessary? I could have broken something."

"Good. You deserved it."

"What's biting you?"

"Besides you? Nothing."

Reno took the bar stool next to her and ordered another beer. The one he had been drinking was now a puddle on the floor.

"Don't you have anything better to do than drink?" Yuffie asked.

"Don't you have anything better to do than be annoying?"

She turned so that she faced him, "This is my hometown. If you don't like it, LEAVE!"

Reno ignored her, downing half his beer.

"You know what Reno? You're a slob. And, an ex-Turk slob at that. So, that's even worse."

"Gee thanks for the compliments. Any other part of me you want to disassemble?"

"Yeah. Your head."

Reno raised his eyebrows and said, "No, come on. Tell me how you really feel about me!"

To his surprise, a blush suddenly spread out across Yuffie's cheeks, and she looked down at her soda.

"Uh, Yuffie?"

"Shut up Reno! If I wanted to talk to you, I'd tell you so."

"Okay."

They sat in silence for awhile, Reno studying the label of his beer bottle and Yuffie watching the bubbles fizzing in her pop.

"Say-umm-Yuffie?"

"What do you want Reno?"

"Are you doing anything tonight?"

"What are you talking about Turk?!" Yuffie asked, deliberately being rude to cover her embarrassment.

"Well, it's-uh my day off. Since Rude's married and all, I don't have anything to do."

"Spit it out!"

Reno's face suddenly turned as red as his hair and he asked, "You want to go do something?"

"Are YOU, Reno, asking ME, Yuffie, on a date?!"

"Yeah."

The residents of Wutai were milling about aimlessly, looking for something exciting to do. It was always quiet on the weekends, what with the shops being closed and no tours being given. So, when Reno flew out of the bar and into the rather large pot in front, they perked up immensely.

A dazed and confused Reno managed to recover just in time to see Yuffie coming at him with a flying kick aimed right for his face. He managed to grab her leg, and they went down in a heap of arms, legs, and torsos.

"Get off Brat! You weigh a ton!"

"Why you jerk!" she cried, punching him in the eye.

\$@#%!" Reno cried in pain, grabbing onto Yuffie's braid and tugging as hard as he could.

"OWWWWWWWWWW! Let go!"

"It's a good thing you got rid of that childish hair style, it gives me something to grab on to.

"Oh yeah?" Yuffie taunted, getting a good hold on his pony tail and yanking with all she had.

"HEY!!"

Yuffie snickered, "Doesn't feel so good does it?!"

Reno let go of her hair, only to find his hand had landed in an-er delicate place. Yuffie called him a pervert, and managed to get a good, solid hit to his gut. She then added to the pain by clipping him neatly under his chin.

While Reno lay in anguish, she stood up, straightened her clothes and bowed to the spectators. Reno, however, had gotten over his injuries, and wasn't finished with her yet. Yuffie was so busy gloating, she never saw him coming. Reno grabbed her around the waist, and flung her over his shoulder.

"LET-ME-GO!!"

"Not a chance Miss. Kisaragi. We've got a score to settle. And we're going to do it without an audience."

"Reno put me down or so help me God, I'm gonna kill you!"

"Oh? You don't seem to be defending yourself so well right now."

On the cheers of the crowd, Reno headed for the Da-Chao Statue, Yuffie hanging over his shoulder like a sack of flour.

Okay, so, you all probably knew who Rude married. But, were you prepared for this? Reno and Yuffie. Sounds kinda good together. I mean, they are both messy, lazy, and they annoy people on purpose. Sounds like heaven to me. Also, I apologize profusely to Yuffie for not telling ya'll what she was up to in chapter 3. So, what IS Reno going to do with Yuffie?

As for Cid's nightmares. Whatever could it mean?! Is this the signal of something yet to come? Hope you enjoyed Mandie's

little concoction from the fridge. HEHE. How many of YOU have opened containers, only to find they were either really stinky, or really fuzzy? And, last, but not least, Cid's gonna be a PAPA! Again. Hmmm. Wonder what it'll be this time.

I say again, I'd LOVE comments :p

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