

Rufus's Twin
By Jen

Chapter 8: Someone's got the Chickenpox!

He walked down the damp, poorly lit corridor, the soles of his brown boots making hardly any sound. Up ahead, and to the left would be one of his greatest sources of power. He had simply to wake them and they would do anything he wished.

He turned the corner and the long hem of his white overcoat fanned out behind him. His Brother's sense of style was merely another way for him to torment his adversaries. He smirked at that; brother, what a quaint little term. He belonged to no one and cared for nothing. Not even the woman that was his Sister by blood only. No matter that she was kin, or that she was essentially good where he was evil, he would destroy her like the everything else that got in his way. He only had one purpose now, and that was to see the saviors of the Planet harmed or even killed in some way.

Wouldn't Hojo be fuming now if he knew that all of the plans he had for his creation were nothing. Since birth, he had been grooming Rufus' look-a-like to have the strength and intelligence to take over Midgar. And with his Mako-enhanced army to aid him, Hojo had thought that nothing could stop him. When President Shinra had died, he felt that he could easily overtake Rufus and give his twin the throne that ruled all of Midgar. What he hadn't counted on, was the members of AVALANCHE stopping him at his every turn. And, finally, with the return of Sephiroth Hojo had gone insane and injected himself with Jenova. All of his plans, and the twin that he kept captive in a lab below Midgar, had been forgotten in the quest to aid his first creation.

He pushed open the doors to a room of darkness and flipped the lights on. Before him, lay thousands of sleeping bodies, stripped of all their possessions and their minds. Where they once had free will, they now only knew obedience. They were all hooked up to a simple machine that kept them forever suspended between the world of reality and dreams. He had only to flip the switch and they would awaken to do his bidding.

"The time has come for me to stop observing and start tearing apart the carefully constructed world of my enemies. It is time to awaken my army."

And he flipped the switch.

Red, who was quite used to rising early, padded softly through his Grandfather's quarters and into his planetarium to watch the Planet for awhile. Cloud had told him that they were all uneasy about the latest events and as one of the precautions, they wanted him to keep an eye on the Planet.

He managed to flip the switch with his front paw and then took his place on the platform. The massive structure rose high into the air and took Red into the Solar System. Idly, he watched a few comets raced by, fascinated with them no matter how many times he watched them. Striding up to the Planet he called home, he glanced intently at it. Many things were returning to the Lifestream even at this moment, their energy giving strength to the Planet and healing all of the Planet's injuries.

One of those strands could have been Cid, he knew. Cloud had regaled him with all of the details and Red was thankful to the Planet for returning Aeris. It was also one of the times, besides battle, that he was thankful for Vincent's changing abilities.

Red watched the Planet for sometime and was about to turn away when he noticed what appeared to be thousands of dots of energy all gathered together underground. He wasn't quite sure what to make of this phenomenon. It could simply be a sudden uprising of large creatures, but what bothered him was that they were right under Midgar.

Mandie sat up in her place between her sleeping parents and climbed over Cid. She padded softly out the door to the

bathroom, aware that, for some reason, she itched a whole lot. When she looked into the bathroom mirror, she suddenly realized why.

"Mama! I have red spots all over me!" Mandie wailed.

She frantically made her way back to her parents room and leapt onto their bed, landing right in the middle of her Father.

"What the hell...!" Cid grunted.

Shera sat up, "Mandie honey, what is it?"

"Spots! All over me!"

Shera put her glasses on and took a closer look at her Daughter, "Oh dear. You have the Chickenpox."

"Chicken-whats?!" Mandie wanted to know.

"What's goin' on?" a very groggy Cid asked, having not moved from the position he was in.

"Mandie's got the Chickenpox."

"Chickenpox...oh...that's-what the hell?! Chickenpox?!"

"Cid?" Shera asked, puzzled.

Cid suddenly sat up and looked at Mandie, "I've never had the damn Chickenpox!"

"Oh no," Shera replied, not quite able to stifle a smile.

"You mean Daddy's gonna get these itchy spots too?"

"I'm afraid so, honey."

"Well shit!" Cid exclaimed.

"You're stuck to the house until these clear up, dear," Shera stated.

Cid fell back onto his pillow with a resigned sigh.

Mandie used his stomach as a pillow and said, "At least we'll have the spots together."

Reeve sat quietly on the couch, watching Reno sleeping on the floor. He wasn't sure how long the latter had stayed up with Aeris after Reeve had went back to his bed on the couch. He knew he had been avoiding any thoughts of Aeris because he wasn't sure he wanted to explore the reasons why he felt so protective of her or why he got so jealous whenever Reno was around her.

Maybe it was because he knew what kind of man Reno was and how he used women. Aeris seemed so innocent, and so likely to allow anyone to get close to her. And he had to admit, he didn't want that to be anyone. At least, not anyone but him.

He had been so lost in thought, that he hadn't noticed Reno had woken up and was staring at him.

"You're looking mighty cheerful this morning, super-prez," Reno said, still lying on the ground, his arm holding his head up by the elbow.

Reeve shook himself out of his thoughts and stared down at Reno blankly.

Reno grinned, "Contemplating the fate of Midgar?"

"No."

"Ah," Reno answered, sitting up, "something much more serious than that."

Reeve rubbed his eyes and wondered if Reno really was perceptive enough to understand the situation between he and Aeris, or if he was just being his usual smartass self.

"Oh?" Reeve replied.

Reno liked Aeris, but she was something he couldn't handle, she was too pure. She reminded him of Reeve in many ways. No matter how much corruption and filth they saw, neither of them seemed to lose that air of innocence. Reno glanced down at his knees and back up to Reeve again. Even if he had feelings for Aeris, he would never have pursued them. There was one thing that could be said for all the woman Reno had dated or used, they all knew what the deal was before going into it and they all agreed.

"You're worried that I'll take her."

Reeve tried to look puzzled, "Take who?"

"Cut the shit, Reeve. You know what I'm talking about. Last night, if it was at all possible, you would have killed me on the spot with that look. Now Aeris may be innocent enough to not see what's behind your concern for her, but I'm not stupid."

Reeve rubbed at his goatee furiously, unable to contain the slight flush that spread across his cheeks. He had been wrong, Reno *did* understand.

Reno grinned and tossed his sheet aside to stand up. So, super-prez did have feelings for Aeris. If he was a nice guy, he wouldn't mess with that. But then, he had never been accused of being a nice guy and he enjoyed Reeve getting jealous.

"Good morning."

Both men glanced up to see Aeris in the doorway. Reno walked casually up to her and slipped an arm around her shoulder.

"Morning babe. What's got you up so early?"

Aeris grinned, "From what I heard, Mandie has the chickenpox and Cid's next to get them."

Reno howled with laughter, "Cid getting the chickenpox? Poor Shera!"

Reeve stood up, his blanket around his waist to hide the fact that he had yet to put his pants on.

"That's not funny Reno," he admonished.

Reno grinned, "You just don't have a sense of humor."

Reeve snorted and grabbed his pants, heading for the bathroom. Shera met him as he was going down the hall.

"Good morning, Reeve."

Reeve inclined his head and returned the greeting. From Cid and Shera's room, he heard Mandie suddenly scream in laughter.

"Stop it Daddy! That t-t-tickles!"

"Ha ha! That's what ya get for givin' me the chickenpox!"

Reeve looked to Shera, but she had already left for the kitchen. Driven by something aching inside of him, Reeve moved quietly until he could see into the room. Mandie and Cid lay in a tangle of blankets in the middle of Cid and Shera's bed. She had somehow managed to gain the upper hand and was now tickling him unmercifully. Something punched him near his heart, and Reeve reached up and absently rubbed his chest right above it.

Cid sat up and he didn't look like the tough pilot that had helped save the Planet. He looked like a content man in love with his wife and daughter. Mandie jumped up and attached herself to his bare back.

Cid fell backwards on purpose and yelled, "Ahhh! Spots all over my back!"

"Daddy! Get off! You weigh too much!"

Cid reached behind him, pulled his Daughter into his arms, and hugged her tightly. Mandie returned the favor, yanking on his hair. Feeling ashamed for watching uninvited, Reeve turned and went for the bathroom. This time he ran into Aeris, and blushed as he kept a tight grip on the blanket, the other hand holding his pants.

Aeris looked concerned, "Reeve, are you all right?"

Reeve offered an unconvincing smile, "Yeah, sure. No worries here."

"Reeve-" Aeris reached out, but he stepped away from her and into the bathroom.

Manners had him saying at least, "I need to change now. Please excuse me."

Aeris let Reeve close the door to the bathroom and she shook her head. When Reeve was ready to talk, she felt that he would tell her what was troubling him. For now, she contented herself with changing into the clothes given to her by Shera and enjoying the freedom of being alive.

When she entered the kitchen, she found Cid's wife at the stove flipping pancakes and monitoring eggs. Aeris offered to help, but Shera waved for her to sit down.

"I do this all the time. I'm an old pro," Shera said, tossing a smile over her shoulder.

Reno straggled into the kitchen and took a chair next to Aeris, "Are you coming back with us?"

She shook her head, "I'd like to visit with everyone some more. Barret said he would pick me up later this evening."

"I swear I itch already!" they heard Cid complain from the hallway.

"Daddy, maybe Mamma will wipe that pink lotion all over you too. That keeps the spots from itching," Mandie replied.

Cid laughed, "I don't think it's a good idea to have your Mamma wipe lotion all over me."

"Why not?" a puzzled Mandie asked.

Cid just laughed some more and in the kitchen, Shera blushed and kept her back to Reno and Aeris. Mandie charged into the kitchen seconds later and launched herself at Reno, who caught her and began counting her spots. Mandie found this a fascinating way to pass time, so she counted with him.

Cid walked up to Shera and whispered in her ear, "Will you wipe lotion all over me? You can count my spots when you're done."

"Cid!" Shera hissed. But, she turned around and hugged him, a small smile on her lips.

Reeve entered the kitchen a few moments later, and breakfast got underway. When they were all finished, Reno and Reeve thanked Shera and Cid for their hospitality, and began their journey back to Midgar.

Cera finished chewing her mouthful of chocobo cereal and leapt on the ringing PHS. When she found that it was Red asking for Cloud, she ran to her Parent's room. Both were still sleeping, recovering from the excitement of the night before. She walked up to her Father's side and shook him until he woke up. He pushed a hand through his spikey blonde hair, made even wilder from a nights sleep, and eyed her grumpily.

"Dad, it's Uncle Red. He says it's important."

Cloud took the PHS, "Hello Red, what's wrong?"

"I am not sure if it is anything too serious, but there appears to be a large mass of energy moving under Midgar."

"Can you tell what it is?" Cloud asked, puzzled.

"No. But I thought perhaps you and Reeve would like to investigate it."

"Yeah, we could probably send down a small army of Soldiers to investigate. I'm sure Reeve will be back in Midgar and no doubt straight to work regardless of it being Sunday. So, I'll talk to him about organizing that today."

Cloud turned the PHS off and looked to Tifa, who was now awake also and staring up at him.

"Problems?" she asked.

"I'm not sure if it'll be a problem or not. Red noticed a large amount of energy moving under Midgar. I'll talk to Reeve today and organize a small army to investigate."

Tifa yawned, "It's too early to be up. What is it...8:15? That's too early," she repeated, pulling her pillow over her face.

Cloud grinned and attacked her sides with his hands.

"Hey!" she protested, throwing her pillow at him.

"That's payback for yesterday."

"Hmph! See if I cook you breakfast."

Cloud batted his lashes at her and clasped his hands together, "Please? I might waste away into nothing...or worse, I might have to eat Cera's chocobo cereal!" he added, his face taking on a look of horror.

Tifa laughed and sat up, "All right you spoiled brat, you win!"

Cloud crossed his arms and looked smug, "Ha! Don't take on the master, I always win."

Tifa snorted, "Don't push your luck, bud. Or I might have to...push you out of bed!"

Cloud hit the floor with a loud thump and his face held such a comical look of surprise, that Tifa started laughing and couldn't stop. Cera, who had grown curious after the sound of Cloud hitting the floor drifted out to her, ran into the room. Seeing her Father unprotected on the floor, she leapt on him and began tickling him unmercifully.

"Hey! What is it with the women in my life tickling me to death!"

Tifa joined in on the fun and when they all were laughing too hard to move, they laid on the floor in one enormous heap.

"Can we do something fun today?" Cera asked.

"Like what?" Cloud answered.

"Umm...go visit Marlene in Kalm! I wanna play with her again. We were playing super chocobos last night with Mandie. Hey! Can Mandie come too?"

Cloud winced as he sat up, "Sure. Go call Aunt Elmyra first to see if it's all right. Then call Mandie."

Cera took off and Cloud muttered, "Kids and their energy. To think, we once were one of those."

She awoke to darkness. But, that was nothing new for she had lived in darkness for so long that it had become normal to her. It was when she found that she could open her eyes that she was shocked. And, when the bright light entered her pupil and resonated throughout her brain, she nearly cried out. The pain was so intense that it caused an instant headache. She flung her legs over the side of the object she sat on and stumbled to the floor. Her legs immediately collapsed under her and still blinded from the light, she crawled along the floor until she ran into a door. The pain reverberated up her arm and she ignored it, some instinct urging her on, urging her to move quickly.

The next place she found herself crawling in was damp and much darker. She still couldn't see clearly, but she could make out the hazy image of stone walls. She stopped momentarily, wondering which way to take until something told her to head east from the room she was in. Crawling wasn't going to get her anywhere fast, so she moved until she reached the wall and used it to pull herself up. Shakily, she felt her way along the wall, her vision becoming clearer with each step she took. Her legs were also becoming stronger, so she moved them as fast as they could go without causing herself to fall again.

She walked for what seemed like hours, never stopping again for any reason because the fear that was welling up inside her told her she was in a danger of some kind. She tried to sort out the reasons why, but her brain refused to cooperate with her and she couldn't even remember her name or how long she had been like this.

And then it hit her, a memory. She saw herself walking along a dirty, crowded street. There were people everywhere and they were moving about at amazing speeds. Everyone seemed to be in a hurry to get something and get somewhere. In her hand, she held a basket of fruit. She wasn't sure what she was supposed to do with it...she just couldn't remember. She stopped pushing herself and let the memory unfold itself. She walked on farther and was suddenly stopped by two men in blue uniforms. Soldiers? But of what? They were saying something to her, but she couldn't make it out. Then, they were grabbing her, and the fruit basket fell to the ground forgotten in the struggle. That memory ended and she flashed ahead to a small, sterile room. A man stood over her, his smile making her queasy inside. He held up a large needle and she struggled against her restraints. The needle pierced her skin and she screamed silently, welcoming the blackness.

She began to run, her breath coming in short, quick gasps. All she knew was that she had to get out of these tunnels and away from the horrible memories. She couldn't let them find her again. She didn't want to go back to the torture.

She stood on the path of Da-Chao and watched as Wutai burned to the ground and the people she had grown up with died at the hands of the enormous army. As prosperous as Wutai was now, they were still not strong enough to take on an army of thousands. She stood as guardian to the fire cave, where the children were hidden away. But, if they lost this battle, the children would have no parents to take care of them and no home to go back to.

"Sad, isn't it?"

She whirled around; no one should have been able to get past her guard.

"The children are all dead. Take a look."

"Where are you coward?!"

From the shadows, a brown boot appeared, followed by another, and then the hem of a long, white coat. She looked up and found herself face to face with a man that should have been dead.

"You-you're dead! We all watched Weapon shoot the Shinra building..."

He laughed, "Dead? No, I'm afraid not. And your nightmares, little girl, are just beginning."

She felt a surge of anger and rushed forward.

"I don't think that would be wise." He stated.

She looked to where he pointed, and watched, helplessly as one of his drones held her father over the edge of the stone path.

"Hmmm. To drop, or not to drop. Which shall it be?"

"You twisted bastard, let him go!"

"No. I've made up my mind. Drop him."

She woke up screaming, the sheets a twisted mess around her waist, and her body covered in sweat. It was all of her worst nightmares packed into one dream. She knew that the dream wasn't real, but it took her mind awhile to believe her.

When she was sure her legs would support her, Yuffie stood up on her mat and noticed the light seeping into the window. It was early morning now, and there would definitely be no attempt to go back to sleep. She couldn't explain the nightmare. Maybe it had been brought on by Cid's near brush with death. Tifa had called and told her all that had happened and Yuffie admitted she had been a little uneasy. She wasn't overly fond of the cantankerous, old pilot, but that didn't mean she wanted him dead.

She needed something to take her mind off of both things, and she knew just what to do. She would climb the pagoda. She needed the exercise, and so did her Father.

Reno followed Reeve into his office and gave his surroundings a sour look. He had thought that perhaps Reeve would want dropped of at his apartment to shower and change, but he should have known that he would want to work. Reno considered work on a Sunday an abomination that was surely conjured up to destroy good, clean fun. He most certainly had no intentions of sticking around here. He knew a bar stool that had his name written all over it and half a dozen beers that were waiting to be drunk.

He was about to remark upon the futility of working on Sunday, when Reeve's office phone rang. Reeve snatched it up and listened intently for a few moments before answering whoever it was that he would get right on it.

"What was that all about?" Reno asked, throwing himself into a chair and propping his feet up on Reeve's desk.

Reeve gave him a look and pushed his feet off of his desk. Reno grinned at him and promptly put them back up. Reeve threw his hands up in frustration and went to sit behind his desk.

"That was Cloud. There something under Midgar that needs to be checked out. Red saw what seemed to be a large mass of energy moving underneath us."

"And?"

"And what?" Reeve replied, irritated.

"What are you going to do about it."

"Send a small army of Soldiers underground to check it out."

Reno's feet hit the floor hard and he leaned forward, "Jesus Reeve! It's Sunday! You're becoming more and more like ole Rufus everyday."

Normally, this was a joke between Reno and Reeve, but today Reeve took offense to it.

"Me becoming more like Rufus?! You seem to forget Reno, that I was doing *something* to aid Cloud and the others in bringing Shinra down, while you either sat on your ass and drank or caused us problems."

Reno stood up, his eyes flashing, "Just what the hell is biting you today Reeve? No, wait, I rephrase that. What the hell has been biting you for the past two days."

Reeve stood up as well, so that he could lean across his desk and snap at Reno, "Nothing is biting me! And if it was, maybe it would be you!"

"What's that supposed to mean?!" Reno demanded.

"No, of course not! Reno would never realize that perhaps he got on everyone's nerves just a little, no scratch that, a whole lot! Did it ever occur to you that maybe we get sick of your laziness and you smartass remarks?"

Reno slapped his hands hard onto Reeve's desk and growled, "You just keep pushing, super-prez, and you're likely to find yourself feet over ass."

"Are you threatening me, Reno?"

"You betcha. What are you going to do about it?"

Reeve stared at Reno for a few minutes before rounding his desk and coming to stand in front of him.

Reno laughed harshly, "I'm not going to fight you, you stupid @\$%er. I'm out of here," he added, heading for the door.

Before he left, he turned around and said, "You'd better work that kink out of your system before you find that you have no friends left, Reeve. I find you to be a halfway decent guy, but keep it up, and I might just change my mind."

Reeve waited until Reno was out of sight before knocking all of the papers off his desk with one angry sweep. He didn't like these conflicting feelings he was experiencing, and so he had made a jerk out of himself by tearing Reno down. He knew Reno made it a habit to fawn all over every woman, but this time it wasn't just any woman, it was Aeris. And because he couldn't understand what it was he felt for her, he most certainly didn't want Reno anywhere near her.

Vincent paced the front hall of his mansion, an unexplainable feeling of restlessness plaguing him. After last night's scare, he hadn't been able to sleep because he hadn't been able to hold back all of the emotions he told everyone else were gone. They weren't gone at all, he had just gotten very good at hiding them. He pushed a hand through his unruly black hair and let a frustrated sigh slip past his lips.

He wasn't sure where it was he wanted to go, but it wasn't here. He only had to make up his mind and then head for the ferry. It would take him to the other continent and he could go where ever he wanted. Vincent wasn't usually given to wandering just for the sake of wandering, but he wanted to now. He wanted to go everywhere and just look at everything

as though for the first time. To see things through the eyes of a man that had much to live for, not through ones that remained detached from life.

And so, that was how he found himself on the ferry in the middle of the afternoon, bound for anywhere and anything.

Yuffie had spent the better part of the morning climbing the Pagoda and now it had reached mid-afternoon. She was standing across from her Father now, preparing for the final battle. They bowed to one another and began circling each other on the mat. Yuffie, ever the bold one, darted forward and threw the first kick. Her Father managed to block it, but just barely. His Daughter was getting quicker, that or he was getting older.

Godo suddenly brought his hand toward Yuffie's neck, and while she blocked this, he swung around and brought her to the mat by sweeping her feet out from under her. Yuffie swiftly jumped back up, her face a mask of concentration. Godo pulled a materia into his hand and called down Bolt. Yuffie absorbed the hit and counter attacked with one of her own.

"Bolt? Come on, Dad, you're getting soft!"

Godo glared at her and replied, "I was just warming up. Now quit talking and get fighting."

Yuffie pulled out a yellow materia and jumped up to him, using it to steal all of his materia. Godo immediately stopped and fisted his hands on his hips.

"What was that? Cheating again?"

"That wasn't cheating!" Yuffie protested. "I was using a steal materia."

"Cheating. That's not what it's used for. Well, since you have all my materia, why don't you get rid of all yours and we will fight without any weapons or materia."

Yuffie shrugged, "You're on."

Yuffie dodged Godo's first punch and used his arm to swing herself around. She then grabbed a hold of his shoulders and flung him to the ground. Godo lay where he was, pretending to be mortally wounded. When Yuffie finally came close enough out of worry, he grabbed her foot and pulled her down with him.

"Hey! Now who's cheating?!"

Godo laughed, "That wasn't cheating. That was using my wits."

"Ha!" she yelled, sending a punch into his gut.

"Oomph! Now-that-was-cheating! I-wasn't-even-ready!"

Yuffie smirked and turned his words on him, "I was just using my wits."

They lay still for awhile before Yuffie finally asked, "Dad, what was my Mom like?"

Godo looked surprised. In all the years of her life, Yuffie had never asked him that question before. He wondered if it hurt her to talk of her Mother as much as it hurt him, so he had let it pass.

"She was beautiful, like you. And she made me very happy. I was always so much more calm when she was around. She balanced out my tendency toward rashness. I'm afraid you inherited that from me."

Yuffie smacked him playfully, but waited for him to go on.

"I married her long after the war with Shinra was over. Before then, I had been too busy getting the town back on its feet. She was kind, loving, and very excited about your arrival. When she died giving birth to you, a part of me died with her. Because of that, I'm afraid I haven't always given you the strong hand you've needed. And I haven't always been there for you when I should have been. I regret the estrangement in our relationship for so many years, and take most of the blame for it."

Yuffie rested her hand on his, "It's okay. That's all passed now and there's no sense in dragging it up again."

Godo looked at her curiously, "Why do you want to know this all of the sudden?"

Yuffie shrugged and stood up, hiding her face from him while she gathered her materia.

"It doesn't have anything to do with that red-haired man who you are always fighting with, does it?" Godo asked, sitting up.

Yuffie whirled around, "Of course not! What a stupid question. Anyhow, I'm going to shower and head to the bar. I need something to drink."

Godo watched her leave, grinning to himself. She had been a little too adamant in her denial. He could almost feel those grandchildren bouncing on his knees.

Yuffie showered and true to her word, she headed for the bar. Her Father's words had stuck with her and she half expected Reno to be there, but sitting in his usual place, was a big, black-haired stranger that she'd never seen before. As she walked past him, his arm shot out and grasped her around the waist.

"Hey-"

"Hiya honey, how about sittin' in my lap for awhile?"

Yuffie gave him a dark look and said, "I'd rather juggle torches naked in front of the whole town!"

The man took offense to that, and stood up, crushing her in his arms, thus making her immobile. Yuffie wasn't too sure how she was going to get out of this one. Maybe if she managed to bite his...

She heard what sounded like an electric charge and a familiar voice said, "Let the lady go."

The man holding Yuffie sized up the red-headed shrimp in front of him, who was carrying some little stick and who was looking like he just crawled out of bed, and then laughed.

"What're ya gonna do about it shrimp?"

"Why don't you let her go and I'll show you." Reno replied coolly.

The punk looked down at Yuffie and said, "This'll be fun. I haven't had exercise in awhile."

Yuffie kind of felt sorry for the guy as he set her aside, Reno looked angrier than she had ever seen him.

Reno waited patiently for the man to attack, his electrically charged nightstick resting on his shoulder. Judging by the size of the guy, Reno knew that his opponent would rely on brute force. It was simply a matter, then, of being quicker and smarter.

The first punch the giant threw was easily dodged, and Reno zapped him a good one with his stick. The guy was a little surprised, but he recovered quickly enough. This time, the ogre managed to connect his fist with Reno's nose. Reno wiped his nose with his sleeve and shocked the guy with a little bit higher voltage. Unfortunately, that didn't have the effect Reno was hoping it would. Instead, it enraged the giant further and he charged Reno.

"Look, I'd love to continue, but I'm not much in the mood." Reno said, pulling a green orb out of his pocket.

"BOLT THREE!"

Reno left the fried guy where he was and sidled up to the bar. He asked for whiskey, and downed the glass in one swift gulp. Fishing a handkerchief out of his pocket, he pinched his bloodied nose.

"Reno-"

"Shut up, Yuffie. I'm not in the mood to deal with you."

"I was just going to thank-"

"Save it for someone who gives a shit."

"Well jeez! What's your problem?!"

Reno turned on her, his icy blue eyes cutting through her like shards of glass, "Can't you take a hint? I don't want to look at you, much less talk to you!"

"Listen, maybe if you talked about it, it-"

"What are you, stupid? You don't know shit about me, and if I chose to share my thoughts with someone, it wouldn't be you!"

Yuffie had finally had enough abuse, and containing the look of hurt, she turned and walked stiffly away. When she reached the outside of the bar, she headed for Da-Chao, tears streaming down her face.

Well, I suppose it was about time this chapter got finished. I admit I've had a bit of writer's block and a lack of time, but I finally did it!

Hmmm...so what is this thing I seem to have for tickling? Everyone's tickling somebody anymore. I am not ticklish, thank the Lord ^_^ But for all you who are, you have my sympathy.

Okay...questions. Who is the mysterious girl? What's up with Vince all of the sudden? CID with CHICKENPOX?? Ooooo, a mysterious source of energy showing up under Midgar right after mean ole Ruffie awakens his army, does that mean trouble is on its way? And what's up with Reeve? He sure is turning into a grouch all of the sudden. These questions, and many more to be answered in other chapters. *evil grin*

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