

Chapter 13: A Big Rascal

"Aww, you killed the cowlick? You were such a cute little rascal."-Kiyara Maiden Shinra

The green glow from the computer screen provided the only illumination in the living room, giving Kiyara's face a strange look, casting it in emerald shadows.

Leaning forward in the seat, she mumbled quietly to herself. "Born 1947... married in '69...born in '77 and '79..."

Suddenly, Kiyara was aware of a presence behind her as the hairs on the back of her neck stood on end. She whirled in the chair to find Reno grinning at her. She sighed, part in relief and part in exasperation. "You scared the hell out of me!"

Reno smirked at her from where he was leaning up against the doorframe. "That was the point."

Kiyara rolled her eyes and returned her attention back to the computer screen, scrolling down, her keen blue-gray eyes searching for key words and phrases.

"What're you doin' down here?" Reno finally asked. "It's one in the morning. Everyone else went to bed hours ago."

"Everyone else didn't just find out today that they have a family and that they could be the heir to the presidency of Shinra," Kiyara replied caustically, not even bothering to turn around.

That got Reno's attention. "Presidency?! As in President of the Shinra Power and Electric Company?!"

"Where else would I have a chance at being president?"

Reno gulped. "But...but that would mean you'd be my boss!"

Kiyara turned for a moment with an evil grin on her face, her bared teeth shining oddly in the semi-gloom. "It would, wouldn't it?"

Reno was lost for words.

"I ought to announce that I could be your boss every day. It keeps you nice and quiet." Kiyara frowned at the computer screen. "What the...that doesn't make sense!"

Reno regained his tongue. "What doesn't make sense?" He crossed the room to lean on her chair, his forearms on the gray back of the seat and his own back curved.

Kiyara glanced back at him for a moment. "You're going to need a back brace one day when you keep slouching like that, and I'm gonna laugh my ass off."

Reno barely took any notice of what she had said. "Yeah yeah. So you're looking up stuff on the Shinras?"

She nodded. "Yeah. Then I'm gonna see if either Az or I are eligible for the presidency."

Reno winced. "I think I'll shoot myself if you become president."

Kiyara didn't even bother to reply to that. She squinted at the screen. "Wha...shit."

"What is it?" Reno asked, leaning over her shoulder.

"Not only did the old man beat his kids, he was a lying sonovabitch, too," Kiyara hissed, her face gaining an angry expression.

Reno gave her a confused look. "Who?"

Kiyara scowled at him. "Let me start from the beginning. Rufus Shinra Senior was born in 1947."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. His name was Rufus? President Shinra's name was Rufus?" Reno asked, looking like he was ready to burst out laughing. "I can't believe he gave the kid his name. Those two hated each other."

"Yes, his name was Rufus. Now can I continue?"

Reno nodded. "Go right ahead."

"So he was born in 1947. My mother, Elisa Maiden, was born in 1951. They were married in 1969."

Reno did some quick counting in his head. "That means that she was eighteen, and he was twenty-two. And Maiden, that's Az's last name! He must have taken your mother's maiden name as his own."

Kiyara fixed him with a glare. "I kinda figured that. Can I go on, please?"

Reno waved her on.

"Azrael was born in '77. I was born in 1979. Azrael, Elisa, and me went missing, supposedly to the Wutaiins, in '88, when Azrael was eleven, I was nine, and Elisa was thirty-seven. President Shinra remarried, to some wealthy socialite in '89. Now, here's the weird part. On all of the websites that I went on, they said that Rufus had been born in '90. But when I managed to hack into Midgar city records, there was a birth certificate for Rufus, but it was dated 1984."

Reno understood almost immediately. "Dear old dad was cheating. Rufus was born even before you three were gone."

Kiyara nodded. "Right. Then, in May of 1997, the Second Shinra-Wutai War began, supposedly because of what the Wutaians had done to President Shinra's family so long ago, and because they had been attacking Shinra merchant ships." She scrolled down a little more. "It also says that some village, Leecos, or Lircos or something like that, was destroyed by the Wutaians, and that was the final straw."

Reno frowned. "But I don't think anything was done to President Shinra's family, because you're right here."

Kiyara nodded. "Exactly. Reno, we've stumbled onto something tremendous here. If this is true, the Shinra-Wutai War was started for some other reason that President Shinra wanted to keep hidden. And that can't be a good reason."

"Yeah, but what can we do with this? The war was over...erm, when was it over again?"

Kiyara snickered slightly, but answered. "In November of 1997." Then she sobered. "Then, in 2001, that's three years ago, the whole Meteor incident occurred, and both Rufus Shinras went to the grave. I hope they rot in hell."

Reno flinched at the steely tone in her voice. "Glad I'm not them."

A voice startled the both of them suddenly. "You could take this new information to the press, and Shinra would take quite a beating, even if the same family isn't in charge any more."

Reno and Kiyara spun to find Cid in the doorway of the room.

"Cid!" Kiyara said. "I, um, was gonna ask if I could use the computer, but you guys were asleep, so I, uh..."

Cid waved her off. "That's fine. I don't care if you use the damn thing." He came closer, and peered in at the screen. "Lircos Village... Now that brings back memories..."

Kiyara blinked. "You were involved in this?"

Cid nodded. "Hell, yeah. I was Shinra's top fighter pilot."

Reno cocked an eyebrow. "Really?"

Cid sounded more amused than angry, but still let Reno have it. "What do you think?! Of course really!"

Reno just shrugged and returned to scanning the computer screen over Kiyara's shoulder.

"I think I'm gonna have you two out of here tomorrow," Cid said idly.

"Finally," Reno sighed.

"So the repairs are almost done?" Kiyara asked, clicking on another website.

Cid grinned. " 'Yara, they are done. All that's left is to make sure that the damn thing still works." Kiyara frowned. " 'Yara. That doesn't sound right... But then again, I'm still not used to being addressed as as Kiyara anyway."

Cid's voice became gentler. "How goes the fact finding about the family?" At Kiyara's questioning look, he answered, "Well it was obvious why you were down here."

"Well, uh, pretty good for discovering that your father was a bastard who beat his family and cheated on his wife, and your mother was a former stripper."

"Whaaaaat?" Reno blinked. "You didn't tell me that part about your mom!"

She smiled mock-sweetly at him. "For one thing, I certainly don't tell you everything. For another, it wasn't public knowledge or something that she told very many people."

"How'd you find this out, then?" Reno asked.

"By chance, really. I looked up her maiden name, Elisa Maiden, and I came up with an old advertisement for a strip club."

"Hey, if it makes you feel better, my mother was one too," Reno offered.

Cid snorted. "Y'know, I think I'm gonna leave you two to your discussion of your mother's professions and go to bed. G'night."

"Good night, Cid!" Kiyara called after him as he went down the hall.

"Hope the bed bugs bite," Reno muttered under his breath.

Kiyara had sharp hearing, and smacked him.

"Ow," Reno complained, rubbing the back of his head.

Suddenly, he heard her give a sharp intake of breath.

"What?" he asked.

She turned to look at him. "I was reading through the Shinra charter, and Azrael should by all rights be president of the company!"

"What?! Lemme see that!" Reno leaned very close in over her shoulder.

"I'll translate the hard words for you," she said condescendingly. Reno glared. "It basically says that no matter what, the oldest Shinra is in charge. If there is no oldest Shinra, that's when someone like your buddy Reeve steps in. But even after all of the horrible things that both Rufus Shinras did, that still stands. And Az is the oldest living Shinra child..."

"So Az could just step in, prove that he's Rufus Shinra Sr.'s son, and take the presidency away from Reeve, just like that?" Reno asked in amazement.

Kiyara nodded. "Just like that."

Reno was dumbfounded. "Wow. We've gotta get in touch with him!"

Kiyara shook her head. "I tried this afternoon when I found out he's my brother. He's in his plane, and no one was sure quite where. The thing's too damn old to have a phone of some sort, the airport wouldn't send a personal message over the radio, and Azrael doesn't carry a cell phone. We've gotta wait til he comes in somewhere, which could be a while."

Reno shook his head, grinning. "'S just like Az."

There was a comfortable silence for several moments, while Kiyara continued reading the Shinra charter. Finally, she finished and began to shut down the computer, but stopped and sat still for a moment.

"I'll be sad to leave this place," she said quietly.

Reno shrugged. "It was kinda nice..."

"Wow. That's the first time I've heard you refer to this place in a way that isn't totally condescending and evil."

Reno hit at her, not really meaning it. Kiyara batted back at him, meaning it.

"Ouch!" Reno hissed.

Kiyara smiled sweetly at him. "Whoops. My hand slipped."

Reno stomped off, cursing her under his breath.

Smiling to herself, Kiyara flicked off the computer and walked out after him, off to her room.

* * * * *

In the morning, Reno was awakened by voices in front of the door of the guestroom he was sleeping in.

He thought he heard Kiyara giggle, then say, "Why don't you go on in and wake Mister Reno up? He'll really appreciate it."

Please tell me you're joking... Reno thought to himself, groaning inwardly and pulling the pillow further over his head.

The door to his room opened, and two yelling little creatures ran in and jumped on Reno, bouncing up and down on the bed, and inadvertently stepping all over him.

"Ow, ow, ow!" Reno yelled through his pillow, voice muffled.

"Time to get up!" Kat shouted, her shout riddled with giggles.

"No," Reno said stubbornly, pulling the pillow closer to his face.

Kiyara's voice came from the doorway. "Try lifting the shades."

Josh jumped off the bed and ran to the windows, thrusting up the blinds and sending shafts of sunlight into the room.

Reno pulled the pillow away from his face so that he could look at Kiyara for a moment. She was leaning on the doorframe, grinning. "So you're the evil mastermind behind this."

"That would be me!" she replied sprightly.

While he was otherwise occupied and the pillow wasn't being held so tightly, Kat grabbed it and began hitting him with it while still bouncing on him. "Time ta get up!" she reiterated.

Reno held up an arm to shield himself from the blows raining down on him.

Cid's voice came up the stairs. "Tell Copper-top that if he's not ready in a half an hour, I'm leaving him here with the twins!"

Reno heard him loud and clear, and fairly leapt out of the bed. Josh and Kat laughed uproariously at his reaction, and he could hear Kiyara's smothered laughter from the door. He stopped from his search through the pile of clothes that Cid had lent him for a moment to glare at her. "It's not funny."

She shook her head, with a hand over her mouth. "Yes it is. The hair looks great there, Reno."

Reno's hand went to his hair immediately to find that there was a piece sticking up in the back.

"You look like Alfalfa!" Katania said loudly, smiling widely.

Reno scowled at her and went into the bathroom with his clothes, slamming it behind him. The three co-conspirators giggled, then ran downstairs to get breakfast.

* * * * *

Ten minutes later, Reno was downstairs and grabbing a bagel from the table. His hair was still damp, and it looked like he had really plastered down the back of his head in particular. The soggy ponytail flopped around on his shoulders and back.

Kiyara was already seated. Cocking an eyebrow, she said, "Aww, you killed the cowlick? You were such a cute little rascal." There was smothered laughter from the entire Highwind family.

Reno opened his mouth to respond, but then he glanced at Josh, who was sitting beside him, looking up at him. Reno closed his mouth and contented himself with glaring as he munched on his bagel.

"So, you two ready to go?" Cid asked, standing up and pushing his table back from the table. There was a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"No," protested Reno, his voice muffled by bagel. "I just sat down!"

"Yeah," Kiyara answered, also smirking a little as she ignored Reno completely.

"Let's go, then," Cid replied.

"Does no one listen to me?" Reno entreated to the air.

The other two ignored him some more.

Shera stood as well. "Let me get you a bag for the clothes I gave you, Kiyara."

"No, really, those are your clothes, Shera. I can't take them," Kiyara protested.

"Sure you can. C'mon." The two women left the room, still arguing good-naturedly.

"C'mon, Turk," Cid said to Reno, making a move toward the stairs. "I'm supposed to be doin' the same."

Cid was halfway to the stairs when he realized that Reno wasn't with him. He turned back around. "You comin'?"

Reno was standing there still, with his arms crossed over his chest and the cold expression that was on his face was one that was usually reserved for really rotten enemies. "I don't answer to Turk, Copper-top, or whatever else you can come up with. I'm sick of it. How would you like it if I called you old man?"

Cid scowled. "I'm only ten years older than you."

"Didn't think you'd like it. I'll answer to my name, either my first or my last. Nothing else."

Cid sighed. "All right. But if you call me old man again, nothin's gonna save you. Lynley, you comin' or not?"

"Coming," Reno replied, following him up the stairs.

* * * * *

A few minutes later, the Highwind family and Reno and Kiyara were gathered at the crude airstrip, where the gleaming Highwind was awaiting them, Reno and Kiyara both in possession of duffle bags.

Reno accidentally dropped his bag, and when he bent to pick it up, Kat and Josh were all over him--literally. The twins took the opportunity of him suddenly being their height and jumped on his back, nearly dropping him along with his bag.

"Mista Reeeneooooo!" they wailed.

"Aww, we don't want ya to goooo!" finished Kat, looking ready to burst into tears. Her black-haired brother, finding that there wasn't enough room on Reno's narrow back, jumped off.

Reno blinked, feeling another flashback coming on. Go away, go away, go away, he pleaded silently. But it didn't listen.

* * * * *

There was a breezeway in one of the few true houses in Midgar. The walls were painted a pale green and sunlight streamed in through the clean windows. In direct contrast to the clean, expensive room, piles of clothes and children's toys were strewn haphazardly across the white tiled floor.

There were a man and a girl standing in the middle of this breezeway. However, this was a different man and girl; not the middle-aged child beater and blonde girl. No, this man was very young, tall, and lanky, with flaming red hair spiking all over his head and gathered into a ponytail at the nape of his neck. His baggy blue jeans and plain gray T-shirt hung off of his skinny frame, while the seven-year-old girl clinging to his leg wore a jean skirt, fitted pink T-shirt, and pink jelly sandals.

"Aww, I don't wanna goooo!" the little girl wailed, her red curls bouncing as Reno attempted to shake her off.

I fuckin' hate it when she decides to be stubborn... "Aimee, you're going on a special field trip today, 'member? Your teacher's bringing you to Sector 7, as part of your Social Studies class about helping others. You guys are working at the soup kitchen, remember?" Reno tried to convince her, using his hands in expansive gestures. Hahaaaaa, Lynley, you're so full of bullshit.

She didn't look convinced, and glared up at him with wide green eyes, still firmly attached to his leg. "What's so interesting about that?"

Reno was at a loss; in his mind, there was absolutely nothing interesting about it and he would've kicked and screamed if he'd been forced to go.

Aimee's angry façade began to crack, and she smiled at his loss of words.

Standing in the expansive, elegant foyer, Reno took heart. "I can't really describe it, Aimee. It's too damn cool for me to explain with words! But if you really don't wanna go, I'll take your place and go on the fun field trip while you stay here and clean, 'cause that's what I was gonna do today. This is gonna be so cool!" He was fighting the urge to crack up, give in, and allow her to stay home for the day; he almost succumbed to the urge, then frowned to himself. The little demon'd missed the day before for pretending to be sick; he couldn't let her stay again today.

"No! I'll go! I'll go!" Aimee yelled, looking full of fear. Problem solved.

Reno's keen green eyes glanced out the window as her death grip on his leg finally relaxed. A big yellow vehicle was pulling up at the corner of the street. "Hey, go on, okay, kiddo? The bus is here."

The girl gave a wordless scream, grabbed her small black backpack, and bolted out the front door. "Bye!"

The door slammed behind her.

Reno grinned to himself. Score one for the big guys. Almost immediately, Reno's cell phone rang. He picked it up and placed it to his ear. "Y'ello."

"Reno? It's Tseng."

Oh fuck. "Hey, great leader. Called to wish me a nice day off?" Reno asked hopefully, knowing that was not the truth. Sighing unhappily to himself in his head, he shoved stray molten red strands of hair out of his face.

There was silence for a moment, then Tseng answered. "I'm afraid not. We need you for a special assignment. Met me at the helicopter pad in fifteen minutes for a special mission to Sector 7. Tseng out."

Reno cursed to himself as he hung up the phone, grabbed his navy-blue suit from a pile on the floor, snatched up a set of car keys off of a stack of dolls, and went out the door.

* * * * *

The redhead shook his head violently, and opened his eyes to find Kat's face in his, looking down on him curiously. His little flashback appeared to have only taken a few seconds, but the little girl had obviously noticed that something was wrong.

He seemed normal enough, so she ignored the digression. "D'you hafta go, Mista Reno?" she asked, putting on a little cute expression, her black hair falling into her face and obscuring her face completely.

Reno grinned at her upside down face. She was still sitting on his back while hanging her face into his. "Unfortunately, I do hafta go."

Kat pouted, but kissed him on the cheek. "Fi-ine. Bye Mista Reno!"

Then she jumped off his back and ran off to Kiyara.

Josh, a little more shy than his sister, hung back, but came close enough to shake Reno's hand, which was held out to him solemnly.

Then Reno stood back and watched Kiyara's good-byes impatiently, foot tapping. With a look from Kiyara, the foot stopped.

Kiyara hugged Shera fondly. "Thanks for everything, Shera."

Shera smiled at the blonde. "You're very welcome. It was well worth helping you."

Kiyara felt something grab her legs, and she looked down to find Josh hugging her knees.

Kiyara smiled and dropped to a crouch beside him. "C'mere." She held her arms open, and Josh jumped into them, wrapping his chubby little arms around her neck.

"Bye bye, Joshie," she whispered in the shy boy's ear.

"Bye, K'yara," he whispered back.

The second he backed away, Kat dashed in and took his place.

"Visit us?" she asked hopefully.

Kiyara reassured the little girl. "I would love to."

Kat frowned, the expression on her face looking almost comical. "Promise?"

Kiyara nodded. "I promise."

Kat looked mollified. "All right. I guess you c'n go, then."

"Thanks for the permission, Kat. Bye." Kiyara hugged the small girl.

The Wutaian girl squeezed her back, then let go. Kiyara rose to her feet and picked up her bag.

Reno's face wore an expression that practically screamed, "Finally!"

As the two of them walked toward the waiting Highwind, which was straining against its tethers, Kiyara smacked him in the chest.

There was faint laughter from the deck of the ship.

Kiyara took a mock bow in the direction of the gleaming airship as Reno halted in front of Shera. Giving the tiniest hint of a bow, he looked her straight in the face and said, "Thank you for everything, Mrs. Highwind." He threw the duffel bag over one shoulder and continued on his way, leaving Shera and Kiyara staring after him.

Kiyara blinked at his amazing politeness, then tossed her own bag over one shoulder, and jogged after him. The two of them scrambled up the swaying rope ladder and onto the deck of the Highwind without further mishap.

Shera, Josh, and Kat waved until the ship was just a tiny silver dot in the distance, which finally winked out into oblivion.

* * * * *

Author's Notes: If you're looking for some more info on the whole Wutai-Shinra war, Diego Chavez's *In the Absence of the Sun* is an absolutely fantastic piece on the Shinra-Wutai War through Cid's eyes. Also, it's in the same timeline as *Catching Glimpses* and features Azrael Maiden. By the timeline comment, I mean that it's part of the backstory to CG, so anything that happens in it, happens in the CG FFVII universe.