

Chapter 4: Revealing Secrets

"I'm wishing for once that I had Rude's linguistic skills."-Reno Lynley

Two hours and many miles later, Reno was still complaining about Dinah's long hair.

"I'm gonna have fucking whip marks all over my face."

He batted at the offending golden strands irritably. The sun was just beginning to come up over the horizon.

Dinah whirled and spat him with her sharp gaze for a moment before turning back to her driving. "Would you just shut up?!? Gods, are you a pain in the ass!"

Reno opened his mouth in retaliation, when suddenly, the bike's engine coughed, sputtered, and stopped.

Closing his mouth on his return shot and glad of an excuse to stretch his cramped legs, the ex-Turk hopped off and examined the motor. "We're gonna be stuck here for at least a couple of hours," he announced to the waiting Dinah.

"What's the most amount of time it could take, and can you fix it?" she answered, leaning against the immobile bike casually.

Reno straightened up from the engine and gave her his trademark smirk. "I can fix anything, and at the most, it'll take maybe about five hours. For such an expensive bike, the motor's a huge mess."

Dinah eyed the upcoming sun uneasily. "Well, Mr. Fix It, the sun'll be up by then."

"No shit, Einstein."

"Unless you want to be found by those guys again, we ought to move into that forest," Dinah said, nodding to the nearby woods.

Reno mimicked her pose, crossing his arms over his chest obstinately. "Not until you tell me what those guys wanted back there."

She met his gaze steadily. "And I'll tell you that when I'm ready, which'll probably be never. Why don't you just give up and help me push the bike?"

Reno sighed and rolled his eyes, feeling a little surprised that he had given in so easily. "Fine."

With Reno on one side and Dinah on the other, they quickly shoved the bike into the forest. Dinah went back to sweep away the tire tracks and footsteps, while Reno began to try to fix the bike, with not very much success.

Loud curses and electrical shocks greeted Dinah when she walked back into the small camp they had set up with what little they had. She laughed. "What happened to Mr. Fix It?" she asked.

"He decided to go to sleep, which seems like a good idea," Reno returned, mumbling around a penlight he held in his mouth.

Dinah took a seat next to him, folding her legs under herself with deceptive ease. "How bad is it?"

"Worse than I thought at first. It'll probably take closer to a day than five hours, and that's if I keep working nonstop."

"Which you will, right?"

Reno grimaced. "Yeah, yeah."

4 hours later...

"That's fucking it," Reno gritted as he caught his finger in the engine for the umpteenth time. He yanked it out swiftly, flinging down the crude tools he had been working with.

"C'mon, you can't give up now," Dinah admonished him, lying on her back and staring up at what she could see of the sky.

He looked to her angrily. "It doesn't seem like you're helping much."

"I tried to help in the beginning, remember? I passed you tools and stuff, until you got mad and told me to 'just piss off.'"

Reno stopped short sheepishly, crankily rubbing at his red, sleep deprived eyes. "Oh yeah... But I'm still not going to do it any more!"

"How d'you think we'll get back to civilization without transportation?" Dinah asked practically.

But Reno wasn't in a practical mood. "We can walk for all I care," he growled.

Dinah, seeing that he was in earnest, sat up. "You've gotta be kidding me! The closest town is Costa del Sol, and we rode that bike for two hours! Do you have any idea how long it would take to walk that far?"

"No, but I'm getting the feeling you do," Reno muttered.

"It would take hours and hours! There's no way we could do that before the sun came up!"

"What's the problem with the sun? You a vampire?"

Dinah ignored his second comment. "Do you really want those guys to find us again?"

Seeing that she was expecting an answer, Reno shook his head reluctantly. "Well, no."

"Then we'd have to travel at night, and it would take us longer than it is dark to walk that far."

"All right, all right! I get the point."

"Does that mean you'll fix the bike?"

Reno grinned. "You find something that'll make me actually want to fix the bike, and you've got yourself a deal. Until then, have fun walking."

Dinah sputtered with indignation and anger. "You want to bargain?!"

Reno was oblivious to her rage. "Yup."

"All right. I'll give you a reason to want to fix the bike," Dinah said softly, her eyes glittering dangerously. She stood slowly,

hands balling into menacing fists.

Reno just looked at her, refusing to be intimidated. "Not that kind of reason, though."

"What then?" she snarled.

"Why don't you tell me why those guys are after you, and I'll repair while you talk," Reno suggested.

She immediately drew back. "No way in hell!"

"Fine then. I guess you'll just have to walk. I don't have anywhere I have to be anytime soon. Work at Shinra was getting boring anyway," Reno said airily.

Dinah cursed softly to herself. For several seconds, she obviously fought for what to do. Then she reached a decision. "All right," she sighed, sitting back down. "What do you want to know? But I swear, Turk, that if I find that you've sold what I'm gonna tell you to the highest bidder, nowhere on the Planet is going to be safe for you."

"I won't tell," Reno agreed. He noticed that she was still glaring at him. "What, d'you want me to swear on the Bible or something? Let me tell you something, sweetheart. I'm an atheist."

"Don't...push it, Lynley," Dinah growled. "I may be forced to put up with you for now, until you repair the bike, but that doesn't mean that I'm forced to put up with your attitude."

"Okay, okay. No more 'sweethearts'. Just get on with the story," Reno said dismissively.

"Not until you start working on the bike. A deal's a deal."

Reno sighed loudly and picked up his tools again, digging through the motor. "I'm working. Now will you tell me why those guys were after you?"

Dinah was silent for a moment, then began to speak. "I don't know where I'm from-"

"What? How can you not know where you're from?" Reno interrupted.

Dinah glared icily.

"Okay, shutting up now. Go on."

Dinah cleared her throat and started again. "I don't know where I'm from. The only home that I've ever known was a laboratory in a small town called Nibelheim."

Reno stopped where he was. "Laboratory? Nibelheim? As in Hojo's laboratory in Nibelheim?"

The blonde woman favored him with a curious look. "You know of it?"

"Vaguely. I was sent there with Rude to clear out all of Hojo's crap after Reeve became president of Shinra. There was some weird stuff in there, and Reeve didn't want it falling into the wrong hands." Reno glanced at her. "Though obviously, it did."

She looked at him strangely. "Rude?"

Reno blinked. "You don't know who Rude is?"

Dinah shook her head slowly. "No. Should I?"

"Probably. D'you know who Reeve is?"

"Of course I do; who doesn't. He's the new president of the formerly very corrupt Shinra Electric Company and under his leadership the company is now actually providing energy to the people rather than leading the city of Midgar."

"Gods, you sound like a fucking brochure. I take it you know what Shinra is?"

She answered with a shudder.

"I'd say you do. After Meteor hit Midgar--" Reno stopped, then groaned. "I have to explain Meteor, don't I?"

"Don't bother; I'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to know about Meteor."

"That's a relief. I barely understand all the Meteor/Sephiroth shit myself. Anyway, after Meteor decimated Midgar, Reeve managed to fix up the whole city within two years, and he was elected the new president of Shinra. That was last year, and I work under him now, as does my partner Rude. Anything else?"

Dinah nodded. "Yeah. How long ago did you go to the lab?"

Reno thought for a moment. "I'd say it was about ... two months ago."

She seemed to ponder that. "They can't be gone..." she muttered.

"Hello? The Planet to Dinah?" Reno asked, green eyes watching her shrewdly for a moment as he paused from his work with the motorcycle.

"Huh?"

"Any more questions, or can you finish your part of the bargain now?"

Dinah shook her head. "No more questions."

"Good. You go on now." Reno went back to reaching inside the innards of the bike.

"I don't remember where I was from, what my name was, or anything about myself before the laboratory. My earliest memory was when I was nine or ten, and I was in a specimen tube in the lab.

Basically, I lived there for all of my childhood and teenage years, with that sonuvabitch Hojo and his assistants poking me with needles and all kinds of other nasty things. As far as I can remember, that is. I honestly don't remember much of anyone or anything, both before and after I ended up in his lab. My guess is that he had me on some kind of memory drugs.

I lived that way even after he died in Midgar, because he had a group of sadistic colleagues who kept up the experiment with me. I never even knew what the gods-be-damned experiment was, and I still don't. Then, around a year and a half ago, a new lab worker came along. She was young and naïve, and thought that she was searching for a cure for cancer. Imagine her shock when she got to the lab, and found that they were really performing twisted and cruel experiments on living creatures." She gave a mirthless laugh.

"Creatures? Creatures as in plural?" questioned Reno, face furrowed in a frown.

"Yeah, I wasn't the only one. I could see from my tube at least one other human, and a lion-looking thing. Anyway, though, that lab student stayed, and made her new goal to free all of us. Her name? It was Dinah. I don't have a name. Dinah was so kind to me that I decided to use hers.

She was the only kind one out of the bunch, and I almost immediately latched onto her when she brought me my food every night. They soon found that I wouldn't struggle if she gave me my injections and strapped me to the table for experiments, because I was afraid of hurting her. Finally, they grew to trust her, and to trust that I wouldn't hurt her, so they would leave us alone to do the experiments, since I fought even less when there were less people around.

One day, she led me away from the lab and into the mansion, to her little room. She gave me money and suitable clothes, then brought me back to the lab. I didn't understand what was going on until she told me to snap the straps on the examining table and hit her as hard as I dared. After a lot of convincing, I did punch her, then ran out of the lab and away from Nibelheim. I've been traveling the Planet ever since, trying to get away from those guys that you saw back in Costa del Sol. They're the thugs hired by Hojo's group of colleagues, and they're trying to get me back. But there's no way I'm going to become a lab rat again. They'll have to kill me first."

There was silence. Then Reno said, "Y'know, I'm wishing for once that I had Rude's linguistic skills."

Dinah looked at him strangely.

"He always says '...'"

Dinah cracked a weak smile.

"I can tell why you didn't wanna tell me about that, I guess."

She was silent, staring at where her hand was idly ripping up tufts of grass.

"So you're basically--shit!--running all the time," Reno said, injecting the curse when the engine panel slammed shut on his hand.

"Yeah. Exactly," Dinah answered.

"That bites," Reno said with characteristic understatement while fighting to lift the panel off of his hand.

Dinah shrugged. "You could say that. Have you almost got that damn thing fixed?"

Reno finally succeeded in freeing his reddened hand, and he wrung it in pain. "No. If you're so impatient, why don't you try?"

Dinah walked over and started the motor. Nothing happened.

Reno smirked, and began to say something when she interrupted him by giving the bike a hard kick. Then she turned the key again. To Reno's surprise and chagrin, it started.

"Where to?" she asked.

Reno pondered that for a moment, then his emerald eyes lit up. "Costa del Sol. We're taking the ferry back to Junon."

"We?" Dinah crossed her arms over her chest.

"I know of a place where you can hide out," Reno offered.

She was obviously skeptical. "Where? Your place? If you think I'm gonna fuck you, you're so damn o--"

Reno shook his head, cutting her off. "No. Not my place. A better one. Somewhere where no one would even think of looking for you."

"I'm listening."

Reno grinned. "I'm not telling you!"

"And why not?"

Lynley, what the fuck are you doing? his brain demanded. But yet another voice prompted him to help her. Was it a conscience? He doubted it; he'd done too much in his time to be growing one of those now. "Uhh... 'cause if I told you, you'd go there and leave me behind, and I'd miss all of the excitement," he lied, not wanting to admit to an urge to actually help her for no particular reason.

Her lip curled in a sneer. "Your life is pretty boring, isn't it?"

"You can say that again," Reno replied with a shrug. "Now you're stuck with me, though. Wherever you go, these guys find you, right?" At her nod, he continued. "Well, this is the one place that they're not gonna find you. I guarantee it."

Dinah sighed. "All right, all right. We go at dark."

Reno shook his head and smiled. "I've got a better idea."