

IC HAPTER XIII: THEY BLINDED ME WITH SCIENCE

"Are you hurt?"

Aeris did not reply right away. She had fully recovered from Grem's attack while still on their aircraft. The man had kept a watchful eye on her once they had landed, and she hadn't tried to escape again. It didn't seem an attempts to escape would be fruitful at the moment. All she could do was bide her time and wait for a better opportunity.

Grem had brought her here, though she wasn't all that sure where here was, exactly. The cabin she had been in in the aircraft had not had any windows. She hadn't been able to see out. The flight hadn't been very long, so she knew she couldn't be *too* far away from there they had picked her up. They were in a Cetra city. The crystalline structure of the buildings and the soft greenish tinted glow of them made that obvious from the moment she had stepped out of the aircraft. If she didn't know they were miles away from Ifalna, she might have thought they had somehow brought her there. She hadn't know there were any other Cetra cities left.

However, in spite of her curiosity, she hadn't had much time to look around. Grem had led her immediately into one of the buildings, into the very room she stood in now, in fact. It was a small conference room. A long table and chairs took up most of the room. She had tried the door as soon as Grem had left. It was locked. There were no windows.

She hadn't been alone for long however, when the door had opened once again and this man that she had not seen before entered. If he was human, she would have put him somewhere in his thirties. With a Cetra is was difficult to tell his actual age. She had a feeling he was a lot older than that. He had blonde hair and a rather angular face. His eyes were a deep brown, and she was immediately drawn to them. She wasn't exactly sure why. There was just something about them that was, well, mesmerizing was the only word she could think of. They made his face look so wise and so peaceful. Just by looking in them she got the impression she could trust this man, before he even said a word. That put her on guard.

"Why have you brought me here?"

"Be at ease," he replied, stepping closer. "No one is going to harm you. My name is Yonsin, and this is Dal'Otor, the ancient capital city of our people."

"You didn't answer my question," she pointed out, in no mood to be polite.

"Nor did you answer mine," he responded. "Even if you are not hurt, you must be tired and hungry from your recent travails. These last few days must have been difficult for you. If you wish to rest, you're welcome to use one of our sleeping quarters. Or if you need to eat, food can be provided."

"I'm fine," she said, rather abruptly. "Why am I here?"

"I see that curiosity has perhaps driven both hunger and rest from your mind. Understandable, I suppose. Very well, if you'll come with me?"

He walked over to the door and motioned for her to follow. After a moment, she did. They exited the room, turning in the opposite direction from the way she had originally come. He led her out of the building into the streets.

"Dal'Otor was once the greatest of the Cetra cities," he said. "Much larger than the city you now call Ifalna. At it's height it was the greatest and most wondrous city on the face of the Planet. It was said a person could walk for a week and not reach from one end to the other. Alas, I'm afraid the city is but a poor shadow of that these days."

Aeris made no reply.

"There are few of us left now," Yonsin continued. "We only occupy a tiny portion of the city. The rest has fallen into disuse. Neglected. It is a shame really. However, I see a day when Dal'Otor is restored to it's former glory."

Again Aeris did not reply. She could tell from his voice this was something he was passionate about. She filed that under information she might need later on but showed no outward sign of interest. Frankly, she didn't care about how he felt about the city right now. It wasn't what she wanted to know.

Her lack of replies didn't seem to phase Yonsin.

"This way," he said.

He turned and they entered another building. This one seemed to be some kind of research center. They passed a number of rooms with what was obviously lab equipment in them, but that was all she could tell about it, and she had no idea of

the purpose of most of it. A few of the other Cetra were there to, the first she had seen since her she had been brought here. She recognized at least one person from the airship, but the others she did not recognize.

They passed all those rooms, however, walking down a long flight of stairs. Another corridor opened before them. This was deserted, the few doors they passed closed. At the end of this hallway they came to another room. Yonsin opened the door and they entered. In the center of this room stood some kind of Cetra device and that took up most of the room. It was obvious that whatever this was that now stood before her, it was what Yonsin had brought her here to see. It reminded Aeris of some kind of strange pipe organ. Large tubes shot out of the top, ending at different heights. There were no keys, of course, but instead some kind of control panel in the front, covered with knobs that Aeris recognized as controls from the Cetra device they had seen on Grouchoon. The entire thing seemed to be made of some kind of fine crystal that glowed with an inner light.

"We call this the Amplifier," Yonsin announced. He glanced at Aeris as he said this, but she did not look impressed.

He stood there in silence for a moment, as if waiting for Aeris to ask a question, but she did not speak.

"We call it that because it will amplify and project the voice of whoever is using it through the lifestream to all other Cetra on the planet. To any Cetra who hear it, it will sound like the Voice of the Planet."

The Voice of the Planet," Aeris said slowly, finally breaking her silence. "This has something to do with the Cetra children, doesn't it?"

"Yes. A new day is dawning for the Cetra. Jenova tried to destroy us with their virus, and they almost succeeded. For two thousand years we have been in a slow decline. Finally, however, that is about to change. The Jenova virus is dormant. There are few areas left where it is still endemic. It is gone from most places, because the Cetra are gone. All these years, we've been trying to find a cure, but we've been going about it wrong. The virus has faded, it is no longer a major threat. We believe the world can be safely repopulated, but there are too few of us left to do that. There is a new population of Cetra appearing in the world, but they come from human parents and will be raised in human households. They will be taught human culture and will forget their Cetra heritage. With the amplifier, however, we can reach them all, we can teach them of their true heritage without human interference."

Aeris didn't respond for a moment. She didn't like the sound of that. She didn't like the sound of that at all.

"The Cetra children," she finally said. "You had something to do with that, didn't you?"

"We engineered our own virus. It changes the genetic structure of a human child."

"Turning them into a Cetra," Aeris finished.

Yonsin nodded. Aeris face clouded.

"You're altering the genetic structure of human children without anyone's knowledge or consent? What gives you the right to do such a thing?"

"We have every right."

"You have *no* right!" Aeris snapped. "It was bad enough when the Cetra messed around with their own genetic structure. That's what spawned Jenova in the first place! Jenova nearly destroyed you because of your own foolishness and what have you learned? Didn't that teach you anything? So now you're messing around with another species? It was bad enough when we played God with our own people, now you want to do it with another?"

For a moment a look of anger flashed across Yonsin's face, but it vanished almost immediately.

"You have no idea of what you speak," he told her. "The human race is an aberration. Ten thousand years ago there was no human race, there was only Cetra. When we first came here there were some who rejected the Cetra ways. The Planet was wild and dangerous back then. They split apart from the Cetra, refusing to participate in our fight to tame this world, even though they were quick enough to reap the benefits when the opportunity arose. They forsook Cetra culture and turned to their own ways. Eventually they devolved into what you now call the human race."

"Why do you think Cetra and human DNA appear the same? Why do you think Ceta and humans can interbreed? It is because the human race is a pale reflection of the Cetra. Those Cetra who split apart, they made a mistake. It was not meant to be. Humans and Cetra are one. They always have been. We haven't played God with another species, we are the same species. The humans would return to the Cetra eventually. It is inevitable. We're just speeding up the process. We're returning them to what they should be. They shouldn't fight it, they should thank us for it."

"Thank you for destroying their race, their culture?" Aeris retorted. "You're not returning them to what they should be, you're committing genocide!"

Yonsin frowned. She was being much more difficult than he had hoped. Still, it was a bit much to take in.

"Perhaps from your narrow viewpoint that may seem true," he replied. "Good ideas are not always obvious the moment you see them. Sometime it takes time to fully understand something."

"That's nonsense," Aeris replied. "What, you think if you keep me here long enough I'll change my mind? Is that why you brought me here? You knew I would hear when you spoke to the Cetra children. You knew I would tell the humans the truth."

"We can't let them interfere!" Yonsin replied.

"Why not? It's *their* children you're talking about! They have a right to raise them as they see fit, Cetra or no. If this is so good for them, why are you forcing it upon them without their knowledge? Why didn't you just go to them and give them a choice, why didn't you let them make up their own minds?"

"They're humans," Yonsin replied. "They wouldn't understand. They're... misguided."

"Misguided? *Misguided*? You're experimenting with their genetics, knowing full well what happened the first time the Cetra tried that on themselves, and you have the gall to call *them* misguided?"

Yonsin just looked at her for a moment. It was plain he wasn't satisfied with her attitude, but she didn't care. How could they not see that what they were doing was wrong?

"I was hoping you would be more... understanding," he finally said. "We have a place for you to stay. You will be quite comfortable. Do me at least this one favor and promise to think about what I've told you. We're not monsters. We're not doing anything more than ensuring the continuation of our race."

At the expense of another. Aeris thought that but she said nothing. There was no point. It was obvious she wasn't going to convince him anymore than he was going to convince her.

"I'm a prisoner," it was more statement than question.

"We cannot allow you to leave, but I would prefer if you thought of yourself as a guest rather than a prisoner."

"It's hard to think of myself as a guest when I'm locked in a room and there are people watching me all the time when I'm out," she replied, staring at Grem, who was standing in the shadows in the hallway behind them, as she spoke.

"I'm sorry if you wish to look at it that way, but it is a necessary precaution," Yonsin replied. He didn't show any surprise at her having spotted the other man. "We mean you no harm, but we will not allow you to warn the humans. Hopefully as time passes, you will see the error of your ways."

Aeris said nothing more. There was no point to it. She now knew at least why she was here, and what the Cetra were up to. Yonsin obviously thought there was hope that in time she would come around to their point of view. She knew that would never happen, but wondered briefly if it might be better to play along. If she could win their trust, perhaps it would give her a better opportunity to escape. They didn't seem anxious to kill her, but that might change if they became convinced she would never come around to their point of view. It would be difficult to keep her here indefinitely against her will.

Of course, even if she played along, they weren't going to start trusting her anytime soon. It was obvious that Grem at least did not trust her at all. She was sure Yonsin didn't either, although he wasn't so obvious about it. She wasn't even sure if she could pull something like that off. She didn't know if they would believe her if she pretended to go along. It wasn't really in her nature to try to deceive people like that. She had a feeling they would see right through her. She would just have to play it by ear and see what developed.

They left the building and returned to the previous one. This time they did not return to the room she had been in but instead Yonsin led her upstairs into an area that held living quarters. He ushered her into one of the rooms.

"You should be quite comfortable here," he told her. "If you need anything, just call out. Someone will not be far away."

Yonsin looked at her for a moment, as if waiting for some kind of response, but Aeris did not reply. Finally, with a shrug, she closed the door. Aeris heard the lock click a moment later.

As Yonsin walked down the hall away from the room Grem came up beside him.

"I told you. She won't join us. She's too far gone. She's been contaminated by the humans."

"I'm not convinced of that," Yonsin replied. "Just let her spend some time with her own people, then we'll see."

"We are not her own people. She's half human. She isn't one of us."

"Yes she is," Yonsin answered, sounding irritated. "Humans are weak. You know that as well as I do. Given time and the proper training her Cetra side will dominate."

"And what if it doesn't? You know we can't afford to let her go. She knows too much now. What are you going to do if she doesn't change her mind, if she opposes us?"

"I don't know yet," Yonsin replied. "I don't think it will come to that. She'll see it our way. She has to."

"But what if she doesn't?" Grem persisted. "What if she tries to escape?"

"Then it's up to you to stop her, now isn't it?" Yonsin responded. "Without killing her."

"That may not be possible."

"I won't have anymore Cetra deaths!" Yonsin said sharply. "Marlek has already been killed. Now you want to kill Aeris too? There are so few of us left, every Cetra life is precious."

"You forget the children," Grem stated. "The project is going exceptionally well. There are already more of us now than there have been in a hundred years."

"Yes, and they are all infants," Yonsin pointed out. "They need adult Cetra to teach them, otherwise they will be lost."

"With the amplifier, it only takes one Cetra to teach them."

Yonsin ran his hand through his hair and glared at his companion.

"So what would you have me do, kill Aeris? What about Dalliana and Temerico? They've both voiced misgivings about this entire project. Should we kill them too? Have we fallen that far into barbarity? If so then perhaps Aeris is right."

"I'm not talking about wanton slaughter," Grem replied. "But we both know this project is bigger than any one person. We're talking about nothing less than the survival of our race here. We can't let any one person, no matter who they are, to stand in the way of that."

"So the ends justifies the means? Is that what you're saying? You know as well as well as I do where that path leads."

"No, what I'm saying is, in war casualties are unavoidable."

"We're not at war."

"Yes we are, a war for our own survival. You know that as well as I do. You've already proven that to me. In spite of your protests, you didn't go to the others when I told you I had killed Marlek. You didn't give me away, you couldn't afford to. You knew what that would do to the project. You were willing to cover it up. And don't tell me you weren't willing to see Aeris eliminated as well, if it could be done without too much fuss and none of the others found out. I'm not talking about getting rid all the others, just her. Dalliana and Temerico might not be behind us one hundred percent but you and I both know they'll go along with whatever we decide. We both know they'll toe the line. I don't think Aeris will do that, no matter how much you try to convince her, or how long you keep her here. She's a threat, Yonsin. A threat."

"Perhaps she is, but I'm not convinced of that, and until I am I want her alive. Do you understand me?"

For a moment they just looked at one another. There was nothing ambiguous about what Yonsin had just said. He wanted to be very clear this time exactly what he wanted. Grem seemed to be using a lot of his own initiative lately, too much so, in fact. He was becoming harder and harder to control. Grem made no attempt to disguise his ambitions. He wanted to be in charge. Yonsin had no doubts the man would turn against him as soon as it became in his best interest to do so. Knowing that, Yonsin had been tempted to jettison the man. Unfortunately that was not possible. They both had too much invested in this project to turn on the other. He had needed Grem's support to get the project going, but Yonsin was still the leader, he was the one who had the backing of most of the others. They had to work as a team or they would never succeed. He just hoped Grem realized that.

"As you wish," Grem replied. "I'll leave her alone. For now."

Yonsin nodded.

"What about this human she was with?"

"What about him?" Grem asked.

"You told me he has the Jenova virus. Could he be a threat to us?"

"He's a human," Grem said dismissively. "He's out there in the woods somewhere, alone. He doesn't know where we are, and even if he did, he couldn't get in. He'll probably just wander around until he dies of starvation. He is inconsequential."

Yonsin said nothing for a moment. Grem knew more about the humans than any of them. He was the one who had studied them, who had been off the island and among them more than any of the others. If he thought the man was no threat, then he probably wasn't.

Still, Yonsin suspected that the humans were a bit more resourceful than Grem gave them credit for.

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"Red! Thank God you're here."

The large red beast nodded to Elena as he walked into the lab. It was still a mess, though Lucrecia's body had been removed. Rude stood beside Lucrecia, while Lai Li sat at a nearby table, a pile of notes and slides heaped in front of her in a space on the table that had been cleared of debris. Reno, Yuffie and Ichiero had left to look for Vincent in the surrounding area.

"Well, I got here as fast as I could," he replied. He had important duties to attend to in Cosmo Canyon, but when he had gotten the call from Yuffie and found out what had happened in Nibelheim he had left immediately. Nipala was there, after all. She had wanted to come with him, but he had convinced her to stay. He was slowly teaching her the ways of the canyon, and what it meant to be a protector. It would be good training for her to run things while he was away for a while, something she would need if she was going to take her rightful place beside him.

"What have you found out so far?" he questioned.

"Not a hell of a lot," Rude said. "Lai Li has been looking over Lucrecia's notes, but she hasn't been able to tell us much."

"Hey, I'm working on it," he heard Lai Li comment from over by the table.

"Yes she is, but she's a linguist, not a scientist," Rude said. "This is not her area of expertise."

"Well it's hard to tell anything with this place being in such a wreck," Lai Li stated as Red walked over to her. "How much do you know about what Lucrecia was doing?"

"Not a lot, I'm afraid," Red replied. "Lucrecia was using some kind of cocktail of drugs to try to purge the Jenova cells from within Vincent's body and obviously something went very wrong. That's pretty much my entire understanding of the situation."

"You can say that again," Lai Li nodded. "Fortunately Lucrecia kept meticulous records, most of which are still intact." She shuffled through the papers in front of her for a moment. "Everything seemed to be going fine. The percentage of aberrant cells was steadily declining, that is, until the last specimen taken. Take a look at this."

She placed a slide under the microscope then got out of the way. Red stood up on his hind legs, resting his front paws on the counter in front of him, and looked into the microscope.

"That's from day before yesterday," Lai Li told him. "As you can see the slide has quadrants marked off on it. The Jenova cells can be distinguished from the normal one's by the deeper purple color of the chromatin inside the nucleus. According to Lucrecia's notes, the Jenova cells make up approximately thirty six percent of the total cells there."

"I would estimate it is closer to forty percent," Red replied.

"I came up with thirty nine," Lai Li said. "I suspect Lucrecia was suffering from overwork, or perhaps stress. Her earlier counts were much more accurate, but the difference is still not enough to significantly affect the experiment. Anyway, the count the first day was forty eight percent, so you can see there was a total decline of nine percentage points. However, look at the slide from the last day."

She removed the slide he had been looking at and replaced it with another. Red squinted at it for a few moments.

"The percentage has gone up," he said finally.

"Yes, to sixty two percent," Lai Li agreed. "It was dropping steadily a few percentage points per day, and then suddenly shot up twenty three percentage points in one day. That must have been what set off the episode, but so far I haven't been able to determine a cause."

Red stared at the slide for a bit longer.

"Wait a moment," he said, turning toward Lai Li. "Let me see that other slide again."

Lai Li obediently replaced the slide with the one that had been on the microscope. Red looked at it for a few moments.

"Hmm," he said finally.

"Hmm? What does that mean?" Lai Li asked.

"I'm not sure yet," Red answered. "Do you have an earlier slide?"

"I've got them all," Lai Li replied, indicating a group of slides stacked nearby.

"Let me see an earlier one."

Lai Li sorted through the pile and picked up another one.

"Here's one from the first day."

She put that one on the microscope and Red examined it.

"Interesting," he commented.

"What's interesting?" Lai Li asked. "What have you found?"

"Take a look," Red offered.

Lai Li replaced him in front of the microscope. She stared at the slide. She had already looked at it and nothing had seemed out of the ordinary. Nothing did this time either.

"What am I looking for?" she questioned.

"Notice the size and placement of the vacuoles and the thickness of the membrane surrounding the nucleus."

"All right," Lai Li said slowly.

"Now look at the slide from the last day again," Red said.

Lai Li did as she was told. She stared at the new slide, a frown slowly forming on her face.

"They're different," she finally said.

"Exactly," Red replied.

"But, how can that be?"

"I don't know."

"What is it? What are you talking about?" Elena spoke up. She had pulled herself together in the time it had taken Red to get there. As best she could, anyway.

Red turned toward her.

"The Jenova cells inside of Vincent changed somehow inside of him over the course of this experiment. It's as if they... mutated."

"Yeah, except cells don't just spontaneously mutate," Lai Li stated. "Changes in DNA usually take place during transcription or recombination."

"Not completely correct," Red said. "DNA changes have been known to occur spontaneously in non germ cells if they're exposed to some kind of outside influence, to a radiation source of some kind, for instance."

"Yes, but the changes are random, and don't affect every cell," Lai Li countered. "This seems to have affected every single cell, and the change is exactly the same in each case. It's like these cells arose from one germ line, a different one from the cells of just a few days before. How can that possibly be?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about. Would you please speak English!" Elena pleaded.

"In layman's terms," Red said, then paused for a moment. "Okay, you have humans and you have frogs. A human can't spontaneously turn into a frog, right?"

Elena just stood there for a moment, then nodded.

"Well, on a cellular level, that's more or less what the Jenova cells in Vincent have done. They've mutated almost overnight. Usually a change like that takes many generations."

Red stopped, looking at Elena. She shook her head.

"Okay, but what does it *mean*?"

"That is the big question, isn't it?" Red replied.

"It's almost like..." Lai Li began. Elena turned toward her.

"Almost like what?"

"Almost like... they're defending themselves," Lai Li finished.

"Defending themselves?" Red inquired. "You mean the Jenova cells?"

"Yes. I know it sounds like nonsense, and it's certainly a simplification but it could explain the why if not the how. Look, Lucrecia gives Vincent her drug. It's toxic to the Jenova cells. They begin to die. Somehow they realize this is occurring, so they fight back. They change their genetic structure, change it to something that is resistant to the drug, perhaps even something that can use the drug to its own advantage. That would explain why there was a sudden increase in Jenova cells."

"Lai Li, you realize you're talking about cells as if they're sentient," Red said.

"Yes. I'm not saying that's the exact mechanism. Think of it more as an analogy. Even so, it may not be far from the truth. We are talking about Jenova cells, after all. We don't know what kind of properties they may have, we don't know how different from human they are. This might even explain why those who have Jenova cells in them can exhibit the polymorphism they seem to show. Still, no matter how it happened, if the cells developed a resistance, the drug would no longer be effective."

"Well, I can't deny that it's within the realm of possibility, though I have to admit it seems a bit far fetched," Red said. "Still, it's something to work with, and a theory doesn't necessarily have to be exactly right to be useful."

"So what can we do?" Elena asked. They had lost her once more with their scientific talk. She just wanted to know what had to be done.

Red and Lai Li exchanged glances, but neither of them had a ready answer.

"I'm not sure," Red said finally. "If Lai Li is right, then the drug is no longer useful, in fact, giving him more might make things even worse."

"I don't see how they could get any worse," Elena said resignedly.

"Well, the drug did work for a while," Red pointed out. "Until the Jenova cells mutated. A slight change in the DNA of the Jenova cells rendered the drug impotent. Perhaps we can use the same tactic. A slight alternation in the drug might make it effective once more."

"I don't know," Lai Li said. "We don't know the exact mechanism the drug used. We don't know its point of attack on the Jenova cell. We could play around with the ingredients all we wanted and get nowhere."

"We have Lucrecia's notes," Red responded. "They should tell us most of what we need to know, or at least point us in the right direction."

"Even if we do get the drug to work again, we'd be stuck with the same problem. How do we know the Jenova cells wouldn't just mutate one more time?"

"Yes, there is that," Red said slowly.

"So what are we going to do?" Elena asked, beginning to feel more and more frustrated. They kept on and on with their mumbo-jumbo, and yet they seemed no closer to actually doing anything than they had been before.

They both looked at Elena for a moment.

"We don't know," Red finally said. "We just don't have enough information yet. The first thing we need to do is to verify for sure that the drug no longer works. If that is indeed the case then the first order of business would be to find a way to make it effective once again. Even if we do that we'd have to start administering the new drug to Vincent, and we'd obviously have to find him before we can do that. And even if we accomplish all that, we don't know if the Jenova cells will merely mutate once again and make the new drug useless."

Red realized if Elena was looking for any kind of reassurance, that wasn't going to give it to her, but what else could he say, it was the truth.

"So you don't know if we can use the drug, you don't know if we can make a new one if this one doesn't work, and we don't even know where Vincent is."

Red just looked at her. There wasn't any question in what she just said that he could answer. He wished he could give her something more, some kind of hope.

"The problems may not be insurmountable," was all he could think of to say.

To his surprise Elena laughed at that. It was laughter tinged with hysteria, however.

"May not be insurmountable! You make it sound so... cold. We're not talking about some kind of scientific calculation here, we're talking about Vincent. I told him not to come here. I told him not to listen to her, but he wouldn't listen to me. He wouldn't listen and now look what's happened. Is there really any hope? Any at all?"

"Of course there is," Lai Li spoke up. "We just need to know more. Look how much we've learned already. We know the Jenova cells mutated. We know what caused the problem, and knowing the cause is half way to knowing the solution."

Red nodded, but Elena did not look much comforted. Red felt bad for her, but there didn't seem to be much he could do except try to find a solution as quickly as possible. Right now it was more important to find a cure than to comfort her.

Another thought occurred to him.

"Perhaps Lucrecia was going about it the wrong way," he said.

"What do you mean?" Lai Li questioned.

"We know for a fact the drug worked, at least for a while," Red replied. "The percentage of Jenova cells did decline."

Lai Li did not respond, waiting for him to continue.

"Lucrecia administered the drug slowly over a period of days. The Jenova cells mutated at a faster rate than anyone would think possible, but it has a limit. If not they would have changed immediately. They would have become resistant in a day, not a week. It took them a little bit of time to react. If we could kill off all the cells before they had time to adapt..."

"What are you suggesting, giving Vincent a massive dose of the drug?" Lai Li questioned.

"Yes," Red replied. "Lucrecia gave him the drug in small doses, thus giving the Jenova cells time to adapt. If we can make the drug effective again and give him one large dose, we may be able to kill off all the Jenova cells at once."

"You realize that Lucrecia gave him the drug in small doses because she didn't know what effect a large dose would have on him. Looking at her notes it seems the drug had some rather serious side effects," Lai Li said.

There discussion was interrupted as Reno, Yuffie and Ichiero walked into the room.

"Vincent headed off to the north," Reno said. "We tracked him to the foothills of the mountain pass but then we came back. From the tracks we saw he's still the Chaos beast. He's not likely to cause much harm up there, and we wanted to know if you'd found out anything."

"He won't cause any harm in the mountains, but it might be a different story once he gets through them," Red said. "With the percentage of Jenova cells inside him, I'm not surprised he is still Chaos. I don't know if he even has the ability to change back anymore. From what he did here, we have to consider him extremely dangerous."

He glanced at Elena as he said this, but she showed no reaction.

"It looks like the drug Lucrecia was giving him is no longer effective. Lai Li and I will stay here to try to see if we can make a new one that will work and plot a strategy for administering it. I suggest the rest of you go after Vincent and try to prevent him from hurting anyone else."

"And just how are we supposed to do that?" Yuffie questioned.

"I'll leave that up to you," Red said not particularly helpfully. "We'll have our hands full here trying to find a way to fix the drug. When we do we may have to give him one massive dose."

"And you think that'll cure him?" Reno asked.

Red shrugged.

"We don't know. There's a good chance it'll either cure him or kill him."