

CHAPTER XI: GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN

"Relax," Nipala said.

They stood in a small camp hidden in a deep valley in the mountains east of Cosmo Canyon, the third one they had moved to since they had been forced to leave the canyon. Red looked at her but did not stop his pacing.

"I should have gone with them," he said.

It was the third time he had told her that.

"You've been taking enough risks as it is," she explained to him once again. "You can't be at the forefront of every battle, no matter how you may feel about it. You're a good warrior, Nanaki, but you've been taking too many chances."

Red growled low in his throat. They had gone over this already, at a meeting earlier in the day. The others had all agreed he was being reckless, and had convinced him to remain behind for the latest attack. Actually it was more like they had bullied him. With Illyanova, Nipala and Barret all ganging up against him, even the legendary protector of Cosmo Canyon had had to bow to their will.

But that didn't mean he had to like it.

"What if something goes wrong?" he muttered.

"They'll be able to handle it," Nipala replied. "Barret knows what he's doing, and so does Brogan."

Red nodded slowly. They had gone over that too. They had launched almost a dozen attacks since the fall of the canyon. Never at the same time or place. Their success depending on them doing the unexpected, on taking their foes by surprise. They had been fairly successful, but Red knew they were too few to do any real damage. Still, it was the best they could do. To further confuse their enemy, they had decided to launch a two pronged attack today, something they had never done before. Barret had taken a force just north of the entrance of the Canyon, almost onto the plain itself. Even though their enemy was not shipping materia to Gongaga, they still had to send supplies back and forth between the two cities. The shipments had been fairly regular and Barret had been sent to intercept one of them.

Brogan, the highest ranking member of the Cosmo Canyon guards who still retained the ability to fight, had been sent west to attack a small force that Red thought was surveying the mountains for a new source of materia. Their scouts had told them that both groups were lightly defended. Brogan was a competent man but still young at 22. Even though he had lived his whole life with them, Red still sometimes could not get used to the fact that these humans matured so quickly. One of his own species at 22 would barely be out of infancy.

Nipala looked at Nanaki sympathetically. She knew this must be incredibly difficult for him. She had barely gotten to see Cosmo Canyon before they had been driven away, but even in that short time she had grown to care for the red clay hills and peaceful people who lived there. Nanaki had lived there all his life and had a tradition of safeguarding it that went back generations. She looked at him, still pacing, and wondered if there were anything she could do.

She uncurled from the spot on the floor where she had been resting and trotted over to him, stopping as he paced by. He looked at her for a moment but she said nothing, and he continued past. When he came by a second time she suddenly cuffed him in the side of the head with her paw.

He looked at her in surprise.

"What was the purpose of that?" he questioned.

Nipala shrugged.

"I just felt like annoying you," she replied.

He gave her an odd look and walked away. She immediately followed and smacked him again on the flank, knocking him off balance.

"Would you stop that!" he exclaimed, turning to face her.

"Hey lighten up," she replied. "When was the last time you had any fun?"

He looked at her darkly.

"This is no time for fun," he said seriously.

"Why not?" she responded. "I know how you feel, but we're doing everything we can, and life goes on. There's nothing for you to do right now, so why can't you just relax. C'mon, I'll race you to the top of the ridge."

She motioned toward the top of the hill behind him.

"Don't be ridiculous," he replied.

"C'mon," she said. "Why not?"

He looked around slowly. Already they had caught the attention of some of the others in camp. He could see Illyanova sitting beside a tent, looking at him thoughtfully.

"It would be...undignified," he responded.

"Oh, please," she said, "You're taking yourself way too seriously. Are you trying to tell me the humans with think less of their great leader if he enjoys himself every once in a while?"

She lunged forward once again, smacking at his left hind leg, and nearly knocking him over once more.

"If you persist in continuing I will be forced to retaliate," he stated.

"Ohhh, I'm so scared," she replied.

She lunged at him again. This time he twisted round and slapped at her, but his paw met nothing but air as she spun back safely out of the way.

"You're going to have to be a lot quicker than that," she taunted.

"Would you please stop," he said, glaring at her. "You're making me look foolish."

"You can say that again," she retorted. "And I'm not done yet."

She ran forward again, feinting toward his head. As he turned to protect himself she suddenly sprang once more toward his back legs, this time slamming full into him, and he really was knocked off his feet, with her on top of him.

She leaped off even as he lunged for her again. With a growl he jumped up and chased after her. She ran through the camp, passing right in front of Illyanova, and scrambled up the ridge beyond, Red right behind her and closing fast. Several men who were nearby looked at them in surprise, and a few of them started for their weapons, but with a shake of the head and smile from Illyanova, their hands dropped to their sides.

Nipala raced up the ridge. She made it to the top still ahead, and then plunged down the other side. But when Red reached the top he hurled himself into the air, clearing nearly twenty vertical feet downward and landing right on top of her. They both tumbled to the ground, kicking up a huge cloud of dust. For a few minutes they buffeted each other with smacks from their paws as they wrestled for position, but eventually Red's superior weight was too much for Nipala, and she found herself pinned down, struggling helplessly beneath him.

"All right," she said, stopping her struggling. "I give up. Now get off me, you big lug."

Red lifted himself up and let Nipala slip out from beneath him, then lay back down. Nipala laid down at his side, both of them catching their breath in the shade of a large up jutting finger of rock.

"I don't think your presage has suffered any," Nipala commented.

Red looked at her and smiled. No matter how much he tried to hide it, no matter what his responsibilities, he was still really only a teenager in his own species years. He had lived his whole life with humans. There had been no other children of his own kind for him to interact with. He had forgotten what was like to play.

"Thank you," he said, looking at her gratefully.

She did not reply but rested her head on his foreleg.

Red lifted his head and gazed out across the the mountains surrounding them. He could see Cosmo Canyon in the distance. He could see the rounded outline of the observatory. He didn't know what the monsters had done to the canyon, and he was sure they would find many unpleasant things when they returned there, but he was relived that at least the observatory still stood. Of course he could also see the Mako reactor beside it, now apparently completed and much larger than the observatory it stood next to. And beside that....

He stood up suddenly, staring off into the distance. Nipala looked at him and then stood up as well.

"What is it?" she asked.

He nodded his head in the direction of the canyon.

"Look there," he said. "Beside the new reactor. What is that?"

She looked toward the canyon as well. His eyesight was good, better than any man in the canyon, but her's was better.

"It looks like..." she said slowly. "...a cannon."

He stood beside her, not reacting to her statement. He could see it too, and had known the answer even before she had confirmed it. It was a cannon, but he knew it was not just any cannon.

It was a Mako cannon.

Suddenly he seemed very agitated.

"No wonder our targets are so lightly defended," he went on. He had seen the power of a Mako cannon, when Diamond weapon and Sephiroth's shield had been destroyed by Sister Ray. Even though this cannon was only powered by a single reactor, it was still a formidable weapon.

"We've got to call off the attacks," he said with sudden urgency. "If they fire that thing, a direct hit could wipe out our entire force."

She stood there for a moment assimilating this information.

"I'll go warn Barret," she said suddenly. Then she sprang off down the steep slope before he could say a word.

He looked after her for a moment. He should be the one to warn Barret. He was faster than her, and Barret was further away. But she was already at the bottom of the hill, racing away quickly. By the time he ran after her, they would have wasted too much time. With a soft growl he turned and ran up the slope, heading east toward Brogan.

Again heads turned toward him as he ran past the camp, but he paid them no mind, and in moments he had disappeared from view into the almost trackless hills and gullies that surrounded their hidden camp.

He ran as fast as he could. The way was steep and treacherous, but he was sure footed, and knew these hills as well as anyone. Less than ten minutes later he had located Brogan, who had his men spread out behind the crest of a small hill, poised to attack the group of men and monsters walking through a narrow valley below.

Red quickly explained the situation, then immediately took off once again, leaving Brogan to gather his men together and head back to the camp. Red, meanwhile, ran east, back towards the canyon itself. He knew he could do nothing for Barret, he could not possibly beat Nipala to him now. Whatever happened to them, it was out of his hands.

He quickly climbed up a rocky precipice and looked once more towards Cosmo Canyon. He was closer now, and could see the cannon easily. There seemed to be a number of figures moving around beneath it. Even as he watched he saw the gun moving, rotating slowly on it's base as the barrel lifted into the air, and he knew with sudden certainty that they were taking aim.

A moment later the cannon stopped. He stood there, rooted to the spot as he saw a white light beginning to take form in front of the barrel. It shimmered and swirled, and then suddenly came into sharp focus. Red stared helplessly as an enormous ball of glowing energy shot out of the cannon, arching up gracefully into the air. He saw it rise, up higher, fading away into the distance. Then, inevitably, falling back down. even as it faded far into the distance in the west, dropping until he could no longer see it. There was a flash of light along the horizon, and a few moments later he felt a tremor run through the ground beneath him. Even this far away, he could feel the effects.

With a sudden ache burning in his heart, he scrambled down the hill and ran off towards the west where the weapon had struck.

Barret ran out from a line of trees, firing rapidly at the monsters among the supply wagons in front of him. The thirty men with him had already reached the line of wagons in front of them and were fighting hand to hand. There were opposed by a nearly equal number of their foes, but had used the advantage of surprise to cut down that numner almost immediately. The defenders seemed to be even more disorganized than Barret was used to from their enemy, and almost half of those left scattered and ran as soon as his force had revealed itself. In minutes their foe had been routed.

There were six wagons in all, and now Barret stood beside the last in line as his men rummaged through them. They would take the most useful items, but they were too few to carry away more than a fraction of what was here. The rest would be burned, and he could see one man in front of him already with torch in hand. Nothing would be left for their enemy to put to use.

Barret wheeled around, gun raised, having caught a sudden motion out of the corner of his eye, but then he let his arm fall as he saw a red beast running out of the forest toward him. For a moment he thought it was Red, but then he saw the shock of blond hair and realized it was Nipala.

He looked at her expectantly and slightly puzzled as she scrambled to a halt beside him. This had not been part of the plan, and she seemed upset.

"We must go!" she blurted out between gulps of air from the long run.

She quickly explained the situation. Barret grasped it immediately. He looked towards Cosmo Canyon, but the observatory blocked his view from this direction. Still, he had seen once before what one of those cannons could do. He no desire to feels it's effects.

He turned toward the others.

"Retreat!" he shouted, his deep voice immediately commanding everyone's attention. "Back to the woods. It's a trap!"

Most of the men ran towards the forest immediately. Three of the wagons were ablaze now. The man with the torch hesitated and looked at Barret.

"What about these?" he questioned, indicating the remaining wagons.

"Forget about them," Barret replied. He knew if the cannon fired at them the explosion would destroy the wagons even more efficiently than burning them. He was sure their enemy would gladly sacrifice the goods, as well as their own people, if need be, to destroy Barret and his men.

The man dropped the torch and followed the others towards the forest, running as fast as he could. Barret followed behind, with Nipala pacing along side, even though he knew she could easily outdistance him.

Nipala kept glancing back at Cosmo Canyon. She had never seen what kind of damage a Mako cannon could do, but she had a feeling she didn't want to find out. Still, she couldn't help but think that perhaps Red had overreacted. No one had seen the gun the day before, and for all they knew it might not even be completed yet. Even if it was done, Cosmo Canyon was a long way off, and they were an awfully small target. It would be difficult to hit them from such a distance.

She glanced back yet again, and this time she saw a bright ball of light shooting up into the sky above the canyon.

Barret noticed it as well. He immediately put on a burst of speed.

"Here she comes," he yelled. "Better all get your asses under cover!"

They had reached the edge of the trees now. Barret plunged into the wood and threw himself down behind a low mound covered with young elm trees. Nipala hesitated a moment, looking back once more. She could see the ball of light growing fast, hurtling down toward them.

She leaped over the mound and landed beside Barret just as the blast hit. The ground rocked beneath them, and a blinding white light flashed from the plain they had just vacated. Nipala looked up to see the trees in front of them being torn from the ground and thrown like matchsticks above them. Then she cowered down, covering he head with her paws.

Slowly the trembling of the ground faded. She waited for it to stop completely, but it did not. Then she realized it was she who was trembling.

Slowly she lifted her head. The plain beyond, where they had stood just a few minutes ago, was utterly destroyed. Fires burned though what vegetation remained, although there was not much. The wagons had been completely annihilated.

She sat there looking around for a few moments, hardly able to believe the damage that had been caused. Only two tress remained of the grove of elms that had covered the mound in front of them, and both were leaning precariously. She realized here earlier assessment had been wrong. Red had been absolutely right to be worried.

"Everyone all right?" she heard Barret call out beside her.

They quickly assessed the damage to their party and found out it had been surprisingly light. Just five wounded, and only one seriously. It could have been a lot worse, Barret thought. If not for Nipala's warning...

"Thanks," he said, looking at her.

"It is Nanaki you should be thanking," she replied. "It was he who spotted the cannon in the first place."

Barret nodded.

"I'll do that," he replied. He stood beside Nipala and looked out over the damage. He had seen what the cannon could do before, but even so, he was still impressed.

He turned to face back toward the canyon. Whatever else happened now, he knew they could no longer continue the raids they were staging on their enemies at Cosmo Canyon. The cannon changed that. If they were to continue, they would have to come up with some other strategy.

"Well, we better get out of here," he said, "Before they decide that one shot might not be enough to do the job."

Nipala needed no urging, and followed quickly as Barret led them back through the woods, back once more toward the safety of their hideout in the hills.

"We're almost there," Yuffie said.

"Obviously," Reno replied. They could both clearly see the tops of the houses on the outskirts of Wutai peeking above the trees ahead of them.

Yuffie gave him a dark look but did not reply. Reno looked down at himself. They had stopped at a farmers house late last night after their little excursion through the mud and had gotten cleaned up. Reno had replaced his torn shirt with another one the farmer had given him. It was old and not his style, and even worse, it was yellow, a color he hated, but beggars can't be choosy, and it would do until he could get into Wutai and find a replacement.

They had been following a wide dirt trail that lead toward the town, but now Yuffie suddenly veered off to the side.

"Where are you going?" Reno questioned.

"It's quicker this way," she replied, nodding toward a grove of trees in the distance.

Reno hesitated a moment, then followed. They passed through a wide field covered with wildflowers. The grove of trees ahead seemed to be some kind of fruit tree. They were spaced out in even rows, obviously planted by some farmer, though the grove did not appear to be very large. As they approached Reno saw a stone wall surrounding it. He could see no gate in it.

They reached the wall. It was made of a gray slate-like stone, and ran about six feet high. Yuffie quickly leaped up and hauled herself to the top. She turned and looked at him expectantly.

He stood there looking at her without moving. He wasn't really in the mood to be climbing any walls.

"I think I'll just go around," he said.

"What's the matter, you'd rather go all the way around than climb over the wall? I knew you were lazy, but I didn't you were that lazy. But fine, suit yourself. I'll just explain the whole situation to Godo before you get there."

Reno folded his arms across his chest. The wall wasn't any big deal, and he didn't want Yuffie to talk to Godo without him being there. God knows what she would tell him.

He hesitated a moment more, then walked to the wall and pulled himself up as well.

They both dropped down to the other side. Yuffie immediately walked off under the trees, and Reno followed. He had never seen trees like this before. They were covered with deep green wide bladed leaves. He could see a small red fruit hanging below the leaves on many of the trees, almost like a group of small plums growing together. He stopped for a moment to examine one group. The skin was soft and slightly fuzzy. He wondered what the fruit was called. He turned to ask Yuffie.

"Halt!"

Reno spun around to see a man standing a short distance away. He seemed to have appeared out of nowhere. He was dressed in traditional samurai garb, and held a long katana in his hand. Now he stepped toward Reno, weapon poised menacingly in front of him.

"Who are you who dares enter Lord Godo's sacred grove?" the man asked sharply.

Reno looked at them man casually, obviously not impressed.

"Relax, samurai boy," he stated. "I'm with Lord Godo's daughter."

The man did not relax his guard, but came up closer, until the sword was dangerous close to Reno's neck.

"I see no one else," the man said.

Reno turned around, looking back and forth through the trees around him. Yuffie had vanished.

"Yuffie," he called out.

There was no response.

"Yuffie!" he called again, more urgently.

His only response was the wind through the trees.

"Come with me," he man said sternly. Reno looked at him. He opened his mouth, then closed it again, his face quickly lost it's casual air and became red with rage.

The man motioned with his weapon, and Reno turned and walked in the indicated direction.

"I'm gonna kill her," he muttered.

He felt the point of the blade against his back.

"Be careful," the man said sharply. "To enter the sacred grove without permission is twenty lashes in the town square, to threaten the life of Lord Godo's daughter would mean your death."

Reno walked on, biting his lip in silence. His hand slowly slipped down to his nightstick. But he did not use it. So far, what he had done could be explained away once Yuffie decided she had had enough fun, but if he attacked the man, that could get him in real trouble. If he was going to have any chance of a payday here in Wutai, he would just have to play along with Yuffie's little joke. He just hoped she wouldn't string him along for too long.

Three hours later he was cooling his heels in a small windowless cell when Yuffie finally made an appearance. She walked in and looked around casually. Reno glanced at the guard and resisted the urge to jump up and issue a string of profanities. Instead he slowly stood up and walked over to the barred door.

Yuffie barely glanced at him but turned to face the guard instead.

"I understand you found someone trespassing in the sacred grove," she said.

"Yes, Miss Yuffie," the man said deferentially.

He pointed to Reno.

"This vagabond had the audacity to claim he had your permission to enter the grove." he said, looking at Reno darkly, obviously of an opinion that such a claim could not possibly be anything more than an outrageous lie.

Yuffie turned and looked him over. Her back was to the guard now, and Reno could see she was having difficulty keeping a straight face. He felt his grip tighten viciously on the bars in front of him, all the time wishing it was Yuffie's neck he was holding.

"Ridiculous," Yuffie said, shaking her head slowly.

"True, Miss Yuffie," the guard quickly agreed. "He must be completely addled to have thought I would believe something like that for even a moment."

Yuffie nodded in agreement.

"Yes, I would say so," she said. "I think we'll have to make it thirty lashes for telling such a ridiculous falsehood."

"That would be most appropriate," the guard stated.

Yuffie looked at the guard once more.

"Well, let him out. I'll take him over to Godo for his judgment. Which I am sure will be swift and painful."

The guard hesitated a moment.

"Are you sure that's wise, Miss Yuffie," he said slowly. "Even though he doesn't look like much, he could still be dangerous. Are you sure you don't want an escort?"

Yuffie brushed aside his fears with the wave of her hand.

"Nonsense," she stated. "You know I'm trained to take care of myself. I'm sure he'll be no trouble."

"Very well, Miss Yuffie," the guard said, bowing to her will.

He walked over to the cell and fumbled with the keys for a moment, then the door swung open. Reno stepped out and Yuffie motioned for him to follow as she led him out of the room.

"Don't give her any trouble," the guard admonished as he walked out the door. "Or thirty lashes will be the least of your worries,"

Reno did not respond, just followed after Yuffie, his jaw set.

A moment later they had left the building and stood in the streets of Wutai.

"I hope your estate is in order and you've left all your materia to a good cause because when we leave this town you are dead, dead, dead!" Reno said, showing remarkable restraint.

"Awww, whatsamatter, can't take a joke?" Yuffie questioned.

Reno pulled out his nightstick and started fiddling with the controls.

"Maybe I won't even wait till we leave," he said. "Might be worth it to just fry your little ass right now."

"Ohhh, you say the sweetest things," she retorted. "But you might want to hear me out before you do that."

Reno turned toward her, satisfied that he had found the right setting.

"I've set in on stir-fry. Now come here you little witch."

"I got Godo to agree to hire you," she said.

His expression did not change.

"Nice try, but you're not going to get out of this that easily."

"No really," she responded. "I'm not kidding. You can ask him yourself. And I even got you a new shirt too."

He hesitated and looked at her doubtfully.

"What color?" he asked finally.

"White, of course," she replied.

He stood there looking at her, rubbing his chin in thought. Finally he nodded.

"I'm not sure I believe you. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure I'd believe you even if you had a signed sworn statement. But I guess I can wait and see. But I'm not going to let you out of my sight, and if you're lying this time..."

He tapped the nightstick against the palm of his hand.

"I told you, I'm not lying," she replied innocently. "Now c'mon, we've got a lot to do. You've goofed off long enough."

"Goofed off?" he exclaimed. "Who's fault was that?"

She did not reply, but hurried off down the road. He trotted after her.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

She did not look back.

"To help Godo gather the troops," she replied. "How you forgotten we've got an army to raise?"

The two trucks drove slowly across the plain northeast of Gongaga. Cid sat at the wheel of the first one, with Ellengio and Talon beside him. Vincent followed closely behind, with Elena next to him. Rude was in the back of their truck. Elena had offered to let him sit beside her up front, but he had declined.

Elena stared out the window, watching the monotonous scenery go by, but she was anything but bored. She couldn't help but think of what lie ahead. She hadn't been with Avalanche in the north crater, she hadn't faced Jenova. But she knew it hadn't been a pleasant experience. And she had a feeling this one would be even worse. She couldn't help but think back to when they had been here before and how the Healer had lifted that metal grid as if it were nothing.

Both the trucks contained machine parts from Corel. No matter what the Healer's power, he couldn't make parts for his reactor from nothing, nor did they have the factories in Gongaga alone necessary to create all the parts needed for the ever expanding reactor. Some had to be shipped in from somewhere else. Gagnon had been aware of this, and the rebels had commandeered the trucks for them.

She looked at Vincent, driving silently beside her. As usual, his face betrayed nothing.

"Are you worried?" she asked.

Vincent did not turn toward her.

"About what?"

"About fighting Jenova?" she replied. What did he think she was talking about?

Vincent sat in thought for a moment.

"No," he replied. "We'll either defeat him, or we won't. Either way they'll be nothing left for us to worry about."

Elena frowned.

"That's not very reassuring," she replied.

This time he did glance over at her. Why did she seem to have this incessant need to be reassured? Him saying everything would turn out all right would not make it so.

"We'll do the best we can," he said noncommittally.

She looked at him again, but he did not meet her gaze. For a moment she felt angry, but then it passed. He didn't know what was going to happen any more than she did, it shouldn't make her feel better if he said everything would be all right.

Still, for some reason it would have. She felt anger once more, but this time directed at herself. She was a grown woman who was perfectly capable of taking care of herself. On top of that, she was a Turk, and had been trained to think on her feet and handle any situation. She didn't need someone to take care of her. She didn't need the protection of a man.

But she couldn't help it. She wanted the protection of this one.

She turned away and looked out the window again. They could see the houses of Gongaga across the plain ahead of them now. It wouldn't be much longer before they arrived, and then whatever happened would happen. She found her eyes slowly straying back to Vincent. Even though he kept his feelings to himself she had found a closeness with him that she had never before experienced. She didn't want to end. She had been in battles before. She remembered being nervous before some of them, even a little scared. But her fear seemed to be greater this time. Perhaps it was because this time she felt she had more to lose.

"I love you," she found herself saying.

Vincent's expression betrayed nothing, but he reached over and took her hand in his own. She accepted his hand but continued to look at him. She knew he could feel her gaze on him, but he did not look at her.

She felt her anger start to return.

It wouldn't kill him to say it.

She leaned back in her seat and deliberately forced herself to relax. There was no point in getting angry. She knew how he felt about her, he didn't have to say it. She had told herself that many times in the past, and she believed it, but it would be

nice to hear it, just once. They didn't know what was going to happen. They didn't know if they were going to survive this confrontation with Jenova. Did he really want it all to end without saying it? Without telling her how he felt?

She wondered if that had even entered his mind.

The truck suddenly slowed. She looked ahead to see some people standing in the road ahead of them, blocking their way. She glanced at Vincent yet again, then sighed. She had vowed to wait, no matter how long it took. She wouldn't forget that, no matter how hard it was.

They stopped. She could see three men standing beside the truck in front of them, one of them talking to Cid. The man glanced back in their direction and she could see the glow in his eyes.

Her hand went beneath her jacket and wrapped around her gun. But she did not take it out. She didn't anticipate them having any problem. Their papers couldn't be more legitimate. They had taken them from the men who had originally been driving the trucks. Still, she wasn't about to be caught off guard. They had been here less than a week ago, all except Ellengio and Talon. It was always possible that one of these men would recognize them.

A few moments later the men stepped back and waved them ahead. Vincent started forward once more and soon they found themselves traveling down the streets of Gongaga.

They stopped in front of Gagnons' house. They all got out and gathered next to Cid's vehicle.

"All right," Ellengio said. "Does anyone have any questions about the plan?"

No one spoke. He hadn't really expected them to. They had gone over it so many times already, if they didn't know it by now, they never would.

"Then let's get going," he stated.

They started down the road on foot, heading for the reactor. The underground had been keeping tabs on the Healer, and he was almost always at the reactor this time of day.

They hadn't gone very far when Talon turned and hurried off in another direction. He was going to contact some of the others in the underground who still remained in Gongaga. They were going to stage a little diversion that they hoped would pull any guards out of the reactor. They would have enough to deal with fighting Jenova, they didn't need his guards around to make it that much more difficult.

Elena watched him walk off, more nervous than ever. They weren't the only one's who were endangering themselves. If they failed, Talon and all the others staging the diversion would be revealed. She didn't think they'd stand much of a chance once that happened.

They came around a corner and she could see the reactor now, looming up ahead of them in the distance. She slowed down, looking at it. It seemed even larger now than it had been when they had been here previously. How many more monsters had it churned out in that time? How many of the people of Gongaga had been turned into twisted shadows of their former selves since then? How many in Cosmo Canyon? And how many more cities after that if nothing was done, if Jenova wasn't stopped?

She vision dropped and she saw that the others had gotten ahead of her. She hurried to catch up, a look of grim determination stealing over her. It didn't matter that she was scared, someone had to do something about this. Whatever price had to be paid, she was willing to pay it. This had to come to an end.