

CHAPTER XIV: OVER THE EDGE

Aeris opened her eyes to see the void of space. She blinked for a moment, feeling completely disoriented. For a second she couldn't remember where she was or how she had gotten here. Then she realized she was looking out the window in the lounge.

She sat up on the couch, wondering how she had gotten here. The last thing she remembered was being with Ellengio, of collapsing just as they were to about enter the wormhole.

"You're finally awake."

The lights were out in the room, the door to the hallway open just a hair, letting in only a dim light. It made the view outside that much more spectacular, but shrouded the cabin in darkness. She could barely make out Red's dim form on the floor by the window.

"How long..." she said, her voice sounding somehow strange. She still felt exhausted.

"Almost three hours now," Red replied. "We were going to wake you, but Ellengio said you would need the rest before he went to get some himself. You both went through quite an experience, it would seem."

"It certainly was," Aeris replied.

Aeris stood up, grabbing hold of the arm of the couch to steady herself. But the rest had done her good and she could feel her strength returning. But she had something more urgent on her mind. Her hands had slipped off of Ellengio's. She remembered that clearly.

"Did we make it?" she asked. "Did we get through?"

Red got to his feet as well.

"Come and see," he replied.

He walked out of the room, Aeris right on his heels. They walked quickly to the command center. Most of the others were already there.

"Aeris, you're finally up," Reeve said. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. I..." Aeris began, then stopped as she looked at the view ahead of them.

Two large spheres hung suspended in space in front of them. She stared at them, walking up closer until she stood next to the pilot's seat. The closer one was a dull reddish color, though she could see a few patches of blue as well. Covering over most of it was a fine latticework of white, a patchwork quilt of clouds. The planet farther away was a uniform silver in color.

"Grouchoon and Shinialyn," Cid stated.

Aeris slowly reached her hand out to touch the glass in front of her.

"The voice is very strong," she said, "but..."

She looked at the silver planet.

"It's the shield," Ellengio stated. "We can't hear the voice of Shinialyn through the shield."

Aeris stared at the silver planet in front of her, feeling suddenly sad. She knew the shield was necessary to prevent Jenova from escaping, but she couldn't help feel sorry for the planet, cut off from all the others, for all this time.

"Two thousand years," she said softly.

"What?" Cid asked.

Aeris shook her head.

"Nothing," she replied. There was nothing she could do about it. And if fact they were there to make the shield even stronger, and permanent. Somehow she wished there were another way.

"How soon until we reach the planet," she asked. Grouchoon filled most of the view in front of them. It seemed very close.

"We were just about to start landing procedures," Cid told her. "If you would all be kind enough to take your seats?"

The others did as they were told.

"How do we know where to land?" Reeve asked.

"We'll figure that out when we get closer," Cid replied. "Hopefully we'll be able to spot a city or something on the surface."

"We don't want to get too close to one," Cloud pointed out. "Remember, we know for a fact Jenova has reached this planet, and there's a good chance there are still some here. We don't want to come down in a city full of them."

"I realize that," Cid replied. "I won't set us down directly in a city, just close. We don't want to land in the middle of them, but we don't want to be a thousand miles away, either. Ellengio, did the book give you any clues as to where a city might lie?"

"Just in the vaguest terms," Ellengio replied. "They did mention a large city on a crescent shaped continent in the northern hemisphere, but that was thousands of years ago. Who knows how things have changed since then?"

"Well, it's better than nothing," Cid replied.

Slowly the planet drew closer, until it filled the view in front of them completely. They could see the clouds clearly now, and surface details soon became apparent. There were oceans on this planet, but they seemed much smaller than on earth. Large reddish continents covered most of the planet, with only a small patchwork of blue separating them.

Cid guided the craft down, gliding through the atmosphere. The planet looked smaller than earth, although it was kind of hard to tell, but because the oceans were so small he guessed that the total landmass was greater. For this high up he could see no sign of civilization, and he hoped that the city mentioned in the old book still existed. Unless the planet was heavily populated, it would be nearly impossible to find a city by chance. There was just too much ground to cover. They had to glide in for a landing, they didn't have enough fuel to land under power, so they were going to have to live with wherever they picked to land.

He scanned the planet in front of them, looking for a crescent shaped landmass. He wondered how the planet could have changed in two thousand years. The continents could have shifted in that time, and the landmass might have moved or collided with another one. On earth the movement of continents was a slow process, and not much would happen in two thousand years, but this was another planet. Who knew what kind of plate tectonics they had here, if there was any at all. For all he knew the continents on this planet could be whipping all over the place in that time, or they may never move at all. And even without continental drift, there was always the possibility of natural disasters. A volcanic eruption or a change in sea level could reshape a continent as well.

But his fears proved groundless as a short time later an unmistakably crescent shaped continent appeared on the horizon ahead of them.

"Looks like that's the place," he said.

"It's still pretty big," Elena observed. "Are you sure we're going to be able to find a city?"

"I don't know," Cid replied. "It depends on how heavily populated this place is. We're just not gonna know until we get closer."

The rocket continued to descend. After a few minutes they were over the crescent shaped continent. They were low enough now to make out the humps of mountain ranges and the pale blue of large bodies of water.

Cid inspected the ground below them carefully.

"Everyone keep your eyes open for any sign of civilization," he announced.

"Not likely I'm gonna see much back here," Lai Li responded. Her seat near the back gave her a severely limited view out the window in front of them.

Cid did not respond. They continued to drop lower. Slowly details of the land below them began to appear. The planet appeared to be mostly desert, at least in this area. The ground below them was mostly bare reddish rock, and from the color of the other continents, he suspected it was a worldwide phenomena. As they dropped lower he could see some green patches of vegetation, but they were neither large nor plentiful.

"Doesn't look like a particularly hospitable planet," Vincent commented

No one replied, even though that had been exactly what Cid was thinking himself. It looked like a harsh landscape, and not someplace they would want to wander around in for very long. He hoped more than ever to find some sign of a city.

But as they dropped lower finding a city became secondary to finding an adequate place to land. They needed a relatively flat stretch of land to come down on, and so far the ground below was broken and uneven, totally unsuitable.

He looked around. To their left was a long line of mountains, the same reddish color as the land beneath them, although some were topped with white. To the right there was rolling hills as far as the eye could see. Beneath them he could see jagged canyons as thin lines of blue laced down from the mountain peaks. There was no flat plain in sight.

He was about to turn away from the mountains, thinking there might be a broad plain further to the east, when Ellengio, who was sitting right behind him, pointed to the left.

"What's that?"

Cid looked that way. For a moment he didn't see anything out of the ordinary, but then he noticed a thin dark line running towards two folds of the mountain that stretched out in their direction. He probably wouldn't have given the line a second thought except for one thing, it was straight.

"It looks like a road," he stated.

He turned the craft slowly toward the mountains. They flew over one of the protruding arms of the mountain chain below, and immediately saw the outline of what could only be a city below them.

"All right," Cid exclaimed. It had been two thousands years since the book had left this planet, he had secretly feared that they would find a deserted world.

He looked up again. "Now if we could just find someplace to land."

He looked dubiously at the mountain range, then back at the hills in the other direction. It was more likely they would find a suitable place to land away from the mountains, but that would take them away from the city as well.

"I don't see anyplace to land around here," Cloud commented, again seeming to read Cid's thoughts.

"Neither do I," Cid replied. "But we can't get too far from the city."

"How do we know there's not more cities out on the plain?" Elena asked.

"We don't," Cid replied. "But we know for sure this one's here. If we fly out over the plain and find nothing we won't be able to come back, we'll be too low. I'd rather find someplace to land here, where we know there's a city."

"The land down there is all broken up, you'll never find a place," Reno stated. "And if we stay here much longer, we're not going to have any choice, are we?"

"Nope," Cid said. "Still, I think we should take a look around here first."

Reno shook his head.

"This thing is the only way for us to get back to our planet. If you smash it up on landing, how the hell will get out of here. It's too risky."

"Reno, quite your damn whimpering!" Barret exclaimed. "You've been nothing but trouble and we haven't even landed yet. Why the hell did you come along in the first place?"

"Barrett, what the hell.." Reno started.

Suddenly the ship jerked violently and dropped straight down. Everyone except Cid was thrown violently against the side of their seat. In a moment the craft had righted itself again.

Cid turned around and stared at them.

"Now that I've got your attention," he said. "I want you all to shut the hell up! I'm the Captain of this goddamn ship and I'll land it wherever I goddamn please! I don't need any comment from anybody about what I'm doing, and if I hear anymore I'll have you removed from the room and locked up by yourselves until we land, and then you can yap to your hearts content. Now, does anybody here have anything more to say?"

He stared at them all for a moment, his eyes smoldering. Reno looked unhappy, but he kept his mouth shut.

"Good," Cid said and turned back forward.

He steered the craft closer to the mountains, getting even closer to the city. He looked it over carefully, watching for any movement, something to prove that the city was inhabited. They had found a sign of civilization, but for all they knew, this city could have been abandoned hundreds or even thousands of years ago. He saw nothing, but that didn't really prove anything. They were still too high up to see much.

"Umm, I don't want to tell you what to do," Red said extremely politely. "But do you really think it's wise to fly right over the city? If there's someone down there, it's almost sure to attract their attention."

Cid grunted in acknowledgment and turned to the west, heading straight toward the mountain range. He had gotten so caught up in trying to spot details in the city, he hadn't realized how close they were getting. They were quite low now, below the peaks of the mountains ahead of them. They would be quite obvious to anyone if they flew over the city.

Suddenly he spotted a wide plateau on the mountain ahead of them, about halfway up the slope. Immediately he steered toward it, looking it over critically. It was hard to tell from this far away, but it looked promising.

As they came closer he could see that it appeared flat enough. He hesitated for a moment, looking over the length. He was pretty sure it was long enough, but was pretty sure good enough? Reno had been right when he said the rocket was there only ticket out of here. He couldn't afford to make a mistake.

He stared at it as he approached, trying to gauge its length. It became easier to tell as they got closer. He made up his mind.

"All right, I see a place to land," he announced. "Everyone get ready. I don't know how bumpy this is going to get."

The others looked out the window, spotting the plateau immediately. Reno glared at Cid, but kept his mouth shut.

Cid brought the craft around until he was approaching from the south, giving them the longest distance for the landing. The ground was approaching rapidly now, and they could see the plateau clearly. There was a large depression in the center.

"Shit," Cid muttered.

"What is it?" he heard Tifa ask nervously.

He didn't reply. They were committed now. They were too low to change their mind. He could see that the depression did not cover the entire plateau, the land on either side of it was level, though narrow. He glanced back and forth from one side to the other, trying to decide which had more room. If he picked wrong they could end up going over the side or smashing into the mountain. He only had seconds to decide now.

He let the rocket drift to the right, towards the edge. Suddenly the craft rocked below them as the wheels touched down. They bounced jarringly a few more times, the edge of the chasm so close that they could not see the plateau below them on the right side.

"Oh Gawd!" he heard Yuffie lament.

The ship was shaking violently. The ground that had looked smooth from above was actually littered with small rocks and cracks, and it took all his strength to keep the ship under control. They passed by the depression, throwing up a cloud of dust behind them, and Cid pulled away from the edge as the craft slowed down. A few moments later they came to a halt.

"Damn," Cloud exclaimed. "Did you have to come so close to the edge?"

Cid turned toward them and cast Cloud a baleful glance.

"I knew exactly what I was doing," he replied, even though the white around his knuckles and the sweat on his brow plainly contradicted that statement.

"Well, you did it, that's what counts," Ellengio said as they unstrapped themselves from their seats.

"How far do you think we are from that city?" Zack asked.

"Hard to say," Cid replied. "Maybe ten, fifteen miles. Not exactly a stroll in the park, but it could have been a lot worse."

Lai Li came forward and looked out the front of the ship at the land around them. The mountain rose up on their left, with the plains below on their right.

"I don't see anything moving," she commented.

"What did you expect to see?" Cid asked.

"I wasn't expecting to see anything," she replied. "I was hoping to see some sign of animal life."

Cid looked out the window again.

"Well, we just got here," he replied. "And the land around here doesn't look all that hospitable."

"There are plenty of places on earth like this that are teeming with life," Lai Li countered.

"True," Ellengio said, coming up beside them. "But it may be that our landing here has chased everything away for the moment. I'm sure we made quite an impact."

Lai Li nodded and looked at the others.

"So what are we waiting for. Let's go take a look around."

"Not so fast," Red warned. "This is another planet. We have no idea what kind of dangers await us. We can't just go rushing out willy-nilly."

"Yeah," Yuffie said, looking out the window. "How do we even know we can breathe out there?"

"The Cetra were here two thousand years ago, and they could breathe," Lai Li pointed out. "I don't think the atmosphere could change in that short a period of time."

"Probably true," Ellengio replied. "But there are other dangers. Red's right. Cloud, why don't you take a few people out to scout around, just to get the lay of the land and a general idea of what we might be up against."

Cloud nodded and looked around for a moment.

"Cait, Tifa, Barret, Vincent and Elena, come with me," he said.

"I'll go too," Reno volunteered.

"If he's going, I'm going also," Yuffie immediately spoke up.

"I want to go too," Amanda added.

"You'll do no such thing," Barret snapped.

"Stop telling me what to do!" Amanda protested.

"Oh not again!" Cloud exclaimed. "The choice has been made, I'm not going to change it. So everyone quit your arguing."

"Since when did this turn into a dictatorship?" Reno questioned.

"Since we lifted off," Cid snapped. "The Captain of a ship has wide authority over what happens on board the ship. The decision has been made and you're going to have to live with it. And don't try getting out on your own because no one is going to get out that door without my okay."

Reno glared around him again.

"Oh let it go, Reno," Elena spoke up. "Give us all a break."

Reno folded his arms across his chest and gave her a sour look.

"I'm beginning to wish I hadn't come," he replied.

"Join the crowd," Barret muttered.

"All right, let's get going," Cloud stated.

He walked out of the room, those who were going with him right behind. They stepped into the airlock and the door closed behind them. Barret looked around nervously.

"Are you sure about this air thing?" he questioned.

"We'll find out in a minute," Cloud said calmly. "All right Cid, you can open her up."

There was a rumbling sound and the outer door swung open. For a moment they all stood there, not knowing what to expect. Then a light breeze blew around them. The air was hot and had an unusual musty order. Cloud took a deep breath and looked at the others.

"Well, looks like we're going to live," he commented.

He stepped out of the craft and down the metal stairway, the others right behind him. The first thing that struck them was the heat. It was uncomfortably warm, and they could feel the sun burning down on their head and shoulders as they descended the stairway. At the bottom their feet kicked up puffs of dust as they stepped onto the ground.

Tifa shaded her eyes and looked around.

"So where do we go from here, oh fearless leader?"

Cloud glared at her. "Don't you start too," he said.

He walked over to the edge of the precipice and looked down at the land below. He could see the gleam of the sun off the buildings of the city off to the left.

"I guess we should try to find a path down towards the city," he said seriously. "C'mon."

Tifa took a look back at the ship to see Cid, Amanda, and Aeris watching them. She waved and pointed in the direction they were going to go, then started off after the others.

Amanda watched them until they disappeared from sight around a bend, then she turned and walked out of the room. Aeris came up beside her.

"I don't know why he thinks he can tell me what to do," Amanda muttered.

"Don't let it bother you," Aeris advised.

"But he treats me like a little kid!" Amanda stated.

Aeris laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Look, I admit Barret can be a hothead, and that can lead to some bad decisions, but I'm afraid this isn't one of them."

Amanda turned toward her.

"What do you mean?" she said, a hint of anger in her blue eyes. "Are you saying you agree with him?"

"No, I'm not saying that," Aeris replied quickly. "But have you ever stopped to think why he's acting this way?"

"Because he thinks he can tell me what to do," Amanda snapped. "He thinks he's the big boss, just like in Corel."

Aeris shook her head.

"I don't think so," she said. "I've know Barret a long time, and he's not like that. He gave up the leadership of Avalanche as soon as he realized Cloud would do a better job. He took over as Mayor of Corel because he wanted to help rebuild the city. He's not trying to boss you around."

"Well then what else could it be?" Amanda asked.

"It's very simple really," Aeris replied. "He doesn't want to see you get hurt. He's concerned about you."

Amanda looked puzzled, then shook her head.

"But why would he be concerned about me?" she questioned. "He doesn't even *know* me?"

Aeris shrugged.

"That's just the way he is," she replied. "Once you get to know him he's really just a big teddy bear. For all his faults, he can be a really nice guy."

Amanda still looked puzzled, and even more upset then before.

"What's wrong?" Aeris asked.

"Nothing," Amanda said quickly. She stood there looking at Aeris for a long time. "How...how long have you known Barret?"

"Since I met up with Avalanche," Aeris replied. "Almost three years ago."

"And in all that time he never..."

Aeris looked at her curiously. "Never what?"

Amanda shook her head.

"Nothing. Forget it. I guess I'm just still upset. I really wanted to go with them."

"I know," Aeris replied. "I kind of wanted to go myself, but they're right, on a mission like this there have to be rules. It's too dangerous for us to go running around as we please. I'm sure we'll all get a chance when the time comes."

Amanda gave her a rueful smile.

"I hope so."

~*~

"There looks like a way down over here," Vincent said.

The others walked over to him. They were on a wide ledge about a hundred feet below the plateau the rocket rested on. Cloud looked down at the slope below them. It looked too steep to climb.

"Where?"

"That way," Vincent said, pointing ahead. The mountain faced east where they were standing, but a short distance ahead it curved to the left and faced north, and that was where Vincent was pointing. "That looks like a trail."

Now that he had pointed it out, they could all plainly see the yellow dirt path that wended its way down the mountain in front of them.

"Looks like somebody comes here sometimes," Cloud commented. "And it can't be too long ago. That path wouldn't last two thousand years."

"Somebody, or something," Barret said.

"But there's no trail to it from here," Tifa pointed out. "How are we supposed to get to it?"

Vincent looked up at the slopes above them.

"It looks like we can climb up here," he mused. "That looks like a ledge up there. I think we can get to it from that."

The others followed his gaze.

"I think you're right," Cloud said. "Let's go."

Barret shook his head.

"Climb down, climb up. I wish we'd make up our minds," he muttered.

They started up the slope. The ground was rough and uneven, with no trail, and at first it was very difficult. It took them nearly a half hour to make it up the thirty meters to the ledge above. But once there things became easier. The ledge led them along a narrow gorge with a sheer drop, but the ground was level and they had no trouble. A short time later they reached the path. It was narrow and wandered seemingly at random along the slope, but it quite clearly lead downward.

"How far are we going to go?" Cait asked.

"Not sure," Cloud replied.

"We're not going to go all the way down to the city, are we?" Elena asked.

"No," Cloud replied. "We're just here to take a look around and find a way down, and to see if there's anything dangerous lurking around. We'll wait until the others are with us before we go down there."

"Doesn't look like there's anything alive up here, much less dangerous," Barret observed.

"There's plenty of life," Vincent countered. "Look at those plants."

He pointed to a group of odd looking shrubs clinging to the almost vertical face of mountainside a short distance away.

"I don't mean those," Barret said. "I mean animals. Plants aren't dangerous."

"We don't know that," Vincent countered. "For all we know, those plants could be deadly if we got near them."

Barret looked at him skeptically.

"Besides, something made this trail," Cloud pointed out. "And I don't think that was a plant."

"Whatever," Barret said, unhappy with the way the discussion was going.

They lapsed into silence. Moving further down the trail, they came to an area where the plants grew rather close to the path. Tifa looked at them as they walked by. They had unusually thick stems and many very small leaves, none of which seemed to be the same shape. Though they were very odd looking, they were clearly recognizable as plants. The land around them was mountainous, and the reddish rock reminded her of Cosmo Canyon. She looked up. The sky was pale blue, the sun burning with a yellow light above them. If she didn't know better, she could almost get herself to believe that they were in some exotic location on earth, and not on another planet at all. There was nothing here that was so unusual that it stood out as proof that they had left their home far behind.

A movement in the sky attracted her attention. She squinted in the sunlight. She could clearly see something moving in the air up near the mountaintop.

"Look at that," she exclaimed, pointing.

The others looked up immediately, shading their eyes from the glare. It took them a moment to spot what she was pointing out.

"It's only a bird," Barret said dismissively.

"It's the first sign of fauna," Vincent commented, making it sound very significant.

Cloud moved over closer to the cliff face, trying to get a better view. The creature was circling lazily in the air high above them, almost directly in the sun. It was difficult to get a good view. Suddenly the creature dived down, and in a moment had disappeared from view.

"I don't think it was a bird," he stated slowly. "The wings were more bat-like, I think."

"Maybe that's what birds look like around here," Barret said.

"Perhaps," Cloud replied.

"It looked pretty big," Elena said slowly.

"I got the same impression, but it's kind of hard to tell at a distance," Cloud said.

They watched the sky for a few minutes more, but saw no further sign of the creature.

"Well, at least we know for sure now that there are animals here," Cloud said. "Let's move on."

They started down the trail once again. The sun was high in the sky now, and they all felt it beating down on their backs. Even though they were going down hill and the trail was easy to follow, they were all sweating.

"I don't know how much further you want to go," Vincent said. "But keep in mind it's going to be much more difficult going back up."

Cloud nodded and looked up at the sun. It was almost directly overhead. They were probably just heading into the afternoon, often the hottest part of the day on earth. He hoped it didn't get much warmer.

He pointed ahead.

"Let's just go down to the bend in the trail. I think it'll give us a better view of the city below. Then we'll start back."

"Sounds good to me," Barret agreed.

Ahead the mountainside curved to the right, away from them. The slope above them had eroded away here, littering the path with rocks and debris, making footing hazardous. At the bend itself a large boulder, a darker color than the rocks around it, almost completely blocked the path.

They picked their way carefully through the debris until they reached the bend. But just as Cloud was passing the boulder it suddenly moved. He turned toward it in surprise and saw gleaming eyes and a snapping jaw lunging for him.

With catlike reflexes he dodged out of the way. He heard Tifa cry out in surprise. He rolled along the ground and then leapt back to his feet, pulling his sword out in one fluid motion. The boulder was not a boulder at all, but the creature's shell, an almost perfect disguise among the rocks of the mountain. Cloud was immediately reminded of a turtle, but the beast itself beneath the shell was more lizard-like, yet it moved shockingly quickly straight at the group. Cloud had barely managed to get out of its way, but Cait, who had been behind him, was not so lucky, and the creature's jaws clamped down on him.

There were shouts from the others, and then a loud blast as Barret opened up with his gun. The bullets hit the shell and ricocheted all over the place.

"You're going to hit one of us!" Tifa yelled as a bullet glanced off a rock beside her.

The creature ignored the attack, shaking Cait's body viciously in its jaws, all the while Cait was pounding with his fists on its head.

Cloud sprang forward, lashing out with his sword. It hit the shell with a crack, and rebounded so quickly that it almost flew from his hands. The creature totally ignored the blow.

"You can't get at it through the shell," he called out. "You've got to hit it underneath!"

Vincent had maneuvered himself in front of the creature, the Death Penalty in his hands, trying to get a clear shot at the creature's head, but Cait, through no fault of his own, was in the way. Vincent lowered his sight and fired, and the bullet penetrated the creature's leg.

With a roar the creature spat out Cait, sending him tumbling down the trail. Just as it did so fire from Elena's materia flashed around it.

It roared again. Barret fired at its legs from the side, while Vincent hit it near the neck. At the same time it was struck by lightning from a materia held by Tifa.

The beast screamed in agony and stumbled, then lunged forward in one last dying attempt to get at its tormentors, straight at Elena. She tried to scramble out of the way, but the footing was treacherous, and she slipped on the rocks and fell to her knees. The creature slammed into her and she was thrown backward. She landed right at the edge of the slope, but the rocks around her were loose and the slope angled downward where she landed. She slid down further, heading straight for the edge of the cliff.

Her hands flew out, trying to dig into the slope, but the rocks just came loose in her grip. She looked up at them, a panic-stricken look on her face as she slid closer to the edge, gaining speed as she went. A moment later she plummeted over the edge, with only a scream echoing up behind her.

For a split second no one moved. It had happened so fast, no one had had a chance to react. They all just stood there, staring at the place where Elena had disappeared in disbelief.

Vincent stood there for a moment with the others, then he suddenly let out a straggled cry. Cloud had never heard a sound like that from Vincent before, from any human before. It was filled with agony and grief, inhumanly sorrowful. A moment later the cry had changed to a roar, losing any semblance of humanity as Vincent transformed. The huge chaos beast roared again, but even that was different, even transformed his voice was filled with grief and loss. The beast spread its wings and shot into the sky.

"Vincent!" Tifa shouted. But the beast flew on, disappearing into the canyons below.

For a long time they all stood there in silence, shocked at what had befallen them. Then slowly, almost mechanically Cloud carefully made his way to the edge where Elena had fallen and looked down for a moment. Tifa came up slowly behind him.

"Is there any chance..."

Cloud shook his head.

"It's a thousand foot drop," he said in a tight voice. "No one could have survived."