

THEY were about to leave – the handler had ramped the price up when he saw Edgar’s attire, neglecting to consider that for eight birds, it would make the total sum quite extortionate – when Terra said, “They’re different here.”

Celes was about to turn to her and speak sharply – *don’t be ridiculous, there’s only one breed big enough to ride* – but the glint of the nearest chocobo’s eye stopped her in her tracks: it was brighter than those of the Imperial stock, she realised, and as she considered the bird, she saw that the feathers seemed softer and lighter, more relaxed.

“They’re kept better,” she concluded; “they’re happier, away from all that.”