

JAYNE Folia was doing all she could to make sure the children didn't disturb Biggs while he was recuperating. He appreciated it: he was fond of children, and he knew some of those who lived at the Leaf House very well from the days when he had worked there. There were a few he had seen grow up and grow into themselves, developing personalities of their own, all unique but equally good, lively company. For now, though, he needed to get better, and he lacked the energy to receive visitors. Jayne was the only person who came to see him, and even speaking to her was enough to make him very tired.

"There's a young man who wants to see you," she remarked during one of these short visits, two days after Biggs had regained consciousness. "I told him you couldn't be disturbed."

Biggs thanked her. "I wonder who it could be," he mused.

"I don't know," said Jayne. "He's there every day, before I'm even up. Always asking the same questions."

"Really?" he said. "Maybe you should let him in, then."

"It can't be that important," she told him.

"But," he said, "even so – what does the guy look like? Maybe I know him. He could be from Sector 7."

She paused, clearly wondering how to describe him. "Well," she said, "he has a sort of chubby face, I suppose. Wears a red bandanna."

At that, Biggs abruptly attempted to sit up. It was a bad decision: his shoulder was suddenly very painful. He let out a sharp gasp.

“What are you doing?” Jayne exclaimed. “You’re supposed to be resting, you know that. Don’t move so quickly.”

“It’s gotta be Wedge,” said Biggs. “He’s OK – he can come in. I wanna see him.”

“Oh,” said Jayne; she lowered her head, seeming embarrassed.

“What’s up?” Biggs asked.

“I’m sorry,” said Jayne. “I didn’t realise he was your boyfriend.”

It was Biggs’ turn to feel embarrassed. “What do you mean?” he said. “He’s just my best friend, that’s all.”

“Oh,” said Jayne again. She seemed even more uncomfortable.

“Why did you think –”

“I misunderstood,” she said. “Although –” She let out a brief sigh. “Well ... you were calling out for him while you slept. Saying his name. If I’d realised that’s who he was, I’d have let him in straight away, I swear: you obviously needed him. I just didn’t realise it was the same guy.” She got up, adding, “I’ll go get him.”

Biggs let his head fall back against his pillow, listening to Jayne’s footsteps recede as she made her way down the stairs. He was starting to feel confused: it was probably a reaction to the medicines he was taking. They had only been speaking for a few short minutes, and yet he still wanted to go to sleep now the conversation was over.

But after a few minutes, Wedge entered the room. He was visibly injured – not as seriously as Biggs had been, but there were scattered bandages on his face and arms. Nonetheless, the smile on his face was so broad that it seemed as if he was in perfect health.

“Wish I felt that good,” Biggs mumbled, and Wedge came close to him and scooped him into a tight embrace.

“Stop,” Biggs added feebly after a few seconds had passed. “Too tight. I can’t breathe –”

“Sorry, I’m sorry!” said Wedge, springing back immediately. “I didn’t know if you were awake. I was trying to speak to that lady every day, but she never told me anything. I just wanted to know how you were doing.”

He was teary-eyed: Biggs pretended not to notice. “It’ll take a while,” he said, “but the doctor said there’s nothing to worry about. I’ll be fine in the end. Worst thing for now is these pills I gotta take: they make me all slow and sleepy.”

Wedge grimaced. “Sounds horrible. I was lucky – just a few scrapes in Sector 7, then during the fighting in the Shinra Building, but –”

“Wedge,” Biggs interrupted him. He was starting to feel very tired indeed. “What did you say to Jayne?”

“To who?”

“The woman you were talking to outside,” Biggs explained. He closed his eyes. “She was here just now; she thought you and me were an item. You must’ve said something to make

her think so. Otherwise, she wouldn't have ..." By this point, he was a little confused by what had happened. He had the feeling that there might have been something else to the story, but if so, he had forgotten it.

Wedge hesitated, but then he replied: "I had to say something to try and get her to let me in. I, uh, told her you're the most important person in my life."

Biggs opened his eyes. He could feel himself starting to smile. "Is that true?" he asked.

"Do you mind?" said Wedge.

Slowly, he shook his head. It took a lot of effort: he really would have preferred to be asleep.

"I could say the same," he murmured. "About you, I mean. Uh, that is –"

"I get it."

Biggs suddenly felt a little more lucid. "Sorry," he said. "It's this medicine – I feel totally useless. Can't stay awake." He looked at Wedge. "You're injured too, though, right? Can't have helped, coming over here first thing every morning. You should rest."

"No, that's OK," said Wedge. "I already said, it's fine –"

"Why don't you sleep here?" Biggs suggested. "Room in my bed: come on, lie down. Hold on a minute." He shuffled to the side to make room, but Wedge stayed where he was.

Suddenly, Biggs felt very alone. Until then, he had felt reassured to have Wedge there as a comrade, someone he knew

and trusted better than anyone. But now that Wedge seemed to be refusing to take the place Biggs had left for him, it was as if a barrier had come down between them.

“Wedge,” he said pathetically. “Please – I’m begging here – stay with me, don’t leave ...”

“You really want me sleeping in your bed?” said Wedge. “Right next to you? No, Biggs, don’t cry – of course I will, if you’re sure that’s what you want –”

If he was crying, Biggs was unaware of it. By this point, he was more aware of Wedge’s presence than of his own body. A few seconds later, he recognised the feeling of Wedge pressed against him, his warm hands against Biggs’ arms. He sighed: everything would be all right.

“Don’t leave me,” he mumbled.

“Never,” said Wedge. “I promise.”

Wedge’s lips pressed lightly against his forehead, and that was the last thing he felt before he fell asleep.