



Dialogue Written By:

Phoenix Tamarisk

Edited By:

Phoenix Tamarisk

Candy Crystal

Joey Joe Joe Shabidue

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Part One: But you will lose something dear

Chapter 01: Avalanche

We are floating through space, our vision constantly shifting examining the stars around us. We hear screaming coming, we look around, but we cannot find where the screaming is coming from. What is happening? Suddenly everything goes black, and the scene changes to a beautiful girl who is watching some fireflies. She stands up and begins to walk. We realize that she is in an alleyway. When she emerges from the alley, holding a flower basket, and we begin to rise, away from her, revealing a clear shot of the monstrously large city that this girl lives in, Midgar.

Then the sound of a train on the tracks appears and the screen fades to a train approaching a train station. When the train stops, three people quickly depart from the train; Biggs, Wedge, and Jessie. They move to action quickly removing the immediate threat to them, the guards. They quickly move on as Barret runs out of the train, along with a young man, with spiked hair. Barret turns to the man and shouts, “C’mon newcomer. Follow Me.”

Barret led the way, and the young man lost sight of him as Shinra guards attacked the young man. It was a brief fight, and the young man continued. He left the train station, and regrouped with the others, who were at a steel gate trying to hack it open.

“Wow,” exclaimed Biggs. “You used to be in SOLDIER all right! ...Not everyday ya find one in a group like AVALANCHE.”

At the sound of Biggs comment, Jessie turned towards Biggs, and asked, “Soldier? Aren’t they the enemy? What’s he doing with us in Avalanche?” Biggs quickly responded, “Hold it, Jessie. He *was* in Soldier. He quit them and now is one of us.” Jessie then continued her work trying to open the gate, and Biggs turn towards the young man that they talking about, and mentioned to him, “Didn’t catch your name...”

The young man looked at Biggs, and introduced himself, “Cloud.”

“Cloud, eh? I am...” Cloud interrupted Biggs, “I don’t care what your names are. Once this job is over I am outta here.”

No sooner were those words out of his mouth when Barret ran up to the group. Seeing them grouped like this only irritated him. “The hell you all doin’!? I thought I told you never move in a group!” Then he somewhat calmed down, and gave the orders. “Our target’s the North Mako Reactor. We’ll meet on the bridge in front of it.”

Jessie then got the steel gate to open, and the group continued, except for Barret, who turned towards Cloud with an unsure look. “Ex-Soldier, huh? Don’t trust ya.” Cloud did not comment on what Barret said, and they both ran towards the mako reactor.

Running through the dark alleyways Avalanche arrived at the mako reactor. Wedge secured the exit route, while the others made their way into the reactor. As they regrouped in the reactor, Barret turned towards Cloud. “Yo! This your first time in a reactor?”

“No. After all, I did work for Shinra, ya’know,” Cloud responded.



Barret then continued, "The planet is full of Mako energy. People here use it every day."

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, causing Barret to go into a raging fit.

"It's the life blood of this planet. But the Shinra keep suckin' the blood out with these weird machines."

"I am not here for a lecture. Let's just hurry," stated Cloud.

This only frustrated Barret more, and retorted, "That's it! You're comin' whit me from now on."

Biggs entered the command code to open the steel door, and the computer stated, "Code deciphered." The door opened and the group made their way to another steel door, where Jessie entered a code to the computer, and again the computer stated "Code deciphered."

The group moved on, except for Biggs, to an elevator. Jessie opened the elevator doors, and they stepped in. Jessie then told Cloud, "Push that button over there." Cloud didn't respond, and pressed the down button, and the elevator began to go down.

On their way down Barret continued with his lecture. "Little by little reactors'll drain all the life. And that'll be that."

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and responded, "It's not my problem."

Barret waved his arms while saying, "The planet is dyin', Cloud!"

Cloud shook his head from side to side. "The only thing I care about is finishin' this job before security and the Roboguards come."

Cloud's comment only angered Barret more, and stopped try to convince Cloud of what Shinra was doing to the planet for now.

The elevator arrived at the bottom floor, and they had to continue down a flight of stairs, three stories to be exact. Then Cloud jumped over a hole in the ground, and climbed down a ladder to an 'I' beam platform, where Jessie decided to wait for them to return. Cloud then continued to the bottom of the reactor.

They reached the bottom with no problems, and made their way to the reactor core. When they arrived Barret commented, "When this place blows, this ain't gonna be nothin' more than a hunk of junk. Cloud set the bomb"

Cloud looked at Barret with confusion, and asked, "Shouldn't you do it?"

"Jus' do it! I gotta watch to make sure you don't pull nothin'."

"Fine, be my guest."

Then Cloud heard a hi-pitched sound and a voice. "Watch out! This isn't just a reactor!!" The noise faded a way, and Barret asked, "What's wrong?"

Cloud still somewhat bewildered looked at Barret and responded, "huh?"

"What's wrong, Cloud? Hurry it up!"

"Yeah, sorry."

Cloud proceeded to the core, and set the bomb. When he finished an alarm sounded.

Barret and Cloud both looked around, and Barret shouted, "Heads up, here they come!"

No sooner where those words out of his mouth, when a Guard Scorpion appeared. Cloud and Barret when to work quickly, and with a few shots from Barret's arm gun, and attacks form Cloud's sword, the Guard Scorpion was quickly defeated.

When the battle was over, Cloud looked at Barret, and said, "Come on. Let's get outta here!"

They began to vacate the area when the computer announced, “Ten minutes to detonation.”

They moved quickly to leave the reactor. While they were leaving Cloud noticed Jessie struggling to move. Cloud approached her and asked, “You all right?”

Jessie still struggling responded, “My leg got stuck.”

Cloud took a closer look at her leg and helped her get it unstuck. Jessie Stood up and with gratitude said, “Thanks!”

They continued their way to the top floor of the reactor, where Jessie had to reopen the steel door, and Biggs had to open the other one. They quickly left the reactor, and regrouped with Wedge and Avalanche then left the area as the mako reactor exploded.

A short time later Avalanche is in a tunnel setting up their escape route. Jessie was setting small explosives; Wedge was keeping a look out, while the others waited. Biggs then commented, “That should keep the planet going... at least a little longer.”

“Yeah,” responded Wedge.

Barret didn’t comment, and Jessie finished setting the explosives, turned towards the group, and stated, “Ok! Now everyone get back.”

They all stepped back a safe distance and the explosives when off, creating an opening for Avalanche to escape. They all made their way out of the tunnel. After everyone was out Barret spoke, “All right, now let’s get out of here. Rendezvous at Sector 8 station! Split up and get on the train.” Avalanche broke off and Cloud stopped Barret.

“H, hey!” exclaimed Cloud.

“If it’s about your money save it ‘till we’re back at the hideout.”

Cloud didn’t comment on what Barret said, and they split up and left the area. Cloud continued on his way to the Sector 8 station when he ran into a Flower Girl selling flowers.

“Excuse me,” she paused for a brief second, and continued. “What happened?” Cloud unsure of how to answer that question, responded with, “Nothing... hey listen...” Cloud quickly changed the subject. “Don’t see many flowers around here.”

“Oh, these? Do you like them? They’re only a gil...?” Cloud looked at the basket, and offered to buy one.

“Oh, thank you!”

She took out one flower, and handed to Cloud.

“Here you are!” The Flower Girl then walked away, and Cloud continued his way to the Sector 8 train station. Cloud walked up and alleyway hoping that he would not be spotted by Shinra Soldiers, when he heard a voice behind him, “Hey! You there!!”

Cloud turned around to Shinra Soldiers and quickly ran. The Shinra Soldiers Quickly opened fire from their guns and yelled, “Halt!”

Cloud tried to run but all the exits seemed to be blocked, as a group of six Shinra Soldiers surrounded him on an over past.

“That’s as far as you go,” stated one of the Shinra Soldier.

“I don’t have time to be messin’ around with you guys.” stated Cloud.

“Enough babbling... Grab him,” order a Shinra Soldier.

The Shinra Soldiers charged at Cloud. At the same time Cloud ran toward the edge of the over pass. The train whistle blew, and he jumped off the over pass onto the train, and the train disappeared into another tunnel.

Meanwhile the rest of Avalanche were on the train that Cloud had missed. Avalanche had boarded the train in the cargo section. Barret had a look of frustration on his face, while Biggs and Jessie were further back in the cargo car. Wedge was towards the front of the car looking at the floor. He then looked at Barret and commented, "Cloud never came." And he went back to looking at the floor of the car.

Biggs responded to Wedge's comment, "Cloud... I wonder if he was killed."

Barret looked at Biggs and retorted, "No way!!"

Jessie who was standing the farthest away turn away from the group, and said to herself quietly, "Cloud..."

At that moment they all heard a noise on top of the car, a sound that sounded like someone, or something running on top of the train car. They all looked towards the ceiling and the noise stopped.

"Say," mentioned Biggs. "Do you think Cloud's... Going to fight to the end for Avalanche!?"

"The hell would I know!?" responded Barret. "Do I look like a mind reader?" Barret slammed his hand on a top of a crate. "Hmph!! If y'all weren't such screw-ups..."

"Hey Barret what about our money...?" questioned Wedge.

Barret again slammed his hand on the crate, and Wedge said, "Uh, nothin'... sorry."

After that there was some knocking on the door. Everyone began to look around the car, and the door opened, and Cloud jumped in. Biggs, Wedge and Jessie at the same time said, "Cloud!!"

Cloud placed his hands on his hips, and stated, "Looks like I'm a little late."

"You damn right, you're late," responded Barret. "Come waltzin' in here makin' a big scene!"

"It's no big deal. Just what I always do."

"Shi't! Havin' everyone worried like that you don't give a damn 'bout no one but yourself!"

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and mentioned, "Hmm... you were worried about me!"

This sent Barret into a fit, waving his arms. "Wha!? I'm takin' it out of you money hot stuff!" Barret then walked towards the front of the car and shouted, "Wake Up! We're movin' out! Follow me!"

Barret left the car and Wedge looked at Cloud. "Hey, Cloud!! You were great back there!" Wedge left the car and Biggs ran up to Cloud.

"Heh heh... Cloud! We'll do even better next time," said Biggs, and he left the car. Jessie walked over to the door and said, "Be careful, I'll shut this." She closed the door and turned toward Cloud. "Oh, Cloud!! Your face is pitch-black..." She wiped Cloud's face, and said, "There you go!"

Jessie started to leave the car, when she turned back towards Cloud. "Say, thanks for helping me back at the reactor!" Jessie then left car, and Cloud followed.

Just before Avalanche entered the next car, a voice came over the P.A. “Last train out of Sector 8 station. Last stop Sector 7, Train graveyard. Expected time of arrival is 12:23AM, Midgar standard time...”

As soon as the announcement had stopped, Avalanche entered the car causing some of other passengers to leave the car. Just before the last man that was leaving the car left, he commented “This is why I hate the last train. Hoo-boy...” and he left the car.

Cloud started walking towards the front of the car. When he was walking by Barret, he turned towards him, and Barret stated, “Stop actin’ like a damn kid. Si’ down an’ shu’up.” Cloud didn’t pay any attention to Barret’s comment and walked up to Jessie.

When he arrived, she asked him, “Hey, Cloud. You want to look at this with me? It’s a map of the Midgar rail system. Let’s look at it together. I’ll explain it to you.” She turned towards the monitor and commented, “I like this kinda stuff. Bombs, and monitors... you know flashy stuff.”

Cloud took a look at the monitor and Jessie said, “Its about to start.” The monitor turned on and Jessie started. “This is a complete model of the City of Midgar. It’s about a 1/10000 scale. The Top Plate is about fifty meters above the ground. A main support structure holds the plate up in the center, and there are other support structures built in each section. She then turned towards Cloud and whispered , “The No. 1 reactor we blew up was in the northern section. Then there is No. 2, No. 3 all the way up to No. 8 Reactor. The 8 reactors provide Midgar with electricity. Each town used to have a name, but no one in Midgar remembers them. Instead of names we refer to them as numbered sectors. That’s the kind of place this is... Phew this is next look at this.”



The Screen flashed and showed a train route, and Jessie continued, “This is the route the train is on. The route spirals around the main support structure. We should be coming around the center area, right now. At each check point, an ID sensor device is set up. It can check the identities and backgrounds on each passenger on the train by linking it up to the central data bank at Shinra Headquarters.”

Jessie then whispered, “Anyone can tell we look suspicious, so we’re using fake ID’s.” No sooner were those words out of her mouth when the train passed through the check point, sounding a siren and flashing a red light. Jessie then commented, “Speak of the devil. That light means that we’re in the ID check area.” She then whispered, “(When the lights go off you never know what kind of creeps’ll come out.) Anyhow, we’re almost back now. That’s a relief. ”

The lights stopped flashing and the sound stopped as well. They had cleared the ID check point with no problems. After they were cleared Barret began talking. “Look... You can see the surface now. This city don’t have day or night. If that plate weren’t there we would be able to see the sky.”

Cloud walked over to Barret and looked out the train window, and mentioned, “A floating city. Pretty unsettling scenery.”

Barret stood up, looked at Cloud and crossed his arm. “Huh? Never expect ta hear that outta someone like you. Your jus’ full of surprises.” Barret walked to the front of the

car, turned back, and continued. "The upper world... a city on a plate. It's 'cuz of that fuckin' 'pizza', that people underneath are sufferin'!"

Barret turned away, and crossed his arms. "And the city below is full of polluted air." Barret walked to the right side of the car, waving his arm. "On topa that the Reactor keeps drainin' up all the energy." Barret turn back towards Cloud, and Cloud asked, "Then why doesn't everyone move onto the plate?"

"Dunno," responded Barret. "Probably 'cuz they ain't got no money. Or, maybe... 'Cuz they love their land, no matter how polluted it gets."

"I know... no one lives in the slums because they want to. It's like this train. It can't run anywhere except where it rails take it," stated Cloud.

Shortly after the train arrived at the destination, and everyone got off. They all stepped off the train platform and Barret ordered, "Yo!! Get over here, all'ya!!"

Everyone regrouped and Barret continued, "This mission was a success. But don't get lazy now. The hard part's still to come! Don't y'all be scared of that explosion! Cause the next one's gonna be bigger than that!" Barret than began to leave, turned back to the group, and stated, "Meet back at the hideout!! Move out!"

The group quickly responded to what Barret had said, and started to make their way back to the hideout. Avalanche's hideout was a bar in the Sector 7 slums, known as Seventh Heaven. This bar is owned, and ran by a girl named Tifa Lockheart, who also is a member of Avalanche.

Cloud made his way to Seventh Heaven. When he arrived he saw Barret outside guarding the entrance. Cloud approached the bar, and Barret stated, "Ok! Go on ahead." Barret moved out of the way, and Cloud entered the Bar.

As Cloud entered the bar, Marlene, Barret's daughter said, "papa!!" Though when she saw Cloud standing there she quickly ran to the furthest corner. Upon seeing this Tifa ran from behind the bar, to Marlene.

"Marlene! Aren't you going to say anything to Cloud?" asked Tifa. Marlene didn't respond and Tifa walked over to Cloud. "Welcome home, Cloud. Looks like everything went well. Did you fight with Barret?"

"Yeah," responded Cloud.

"I should have known. He's always pushing people around, and you've always been in fights since you were little. I was worried." Tifa then noticed that Cloud had a flower. Upon seeing it she questioned, "Flowers? How nice. You almost never see them around the slums. But... A flower for me? Oh Cloud you shouldn't have."

"No big," Cloud said as he handed the flower to Tifa. She took the flower, and smelled it. "Thank you, Cloud. It smells wonderful." Tifa turned around, and continued, "Maybe I should fill the store with flowers." Tifa turn back towards Cloud and Barret ran in. No sooner was he in the Bar, when Marlene ran up to him and said, "Papa, Welcome home!"

Barret picked up Marlene and place her on his right shoulder, and Tifa asked, "You all right, Barret?"

"Great," responded Barret. "Get in here, fools!! We're startin' the meetin'!!" After that statement Barret walked over to a pinball machine, hit the top of it, and went to a secret basement. The rest of Avalanche followed him down, except for Tifa, who went back behind the bar.

In the secret basement Jessie was working on a computer, while Biggs appeared to be looking over some plans, or even watching the news report on the television. Wedge also appeared to be watching the television, or just staring off into space thinking. Barret was punching on a punching bag, while Marlene was sitting on a box next to him.

Cloud was the last to arrive in the basement, and walked over to Barret who only was a few steps away. Only a couple seconds had past when Barret noticed Cloud standing there. He stopped punching the punching bag, turned towards Cloud.

“Yo, Cloud! There’s somethin’ I wanna ask ya.” Barret paused, but Cloud didn’t respond, and Barret continued. “Was there anyone from Soldier fighting us today?”

Cloud shook his head no, and responded, “None. I’m positive.”

Barret hit the punching bag, and commented, “You sound pretty sure.”

“If there was anyone from Soldier you wouldn’t be standing here now.”

Cloud’s comment was only frustrating Barret, and he responded, “Don’t go thinkin’ your so bad jes cuz you was in Soldier.”

Cloud turned away from Barret, and started to walk away. Barret now angered at Cloud, started to run towards him as if he was going to start a fight. Biggs noticed this and grabbed Barret. Cloud stopped walking, and looked towards the floor, and didn’t comment on what Barret had said.

Barret in a rage quickly turned towards Biggs, and punched him, sending Biggs flying across the room, and into the ceiling. Barret then calmed down looked at Cloud, and said, “Yeah, you’re strong. Probably all them guys in Soldier are. But don’t forget that your skinny ass’s workin’ for Avalanche now! Don’t get no ideas ‘bout hangin’ on to Shinra.”

Cloud turned back towards Barret and quickly responded, “Stayin’ with Shinra? You asked me a question and I answered it... that’s all.”

Cloud walked over to Barret and got in his face. “I’m going upstairs. I want to talk about my money.” Cloud started to walk away when Tifa showed up.

“Wait, Cloud,” requested Tifa.

Cloud didn’t respond and Barret said, “Tifa! Let him go! Looks like he still misses the Shinra.”

“Shut up!” responded Cloud. “I don’t care about either Shinra or Soldier!”

Cloud continued to walk away, and when he arrived at the pinball machine, he turned back, and added. “But don’t get me wrong! I don’t care about Avalanche or the planet for that matter!”

No one in the basement responded to what Cloud said, and Cloud left the basement. After the pinball elevator arrive back to the top floor, Cloud stepped off and walked to the middle of the room to wait for Barret to show up so they could discuss the money issue.

The pinball machine went back down, and quickly came back up, but Barret wasn’t the one riding it, for it was Tifa. She quickly ran up to Cloud and began talking. “Listen, Cloud. I’m asking you. Please join us.”

Cloud shook his head no, took a couple of steps towards the door, and responded, “Sorry Tifa.”

Tifa walked up behind him, and said, “The planet is dying. Slowly but surely it’s dying. Someone has to do something.”

Cloud turned towards Tifa, and snapped, "So let Barret and his buddies do something about it. Its got nothin' to do with me." Cloud continued walking towards the door, and Tifa huffed, "So! You're really leaving!? You're just going walk out ignoring your childhood friend!?"

Cloud turned back, and responded, "What... How can you say that!"

"You forgot the promise, too," Tifa added.

"Promise?"

"So you *did* forget?"

Tifa took a couple of steps towards Cloud, and continued, "Remember...Cloud. It was seven years ago..."

Then Cloud started to think about it, and was trying to remember. Tifa then mentioned, "Look the well. Do you remember?"

Cloud nodded yes, and said, "Yeah... back then. I thought you would never come, and I was getting a little cold."

Cloud then recalled the memory. He remembered sitting on the well waiting for Tifa. When she finally showed up.

"Sorry I'm late," said Tifa. She sat next to Cloud and continued. "You said you wanted to talk to me about something?"

"Come this spring... I'm leaving this town for Midgar."

"All boys are leaving our town."

"But I'm different from all of them. I'm not just going to find a job." Cloud stood up, and turn toward Tifa, and continued. "I'm going to join Soldier. I'm going to be the best there is, just like Sephiroth."

"Sephiroth... The great Sephiroth."

Cloud didn't respond to what Tifa had said, and climbed to the top of the well, and Tifa added, "Isn't it hard to join Soldier?"

Cloud nodded his head yes, and responded, "I probably won't be able to come back to this town for a while."

Upon hearing those words Tifa began to cry a little. Cloud looked down at her and questioned, "Huh?"

"Will you be in the newspaper if you do well?" asked Tifa.

"I'll try."

"Hey, why don't we make a promise?" She paused for a second. "Umm, if you ever get famous and I'm ever in a bind... You come and save me, all right?"

"What?" Cloud asked in a confused tone.

"Whenever I'm in trouble, my hero will come and rescue me. I want to at least experience that once."

Cloud now even more confused asked, "What?"

"Come on--! Promise me--!"

"All right..... I promise"

Cloud stopped thinking about what had happened all those years ago, and Tifa asked, "You remember now, don't you... our promise?"

Cloud shook his head, and responded, "I'm not a hero, and I'm not famous. I can't keep... the promise."

“But you got your childhood dream, didn’t you? You joined Soldier.” Cloud wasn’t sure on how to respond to what Tifa had said, he scratched his head, and Tifa added, “So come on! You’ve got to keep your promise.”

Barret then climbed up the pinball elevator shaft, and jumped behind Tifa.

“Wait a sec big-time Soldier. A promise is a promise! Here!” Barret then threw 1500 gil at Cloud’s feet. Cloud picked up the gil, and said, “This is my pay? Don’t make me laugh.”

Tifa kinda shock by Cloud’s comment, and said, “What? Then you’ll...!!” Cloud interrupted Tifa, and stated, “You got the next mission lined up? I’ll do it for 3000.”

Barret shocked by Cloud’s statement, and responded, “What....!?” Barret was getting angry, and frustrated with Cloud. Tifa stepped closer to Barret and said, “It’s ok, it’s ok.” And then she whispered, “We’re really hurting for help, right?”

Barret then whispered back, “That money’s for Marlene schoolin’.” Barret then stepped away from Tifa looked at Cloud and stated, “2000!” He then turned his back to Cloud, and Tifa walked up to Cloud, and said, “Thanks, Cloud.”

Chapter 02: The Flower Girl

The next morning Cloud was the last person to wake up. He got up and left the basement; when he arrived on the top floor, Tifa said in a cheerful voice, “Good morning! Cloud! Did you sleep well?”

“Next to you, who wouldn’t” Cloud said jokingly.

Tifa’s face went red, and she placed her hands over her face. “I don’t know what you mean.” Tifa then calmed down and mentioned, “I’m going this time.” Cloud didn’t respond, turned towards the door, and Barret gave the mission orders.

“Our target’s the Sector 5 Reactor. Head for the Station first. I’ll fill you in on the train.” Then Barret got this confused look on his face and said, “Yo! Cloud! I got somethin’ I wanna ask you!!” Barret paused, and then tried to continue. “I, uh.... I don’t know how to use Materia! I’ll give you that Materia you found. Just teach me how to use it!”

Cloud sigh, and responded, “You wouldn’t understand.”

“So this is what makes them guys in SOLDIER so great, huh!?” retorted Barret. “Ok I’ll ask Jessie later. But, from now on you’re in charge of the Materia.”

Tifa then walked over to Marlene who is only five years old, and told her, “Marlene you watch the store while we’re gone.”

“All right!! Good luck,” responded Marlene.

Then Tifa, Barret and Cloud left the Bar, and met up with the rest of members of Avalanche and headed to the train station. It only took a couple of minutes to arrive at the station, and Avalanche boarded.

Avalanche entered the car that they normally ride in and Barret, announced, “Yo!! Looks like this ain’t no private car!! So split up!!”

Biggs, Wedge, and Jessie left the car, and ironically the same Businessman complaining about them the night before was again in the same car, and said to himself, “hoodlums again. God, don’t I just have all the luck.” The Businessman decided he had the same right to ride in the rail car as everyone else. So instead of leaving, he sat down.

After the Businessman sat down, Barret ran to the front of the car, and without looking at the businessman he asked “You say somethin’?” The Businessman didn’t respond, and Barret stated, “I said, did you say somethin’!” The Businessman didn’t respond again, so Barret ran up to him, and stood in front of him.

“Yo, look at that!! It got empty alluva sudden,” Barret stated to the businessman. The businessman was fidgeting and replied, “What’s goin’ on?” He then looked up to see Barret, and said, “*Damn!!* I... it’s empty because of... g, guys like you.”

Barret didn’t like the Businessman’s comment and hit the seat right next to the Businessman’s head.

“Y, Y, YIPES!!” was the response of the terrified Businessman. “You... you’ve seen the news, right? Avalanche says there’ll be more bombings. Only devoted employees like me would go to Midgar on a day like today.”

Barret jumped back, pointed his gun-arm at the man and asked, “You workin’ for Shinra?”

The businessman put his hands over his face, and stated, “I won’t give into violence... and I’m not giving you my seat either!”

“Barret,” yelled Tifa.

“Shit!! You lucky bastard!”

Barret then ran to the back of the rail car where Cloud was, and Tifa followed. When they both got to the back of the rail car, Cloud asked, “So, what are we gonna do now?”

“Shit! The hell you so calm about? You bustin’ up my rhythm,” responded Barret.

The train whistle sounded, and the car shook. Tifa then commented, “Seems like they just finished connecting the cars. We’re finally leaving.”

The train started to move and Cloud asked Barret, “So what’s our next target?”

“Hah! Listen to Mr. Serious-about-his-work!” Barret paused, and then continued, “Awright... I’ll tell ya. Jessie probably already told you, but there’s a security check point at the top plate. It’s an ID scan system checkin’ all the trains.”

“Which Shinra is very proud of,” Tifa added.

“We can’t use our fake ID’s anymore,” stated Barret.

Then an announcement came over the P.A. System. “Good morning, and welcome to Midgar lines. Arrival time at Sector 5 station will be 11:45.”

Tifa then mentioned, “That means we’ve got only three more minutes to the ID check point.”

“Alright, in three minutes we’re jumpin’ off this train. Got it!?” Barret stated.

Barret sat down, and Tifa ran up to the Railway map Monitor, and said, “Cloud, come over here! Let’s look at the Railway map monitor.”

Cloud ran down to where Tifa was, and stood in front of the Railway map monitor. Then Tifa said, “Hmm, it looks like you’ve seen this already. It’s all right. Come a little closer.”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and moved closer to Tifa. As soon as he got closer to her the ID checkpoint went off sounding an alarm, and flashing a red light. Tifa and Cloud were both confused by this because they were no where near the ID Check point location.

Tifa looked at Cloud, and commented, “That’s odd. The ID checkpoint was supposed to be further down.”

No sooner did Tifa finish her sentence when a different type of alarm sounded, and voice over the P.A. System announced, “Type A security alert!! Unidentified passengers confirmed. A search of all cars will be conducted! Repeat Type A security alert!! Unidentified passengers confirmed. A search of all cars will be conducted!”

Tifa was now in a slight panic, and questioned, “What’s Happening?”

Barret more confused than panic, ran to the front of the car. “What’s goin’ on!!”

Jessie that ran back into the car, and stated, “We’re in trouble. I’ll explain later. Hurry! Get to the next car!”

“Fuck! Someone blew it,” stated Barret.

Then a Voice came over the P.A. System. “Unidentified passengers located in Car # 1 preparing for lock down.”

Barret then ordered, “Let’s go! Keep it up!”

As soon as Barret gave his orders everyone move to the next car. Upon entering the next car, a voice came over the P.A. “Car # 1: Locked down. Upgrading to level 2 warning.”

Biggs who was standing at the other end of the car shouted, “hurry!” Wedge followed that with, “They’re gonna lock the door, sir!” Biggs and Wedge left for the next

car, and announcement came across the P.A. “Unidentified passengers located in Car # 2 preparing for lock down.”

“Just run,” yelled Jessie! “Changing to Plan 2!”

They entered the next car, and the door locked behind them, with and announcement stating, “Car # 2: Locked down. Upgrading to level 3 warning.” And the alarm and flashing lights stopped, and Barret said, “Awright! We clear!?”

Jessie responded, “Not yet. They’re starting another check. If we’re caught, we’re done for! But, don’t worry. If we move up the train, car by car, we should get past it!”

Again the ID Check point started, and Jessie ran towards the door of the car. Just before she left the car she punched a man by the door, and he fell to the ground. Jessie left the car and another announcement came. “Unidentified passengers: Moving to the front of the train. Currently tracking location.”

They left the car, and enter the next one. “Car # 3: Locked down. Upgrading to level 4 warning.” And they continued to the next car. When they entered an announcement stated, “Car # 4: Locked down. Upgrading to level maximum security alert!!”

Barret then ran to the front of the car, and stated, “All right!! We made it. Yo!! This way!!”

Then a person wearing a Shinra uniform opened the side door of the train. Tifa and Cloud quickly joined Barret at the other end, and Barret said, “Let’s go we’re gonna dive outta here!!”

Cloud, kind of confused about the Shinra Guard that had opened the door, looked at her. The Shinra Guard then stated, “It’s me, Jessie. How do I look, Cloud? Do I look good in a Shinra uniform?”

“Yeah... you look great, just like a man.”

“Yay!! I’m so happy... I think?”

Cloud then turned to Tifa, and she said, “Scary... huh.”

“Too late to be saying that now. Why’d you come along anyway?” asked Cloud.

“Because...” Barret interrupted Tifa. “Hey you two! There ain’t no time for that!”

Barret stepped away from the door, and Tifa and Cloud walked up to it. Tifa stood in the doorway, and then stated, “Yeah!! I’ve made up my mind! Watch closely I’m gonna jump.”

Tifa jumped off the train, and Cloud turned towards Barret, and asked, “You don’t care if I go first?”

“A leader always stays till the end,” responded Barret. “Don’t worry ‘bout me, just go!” exclaimed Barret.

Cloud walked to the door, and Barret added, “Yo! Don’t go gettin’ you spikey-ass hurt! It’s only the beginnin’ of the mission!”

Cloud looked at Barret shrugged his shoulders and jumped out of the train. Barret then walked up to the door, and told the remaining members of Avalanche, “Later! You take care of the rest!” He then jumped from the train.

A short time later Tifa, Cloud, and Barret regrouped, and Barret stated, “Good, so far everything’s going as planned. Better not let your guard down till we get to the Sector 5 reactor. Biggs, Wedge and Jessie got everything ready for us. So MOVE it.”

Tifa and Cloud stated to move out, and Barret added, “Well, the reactor’s just down this tunnel!!”

They made their way through the train tunnel, hoping that they would be able to get to the Sector 5 Mako reactor, but only after a short time they ran into some security beams blocking the path. Cloud then pointed out, "Those light beams are the Shinra's security sensors. We can't go any further."

Cloud then walked over to a floor vent and looked down it. Barret then mentioned, "That's one damn tiny hole. You tellin' me to squeeze into that to get under the Plate? No way! Yo, Cloud, what're we gonna do?"

"Go down," responded Cloud.

"But, damn man, that thing gives me the chills."

Cloud didn't respond, and he went down the hole. Barret and Tifa followed him down. After a short ride down they landed in a duct work system, and they continued on with their mission.

They eventually made the way into a under ground area, and found Wedge. "Cloud, this way. The reactor's up this ladder." Cloud didn't respond, and proceeded up the ladder.

After they climbed the ladder, Cloud noticed Jessie, and she said, "I'm sorry. The ID scan on the train was all my fault. I made you ID card special... So that's why it happened. I put my heart into making it. But I failed. Next time I'll give you something more decent. I'll be back at the hideout in my research room workin' on it."

Cloud then continued on to the next ladder, and climbed down. At the bottom he ran into Biggs. "We're gonna pull out now. We'll meet up at the hideout," stated Biggs. "Cloud, we're countin' on you to blow the reactor." Biggs left, and Cloud entered the reactor.

Cloud, Tifa, and Barret made their way to the core of the reactor. They quickly arrived, and before they could get close enough to the core to set the bomb, Cloud heard a high pitch sound. He placed his hands over his ears, and dropped to the ground, and he saw a flash back.

In this flash back he was inside a different mako reactor, and saw Tifa, who was younger, kneeling next to an older man. Cloud also noticed a katana sword on the ground, and then Tifa spoke. "Papa... Sephiroth!? Sephiroth did this to you, didn't he!?" Tifa clasped onto her father, and added, "Sephiroth... Soldier... Mako Reactors... Shinra... Everything!" She then lifted back up and shouted, "I hate them all!"

Tifa then stood on her feet, and in anger picked up the katana sword, and ran into the next room. Then everything went black, but for only a second, and fades back to the present.

"Damn man, get a hold of yourself," said Barret.

Tifa walked up to Cloud and asked, "You all right?"

Cloud looked up at Tifa, and responded, "... Tifa."

"Mmm?"

"No... forget.... Come on let's hurry!" Cloud then stood up, and walked on to the core of the reactor. He set the Bomb and they left the area.

Even though they entered the reactor through the back entrance, they would not be able to go back that way, so they went to elevator, and went to the 1st floor. When they arrived, they had to open the steel door, and they went into a side room where there was a panel with three buttons.

"Jessie said we all have to push the button at once," stated Tifa.

Tifa, Barret, and Cloud pressed the button's at the same time and the steal door opened, and they continued on there way out. It only took them a couple of minutes to exit the reactor, and come to a split in the path.

Tifa went to the left, and Barret went to the right, and said, "This way!" Barret started to run to down the path, when a group of Shinra soldiers appeared. Barret who was confused by this said, "Shinra soldiers!? SHIT! What the hell's goin' on?"

"...A trap," stated Cloud.

Then a short fat man dressed in a red suit, walk out of the reactor. Barret noticed this man, and with more confusion, questioned, "Presi...President Shinra?"

"Why is the President here?" asked Tifa.

Neither Cloud nor Barret responded to Tifa's question, and President Shinra spook. "Hmm... So you all must be that... what was it?"

Barret retorted, "AVALANCHE! And don't ya forget it! And you're President Shinra, Huh?"

Cloud took a couple of steps towards President Shinra, and said, "Long time no see, President."

"Long time no see? Oh... you. You're the one who quit Soldier and joined Avalanche. I knew you'd been exposed to Mako from the look in your eyes... Tell me, traitor... what was you name?"

"Cloud"

"Forgive me for asking, but I can't be expected to remember each person's name. Unless you become another Sephiroth." President Shinra paused for a second, and then continued. "Yes, Sephiroth... He was brilliant. Perhaps too brilliant..."

Cloud took a step back, and questioned, "Sephiroth...?"

Barret then ran in front of Cloud and told President Shinra, "Don't give a damn 'bout none of that! This place's goin' up with a *bang* soon! Serves y'all right!"

"And such a waste of good fire works just to get rid of vermin like you," was the comment of President Shinra.

"VERMIN!? That's all you can say... VERMIN!" snapped Barret. "Y'all Shinra're the VERMIN, killing the planet! And that makes you King VERMIN! So shu'up jackass!"

"You are beginning to bore me. I'm a very busy man, so if you'll excuse me... I have a dinner I must attend."

"Dinner!? Don't gimme that! I ain't even started wit' you yet!"

"But, I've made arrangement for a playmate for you all," comment President Shinra, as he snapped his fingers. Immediately after that there was a noise, and it sound like it was coming their way.

"What's that noise?" asked Tifa.

"The hell is this!?" added Barret, and a techno-soldier came roaring in.

"Meet 'Airbuster', a techno-soldier. Our Weapon Development Department created him. I'm sure the data he'll extract from your dead bodies will be of great use to us in future experiments."

"Techno-soldier?" questioned Cloud.

A helicopter arrived and President Shinra said, "Now then, if you'll excuse me.

"Wait, President!" yelled Cloud as President Shinra Boarded the helicopter, and flew away.

“Yo, Cloud! We’ve gotta do somethin’ ‘bout him!” mentioned Barret.

The Airbuster lunged at Tifa and Barret, and Tifa yelled, “Help, Cloud! *This* is from Soldier?”

“No way! It’s just a machine,” responded Cloud

“I don’t care what it is!! I’m gonna bust him up,” stated Barret, and a fight had broke out. Though Airbuster had great potential, but a shot time later he was severely damage, and then exploded; blowing a hole into the catwalk, and Cloud fell.

Do to Cloud’s quick thinking he grabbed on the ledge, barely holding on, but he was on the other side, so neither Tifa nor Barret could help.

“It’s gonna Blow,” stated Barret. “Let’s go, Tifa!”

“Barret can’t you do something,” asked Tifa.

“Not a damn thing.”

“Cloud! Don’t Die! You can’t die! There’s still so much I want to tell you!” exclaimed Tifa.

“I know, Tifa...” responded Cloud.

“Hey, you gonna be awright,” asked Barret.

“You worry about yourselves! I’m all right, but take Care of Tifa!”

“Alright. Sorry ‘bout all this.”

“Stop talkin’ like this is the end!”

“Alright, then, later,” responded Barret as the reactor exploded, forcing Cloud to let go, and fall.

Unknowing where Cloud had fallen, none of Avalanche was unable to locate him. Cloud who was unconscious now, started to hear a voice and it asked, “You all right? Can you hear me?”

Cloud trying to look around the blackness, responded, “...Yeah...”

“Back then... you could get by with just skinned knees...”

“...What do you mean by ‘back then’?”

“What about now? Can you get up?”

“...What do you mean by ‘that time’ ...What about now?”

“...Don’t worry about me. You just worry about yourself now.”

“...I’ll give it a try.”

Then a different voice said, “Oh! It moved!” and the other voice that had been speaking to Cloud continued, “...How about that? Take it slow now. Little by little...”

“...I know,” responded Cloud, and the newer voice said, “Hello, hello?”

Cloud not pay any attention to the newer voice asked, “Hey... who are you?”

The voice he was talking to didn’t respond, and the newer voice again said, “Hello, hello!”

Cloud regained consciousness to see the girl who had sold him a flower kneeling by his head. He then sat up, and the girl asked, “You okay?” Cloud did respond, and still somewhat confused as to what just happened, and the girl added, “This is a church in the Sector 5 slums. It suddenly fell on top of me. It really gave me a scare.”

“I came crashing down,” asked Cloud.

“The roof and the flower bed must have broken your fall. You’re lucky.”

Cloud look down to the ground and asked, “Flower bed... is this yours?” Cloud then stood up, and added, “Sorry about that.”

"That's all right. The flowers here are quite resilient because this is a sacred place. They say you can't grow grass and flowers in Midgar. But for some reason, the flowers have no trouble blooming here. I love it here."

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and the girl started to work in her flower garden. Then she mentioned, "...So, we meet again."

Cloud started to think of where he met her, and she asked, "Don't you remember me?"

"Yeah, I remember you were selling flowers."

"Oh! I'm so happy! Thanks for buying my flowers." She then went back to work in a garden for a brief second. "Say, do you have any Materia?"

"Yes, some." Cloud shook his head, and added, "Nowadays you can find Materia anywhere."

"But mine is special. It's good for absolutely nothing."

"...Good for nothing? You probably just don't know how to use it."

"No, I do... it just doesn't do anything. I feel safe just having it. It was my mother's...." She paused for second, and then continued. "Say, I feel like talking. Do you feel up to it? After all here we are meeting again, right?"

"I don't mind."

"Wait here. I've got to check my flowers. It'll just take a minute."

She went to check on her flowers and Cloud being impatient went over by her, and she said, "Just a little longer... Oh! Now that you mention it... We don't know each other's names, do we? My name is Aeris. I'm Aeris, the Flower girl. Nice to meet you."

Cloud nodded his head and said, "The name's Cloud. Me... I do a little bit of everything."

While they were getting more acquainted, a person had walked into the church. Neither Aeris nor Cloud noticed the man, and Aeris responded to Cloud's comment.

"Oh... a jack of all trades."

Aeris started to giggle, and Cloud nodded again. "Yeah, I do whatever's needed. What's so funny? What are you laughing at?"

"Sorry... I just." Aeris stopped because she noticed the man. Cloud turned around to see a man with brownish red hair and wearing a blue suit. Cloud start to approach the man.

"Cloud! Don't let it get to you!" stated Aeris.

Cloud looked back at Aeris, shrugged his shoulders, and walked back to Aeris.

"Say, Cloud. Have you ever been a bodyguard? You *do* do everything, right?"

Cloud scratched his head, and responded, "...Yeah, that's right."

"Then, get me out of here. Take me home."

"Ok, I'll do it... but it'll cost you."

"Well then, let's see... How about if I go out with you once?"

Cloud took a step back held up his hand and rubbed his fingers together, demonstrating that he wanted money, but then walked towards the man.

"I don't know who you are, but..." Cloud shook his head, and continued, "You don't know me...?"

Then the same voice cloud had heard while was unconscious spoke in Cloud's mind. "...I know you." Then Cloud saw a white flash, and said, "Oh yeah... I know you. That uniform..."

Then in came three Shinra guards, and the man said, "...Hey sis, this one's a little weird."

"Shut up! You Shinra spy!" exclaimed Cloud.

Then one of the Shinra guards said, "Reno! Want him taken out?"

"I haven't decided yet," responded Reno

Then Aeris stated, "Don't fight here! You'll ruin the flowers!" Aeris ran to a door in the back, and Cloud followed.

"The exit is back there," said Aeris.

Cloud and Aeris ran through the door, and Reno walked through the flower bed, and comment on what just happened. "They were... Mako eyes." He then turned back to his men. "Yeah, all right. Back to work, back to work." Reno walked away, and yelled "Oh! And don't step on the flowers."

The Shinra guards all commented at once.

"Hey Reno, you just stepped on them!"

"They're all ruined!"

"You're gonna catch holy hell!"

Reno and the three Shinra guards followed Cloud and Aeris to the back, but when they arrive they were no where in sight. The reason that Cloud and Aeris weren't spotted right away was because they were climbing the stairs.

Though they were not in the clear, when one of the Shinra guards noticed them.

"There they are, over there."

Aeris looked down and said, "Cloud... that one!"

"I know. Looks like they aren't going to let us go," responded Cloud.

"What should we do?"

"Well we can't let them catch us, can we? Then, there's only one thing left."

Cloud jumped over a hole, and exclaimed, "Aeris! This way."

Aeris shook her no, and Cloud said, "All right. I'll hold them off"

"Right. Make sure they don't get through!"

Reno then shouted, "The Ancient is getting away! Attack! Attack! Attack!"

The Shinra guards began shooting their machine guns, causing Aeris to fall down.

"Eaygh!!" yelled Aeris as she fell.

"Aeris," shouted Cloud.

Aeris fell back to the bottom floor, and Reno said, "Think we'd killed'em? They shouldn't have put up a fight, I say!"

Then without orders from Reno, one of the Shinra guards approached Aeris.

"Cloud, help!" she screamed.

Cloud saw this and said to himself, "Damn!" He then looked up to the next floor and questioned, "What's that...?" Cloud then got an idea and shouted, "Aeris, hold on a minute!"

Cloud ran up to the next floor and saw four barrels. He looked down to where the Shinra guard was standing, and walked over to one of the barrels. "Here's a barrel. If I can just push it over..." Cloud pushed the barrel of the ledge, and landed right on top of the Shinra guard.

"Guuagh," was the sound he made as the barrel landed on top of him.

Aeris looked towards Cloud, and said, "Thanks, Cloud." Aeris started back up to where Cloud was and then screamed, "Eaygh!!" Another Shinra guard had blocked the bottom of the stairs, and Aeris yelled, "Cloud, help."

"Aeris hold on a minute!" responded Cloud as he pushed over another barrel. The barrel fell, landed on the stairs, and rolled of the Shinra guard. "Urkkk!" was the sound the Shinra guard made as the barrel rolled over top of him.

Aeris looked towards Cloud, and said, "Thanks, Cloud." She started to run up the stairs, and the last Shinra guard chased her. "Cloud, help," she yelled again.

"Aeris hold on a minute!" responded Cloud as he pushed over another barrel. The barrel fell, landed on the stairs, and rolled down the stairs towards the Shinra guard. "Nwahh!" was the sound the Shinra guard made as the barrel rolled over top of him.

Aeris looked towards Cloud, and said, "Thanks, Cloud," and continued. She finally met back with Cloud, and said, "Aeris, this way." Cloud lead Aeris out a hole in the roof, the same hole Cloud made when he fell from the reactor.

When they reached the roof, they decided to take a quick break, and Aeris mentioned, "Ha, ha... They're looking for me again."

"You mean it's not the first time they've been after you?"

Aeris looked away, and said quietly, "...no"

"They're the Turks," stated Cloud.

"Hmmm..."

"The Turks are an organization in Shinra. They scout for possible candidates for Soldier."

"This violently? I thought they were kidnapping someone," commented Aeris.

"They're also involved in a lot of dirty stuff on the side. Spying, murder... you know."

"They look like it."

"But, why're they after you? There must be a reason, right?"

"No, not really. I think they believe I have what it takes to be in Solder!"

"Maybe you do. You want to join?"

"I don't know... But I don't want to get caught by those people!"

Cloud nodded his head, and said, "Then, let's go!"

They both left the church roof top, and made their way onto a junk pile. They moved across the junk pile, and Cloud started to get further and further away from Aeris.

"Wait... Wait I said," shouted Aeris. Cloud stopped and turned back to see Aeris having a hard time keeping up. She finally caught up. Aeris place he hands on her knees, "Puff... wheeze," as she tried to catch her breath. "Slow... down... Don't leave me..."

"Funny... I thought you were cut out to be in Soldier?" questioned Cloud.

"Oh you're terrible!"

Cloud chuckled.

"Hey... Cloud. Were you... ever in Soldier?"

"...I used to be. How did you guess?"

"...Your eyes. They have a strange glow..."

"That's the sign of those who have been infused with Mako. A mark of Soldier. But, how did you know about that?"

"...Oh, nothing."

"Nothing?"

“Right, nothing! Come on, let’s go! Bodyguard!”

They continued to make their way through the junk pile, and they finally found a place where they could climb down. Cloud had no trouble getting down the pile of junk, but Aeris struggled a bit. When they were both on solid ground Aeris said, “Whew! Finally made it off. Now what...”

Cloud didn’t respond, and Aeris looked around. She had figured out where they were, and told Cloud, “My house is over here. Hurry before he comes.” They continued through the Sector 5 Slums, and finally reached Aeris’ house. They walked in and Aeris announced, “I’m home, mom.”

Aeris’ mother, Elmyra, went up to greet Aeris, and Aeris said, “This is Cloud. My bodyguard.”

“Bodyguard,” questioned Elmyra. “You mean you were followed again!? Are you all right!? You’re not hurt, are you!?”

“I’m all right. I had Cloud with me.”

Elmyra then turned to Cloud, “Thank you, Cloud.” And she went upstairs. Aeris turned to Cloud and asked, “So what are you going to do now?”

“Is Sector 7 far from here? I want to go to Tifa’s bar.”

“Is Tifa... a girl?”

“Yeah.”

“A girl... friend?”

“Girlfriend? No way!”

“Hee hee hee... You don’t have to get *that* upset...” Aeris took a step towards Cloud. “Well, that’s... nice. Let’s see Sector 7? I’ll show you the way.”

“You gotta be kidding. Why do you want to put yourself in danger again?”

“I’m used to it.”

“Used to it!? ... Well, don’t know... getting help from a girl...”

“A girl!! What do you mean by that!? You expect me to just sit by and listen after hearing you say something like that!?” Aeris then turned to the stairs and shouted, “Mom! I’m taking Cloud to Sector 7 I’ll be back in a while.”

Elmyra came back down stairs and responded, “But dear... I give up. You never listen once you’ve made up your mind. But if you must go, why don’t you go tomorrow? It’s getting late now.”

“Yeah, you’re right, mom.”

“Aeris, please go and make the bed.”

Aeris went up stairs to make the bed, and Elmyra spoke with Cloud. “That glow in your eyes... you’re from SOLDIER, right?”

“Yeah. Rather I used to be...”

“I don’t know how to say this, but... Would you please leave here, tonight? Without telling Aeris.”

Cloud didn’t answer, and stated walk up the stairs, and Elmyra commented to herself, “SOLDIER... the last thing Aeris needs is to get her feelings hurt again...”

Cloud arrived upstairs and Aeris said, “You need to go through Sector 6 to get to Sector 7. Sector 6 is a little dangerous, so you’d better get some rest tonight.”

Cloud started for the bedroom, and walked passed Aeris.

“Cloud...” said Aeris.

Cloud turn back toward Aeris, and she added, “Good night.” Aeris walked down stairs, and Cloud said, “oh, man,” as he scratched his head. Cloud then laid down, in the bed hoping soon Aeris would go to sleep in the other room so he could sneak out.

Chapter 03: The Wall Market

As the night went on Cloud was lying in bed, and Aeris was now in the other room, waiting for morning to come. While Cloud was lying in the bed, with his eyes closed, he heard that same voice while he was unconscious at the church.

“...seem pretty tired...”

Cloud who was confused by the voice didn't respond.

“I haven't slept in a bed like this... in a long time.”

“Oh, yeah,” responded Cloud.

“Ever since that time.”

Then Cloud either started to have a dream, or another flashback, and he was lying on a different bed, in a different house. There was also another person there, his mother.

“My, how you've grown,” comment his mother. “I'll bet girls never leave you alone.”

“...Not really.”

“I'm worried about you. There are a lot of temptations in the city... I'd feel a lot better if you just settled down and had a nice girlfriend.”

“I'm all right.”

“You should have... an older girlfriend, one that'll take care of you. I think that would be the perfect type for you”

“...I'm not interested.”

Then Cloud awoke, and said, “I must've fallen asleep.” Cloud then got out of bed, and walked to the door. “Sector 7's past Sector 6... I should be alright by myself...” He opened the door, tiptoed past the room where Aeris was in, and went down stairs. He left the house and made his way to through Sector 5.

Just a short time later he arrived to the path that would take him to Sector 6 and to his surprise he saw Aeris standing there.”

“You're up bright and early,” commented Aeris.

Cloud shook his head, and responded, “How could I ask you to go along when I knew it would be dangerous?”

“Are you done?”

Cloud scratched his head, and Aeris stated, “You have to go through the slums in Sector 6 to get to Tifa's 7th Heaven. I'll take you there. Come on.” Aeris ran on ahead, and Cloud shrugged his shoulders knowing there was nothing he could say or do to change her mind.

Cloud followed Aeris, through Sector 6 and the arrived at a playground. Aeris then pointed to the left and said, “The gate to Sector 7's in there.”

“Thanks. I guess this is goodbye. You gonna be all right going home?”

“Oh no,” Aeris said jokingly. “What ever will I do!? ...isn't what you want me to say?”

Cloud then offered to see Aeris home, and Aeris responded, “Isn't that a little out of the way?”

Cloud scratched his head and said, “Yeah, I guess so.”

Aeris nodded, and asked, “Can we take a break?”

Aeris then walked into the playground and stopped by a funny looking slide.

"I can't believe it's still here," said Aeris. She then climbed to the top of the slide, and sat down.

Cloud, over here!"

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and climb to the top as well, and sat next to Aeris. Aeris rested her head on Cloud's right shoulder, and questioned, "What rank were you?"

"Rank?"

"You know, in Soldier."

"Oh, I was..." Cloud saw a white light flash, and continued. "First class."

"Just the same as him."

"The same as who?"

"My first boyfriend."

"You were... serious?"

"No, but I liked him for a while."

"I probably knew him. What was his name?"

"It doesn't really matter."

As they were talking the giant steel gate opened, and came through a Chocobo carriage. Cloud heard the door open turned to look to see what was going on. "Huh? Hey, back there..." Cloud stood up and got a closer look. "Tifa!?" was his comment when saw Tifa riding in the carriage, wearing a skimpy dress.

The Chocobo carriage went onto Sector 6, and Aeris said, "That girl in the cart was Tifa? Where was she going? She looked kind odd..." Aeris then jumped down the slide, and ran on to Sector 6 business district.

"Wait," yelled Cloud. "I'll go on alone! You go home!" But it was too late Aeris was already gone. Cloud quickly jumped off the slide and chassed her.

Now Sector 6 is one of the most disturbing areas in Midgar. This Sector is quite a wreckage, with not just junk, but with the kind of people and business that are here. And let's not forget about the Honey Bee Inn, this is a member's only club, where the women, or men if you prefer, offer to 'serve' you.

Cloud finally caught up with Aeris in the business district, and Aeris commented. "This place is scary in a lot of ways. Especially for a girl. So we've got to find Tifa fast."

They searched through the business district and questioned some people, but it had appeared that no one had the answers they were looking for, until they found a greeter at the Honey bee Inn. He started off with his normal pitch. "Welcome!! Even unpopular dweebs, like you may meet their destine here!! You looking for a girlfriend too?"

"You know a girl named Tifa?" asked Cloud.

"Hey, you're pretty fast. Tifa's our newest girl. But, unfortunately, she's having an interview right now. Here at the Honey Bee Inn, it's customary for all the new girls to be taken to Don Corneo's mansion. Don Corneo's a famous dilettante. Now he wants to settle down and is in the market for a bride. "

After the greeter finished, Cloud went to Don Corneo's mansion to rescue Tifa from this disturbed man. When they arrived there was a man posted outside of the door, and stopped Cloud before he could walk in.



"This is the mansion of Don Corneo, the most powerful man in Wall Market. Look, The Don's not into men. So don't let me catch you around here again..." The man then looked at Aeris.

"Hey, and you got another cute one with you!"

Cloud and Aeris took a few steps away from the man, and Aeris said, "Hey, this is the Don's mansion. I'll go take a look. I'll tell Tifa about you." Aeris started back to the mansion, and Cloud snapped, "No!! You can't!!"

Aeris returned to Cloud, and asked, "Why?"

"You *do* know... what kind of... place this is, don't you?"

"Then what am I supposed to do? You want to go in with me?"

"Well being a man, that'll be pretty hard. Besides if I bust in there, it'll cause too much commotion."

Aeris started giggling, and Cloud added, "But, I just can't let you go it alone... Oh, man... First... we need to find out if Tifa's alright... What's so funny, Aeris?"

"Cloud, why don't you dress up like a girl? It's the only way."

"WHAT!?"

Aeris then returned to the man, and said, "Just wait. I've got a cute friend I want to bring." Aeris then returned to Cloud, and he stated, "Aeris! I can't..."

"You *are* worried about Tifa, aren't you? Then come on, hurry!"

Cloud wasn't sure about this plan at all, but he knew it would be the only way into the Don's mansion. To get started he knew he would need a dress, so they proceeded to the dress shop. When they arrived, Aeris told the lady behind the counter, "Excuse me! I'd like to get a dress."

"Umm, it might take a little time. Will that be all right?" responded the lady.

"What's the problem," questioned Aeris.

"Well, my father, the owner, has been in a slump lately. You see, he makes all the dresses."

"And, where is your father?"

"He's probably plastered at the bar."

"So you're saying we can't get a dress unless we do something about your father?"

"Yes I'm sorry. He's caused so much trouble." She paused and then asked, "You'd help me bring him back?"

"Well, if we don't do something, we don't get a dress, right?"

"Really!? Please help my crazy old dad. I just don't know what to do anymore..."

"All right, we'll do something. Let's go, Cloud!"

They left the dress shop, and proceeded to the bar where the shop owner was located. When they arrived at the bar, they walked in and saw a man sitting by himself. Not knowing for sure if this was the shop owner, Aeris said, "Excuse us, are you the father of the girl at the Clothes Shop?"

"I own the Clothes Shop... but I ain't your father."

"I didn't say that..."

Cloud then ordered, "Make me some clothes."

The man looked at Cloud and stated, "I don't make men's Clothes. And I don't feel like makin' anything right now."

Aeris noticing the conversation was going nowhere asked, "Cloud, you wait over there for a second. I'll try and talk to him. Why don't you go over there and have something to drink."

Cloud moved away, and Aeris spoke with the Shop owner.

"You know, Mister. He always said that just once, he'd like to dress up like a girl. So, that's why I wanted a cute dress for him..."

"What!? A tough lookin' guy like that?"

"So, how 'bout it? Will you make him one?"

"...might be interesting. I was getting' a little bored just makin' regular clothes."

"Then you'll do it for us."

"Yeah, all right. What kind of dress you want?"

"Something that feels soft, and something that shimmers."

"Hmm, got it. Y'know I got a friend that has the same taste as him. I'll go talk to him."

They left the Bar and met back at the Clothes Shop. When they arrived, the shop owner was already there waiting. They went up to the counter, and the shop owner said, "Oh you're here. It's ready. Go try it on." The shop owner gave Cloud the silk dress and Cloud went to the dressing room.

During the process Cloud was confused as how to go about trying on the dress. "How... do you put this on?" he said to himself. Aeris then walked over to the dressing room curtain and peak at Cloud.

"Whoa! What are you doing!" exclaimed Cloud.

"It's still not right. A wig! That's what you need!"

The shop owner then mentioned, "Umm, I thought you might, so I talked to my friend about getting one. You know the gym. You'll find a lot of people there like you. Go and talk to them."

Cloud stepped out of the dressing room, and responded, "...like you'? Aeris, what did you tell him?"

"Does it matter? Anyhow, we got a pretty dress!?"

Cloud didn't respond and they walked off to the gym to get a wig. They entered the gym and walked up to the gym owner.

"You the one... Who wants to be cute?" asked Big Bro, the gym owner.

"Cute?" questioned Cloud, and Aeris responded, "Right. And about the wig..."

"Yeah, I heard. But it'll cost ya," stated Big Bro.

Then one of Big Bro's muscle-heads working out ran up. "Urrgh!!!" was the sound he made. "Big bro!! The only way you're gonna get cuter is if you can beat Big Bro!!"

Then another muscle-head added, "That's right. So, you've got to compete with us!"

"You're right," responded Big Bro. "Let's do squats."

"All right we'll beat you out of this gym!" stated one of the muscle-heads.

Cloud somewhat confused looked at Big Bro and questioned, "Are you..." Aeris interrupted, "The Beautiful Bro?"

"What? You didn't know? Always running around here saying 'Big Bro' this, 'Big Bro' that..." stated one of the muscle-heads. Big Bro then waved over the muscled

head that just answer Cloud's and Aeris' question, and said, "Never mind that come over here."

The Muscle-head walked towards the Big Bro and stopped by Cloud.

"Now, I'll explain the rules," stated Big Bro. "Whoever has the most squats after 30 seconds gets the wig."

"I'm not going to lose," stated the muscle-head. "Big Bro's wig is *mine*."

"Just be quiet..." stated Big Bro. He turned to Cloud, and mentioned, "It's not fair for you to start right away. So, you want some practice?"

"Don't need to practice," responded Cloud.

"Now, let's begin the real thing. Start!" stated Big Bro, and the contest was underway. Cloud and the Muscle-head started off neck to neck, but soon the muscle-head messed up his rhythm and couldn't regain the lead. Then the time expired, and Big Bro announced, "He had 16 squats, and you had 19 squats. You're really something. Okay, I'm a man of my word, here you are."

Big Bro walked over to Cloud, and handed him the Blond Wig. After Cloud received the wig the muscle-head that competed against Cloud, said, "Big Bro I'm so mad. I'm so so so---mad!"

Big Bro not pleased with his muscle-head, punched him, and sent him flying across the room. "Shut up! Don't cry just because you lost!"

"Uuuuhh, Bro's fists of steel cut to the bone!" stated the muscle-head. The other members of the gym, and Big Bro walked over to the injured muscle-head. Cloud and Aeris not interested in the matter left the gym. They left to get one more article of clothing that would for sure get him into the Don's mansion.

This last piece of clothing was located at the Honey Bee Inn. Though they were not sure as of how they were going to get in. On their way their Cloud ran into a man pacing, and the man said, "Nope, I just can't make up my mind. Here, you take this. You won't be able to get in without it."

The man then handed Cloud a member's card for the Honey Bee Inn. Cloud gladly took the card and proceeded to the Honey Bee Inn. The Honey Bee Inn was only around the corner. Cloud and Aeris approached the front door, and the bouncer standing there stated, "Hey! Is that a 'Member's Card' I see shining in you hot little hand?"

Cloud nodded, and the bouncer said, "Please, come in."

Aeris stepped back and a group of men surrounded her. Cloud turned towards Aeris, and said, "...Hmm. That's how you'll fool them."

Aeris turned towards Cloud and responded, ".....Hmmmmmmmm. So that's how you fooled them."

"Let's go!!" said Cloud and he ran in, but Aeris stayed outside.

As soon as he entered the Honey Bee Inn, a young girl dressed in a bee outfit ran up to Cloud and said, "Poo, I uh, mean, Sir... Hurry..."

Cloud then walked up to a door, and read the sign, 'The Fuck Room' Cloud not sure of what room he wanted decided to explore his options, and moved on to another door.

At the next door Cloud read the sign, 'The group room.' For some reason Cloud decided to go in this room, and said, "I'll take this room."

The greeter ran over, and said, "All right. Now, all we have to do is enter this room. You're not going to have a change of heart, Are you?"

“Don’t make me repeat myself.”

“Oh, don’t be angry with me... (Geez... this one’s probably the violent type...)”

She unlocked the door, and stepped aside. “All right, please.”

Cloud then entered the room, and the Honey Bee hostess followed. After they were in the room, she locked the door, and said, “This way, please.” She then lead Cloud to a hot tub, and said, “Shall we begin? I guess since you chose this room, that would mean you... hate being lonely?”

“I’m always alone,” replied Cloud.

“All right, all right. (...geez, you’re so moody!) Come on, everyone’s waiting.”

“Everyone?”

“Here they are. All right everyone.” The hostess moved out of the way and in ran a group of men, shouting, “One, two!! One, two!!” Cloud quickly moved away from hot tub, as the nine or so men ran up to it.

“Yeah,” someone said. “One, two!! One, two!!” The group of men said. “One, two!! One, two!!” Cloud now so confused by this, and wanted to leave the room.

“Wassup!!” said a man named Mukki. (Smile, smile, smile...) was his thought.

“One, two!! One, two!!” shouted the group.

Cloud shook his head, “Oh, man... I’ve got no time to mess around with you. Outta my way.”

Mukki waved his arms, “Heave... pant... Don’t be so embarrassed! Loosen up, bubby! Heave... pant... Let’s wash off all our sweat and dirt together!”

“Wassup!!” shout someone from the group.

Cloud trying to escape, was immediately surrounded by group of men, and they began to undress Him.

“Bubby,” exclaimed Mukki. “You’re the intimate type, huh!! ...heave... pant... Wow!! Would ya look at that!”

Then they all entered the tub, and forced Cloud to Join them.

“Isn’t Bathing Great...” asked Mukki. “It soothes your heart. How is it, bubby!? Feels good, huh?”

“It hurts. Too stuffy in here...”

“You’ll get used to it. Try counting to ten.”

“Ten... Nine...”

“Hey bubby, how old are you?”

“Eight... Twenty one...”

“You’re less than half my age. I’m so jealous. So how ‘bout it...? Do you wanna join my ‘Young bubby’s’ group?”
“Seven... Six... Maybe in another life.”

“Well, if that’s how you feel... too bad. We have a trip planned at a cabin out in the country.”

“Five... Four... Three... Two... One... Alright, that’s ten, I’m getting’ out.”

“Why don’t you stick around and play a bit? Daddy’s so lonely...”

Everyone got out of hot tub, and got dressed, and Mukki said, “Bubby!! This is most important to me. Here’s a memento of our time together!” He then handed Cloud a pair of Bikini briefs. “Hope we meet again!” said Mukki, and the group of men left the room.



“This is *some* underwear... I’m supposed to wear this...?” Cloud commented to himself. “Well, if it’s to save Tifa... I guess there’s no way around.”

Cloud then left the Honey Bee Inn, and on his way out the greater said, “Uh, sir!! It’s almost closing time... So, remember any personal belongings.”

Cloud continued to leave, and track down Aeris. Though Cloud didn’t have to look hard, because there was a small group of men hovering over her. Cloud approached the group, and Aeris said, “Hey!! Cloud!!” The group quickly broke up, and Cloud, Aeris left for the Clothes Shop.

When they arrived, Cloud went to the dressing room, and put on all of the items that he got, to make him look like a woman. When he stepped out of the Dressing room, the owner stated, “Hmm, not bad. This may be a new business for me.”

“Yeah, you’re right. Should we try it?” asked his daughter. She then turned towards Cloud, and Aeris. “Thanks for showing us something new. My father’s got his motivation back now, so the dress is on the house.”

Aeris said, “Walk more nicely like... this. Miss Cloud.”

“...What do you mean ‘nicely’?” responded Cloud.

“Oh you’re so cute, miss Cloud.” Aeris added. She then looked at the shop owner. “Aaah, I want one. Do you have one that’ll look good on me too?”

“How’s this,” responded the shop owner’s daughter.

“How about that one,” asked the Shop owner?

“Father, what are you talking about? This one’s much better.”

“No, what are you saying? This one,” responded her father.

Aeris then walked over to the clothing rack, picked a dress, and stated, “I want *this* one.”

Both the owner and his daughter responded, “Huh?”

“I’m going to go change,” said Aeris as she walked towards the dressing room. Before she entered, she turned back towards Cloud, and said, “...No Peeking!” Aeris entered the dressing room, and changed her clothing. After she did that, she exited the dressing room and asked, “So? How do I look?”

Cloud just shook his head, and Aeris said, “Oh, you’re no fun!”

They left the Clothes Shop, and headed to Don’s mansion. When they arrived the man guarding the door comment, “Damn!! Your friend’s hot, too! Come in, come in!!” He then turned to the door, and shouted, “Two ladies coming through!!” The door opened and they walked in.

When they entered there was a man standing behind the desk, and called them over. “Hey ladies. I’ll go and let the Don know you’re here. Wait here. Don’t go wandering around...”

As soon as the man was gone, Aeris said, “Now’s our chance. Let’s find Tifa.”

Cloud didn’t respond, and they began their search for Tifa. After some searching, Cloud found his way down the basement, where Tifa was. As he entered the basement, he saw Tifa, and turned the other way. Aeris came down just seconds later, and walked to the middle of the room.

“...Tifa?” asked Aeris.

Tifa walked up to Aeris, and Aeris continued. “Nice to meet you. I’m Aeris. Cloud’s told me a lot about you.”

“And you are? Hey you’re the one with Cloud in the park...”

“Right, with Cloud.”
“Oh...” said Tifa.
“Don’t worry. We just met. It’s nothing.”
“What do you mean, ‘Don’t worry’... about what?”
No, don’t misunderstand. Cloud and I grew up together.
Nothing more.”

Aeris giggled, and commented, “Poor Cloud, having to stand here, and listen to both of us call him nothing.” She then turned toward Cloud, and added, “Right, Cloud?”

“Cloud?” asked Tifa.

Cloud then walked over to Tifa, and with confusion, she took a closer look.

“Cloud!? Why are you dressed like that!?” asked Tifa. “And what are you doing here!? Forget that, what happened to you after the fall? Are you hurt!?”

Cloud shook his head, and responded, “Hey, give a chance to answer. I’m dressed like this... because there was no other way to get in here. I’m all right. Aeris helped me out.”

“Oh, Aeris did...” commented Tifa.

“Tifa, explain. What are you doing in a place like this?” asked Cloud.

“Yeah, ummm...”

“Ahem!! I’ll just plug my ears,” stated Aeris.

Aeris walked away and placed her hands over her ears, and Tifa continued, “...I’m glad you’re OK.”

“Thanks. What happened?”

“When we got back from the number 5 reactor, there was this weird man. So Barret caught him and squeeze some information out of him.”

“That’s when Don’s named popped up.” added Cloud.

“Right, Don Corneo. Barret told me to leave the lech alone... But something’s been bothering me. I see. So you wanted to get the story straight from Corneo’s mouth. So I made it here, but now I’m in a bind. Corneo is looking for a bride. Everyday, he gets three girls, chooses one of them, and then... and, well... Anyway, I have to be the girl, or I’m out for tonight.”

Aeris removed her hands, and turned to Tifa, and Cloud. “Sorry...” said Aeris. “But, I overheard... If you know the three girls, there’s no problem, right?”

“I guess so, but...” commented Tifa.

“We have two here, right?” mentioned Aeris.

“No, Aeris! I can’t have you get involved.” stated Cloud.

“Oh?,” said Aeris. “So it’s all right for Tifa to be in danger?”

“No, I don’t want Tifa in...”

Tifa interrupted Cloud walked over to Aeris, and asked, “Is it all right?”

“I grew up in the slums... I’m used to danger. Do you trust me?”

“Yes. Thanks, Ms. Aeris.”

“Call me Aeris.”

“He---Y!!” shouted a man. Cloud Tifa, and Aeris looked up the stairs to see the same man that was behind the desk. “It’s time, ladies. The Don is waiting!” The man started to walk back up the stairs, and added, “I told you not to wonder around... I tell ya, women nowadays... Hurry up, will ya!”



"I probably don't need to ask but the other girl is...Me right?" asked Cloud.
Tifa nodded her head, and responded, "You're right, there was no need..."
"...to ask." finished Aeris.

They made their way back upstairs, and enter Don's quarters. They walked in and one of Don's men, Kotch, said, "All right, ladies! Line up in front of the Don!"

Tifa, Cloud, and Aeris lined up in front of the Don. Upon seeing them standing there, Don jumped out of his seat, and onto his desk panting like a dog.

"Hmmm! Good, splendid!" exclaimed Don as he hopped onto the floor. He walked up to the front of Aeris, and said, "Now, let's see... Which girl should I chose? Hmm---hmm---!"

He then walked up to Cloud. "This one?"

Then moved onto Tifa. "Or this one?"

He walked back to Cloud, and took a closer look. "Woo-hoo, I've made up my mind!! My choice for tonight is..." Don paused and the announced came, "This healthy-looking girl!!"

Cloud in complete shock, responded, "Wa, wait a sec! I mean, uh, please wait a moment!"

"Woo-hoo! I love chickies who play hard-to-get! Yeowza!" Don then turned to his men, and said, "You can have the other ones!"

"Yes, sir! Thank you sir!" responded Don's men.

Don turned back to Cloud, and said, "Well then, Shall we go my pretty!?"

Cloud looked at Tifa, and she nodded. He then looked at Aeris, and she nodded as well. Cloud looked at the floor, still in shock of what has happened, and what will happen. Cloud picked up his head, and followed Don to his bedroom.

Don's Bedroom was just behind his office area, so it only took a minute to get there. Don hopped on the bed, and Cloud stood at the foot of the bed.

"Ahh, we're finally alone..." stated Don. "All right, pussycat... Come to daddy!!"

Cloud walked up to the side of the bed and Don commented, "You're so cute, I never get tired of looking at you. Do you... like me, too?"

Cloud knowing that he might be the only person that could get any information out of Don responded, "Of course!"

"You sure know how to make a guy feel good! Then, wh... what do you want to *do*?"

Cloud shuddered at the thought, and responded, "Whatever *you* want, daddy."

"Oh man! I can't stand it! All right, then... Give me a kiss!! *A kiss!!*"

"Nope, can't do that..."

"Why? WHY? WHY?"

"Because... Because I'm gonna have to use that mouth of yours to give me some information!!."

Cloud jumped to the foot of the bed and ripped of his disguise, showing Don who he really was.

"A man!? You tricked me!! Somebody get in here NOW!!"



“Unfortunately, no one’ll be comin’ to help.” shouted a woman’s voice, and Tifa and Aeris ran in.

“You’re the ones from before!” stated Don. “What the hell’s going on?”

They ran to the side of the bed, and Tifa said, “Shut up we’re asking the questions now... What did your assistants find out? Talk! If you don’t tell us...”

Cloud placed his foot on the bed, and said, “...I’ll chop them off.”

“No! Not that that! I’ll talk! I’ll tell you everything!” responded Don.

“So...talk,” stated Tifa.

“...I made’em find out where the man with the gun-arm was. But that’s what I was ordered to do.”

“By who?” asked Tifa.

“No--! If I told you that, I’d be killed!”

“Talk! If you don’t tell us...”

Aeris placed her foot on the bed and said, “...I’ll rip them off.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaah--! It was Heidegger of Shinra! Heidegger, the head of Public Safety Maintenance!”

“The head of Public Safety Maintenance!?” questioned Cloud.

“Did you say Shinra!?” asked Tifa. “What are they up to!? Talk! If you don’t tell us...” Tifa placed her foot on the bed, and continued, “... I’ll smash them.”

“You’re serious, aren’t you... ohboy, ohboy, ohboy. I’m not fooling around here either, you know. Shinra’s trying to crush a small rebel group called Avalanche, and want to infiltrate their hideout. And they’re really going to crush them...literally. By breaking the support holding up the plate above them.”

“Break the support!?” exclaimed Tifa.

“You know what’s going to happen? The plate’ll go *ping* and everything’s gonna go *bamm* I heard their hideout’s in Sector 7 Slums... I’m just glad it’s not here in sector 6,” said Don.

“They’re going to wipe out Sector 7 slums!?” exclaimed Tifa. “Cloud, will you come with me to Sector 7?”

“Of course, Tifa.”

Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris started to leave, and the Don stopped them at the foot of the bed. “Just a second!”

“Shut up!” responded Cloud.

“No wait, it’ll only take a second. How do you think scum like me feels when they babble on about the truth?”

Cloud being a smartass, responded, “They’re sure they’ll win.”

“Woo-hoo! Right!” responded the Don as he pulled a lever, opening a trap door, and they fell into the sewer.

Chapter 04: Aeris's Past

At the Shinra headquarters, Heidegger was on his way up to see President Shinra. He walked his overweight ass up the stairs, and approached President Shinra's desk.

"How are the preparations going?" asked President Shinra.

"Ha, ha, ha!! Smoothly, very smoothly! I assigned the Turks to this." responded Heidegger.

Reeve, a proud member of the Turks, continued with the conversation.

"President!! Are we really going to do this? Simply destroy a group with only a few members..."

"What's the problem, Reeve? You want out?" asked the President.

"...No. But, as head of the Urban Development Department, I have been involved in the building and running of Midgar. That's why..."

"Reeve, you should flush those personal problems in the morning!" commented Heidegger.

"The Mayor's against this anyway..." stated Reeve.

"Mayor?" questioned Heidegger. "He just sits in the building all day feeding his face! You still call that a Mayor? Now if you'll excuse me sir!"

Heidegger left the room, and Reeve was full of rage.

"You're tired." stated the President. "Why don't you take a couple of days off and go somewhere."

Reeve didn't respond, and left the room, and the President commented to himself, "We'll destroy Sector 7 and report that Avalanche did it. Then we'll send in the rescue operating, care of Shinra, Inc. ...Heh, heh, heh... this is perfect."

Meanwhile in the sewers of Sector 6, Cloud, Tifa and, Aeris were unconscious. Cloud came to and quickly ran over to Aeris, and asked, "You alright?"

Aeris stood up and responded, "Yeah."

Cloud then ran over to Tifa, and asked, "You alright?"

"Man! This is terrible," responded Tifa. She then stood up, and Aeris said, "Well, the worst is over..." Then there was a horrible growl. "Maybe not..." added Aeris as a monster, (also known as Don's pet) Aps, appeared.

Even though Aps was a big creature, they made quick work of him. After Aps was dead, Tifa said, "It's too late... Marlene... Barret ...the people of the slums."

"Don't give up, never give up hope," stated Aeris. "It's not easy to destroy the pillar, right?"

"...Yeah... you're right! We still have time," responded Tifa.

They quickly made their way through the sewers hoping that they would find a way out. After searching, and wondering around they found a way out. They climbed up the ladder, to arrive in the train graveyard in Sector 7.

After they were all out of the sewer, Cloud said, "Aeris. I got you mixed up in all of this..."

"Don't tell me to go home," responded Aeris.

Tifa took a look around and mentioned, "Let's see... If we can just get past the trains that are lit up, we should be able to get out of here."

They moved their way through the train graveyard, climbing on top of trains, through trains, and even moving some of them around to make paths. After all that hard

work, they finally arrived back at the train station in Sector 7. They quickly ran to the slums, hoping that it wasn't too late.

As they arrived, they heard gun fire, and saw people gathered by the chain link fence trying to see what was happening at the top.

"We made it," said Tifa. "The pillar's standing!"

"Wait! You hear something... above us?" asked Cloud.

"...gun fire," responded Aeris. Cloud then looked up and saw a man fall off the top of the pillar, and landed by Cloud. When the man hit the ground, Cloud knew it was Wedge, and he ran to him.

"Wedge!! You all right!?"

Wedge barely alive, responded, "...Cloud... You remember... my name." Wedge paused to take a breath, and then continued. "Barret's up top...help him..." Wedge having a hard time talking, added, "An' Cloud... Sorry, I wasn't any help." Wedge slowly closed his eyes, and collapsed.

Cloud then turned back to Tifa, and Aeris. "I'm going up! Aeris! You look after Wedge."

Aeris nodded, and Tifa ran up to her. "Aeris, do me a favor. I have a bar called '7th Heaven' in this neighborhood. There's a little girl named Marlene there..." Aeris interrupted Tifa. "Don't worry. I'll put her somewhere safe."

Tifa then turned to the crowd of people standing there, and shouted, "It's dangerous here! Everyone get away from the pillar, quickly! Everyone get out of Sector 7!"

The crowd didn't listen to a word that Tifa said, and went back to watching the action about nineteen stories above. Tifa and Cloud started up to the top of the pillar to help Barret, and hoping that they could stop the Turks from destroying Sector 7.

As they climbed up the first flight of stairs, they saw Biggs hanging off the railing. Biggs saw Cloud, and mustered up the strength to say, "Cloud... so you don't care... what happens...to the Planet?"

"You're wounded," replied Cloud.

"Thanks, Cloud... don't worry about me... Barret's... fighting up there. Go help him..."

Cloud didn't respond, and moved quickly to the top of the pillar. About sixteen stories up they found Jessie laying on the stairs. Cloud stopped to see if she was ok, and she said, "...Cloud... I'm glad... I could talk with you...one last time."

"Don't say 'last'," replied Cloud.

"That's...all right... Because...of our actions...many...people died...this probably...is our punishment..."

Cloud, and Tifa continued to the top, and they finally made it. They both ran up to Barret, and he exclaimed, "Tifa! Cloud! You came! Be careful! They're attacking from the helicopter."

"Better equip ourselves before they attack in full force," suggested Tifa. They quickly organized themselves, and Tifa stated, "Here they come!"

The Helicopter flew over head, and Reno jumped off, and ran over to the pillar control panel. "You're too late. Once I push this button..." He paused and pressed the button on the panel. "That's all, folks! Mission accomplished."

"We have to disarm it! Cloud! Barret! Please!" shouted Tifa.

Reno looked at Cloud, and stated, "I can't have you do that. No one gets in the way of Reno and the Turks..."

At that comment Reno attacked them. Cloud, Tifa, and Barret weren't surprised by Reno's action, and fought back. The battle only lasted a few short minutes, and in the middle of the fight, Reno looked at his watch, and stated, "It's time." He then jumped off the top of the pillar, and landed in the helicopter.

Tifa quickly went to work trying to dismantle the bomb. Cloud ran over to assist her, and Tifa said, "Cloud! I don't know how to stop this. Try it!"

Cloud took a look at the control panel and stated, "...it's not a normal time bomb."

Then the helicopter flew over them, with Tseng standing on a platform of the helicopter.

"That's right," said Tseng. "You'll have a hard time disarming that one. It'll blow the second some stupid jerk touches it."

"Please, stop it," begged Tifa.

"Ha ha ha... Only a Shinra Executive can set up or disarm the Emergency Plate Release System."

Barret then aimed his gun-arm at Tseng, and shouted, "Shut yer hole!" Barret began shooting, and Tseng stated, "I wouldn't try that... You just might make me injure our special guest."

"Aeris!!" exclaimed Tifa.

"Oh, you know each other?" questioned Tseng. "How nice you see each other one last time. You should thank me."

"What are you gonna do with Aeris!?" asked Cloud.

"I haven't decided. Our orders were to find and catch the last remaining Ancient. It's taken us long time, but now I can finally report this to the President."

"Tifa, don't worry! She's all right!" shouted Aeris.

Tseng smacked Aeris and Tifa shouted, "Aeris!"

"Hurry and get out!" shouted Aeris.

"Ha, ha, ha... Well, it should be starting right about now. Think you can escape in time?" asked Tseng.

The helicopter flew off and the pillar began to collapse. Barret began running around looking for an escape, and then stopped by a hook cable. He then unhooked it, and stated, "Yo, we can use this wire to get out!"

Tifa and Cloud ran over to Barret, and hopped on. Tifa hopped onto the wire in front of Barret, and Cloud hopped on his right shoulder. Barret then took a leap of faith, and jumped. With the pillar Almost gone, it began to fall. They swung through the air, Somehow they dodged the falling debris and escaped Sector 7 just as the plate came crashing down.

Elsewhere in Midgar President Shinra was watching the demolition from his private quarters at the Shinra building. He was listening to some relaxing music, and when the demolition was complete, he had a sense of satisfaction,



believing that Avalanche was destroyed.

Back in the Sector 6 playground Cloud, Tifa, and Barret came to and took a look at the damage that was caused by the fallen plate. Even the Playground and the area had suffered damage, and debris. Barret noticing that Sector 7 was completely destroyed, ran up to what used to be the entrance to sector 7 yelling, “Marlene! MARLENE! MAR---LE---NE! Biggs! Wedge! Jessie!! Goddamn it!!! Damnit! DAMN IT ALL TO HELL!!! What the hell’s it all for!? ARGGHHHH!!!”

“Hey, Barret!” said Cloud.

“Barret!” exclaimed Tifa.

“ARGGHHHH!!!” was Barret’s reply.

Tifa and Cloud ran up to Barret.

“Hey!” said Cloud.

“Barret, stop... Please stop, Barret.” beg Tifa.

“URGGHHHH!!!” was Barret’s reply, and he began shooting at the debris. After a couple of rounds he dropped to his knees and said, “God damn...”

Some time went on, and Barret finally moved away from the wreckage, and sat down on the slide.

Cloud and Tifa followed him over.

Barret who was depressed, and still in shock said, “Marlene...”

“... Barret...? Marlene is... I think Marlene is safe,” said Tifa.

“...huh?” questioned Barret.

“Right before they took Aeris, she said, ‘Don’t worry, she’s all right.’ She was probably talking about Marlene.”

“R, really!?”

“But...” Barret interrupted Tifa. “Biggs... Wedge... Jessie...”

“All three of them were in the pillar,” said Cloud.

“Think I don’t know that?” stated Barret. “But... we, all of us fought together. I don’t wanna think of them as dead!”

“...and the other people in Sector 7,” said Tifa.

“This is all screwed up!” responded Barret. “They destroyed an entire village just to get to us! They killed so many people.”

“...are you saying it’s our fault? Because Avalanche was here? Innocent people lost their lives because of us,” asked Tifa.

Barret shook his head, and responded, “No, Tifa.! That ain’t it! Hell no!! It’ ain’t us! It’s the damn Shinra! It’s never been nobody but the Shinra! They’re evil and destroyin’ our planet just to... build their power and line their own damn pockets with gold! If we don’t get rid of them, they’re gonna kill this planet! Our fight ain’t never gonna be over until we get rid of them!!”

“.....I don’t know,” responded Tifa.

“What don’t you know!? You don’t believe me?”

“It’s not that. I’m not sure about... me. My feelings.”

Barret scratched his head, and turned to Cloud. “An’ what about you?” asked Barret. Cloud didn’t respond, and he left the playground

“Yo!” shouted Barret. He then looked at Tifa, and asked, “Where’s he think he’s goin’!?”



“Oh! Aeris,” responded Tifa.

“Oh yeah, that girl. What’s up with her?” questioned Barret.

“...I don’t really know... but she’s the one I left Marlene with.”

“Damn! Marlene!! Tifa. There ain’t no turnin’ back now,” stated Barret as he went after Cloud, and Tifa followed.

Cloud didn’t get very far and stopped when he heard Barret’s voice yell, “Cloud!” Barret and Tifa caught up with Cloud, and Barret said, “Take me to Marlene!” Cloud didn’t respond, and Tifa asked, “You’re going to help Aeris?”

“Yeah... but before that, there’s something I want to know.”

“What’s that?” asked Tifa.

“It’s about the Ancients.” Cloud then saw a flash of white light and everything around him went black. He then remembered someone saying, “In my veins courses the blood of the Ancients. I am one of the rightful heirs to the planet!” The blackness faded and placed his hand on his head. “Sephiroth...?” he questioned as he drooped to one knee.

“Are you all right?” asked Tifa.

“Pull it together, man!” stated Barret.

Cloud didn’t respond, got up, and they headed off to Sector 5, where Aeris’ house was located. They arrived a short time later and entered Aeris’ house. When they entered Elmyra was staring at a wall, and without even looking to see who had entered her house, said, “Cloud...wasn’t it?” She turned towards them, and continued. “It’s about Aeris, isn’t it?”

“...Sorry. The Shinra have her.” responded Cloud.

“I know. They took her from here.”

“They were here?”

“That’s what Aeris wanted...”

Cloud walked over to Elmyra, placed his hand on her shoulder, and asked, “Why is Shinra after Aeris?”

Elmyra turned away, and said, “Aeris is an Ancient. The sole survivor.”

Barret confused by what Elmyra had just said, asked, “What did you say? But aren’t you her mother?”

“...Not her real mother. Oh... it must have been 15 years ago...” She took a deep breath, and continued. “...during the war. My husband was sent to the front. Some far away place called Wutai. One day, I went to the station because I got a letter saying he was coming home on leave.” She paused to think about how she went to the train station, and remembering and continued to tell what happened as if it was fifteen years ago. “My husband never came back. I wonder if something happened to him? No, I’m sure his leave was just canceled. I went to the station everyday. Then, one day.....” She then described a young woman lying on the ground dying, and her child was standing over her.

“You used to see this sort of thing a lot during the war. Her last words were, “Please take Aeris somewhere safe.” My husband never came back. I had no child. I was probably lonely. So I decided to take her home with me. Aeris and I became close very quickly. That child loved to talk. She used to talk to me about everything. She told me she escaped from some kind of research laboratory somewhere. And that her mother had already returned to the planet, so she wasn’t lonely... and many other things.”

“Returned to the planet?” asked Barret.

“I didn’t know what she meant. I asked if she meant a star in the sky, but she said it was this planet... She was a mysterious child in many ways.” Elmyra then continued her story, and the screen flashed back to when Aeris was younger.

“Mom,” said Aeris “Please don’t cry.”

“Aeris just blurted that out all of a sudden. When I asked her if something happened...”

“Someone dear to you has just died. His Spirit was coming to see you, but he already returned to the planet.”

“At that time I didn’t believe her. But... Several days Later... We received a notice saying my husband died... and that’s how it was. A lot happened, but we were happy. Until one day...”

The screen then changed with Tseng standing there.

“We want you to return Aeris to us,” stated Tseng.

“We’ve been searching for her for a long time.”

“No! Never,” exclaimed Aeris.

“Aeris, you’re a very special child. You are of special blood. Your real mother was an ‘Ancient’.”

(“Of course I heard it. That she was an ‘Ancient’,” said Elmyra.)

“The Ancients will lead us to a land of supreme happiness,” said Tseng. “Aeris will be able to bring happiness to all those in the slums. That is why Shinra would like Aeris’s cooperation...”

“He’s wrong! I’m not an Ancient! I’m not!”

“But Aeris, surely you hear voices sometimes when you’re alone?”

“No, I don’t,” and she ran off.

“But I knew,” said Elmyra. “I knew about her mysterious powers... She tried so hard to hide it, so I acted as though I never noticed.”

“It’s amazing how she’s avoided the Shinra for all these years...” commented Cloud.

“The Shinra needed her, so I guess they wouldn’t harm her,” replied Elmyra.

“But why now...” questioned Tifa.

“She brought a little girl here with her. On the way here, Tseng found them. She probably couldn’t get away fast enough. She decided to go to the Shinra in exchange for the little girl’s safety.”

“Must be Marlene,” stated Cloud.

This only angered Barret, and sending him into a raging fit. “Marlene!! Aeris was caught because of Marlene!?” Barret slightly calmed down, and said, “I’m sorry. Marlene’s my daughter. I’m...really...sorry...”

“You’re her father!? How in the world could you ever leave a child alone like that!?” questioned Elmyra.

“...Please don’t start with that. I think about it all the time. What would happen to Marlene, if I... But you gotta understand somethin’... I don’t got an answer. I wanna be with Marlene... but I gotta fight. Cause if I don’t... the planet’s gonna die. So I’m gonna keep fightin’! But, I’m worried ‘bout Marlene. I really just wanna be with her... always. See? I’m goin’ in circles, now.”



“... I think I understand what you’re saying... She’s upstairs asleep, why don’t you go and see her.”

Barret went up stairs to see his daughter, and Cloud followed. When he arrived upstairs, he saw Barret crying, and hugging Marlene.

“I’m so glad... I’m so glad you’re alright...” said Barret.

“Daddy, don’t cry. Your whiskers hurt!”

Cloud glad to see the situation work out, started to go back down stairs, but Barret stopped him.

“Cloud! You gonna help Aeris, right? She’s done so much for me... If it’s the Shinra you’re dealin’ with, I can’t just sit here! I’m comin’, too.”

Marlene then ran up to cloud saying, “Guess what? Guess what? Aeris was asking me a lot of questions. Like what kind of person Cloud is. I bet she likes you, Cloud!”

Cloud not sure on what to say back, responded with, “Let’s hope so.”

“I won’t tell Tifa,” responded Marlene, and Cloud went downstairs. When he arrived, Tifa asked, “You’re going after Aeris, right?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m coming with you.”

“We’re going right into Shinra Headquarters... You gotta be prepared for the worst.”

“I know. Right now, I feel I have to push myself to the limit. If I stay here... I’ll go crazy.”

Barret then came running down the stairs and asked, Elmyra, “Sorry, but can you take care of Marlene a bit longer?”

“Yes, I don’t mind.”

“This place is dangerous now. You better go somewhere else.”

“You’re right. But promise me that you’ll come back to get her. Don’t get yourself killed.”

Barret nodded his head and they all left Elmyra’s house. When they were outside, Tifa was curious of how the to get to the Shinra building, and asked, “How do we get to the Shinra Building?”

“There ain’t no train that goes up there anymore...” responded Barret.

Cloud had no clue of how they were going to pull this mission off, and Tifa suggested, “Well, let’s just go to Wall Market. We might be able to find something there.”

Chapter 05: The Rescue?

They went on to the Sector 6, where the Wall Market was located, and began poking around to find out any information on how they could get to the Shinra building. Then they found a group of kids, with one saying, “Wanna see somethin’ awesome? Follow me.”

Cloud was kind of curious, so he followed the kids. They lead him to a wall with a wire that lead up. There was kid standing in front of the wire, and mentioned, “Everyone climbed up this wire. Looks scary... Brrr.”

“Can we climb it?” asked Tifa.

“Yeah it leads to the upper world.” responded the child.

“Awright! We’ll climb this wire!” stated Barret.

“There’s no way we can do this. You know how far it goes up?” asked Cloud.

“There *is* a way! Look! What’s that look like?” asked Barret.

“Just a normal wire.”

“Oh yeah? Well, to me it looks like a golden shiny wire of hope.”

They all looked at the wire, and Tifa said, “You’re right. This is the only way to save Aeris...”

“Ok, that was a bad analogy, but, Barret, I understand how you feel,” stated Cloud. He then looked at Tifa, and she nodded, and Barret nodded as well.

“Let’s go!” said Cloud, and they were off to the upper world.

They climbed to the up the wire, and as they were above the wall the say the damage of what used to be Sector 7. They continued their way through the wreckage and debris, getting closer and closer to the top of the plate.

Then they finally arrived at the top, and made their way to Shinra Headquarters. When they arrived at the main entrance, Barret commented to Cloud, “Hey, you oughta know this building well.”

“...Not really, now that I think about it, this’s the first time I’ve been to the Headquarters,” responded Cloud.

“I heard about this place before,” said Barret.

“Every floor above the 60th is special and not easy to get to even for employees. Must be where they took Aeris. The Security’s pretty light now. Awright, let’s go!!”

Barret started to run towards the main doors, and into the Shinra building, when Tifa shouted, “Wait a second! You’re not thinking of just going right through the main entrance, are you?”

“Well what else does it look like!? I’m gonna kick some Shinra butt and...”

“That’s not going to work! We’ve got to find another way...”

“Ain’t gonna be no other way! If we keep wastin’ time like this, Aeris’ll...”

“I know that! But if we get caught here... Hey, Cloud... What should we do?”

Cloud knowing that security was minimal, and that this need to be done quickly responded, “Let’s bust on in!”

“That’s more like it! C’mon, let’s go!!” stated Barret, and they busted trough the front doors. Upon entering the building the receptionist said, “Excuse me! If you don’t



have an appointment, you'll just have to ...” Barret cut her off. “Don’t need no appointment. This is a ‘mergency! Anyone who don’t wanna get their face bashed in, better git outta the way!!”

Barret pointed his gun-arm at the receptionist, and she screamed, “Yaagghh!” People in the lobby area began to panic, and with some of them saying, “Who do they think they are?”

“Y, you don’t think that’s Avalanche?”

“Intruders! Seize them!!” shouted a Shinra guard. Four Shinra guards lunged at them, but were quickly defeated.

“Let’s go to the top!” exclaimed Barret, and they made their way to the elevators. They enter the elevator, and Cloud pressed the up button. When the elevator started up Tifa asked Cloud, “...What’s wrong?”

“I didn’t want to start a ruckus till we save Aeris. I should have know that wasn’t possible though...”

“Heh, heh, heh,” laughed Barret.

“What is it?” asked Cloud. “You’re givin’ me the willies.

“So there are times when even you fight for other people. I’m impressed.”

“Who cares if you’re impressed...?”

“Y’know I ain’t so good at sayin’ this, but... Sorry... for lotsa things.”

Then the alarm sounded in the elevator, and they began to look around.

“Wh, what the!?” said Barret with confusion.

“Look!” exclaimed Tifa as she pointed to the monitor that displayed the floor numbers. Cloud and Barret looked towards the monitor and saw it going crazy, and flashing all sorts of numbers.

“Da-mn...!” responded Barret. “I don’t care where, Cloud! Just stop it!”

Cloud walked over to the elevator buttons, and pressed the stop button. The elevator slowed down, and stopped on floor nineteen. The Door opened and in ran a Mighty Grunt. They quickly responded, and defeated him with ease. The doors closed and the elevator continued up, but it still wasn’t working correctly.

Cloud again stopped the elevator at floor twenty-eight, and another Mighty Grunt ran in, and they defeated him as well. This would continue to happen, but on floor 38 there was a Shinra Executive.

“Oh man,” said the executive. “No, uh, that’s all right. My mistake. I’m, uh. Not getting on.”

The Shinra Executive ran away saying, “Oh man,” and the doors closed. They next stopped on floor fifty were a Hammer Blaster tried to kill them, but he was unsuccessful. Cloud then stopped the elevator on floor fifty nine, and they ran to another set of elevators.

Just before they could get to the elevators, Shinra guards yelled, “Destroy the intruders!” Though the guards were no match for Avalanche, and the Shinra guards were killed. When the battle was over, Cloud noticed something on the floor; he kneeled down and said, “What’s this?” Upon further investigation he discovered it was a Keycard for the 60th floor.

They entered the elevator, and used the card to go to the 60th floor. On their way up Tifa made the comment, “I hope Aeris is all right.” Barret also had a comment, well more like advice for Cloud. “This is the real thing. Don’t let your guard down.”

They arrived on the 60th floor without being spotted on the monitors, because the Shinra guard that were supposed to be watching them was asleep. They quickly moved away from the elevators, and ran into a small room, which was located to the left of the elevators. After they were situated, Barret mentioned, "Lookit that, all them guards is runnin' around. Cloud you go on ahead and signal us when it safe to come."

Cloud took look out the door and noticed some statues and how the Shinra guards were pacing back and forth. Cloud figure out their patrol method, and moved between the statues. When he arrived in the middle he called Barret over first, and then Tifa. Cloud then did the same for the other side, and they made it to the other room. Upon entering the room, Barret said, "Ok! We gonna rock!"

"Remember we're here to save Aeris," stated Tifa.

"Hell, I know that!" snapped Barret, and they continued with their plans.

They went up a flight of stairs, to floor 61. As they arrived on the 61st floor, Cloud noticed that the door that would normally limit access to the floor was open, and thought this would be the perfect opportunity to ask some questions. They left the stairwell and a Shinra employee stopped them.

"The hell are you. What're you doin' around here?" Cloud was caught off guard, and was at a loss of words. The Shinra Employee noticing that Cloud was confused, and no idea of where to go, and they employee mentioned, "Oh, I see. So you must be that whatcha call it... Shinra, Inc. Repair Division!! You know, it looks like this building is starting to fall apart. The door was just pushed open. You ought to fix this right away." The employed paused for moment, and the added, "Oh yeah, and take a look on the other floors too. I'll give you this." The Shinra employee handed Cloud a Keycard 62 on it, and Cloud gladly took it. The Shinra employee walked away, and they went to floor 62.

On the 62nd floor there were a lot of books on shelves, in many different rooms. So they began searching the floor, and books on any information that could be of use to them.

They enter the room of Mayor Domino, and The Mayor questioned, "Hmm? Oh, and who might you be? You all must be those...ahem... Me? I'm Domino, the Mayor of Midgar. Actually, I'm the Mayor in name only. This city and everything in it is really run by Shinra, Inc. My only real job is watching over these documents... Me! The Mayor! A librarian! Ohh...you want to get upstairs? I tell you what, if you can guess the password, I'll give you my keycard. Yes, that's it. Guess the password, and I'll give you my keycard! Get it on the first try, and I'll even throw in a special item!"

Cloud remembered from searching the floor that he saw something that resembled what could have been a password, and replied, "Mako."

"MAKO!! God, I love the sound of that! *Mako*! If I had a lot more of it, I would be a real Mayor! ...hmm. Well, ok. Here, take it." Domino handed Cloud a Keycard 65. "I never thought you'd get it on the first try... Just goes to show you can't judge a book by its cover. Oh well, a promises is a promise. Take this, too." He then handed Cloud an Elemental Materia! Cloud took the Materia, and had a look of confusion on his face, and before he could say something, the mayor said, "Why would I do something like this, you



ask? To mess with them, of course! Shinra has been torturing me forever. That's why I was a little rough on you all just now. Now go up there and really make them suffer. This ought to make us even! Heh heh heh..."

Cloud knew now that the mayor had lost some of his mind, and left without saying a word. With Keycard in hand they went up to the 65th floor, only to discover an incomplete model of Midgar. After searching around the floor Cloud discovered several locked cases, and found one that had 'Midgar Parts'. He returned to the model, and placed the parts in, and another case would unlock.

Cloud continued to place all the parts back in the model, and the last case unlocked containing a keycard 66. Cloud took the keycard, and went the 66th floor.

As they arrived on the 66th floor, they noticed Shinra Exclusives, along with President Shinra, having a meeting. Cloud wanted to know what the meeting was about noticed the heating and cooling ducts, and looked for a way up in them.

After searching around, they discovered away up to the ducts in the restroom, and climbed up. They crawled their way over to the conference room, and they got situated. They started to look down the vent and Barret made the comment, "Geez--! That's a lot of suits."

Barret was correct, in fact the people involved with this meeting, was President Shinra, Reeve, Scarlet, Palmer, and Heidegger. The meeting began with Reeve saying, "We have the damages estimates for Sector 7. Considering those factories we already set up and all the investments, the damage is estimated at approximately 10 billion gil... The estimated cost to rebuild Sector 7 is..." President Shinra interrupted Reeve. "We're not rebuilding."

"What?" questioned Reeve.

"We're leaving Sector 7 as it is. And restarting the Neo-Midgar plan."

"...then the Ancients?"

"The Promised Land will soon be ours. I want you to raise the Mako rate 15% in every area."

Palmer started jumping up and down, saying, "Rate hike! Rate hike! Tra, la, la! And please include our space program in the budget!"

President Shinra looked at Palmer and stated, "Reeve and Scarlet will divide the extra income from the rate increase."

"Oh man," responded Palmer with disappointment.

Reeve outraged by this stood up and retorted, "Sir. If you raise the rates, the people will lose confidence..."

"It'll be all right," responded President Shinra. "The Ignorant citizens won't lose confidence they'll trust Shinra, Inc even more."

"Ha ha ha!" laughed Heidegger. "After all, we're the ones who saved Sector 7 from Avalanche!"

Barret looked at Cloud and said, "That dirty bastard."



Then a scientist walked into the conference room, and President Shinra asked, “Hojo. How’s the girl?”

“As a specimen, she is inferior to her mother. I’m still in the process of comparing her to her mother, Ifalna, but for now the difference is 18%.

“How long will the research take?”

Hojo looked at the ceiling, pretending to think hard, and responded, “Probably 120 years. It’s probably impossible to finish in our lifetime. Or in the lifetime of the specimen too, for that matter.” Hojo started to walk out, and added, “That’s why we’re thinking of breeding her. Then we could create one that could withstand our research for a long time.”

“What about the Promised Land? Won’t that hinder our plans?”

Hojo place his hand on his chin, and said, “That’s what I need to plan. The mother is strong... and yet has her weaknesses.” Hojo then started to laugh. President Shinra then said, “That concludes our meeting.”

Everyone started to leave, when Scarlet looked up to the vent in the ceiling, and stated, “Something stinks...” and she left as well.

After they were gone, Cloud questioned, “They were talking about Aeris...right?”

“I dunno,” responded Barret.

“Probably,” responded Tifa.

“Let’s follow’em,” stated Cloud.

They climbed back down the vent, and started to follow the Shinra executives. When Cloud rounded the corner, and saw Hojo, he moved back behind the counter, and said, “Hojo...huh...?” Cloud then took a look and saw that Hojo was gone, and being the brilliant man he was, left the door open. They followed them upstairs, and again the careless Hojo left that door open as well. They stopped for a second, to make sure the coast was clear, and Barret said. “I remember him. That Hojo guy. He’s in charge of the Shinra’s science department. Cloud, don’t you know him?”

Cloud shook his head, and responded, “This is the first time I’ve actually ever seen him. So... that’s what he looks like...”

The conversation ended quickly, and they continued. They made their way on the 67th floor, it wasn’t hard for them, and they caught up with Hojo who was looking at a glass cage, with a dog type creature in it.

Cloud seeing Hojo quickly took Barret and Tifa behind some crates. Just as they were well hidden, another man walked up to Hojo and asked, “Is this today’s specimen?”

“Yes. We’re starting right away. Raise it to the upper level.”

The man walked away, and Hojo placed his hand on the glass. “My precious specimen...” He then tapped the glass and walked off. After they were gone Tifa walked over to the cage, and said, “Precious Specimen...?” She then looked towards Cloud and Barret. “Is it going to be used for a biological experiment?”

Cloud, nor Barret didn’t answer, and Cloud the noticed a containment box, with a sign on the door that read Jenova. Cloud walked to the containment box and read the sign out loud, “Jenova...” He then took a look inside, and the heard a high pitch sound. He placed his hands on his ears, and dropped to his knees shaking, and then fell to the floor. The noise stopped as quickly as it came on, and he sat up. Tifa went to help him, she kneeled, and placed her arm around Cloud.

“Jenova... Sephiroth’s... So... they’ve brought it here,” commented Cloud.

“Cloud, be strong!” stated Tifa.
“Did you see it?” asked Cloud.
“See what?” responded Barret as he looked at the containment box.
“It’s moving....still alive?” Cloud said with confusion.
Barret took a look in the containment box, then turned back to Cloud. “Where’s its fuckin’ head?” This whole thing’s stupid. Let’s keep goin’.”



Cloud picked himself up and they found an elevator that would take them to the next floor. When they arrived, they saw Aeris in a similar cage, like the one they saw downstairs. Upon seeing Aries, Cloud said. “Aeris!”

“Aeris?” questioned Hojo. “Oh, is that her name? What do you want?”
“We’re taking Aeris back!” exclaimed Cloud.
“Outsiders...” responded Hojo.

Barret who started a raging fit, stated, “Shoulda noticed it earlier, you...” Hojo interrupted him. “There’s so many frivolous things in this world.”

At Hojo’s comment, Cloud and Barret started to move in on him.
“Are you going to kill me? I don’t think you should. The equipment here is extremely delicate. Without me, who could operate it? Hmm?”
“Ugh,” responded Cloud.

“That’s right. I recommend you think things out logically before you make any rash moves.” Hojo then looked up to his assistant. “Now, bring in the specimen!”

His assistant then rose up the dog like creature, and stated to acting Aeris. Cloud Barret, and Tifa the surrounded the cage and Aeris yelled, “Cloud, Help!”

“What do you think you’re doin’?” asked Cloud.
“Lending a helping hand to an endangered species... Both of them are on the brink of extinction... If I don’t help, all these animals will disappear.”
“...animal? That’s terrible! Aeris is a human being!” exclaimed Tifa.

“You’re gonna pay,” stated Barret.
Cloud then turned to Barret, and said, “Barret! Can’t you do anything?”
Barret ran to the front of the cage, pointed his gun arm at the door, and said, “Awright!! Step back!”

“Stop!!” shouted Hojo, but it was too late, Barret began firing. The inside of the cage went bright white, and Hojo ran up to the cage. “Wa...what are you do—Oh! My precious specimens.”

The door slid open and the light fade back to normal. Just as they could start to see in the cage, out jumped the dog like creature, landed on Hojo, and started crewing on his throat.

“Now’s our chance to get Aeris!” stated Cloud.
Cloud ran inside to check on Aeris, and she stood up.
“Thanks, Cloud,” she said and they left the cage. As soon as they were out, the specimen elevator started, and Tifa asked, “Cloud...what’s wrong?”
“The Elevator is moving.”

The Dog like creature stopped chewing on Hojo, and Hojo said, “This is no ordinary specimen. This one is a very ferocious specimen!”

The dog like creature then turned towards Cloud, and said, "He's rather strong. I'll help you all out."

Tifa looked at the dog like creature, and in shock, said, "It talked!?"

"I'll talk as much as you want later, Miss."

"We'll take care of that monster," stated Cloud. "Somebody take Aeris somewhere safe... Tifa, I'm countin' on you!"

Tifa and Aeris left, and Cloud looked at the dog like creature. "What's your name?"

"Hojo has named me, Red XIII. A name with no meaning whatsoever to me. Call me whatever you wish."

Cloud decided that Red XIII was his name, and turned back to the cage. "Come on!" And the specimen, named Sample: H0512 attacked. Though like many specimens of Hojo this one was weak, and easily killed. When it was safe, Tifa and Aeris returned, and Cloud asked, "Aeris, you all right?"

"She seems all right, in many ways," responded Tifa.

"I have a right to choose, too," said Red XIII. "I don't like two-legged things."

"What are you?" asked Barret."

"An informed question. But difficult to answer. I am what you see... You must have many questions, but first, let's get out of here. I'll lead the way."

"Cloud...so you did you come for me," said Aeris.

Red XIII started to leave, turned to Aeris, and said, "I apologize for what happened back there. I was merely acting to throw Hojo off guard..."

"Now we've saved Aeris, ain't no need to be in this buildin'!" stated Barret. "So let's get the hell outta here!"

"If all five of us go together, we'll be noticed. Let's break up in two groups," suggested Cloud.

Based on Cloud's suggestion, they broke off into two groups, Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris in one. Barret and Red XIII in another. After the groups were decided, Barret said, "Later! Meet up at the 66th floor elevator!"

"Don't be late. Do you know where the Elevator is? The 66th floor," stated Red XIII. Cloud nodded, and Red XIII left along with Barret. Cloud, started on his way out when he noticed that Hojo's assistant was still there, and approached him.

"No! Please don't kill me," beg the assistant. "I only did what Hojo told me to do. To prove it to you... here, this is the keycard to the 68th floor. Would I be doing this if I was the enemy?"

Cloud took the keycard, and Hojo's assistant ran off. Cloud then went to the elevators, to meet up with Barret, and Red XIII. They entered the elevators, and was about to press the 66th floor, when Rude, from the Turks stepped in.

"H, hey! What is it?" questioned Cloud.

Rude pointed up, and said, "Would up press the 'UP' please?"

"Turks? Must be a trap..." stated Cloud, as Tseng walked in.

"It must have been a real thrill for you... Did you enjoy it?" asked Tseng.

"Ggh..." responded Cloud, and pressed the up button.

Shortly after, Cloud, Tifa, Barret, and Red XIII had their hands chained behind their backs, and escorted to President Shinra's office. They were all lined up in front of the president, and Cloud looked around to see everyone except for Aeris.

“You all got caught, too?” asked Cloud. He then turned to President Shinra, and demanded, “Where is Aeris?”

“In a safe place,” responded the president. “She’s the last surviving Ancient...” He paused, stood up and walked to the right side of his desk. “Don’t you know? They called themselves the Cetra, and lived thousands of years ago. Now they are a forgotten page in history.” The president then walked towards them, and stopped in front of Cloud.

Though what the president had said, made Red XIII curious, and asked, “Cetra... That girl, is she a survivor of the Cetra?”

President Shinra shrugged his shoulders, and responded, “Cetra, or the Ancients will show us the way to the ‘Promised Land.’ I’m expecting a lot out of her.”

“The Promises land? Isn’t that just a legend?” asked Red XIII

“Even so, it’s just too appealing to not pursue. It’s been said the Promised Land is very fertile... If the land is fertile...”

“Then there’s gotta be Mako!” stated Barret.

“Exactly. That is why our money sucking Mako reactor is necessary. The abundant Mako will just come out on its own. That is where Neo-Midgar will be built, Shinra’s new glory...”

“Bastard! Quit dreamin’!” retorted Barret.

“Oh really, don’t you know? These Days all it takes for you dreams to come true is money and power. Well, that is all for our meeting.”

Rude then ran up, and ordered, “Come on! Outta his way!”

Tifa, Cloud, and Red XIII went willingly, but Barret wasn’t done yet. “Hold it! I got a lot I wanna say to you!” Rude then grabbed Barret and pushed him a way, with Barret trying to fight back. When they were gone President Shinra announced, “If you need something else... talk to my secretary.”

Cloud, along with every one else was escorted to holding cells. Barret and Red XIII were in one cell together. Cloud and Tifa were in a cell Together, and Aeris was in a cell all alone. Cloud was thinking of a way out, when he hear a voice say, “Cloud, are you there?”

Cloud knew that was Aeris voice, and had a feeling of relief come over him.

“Aeris!? You safe?”

“Yeah, I’m all right. I knew that Cloud would come for me.”

“Hey, I’m your bodyguard, right?”

“The deal was for one date, right?”

“.....Oh, I get it,” said Tifa.

“!? Tifa! Tifa, you’re there too!” responded Aeris.

“Excuse me. You know, Aeris. I have a question.”

“What?”

“Does the Promised Land really exist?”

“I don’t know. All I know is... The Cetra were born from the Planet, speak with the planet, and unlock the Planet. And.... then... The Cetra will return to the Promised Land. A land that Promises happiness.”

“...What does that mean?” asked Tifa.

“More than words... I don’t know.”



“...Speak with the Planet?” asked Cloud.

“Just what does the Planet say?” asked Tifa.

“It’s full of people and noisy. That’s why I can’t make out what they are saying.”

“You hear it now?” asked Cloud

“I, I only heard it at the Church in the Slums. Mother said that Midgar was no longer safe. That is... my real mother. Someday I’ll get out of Midgar... Speak with the Planet, and find My Promised Land... That’s what mom said. I thought I would stop hearing her voice as I grew up, but...” Aeris stopped talking, and Cloud decided to let her be.

“Psst (can we get out?)” asked Tifa.

“Leave it to me,” responded Cloud.

“Psst (Cloud, you’re so brave!)”

Then Cloud heard Barret’s voice from the next cell over, “Hey! Aeris is an Ancient and the real name of the Ancients is Cetra. The Ancients know where the Promised Land is, and the Shinra is searching for that Promised Land. I only heard Stories ‘bout the Promised Land. I don’t know if it really exists. Is that right?”

Red XIII just shook his head, and Barret said, “The Shinra believe that the Promised Land is full of mako energy. Which means, if the Shinra get there, they’ll suck up all the Mako energy... and the land’ll wither away. The Planet’s gonna get weaker. I can’t just leave ‘em be. I’m recruitin’ new members!! Me, Tifa, Cloud... and Aeris too. How about you?”

Red XIII didn’t respond, and laid down in the back of the cell.

“You’re so damn boring,” stated Barret.

Cloud then decided this would be the perfect time to get some rest. So he sat down against the wall, and closed his eyes.

Chapter 06: the escape

Cloud awoke sometime later, and noticed the door to his cell was opened.

“The door’s open... When did it open?” he questioned. He then decided to take a look outside, and see if the Shinra guard was around. After looking he saw the Shinra guard dead on the floor, he knelt down to check the guard, and questioned, “What happened?”

He quickly returned to his cell, and ran up to Tifa. “Tifa... Wake up!”

Tifa sat up and asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Something’s wrong. Look outside.”

Tifa ran outside, and Cloud followed her, back to the Shinra guard.

“I wonder what happened...” said Tifa.

“He should have a key on him...” responded Cloud as he began searching the guard for a key. With in seconds, he found the key, and instructed, “Come on, Tifa, get Aeris. I’ll go help Barret and the others.”

Tifa ran into Aeris cell, and Cloud went to Barret’s and Red XIII’s cell.

“Barret, Red XIII... come with me. Something’s wrong.”

Barret stood up, and questioned, “How’d you get in? Why’s the door open!?”

Cloud didn’t respond, and took Barret and Red XIII to the fallen guard. Upon seeing the fallen guard, Barret said, “The hell’s goin’ on!?”

“No human could’ve done this,” commented Red XIII. “I’ll go ahead.” Red XIII went on to make sure no one was around, and Barret stated, “I’ll clean up back here, so you guys go ahead. And don’t get caught by Shinra!”

Cloud ran into Aeris’s cell, and Tifa said, “Come on. Let’s follow Red XIII!”

They left the cell block, and discovered many dead bodies. They eventually caught up to Red XIII, who was standing by the Jenova containment box. Cloud noticed that the door to containment box was ripped off, and the Jenova Specimen was gone. There also was blood stained on the floor, leading from the containment box, and leaving a trail to follow. Red XIII then mentioned, “Jenova Specimen... Looks like it went to the upper floor, using that elevator for the specimens.”

Red XIII ran on, and Cloud followed. On the next floor Red XIII stopped, and mentioned, “It looks like it leads up...” Cloud followed the blood trail, all the way up to President Shinra’s office.

Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris were the first ones to arrive, to see President Shinra dead, with a sword in his back. Shortly after they made this discovery, Red XIII, and Barret showed up as well. Barret upon seeing the dead President, shockingly said, “He’s dead... The leader of Shinra, Inc is dead.”

Tifa ran up to take a closer look, but not at the dead president, but at the sword that was sticking out of his back. After looking at the sword, she stated, “Then this sword must be...!?”

“Sephiroth’s!!” exclaimed Cloud.

“Sephiroth is alive?” questioned Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and responded, “...Looks like it. Only Sephiroth can use that sword.”

“Who cares who did it?” stated Barret. “This is the end of the Shinra now!”

Then popped out a head from behind the pillars, and a voice said, “Uh!”

Cloud pointed out the man, and out ran fat man Palmer, trying to get away. Cloud, and Barret quickly grabbed the fat man, and he begged, “P, p, p, please, don’t kill me!”

“What happened?” asked Cloud.

“Se...Sephiroth. Sephiroth came.” Palmer responded nervously.

“Did you see him? Did you see Sephiroth?”

“Yeah, I saw him! I saw him with my own eyes!”

“You really saw him?”

“Uh! Would I lie to you at a time like this!? And I heard his voice too! Um, he was saying something about not letting us have the Promised Land.”

“Then what?” asked Tifa. “Does that mean that the Promised Land really exists and Sephiroth’s here to save it from Shinra?”

“So he’s a good guy then?” asked Barret.

“Save the Promised Land? A good guy? No way!!” responded Cloud. “It’s not that simple! I know him! Sephiroth’s mission is different!”

Then the sound of helicopter came, and Palmer broke lose. As the helicopter was about to land, Barret said, “Rufus! Fuck! I forgot about him!”

“Who’s that?” asked Tifa.

“Vice President Rufus. The President’s son.”

Cloud ran out to the helicopter pad, and everyone followed. When they approached Rufus, he and Palmer were in the middle of a conversation.

“So... So Sephiroth was actually here... by the way.” Rufus stopped his conversation because he noticed Cloud, along with his companions. Palmer ran off, and Rufus asked, “Who are you guys?”

“I’m Cloud, former Soldier First Class!”

“I’m from Avalanche!” stated Barret.

“Same here!” added Tifa.

“...a flower girl from the slums,” said Aeris.

“...A research specimen,” said Red XIII

Rufus shrugged his shoulders, and said, “What a crew.” He then walked toward the middle of the balcony, and said, “Well, I’m Rufus. The President of Shinra, Inc.”

“You only President, ‘cause yer old man died!” exclaimed Barret.

“That’s right. I’ll let you hear my new appointment speech.” He started walking back and forth between them all saying, “...Old man tried to control the world with money. It seems to have been working. The population thought that Shinra would protect them. Work at Shinra, get your pay. If a terrorist attacks, the Shinra army will help you. It looks perfect on the outside. But, I do things differently. I’ll control the world with fear. It takes too much to do it like my old man. A little fear will control the minds of the common people. There’s no reason to waste money on them.”

“He like to make speeches just like his father.” commented Tifa.

Cloud then looked at Barret, and ordered, “Get outta this building with Aeris!”

“What?” questioned Barret.

“I’ll explain later! Barret! This is the real crisis for the planet!”

“The hell’s that supposed to mean?”

“I’ll tell you later! Just take my word for it now! I’ll go after I take care of him!”

“Awright, Cloud!” responded Barret, and lead everyone away. On the next floor down, Aeris stopped, and said, “Cloud... I just thought of something.”

Tifa walked over to Aeris, and stated, "...I'll wait for Cloud! Everyone, get to the elevator!"

Aeris nodded, and left along with Barret, and Red XIII. They made it to the elevator, and pressed the down button, and the Elevator started to move down. Then in the other elevator across from them and Hundred Gunner attacked, he start by shooting out the glass, and they responded with force. The Hundred Gunner was no challenge for them, and a Heli Gunner appeared, but it met the same fate as the Hundred Gunner.

Now at the same time Aeris, Barret, and Red XIII were making their escape, Cloud and Rufus were having a conversation.

"Why do you want to fight me?" asked Rufus.

"You seek the Promised Land and Sephiroth."

"Hm, exactly," responded Rufus, and he walked towards Cloud. "Mm? Did you know that Sephiroth is an Ancient?"

"A lot has happened. Anyway, I can't let either you or Sephiroth have the Promised Land!"

"I see. I guess this means we won't become friends," responded Rufus as he attacked Cloud. Cloud grabbed his sword, and quickly cut him down, but before he could finish Rufus, he said, "Heh... That's all for today..." He then grabbed the bottom of the helicopter and flew off.

Cloud left the roof to catch up with the others, and found Tifa waiting on the second floor. Upon seeing Cloud, Tifa asked, "Where's Rufus?"

"I couldn't finish'em. Looks like this's gonna get complicated."

Cloud, and Tifa went to meet up with others. Down stairs, Aeris, Barret, and Red XIII just arrived on the first floor, and were about to go out the front door, and Barret said, "I'll go on ahead!" He exited the building, only to hear gunfire, and quickly ran back in. "Shit ... surrounded, huh? If I was alone this wouldn't be a thang but, I gotta reputation to protect."

"You all get out while you can," said Aeris. "It's not you they're after... it's me."

"Yeah, well that ain't happenin'. You got caught up in this over Marlene. Now, it's my turn to watch out for you!" Barret turned back to the door, and stated, "Ok, playtime's over for you jackasses..."

"...Thank you, Mr. Barret.!" said Aeris.

"Who you callin' Mr. Barret? That don't sound right?"

"Well then..." said Red XIII "If you are through talking, may I suggest that we think of a way to get out of here."

"Huh? Oh, oh yeah..." responded Barret. "You a cold man. Just like someone else 'round here I know."

"Did you say something?" asked Red XIII.

"Notta thing. So what're we gonna do?"

Then they heard Tifa's voice shout, "Barret!!" They turned around to see Tifa running down the stairs.

"Tifa!" exclaimed Barret. "Where's Cloud?"

"Everyone, over here!"

"Huh? What's up? Where's Cloud?"

"I'll tell you later! Hurry, Hurry!!"

They quickly followed Tifa, as Cloud came down the stairs riding a motorcycle. Tifa then found a truck, and she got in the drivers seat. Aeris sat in the passenger seat, while Barret, and Red XIII hopped into the back. They drove through the building, back up a flight of stairs, and Cloud rode through a window, followed by the others. They landed on the freeway, and they escaped the Shinra building.

Though it was far from over, because the Shinra army had noticed them, and sent out some men to pursue them. They too were on motorcycles, and Cloud had to knock them off to stop them from attacking the truck. One by one they fell, and seeing the end of the freeway the rest of the Shinra motorcyclist backed off, and allowed one of the mechanical warriors through.

When Cloud and the others had to stop, because there was no more freeway, he Mechanical Warrior- Motor Ball attacked them. Though Motor Ball appeared strong, just like any other Shinra machines, he wasn't and was easily destroyed.

After the battle Barret turned to everyone, and asked, "Well, what do we do now?"

"Sephiroth is alive. I... I have to settle the score." stated Cloud.

"And that'll save the Planet?" asked Barret.

"Seems like it."

"Awright, I'm going!"

"I'll go too," said Aeris. "...I have things that I want to find out."

"About the Ancients?" asked Cloud.

"...Many things," responded Aeris.

"I guess this is good bye, Midgar," commented Tifa.

They all climbed down a construction rope, which took them to the ground, and just outside of the city. Once everyone was down, Cloud said, "Then...Let's go."

Barret started to get frustrated, and threw a fit. "We need a group leader for our journey. 'Course only me could be the leader."

"You think so...? asked Tifa.

Aeris then walked up to Cloud, and suggested, "It would have to be Cloud."

Barret was only agitated by Aeris comment, and scuffed, "Fuck... awright. Go Northeast to a town called Kalm. If something happens, we'll meet up there." Barret then somewhat calmed down, and sat on the ground. "'Sides, we can't have 5 people strolling down the fields. It's too dangerous. Split us into 2 parties..."

Cloud decided that him, Tifa and Aeris would travel together, and Barret, and Red XIII would travel together. After his decision was made, Barret made the comment, "...Thought you'd do that. Later, at Kalm!" They all left, and headed towards Kalm.

Chapter 07: Cloud's story

Kalm was a peaceful little village that was located to the Northeast of Midgar. When Cloud, Aeris and Tifa arrived, Aeris stated, "We've reached Kalm."

"Everyone is waiting in the inn. Let's go Cloud," said Tifa, and she entered the inn.

"Well then, I'll go on ahead," stated Aeris, and she went into the inn as well. Cloud of course followed too. He entered the Inn and went upstairs to meet with everyone.

When he arrived upstairs, Aeris said, "Cloud, you're late!" Cloud then walked over to every one, and almost like an echo, Barret said, "Yo man, you're late!"

"Sorry to keep you waiting," responded Cloud.

"Guess everyone's here now," stated Aeris.

"So let's hear your story..." said Barret. "You know, the one about Sephiroth and the crisis facing the planet. Let's hear it all."

Cloud lowered his head to the floor, and took in a deep breath. He then picked up his head, and started. "...I used to want to be like Sephiroth, so I joined Soldier. After working with Sephiroth on several missions, we became friends."

Barret interrupted, "You call that a friend?"

Cloud continued, "Yeah, well... He's older than me, and he hardly ever talked about himself. So I guess you'd call him a war buddy... We trusted each other. Until one day..."

"...one day?" asked Aeris.

Cloud then continued, "After the war it was Soldier's duty to put down any resistance against the Shinra... that was 5 years ago. I was 16..."

Then he flashed back to the memory, with him, Sephiroth, and three Shinra soldiers riding in a van type vehicle. This night in particular it was raining pretty hard, and Cloud commented, "It sure is raining hard." He then walked over to one of the Shinra soldiers, who was sitting on a crate across from Sephiroth.

"Hey, how are you doing?" asked Cloud.

The Shinra soldier placed his hand towards Cloud, and shook his head.

"I'm all right. I wouldn't know... I never had motion sickness."

Cloud then walked up to the other Shinra Soldier, and asked, "Everything ok?"

The Shinra soldier didn't respond, and Cloud walked away, and placed his hand on his face.

"Hey," said Sephiroth. Cloud looked at Sephiroth, and he added, "Settle down."

Cloud started bouncing and responded with excitement, "They gave me some new Materia. I can't wait to use it."

Sephiroth shook his head and said, "...just like a kid."

Cloud stopped bouncing, and shrugged his shoulders, and asked, "You going to brief us about this mission?"

"...this isn't a typical mission," stated Sephiroth.



“Good,” responded Cloud.

“Why do you say that?”

“I joined Soldier so I could be like you. By the time I made First Class, the war was already over. My big hopes of becoming a hero like you ended with the war. That’s why I always sign up whenever there’s a big mission. Kind of a way to prove myself. Say, how do you feel, *Mister Sephiroth*?”

“I thought you wanted a briefing?”

Cloud scratched his head and took a couple of steps towards Sephiroth, and Sephiroth continued, “Our mission is to investigate an old Mako reactor. There have been reports of it malfunctioning, and producing brutal creatures. First, we will dispose of those creatures. Then, we’ll locate the problem and neutralize it.”

Cloud crossed his arms, and began to tap his foot. He then stopped, and asked, “Brutal creatures... Where?”

“The Mako reactor at Nibelheim.”

“Nibelheim... That’s where I’m from.”

“Hmm...hometown...” Sephiroth stopped talking when there was a loud sound and a violent shake. “Sir...s, something strange just crashed into our truck!” exclaimed the driver.

“That would be our monster...” stated Sephiroth, as him and Cloud exited the vehicle. Sephiroth wasn’t surprised by this attack, and drew his sword. With Cloud by his side, they attacked the dragon. Sephiroth was able to kill the dragon with one slash of his sword.

Cloud then broke away from the flash back to the room where they were staying, and commented. “Sephiroth’s strength is unreal. He is far stronger in reality than any story you might have heard about him.”

“So... Where did you come in?” asked Aeris.

Cloud scratched his head, and responded, “Me? I was mesmerized by the way Sephiroth fought... and then we reached Nibelheim.”

Then cloud flashed back to his hometown, where Sephiroth was standing at the entrance of the town, looking towards Cloud.

“How does it feel?” asked Sephiroth. “It’s your first time back to your home town in a long time, right? So how does it feel? I wouldn’t know because I don’t have a hometown...”

“Ummm...how ‘bout your parents?” asked Cloud

“My mother is Jenova. She died right after she gave birth to me. My father...” Sephiroth roared out in laughter, for a moment. He then stopped, and continued, “What does it matter...? All right, let’s go.”

They continued on into the Nibelheim, and Sephiroth mentioned, “The Mako smell is pretty bad here.”

Barret then interrupted, “You wait a minute!! Isn’t that, um...? The name of Sephiroth’s mother...”

Cloud stopped telling his story, and Barret continued. “I remember Jenova. That’s that damn headless spook livin’ in the Shinra building.”

“That’s right,” responded Cloud.

“Barret,” said Tifa. “Would you please let us hear what Cloud has to say? You can ask questions later.”

“Tifa, I was only...” Barret stopped speaking, and Tifa looked at Cloud. “Okay Cloud, continue.”

“It’s a reunion of childhood pals,” exclaimed Aeris.

“...I was really surprised with Tifa,” continued Cloud as he continued with his story. “The town was quiet. Everyone must be staying in their houses, afraid to come out because of the monsters. No, maybe they’re afraid of us...” He then flashed back to Nibelheim, with Sephiroth and him standing outside of the inn.

“We leave for the reactor at dawn,” stated Sephiroth. “Make sure you get to sleep early.” Sephiroth then started towards the inn, stretched, and stepped back to Cloud and added, “All we need is one look out, so you others, get some rest.” He again started towards the inn, and mentioned, “Oh, that’s right... You may visit your family and friends.” And then went into the inn.

Cloud was more interested in his mission, and followed Sephiroth into the inn. He went upstairs, and noticed Sephiroth looking out a window, and Cloud questioned, “What you are looking at?”

Sephiroth turned towards Cloud, and responded, “...This scenery... I feel like I know this place... Have an early start tomorrow. You should get some rest soon.”

“Yeah, let’s get some sleep.”

“I’ve hired a guide to the Mako reactor. I’ve heard she’s young, I hope we can rely on her...”

After Sephiroth said those words, Cloud went to sleep. Early next morning Cloud was late getting up, and caught up with the rest of his crew, who were waiting by the Shinra mansion. When Cloud arrived, they were still waiting on the guide to show, up, and Sephiroth mentioned, “Once the guide gets here, we’re heading out.”

Then the father of the guide stated, “Listen to me Sephiroth. In case something happens...”

“...Trust me,” replied Sephiroth, as the guide came running up.

“I’ll be all right dad,” responded the young girl. “I have two men from Soldier with me.” She then turned towards the group and introduced herself, “I’m Tifa. Nice to meet you!”

“Tifa!” exclaimed Cloud. “You’re the guide?”

“That’s right,” she responded. “I just happen to be the number one guide in this town.”

“It’s too dangerous! I can’t involve you in something like this!”

Sephiroth turned to Cloud, and commented, “Then there’s no problem if you protect her... Let’s go.”

They all started out, when a young man said, “Umm...Mr. Sephiroth! Please let me take one picture for a memento!” Sephiroth turned away, and the young man turned towards Tifa. “Tifa, can you ask him for me too....?”

Cloud shrugged his shoulder, and stood in a pose for the picture, and Tifa followed suit. Sephiroth not in the mood, stood next to Tifa, and the young man said, “Cheeeese!”

There was a flash from the camera, and Sephiroth quickly returned to where he was standing before, and the young man said, “Great, thank you! I’ll give each of you a copy once I get it developed!”

Then they left for the Mako reactor. The mako reactor was built in Mt. Nibel, and the mountain air was cold. They continued through the mountain path, until they reached a roped wooden bridge.

Tifa started to cross the bridge, and commented, "It gets harder from here! Follow me."

They all followed her onto the bridge, and somewhere towards the middle end of the bridge, and Tifa nervously said, "Uh... the bridge!!" No sooner were those words out of her mouth, the bridge broke in half. They all grabbed the bridge, holding on for dear life.

When they were back onto solid ground, Sephiroth stated, "Everyone seems to be all right. Can we get back to where we were?"

"These caves are intertwined, just like an ant farm..." stated Tifa. "Oh, and Sephiroth... There seems to be one person missing..."

Tifa was correct; one of the Shinra soldiers was missing, and apparently fell to his death.

"It may sound cold, but we've got no time to search for him," stated Sephiroth. "We can't go back now, so we must go on. We'll travel together from here."

They regrouped, and made their way to the caves. When they entered the cave, it was full of color, and Cloud questioned, "What this?"

"A mysteriously colored cave..." responded Tifa

"It must be the Mako energy. This mountain is especially abundant in it. That's why the Mako Reactor was built here." added Sephiroth.

Then they continued on through the cave. In the next section of the cave was a bright cavern, and in the center was a fountain of some sort, and Cloud questioned, "And what's this?"

Sephiroth quickly responded, "A mako fountain. It's a miracle of nature."

"It's so beautiful," commented Tifa, as she walked to the Mako fountain. "If the Mako Reactor continues to suck up the energy, this fountain will dry up too..."

Sephiroth then walked towards the fountain, and said, "Materia. When you condense Mako energy, materia is produced. It's very rare to be able to see materia in its natural state."

"By the way..." mentioned Cloud. "Why is it that when you use materia you can also use magic too?"

"You were in Soldier, and didn't even know that?" asked Sephiroth. "The knowledge and wisdom of the Ancients is held in the materia. Anyone with this knowledge can freely use the powers of the Land and the Planet. That knowledge interacts between ourselves and the planet calling up magic...or so they say."

"Magic...a mysterious power..." said Cloud.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Sephiroth.

"Did I say somethin' funny?" asked Cloud.

"A man once told me never to use an unscientific term such as mysterious power! It shouldn't even be called 'magic'! I still remember how angry he was."

"Who was that?"

"Hojo of Shinra, Inc... An inexperienced man assigned to take over the work of a great scientist. He was a walking mass of complexes."

“A Mako fountain... So this is where the knowledge of the Ancients is.” said Tifa.

They continued through the caves and finally arrived at the Mako Reactor.

“We finally made it,” said Tifa. “We sure took the long way though.”

Cloud then walked over to Tifa, and said, “Tifa, you wait here.”

“I’m going inside too! I wanna see!”

Cloud shook his head, and Sephiroth stated, “Only authorized people are allowed in. This place is full of Shinra’s industrial secrets.”

“But,” exclaimed Tifa.

Sephiroth looked at the Shinra soldier, and said, “Take care of the lady.”

The Shinra soldier nodded his head, and stood in front of the entrance to the Mako reactor. Cloud and Sephiroth, walked into the Mako reactor, and Tifa tried to follow. The Shinra soldier placed his hand out, and shook his head. Tifa then threw a small fit and said, “Mm, man! Better take real good care of me then!”

Inside of the Mako reactor, Cloud and Sephiroth made their way deep inside. They then discovered a room full of pods, with a stair case leading up to a locked steel door. When Cloud entered the room, he noticed Sephiroth standing at the top of the stairs, reading the sign above the door.

“This is...Jenova, right?” asked Cloud. “The lock won’t open...”

Sephiroth then walked down the stairs, and stopped by a pod.

“This is the reason for the malfunction. This part is broken. Cloud, close the valve.”

Cloud walked over to the pod, and closed the valve as ordered. He then walked over to Sephiroth, and Sephiroth asked, “Why did it break...?” He then pulled himself up and looked through the window on the pod. After a few seconds he climbed down, and placed his hand on his chin.

“...now I see, Hojo,” stated Sephiroth. “But, even doing this, will never put you on the same level as Professor Gast. This is a system that condenses and freezes the Mako energy... that is, when it’s working correctly. Now... What does Mako energy become when it’s further condensed?”

“Uh, umm... Oh yeah! It becomes a Materia.”

“Right, normally. But Hojo put something else in there... Take a look.”

Sephiroth moved out of the way, and Cloud took a look inside the pod. Cloud fell to the floor in shock and said, “Wh... what is that!?”

“Normal members of Soldier are humans that have been showered with Mako. You’re different from the others, but still human. But, what are they? They’ve been exposed to a high degree of mako, far more than you.”

Cloud stood up and asked, “...is this some kind of monster?”

“Exactly. And Hojo of Shinra that produced these monsters. Mutated living organisms produced by Mako energy. That’s what these monster’s really are.”

“Normal members of Soldier? You mean you’re different?”

Sephiroth placed his hands on his head and began shaking, upon seeing this Cloud said, “H...hey, Sephiroth!”



“N...no... Was I?” Sephiroth took out his sword, and began swing at one of the pods. Cloud quickly jumped back, as the sword clanked against the pod.

“...Was I created this way too?”

Sephiroth ran over to another pod and hit his sword against it.

“Am I the same as all these monsters...”

Cloud who was shocked by Sephiroth’s reaction said, “...Sephiroth.”

Sephiroth continued to swing his sword, trying to damage the pod, and slowing losing his mind. “You saw it! All of them... were humans...”

“Human!? No way,” exclaimed Cloud.

Sephiroth turned towards Cloud and stated, “...I’ve always felt since I was small... That I was different from the others. Special, in some way.” Sephiroth started to shake his head, and added, “But... not like this...”

Then one of the pods started to shake, and a hideous scream was heard. Cloud, and Sephiroth both looked up towards the pod, to see it burst open, and a monster like creature laid their, barely alive.

“I didn’t quite understand what Sephiroth was saying at the time. I was even more surprised by that fact that Shinra was producing monsters.”

Barret again interrupted Cloud, “Damn, Shinra! The more I hear, the more I hate’em!”

“...who would have ever thought the Mako reactor held a secret like that,” commented Tifa.

“That would seem to explain the increase in the number of monsters recently,” added Red XIII. “I think we should listen carefully to Cloud. Don’t you think Barret?”

“Why you talkin’ to me!?” responded Barret. “Hmph! Pokin’ his damn nose in where it don’t belong. Cloud! Why don’t you finish that story?”

“Phew...” said Red XIII with relief

“Tifa... You were waiting outside then?” asked Aeris.

“...Yes.”

Cloud then continued with his story. “We returned to Nibelheim. Sephiroth confined himself at the inn. He didn’t even try to talk to me.”

“Then all of sudden he just disappeared, right?” asked Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and responded, “We found him inside the biggest building in Nibelheim.”

“The villagers used to call it the Shinra mansion,” added Tifa.

“Long ago, people from Shinra used to live in that mansion...” Cloud began the flash back aging, to see a Shinra Soldier run out of the inn, with Cloud behind him. They spoke briefly, and Cloud went to the Shinra mansion to find Sephiroth.

Cloud searched trough the mansion. He first went up the stairs, and to the right, and found another Shinra soldier stand in a small room. Cloud approached him, and the Shinra soldier said, “There’s no sign of Sephiroth, but I saw him go into this room.”

Cloud began searching the empty room, with no sign of Sephiroth. He checked many places for clues, under the bed, the bookshelf, and as luck would have it he found a secret passage in the through the wall. He stepped carefully through the secret passage, and discovered a wooden spiral staircase. The stairs looked so old, and unsafe, but he knew that Sephiroth had gone this way.

He went down the stairs, and discovered a tunnel, and proceeded to the end. At the end he found a door, and went inside. This room was nothing like the tunnel; it was well lit, and had many books. As he entered the room he saw Sephiroth walking back and forth, reading from one of the books.

“...an organism that was apparently dead, was found in a 2000 year old geological stratum Professor Gast named that organism, Jenova... X Year, X Month, X Day. Jenova confirmed to be an Ancient... X Year, X Month, X Day. Jenova Project approved. The use of Mako Reactor 1 approved for use...”

Sephiroth started walking down a hallway, which too was filled with books. He stopped in the middle, and looked towards the ceiling.

“My mother’s name is Jenova... Jenova Project... Is this just a coincidence?”

He then lowered his head to the floor, confused, and unsure of what to think.

“Professor Gast... Why didn’t you tell me anything? ...Why did you die?”

Cloud walked up to Sephiroth, trying to console him, but all he said was, “Let me be alone.” Cloud respected him, and left the basement.

Sephiroth didn’t come out of the Shinra Mansion. He continued to read as if he was possessed by something, and not once, did the light in the basement go out.

Days later Cloud awoke from the bed in the Shinra Mansion, and had a feeling. He went back down to the basement where Sephiroth was. Cloud entered the room where Sephiroth was, he heard, “Ha, ha, ha...” Cloud went down the hallway to a room that looked like a small study, which too contain books.

Upon entering the room, Sephiroth was sitting behind the desk and he questioned, “Who is it!” He then looked up to see Cloud, and added, “Hmph...traitor.”

“Traitor?” questioned Cloud.

Sephiroth stood up and remarked, “You ignorant traitor. I’ll tell you. This planet originally belonged to the Cetra. Cetra was an itinerant race. They would migrate in, settle the planet, then move on... At the end of their harsh, hard journey, they would find the Promised Land and supreme happiness. But, those that disliked the journey appeared. Those who stopped their migrations built shelter and elected to lead an easier life. They took that which the Cetra and the planet had made without giving back one whit in return! ”

Sephiroth then pointed at Cloud, and stated, “Those are you ancestors.”

“Sephiroth...”

“Long ago, disaster struck this planet. Your ancestors escaped... They survived because they hid. The planet was saved by sacrificing the Cetra. After that, your ancestors continued to increase. Now all that’s left of the Cetra is in these reports.”

Cloud so confused by what Sephiroth was saying, asked, “What does that have to do with you?”

“Don’t you get it?” responded Sephiroth as he walked over to Cloud. “An Ancient named Jenova was found in a geological stratum of 2000 years ago. The Jenova Project. The Jenova project wanted to produce people with the powers of the Ancients... no, the Cetra... I am the one that was produced.”

“Pr...produced!?”

“Yes. Professor Gast, leader of the Jenova Project and genius scientist, produced me.”

Sephiroth began to leave the basement, and Cloud questioned, “How... how did he...?”

Sephiroth stopped, and Cloud shouted, “Se...Sephiroth?”

“Out of my way. I’m going to see my mother,” stated Sephiroth as he left the basement. Cloud quickly followed, left the basement, but there was no sign of Sephiroth anywhere. He left the mansion, only to see his home town completely on fire.

He ran down to the town square, and a man shouted, “Hey it’s you! You’re still sane, right?”

Cloud nodded, and the man continued, “Then come over here and help me!”

Cloud met up with the man, and Cloud was in complete shock of what had happened to Nibelheim.

“I’ll check this house. You check that one over there!” instructed the man. Cloud ran into the house, and so no one alive, he even checked out the Shinra soldier who was laying on the ground, but apparently they were too late.

“Terrible...” said Cloud. “Sephiroth... This is too terrible...” He then saw the great Sephiroth, using his sword on two innocent villagers, killing them both.

Sephiroth then walked through the flames, and made his way to the mako reactor, on top of Mt. Nibel. Cloud, who was still confused by this whole situation pursued him.

Cloud made his way to the mako reactor, and went back to the room that was filled with the pods, but before he got to the room he saw Tifa kneeled down by her father, with a katana sword next to her.

“Papa...” she cried, “Sephiroth!? Sephiroth did this to you didn’t he!? She then collapsed onto her father, and cried, “Sephiroth...Soldier... mako Reactors... Shinra... Everything!” She picked herself up and shouted, “I hate them all!”

Tifa then stood up, and grabbed the Katana Sword, and ran into the room with all the pods. Cloud quickly followed her.

Sephiroth who was in the pod room was standing in front of the door, and announced, “Mother, I’m here to see you. Please, open this door.”

Tifa who just entered the room screamed, “How could you do that to papa, and all the townspeople?” She ran up with sword in hand, and tried to strike Sephiroth. He however caught her hands, and took the sword back, and struck Tifa.

Tifa immediately flew backwards, bouncing down the stairs. Cloud ran in just as she fell to the bottom. He looked up and saw Sephiroth standing at the top, and the steel door opened, and he walked in.

Cloud went to aid Tifa, he kneeled down, and Tifa said, “...You promised... You promised that you’d come... when I was in trouble...”

Cloud picked Tifa up, and rested her against one of the pods, and in rage went after Sephiroth.

Cloud entered the room, to hear Sephiroth speaking with his mother. “Mother, let’s take this planet back together. I’ve thought of a great idea. Let’s go to the Promised land.”



“Sephiroth... My family! My hometown! How could you do this to them!?” shouted Cloud.

Sephiroth kinda amused, laughed, “Ha, ha, ha... They’ve come again, mother. With her superior power, knowledge, and magic. Mother was destined to become the ruler of this planet.”

Sephiroth started to move towards Jenova, and continued, “But they... Those worthless creatures are stealing the planet from mother. But now I’m here with you so don’t worry.”

Sephiroth then removed a metallic statue that was in front of Jenova’s glass containment tube, to reveal Jenova herself.

“What about *my* sadness!? My family...friends... The sadness of having my hometown taken away from me!? It’s the same as your sadness!”

“Ha, ha, ha... my sadness? What do I have to be sad about? I am the chosen one. I have been chosen to be the leader of this planet.”

Sephiroth placed his sword in front, and continued, “I have orders to take this planet back from you stupid people for the Cetra. What am I supposed to be sad about?”

Cloud lowered his head, and responded, “Sephiroth... I trusted you...” He then lifted his sword, and stated, “No, you’re not the Sephiroth I used to know!”



Sephiroth and Cloud just stared at each other, and then the flashback stopped.

“... and that’s the end of my story,” stated Cloud.

“Wait a damn minute!” exclaimed Barret. “Ain’t there more?”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders and responded, “...I don’t remember.”

“What happened to Sephiroth?” asked Aeris.

“In terms of skill, I couldn’t have killed him.” responded Cloud.

“Official records state Sephiroth is dead.” stated Tifa. “I read it in the newspaper.”

“Shinra, Inc. owns the newspaper, so you can’t rely on that information.” commented Aeris.

“...I want to know the truth.” stated Cloud. “I want to know what happened then. I challenged Sephiroth and lived. Why didn’t he kill me?”

“...I’m alive, too.” added Tifa

“Seems like a lot of this doesn’t make sense.” said Aeris. “What about Jenova? It was in the Shinra building, right?”

“Shinra shipped it from Nibelheim to Midgar,” responded Cloud.

“Did someone else carry it out after that?” asked Aeris. “It was missing from the Shinra building.”

“Sephiroth...?” stated Tifa.

“Damn!” exclaimed Barret. “Don’t none of this make sense! I’m going, going, going, gone! And I’m leavin’ the thinkin’ to you!”

Barret ran to the stairs, stopped, and turned back to the others. “Yo, Cloud! Let’s get a move on!”

Cloud nodded, and Barret said, “Yo, c’mon let’s go!” Barret ran down the stairs, and Cloud said, “...Oh brother...”

“Cloud...?” asked Tifa. “How bad was I when Sephiroth cut me?”

“I thought you were a goner... I was really sad.”

Tifa didn't respond and Aeris mentioned, “I... The Ancients... Cetra... Jenova... Sephiroth and myself...” Aeris stopped because she too was kind of confused by this situation, and Tifa stated, “Let's go. Barret's waiting.”

Cloud nodded, and they left the room. Red XIII stayed behind, and commented to himself, “What a fascinating story...” and followed them down. They met up with Barret, and he said, “Yo, Cloud. Here.” Barret handed Cloud a ‘PHS’, (a cell phone) and Cloud took it.

“PHS, will put us in constant contact with each other,” stated Red XIII.

“Awright the, we're outta here,” stated Barret, and they left the inn.

Chapter 08: Sephiroth's Trail

The hunt for Sephiroth wouldn't be an easy one, well for one reason in particular, they had no clue on where to begin. They started by preparing themselves for their journey, by buying weapons, armor, and materia.

After that they started asking questions to see if anyone might have seen Sephiroth. After questioning some people it seemed hopeless, until they found a man standing by the entrance of Kalm, and he said, "Listen to me! Just now, some guy in a black cloak walked east towards that grassy field. And he's got this killer sword, and is looking *real* scary..."

Cloud knew that this was Sephiroth, left Kalm, and headed west to find him. On the trail of Sephiroth, they found the Chocobo farm. The Chocobo farm is a place where ranchers keep Chocobo for people. They also offer great advice into how to capture one, and how to keep it there for later use.

Cloud searched the area to see which way Sephiroth went. After some investigating, he discovered a cave, just across a marsh. They proceeded, only to be attacked by a Midgar Zolom. The Midgar Zolom was a giant snake that resembled a cobra. Being no match for Midgar Zolom, they quickly retreated.

Cloud knew that they would have to find a way to cross, and decided to go back to the Chocobo farm to see if anyone here had any information, on how to do so. They entered the farm, and went into the house, and Choco Bill, the owner, asked, "Thinking of crossing the marshes?"

"Yeah," responded Cloud.

"Hmm, then it'll probably be safer for you to get a Chocobo. That way you can zip through the marshes with the Chocobo. It's the only way to avoid being attacked by the Midgar Zolom."

Choco Bill paused for a second, and continued, "Midgar Zolom...? It's a serpent-like creature over 30 feet tall!! It picks up on footsteps that enter the marshes... And then, BAM!! It attacks!!! To avoid that, buy a Chocobo at the Choco Bill & Choco Billy Chocobo Farm. To purchase a Chocobo, please talk to my grandson. He's in the Chocobo stables at the far right end of the farm."

Cloud took his advice and went to speak with Choco Billy. They entered the stables, and found Choco Billy.

"Do you want a Chocobo?"

"Mmm... Give me one," responded Cloud.

"You old folks are out of luck!" stated Choco Billy.

"Old folks...?"

"We're all out of Chocobos. I'm taking care of those ones there for some one else. You know, if you really want a Chocobo, you should go out and catch one. Want to know how to catch a Chocobo?"

"How do I catch one?" asked Cloud.

"A wild Chocobo always appears with other monsters. But, you won't be able to catch it because of the monsters. That is why you must defeat the monsters first before you catch the Chocobo."

"And then?"

“Also, wild Chocobos are really cautious. They’ll run away from the slightest things. But if you use ‘Greens’ they’ll focus on that, and won’t run away. Want to know how to catch a Chocobo?”

“Where are they?”

“You see those claw prints out there? Wild Chocobo’s will appear in those areas. But, if you don’t have a ‘Chocobo Lure’ they won’t come out. They very cautious animals by nature.”

“Chocobo Lure?”

“‘Chocobo lure’ is a type of materia which attracts Chocobos. If you equip this, they’ll come to you. But without it, they won’t appear.” Choco Billy paused, and said, “Well then, shall we get down to business? I will sell you the ‘Chocobo Lure’ for 2000 gil, right now. You want it?”

Cloud nodded, and gave Choco Billy 2000 gil.

“Thanks,” responded Choco Billy as he handed them a Chocobo Lure. “It wouldn’t hurt to buy some ‘Greens’ either. Oh, and how fast a Chocobo’ll finish eating depends of what type of ‘Greens’ you feed them.”

Cloud decided that he would buy some Gysahl Greens, for about 100 gil per green. After he bought three Gysahl Greens they went out to get a Chocobo.

Within minuets after leaving the Chocobo Farm, they found a Chocobo. Cloud quickly fed it the greens, while Tifa and Aeris fought the Mandragora’s. They quickly defeated the Mandragora’s and caught a Chocobo.

They continued across the marsh, to the cave on the other side. Once they were across, they dismounted the Chocobo and the Chocobo ran away. Just before entering the cave they discovered a dead Midgar Zolom. Upon seeing this Cloud in shock, questioned, “Did Sephiroth... do this...?”

Aeris then added, “Our enemy is someone that could do this...?”

Tifa in shock as well, just said, “Amazing...”

Without another word said, they moved onto the cave in search of Sephiroth. The cave was a dark and cold place, but this didn’t stop them from continuing. The monsters in this cave were fairly easy to kill, and with the discovery of items, from fallen travelers, only made their lives easier.

As they approached the end of the cave, they entered a cavern, and Rude from the Turks was standing there.

“Just a second!” exclaimed Rude.

“By any chance, are you...?” asked Aeris.

“Do you know who I am?”

Cloud nodded, and Rude continued, “Well if you know, then this won’t take long. It’s difficult to explain what the Turks do...”

“Kidnapping, right?” said Cloud.

“To put it negatively... you could say that... But, that’s not all there is to it, anymore.”

Rude took a long pause, and everyone heard a voice coming from a distance, “Sir!”

Everyone looked up to see Elena, who too was with the Turks.



"It's all right, Rude," Elena exclaimed. "I know you don't like speeches, so don't force it!"

"...Then Elena, explain..." requested Rude.

"I'm the newest member of the Turks, Elena. Thanks to what you did to Reno, we're short of people... Although, because of that, I got promoted to the Turks... In any case, our job is to find out where Sephiroth is headed. And to try and stop you every step of the way... Wait a minute, it's the other way around... You're the ones that are getting in our way."

"Tseng then entered the cavern and stated, "...Elena. You talk too much."

"Mr. Tseng!?" said Elena.

"No need to tell them about our orders," stated Tseng.

Elena lowered her head, and responded, "Sorry ... Tseng."

"I thought I gave you other orders," snapped Tseng. "Now go. Don't forget to file your report."

"Oh! Right! Very well, Rude and I will go after Sephiroth, who's heading for Junon Harbor," stated Elena.

"...Elena. You don't seem to understand," Tseng stated.

"Oh! I'm, I'm sorry."

"...Go. Don't let Sephiroth get away," ordered Tseng.

"Yes sir!" responded Rude, and Elena. They started to leave, and Rude turned back to Cloud, and mentioned, "...Reno said he wanted to see you after the injuries you gave him healed. He wants to show his affection for you all... with a new weapon."

Rude then left and Tseng wanted to get the last word in, "Well, then..." He paused, and turned to Aeris. "Aeris... Long time no see. Looks like you got away from the Shinra for a while, now that Sephiroth reappeared."

"...so what are you saying?" asked Aeris. "That I should be grateful to Sephiroth?"

"No..." Tseng responded. "Well, I won't be seeing too much of you, so take care."

"...strange, hearing that from you," comment Aeris.

"Well then, stay out of Shinra's way," stated Tseng, and he left.

With the new information that the Turks had given, they knew where they had to go, and left the cave. Once outside they made haste to Junon harbor, which was located to the west/northwest of the cave.

Junon Harbor is a unique city. In a way it's like Midgar. With a lower city, where the poor population live, and a upper area which is more state of the art with technology. Junon Harbor is also a defense/military/air/navy base, armed with hidden laser guns, and the infamous big cannon. This cannon is the most powerful gun in the world, and with one shot could destroy a entire city.

Of course Junon Harbor was never like this. Back during the war Shinra transformed the town, into this City, by building the upper city, and polluting the water, and just like



any other place, the Shinra didn't care about the people that lived in the lower part.

So, Cloud and the others arrived at Junon Harbor, and as they entered, Cloud made the comment, "What happened to this town? It's so run-down..."

Neither Aeris, nor Tifa had a response, and they began their search for any information on how to get to the upper part of the city. As they searched they found people that really didn't have the information they were looking for. They also discovered an elevator that would take them to the upper part of the city, but the Shinra Soldier wouldn't let them use it. Cloud knew that they would be able to kill the Shinra Soldier, but he didn't want to cause a scene.

So he decided to explore the town some more. They moved on to the beach area, to see a little girl in the water, playing with a dolphin.

"He-y! Mr. Dolphin!" exclaimed the little girl with excitement. The dolphin jumped up out of the water, and the little girl said, "My name is...Pri-scil-la! Now you say it."

Cloud and friends approached Priscilla, and she asked, "Who are you guys? Are you members of the Shinra, Inc?"

Tifa shook her head, and responded, "No...stay calm..."

Cloud nodded, and said, "...that's how it is."

"I don't believe you! Get out of here!" yelled Priscilla.

"Great..." responded Cloud.

Then the water started to get wavy, and the ground began to shake violently, and something appeared in the distance.

"What's that!?" said Aeris.

Everyone turned to see a monster, Bottomswell, approaching them, and Priscilla shouted, "Be careful Mr. Dolphin!" She ran into the water to help her friend, and went under quickly.

"Hey! Hold on, we're coming!" exclaimed Cloud, as he ran into the water to help Priscilla. The Bottomswell saw this as an opportunity, and attacked them. Bottomswell did appear to have the upper hand, but he would be defeated with Cloud's sword.

Cloud pulled Priscilla to shore, and laid her on the beach. Cloud was kneeling next to her, and said, "This is bad... You don't think she's dead, do you?"

"Priscilla," shouted a voice in the distance. They turn around to see a man running down to them. He quickly checked Priscilla, and stated, "Nope... she's not breathing." The man paused, and then said, "Hey, that's it!" He looked at Cloud, and exclaimed, "Young man, CPR now!"

Cloud shrugged his shoulders and responded, "Mouth to mouth!?"

Tifa placed her hands on her hips, and asked, "Cloud, what are you going to do?"

Cloud shook his head, and responded, "But... she's just a girl..."

"Cloud, hurry!" exclaimed Aeris.

"What?" asked the man. "You don't know how? Come over here, I'll show you."

Cloud scratched his head, and stated, "Guess I gotta do it..." Cloud walked over to the man, and he instructed, "Just take a deep breath, hold it in. Then breathe into her. Hurry up and do it!"

Cloud kneeled next to Priscilla, and did as the man instructed. He took in a deep breath, and gave her mouth to mouth. About a minute later, Priscilla became conscious,

“Uh...ugh...” she moaned. Cloud stood up, and the man asked, “Hey hey! Priscilla, are you alright?”

Priscilla still in a confused state, and did respond. The man quickly picked her up, and took her home. Cloud and the others followed him. When they arrived, the man said, “Sorry Cloud, Pricilla needs to rest for a while.”

Respecting what the man had said, Cloud, and the others went to find a place to rest. After looking for an inn, they discovered that there wasn’t one, but one townsman noticed them, and said, “Hey, come in for a while.”

They followed the townsman into his house, he said, “I heard what happened. You’ve done so much for Priscilla.” They all walked to the dinning area of the house, and the townsman offered, “You all must be tired. If you want to get some rest, stay here.”

The townsman began to leave the house, when he turned back, and stated, “Make yourselves at home.” Then he left.

“Take a rest?” asked Tifa.

Cloud crossed his arms, and responded, “Yeah, let’s rest.”

They went to sleep, and Cloud was out like a light. Then like several times before, he heard that voice. “...That reminds me.”

“You again?” asked Cloud. “Who are you?”

“...You’ll find out soon... But more importantly, 5 years ago...”

“5 years ago...Nibelheim?”

“When you went to MT. Nibel then, Tifa was your guide, right?”

“Yeah... I was surprised.”

“But where was Tifa other than that?”

“...I dunno.”

“It was a great chance for you two to see each other again.”

“...You’re right.”

“Why couldn’t you see each other alone?”

“...I don’t know. I can’t remember clearly...”

“Why don’t you try asking Tifa?”

“...Yeah.”

“Then, get up!”

The voiced faded away, and Cloud hear Tifa’s voice “Hey, wake up. Wake up, Cloud!”

Cloud awoke, and got out of the bed, and said, “Tifa... When Sephiroth and I went to Nibelheim where were you?”

Tifa scratched her head, and responded, “...We saw each other, right?”

“The other time.”

Tifa placed her hands by her face, and responded, “No... it was 5 years ago. I don’t remember.” Tifa really didn’t want to discuss this with Cloud, and quickly changed the subject. “But, something seems strange outside. Cloud come quick.”

Cloud followed Tifa outside to hear this cheerful music coming from the upper part of the city. He then regrouped, with everyone, and said, “Doesn’t it seem a little strange? Everything getting so noisy all of a sudden...?”

Red XIII too was curious and said, “Does this have something to do with the Shinra?”

Seems like something’s goin’ on up there!” stated Barret.

Aeris then mentioned, "I heard that girl regained consciousness," and Priscilla came outside. Cloud walked up the stairs, and stopped half way. "Are you all right now?" he asked.

"Umm...thanks for helping..." responded Priscilla. Then both walked back to the group, and Priscilla said, "I'm sorry, I mistook you for one of the Shinra, Inc..."

"That's all right," responded Cloud.

"I'll give you something *special*!" stated Priscilla. She walked over to Cloud, and held out her hand. "It's an amulet. Take good care of it, ok?"

Cloud took the amulet, and realized immediately that it was a summon materia, Shiva. Barret then asked Priscilla, "What's that music? It sure sounds lively."

"I heard they're rehearsing the reception for the new Shinra President."

"Rufus!?" exclaimed Barret. "I gotta pay my respects."

"Grandpa and grandma told me this beach was beautiful when they were small," said Priscilla. "But after the Shinra built that city above, then the sun stopped shining down here, and the water got polluted... I was raised on that story and hate Shinra so much, I could die!"

"You think Rufus is thinking about crossing the ocean from here, too?" asked Aeris. "What? Does that mean Sephiroth already crossed the Ocean?"

Red XIII placed his paw on his chin, and asked, "Cloud, didn't you finish Rufus off?"

Cloud didn't respond, and Barret stated, "We gotta get to the town up there... Mebbe we could climb the tower?"

"No! No!" exclaimed Priscilla. "There's a high voltage current running underneath the tower. Don't wander near it, it's dangerous! But... you might be able to if Mr. Dolphin helps you. Follow me!"

Priscilla ran towards the beach, and Tifa said nervously, "High voltage tower... I guess this mean Cloud'll be all right"

"Yeah, better leave it to Cloud!" commented Aeris.

"We're counting on you, Cloud," stated Red XIII

"Hey!!" exclaimed Cloud and everyone started too separate. "Wait a second!" Cloud now knew it was up to him to go up the tower, and proceeded to the beach.

The tower rested in the water, it had only seemed logical to the Shinra, to build a voltage tower, and place it in the water. The only real danger was towards the bottom of the tower, so Cloud needed to find a way to the top. He met up with Priscilla, and she said, "Wait a minute."

She pulled out a whistle, and blew it, and Mr. Dolphin, came toward Priscilla, and then jumped out of the water, high enough to get Cloud up the tower. While MR. Dolphin was demonstrating his abilities, Barret showed up. After seeing what MR. Dolphin could do, Barret said with amazement, "Now ain't that something! I ain't never seen no dolphin jump like that!"

"Pretty cool, huh?" said Priscilla. "When I blow this whistle, Mr. Dolphin jumps for me. Here!! This is for you, Cloud!"

She held out the whistle, and Cloud shrugged his shoulders. "A gift? What am I supposed to do with it!?"

"Just go into the water, blow this whistle, and Mr. Dolphin'll jump you to the top of the pole!"

Cloud somewhat confused responded, “Jump to the top of the pole?”

“See that rod sticking out at the top?” asked Priscilla “If you jump just right, you can climb to the top of the town.”

Cloud took the whistle, and Barret said, “Good luck Cloud! If you make it, we’ll follow you!” Cloud not really enthused with this plan started into the water, and Barret said, “Whoa, I’ll hold the PHS for you. It’ll break if it gets wet.” Cloud handed over the PHS, and Priscilla asked, “You wanna jump with MR. Dolphin?”

Cloud still thinking this wasn’t the best plan, responded in an unsure voice, “Sure.” He then entered the water, and swam under the rod. He judged the best place to jump, by remembering the way that Mr. Dolphin had jumped, and lining up with the rod. He then blew the whistle, and Mr. Dolphin lifted him up high into the air, and Cloud landed on the rod, and proceeded to the upper city.

He climbed up the rest of the tower, which would take him to the airstrip. When he arrived at the top, he saw a huge airship. The airship was almost as big a blimp, but not as round.

Cloud quickly left the airstrip, so Shinra Soldiers wouldn’t catch him. He used an outside lift to take him down level, and entered a near by building. When he entered, he saw three Shinra soldiers marching in the hall with them all say different things.

“Eh! Ho!”

“The new President!! He’s here, he’s here!!

“Hurry! Hurry!!”

Cloud at first panic, thinking that the Shinra Soldiers would bust him, but they left him alone and marched on. Cloud thinking he was in the clear, started to move, when a voice shouted, “Hey!” Cloud turned to see a Shinra Commander running to him. Cloud began to panic, think that he was busted, when the Commander stated, “You still dressed like that!? Come’ere!”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and did as instructed. He followed the Commander, and he ordered, “Here!! Get in the room!” Cloud entered the locker room, and the commander stated, “Today’s the big day when we welcome President Rufus! Hurry up and change!”

Cloud somewhat confused, went over to a locker, and pulled out a Shinra uniform. He picked up the Shinra uniform, and said to himself, “Brings back memories...”

The commander kind of heard Cloud, and snapped, “Quit yappin’! Hurry up!” Cloud walked into the changing room, and continued to talk to himself, “A Shinra uniform... I was so proud when I first put it on.” Cloud was struggling to put on the uniform, and mentioned to himself, “I wonder when it was... I couldn’t stand wearing this thing anymore.”

Cloud stepped out of the changing room, wearing the Shinra uniform, and the Commander complimented, “Wow! You look good in it!” The Commander walked up to Cloud, and asked, “You remember the Greeting procedure, right!?”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and the Commander stated, “...the look on your face says you forgot. All right, I’ll show you again!” He took a step back, and said, “Do just like we do.”

Then in ran two Shinra Soldiers and announced, "Commander!! We'll help too!" One of Shinra Soldiers turned to Cloud, and stated, "This is how to do it!" The other Shinra Soldier follow suit, and stated, "We'll sing too!"

"All right! Show'em!!" ordered the Commander. "Now, march!! This's the Welcoming March!"

"Then I'll sing along with you" stated one of the Shinra Soldiers. "Quietly--!!" He then stretched, and said, "Aaaaah! Aaaaah! Hey, come on now." He stopped stretching, and stated, "Now!"

"And... march!!" exclaimed the Commanded. "One, two...! Three, four!" The Shinra Soldiers started marching, and the Commander told Cloud, "Keep in step with the soldier next to you and march smoothly! Once you're in step, shoulder your gun! Got it yet?"

"All clear," responded Cloud.

"Good!" exclaimed the Commander. "Make sure you do well at the real parade!"

The door open, and in ran another Shinra Solider. "Rufus has arrived! Preparation completed!"

"All right, show time! Don't disgrace yourselves!" stated the Commander, and they went to meet Rufus.

Down at the parade starting area, the other troops were practicing, waiting for the orders to start. It had seem like forever to the troops, but finally a Shinra soldier came up, and announced, "Begin the Welcome Parade!" Now everyone was so excided that they didn't noticed that they were missing a few troops, and started the Welcome Parade.

The Welcome Parade started off well, with Rufus riding in a vehicle, waving to the public, with people cheering him, and the troops behind him marching as they had practice.

The group that Cloud was with, finally showed up to take part in the parade, but upon arriving the Commander went into complete shock, "Oh...no...!! No one's here! Late---!?" The Commander looked at Cloud, and stated, "Hey! Rookie!! It's because you're running around like that!!"

While Cloud was being scolded, on of the Shinra Soldiers, looked down an alleyway, and said, "Captain!! We'll take a short cut!"

"Right!" responded the Commander. "Good idea. Get over here!!"

Everyone ran up to the alleyway, and the commander ordered his troops, "All right! You first!"

The Shinra Soldiers, and Cloud entered the alley, and caught up to the parade. Upon arriving at the Welcome Parade the first Shinra Soldier stated, "I'll go first! Now you watch close and do as I do, rookie!"

The Shinra Soldier stared to move into the Parade, and said, "Just sneak into the back of the line when you see an opening."

The Shinra Soldier joined the Parade, and the commander said, "Now listen up! This parade's gonna be broadcast live on Shinra TV, around the world! If you look bad the whole Junon army will look bad. Remember that and don't screw up! Ok! Jump in when I give you the sign! Just sneak in the back! Don't mess up the row! And no matter what you do, don't try to go in from the front! All right!! Start marching!!"

Cloud started marching in place, and waited for the commanders signal.

“Charge--!!” shouted the commander, and Cloud marched into the parade, and got into formation. As they moved away from the cameras, the TV Producer, was in shock, and stated, “What the hell was that soldier doing?”

“I don’t know,” responded the assistant director.

“Are the points up?”

“This is terrible! Am...am I fired?”

The producer looked at the ratings, and exclaimed, “What!? You’re FIRED!! Send that soldier a bomb or something!”

Meanwhile they arrived in time to greet Rufus. Heidegger was also present. As they lined up, the commander stated, “Good! We made it.”

“Oh! President Rufus,” said Cloud.

The Commander quickly turned to Cloud, and ordered, “Hey! Line up, and shut up!” The Commander stepped behind Cloud, and added, “Don’t make a move!”

Once everyone was situated, Heidegger turned to Rufus, and Rufus asked, “How’s the job?” He then paused, and asked, “What happened to the Airship?”

Heidegger began laughing, and responded, “The long range airship is still being prepared. It should be ready in about three more days. Gya haa haa!”

“Even the Air Force’s Gelnika?”

“...Gya haa haa!”

Rufus walked up to Heidegger and stated, “Stop that stupid horse laugh. Things are different than when father was in charge.”

Heidegger slowly stopped laughing, “Gya...” and Rufus asked, “Is the ship ready?”

Heidegger nodded, and responded, “Yes sir, we’ll get it ready quickly.”

Rufus then entered a lift car, which would take him to the docks, and Heidegger began laughing. The troops followed Heidegger, and started laughing as well. This only angered Heidegger, and he ran towards them throwing punches.

The troops quickly scattered, except for Cloud, who wound up being Heidegger punching bag. The lift started, and Heidegger quickly ran inside it. The lift left, and the commander stated, “What a disaster.”

Then the troops talked amongst themselves, “Heidegger was really irritated...”

“The man in the Black Cape’s been roaming the city, but we can’t find him,” stated one of the Shinra Soldiers.

“Man in a Black Cape?” asked Cloud.

“He showed up two or three days ago, and killed a few of our soldiers,” replied one of the troops.

“He disappeared right after that. There’s a rumor going around that it was Sephiroth,” stated another Soldier.

The Commander decided that this conversation was over, and stated, “Attention! Dismissed!”

The Shinra Soldiers followed orders and left. Then the Commander asked Cloud, “You messing with the army?”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and responded, “What if I am?”

This only irritated the Commander, and he said, “You’re too lazy!! No break for you!! Get over here!”

The commander took Cloud back to the locker room, and the commander stated, "This is the military, soldier!! Your orders for today are to send off President Rufus at the dock! I'll keep drilling you until it's time!" No sooner were those words out of his mouth, when the two Shinra Soldiers ran in.

"I'll help, sir!" stated one Shinra soldier.

"Me too, sir!" stated the other one.

"All right!! Line up in order and show me your final pose! Today's command is formation! Remember it," exclaimed the Commander, and he turned to the others.

"Ready!? Junon Military Send Off, BEGIN!"

The commander blew his whistle, and shouted out his commands. The Shinra soldiers followed them, and turned to Cloud and said, "All right! Now you try it!"

The Commander blew his whistle, and Cloud did it exactly, and perfectly.

"So, you got it?" asked the commander.

"I've got it!" responded Cloud.

"All right! Don't mess up during the real thing!" exclaimed the Commander.

"Commander!!" said one of the Shinra Soldiers. "What's today's special pose?"

Huh?... I haven't decided yet." responded the commander. He then turned to Cloud, and said, "All right, rookie!! I'll let you decide! Show me your best move!"

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and responded, "Let's see... My best move is..." Cloud raised his gun over his head, and spun it a round.

"Woo----ow!" exclaimed one Shinra Soldier.

"That's awesome!" exclaimed the other.

"All right!! We'll go with that as today's special!! Practice it!"

Both Shinra Soldiers responded, "Yes sir!!"

"Well then!" said the commander. "Meet at the docks!! Don't be late!! Attention! Dismissed!!"

They all left the locker room and made their way to the docks, to send President Rufus off. They made their way through the city, and arrived at the docks, and lined up.

"All right, it's time!" stated the commander.

They then heard the Shinra Soldier that was standing by the door entrance announce, "President Rufus...has now arrived!"

"Ten...HUT!" ordered the Commander. President Rufus entered, with Heidegger by his side, and started walking towards them, and the Commander stated, "This is it!! Junon Military Reception--! Do it right---, Do it with enthusiasm...! Ready...!"

President Rufus had approached them, and the commander blew his whistle, shouting out commands. Cloud followed the commands, along with the other troops, and at the end they performed the special.

President Rufus enjoyed the presentation, and complemented, "Well done. Keep up the good work for Shinra, Inc."

Heidegger then walked up to the troops, and spoke with each one. When he got to Cloud, he said, "Gya haa ha..!! Here's a special bonus for you!! A token of the President's kindness! Don't forget it!"

Heidegger then handed Cloud the Force Stealer sword, and Cloud gladly accepted it. President Rufus, and Heidegger then stared onto the ship, and Rufus mentioned to Heidegger, "Once the word gets out that Sephiroth's here, Cloud and his friends will show up, too."

“We’ll crush them as soon as we find them!” stated Heidegger.

“We can’t have them get in our way.”

“Leave it up to me, sir! Gya haa ha!”

“I thought I told you to stop that stupid laugh...” stated the President as he walked onto the ship.

“Gya...” respond Heidegger and once again went towards the troops with fist of blazing, but the boat whistle blew, and he entered the ship. The commander turned to his troops, and said, “All right! Dismissed!”

“That was close,” stated one of the Shinra soldiers.

“Heidegger’s been really edgy lately.” stated the other Shinra soldier.

“Because Hojo disappeared, leaving a letter of resignation,” replied the first Shinra soldier.

“Heidegger’s been forced to take care of that investigation, too.” stated the other Shinra soldier.

The Commander blew his whistle, and shouted, “Hey--! I thought you were dismissed!”

The troops left and the commander told Cloud, “We got cleaning up to do! Hurry up!”

The commander left, and Cloud started to follow, but he stopped, when he heard Red XIII, “Hey, hurry.” Cloud turned towards the boat to see Red XIII hiding on the boat. “You’re the last one.” added Red XIII.

Cloud confused by how Red XIII was on board, shrugged his shoulders, and asked, “How did you get here?”

“A dolphin gave me a ride. Priscilla remembered the dolphin after you climbed the pole. But, you mustn’t be mad at her.”

Cloud again shrugged his shoulders, and boarded the ship. Once aboard, he stated, “We’ll cross the ocean, to the new continent... even if we are wearing Shinra uniforms...”

The ship set sail across the ocean, heading for the port in the town of Costa Del Sol. Once they were out on the ocean, Cloud, who was in the cargo room of the ship, started to track down the others. After a couple minutes of exploring the cargo room he found one of his teammates.

“Umm...it’s me Aeris. Hey Cloud. Did you see the Airship at Junon?”

“I heard it was big, but I didn’t expect it to be *that* big.” responded Cloud.

“That was *really* something. Hey, do you think I could get on it?”

Cloud nodded, and responded, “I’ll take you someday... keep hoping.”

“Wow! I’m really looking forward to it!” exclaimed Aeris, and then she went back to pretending to work. Cloud then continued his search for the others.

Cloud went topside, and searched for anyone that could be with him. He climbed up to a platform, to find Tifa. She saluted Cloud, and said, “Yes sir! Everything quiet, sir! ...But, you know what? I really hate this uniform. Uniforms, soldiers, war, I hate’em all. They take away all the things and people you love... I wish they’d all disappear. Right, Cloud?”

“Yeah,” responded Cloud.

“You’re right!” stated Tifa, and she saluted Cloud. “Uh, yes sir, I’ll continue my watch sir! Hee hee...”

Cloud then climbed back down, to locate some more of his clan. After some exploring he noticed a Shinra Soldier, having a hard time walking. Cloud somewhat confused by this, approached the Shinra Soldier.

“...It’s me. Red XIII. I’m a little woozy, but I shouldn’t get caught. Humans only look at appearances anyway. Anyway you look at it, I’d say I make a fine human being.”

Cloud didn’t comment, and Red XIII turned around to reveal his tail sticking out of the Shinra uniform. Cloud then went looking for Barret, and hoping that he wasn’t causing trouble.

Cloud proceeded to the bridge of the ship, to see Barret spying on President Rufus through a window. Cloud approached Barret, and Barret said, “Look, Cloud. It’s Rufus and Heidegger. They’re this close but we can’t do a thing to ’em...” Barret paused for a couple of seconds. “Ummm... Gmmmm... How can he... Goin’ off laughin’ like that? Because of him, Biggs... Wedge... Jessie...! Gggggggh... Ggggh...! Gggggghh!!”

Barret ran away from the window with rage building up. He began shaking, and exclaimed, “God!! I can’t take it anymore! I’m gonna settle things here and now...”

Then alarm sounded, and Rufus and Heidegger left the bridge. Barret settled down, and an announcement came across the PA system. “Emergency alert! Reports of a suspicious character found! Those not on detail, search the ship. Report when found! I repeat. Suspicious character found on board! Those not on detail, search the ship. Report when found!”

The alarm stopped, and Barret looked at Cloud. “Damn, did they find us!? Hey, that don’t seem like us. Do they mean Tifa... and the others!?” Barret turned to Cloud, and said, “Get off your spikey butt and let’s go, Cloud!”

Cloud didn’t respond, left, and Barret followed. They quickly regrouped with everyone on the top deck, and Tifa asked, “Everyone all right!?”

“You all right!?” asked Barret.

“Huh?” asked Aeris.

“Everyone’s here...right?” asked Tifa.

“Hey, wait.” said Barret. “You don’t think that suspicious character is...Sephiroth!?”

“Really!?” asked Tifa.

“How the hell am I supposed to know!?” stated Barret.

“...Let’s find out,” stated Cloud.

“It’s the most logical thing to do then, who’s going to go?” asked Red XIII.

They broke off into two groups, Barret and Red XIII in one. The other group was Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris, who was the investigating group.

“... Sephiroth...” said Cloud. “...All right, let’s go.”

They started their search in the cargo room, but all they found was dead bodies. Cloud then decided to check the engine room, since he couldn’t before, because there was a guard there.

They entered the room to see some dead bodies, and a Shinra Commander standing at the control panel, with his back to them. Cloud approached the Shinra Commander, and asked, “Is it... Sephiroth?”

The Shinra commander turned around, dropped to his knees and fell to the floor dead.

“No...not Sephiroth!” commented Cloud.

Then a voice came out of nowhere "...After a long sleep..." Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris looked around the room, but couldn't see anyone, and the voice continued, "...the time...time has...come..."

Tifa then noticed something and exclaimed, "Cloud, look!!" They all stopped looking around the room, to see no other than Sephiroth, appear. He arose through the floor, as if it wasn't even solid.

"Sephiroth!" exclaimed Cloud. "You're alive!"

"...Who are you?" questioned Sephiroth.

"You don't remember me!? I'm Cloud!"

"Cloud..."

"Sephiroth! What are you thinking!? What are you doing!?"

"...the time...is now..."

"What!? What are you saying!? Be more..." but before Cloud could even finish what he was saying, Sephiroth lifted off the floor in flight. The room flashed green, and sent Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris flying backwards. Sephiroth quickly flew up, and out of the room, dropping a part of Jenova, to do battle with them.

The battle started against Jenova-BIRTH, but even with Jenova's great strength, she wasn't powerful enough to defeat them. After the battle, the piece of Jenova, laid on the floor, just throbbing, and Aeris commented, "I've sent this before..."

Cloud knelt next to it, and stated, "...Jenova. The arm of Jenova."

"Jenova..." said Tifa. "He's been carrying this thing around?"

The arm of Jenova faded away, and Cloud stood up. "So it *was* Sephiroth."

"The time is now..." said Aeris. "I think that was what he said."

"...Time...is...now?" questioned Cloud.

"I'm getting so confused..." stated Tifa. "Cloud, explain what's happened so far."

"...I'll try, but don't interrupt me while I'm explaining." Cloud took a step away from them, and continued, "Sephiroth went off searching for the Promised Land, so he could become the ruler of the planet... That was 5 years ago. Then Sephiroth came back and killed President Shinra." Cloud turned back towards them. "And then just now all of us saw Sephiroth." Cloud walked back to them. "He was carrying Jenova with him... This much I do know. He told me he wants to go to the Promised Land with his mother, Jenova. I guess that's about it."

The boat whistle blew, and an announcement came over the PA. "Dock workers—we will be docking in Costa del Sol in 5 minutes. Prepare for docking."

"We should hide somewhere again." stated Tifa, as she walked to the door. Aeris followed, and they left. Cloud was about to leave, when he turned back, and said to himself, "Sephiroth...is alive... The Promised Land... Does it exist...?" He then left the room, to find a hiding place until the boat dock

The boat arrived in the port of Costa Del Sol, and docked. As soon as the coast was clear Cloud and friends went ashore. They quickly regrouped, and Barret mentioned, "Damn! Sure is hot here! But I sure feel better now that I can say good-bye to this sailor suit. Yo listen up!! Y'all be sure to mingle like regular folks here!"

"Oh, too bad," said Aeris. "I liked Barret's sailor suit. He looked so cute."

That comment only angered Barret, and retorted, "...What'ya mean 'cute'?"

"Right...well, uh," stuttered Tifa. "Barret, why don't you use that sailor suit for pajamas? Right, Cloud?"

“Ahhh... You look like a bear wearing a marshmallow.” replied Cloud.

This only angered Barret more, and snapped, “The hell’s that suppose to mean!? This happens to be the most comfortable, so shu’up!”

“...puff...puff... Would you kindly hurry?” asked Red XIII “The heat here is drying my nose.”

“All right. We’ll take a break and then head off,” stated Cloud. “Don’t wander too far off.”

“I’ll wander wherever I damn well want! Who made him the leader?” asked Barret, and then he huffed off.

“It looks like my mane got messed up,” stated Red XIII. “I’m going to rest somewhere cool.”

They all left the area, and a helicopter flew in, and landed on a helicopter pad by the boat. Then off the boat came Heidegger, and President Rufus.

“What a long boat ride that was!!” exclaimed The President. “Hmmm... Good work everyone...”

“Gya, Heh, heh..., ha!! Hurry up with that!” instructed Heidegger to a sailor.

“Yes, sir,” responded the Sailor.

President Rufus, and Heidegger stepped away from the boat, and President Rufus said, “I heard Sephiroth was on board.”

Heidegger nodded, and responded, “...Yes”

“And it seems Cloud and the others were on board, too.” stated President Rufus

Heidegger nodded again, and responded, “...Yes”

President Rufus ran his fingers through his hair, and stated, “They all slipped through... You messed up big time, Heidegger.”

“I’m ashamed of myself.”

“Is that all you can do? Give one word answers and apologize for everything?”

Heidegger just stood there, not sure of how to answer the President, and a sailor shouted, “Ready for departure, sir!!”

President Rufus started to the helicopter, and Heidegger just stood there tapping his foot. President Rufus turned back to Heidegger, and said, “...Do something. I’ll be expecting results.”

President Rufus then went to the helicopter and boarded. Heidegger then had one of his raging fits, and threw two seamen off the dock into the water. He then went after poor civilians, but they ran away. The helicopter took off, leaving Heidegger behind.

Meanwhile in the town, Cloud and the others, were restocking their supplies, and poking around for clues. In their wonderings, Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris found the beach.

“Oh! Cloud!!” exclaimed Aeris.

“Look, look at that!” stated Tifa.

Cloud took a look to see none other than Hojo, surrounded by three women in bikinis. Upon seeing Hojo, he asked, “Is that man over there, Hojo?”

“Go over and talk to him,” Tifa said.

Cloud decided that it couldn’t hurt to talk to Hojo, and went over to speak with him. Cloud approached Hojo, and one of the women said, “God!! What do you want?”

“I want to talk with that man.” responded Cloud.

(Hey, who do you think you are?) She thought. She then turned to Hojo and said, “Professor Hojo. That scary man says he wants to talk with you.”

“I’m busy right now,” stated Hojo.
 “...But too bad.” stated Cloud.
 Hojo looked up to see Cloud, and friends, and responded, “No, I remember you all now... Yes, yes. I remember now. It’s been a long time, Cloud.”
 “Hojo...” said Cloud.
 “Sometimes you just gotta do something like this,” stated Hojo.
 “...What are you doing?” asked Cloud.
 “It should be obvious, I’m getting a tan.”
 “Answer me!” ordered Cloud.
 “Hmm! I believe we’re both after the same goal.”
 “You mean Sephiroth?”
 “Did you see him?”
 Cloud nodded, and Hojo said, “I see...Ha! Ha!”
 Hojo then stood up on his chair, and Cloud asked, “What is it?”
 “Nothing. I just remembered a certain hypothesis... Haven’t you ever had the feeling something is calling you? Or that you had to visit some place?...”
 “I’ll go anywhere Sephiroth is at!” stated Cloud. “To beat him and put an end to all this!”
 “I see... This could be interesting. Were you in Soldier? ...Heh heh heh! Would you like to be my guinea pig?”
 Cloud took a fighting stance and Hojo comment sarcastically, “Oh, now what? Are you going to draw your sword?”
 “Cloud, don’t,” requested Aeris. “If he dies, we won’t find out anything!”
 Cloud shook his head, and Hojo laughed, “Ha! Ha! Ha!...” Hojo then walked up to Aeris, and asked, “Say, aren’t you the ‘Ancient’?”
 “I’m Aeris. The least you can do is remember my name. I want you to tell me something, Professor Hojo... I know I’m an Ancient. My mother told me.”
 “Your mother? Oh, you mean Ifalna. How is she?”
 “You didn’t know!? She died.”
 “...I see”
 “Professor Hojo... Is Jenova an Ancient? Is Sephiroth an Ancient? Do we all have the same blood?”
 Hojo really didn’t want to answer Aeris’ question, and began to mumble, “mumble...mumble...head west...”
 “He’s mumbling slowly... That must mean he’s hiding something!” stated Aeris.
 Hojo then sat back in his beach chair, and didn’t say anything. Tifa crossed her arms, and demanded, “Hey! Answer us!!”
 Cloud turned to Tifa, shrugged his shoulders, and said, “...It’s no use. It’s no good.”
 They left the beach, to get the some rest, and head west to track Sephiroth. They entered the inn, and they could hear Barret in the bathroom, who was wearing the sailor suit. “Uh uh! Hmmm!? Marlene! You ok? ...Dad’ll wear this when I go to see you.”
 Cloud didn’t really know what to think, and decided it was time to get some rest.

Chapter 09: Barret's Past

The next morning they awoke, and left the Inn. Cloud remembering what Hojo said, decided to go west, in the hunt for Sephiroth. They left the town, and started west, hoping that they would catch up to him.

They journeyed west over a mountain path, and discovered a man relaxing, on the side of the road. Cloud wasn't sure if this was the correct way, and stopped to speak with the man.

"Whew!!" stated the man "Hey! You're actually talking to me."

"What is it?" asked Cloud.

"I just passed a guy in a black cloak back there. I just tried to tell him that it's dangerous up ahead, and he ignored me!"

"There was a black-cloaked guy here, too?" asked Aeris.

Cloud the walked over to Tifa, and Aeris, and said, "Sephiroth..."

"Let's hurry on." stated Tifa.

They continued through the path, and found a Mako reactor. This Mako reactor was different than any other that they seen before, because it had, rail tracks coming from the inside of it. As they continued, they found themselves away from the mountain path, and on a set of railway tracks.

The tracks eventually lead them to the small, wrecked town, of North Corel. This was Barret's hometown, and when Cloud and the others arrived, they saw a small group of three people around Barret.

Then one man walked up to Barret and punched him. What would happen next would be surprising to Cloud, but all Barret did was stand there and take it. He didn't resort to any violence what so ever and the man walked back to the group. He then turned back to Barret, and said, "Well. Lookey here! Never thought I'd ever see your face again." stated the first man.

"They kick you out of another town or somethin'?" asked the second man. "You destroy everything you touch."

"You got a lot of balls comin' back here," stated the third man. "Look at this place! It's all your fault North Corel turned into a garbage heap!"

"Why doncha say something!?" asked the second man. "Or did ya forget what you done here already?"

Barret lowered his head, and responded with sad tone, "...I'm sorry..."

"Fuck! You ain't even worth the effort." stated the third man.

"Don't waste you time talkin' to that Techno-freak!" stated the first man.

The men nodded, and walked away. Cloud walked up to Barret, and Barret said, "You heard'em... It's my fault this town was... destroyed..."

Before Cloud could respond, Barret ran off. Cloud started his normal routine, and began to question the townsfolk, but not just for the reason of Sephiroth, but probably to find any information on what had happened to North Corel.

As they questioned people, they weren't interested in telling Cloud anything. But he then found a man that asked, "I hear it's a big fad now in the city to get tattoos. Is that right?"

"I wouldn't know." responded Cloud.

“Really...? I saw a big ‘1’ on the arm of a young guy heading towards the Ropeway Station. That black cape he had on was really cool.”

The information the man had given to Cloud was helpful, and decided to go to the Ropeway Station. The Ropeway Station was in the town of North Corel, just to the west. When they arrived Barret and Red XIII were waiting. Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris approached them, and Aeris asked, “Barret, What happened?”

“Sorry.” responded Barret.

“What happened?” asked Cloud.

Barret started walking towards the Ropeway car. He then turned back, and stated, “My hometown used to be around here.”

“What do you mean ‘used to’?” asked Red XIII

“It ain’t here no more. Heard it got buried... in just 4 years.”

“But how could those people say those terrible things?” asked Aeris.

“An’ it’s my fault. *All* my fault.” Barret paused, and then began his story. “..My hometown, Corel’s always been a coal mining town. It’s so dusty, but calm and so poor... A real small town, this one. That’s the first time I ever heard the word ‘Mako Reactor’ mentioned since that time...”

Barret then flashed back to how things came to be. He remembered being in a house, having a town meeting. There were ten people there, and three were from the Shinra.

“What are we going to do?” asked the Village Headman. “The only one against this is Dyne...”

“I am definitely against it, no matter what. There’s nothing to talk about if you’re thinking of throwing away our coal!” stated Dyne. “Our coal’s been protected for generations. Our fathers, and theirs before them, risked their lives for it. We have no right to throw it all away so easily.”

“But listen, Dyne,” said Barret. “No one uses coal nowadays. It’s the sign of the times.”

“Right, everything is Mako, now,” stated Scarlet of Shinra. “It’ll be all right, Dyne. Shinra, Inc. will guarantee your livelihood once the Mako Reactor Is completed.”

“Listen, Dyne,” said Barret. “I don’t want my wife, Myrna to suffer anymore.”

“I know how you feel! I feel the same way too, damn it!” exclaimed Dyne. “But even so, I won’t give away our coal mines!”

The Village Headman placed his hand on Dyne’s shoulder, and said, “Dyne...you’ve got to understand.”

Dyne looked at Barret, and then looked towards the floor, and Barret continued with the narration of his story.

“That’s how the Corel Reactor was built... and completed. We all thought it would bring us an easier life.” Barret paused for a moment, and then continued, “It happened when Dyne and I were out of town for a few days. Corel was burned down by Shinra troops. All the townspeople... All my relatives... Everyone...everything...”

“Shinra troops?” asked Cloud. “What for!”

“There was an explosion at a reactor. Shinra blamed the accident on the people. Said it was done by a rebel faction.”

“That’s so terrible!” said Tifa.

“Well, I guess that’s true. But more than Shinra, I couldn’t forgive myself. Never should’ve gone along with the building of the reactor...”

“Don’t blame yourself,” said Tifa. “We were all fooled by the promises Shinra made back them.”

“That’s why... that’s why I get so pissed off!! Not only did they take advantage of me... But I lost my wife, Myrna, too...”

Then an announcement came from the ropeway car, “Hey everyone! If you want to go to the ‘Gold Saucer’ hurry and get on!”

Still trying to keep their priorities straight, Cloud responded, “Let’s get on.” They began to board the ropeway car, when Barret mentioned, “Dyne was my best friend. We was close ever since we was kids...”

Barret boarded the ropeway car, and Tifa stated, “I never knew. Barret never said a thing...” Tifa paused for a moment, and then stated, “We better go on!”

Aeris nodded, and they boarded the ropeway car to go to the Gold Saucer. The Gold Saucer is an Attraction Park/casino, but with no slot machines, black jack or poker. For those who enjoy horse races, you won’t find any horses here, but you will find Chocobo racing. There are other fun things as well, such as the battle arena, where one person battles to prove him or herself.

There were other places that you could visit as well. Like Event square, this is where entertainment happened. Ghost Square, was the hotel. Round Square, was a tour of Gold saucer. Speed Square was a shooting roller coaster, and last there was Wonder Square, where many games awaited to be played.

The ropeway car finally arrived, and they proceeded into the Gold Saucer. Just as they were about to enter, a teller turn to them, and stated, “Please buy your ticket here.”

Cloud approached the ticket teller, and she said, “Welcome to the Gold Saucer. Are you together? A single pass is 3000 gil, or you can purchase a lifetime pass for 30000 gil.”

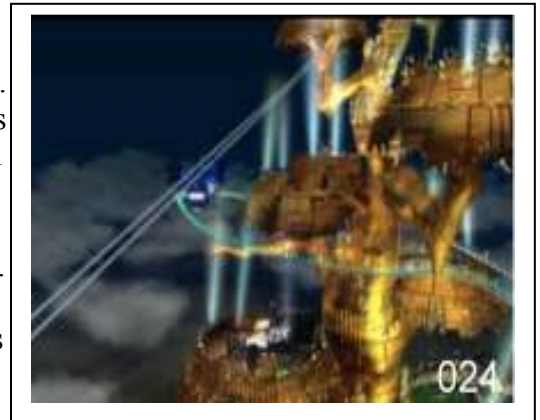
Cloud handed over 3000 gil, and the ticket teller handed him a day pass.

“Thank you very much. If you leave gold Saucer, your tickets become invalid.” said the Ticket Teller. “Here at the Gold there are many places where you must pay with GP. Just think of ‘GP’ as money that you can only use at the Gold Saucer. GP can only be redeemed at the games in Wonder Square and at the Chocobo Races. Your GP limit is 10000 so please be careful. Please enjoy yourselves.”

Cloud and the others entered the Gold Saucer not sure of where to start. As they entered they found themselves in a round room, with many options on which way to go. Aeris who never left the city of Midgar, was amazed with this Attraction Park, and said, “Wow! Let’s have fun!” She then calmed down a little, and added, “I know this isn’t the right time to do this.” She then walked up to Barret, who was still moping around.

“Hey, Barret, cheer up!”

Barret took a couple of steps away from Aeris, and responded, “...I ain’t in a cheery mood. So jus’ leave me alone.”



Aeris then stood beside him, and said, “Really? That’s too bad.” She then ran up to Cloud, and said with excitement, “Let’s go!”

Tifa then ran over to Aeris, and whispered, “Wasn’t that a little harsh Aeris!?”

Aeris whispered back, “Just act normal when this happens.”

“You think so...?” questioned Tifa, who was still whispering.

“Of course,” responded Aeris. She then ran back up to Barret, and said, “We’re gonna go play...”

Barret then turned to the group, and had one of his raging fits. “So PLAY! ...messin’ round #@^%\$! Don’t forget we’re after Sephiroth!” Barret then ran off to Wonder Square.

“...I think he’s mad,” mentioned Aeris.

“He’ll be fine. He seems to be doing a little better now.” said Tifa.

Cloud decided to go after Barret, and walked up to Aeris, and she said, “I wish we could just forget everything and have fun.”

Cloud then suggested that they would go together to look for Barret, and headed off to Wonder Square. When they arrived in Wonder Square, a giant stuffed toy stopped them by saying, “Hey you!! What’re you looking so down for!?”

Cloud, and Aeris walked to the mechanical toy, and the toy said, “How ‘bout it? Want me to read you fortune!? A bright future! A happy future! Oh, but don’t hold it against me if it’s not a great prediction!” The toy paused for a second, and the added, “Oh, sorry! I’m a fortune telling machine. The name’s Cait Sith”

Cloud not sure on how to handle this little situation, asked, “You can only read the future?”

“You kidding!? I can find missing things, missing people, anything!”

Cloud now curious about Cait Sith, decided to test this machines capabilities, and asked, “Then can you tell me where a man named Sephiroth is?”

“Sephiroth, Right!?” responded Cait Sith. “Okay, here goes!!” Cait Sith then did a funky dance, and out pooped a piece of paper from his mouth. He then handed the paper over to Cloud. Cloud took the paper and read it, “...Ordinary luck. It will be an active fortune. Give into the good will of others, and something big’ll happen after summer... wait... what’s this?”

“Huh? Let me try again.” Once again he did a funky dance, and pulled out another piece of paper. He handed it to Cloud, and he read, “Be careful of forgetfulness. Your lucky color is...blue?” Cloud not impressed with Cait Sith said, “Forget it.”

“Wait, wait give me another chance! Wait! Let me try it again!” Cloud not sure of what to think, just stood there, and Cait Sith danced again, but in a rapid way. A piece of paper came out just like before, and he handed it to Cloud.

“...What the!?” questioned Cloud when he read the paper.

“What?” asked Aeris.

Cloud then read the paper, “What you pursue will be yours. But you will lose something dear.”

Cloud looked at Cait Sith and Cait Sith said, “I don’t know if it’s good *or* bad... That’s the first time I ever got something like *this*.” He the paused, for a second, and the added, “Then shall we?”

“What are you talking about?” asked Aeris

“As a fortune teller, I can’t help but think about this. If I don’t see what it leads to, I won’t be able to relax. That’s why I’m going with you!”

“What are we going to do, Cloud?” asked Aeris.

Before Cloud could even answer, Cait Sith stated, “I’m comin’ with you no matter *what* you say!”

“H...hey!” responded Cloud, but just like Cait Sith had stated, he was going with them. So Cait Sith became part of Clouds team. They then continued to look for Barret, but were unable to find him in Wonder Square. So their next stop was the battle arena. When they arrived, there was a Shinra Soldier guarding the staircase going up to the arena, but he dropped to the floor dead.

“Mm!?” said Cloud as he ran over to check the Shinra Soldier. “Dead...”

“What!? Why?” asked Aeris.

Cloud didn’t respond, and ran up to the Battle arena.

“Cloud!? Where are you going?” shouted Aeris, but it was too late Cloud was already gone. Aeris and Cait Sith followed Cloud. When they arrived in the registration/waiting area they saw what only could be described a massacre. With the smell of fresh blood in the air, and possibility the smell of fresh gun powder.

When they walked up to Cloud they heard him say, “Did Sephiroth do this!?” He then walked of to another dead Shinra Soldier, and commented, “No...it’s not him... They’re all shot... Sephiroth would never use a gun...”

Then he heard a noise coming for the desk, “Ugh, ugggh.” Cloud looked of to see the desk worker barely alive. They rushed of to her, and Cloud said, “Hey, what happened!”

“Ugh...ugh...a man with a gun...on his arm...”

Cloud and Aeris were both shocked to hear those words, and Aeris responded, “It can’t be!?”

Then out of nowhere came a voice, and ordered, “Hold it right there! And stay quiet!!” They quickly turned around, to see security officials, along with Dio the owner of the Gold Saucer, run in, and surround them.

“Did you guys do this!?” questioned Dio

Cloud shook his head, and responded, “N...no, it wasn’t us!”

Cait Sith then showed his true intelligence, and said, “Hurry and run, it’s gonna get ugly.” He then started to run/jump towards the Arena. Aeris shook her head, and Cloud exclaimed, “He...hey!

“Hold them!!” ordered Dio, as his men chased them into the arena.

The arena has only two entrances, and exits, but one of them is for monsters, so there was no way out. Dio then walked into the arena, and stated, “That’s as far as you go.”

Cait Sith tried to escape through the monster door, and Cloud tired to plea with Dio.

“Wait, listen to...” before Cloud could finish his sentence, Cait Sith backed away from the monster door, and said, “Cloud...” both Aeris and Cloud turned around to see a machine warrior come through the door. Then out of nowhere appeared two more. The mechanic warriors surrounded them, and capture them.

They then were escorted to a dungeon type room. In this room there was a door in the floor, with the words 'GATEWAY TO HEAVEN' written around the top of it. The mechanic warrior was holding Cloud over the door, and Dio stated, "One more to go."

Cloud was struggling trying to free himself from the grip that the mechanic warrior had, and the head security official, responded, "Yes."

Cloud again tied to plea with Dio, "Hey! Pay attention!!"

"There's no need to listen," stated Dio. "Pay for your crime down below!!" Dio then look at the Security Official, and ordered, "Do it!"

"Yes," responded the Security official, and pulled a lever, and the mechanic warrior jumped through the hole, to Corel Prison.

Corel Prison is a prison located under the Gold Saucer, and south of North Corel. There is only one way into Corel Prison, and that is through the Gold Saucer. Any other way, would be suicide, because the prison is surrounded by quicksand.

When Cloud arrived he quickly found Aeris, and Cait Sith. Upon finding them, Aeris asked, "You all right?"

Cloud didn't answer Aeris question, and he asked, "Where are we?"

"A desert prison..." stated Cait Sith. "Corel Prison..."

"A desert prison?" asked Cloud.

"Yup, a natural prison in the middle of the desert... surrounded entirely by quicksand." responded Cait Sith "I heard that once you get in, you never get out... But, there was one special exception..."

Cait Sith paused, and Aeris noticed Barret, and shouted, "Hey! Barret!!"

Barret didn't even flinch, or look their way, so Cloud, Aeris and Cait Sith went to him. As they approached Barret, they noticed a dead man laying at batters feet. They stopped behind Barret, and Cloud said, "Barret..." Barret turned around, and Cloud continued, "Did he really..."

Barret took a couple of steps backwards, and exclaimed, "Stay back! This's something I gotta deal with." Barret turned his back to them, and added, "Jes' leave me alone..." He then ran off, and Cait Sith mentioned, "Whew! That's one of your friends? He sure looks dangerous..."

"Cloud, what should we do?" asked Aeris. "Barret's not him normal self."

Cloud not sure on what to do, decided the best thing would be was track down Barret. As they explored the prison, they came across an old semi tractor trailer, which read 'Shin-Ra', with two men standing outside of it, guarding the entrance. As they were walking by, one of the men asked, "You new?"

Cloud nodded, and the man added, "Then go pay your respects to Mr. Coates."

They entered the trailer, to see a man wearing an ugly green suit, and he said, "Never see your face 'round here before. Goin' up?"

Cloud noticed Mr. Coates pointing up, and figure that since he was offering for them to leave this prison, responded, "Yeah, up."

"You don't seem to understand how things work around down here. This is the Gold Saucer's garbage dump. And that makes alluv ya scrubs. The only way to get back up there is to win the Chocobo Race. But, it's not as easy as you rookies think. Of course, if you got the boss's permission it'd be a different story but, *you'll* never get that! Ha ha ha ha."

Cloud and the others left the trailer, to continue their search for Barret. After some searching of wrecked homes, Barret caught up with them. Barret was angry to see them standing there, retorted, "Didn't I tell you not to come here!?"

Barret then pointed his gun arm at them, and cocked it.

"Ju...just hold on for a second!" exclaimed Cait Sith. "We just want to talk! You'll understand if you just hear us out!"

Barret just had a blank stare on his face, and made no response to what Cait Sith had said. He then fired his gun arm, and Cloud, along with the others placed the arms over their heads to protect themselves.

Barret then stopped, and a man that was hiding behind the couch, fell to the floor dead. Barret then turned his back to Cloud, and the others, and said, "Didn't want none of ya to get involved..."

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and ran in Tifa, and Red XIII. Barret turned to face his companions, and Aeris stated, "Hey that's Cloud's line! '...it's too dangerous, I can't let you get involved...' blah, blah, blah..."

"Yeah. We're already involved in this," said Tifa. "We saw you and hurried here. So come on Barret, just tell us what's going on."

"You guys..." responded Barret.

"I heard that the murders at the Battle Arena were done by a man with a gun-arm..." stated Red XIII "Was it you?"

Barret shook his head, and responded, "There's another... another man that got a gun grafted into one of his arms. It was four years ago..." Barret paused for a moment. "I remember... I was on my way home from visiting a Mako Reactor being built."

Then he flashed back to him and Dyne walking on the rail tracks, and saw the Village Head man running up to them.

"Barret! Dyne! Come quick! The village's being attacked! It's Shinra Soldiers!"

"What!!!" said Barret.

Dyne and Barret ran to the edge of the cliff, to see Corel on fire. Barret began throwing a fit, and retorted, "What the hell happened?..." Barret then clasped to the ground, and Dyne tried to comfort Barret.

"Hey, Barret! It's not over yet! Everyone's waiting! Let's go back to the village!"

"Dyne! Barret! Protect the village," were the last words of the village headman, as a Shinra Soldier shot him. Dyne and Barret turned around just in time to see his body land on the tracks.

"Hmp! Old man!!" exclaimed a Shinra Soldier.

Barret and Dyne then tried to get to the Shinra Soldiers but they began firing on them.

"C'mon, Barret! We gotta hurry!" exclaimed Dyne.

"Krggh!!" was the sound Barret made dodging the bullets that were being fired from the machine gun.

They ran along the edge of the cliffs and Dyne stated, "Barret!!! You stay here!!!"

Barret looked at Dyne and responded, "Shu' up!!!"

While they were arguing about the situation, Scarlet had shown up, laughing, "Kyaa haa, ha!!" She then looked at the Shinra Soldiers, and commented, "You can shoot all day and never hit them with aim like that."

She took a gun from one of the Soldiers; hit him, knocking him off the rail tracks. She then looked to the other three. "Haa, Ha, ha!! Stop playing around and cover me!!"

Scarlet took aim, and began firing at Barret and Dyne.

"Watch out!!" exclaimed Dyne, as he fell off the edge. Barret quickly reacted, and grabbed Dyne's hand.

"Dyne!! Hang on!!" exclaimed Barret. "Listen to me!! You're comin' back to the village, hear!!?"

"Yeah... I ain't lettin' go... You're comin back... Everyone's waitin' for ya... Eleanor and Marlene... They all waitin' on us..."

No sooner were those words out of Dyne's mouth, the Shinra Soldiers shot them both in the hands that held Dyne between life and death. Theirs hands became useless, and Dyne fell down the cliff to meet his maker.

Barret then stopped his flashback, and stated, "From then on, I couldn't use my right arm no more... I was depressed for a while. But then I threw away my artificial arm and got this gun grafted in. I got a new right arm to get revenge on the Shinra, who took everything away... Back then, I heard the doc say there was another man who got the same operation as me. But it was his left arm."

"But... Dyne's injury was the same as yours, right?" asked Aeris.

Barret didn't respond, and Tifa said, "Yeah, that's right. He was deceived by the Shinra too. He'll probably join us to fight against the Shinra."

"...wouldn't bet on it." Barret replied. "I gotta 'pologize to Dyne before I can rest in peace. An' that's why, I gotta go alone."

"Do whatever you want..." said Cloud. "Is that what you want to hear? Well, I can't let you do it. Because, if you die on me, I'm gonna have nightmares."

"Barret, this isn't the end," stated Aeris.

"Weren't you going to save the Planet?" asked Tifa.

"Shit! Tifa, you oughtta know by now," responded Barret.

"..That's all right. I'm not so different from you," stated Tifa.

"That's easier to understand," said Aeris. "It's you, Barret."

"So there it is, Barret," said Cloud. "So I guess it'll be Barret, me, and Aeris."

They left the house to go see Dyne, in the hope that he would join them, if not grant them permission to go up and compete in the Chocobo Races. They made haste through the prison, and found an area filled with junk cars. They explored the wreckage, and discovered a man, who was possibly Dyne.

They started to approach the man, and Barret held out his arm, stopping Cloud. Barret then continued towards the man alone, and questioned, "...Dyne... Is that you?"

The man looked up to reveal his face, and Barret knew it was Dyne.

"Now that's a voice I haven't heard in years..." replied Dyne. He then limped towards Barret, and continued. "A voice I'll never forget..."

"I always hoped I'd be able to see you again someday... I knew you were alive somewhere... we had the same operation." Barret started walking towards Dyne, and said, "Listen to me Dyne. I want to..."

Dyne shot at Barret to get him to stop walking, and Dyne said, "What's that?... I hear her voice."

Barret was bewildered by what Dyne just said, and Dyne continued, "I hear her voice, Eleanor's voice. Begging me... not to hate you rotten guts. That's why I didn't hunt you down..."

"...I know I was stupid. I am not asking you to forgive me. But... What are you doin' in a place like this? Why ya wanna kill those that ain't ever involved? Why?"

"...Why!? The hell do you care for!? Are the people killed going to understand 'why'? Are the people of Corel going to understand just hearing Shinra's excuses? I don't *care* what the reason is! All they give us are artillery and stupid excuses... What's left is a world of despair and emptiness..." Dyne paused for a brief moment. "You still want to hear 'why'? ...All right, I'll tell you." Dyne took a couple of steps away and told Barret his reasons, "'Cause I want to destroy everything. The people of this city." Dyne walked back to Barret. "This city itself. The whole world!" Dyne then turned away.

"I got nothing left in this world. Corel, Eleanor... Marlene..."

Barret took a step towards Dyne, and responded, "Dyne, Marlene... Marlene's still alive."

Dyne looked back at Barret, with confusion, and Barret added, "I went back into town. I thought she was gone for sure. That is why I wanted to be by her side till the end. That's when I found her... found Marlene. She's in Midgar. Let's go see her together, all right?"

"So... she's still alive..." Dyne took in a deep breath, and continued, "All right, Barret. I guess that means you and I gotta fight."

"What!?" responded Barret.

Dyne turned to face Barret, and responded insanely, "Eleanor's alone all by herself. I've got to take Marlene to her."

"Dyne... are you insane!?"

"Marlene wants to see her Mom, don't she?"

Dyne began shooting at Barret, and Barret shout, "Stop, Dyne! I can't die yet!"

Dyne stopped shooting, and responded, "Oh yeah? Well, my life's been over since then."

Dyne continued shooting at Barret, and Barret exclaimed, "Stop it! I don't wanna fight you!"

"Barret!" shouted Cloud.

"Cloud, you stay the hell out of it! This is *my* problem!!"

Barret saw no other way to stop Dyne, and they engaged in combat. They took shots at each other, and within a couple of minutes, Barret had injured Dyne. Dyne dropped to one knee, and Barret went to aid him.

"Back!!" exclaimed Dyne. Barret stopped, and Dyne walked away. He leaned up on a broken wall and stated, "...It wasn't just my arm... back then... I lost something irreplaceable. I don't know where I went wrong..."

"Dyne... I don't know either, man. Is this the only way... we can't resolve this?"

"I told you... I... I want to destroy everything... Everything... This crazy world... Even me..."

Barret shook his head, and asked, "An' what 'bout Marlene? What's gonna happen to her!?"

“Think about it... Barret... How old was Marlene back then...? Even if I did go to her now... she wouldn't even know me... And what's more... Barret... These hands are a little too stained to carry Marlene anymore...”

Barret lowered his head, and didn't respond.

“Barret...” said Dyne and Barret looked up. Dyne then threw over a necklace, and Barret caught it.

“Give that pendant to Marlene... It was... Eleanor's... my wife's... a memento...”

Barret nodded, and responded, “All right...”

“...Wow...Marlene's... already...4...” Dyne said as he walked over to a cliff edge. He turned back to Barret, and requested, “Barret... Don't...make... Don't ever make Marlene...cry...”

“Dyne?” asked Barret as Dyne lifted his arms up, and started to lean backwards. Barret ran towards Dyne, and shouted “Dyne!” But it was too late Dyne had committed suicide.

“Dy-----ne!!” exclaimed Barret, as he dropped to his knees. “...Dyne. Me an' you were the same... My hands ain't any cleaner... I shouldn't be able to carry...Marlene either.”

Barret raised his arms to the sky, and screamed, “Uuuurrrrrgh!!!”

Chapter 10: The Planet & Red XIII

After a while Barret had regained his composure, and with Cloud and Aeris, they went to see Mr. Coates. When they arrived, Mr. Coates asked, "You want somethin'?"

"I want to go up," stated Barret.

"Like I told you before, you gotta get the Boss's permission, then win the Chocobo..." Barret interrupted Mr. Coates. "Dyne's got his reasons, an' can't speak." Barret showed the necklace, and added, "So, I got this, instead."

Mr. Coates looked at the necklace, and responded, "Yeah, bullshit!!"

"I want to go up," demanded Barret.

Mr. Coates shook his head, and responded, "R, right." he paused for a second. "Did you kill Dyne? You must've. Or you'd never be holding that thing... So Dyne's dead... Maybe now, the place'll calm down a little. Dyne didn't care who anyone was..."

Barret had heard enough, walked up to MR. Coates, and grabbed him by his suit. "The hell do *you* know!!"

Mr. Coates fearing for his very life, responded, "R...ri...right! I mean, no, I *don't* know anything. S, s...sorry."

Barret let go of Mr. Coates, who then fixed his suit.

"Then, will you get us outta here?" asked Cloud.

Mr. Coates turned to Cloud, and responded, "Huh? Oh man, you guys are mistaken. I already told you, there's only one way to get outta here. That's to win the Chocobo Race and that's held up there, in the Gold Saucer. And, only one racer can go up at a time."

Barret again grabbed Mr. Coates, and said, "Say what!?"

Mr. Coates shook his head, and responded, "Nooooo! Really, even if you threaten me!! A rule is a rule. I can't change it. If I do, the whole system down here'll get messed up!! An' I can't do that! Okay, ok, I'll let one go up there. After that, he's gotta deal with Dio."

Barret let go of Mr. Coates, and he fixed his suit again.

"Awright then," said Barret. He turned to Cloud, pointed his finger, and said, "Cloud, you go. We'll wait down here. Hurry up an' win that Chocobo Race, an' get us outta here!"

Cloud not sure if he could pull this off or not, didn't know what to say. Then Aeris said, "Yes, good luck, Cloud."

Cloud now knew he would have to do this, shrugged his shoulders, and MR. Coates asked, "Have you decided?" Mr. Coates placed his hand on his head, added, "All you need now is a manager... and register and get a Chocobo..."

Then a female voice came out of nowhere, "Hi... I happened to hear your story."

They all turn to the door, and MR. Coates questioned, "Ester?" and in walked Ester.

"I'll be your manager."

"Well, I have nothing against it, but..." said Mr. Coates. He then introduced Ester. "This is Ester. She may look kind of funny... But there's no better manager in the races..."

"That's so rude..." replied Ester. She turned to Cloud, and said, "Yeah, well nice to meet you, Cloud."

“All right then, Cloud.” said Mr. Coates. “I’ll send you up the elevator. Ester’ll fill you in on the details.”

Mr. Coates let them use the elevator, and Ester and Cloud proceeded to the Gold Saucer. While they were on their way up, Cloud had explained to Ester their situation, with how Dyne had killed the people in the battle arena, and they were blamed for it.

After Ester had heard the story, she said, “Hmm, so that’s what happened. I’ll talk to Dio directly. You just concentrate on the race. Oh yeah, getting back to the other thing, there are many different types of Chocobo jockeys. It’s not only for criminals. Some people compete for the fame, some people compete for the money, some for the glory... And then there’s people like you. Oh yeah I’ll teach you how to ride a Chocobo.”

Cloud had already ridden a Chocobo, and had a pretty good idea on how to race one.

“Not interested,” responded Cloud, as they arrived at the Gold Saucer. They both got off the elevator, and walked into the Jockeys lounge. When Cloud entered, one of the Jockeys asked, “You new?”

Cloud turned to the Jockey and Ester walked in. “Hi, Joe,” she said.

“Hey, Ester you’re lookin pretty as usual.” commented Joe.

“Thanks,” she responded. “Let me introduce you, Cloud. This is Joe, one of the top Chocobo Jockeys.”

“Nice to meet you, Cloud.” responded Joe. “If you’re with Ester, then...”

“Right!” exclaimed Ester. “He’s an up and coming jockey. He’s only been down there for a day and already he made it up here!!”

Joe was shocked to hear that, and responded, “What!?” Joe looked to the floor, and added, “Oh, I see...” Joe picked up his head, and asked, “So what did you do down there?”

“Sorry... you’re not suppose to ask about the past here...” said Ester.

“Pretty interesting... I have a feeling that we’ll meet again.” stated Joe. “Then, until we meet again, Cloud.”

Joe then left the Jockeys lounge, and Ester said, “I’m going to check on the Chocobo. You just wait here for a while.”

Cloud didn’t respond, and Ester left. While Cloud was waiting, he decided not to make any conversation with the other jockeys. Then an announcement came across the P.A. “The race will start in a few moments. Will the jockeys for the next race, please report to the paddock. I repeat...”

The jockeys left the room, and Cloud was all alone. Cloud then heard Ester’s voice say, “Cloud.” Cloud ran to the door, and Ester walked in.

“Thanks for waiting. I registered you in the next race,” said Ester. “This Chocobo I prepared myself. He won’t lose easily. Oh yeah... You know how to ride one?”

“Yeah, I got it,” responded Cloud.

“Then, good luck.”

Cloud proceeded to the paddock, and mounted on his Chocobo, and they lined up to race. The gun went off, and the race began. Cloud started off in last place, but as they rounded the top of the track, Cloud took the lead, and held it. Cloud barely finished in first place, but he was pleased with the results.

Cloud returned to the jockey lounge, and Ester congratulated him. “Congratulations!! Now, you’re home free!” She then pulled out a piece of paper, and added, “Oh yeah, the owner told me to give this letter to you when you won.”

Cloud took the letter, and read it. “Boy, if you’re reading this letter, then you must’ve won. And won a victory that I am sure you earned. I heard about Dyne from Ester. Now, that you are victorious, I promise that you and all your friends will get a full pardon, and you all will be set free. And also, by the way of apology, I prepared a little gift for you to use on your journey. Sorry I couldn’t be there to tell you this in person, but I’m a very busy man. Sincerely, Dio”

Cloud looked at Ester, and questioned, “A gift?”

Ester didn’t respond, and the PHS rang. Cloud answered it, and heard Aeris’s voice. “Cloud, isn’t this great!? The assistant manager just stopped by and dropped off a ‘buggy’ for you! Now, we can go over ‘deserts’ and ‘rivers’ no problem. Ok, Cloud I will be waiting outside.”

Cloud then ended the call, and noticed the letter had some more written on it. “P.S. I just recently met Sephiroth. He must have a lot of fans with boys your age. Why don’t you get his autograph? It seems he’s headed toward the South of the river, towards Gongaga.”

Cloud stopped reading the letter, and said, “Sephiroth...”

“I guess this is goodbye.” said Ester. “Yeah. Well, if you ever get your own Chocobo, come back again. I’ll take care of your registration and everything. I’ll see you again.”

Cloud nodded, and left to meet everyone who was waiting in the buggy. Now, the Buggy is a vehicle that can transport people around the world, like through quicksand, and shallow rivers.

Cloud met up with the others, and took the Buggy south to the town of Gongaga. This town was run down, like many others, but the reason was different. Gongaga was one of the unfortunate towns that had a Mako reactor explode, causing damage to the town, and the loss of many lives.

On their way to the town they encounter a ninja that that engaged a battle. Even though they were caught off guard they defeated her. They put away their weapons, and approached the unknown ninja.

“Man... I can’t believe I lost...” said the Ninja. She jumped up, and said, “You spikey-headed jerk! One more time, let’s go one more time!”

Cloud responded, “Not interested.”

She then ran in between them throwing rapid punches. She stopped, and said, “Thinkin’ of running away? Stay and fight! FIGHT, I said.”

Cloud walked up to her, and she threw some rapid punches at him. Cloud just stood there, and she said, “C’mon... What’s the matter? You’re pretty scared of me, huh!?”

Cloud decided to humor her, and responded “...petrified.”

She jumped away from them laughing. “Hmm, just as I thought. What do you expect with my skills? Good luck to you guys, too. If you feel up to it, we can go another round. Later!” She started to leave, and then turned back to them. “I’m really going to leave! *Really!*”

Cloud not sure on how to answer this, responded with, "Wait a second!" Cloud ran up to the mysterious Ninja, and she said, "What is it, you still have somethin' for me? ...Hmmm. So is that it? I know you want my help because I'm so good! You want me to go with you?"

Cloud completely mocking the Ninja, responded, "...That's right."

"Heh heh...thought so. You put me in a spot. Hmm, what should I do? But if you want me that bad, I can't refuse... All right I'll go with you!"

Cloud really didn't want that to happen, and responded, "...Let's hurry on." Cloud Tifa, and Aeris started walking away, and the Ninja exclaimed, "Huh? Hey...HEY!"

They kept on walking, trying to leave her behind, and she shouted, "Wait! I haven't even told you my name... I'm Yuffie! Good to meetcha!" She then turned away and commented to herself, "Heh heh... just as I planned. Now all I have to do is a little this... and a little that...nyuk, nyuk, nyuk..." She then ran after them saying, "Hey, wait up! Wait for me!!"

So now Yuffie the young Ninja had joined them on their quest. Though if Yuffie hadn't realized what she had gotten into, she might not have joined them. So now with that out of the way they made it to Gongaga path. Just as they started on the path, Cloud thought he saw some one, and asked, "...Is someone there?"

Cloud then took a harder look to see Reno, and Rude from the Turks, and they were in the middle of a serious conversation. Cloud moved in, along with Tifa, and Aeris, to see if they could hear them.

"Hey Rude. Who do you like?" asked Reno.

Rude turned away from Reno, and Reno said, "What are you getting so embarrassed about? Come on? Who do you like?"

Rude finally spit out the name of the girl he liked, "...Tifa."

Reno was shocked but then, scratched his head, replied, "Hmmm... That's a tough one. But, poor Elena. She... you..."

"No, she likes Tseng," stated Rude.

"I never knew that! But Tseng likes that Ancient..."

Cloud confused as of to why they were having that conversation, shrugged his shoulders, and asked, "What are they talking about?"

Then Elena, from the Turks, walked up behind Cloud and answered, "It's so stupid!" Cloud turned around, and was caught off guard, and wondered what would happen next. Oddly though she continued talking, as if they were friends. "They always talk about who they like, or don't like. But Tseng is different." She then came to her senses, and exclaimed, "Ah! Oh no!"

This startled Cloud, and she ran over to the others. "They're here! They're really here!"

"Hmm... Then it's time," replied Reno. "Rude... Don't go easy on them even though they're girls."

"Don't worry, I'll do my job," responded Rude.

"Then, we're counting on you," said Elena. "I'll report to Tseng!" She ran off to make her report, and Rude, with Reno walked up to Cloud and the others.

"It's been a while." stated Reno. "Payback time for what you did in Sector 7."

Cloud knew what Reno was talking about, and responded sarcastically, “Sector 7?”

“That’s sad,” responded Reno.

“That’s as far as you go,” stated Rude, and they lunged at Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris. They drew their weapons, and reminded Reno, and Rude on who was the stronger party. They first let Reno have it, and he retreated, but before he left he made a statement. “We may be retreating, but...we’re still victorious.” Tifa then gave Rude a beat down, and he fled as well. They emerged victorious, and Aeris mentioned, “...How could they know we were coming here.”

“They followed us...” stated Cloud. “But there weren’t any signs of it. Then, that means...”

“A spy!?... No way,” stated Tifa.

“I don’t even want to think that there’s a spy...” replied Cloud. “I trust everyone.”

At that statement they followed Elena down the path to the ruined Reactor. They started exploring the reactor, with no sign of Elena.

“A ruined Reactor?” questioned Cloud. Then a helicopter landed, and Scarlet and Tseng stepped out.

“It’s Scarlet, head of Shinra weapon Development.” stated Cloud. They quickly found a hiding place, as Scarlet and Tseng walked up.

“...Hmph! This isn’t any good either.” stated Scarlet. “You only get junky materia from junky reactors. This reactor’s a failure. What I’m looking for is big, large, huge materia. You seen any?”

“...No, I haven’t seen it.” responded Tseng. “I’ll get on it right away.”

“Please. We could make the ultimate weapon if we only had some.”

“I just can’t wait.” responded Tseng.

“With Hojo gone, the Weapon Development’s been getting a bigger budget.”

“I envy them.”

“But, even if we make the perfect weapon, could that stupid Heidegger even use it?”

Tseng didn’t respond, and Scarlet added. “Oh...sorry! I forgot Heidegger was your boss! Ha ha ha! Let’s go!”

They left and Cloud said, “...Big, large, huge materia? An ultimate weapon? The perfect weapon? Just what are the Shinra up to...?”

The helicopter took off, and Cloud left the reactor hoping he could find some information that they were looking for. They took the path to Gongaga. When they entered the town, Cloud again noticed the destroyed Mako Reactor, and stated, “A ruined Reactor.”

Cloud decided to talk around the town to find any information on Sephiroth, or the ruined Mako Reactor.

Cloud had learned that the Shinra built the Mako reactor to make their lives easier. Three years ago it had exploded, and kill many People. The people of the town that had survived decided that life would be better without a Mako Reactor and voted to never allowed another to be built.

They the entered a house to see a man and a woman living there. When they entered, the man said, “You a traveler? Hey wait that glare in your eye... you in Soldier?”

“Oh you’re right!” exclaimed the Woman. “Don’t you know anything about our son?”

“His name is Zack.” said the man.

Cloud just stood there, in utter confusion, and the woman added, “It’s been close to 10 years since he left for the city, saying that he didn’t want to live in the country...”

“He left saying he’s going to join Soldier.” stated the man. “You ever heard of a Zack in Soldier?”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and responded, “Hmmm... I don’t know.”

Aeris then said in a low tone, “Zack...”

The man heard Aeris, and asked, “Young lady, do you know him?”

“I remember he wrote us 6 or 7 years ago saying that he had a girlfriend.” stated the woman. “Could that have been you?”

Cloud looked at Aeris, and she shook her head. “That can’t be...” stated Aeris as she walked out of the door, and left the house. Then Tifa shook her head, and said in low tone, “Zack...” and then left the house as well.

“What happened to you two?” asked Cloud, but they were already gone. Cloud excused himself, and went to find Tifa, and Aeris. It didn’t take him long to find Aeris, and he walked up to her. “Aeris...”

Aeris who had her back to Cloud, responded, “What a shock... I didn’t know Zack was from this town.”

“You know him?”

Aeris turned to face Cloud, and said, “Didn’t I tell you? He was my first love.”

Cloud wasn’t sure on what to say, and Aeris added, “Zack... Soldier First Class. Same as Cloud.”

“Strange, there aren’t that many who make First Class, but I’ve never heard of him.”

Aeris turned away, and said, “That’s all right. It’s all in the past now. I was just worried because I heard he’s been missing.”

Cloud was caught off guard, and asked, “Missing?”

“I think it was 5 years ago. He went out on a job, and never came back.” Aeris took in a deep breath. “He loved women, a real lady’s man he probably found someone else...” She then walked up to Cloud, and asked, “Hey? What’s wrong?”

“Poor guy.”

“I don’t really mind that I haven’t heard from him. But, I feel for his parents. Let’s go Cloud.”

They then went to find Tifa, which didn’t take long. Cloud and Aeris approached her, and she said quietly, “Zack...”

“Do you know him?” asked Cloud.

“N. no, I don’t know him!” responded Tifa nervously.

“Your face tells me differently,” stated Cloud.

“I told you, I don’t,” snapped Tifa.

“A, all right.” responded Cloud.

Tifa then turned a way, and took a moment. She then turned back and mentioned, “That sounds just like you leaving town, and saying ‘I’m joining Soldier!’.”

“There were a lot of guys like that back then,” stated Cloud.

“You must really be something making it in Soldier out of a group like that.” commented Tifa. “I really respect you...”

“I worked hard for it.” Cloud said proudly.

“Hard work pays off, huh.” said Tifa. “Cloud, thanks for caring.”

They continued to search through the town, but no one had mentioned Sephiroth. Cloud now wasn’t sure of what to do now. He looked at the map of the world, and noticed that they could go further west, but at that moment Sephiroth’s trail had gotten cold.

They rested in the inn, and left early the next morning, heading west. They journeyed, over a small river path, they entered into a mountain path. As they drove through the mountains, the Buggy broke down right by Cosmo Canyon.

Cloud exited the Buggy, and said, “Oh man...a breakdown? Now?” Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris entered Cosmo Canyon, to see if they could get some help with their buggy. As they approached the man guarding the entrance, Red XIII ran up, and told the man, “I am home! It is I, Nanaki!”

“Hey, Nanaki! You’re safe!” exclaimed the man. “Come on, and say hell to Bugenhagen!”

Red XIII ran in, and Cloud with confusion questioned, “...Nanaki?” Cloud then approached the man, and the man said, “Welcome to Cosmo Canyon. Are you familiar with this land?”

“No,” responded Cloud.

“Let me explain. People from all over the world gather here to seek the Study of Planet Life. Ummgah! It’s full capacity at present, so I’m afraid I can’t let you enter.”

Red XIII then returned, and requested, “They helped me some when I was on the road. Please let them in.”

Red XIII took off again, and the man said, “...Oh, is that so? You helped our Nanaki? Please, come in.”

The man moved out of the way, and Cloud questioned, “Who is Nanaki?”

“Nanaki is Nanaki. That’s his name.”

Cloud not sure why Red XIII would allow himself to be called that when his actual name was Nanaki. With more curiosity than ever, and the buggy the furthest thing from his mind, he went to find Red XIII. It didn’t take long, for they only went up a flight of stairs, and found Red XIII.

“Here is where I was... I mean, ...this is my home town. My tribe were protectors of those who appreciated this beautiful canyon and the planet. My brave mother fought and died here, but my cowardly father left her... I am the last of my race.”

“Cowardly father?” asked Cloud.

“Yes. My father was a wastrel. And so the mission I inherited from my ancestors, is to protect this place. My journey ends here.”

Then a voice was heard, “Hey! Nanaki--! You’re home!”

Red XIII looked to the top of the Canyon, and shouted, “Coming, Grandpa!” Red XIII ran up to see his Grandpa, and Tifa mentioned, “That’s perfect. Why don’t we take a break too? We can meet back here in a while, ok?”



Before Cloud could even say a word, Tifa, and Aeris ran off. Cloud, all alone, decided to find Red XIII, to say his final goodbye. Cloud tracked down Red XIII, and before he could say anything, Red XIII introduced everyone, "Cloud, this is my grandfather, Bugen. He is incredible. He knows everything."

Cloud looked at Bugen and noticed an old man that had no legs. Instead he had a levitating device he wore to help him float around. Bugen then said, "Ho ho hoooo. I hear that you looked after Nanaki a bit. Nanaki is still a child you see."

"Please stop, grandfather. I'm 48."

"Ho ho hoooo. Nanaki's tribe has incredible longevity. So you see 48 years would only be equivalent to say that of a 15 or 16 year old in human reckoning."

"15 or 16!?" questioned Cloud.

"He's quiet and very deep," stated Bugen. "You thought he was an adult?"

Red XIII looked to the floor, and said, "...grandfather. I want to be an adult. I want to grow up to be able to protect you and the village."

"Ho ho hoooo. No, Nanaki. You can't stand on your own yet." Bugen shook his head, and added. "To do that now would destroy you in the long run." Bugen pointed up. "Reaching up into the heavens, threatening to snatch the very stars from the great city of Midgar. You've seen it, haven't you?" Bugen stopped pointing and looked at Red XIII. "Well, that's a bad example. Looking up too much makes you lose perspective."

Bugen paused, and jumped onto the table floating over it. "When it's time for this planet to die, you'll understand that you know absolutely nothing."

"...When the planet dies?" asked Cloud.

"Ho ho hoooo. It may be tomorrow, or 100 years from now... But it's not long off." stated Bugen

"How do you know this?" asked Cloud.

"I hear the cries of the Planet."

A noise was heard, a noise that could be only described as a moaning, fading in and out. Cloud heard the noise, and questioned, "What's that?"

"The sounds of the stars in the heavens. While this goes on, planets are born, and die."

Then a faint screaming was heard and Cloud questioned, "What was that?"

"Ho ho hoooo. That was a scream from this planet. Didn't you hear it? As if to say... I hurt, I suffer..."

"They have come here on a journey to save the planet," stated Red XIII. "Why don't you show them the apparatus?"

Bugen jumped off the table, and responded, "Ho ho hoooo. To save the planet? Ho ho hoooo! But, then again, I guess it wouldn't hurt to show him."

Then a concerned voice shouted, "Bughenhagen!" They all turned to the door, and in came a concerned looking villager. "Several odd looking people have come."

"The whole place has gotten busy all of a sudden," commented Bugen.

"He brought friends too," said Red XIII. "I'll go get them."

Red XIII began to leave the room, and Bugen requested, "Cloud, please call one of them."

"Only three people can fit in grandfather's machine," mentioned Red XIII as he left the room.

Cloud pulled out the PHS, but had no signal, and realized that he would have to leave to request their presence. Cloud left, and tracked down Aeris, and Tifa, and took them back to Bugenhagen's. When they entered the room, Bugenhagen shouted, "Here, over here. The door's unlocked, come on in."

They did as instructed, and entered the side room. As soon as they entered, Bugenhagen said, "Ho ho hoooo. It looks like you have them all together. Then let's begin. I'll be stand there."

Bugenhagen pointed to the area where he wanted Cloud to stand, and Cloud walked to that spot. Bugenhagen then floated over to a control panel, and pressed a button. He then floated over to Cloud, and a platform lifted up. The platform took them to a 3d hologram of the solar system. They all were amazed by this, and Aeris said, "So pretty...It's just like the real thing."

"Hmm, yes pretty good. This is my laboratory. All the workings of space are entered into the 3D holographic System."

"Hey!" exclaimed Aeris. "A shooting star!"

The star went over her head, and then a planet with rotating moons went by as well. Aeris was in awe, as she placed her hands together by her face. Then some meteorites went soaring by rapidly, being sucked into a black hole.

"Wow, how wonderful," Aeris said.

"Ho ho hoooo. Yes, it's is something, isn't it? Well, let's get to the subject." Bugenhagen paused for a second, and started his presentation. "Eventually... all humans die. What happens to them after they die? The body decomposes, and returns to the planet. That much everyone knows. What about their consciousness, their hearts and their souls? The soul too returns to the planet. And not only those of humans, but everything on this planet. In fact, all living things in the universe, are the same. The spirits that return to the planet, merge with one another and roam the Planet. They roam, converge, and divide, becoming a swell, called the 'Lifestream'. In other words, a path of energy of the souls roaming the Planet. 'Spirit energy' is a word that you should never forget. A new life...children are blessed with spirit energy and are brought into the world. Then, the time comes when they die and once again return to the planet... Of course there are exceptions, but this is the way of the world. I've digressed, but you'll understand better if you watch this."

Bugenhagen animated the 3D Holographic, and brought their planet to closer view. Then it showed some trees, and a person on the top. Then the person and a tree broke down into energy, traveled over the planet to the other side, growing a new person.

"Spirit energy makes all thing possible, trees birds, and humans. Not just living things. But spirit energy makes it possible for Planets to be Planets. Watch what happens if the spirit energy disappears."

Bugenhagen the sucked away the spirit energy, and the planet crumbled to pieces. "...These are the basics of the Study of Planet Life.

"If the spirit energy is lost, our planet is destroyed..." said Cloud.

"Ho ho hoooo. Spirit energy is efficient *because* it exist within nature. When Spirit energy is forcefully extracted, and manufacture, it can't accomplish its true purpose."

"You're talking about mako energy, right?" asked Cloud.



“Everyday Mako reactors suck up spirit energy, diminishing it. Spirit energy gets compressed in the reactors and processed into Mako energy. All living things are being used up and thrown away. In other words, Mako energy will only destroy the Planet...”

Bugenhagen took them back down, and said, “The story of the planets... and those who lived with them... You want to know more? Then you must listen the words of the elders.”

Cloud went on to seek some information from one of the elders, Elder Hargo, and he found on babbling to himself, and then said, “I know, I know. You came to ask me something, right?”

Cloud heard him babbling about the Ancients, and said, “It’s about the Promised Land.”

“..The Promised Land. So you want to know...? There is no one place called the Promised Land. That’s what I believe. No no, it does exist. Hmmm... you can say that too. In other words it doesn’t exist for us, but it did for the Ancients. The Promised Land is the resting place of the Ancients. The life of the Ancients is one continuous journey. A journey to grow trees and plants, produce animals, and to raise Mako energy. Their harsh journeys continued throughout their lives... The place they returned to after their long journey... Their burial land is the Promised Land. Huh? Supreme Happiness? I believe that, for the Ancients, It was the moment that they were able to return to their planet. At that moment they were released from their fate, and gained their supreme happiness... At least that’s what I believe. I really don’t know whether or not it’s the truth now.”

Cloud was about to leave when Elder Hargo mentioned, “By the way, those that came with you are all at the Cosmo Candle. Are you leaving?”

Cloud didn’t say and went to meet his friends at the Cosmo Candle. The Cosmo candle was basically a Bonfire. Cloud arrived, and Tifa and Aeris both sat down. Oddly they sat apart, Tifa, sat on one side, and Aeris sat on the other.

Cloud thought that this would be a great time to play catch up, and spoke with Barret. He sat down and Barret started the conversation. “Cosmo Canyon... This’s where Avalanche was born... I promised my guys someday... when we saved the planet from the Shinra, that we’d all go to Cosmo Canyon and celebrate... Biggs... Wedge... Jessie... Now they’re all gone... died for the planet... Really? To save the Planet? We all... we all hate the Shinra... Do I even got to go on? Will they... will they ever forgive me?” Barret shook his head, and then continued, “...Right now, I really don’t know. But I know one thing. If there’s anything I can do, to save the planet... or the people livin’ on it... Then I’m gonna do it! I don’t care if it’s for justice or revenge, or whatever. I don’t care... let’em decide for ‘emselfes.”

Barret stood up and announced, “Urrrgh! I’m gonna do it!! Again... Again... Avalanche’s born again!”

Barret sat back down, and Cloud not sure of what to say stood up and walked of to Yuffie, who really wasn’t welcomed on the journey, but it can’t be undone now.

“What a boring place, just like I thought.” said Yuffie. “I wanna go somewhere! Let’s go find some Material!”

Yuffie then stretched, and Cloud walked to Cait Sith. “I wonder how many years it’s been...” said Cait Sith. “Gosh, it brings back memories...”

Cloud then decided he would speak with Aeris, to see how she was holding up.

"I learned a lot," said Aeris. "The elders taught me many things. About the Cetra... And the Promised Land... I'm all alone now..."

Cloud tried to comfort her, "But I'm... we're here for you, right?"

"I know. I know, but I am the only... Cetra."

"Does that mean we can't help?"

Aeris looked away, and didn't respond, so Cloud decided to leave her alone, and speak with Tifa.

"Cloud..." said Tifa. "Bonfires are funny, aren't they? They make you remember all sorts of things. You know, Cloud. 5 years ago..." She paused, and Cloud nodded, to signify about what she was talking about.

"... It's nothing. No, forget it. I am afraid to ask..." said Tifa quietly.

"What is it...?" questioned Cloud.

"It feels like... it feels like you're going far away... You really, really are.... You... right?"

Cloud unsure of what Tifa was saying, decided to leave her to her thoughts, and spoke with Red XIII, who was sitting on the other side of him.

"...Long ago," said Red XIII. "...When I was still very small. We were all around this flame..." He paused, for a second. "No, never mind..."

"What happened?" asked Cloud.

"It's about my parents. When I talk about my mother, I am full of pride and joy... And that's fine... But when I remember my father, my heart is full of anger..."

Bugenhagen then floated over to Red XIII, and asked, "...You really can't forgive you father...?"

"Of course. He... left mother for dead. When the Gi tribe attacked, he ran off by himself, leaving mother and the people of the Canyon!"

"...Come, Nanaki. There's something you should see," stated Bugenhagen.

Red XIII looked at Bugenhagen with confusion, and Bugenhagen said, "The place may be dangerous. Cloud. Will you and one other person come with us?" Bugenhagen floated away, and Cloud decided to take Aeris along with them. Cloud followed Bugenhagen, and Bugenhagen had lead them to a sealed door.

"Ho ho hoooo. Are we set?" asked Bugenhagen.

"Yeah," responded Cloud.

"Ho ho hoooo. Shall we go?" Bugenhagen then turned to a barrel, and pulled out a remote. The top of the Barrel opened and a receiver device rose up, and the sealed door opened up.

"All right. Come in, come in." said Bugenhagen.

They started to proceed, and Red XIII questioned, "Hey? Aren't you going with us, Grandpa?"

Bugenhagen shook his head and responded, "What are you crazy? It's dangerous in there. I told you that! You want an old man like me should go first? I'll be right behind you."

Cloud and the others went through the door, and followed the path down. The path down was mostly made of ladders, and ropes. When they reached the bottom of the cavern, they entered an underground cave.

The first part of the cave was a giant cavern, with small holes in the walls. In one of the holes they found a lever, which opened up the next part of the cave. As they were

about to go on to the next part, Bugenhagen said, “Ho ho hoooo. Everyone here’s a ghost of the Gi tribe. Killed in a certain battle.”

“A certain battle...?” questioned Red XIII in a confused tone.

“The vengeful spirits of the GI didn’t disappear, and couldn’t return to the Lifestream... We still have far to go. Ho ho hoooo.”

They continued onto the next cavern, to see a lava pit, with a small edge walk way. They carefully proceed, making sure not to slip to there molten rock, which could mean a fiery death. They finally made it to the other side, and Bugenhagen continued his story.

“As you can see, this cave leads to the back of Cosmo Canyon. It was unfortunate that the Gi were larger than us. If they attacked through here, we wouldn’t have stood a chance.”

Red XIII was now more confused than before, and Bugenhagen said, “Let’s move on.”

They went on as instructed by Bugenhagen, and arrived in another cavern. At first it had seemed hopeless, because every path they took, either lead them back to where they started, or to a dead end. Then it seemed they caught a break, and found a path that would actually take them somewhere.

Though it was a bit challenging, because there were giant spiders guarding the path, they made it to through the cavern, and just as before, Bugenhagen said another part of his story.

“The warrior went through the cave all alone. Fighting attackers one after another...”

Red XIII couldn’t handle anymore confusion, and said, “Grandpa.... That warrior...” Bugenhagen stopped Red XIII, and said, “Ho ho hoooo... “We’re almost there.”

Again they continued to the next cavern, to see a rock bridge, with a giant demon head at the other side. They approached the sculpture, and Bugenhagen was confused to see this, and asked, “What is this...?”

“Grandpa, is he...!” asked Red XIII.

“After death... The ghost of the Gi... Like stagnant air...”

The sculptures eyes began to glow, and a ghostly face appeared. “This...can’t be!!” exclaimed Bugenhagen, and the creature attacked. The battle had began against the Gi Nattak. Cloud using his head, took out an ‘X’ potion, (a healing potion) and threw it at the Gi Nattak, and killed it instantly.

“Thank you, Cloud. Because of you, we survived,” stated Bugenhagen. “Nanaki you have grown strong, too.”

“...Oh yeah?” said Red XIII.

“Now I know that it wasn’t a mistake bringing you here... Come I have something I want show you. Right over here,” said Bugenhagen, as he led them to the outside of the cave.

When they were all out side, Red XIII said, “This is...”

“...The warrior who fought against the GI,” stated Bugenhagen. “He kept them from taking even one step into Cosmo Canyon. But he was never able to return to town...”

Bugenhagen pointed up, and stated, “Look, Nanaki. Look at your father, at the

warrior, Seto.”

Red XIII looked up to the top of the Canyon, to see his father Seto, turned to stone. “...That... That’s... Seto...” questioned Red XIII.

“Seto continued to fight the Gi tribe here... To protect this Canyon. Even after the Gi’s poisonous arrows turned his body to stone... Even after they all ran away... Seto, continued to protect us. And he continues to protect us, even now.”

“Even now...” responded Red XIII.

“You thought that he was a coward and ran away. But he, alone risked his life to protect Cosmo Canyon. That is you father, Seto.”

“That... that is Seto?...!? Did mother know?”

“Ho ho hoooo... She knew. The two of them made me promise to keep this cave shut. They asked me to seal it myself and not tell a soul. They said we should forget about this cave.”

Red XIII lowered his head, and Bugenhagen, requested, “Cloud... Would you mind leaving the two of us alone?”

Cloud nodded, and along with Aeris they both stepped away. Once they were gone, Bugenhagen said, “Nanaki. I want you to continue your journey with Cloud and the others.”

Red XIII was confused to hear Bugenhagen say that, and responded, “Grandpa!?”

“Listen, Nanaki. Cloud says they are trying to save the planet. Honestly, I don’t think it can be done. For even if they stop every reactor on the planet, it’s only going to postpone the inevitable. Even if they stop Sephiroth, everything will perish. But, Nanaki. I’ve been thinking lately. I’ve been thinking if there was anything *we* could do, as part of the planet, something to help a planet already in misery... No matter what happens, isn’t it important to try?” Am I just wishing against fate?”

Bugenhagen shook his head. “I am too old to do anything about it... This year, I’ll be 130. Ho ho hoooo. That is why, Nanaki, you must go with them! For my sake.”

“Grandpa...” responded Red XIII in a low tone.

“I wanted to show you your real father before you left... I’m so glad that you came back while I was still alive to show you.”

“Grandpa...don’t talk like that. I don’t want to think of life... without you...”

“Ho ho hoooo. Well, I’ve had a long life.”

“Grandpa! You must live! I’ll see to it. I’ll see what’s happening to the planet. And I’ll come back to tell you.”

“Nanaki...”

“I am Nanaki of Cosmo Canyon! The son of the warrior, Seto! I’ll come back a warrior true to the noble name! So please, Grandpa...”

Then from the sky appeared tiny water drops, like rain, but only there were no clouds in the sky.

“That’s... Seto’s...Seto...” said Bugenhagen.

“Seto... Fa...Father...”

Red XIII jumped to the top of a small peak, and began howling at them, and from the stoned warrior Seto, came tears, tears of happiness for Red XIII.



Chapter 11: Another one joins the team.

Cloud and the others had made their way back, and sat down by the Cosmo Candle. After a while, Barret brought to Clouds attention, "The buggy's fixed, so we can go now."

Cloud stood up, and asked, "Shall we get going?"

"So this is it Red XIII..." said Aeris sadly.

"That's just the way it goes... You came in handy at times..." stated Barret.

Cloud then picked his traveling party, himself, Tifa, and Aeris. Then he started to leave the Canyon, when they hear Red XIII shout, "Wait for me! I'm coming too!" Cloud turned around to see Red XIII running up to them.

Cloud was confused to hear that Red XIII wanted to continue on the journey and said, "Mmm?"

Bugenhagen then came down, and requested, "Cloud. Please look after Nanaki."

Cloud looked at Red XIII, and asked, "What happened?"

"I think I grew up a little. That's what happened!" responded Red XIII, and the he headed for the buggy.

Cloud was about to leave, and Bugenhagen said, "Ho ho hoooo. Come back whenever you need my knowledge."

Cloud nodded, and went to the buggy. They still were not sure of where to go. Sephiroth's trail had gotten cold, so Cloud decided to continue, west/northwest to see what they could find. They crossed over a small river, and found a town. Cloud stopped just outside of the town, hoping that they would be able to find anything useful.

They entered the town, and Tifa, and Cloud had a familiar feeling. Upon seeing the inside of the town Tifa went into shock, and exclaimed, "What---!!" She then turned to Cloud, and asked, "This was all supposed to be burnt down, right?"

Cloud looked around and noticed as well that it was their hometown, Nibelheim. He then nodded, and responded, "...I thought so."

"Then why...? My house is still there too..." stated Tifa.

Aeris had was confused, and asked, "...something's strange?"

Cloud quickly went on the defensive, and retorted, "I'm not lying!" He then shook his head, and added, "I remember... the intense heat of the flames..."

Neither Aeris, nor Tifa responded, and they began searching around the town to find out some information. Cloud decided the best place to start, would be his mother's house. He entered the home to find a woman there, but not his mother. Cloud the questioned the woman.

"What is it?" asked the woman.

"I lived in this house until I was 14... No, but this town was burned down."

"Are you sick...saying those things?" questioned the woman. "Get out of here!"

Cloud did try to get the woman to tell them more, but she would speak to them again. Cloud left the house, and decided to check Tifa's home. When they entered the house, they saw a person dressed in a black cloak. Cloud though this person was very strange, and approached him.

"...must...get...it...and bring...to...Se...phi...roth... Then.... become... one...with...Se...phi...roth..."

Cloud looked over the man, and noticed a tattoo, and stated, "This's guy's number '5'..." Cloud tried to ask Number '5' some questions, but he said, all he was able to.

They checked the upstairs, to find another blacked cloaked person. "Man in a black cape?" questioned Cloud. "Tattoo number '4'."

"...Where...are...you...? Great...Se...phi...roth..."

Cloud now knew that they would be able to figure out where Sephiroth was heading, and went to find more clues. They went to the house that was just south of Tifa's and found two more of the black-cloaked men.

Cloud walked up to one of them, and the blacked cloaked person said, "...Re...union."

Then the other said, "...ion"

Cloud then shook his head, and left them alone. At this point Cloud thought that the black-cloaked people had no helpful information, but he wasn't discouraged, and continued to search the town.

They walked into the supply shop, to find another black-cloaked person standing by a fire furnace. Cloud walked up to him, and stated, "He has a tattoo of the number '12'. Mmm? He has something." Cloud then took an Elixir from the black-cloaked person, and the black-cloaked "man" said, "Can...you...hear? The...voice...of...Se...phi...roth..."

Cloud then questioned one of the townsmen.

"Nice town, huh?" said the townswoman. "We've been in business here for a long time..."

"...You're lying." stated Cloud.

"Do you have anything to do with this town?"

"I was here until I was 14 and I don't remember you."

The townswoman shook her head, and exclaimed, "It's not nice to lie!!"

Cloud shook his head, and bought some supplies, and continued his search. They stopped at the inn to see if there was any information there, and spoke with the man behind the counter.

"Hi, welcome," said the man.

"This town was supposed to have been burnt down five years ago." stated Cloud. "What the hell is going on?"

The man was hesitant to answer; he looked away for a second, and turned back.

"Sir, don't say such awful things. I was born and raised in this town. What you say never happened."

"You're lying..." said Tifa.

"Excuse me... That's so rude... If you're going to talk like that to me, I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

Seeing that the man wasn't going to give out any information, Cloud decided to look around the inn to see if there were any black-cloaked people around. They entered the back of the inn to find yet another black-cloaked person. Cloud walked up to him and stated, "He has a tattoo number '6'. Hmm? He has something..." Cloud then took a Luck source from the black-cloaked person.

"Urrr... rrrr...rrrgh..." said the black-cloaked person. "...must...go...to...Re...uni...on..."

After talking with everyone they could find, Cloud decided to explore the Shinra mansion. As they approached the mansion, he found two more black-cloaked people. He thought to question them to see what kind of information they might have.

“Wooooo-----ooow.... He’s... calling...Sephiroth....is...calling...” said the one.

“The...Great...Se...phi...roth...is...near...” said the other. “In...side...inside ...the... mansion ...Uuuurrrrrgh... the...great...Sephi...roth...”

Cloud now knew he had track down Sephiroth, and they entered the mansion. After exploring some, they discover a safe, but it was locked. They explored a little more, and found the combination to the safe. Cloud decided to open it, and then find Sephiroth.

Cloud, entered the numbers, Right 36, left 10, right, 59, and right 97. The safe opened, and out jumped Lost Number, a powerful monster. Aeris quickly reacted, and used Seal Evil, and paralyzed Lost Number.

In a short time Lost Number was defeated, and they received the Key to the basement, and Odin, a summon Materia. They then went to the basement, and went into the room that had all the books/records to see if Sephiroth was there. Cloud started to walk down the hallway to see no other than Sephiroth.

“Sephiroth!” exclaimed Cloud.

“Being here brings back memories.” said Sephiroth. “Are you going to participate in the Reunion?”

“I don’t even know what a Reunion is!”

“Jenova will be at the Reunion. Jenova will join the Reunion becoming a calamity from the skies.”

“Jenova, a calamity from the skies? You mean she wasn’t an Ancient!?”

“...I see. I don’t think you have the right to participate. I will go North past MT. Nibel. If you wish to find out more...then follow...”

“...Reunion? Calamity from the skies?”

Sephiroth then throw a green materia at Cloud. The materia had flown so fast, and with great strength. Cloud couldn’t react in time, and was hit in the gut, knocking the wind out of him. Sephiroth the floated off the ground, and flew away.

After a couple of minutes Cloud had regained his composer, and picked up the Materia, and left the room. On their way out of the basement, Cloud noticed a door, just to the left. They went in to find several coffins, but only one had a lid. He walked up to it, and heard a voice coming from the inside of it.

“...To wake me from the nightmare.” The lid flew off, and there laid a man, dressed in Black and red clothing. “Who is it!” said the strange man, and he sat up. “...Never seen you before. You must leave.”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and said, “You were having a nightmare.”

“How bad was your dream?” asked Tifa.

“Hmph... a nightmare...? My long sleep has given me time to atone,” responded the man.

“What are you saying?” asked Cloud.

“I have nothing to say to strangers. Get out. This mansion is the beginning of your nightmare.”

Cloud lowered his Head, and said, “...you can say that again.”

“Hmm? What do you know?” asked the man.

“Like you said, this mansion is the beginning of a nightmare.” Cloud then shook his head, and said, “No, it’s not a dream, it’s for real. Sephiroth has lost his mind. He found the secrets hidden in this mansion...”

“Sephiroth!?” questioned the man, and at the same time him, and Cloud asked, “You know Sephiroth?”

The man stood up, and said, “You start first.”

Cloud explained everything, from the beginning, like he had told before.

“...That’s how it was,” he stated at the end of his story.

“So Sephiroth knows he was created five years ago? And about the Jenova Project? ...He was missing, but has just recently reappeared. He has taken many lives and is seeking the Promised Land.”

“Now, it’s your turn,” said Cloud.

“Sorry...I cannot speak.” stated the man.

“Hmm...I’m disappointed.” said Tifa.

“Hearing your stories, has added upon me yet another sin.” stated the man. “More nightmares shall come to me now, more than I previously had.”

The man laid back in his coffin, and said, “Now...please leave.” He pulled the lid back on the coffin. Cloud thinking that the man needed to tell his part, opened the lid to the coffin.

“You’re still here,” said the man.

“At least tell us your name.” stated Cloud.

“I was with...the Shinra Manufacturing Department in Administrative Research, otherwise known as – the Turks...” He then paused, and introduced himself as, “Vincent.”

“The Turks!?” questioned Cloud.

“Formerly of the Turks. I have no affiliation with Shinra now... And you?”

“Cloud, formerly of Soldier.”

“You were also with Shinra...? Then do you know Lucrecia?”

“Who?” asked Cloud.

“...Lucrecia.” repeated Vincent

Cloud shook his head, and Vincent stated, “The woman who gave birth to Sephiroth.”

Cloud was shocked to hear that statement, and with confusion said, “...gave birth... Wasn’t Jenova Sephiroth’s mother?”

“That isn’t completely wrong, but just a theory. He was born from a beautiful lady. That lady was Lucrecia. She was an assistant to Professor Gast of the Jenova Project. Beautiful...Lucrecia.”

“...A human experiment?” asked Cloud.

“There was no way to cancel the experiment. I couldn’t stop her. That was my sin. I let the one I loved, the one I respected most, face the worst.”

“So the punishment was sleep?” asked Tifa. “That’s weird.”

Vincent pulled the lid back onto the Coffin, and Cloud still somewhat confused, tried again to talk to Vincent. He tired to open the lid, and Vincent said, “Let me sleep...” Cloud then decided to do as Vincent requested, and left the room.

They were about half way to the spiral staircase, when Vincent shouted, “Wait!”

Cloud turned around to see Vincent standing there. Vincent had a serious look on his face, and asked, "If I go with you will I met Hojo?"

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Dunno. But we're after him and Sephiroth. So, I guess sooner or later..."

Vincent turned his back to them, and said, "Lucrecia..." He then faced them again, and announced, "All right. I've decided to go with you."

"What?" questioned Tifa. "You're coming with us?"

"Being a former Turks, I may be of help to you..."

Cloud nodded, and said, "All right, then."

Vincent followed them out of the mansion, and they rested at the inn.

The next day they started on Sephiroth's trail again. Unfortunately the buggy that had brought them here would now have to stay behind. Cloud remembered Sephiroth saying that he was going north passed MT. Nibel, and started on their journey again.

They went past MT. Nibel, and continued north. A short time later they arrived at Rocket Town. Rocket Town was called this because of an actual Rocket ship was built here. When they entered the town, Cloud noticed the rocket, and shockingly said, "What's that...?"

They looked up to see the rocket, leaning towards the east, and Cloud added, "A rusty old rocket... Wonder what they'd make something that huge for?"

Cloud wasn't too curious about the rocket, and began searching around the town, for anything useful. They first stocked up on supplies, and rested. After that they searched the town. Questioning people seemed to get them no where, but they did make one discovery, a small airplane.

"There's a Shinra logo on it," stated Cloud. "Tiny Bronco... This is cool."

Tifa then thought if they had the Tiny Bronco, they would be able to catch up to Sephiroth. She then mentioned, "I wonder if we can borrow it..."

Then a lady, wearing a lab coat, walked up to them, and asked, "Um...may I help you?"

They all turned around, and Cloud shrugged his shoulders. "No..." he said. "We're just looking at it."

"...If you would like to use it, please ask the captain," stated the Lady. "The Captain should be in the Rocket." She then paused. "I'm Shera. And what are you names?"

"I'm Cloud."

"Tifa. Nice to meet you."

"I'm Aeris."

"Hmm... So you're not with the Shinra," said Shera. "I thought the approval for the reopening of the Space Program came."

Cloud was somewhat confused, and Shera continued, "President Rufus is scheduled to come here. The Captain's been so restless all morning."

Shera walked away, and Cloud exclaimed, "Rufus!!?"

They went to the rocket to ask the Captain if they could borrow the Tiny Bronco. They climbed up a long flight of stairs, and a ladder to reach the entrance of the rocket. They entered the rocket, to see a man doing what look like repairs. Cloud walked up to him, and the man questioned, "What're you guys doin' here?"

"We heard the Captain was here," responded Cloud.

The man laughed, and stated, "I'm the Captain! The name's Cid. Everyone calls me 'Captain', though. What do you want?"

"Can we borrow the Tiny Bronco?" asked Cloud.

"You out of your fucking mind!? That's my most cherished possession. I can't let you take it."

Cid turned his back to them, and Cloud thought maybe if they made conversation, that Cid would change his mind.

"Tell me about this rocket," said Cloud.

Cid turned back, and started to laugh again. "Wow! Not bad for a kid." Cid regained himself, and said, "Alright then, I'll explain it to you." Cid paused for a second. "You know Shinra developed a lot of technological gadgets during the meaningless war, right? Now it's a mako company, but in the old days it was a weapons manufacturer."

Cloud nodded, and Cid Continued, "Well, they came up with a Rocket engine. There was so much excitement about the thought of going into outer space. Our dreams got bigger, and bigger. They put a major budget into it and made prototype after prototype! Finally, they Complete Shinra No. 26. They chose the best pilot in Shinra-- no, in the world--me. I mean, come on. And finally we get the day of the launch. Everything was goin' well..."

Cid thinking of what happened had angered him. He kicked the wall, and stated, "But, because of that dumb-ass Shera, the launch got messed up. That's why they became so anal! And so, Shinra nixed their outer space exploration plans. After they told me how the future was Space exploration and got my damn hopes up... DAMN THEM! Then, it was all over once they found out Mako energy was profitable. They didn't even so much as look at space exploration."

Cid began to cry, and now was upset. "Money, moola, dinero! My dream was just a financial number for them!" Cid settled down, and took a deep breath. "Look at this rusted Rocket. I was supposed to be the first man in space with this. Everyday, it tilts a little bit more. At this rate, I don't know which will come first, this thing falling down or me getting' outta here."

Cid turned his back to them and sighed. "My last hope is talk to the President..."

Cloud having his answer about the Tiny Bronco, and a story about Cid, decided now would be the perfect time to leave the rocket. Cloud had made the decision to steal the Tiny Bronco, and went back to it.

The best way to the Tiny bronco was through Cid's house. They went in the house, and was about to go out the back door, when Shera stopped them. "Excuse me...Cloud?"

Cloud didn't want to start a commotion, and walked up to Shera.

"Did the Captain say anything?" asked Shera.

Cloud trying to keep himself calm, responded, "Nope..."

"Oh?" said Shera.

Then the unexpected happened, and Cid walked into the house. "Fuck! Shera. What are you, blind? We got guests!! GET SOME TEA! BITCH!"

Shera shook her head, and quickly responded, "I...I'm sorry." She walked over to the stove to prepare some tea, and Cloud said, "Really, don't mind us."

“Shut up! Sit your ass down in that chair and drink you goddamn TEA! Arggggggh! DAMN, I’m pissed!” Cid then turned to Shera. “Shera! I’ll be in the backyard tunin’ up the tiny Bronco! An’ make sure to serve them some tea! All right!?”

Shera didn’t respond, and continued to make the tea. Cid did as he said, and went to tune up the Tiny Bronco. Once Cid was outside, Tifa said, “Poor Shera.”

Cloud turned to Shera, and said, “Sorry. It’s our fault.”

Shera stopped making tea, turned to Cloud, and responded, “No, no. He’s always like this.”

Aeris kind of curious as to why Shera would even stay in this house, asked, “Is it like this all the time? You keep quite when he’s like that to you?”

Shera shook her head, and responded, “No... It’s because of my stupid mistake. I was the one who destroyed his dream...”

“What happened?” asked Cloud.

Shera began to tell her part of the story, and she flashback to how it really happened. She remembered working on the Rocket, trying to make it perfect for Cid. While she was working, Cid was laughing, and stated, “Hey! Get you ass in gear! You work like a snail! Even the moon’d get tired of waitin’ around for your ass!”

Shera had stopped working, and apologized, “I’m...I’m sorry.”

“Don’t take so much time checkin’ that fuckin oxygen tank! Shera, bein’ careful’s good, but it won’t do any good, no matter how many times you check that oxygen tank. That thing wouldn’t break even if hell froze over.”

“But...” Cid quickly cut her off. “No buts!! You’re not stupid, so be more efficient!”

“I’m sorry...”

Then the launch day came. It started with Cid walking in proudly, and the workers were going over a routine check of the rocket. The workers then noticed Cid, and one of them said, “Captain! Our dreams are finally coming true!”

Then another workin added, “We are so proud to be a part of the launch of Shinra No. 26.”

Of course the last work feeling he should say something, exclaimed, “Captain, preparations are complete!! All that’s left is lift off!”

Cid laughed, and stated, “Yeah! Leave it all to me! I’ll be back in a few!”

The workers saluted Cid, and said, “All right, Captain! Fly our dreams into outer space!”

“Thanks, guy!” responded Cid as he entered the bridge of the ship.

“We’re praying for your safety,” stated the workers as the door closed.

Cid sat at the controls, and began his pre-launch check. After he completed that, he announced over the radio, “Instrument panel...all clear. Shinra No. 26, ready for launch.”

Engine pressure rising,” responded the Control center. “Shinra No. 26, 3 minutes to launch. Beginning countdown.”

“...finally,” stated Cid. He then relaxed as best as he could, and waited for lift off. Then out of the blue, and alarm sounded, and Cid asked Control center, “What the? What happened!?”

“Cid! We have an emergency situation! A mechanic is still in the engine section of the rocket!”

What!? Who is the little bastard!?"

"I don't know," stated the Command Center. "Activating the intercom in the engine section."

The Command center activated the, and Cid yelled, "Hey goddammit!! Who the fuck's still in there?"

A voice came across the intercom, "It's Shera, Captain. Don't mind me, go a head with the launch."

"Shera!? What are you still doin' in there!?"

"I was still concerned. The results of the oxygen tank test weren't satisfactory."

"You stupid little bitch!" exclaimed Cid. "It's gonna get so hot in there that there ain't gonna be *shit* left when we blast off! You're gonna be burnt to a crisp! You're gonna die! You know that, doncha?"

"I don't mind," responded Shera calmly. "If I can just fix this, the launch will be a success. I am almost done."

"Almost done!? You're going to die!"

Then the Control Center came on the radio, "Cid, we must start the countdown. We won't make it if we don't!" They paused, for a moment. "Starting engine!"

The rocket began to shake, and Cid exclaimed, "Hey, wait a minute! Shera's still in here!"

Coldly the Command Center responded, "What are you going to do Cid? If we cancel now, it'll be another six months until the next launch!"

"GODDAMMIT, Shera... you wanna make me a murderer?"

"Captain," said Shera.

"Shera!?" responded Cid.

"Tank number 7 check is complete. Once I complete Tank number 8, it's all clear."

Come on, Shera...hurry up... You're gonna die..."

The Control Center announced, "30 seconds until ignition. Beginning countdown. Cid! Forget about her. We won't make it in time!"

Cid didn't want to kill Shera, and questioned "What...what am I... What am I supposed to do...?"

"15 seconds until ignition. Internal temperature rising," stated Control Center.

"Oh man, the moon... outer space... my dreams..."

"Ignite engine," said control, as they started the engine.

"SH-----IT!!"

The rocket started to lift off, and then the engine cut off. The rocket fell back to the launch pad, bounced, and the tipped to the west.

The flashback stopped, and Shera told Cloud and the others, "He pushed the emergency Engine shut down switch, aborting the mission, to save my life. After that, the Space program was cut back, and the launch was canceled. It's all my fault his dream was destroyed... That's why... it's all right. I don't care what the Captain says, I'll live my life for him."

Cid then walked back into the house, and saw that no one was drinking any tea. "Shera," Cid exclaimed. "You still haven't served'em tea!"

“I...I’m sorry,” she responded, and went back to making tea. Cid then sat down at the table, and put his foot up. He then looked at Cloud, and said, “Hurry up and sit down! Or ain’t my hospitality good enough for you!?”

Cloud didn’t respond, or sit either, and Cid mentioned, “They’re late.... Where is Rufus...?”

No sooner were those words of his mouth, when fat man Palmer entered the house.

“Hey-HEY! Long time no see!” exclaimed Palmer. “So Cid, how ya been?”

“Well, if it ain’t fat man, Palmer. How long were you figurin’ on keeping me waitin’!?” Cid then got out of his chair, and ran up to Palmer. “So? When’s the Space Program gonna start up again?”

“Hey-hey! I don’t know. The President’s outside, so why don’t you ask him?”

“Shit! Good for nothing, fat fucker!”

Cid ran outside, and Palmer said, “Don’t say ‘fat’!” Palmer then walked up to Shera, and said, “Hey-hey! Tea! Can I have some too? With lotsa sugar and honey and... oh yeah, don’t forget the lard!”

Cloud not really concerned with Palmer, went outside to see what was going on with Cid. Cloud walked outside, to hear Cid exclaim, “What the....! You got me all excited for nothing!? Then, what did you come here for?”

“I want to borrow the Tiny Bronco,” stated President Rufus. “We’re going after Sephiroth. But it seems we’ve been going in the wrong direction. But now, we think we know where he’s headed. But, we have to cross the ocean. That’s why we want your plane...”

Cid was more furious to hear that President Rufus wanted the Tiny Bronco, and retorted, “Shit! First the Airship, then the Rocket, and now the Tiny Bronco. Shinra took outer space from me and now you want to take the sky away from me too!?”

“Oh my... You seem to forget it was Shinra, Inc. that you were able to fly in the first place,” stated the President.

This only angered Cid more, and said, “What!?”

The door to the house opened up, and Shera said, “Um, excuse me...” Cloud turned around, and Shera added, “This way...” She went back into the house, and Cloud followed. She closed the door, and asked, “You wanted to use the Tiny Bronco, right?”

Cloud nodded, and she mentioned, “I believe Palmer’s going to take it. Why don’t you talk to him?”

Cloud quickly ran to the outside, to talk with Palmer. When they were outside, they saw Palmer, sitting on top of the Tiny Bronco, by one of the propellers.

“Hmm... Why do I have to do this...?” Palmer said to himself. “I’m the head of the Space Program...”

Cloud walked up to Palmer, and he stated, “We’ll be takin’ that Tiny Bronco.”

Palmer turned around responded, “I’ve seen you somewhere before...” He paused to think of where he had seen them, and then it hit him like a ton of bricks. “I know! The Shinra building! When the President was killed! Ulp! Se...se...security!!”

Palmer started up the Tiny Bronco, jumped off the plane, and the started to fight over who was going take the small plane. Though it didn’t take them long to slap the fat man around, and Palmer finally had enough abuse.

“Heh heh hic!” said Palmer as he flipped his middle finger at them. The Tiny Bronco began to move, with propellers in motion. Palmer turned to escape, and almost ran right into a propeller. Palmer quickly ducked, to dodge the propeller.

When it was safe he stood up, and wiped the sweat off his forehead. Then he looked at Cloud, and made a funny face, and ran. Cloud, and the others didn’t chase him, because he was hit by a truck. “Ugh!” was the sound Palmer made as he went flying through the air.

Aeris hopped onto the Tiny Bronco, and Cloud followed.

“It won’t stop!” exclaimed Aeris, as she tried everything to shut off the plane. Cloud quickly thinking, turned to Tifa, and yelled, “Forget it!! Get in!!”

Tifa ran up to the plane, and jumped, just catching the wing. The plane was now off the ground, and flew higher and higher. Cloud grabbed the stick hoping he could control the plane.

Cloud brought back towards the ground, flying towards Cid and the President. Cid saw them coming, and ran away from the President. A Shinra soldier began shooting at the plane, and Cid jumped catching the bottom of the plane. Bullets hit the plane and Cid got situated.

The plane was now hard to control, as they flew out of range of the machine gun, and now were over the water. “Shit!!” exclaimed Cid. “The tail’s been hit!”

“Emergency landing...” stated Cloud.

“This is gonna be a big splash,” stated Cid. “Hold on to your drawers and don’t piss in’em!”

The Tiny Bronco landed in the water with a big splash. The plane drifted to a stop. Being that the Tiny Bronco was so light, it didn’t sink. Cid not really concerned about floating or sinking, began to look over the damage. Only after a couple of minutes, Cid stated, “She won’t fly anymore.”

While Cid was examining the plane, Cloud had thought of an idea. He turned to Cid, and asked, “Can’t we use it as a boat?”

“Fuck! Do whatever you want!”

Cloud was pleased to hear that they could use the Tiny Bronco, even though it couldn’t fly. During his excitement, he wondered about Cid, and what would become of him now.

“Cid, what are you going to do now?” asked Cloud.

“Dunno,” responded Cid. “I’m history with Shinra and I’ve given up on the town.”

“How ‘bout your wife? How ‘bout Shera?” asked Cloud.

“Wife? Don’t make me laugh! Just thinkin’ ‘bout marryin’ he gives me the chills.” He paused for a second. “What’re you guys gonna do?”

“We’re going after a man named Sephiroth. We’ll have to get Rufus of Shinra someday too.”

“I don’t know about any of that, but...” Cid stopped to think, and then added, “What the hell!? Sign me up!”

Cloud thought it would only be fair if everyone had thought the same. “How ‘bout it, everyone?”

“I’m all for it,” responded Aeris.

No one else responded, and Cid looked around. He really didn't care about what everyone else thought, and said, "Glad to be aboard, numbskulls!"

Cloud was confused to as why Cid had said that, and questioned, "Numbskulls...?"

"Yeah. Anyone stupid enough to go up against Shinra nowadays, has *gotta* be a numbskull! I like it!" Cid then shrugged his shoulders, and asked, "So, where we headed?"

Cloud really didn't have a clue on where to go, and Cid added, "Rufus was goin' after Sephiroth towards the Temple of the Ancients."

"Really!?" responded Cloud. "...Where is it? That temple of the Ancients?"

"Dunno. That numbskull kid was tellin' me he was heading 'The wrong direction'... so maybe it's off this way?"

Let's just head for land and get some information," stated Cloud. "Temple of the Ancients... that name bothers me."

Chapter 12: Problems in the road.

They sailed to the nearest land that they could see, which wasn't far away at all. They left the plane, and started to explore a bit. There was a mountain path, and they decided to see if there was a near by town or Village. When they go to the top of the mountain, Yuffie, shouted, "Wait, wait, wait, wai----t!"

They stopped, and Yuffie ran up to them. Tifa confused asked, "What the--? Did something happen?"

"I know this area pretty well," stated Yuffie. "It gets pretty tough past here. Better get ready..."

"...Really?" said Tifa. "Something's telling me I still shouldn't trust you. Are you thinking of tricking us again...?"

"No!" exclaimed Yuffie. "It's *really* tough..."

Then out of nowhere came a voice shout, "There they are, catch'em!!" Two Shinra Soldiers ran up, and pointed their guns at them.

Aeris was surprised to see them, and said, "Hey, the Shinra....!?"

"Hey, that's not them! These are the other guys from before!!" said one of the Shinra Soldiers.

Tifa confused about the situation, and exclaimed, "Yuffie, you're not....!"

"I don't know!" responded Yuffie. "I have nothing to do with this one!"

"This one?" questioned Tifa. "Did you just say 'this one'? So you *were* trying to pull something off!"

Yuffie trying to keep herself calm said, "No, umm, uh..."

"What should we do!?" questioned one Shinra Soldier to the other.

"Uh... Get them! Grab them and ask questions later!!"

The Shinra Soldiers charged at them, and Yuffie ran away. This battle was a little more difficult than expected, because all their materia was gone. Though somehow they killed the Shinra Soldiers, and Tifa questioned, "What's going on!?" She paused, and then added, "I thought something was fishy... My, my materia is missing!"

"Hey...where's Yuffie...?" questioned Aeris.

They looked around, but Yuffie was nowhere in sight. "She's done it to us again!!" exclaimed Tifa. "I'm never gonna forgive her! She was after our materia from the beginning. I won't let her get away with it! I'm pretty sure she ran off North. Let's go after her!!"

Cloud nodded, and they went north to track down Yuffie, and get back their materia. Over and under the mountain path they finally found the village of Wutai. This small village was a lot like ancient China. With the houses, that resembled old China, and the villagers wore robes. They also believed in martial arts, and the old ways of the country.

When they entered Wutai, Cloud spotted Yuffie, and Yuffie yelled, "Hey!!" She quickly ran off and they followed her. Unfortunately they lost sight of Yuffie, and had to start searching the buildings. They started with a tavern, were they lost sight of her. They entered, and what they saw, wasn't what they expected.

"Yy, you!?" exclaimed Elena from the Turks. "How did you get here...?" She quickly stood up from her seat, and added, "Never mind that. I guess it's fate that brought us together. Get ready to die!!"

Elena took a fighting stance, preparing to attack. Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris also prepare to attack, and Reno said, "...Elena, you talk too much."

Elena confused to why Reno would say something like that, questioned, "Ww, What?"

Reno, who was still sitting at the table, asked, "What are we doing way out here in the middle of nowhere?"

"We're taking our vacation and resting up from our work."

"Now our vacation is ruined."

Elena now more confused, responded, "B, but..." Reno interrupted her, "...even the booze tastes bad now."

"...sorry," Elena said in a low tone.

Everyone relaxed, and Reno said, "Drink, Rude! How long have we been a team...? There have been hard times being a Turk, but all in all, I'm glad I did it. I even got to meet a bunch of wing nuts like you."

Cloud really didn't have the time or the materia to mess around with them anyway, and continued to search the village."

They walked into the supply shop, and found an MP Absorb materia. No sooner was it in Cloud's hand, Yuffie appeared, and stole it. Cloud was now frustrated, and ran after her. They searched the town, and walked into the house of an old blind man, and his granddaughter.

"Oh no!" exclaimed the child. "More weirdoes. No, these aren't like the one from a while ago, but these ones look weird too!"

Cloud then knew Yuffie was in this house, and looked behind a pulled out wall. He moved it to see Yuffie. Yuffie was surprised to see them, and quickly ran out. Cloud followed hoping to catch her.

It didn't take long to track down where she was hiding. Back by the Tavern was a giant vase, with a lid on it. They saw the vase shaking, and knew that it was Yuffie. Tifa, and Aeris blocked both exit paths, and Cloud pulled the lid off the vase.

Yuffie jumped out, again trying to escape, but she had nowhere to go. They all moved in on her, and Cloud stated, "You can't get away, Yuffie."

Yuffie waved her arms, and responded, "O...ok, I know... I was wrong... You win. I'll give you back your materia..." She then escorted them to the building where the materia supposedly was.

Meanwhile back in the tavern, The Turks were trying to enjoy their vacation, when two Shinra Soldiers ran in.

"So our reports were right!" exclaimed the Shinra Soldier. "He *is* here on vacation. We finally found him! Get the Turks here for back-up!"

"...what a drag," said Reno

"Ww, what was the...?" asked the Shinra Soldier.

"Right now we're off duty, and can't run off to serve your butts."

"We know you're off duty, but..."

"If you knew that, then don't bother us!" exclaimed Reno. "Lookin' at you is makin' me sober."

"But, you all have orders from headquarters to look for him too!" exclaimed the Shinra Soldier. None of the Turks responded, and the soldier stated, "All right, that's it! We'll get him without any help from the Turks, just you see!"

Both Shinra Soldiers left and Elena look concerned. Then one of them ran back in, and stated, "And don't think that headquarters isn't going to hear about this!!" He then left again, and Elena questioned, "Reno, do you think that was really such a good idea!? I mean is that the way a professional, a Turk would act!?"

Reno turned to Elena, and said, "Elena. Don't misunderstand. A pro isn't someone who sacrifices himself for his job. That's just a fool."

Reno turned back to the table, and continued with his drink. Elena then looked at Rude, and said, "Rude?"

Rude, who was enjoying his drink, didn't respond. This only frustrated the young Turk, and stated, "Well, I don't buy that! Goodbye!!" She then walked out of the tavern, to follow her orders. Rude had a puzzled look on his face, and Reno said, "Relax. She's not a child. Let her have her way now..."

Back with Cloud, Yuffie took them to a house, where she was going to give back the materia. They had stopped in the main room of the house and Yuffie began twiddling her thumbs. Cloud not really in the mood to deal with her, gave her a frustrated look, and Yuffie said, "I know, the materia, right? I have it stored in a safe place... Follow me."

She led them downstairs, and they followed her. In the basement there was a small room, with a machine with two levers on it. Actually the machine looked like an arcade game. They all were in the room, and Yuffie said, "...I've been hearing that ever since I was little. Before I was born, Wutai was a lot more crowded and more important..." She paused for only a second. "You saw what it looks like now, right? ...*Just* a resort town... After we lost the war, we got peace, but with that, we lost something else. Now look at Wutai... That's why... if I had lots of materia I could..." She began crying, and Cloud walked up to her. "Listen, Yuffie," said Cloud. "I don't care about the history of Wutai or your feelings. You've got our materia, and I want it back...now. If you give it back now, we'll drop the whole thing."

Yuffie still crying, sobbed, "I know. I know that... That...sniff...switch... the lever on the left.... Materia's... sniff, hic...in there."

Cloud turned to see the two levers, and started to wonder if what Yuffie has said was true. He ran over to the machine, and looked at the levers. He had his doubts, and it seemed like he couldn't make up his mind on what lever to pull. He took a deep breath, and pulled the left lever, and giant cage came crashing down, trapping Aeris and Tifa.

"Eyaaaaah," scream Aeris.

Yuffie began laughing, "Ha ha ha-----! Never trust anyone that easily!! The materia is mine! Tough!" She started to leave, but stopped to state, "You want your materia? Then go find it yourself! Yeah that's right. And when you're looking for the materia, remember you gotta steal it. Heh heh...steal...steal! Get it? Cya!!"

Cloud flipped back the lever, and they went after Yuffie, again. They made their way to one of the oldest parts of Wutai, where they saw an old bell. Cloud saw the bell, and decided for fun to ring it once. He did, and mysteriously a secret door opened up. Cloud thought that would be a place where Yuffie was hiding. They went inside to see Yuffie being man handled, and she was screaming.

"Let go! I SAID let GO!" Yuffie yelled. "Hey! Who do you think I... OW! What're you doin'...? Jerk!"

The kidnapper ran away, and Cloud started to follow. He stopped, and exclaimed, "You....!"

There stood the man Shinra was looking for, Don Corneo. He just stood there, with the kidnapper standing beside him. "...ho.....ho.... Hohi, Hohi! Hohihi!"

"Corneo!?" said Cloud.

"Hohi! I've finally got a new chicky! Two for one, in fact! Hohi, hohi!"

Cloud was confused because he only saw one, Yuffie. "Two!?" he questioned. He noticed another ninja kidnapper, and he had Elena from the Turks.

"H...hey!" exclaimed Elena. "Let go of me! You're gonna regret this!!"

Hohi, hohi! Hohihi!" responded Don, as the ninja's ran out of the room. He then left the room, and Cloud went after him. They chased him out of a secret passage that lead to another house, and Shinra Soldiers were waiting for Don.

"There he is!" stated the Shinra Soldier. "It's Corneo! Don't let him get away!"

Don quickly turned to run, but to his surprise he couldn't go anywhere, because of Cloud Tifa, and Aeris. Don began to panic, fearing that he was for sure caught, and another Shinra Soldier yelled, "Attaaaack!"

The three Shinra Soldiers charge Don, and he quickly moved out of the way, and engaged battle with Cloud, and the others.

Though like any other person that worked for the Shinra, once they have their mind set to something, they follow through with it. So Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris ended up fighting them, and killing them.

Now their new mission was to get Don, because he had Yuffie, who had their materia. Things just seemed to be getting more complicated, but they had no choice, and continued.

When they walked outside they saw Rude, and Reno. Reno who hadn't seen them yet mentioned to Rude, "Hmm... that Corneo is good at escaping..."

"...Elena..." said Rude quietly.

"Let's go, Rude. We'll give them a taste of what the Turks can do."

Rude nodded, and ran ahead. Once he was gone, Reno said, "...Sounded pretty good." He then turned to Cloud, and said, "If Elena is in his hands, that's going to make things a little difficult. And uh..."

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and stated, "...Ok. Corneo took Yuffie from us. And without Yuffie there's no way we'll get back our materia back."

"Don't misunderstand," said Reno. "We have no intention of joining you. But for now, we'll agree not to bother each other. That's all."

Cloud nodded, and said, "That's fine. We have absolutely no intention of cooperating with the Turks either. Now, uh, just what direction did Corneo run off to?"

"Hmm, nice attitude. Here's a clue, it's a place that stands out the most."

Reno then ran off, and Cloud looked around to see what stood out the most. He didn't look long, because he saw the mountain with giant sculptures carved in it. He proceeded up the mountain in hopes of finding Don, before the Turks.

He went up the mountain path, and ran into Reno, and Rude. "You're finally here," said Reno. "We're gonna split into two. You do whatever you want. But don't endanger Elena. Don't worry, we won't do anything to that girl, Yuffie. For now..."

Reno ran his hand through his hair, and along with Rude they went up the path. Cloud really didn't trust the Turks, but in this situation, he had no choice. They went up the path, exploring everywhere.

They traveled around the giant sculptures, in and out of small caves, and finally found the man himself, Don standing by a cliff. Before they approached Don, they noticed, Yuffie, and Elena tied up against the mountain, on one of the many faces. Then they heard Yuffie yell, “LET...ME... GO!!!!”

“Hmm! Delicious...scrumptious!” Don said excitedly. “I think I’ve just found a new *hobby*! Which shall it be? Hmm...Hmm...” He paused to think about it. He then looked at Elena, and said, “Should I go... with *her*?”

“He...hey, I’m one of the ‘Turks’! Don’t think you can get away with this!?”

Don ignoring what Elena said, looked at Yuffie, and questioned, “Or...maybe... *her*?”

“Oh *gawd*! If I knew this was gonna happen, I would’ve taken rope escape lessons more seriously!!” stated Yuffie.

“Hmm!!! I’ve made my choice! My companion for the night will be... the cheerful one!”

“GROSS-NESS!” exclaimed Yuffie. “Don’t mess with me old man! You don’t even have any materia!”

“Ooooooh! And she saucy, too! Wheee! Wheee!”

“All right, that’s it!!” said Cloud.

Don panicked, and questioned nervously, “Hee-haw. What’s... what’s going on!? Who’s there?”

Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris ran down, to greet Don, and Yuffie said, “Oh man! Cloud...!”

“Wheee!...long time no see,” said Don.

“Don’t tell me you forgot...” said Cloud.

“That fall into the trap really hurt!” stated Tifa.

“You just don’t get it, do you...!?” questioned Aeris.

Don began having a fit, and snapped, “Be quiet! None of you know how much I’ve suffered since then...” He calmed down somewhat, and turned his back to them. “It’s a long story, but...”

Tifa not wanting to hear his pathetic story, stated, “We don’t want to hear it! Just let the two go!”

Don turn back to them, and said, “Hmm... You guys are... serious... Good, good... this ain’t no time for me to be fooling around either... Why did you kill my little Aps? I’m gonna make you *play* with my new pet, so you won’t get in the way of my search for a bride!”

Cloud and the others prepared themselves, and Don yelled, “RAPPS---come here!!”

Even though Don’s new pet, Rapps, was more powerful than Aps, they manage to defeat him barely. Once Rapps was dead, Don was cornered. “Wait...” said Don. “Just wait a second!”

“SHUT UP!” yelled Cloud.

“Just listen to me – it won’t take long.” Don Begged. “Why don’t you think a bad guy like me would swallow his pride and plead for his life?”

Cloud remembered something like this from before, and oddly enough he answered the same way, “Because he’s sure to win.”

“Hmm...! RIGHT!” exclaimed Don as he pulled out a remote, and pressed a button. Elena, and Yuffie flipped upside down.

“Eyaaaah...!” screamed Elena.

“This makes me so MAD...!” yelled Yuffie.

“If I push this button, they’ll fall upside down, and we’ll have *squashed tomatoes!*”

“Damn...!” exclaimed Cloud.

Tifa placed her hands on her hips, and stated, “Coward!”

Aeris nodded, and said, “All right...”

“Now, give me your women too!” ordered Don. “Ha, ha, ha, ha! I guess I’m the one laughing last!”

“No, that would be us,” said voice from out of nowhere.

“Hee-haw. What...what’s goin’ on!? Who’s there?” questioned Don.

Reno then walked up, and Don exclaimed, “...The Turks!”

“You knew this was gonna happen ever since you leaked that secret,” stated Reno. “We’re going to take care of you personally.”

“DAMMIT! Then they’re all goin’ with me!” stated Don.

Don was about to press the button on the remote, when Rude ran up from the other side, threw a stone, knocking the remote out of Don’s hand.

“Ugh...!” was the sound Don made, as the remote fell out of his hand, and he lost his balance falling off the edge, just catching himself in time, and barely hanging on.

“Good timing, Rude,” said Reno.

Rude scratched his bald head, and said, “Let’s get to work.”

Reno acknowledged him, by walking over to Don, and placing his foot on Don’s fingers. “All right, Corneo. This will be quick, so listen up. Why do you think we went to all the trouble of teaming up with those guys to get you...?”

Don wasn’t sure on how to answer the question and Reno Added, “Because we were ready to die. Because we were sure of victory. Because we were clueless.”

“Two... Number two?”

“All wrong,” stated Reno as he pressed his foot tight against Don’s fingers.

“No...! Wait, sto...!” was Don’s last plea, but Reno didn’t stop, and Don fell off the cliff. “Aaaaaaaa...p,” was the last sound Don every made.

Reno ran his hand through his hair, and stated, “The correct answer was...”

Rude scratched his head, and finished the sentence, “...because it’s our job.”

“Oh, thank you very much...!” said Elena. “I never expected you’d to come help...”

Reno turned to Elena, and said, “Elena, don’t act so weak. You’re a Turk!”

“Y... Yes, sir!” Elena responded.

Everyone then was quite, and Aeris said, “Thanks for your help.”

Before Rude, or Reno could respond, Reno’s cell phone rang, and he answered, “Yes...this is Reno.” He paused to listen to the person on the other end. “Yes... Yes... I’ll get on it right away.”

Reno hung up the phone and Elena asked, “Was that the company?”

“Yeah, they want us to find Cloud...” responded Reno as he turned to Cloud. Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris prepared themselves for battle. Rude scratched his head, and asked, “Are we on...?”

Reno ran his hand through his hair, and stated, “No, today we’re off duty.”

Cloud, and the others relaxed, and Yuffie shouted, “Hey---who cares about that! Get---me---down---!”

A short time later, Elena and Yuffie were released, and the Turks went on with their vacation. Yuffie then took them back to house where she had tricked them, and gave back materia, and equipping it for them. When she was done, she took in a deep breath, and said, “Phew, perfect. Now, the materia is back in its rightful place.”

“Hey... the placement of it is all messed up,” stated Cloud.

“Huh? Oh, it’ll be all right...” responded Yuffie. “Don’t be so picky!” She then nodded her head. “Anyways, that sure was close... No, normally I would kick their butts, Boom, Bang!!”

She then started throwing her rapid punches, showing off her skills. She then turned her back to them. “That Corneo guy’s a real pain.”

Cloud then turned to Tifa, and Aeris, and signaled them to follow him. They left the house, and Yuffie continued talking. “I’d rather deal with my dad than deal with that guy. Oh, by the way, some of those guys from the Turks are good, huh? At least, after all that, we got the materia back. Now, come on everybody let’s continue our journey...”

Yuffie turned around to see everyone was gone, and shouted, “...Hey!! W...Wait!” She then ran into another room, and shouted, “Oh, all right. Here, I’ll give this to you guys.” She ran back to the other room, with the MP Absorb materia, and continued, “Here, look, look!” But they didn’t return. Yuffie then ran after them, shouting, “Come on, wait---! No matter what anyone says, I’m going with you!” She then paused, and said quietly, “...next time...”

After all this was done, they still had to see if anyone here knew anything on the temple of the Ancients. They first rearranged their materia, since Yuffie had it all wrong. After that they got supplies, and some rest.

Chapter 13: The Cat and the Keystone

The next day, Cloud began searching Wutai for Clues, but nothing there was useful. So the only thing that was left to do was return to the Tiny Bronco, and see if they could find someone that could give them any information.

They sailed around, stopping from place to place, but it had seem that no one knew anything about the Temple of the Ancients. Then they found a little house, on the shore, just east of Gongaga village.

They entered the house, and noticed it to be a weapon shop. The owner spared no time and walked up to them. "Huh? Oh another customer. You sure picked an out of the way place, but..." he paused for a second. "But if it's the Keystone you're looking for, you're too late. Don't have it."

Cloud had never heard of the Keystone, and said, "Keystone?"

The owner was shocked, and said, "What you didn't come here for that?" He then answer Cloud's question, "The Keystone is the key that unlocks the gate to a very old temple somewhere. You're not going to believe your ears, but I heard it was the Temple of the Ancients!"

"The Temple of the Ancients..." responded Cloud.

The owner laughed, "Kya, hah hah hah..." The owner regained himself, and added, "Don't take it seriously. It's just a legend!"

The owner walked away, to do work around the shop, and Cloud wanted to know more about the Keystone, especially since this was his only lead. Cloud walked up to the man, and asked, "Where is this keystone?"

"I sold it already. Yeah well, to tell the truth, I didn't really want to sell it but... That guy had a way about him that made you feel like it may not be a good idea *not* to sell it to him..."

"Who did you sell it to?" asked Cloud.

"The manager of the Gold Saucer... think his name was 'Dio'. Said he was going to put in his museum, then he took off out of here."

Cloud now knew where the Keystone was, but he still had no idea where the Temple of the Ancients. So he asked, "Where's the temple?"

"Come on... it's only a legend. But if it were true, that sure would be something, huh?" The owner paused for a moment, and then added, "Now, that you mention it, I have heard of something called Ultimate Destruction Magic... was suppose to be hidden somewhere in the Temple of the Ancients."

"Ultimate Destruction Magic...?" questioned Cloud.

"Come on! I told you not to take it seriously!"

Cloud felt he had gotten all the information out of the man, and decided to go back to the Gold Saucer, and get the Keystone. They cross the river, and went to North Corel, and took the Ropeway car to the Gold Saucer.

They bought a ticket, and immediately went to the battle arena, to find Dio. They arrived at the reception/registration area, and Cloud saw a big sign that read, 'Dio's Showroom'. Cloud walked into the room and a stone sitting in the middle of the room. He walked up to it and said, "It's the Keystone..."

Dio then walked up to Cloud, and said, "Heh, heh, heh. Long time no see, my boy. Hmm? You like that, huh?"

Cloud turned to Dio, and went straight to the point, "Can you let me borrow this?"
"Heh, heh, heh. Sorry, but it's not for rent." Dio then paused to think for a second, "Hmm." Then he had an idea. "Since you've been good to me in the past, I *can* let you have it on one condition."

"One condition?"

Heh, heh, heh. Entertain me!"

Cloud was a little disturbed by the way Dio had said that, but he also was desperate, asked, "What'd you want me to do?"

Excitement filled Dio's eyes, and he placed his hands on the back of his head. "Hoo boy!" he exclaimed, like a little kid in a candy store. "Heh, heh, heh. It's not something that's really difficult."

Cloud now was getting a little concerned on what he was agreeing to do, and Dio added, "This is the Battle Arena. Show me your fighting Skills. Just you, my boy. I'm expecting a good fight!"

Cloud went to the Battle Arena, to fight. Now, in the Arena there were rules, first there were seven levels of completion. Each time you defeated a level, a random choice is made that prevents you from using certain magic, items, or taking damage. The random choices are called handicaps, the further you go, the harder the Arena gets. Also, at any given time he could quit, if he or she feels they can't go on. And if you die, you lose the contest.

The first round is the easiest, because there are no handicaps. Cloud's first opponent, was the Bullmotor, but he was easily killed, and he was asked, "Keep going?"

"Off course," responded Cloud, and then came the random drawing. The first one was not as bad, when it was announced, "Down 5 levels. Then go for it" Now, this meant that Cloud was weaker than in the first round, and a Crown Lance appeared.

Cloud kind of showing off, killed the Crown Lance and he was asked, "Keep going?"

"Off course," responded Cloud, and then came the random drawing. The second one was announced, "Accessory is broken. Then go for it" This meant that if Cloud was wearing an item that helped prevent damage, it was now no good.

A Flower Prong appeared, and Cloud quickly went to work, but was defeated. He went back to Dio, and Dio commented, "That's the best you could do? Well, a promise is a promise. Go a head, take it."

Dio handed over the Keystone, and Cloud gladly took it. Dio then said, "Well then, we shall meet again! Heh, heh, heh." Dio then walked off.

With Keystone in hand, they went on to find some information about the Temple of the Ancients, which was the most important part. Cloud then had an idea; he thought that maybe Bugenhagen might know where the temple was.

They went back to the ropeway car to leave Gold Saucer. As they approached the ropeway car, a Gold Saucer employee stopped them. "Excuse me, sir."

Cloud turned to the employee, and he continued, "I'm sorry. The Tram is out of order right now."

"...So?" responded Cloud.

"I'm really sorry! I'm afraid you won't be able to leave until it's fully repaired."

Cait Sith then came hopping out of the Gold Saucer, and asked, "What's wrong?"

Cloud explained the situation to Cait Sith, and Cait Sith said, "Too bad. It happens, though." He paused for a second. "I know! Let's stay at the hotel! They know me there. I'll go talk to them."

Cait Sith hopped off, and the employee said, "I will let you know once the repairs are completed."

Cloud scratched his head, and they all went to the Ghost hotel. After a while everyone who was traveling with the Cloud, was in the hotel lobby, and was having a conversation.

"We don't usually get the chance to be together like this, Huh?" said Cait Sith. "Cloud, how 'bout it? Can you tell us what's happened so far? I really don't know what's goin' on because I wasn't here in the beginning."

"Yeah!" exclaimed Cid. "I'm all for it!"

"Good Idea," added Vincent.

Barret also had to throw in his two cents, "I been here since the beginnin' an' I still don't know what the hell's goin' on either. Cloud, the hell's goin' on? C'mon, tell us!"

Cloud nodded, and took in a deep breath. "Phew... We are going after Sephiroth. Sephiroth must be in search of the Promised Land."

"The Promised Land?" questioned Cid.

"A land full of Mako energy... or at least that's what the Shinra believe. I don't know if it actually exists."

Aeris then added, "The Cetras returned to the Promised land. A land that promises boundless happiness."

"Cetra? That some kind of disease?" questioned Barret.

"That's what the Ancients call themselves," responded Aeris. "Hey, didn't you listen to the elders at Cosmo Canyon?"

Barret scratched his head, and Aeris continued, "...You don't 'know' where the Promised Land of the Ancients is. You search and travel, until you feel it. Like you just know... 'this is the Promised Land'."

"Aeris... can you feel it too?" asked Cloud.

"I think so."

"So, Sephiroth is traveling the world because he's searching for the Promised Land?" asked Tifa. "Is that it?"

Aeris responded, "That, and one other thing he's searching for."

"The Black Materia..." said Cloud.

"I heard from Dio that a man in a Black Cape was lookin' for the Black Materia," mentioned Cait Sith.

"I don't even know what a Black Cape is..." stated Tifa. "How many men with Black Capes and number tattoos are there?"

Red XIII thought it would be best to answer Tifa's question, "...you know, of course... My tattoo is number 13."

Cloud turned to Red XIII and asked, "How do you get that number?"

"...Hojo put it on me. Everything else is just war scars, but the number was done by Hojo."

"So there are at least 13!?" questioned Tifa.

“...You know...” said Aeris. “I think Hojo did something to those men in the Black Capes. But, I don’t know what it has to do with Sephiroth though... That’s why I think we should just go after Sephiroth himself.”

“Yeah, me too!” exclaimed Barret. “It’s all just too damn confusin’.”

“And...” said Aeris. “I’m sorry, forget it!” She paused for a second. “I think I’m tired. I’m going to bed now.”

Aeris ran up to her room, and Cait Sith asked, “What was that, all of a sudden!?”

“What!? That’s it?” said Yuffie. “I’m goin’ to bed.” She ran off to bed, and Cait Sith asked, “is that all? How ‘bout the Black Materia.?”

“You wouldn’t understand even if I told you,” responded Cloud.

“Now, all we gotta do is take action!” exclaimed Barret. “We’re startin’ tomorrow!!” Barret then ran off to his room, and Red XIII spoke, “Cloud... I’m number 13. Am I going to go mad too?”

Tifa walked over to Red XIII, and said, “I don’t know what Hojo did to you, but you’ve been all right so far, right?”

“But...” said Red XIII.

“Be strong,” stated Tifa.

“But, I...”

Tifa placed her hands on her hips, and exclaimed, “Stop it, Red XIII! Be strong!”

Cloud didn’t like Tifa’s tone, and said, “Tifa?”

“You’re not the only one who’s worried!” Tifa added.

“I don’t know what’s goin’ on, but we’re in a bad situation...” said Cait Sith.

Vincent then walked over to Cid, who was sleeping in the Chair. Vincent shook Cid, and said, “Hey Cid, let’s go back to our rooms.”

“...zzzz...zzzz...” was Cid’s response.

Vincent decided to let Cid sleep, and they all went to their rooms. As the night went on, Cloud was looking out the window, pondering some thoughts, when there was a knock on his door. He walked over to the middle of the room, and Aeris walked in.

“Hee, hee!” she giggled.

“What’s wrong?” asked Cloud.

Aeris was acting a little strange, and then she asked, “You want to go on a date?”

Cloud was caught off guard, and said, “What?”

“A D-A-T- E! Or haven’t you ever gone on one?”

Cloud not sure of how to answer this question, thought for a second, and said, “Well, not a real one...”

“No, just a mixed-up kid...” commented Aeris. She then ran up behind him, and started to push him out of the room. “Oh well. Come on, let’s go!”

“Hey,” responded Cloud as he was forced to leave his room.

They arrived in the round room, which was towards the entrance of Gold Saucer. When they arrived there was a coordinator announcing, “Tonight’s Enchantment Night! All the attractions are free. How ‘bout it you two? There’s going to be an entertaining show in Event Square!”

“Come on, let’s go.” stated Aeris.

They went to the Event Square, and when they entered the door greater said, “Congratulations!! You are our 100th couple today!! You two will be the leads in tonight’s show!!!!”

Cloud was confused, and said, “Wha?”

“Oh, now,” said the greeter. “It’s not that hard. Just play it however you want to and the rest of the cast will cover up for you.”

The greeter started to walk off, then turned back to them and said, “Come this way.”

“H, hey! Exclaimed Cloud.

“This sounds like fun,” stated Aeris. “Come on Cloud, let’s do it.”

Cloud shrugged his shoulder, and before he knew it he was back stage getting ready to act in a play. Then the Narrator started, “Long, long ago... An evil shadow appeared over the peaceful kingdom of Galdia... Princess Rosa was just kidnapped by the Evil Dragon King, Valvados. What will become of her? Just then, the legendary hero, Alfred, appears!!”

Cloud then ran out onto the stage, and a knight danced out onto the stage as well. The knight stood next to Cloud, and said, “Oh... You must be the legendary hero... Alfred!”

Cloud just stood there, confused, and the knight whispered, “Hey, it’s your line.”

Cloud looked at the knight, and pointed to himself, and the Knight said, “Yeah, you.”

The knight cleared his throat, and said, “Ahem! Oh... You must be the legendary hero... Alfred! I know in my soul. Please... please save Princess Rosa!” The knight took a knee, and continued, “Now... Please talk... to the King....!”

The knight stepped back and the King danced onto the stage. Cloud went up to the King, and the King said, “Oh... legendary hero, Alfred. You have come to save my beloved Rosa... On the peak of a dangerous mountain... dwells the Evil Dragon King, Valvados... who’s kidnapped Princess Rosa... But you can’t beat the Evil Dragon King now! Talk to one who can help you...”

Then a wizard danced onto the stage, and Cloud walked over to him.

“I am the great wizard, Vorman. What do you wish to know?”

“The Evil Dragon King’s weakness.” responded Cloud.

“Ahh, the weakness of the Evil Dragon King. It must be, it must be...” the wizard paused for a second. “Yes, it must be... True love! The power of love... Is the only weapon that can withstand the fangs of the Dragon King...!”

Then the Narrator announced, “Oh what is going to happen next...! Oh... Legendary hero...look!”

Then the Evil Dragon King flew onto the stage with Aeris, and he let out a hideous roar. “Gaaaaaah! I am the Evil Dragon King... Valvados! I have not harmed the Princess... I have been expecting...you!”

“Please help me... Legendary hero!” said Aeris. She then looked up to the dragon and whispered, “psst...like that?”

The Evil Dragon nodded, and continued with his lines. “Gaaaaaah! Here I come, Legendary hero...Alfred. I already know... your name!”

“And now... Legendary hero...! Here is what will happen... to your beloved...” said the Wizard. He took a knee, and continued, “A kiss! The power of True Love!!

Cloud walked over to Aeris, kneeled down, and kissed her hand.

“Cloud... I mean, Alfred...” said Aeris.

Cloud stood up, and the Evil Dragon King exclaimed, “Arrrggaahhh!! Curses... The power of... love!” The Evil Dragon King flew away, and the King announced, “oh...look! Love has...triumphed! Now let’s all return... And celebrate.”

“Yes let’s, yes let’s” stated the wizard. The Knight along with everyone else danced off the stage, and the Narrator said, “Oh, how profound the power of love... And so the Legendary hero Alfred and our story live on happily ever after.” The audience applauded, and cheered.

Cloud and Aeris then returned to the round room, and Aeris said, “Oh, that was fun. Hey, let’s go on the Gondola.”

Cloud nodded, and they went to Round Square, to ride the Gondola. They arrived and walked up to the ticket lady. “Two, please,” said Aeris.

“Here you are, two tickets,” responded the ticket lady as she handed them the tickets. They took the tickets, and entered the Gondola.

“Enjoy the sights of Gold Saucer,” stated the Ticket lady as the door closed to the Gondola. The Gondola started, and took them around the sights of Gold Saucer. Aeris was looking out the window, and Cloud was sitting across from her.

“Wow, how nice,” said Aeris was gazing out the window. “Oh! Look, Cloud. It’s so pretty.” Cloud looked out the window to see a colorful display of fireworks. “...It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” asked Aeris with amazement in her voice.

They both sat back, and Aeris looked at the floor. She then said in a low tone, “...first off, it bothered me how you look exactly alike.” She picked her head up. “Two completely different people, but look exactly the same. The way you walk, gesture... I think I must have seen him again, in you...but you’re different.” She lowered her head, towards the floor, and sadly said, “Things are different... Cloud I’m searching for you. I want to meet you.”

Cloud was confused by what Aeris was saying, and responded, “But I’m right here.”

“I know, I know...what I mean is...I want to meet...you.”

Cloud didn’t respond, and the Gondola arrived back to the station, and they both got off. “I had fun tonight. Let’s go together again,” said Aeris. Cloud still had a confused look on his face, and this prompted Aeris to ask, “You don’t like being with me?”

Cloud shook his head and said, “That’s not it.”

Aeris eyes lit up with enjoyment, and said, “I’m glad. Next time we come, let’s take our time and go on more rides.” Aeris then noticed how late it was, and said, “Oh, look at the time. We’d better get going.”

Cloud nodded and they left. They went back to the round room, to go back to the hotel, only to find Cait Sith. “Hey? What’s Cait Sith doing?” asked Aeris.

Cloud then noticed something different about Cait Sith, like he was trying to hide something. Then Cloud saw an item that Cait Sith had, that looked like the Keystone.

“Is that the...Keystone?” asked Cloud Aeris. Aeris didn’t get a chance to respond, because Cloud shouted, “Hey! Cait Sith!”

Cait Sith turned around to see Cloud, and Aeris, and made a run for it. He first ran to the Battle arena, and then to Speed Square. Cloud followed him, only to miss him in both locations.

They followed him to Wonder Square, and when they arrive, they saw an employee dressed in a Chocobo suit. Cloud noticed the employee just standing there nervously, and walked up to him.

As they approached the employee, Cloud saw Cait Sith standing behind him. Cloud tried to catch him, but he jumped to the Chocobo Races shoot. Cloud again followed him, and cased up a flight of stairs, into the Chocobo registration area. They play ring around the counter, and Cait Sith ran out. Cloud followed him, outside to see a helicopter, with Tseng on it.

Cait Sit hopped to the helicopter, and Tsang yelled, "Hey! Over here! The Keystone!" Cait Sith threw the Keystone, and Tseng caught it. "Well done," complemented Tseng, and he flew away.

Cloud arrived two seconds too late, and exclaimed, "Hey!"

Cait Sith turned around, and said, "W, wait a second. I won't run or hide. Yes I was a spy. I was hired by the Shinra.

They both were shocked to hear him say that, and Aeris exclaimed, "...I trusted you. I can't believe you!"

"I couldn't help it. How about if we continue like nothing ever happened?"

"No way, cat!" exclaimed Cloud. "You gotta lot of guts acting like a friend but being a spy!"

"Then, what are you goin' to do? Kill me? You'd just be wastin' your time if you tried. This body's just a toy anyway. My real body's at Shinra Headquarters in Midgar. I'm controllin' this toy cat from there. "

"So you're from Shinra," stated Aeris. "Who? Who are you! Tell me!"

"Whoa, I can't tell you my name.

Cloud was just frustrated with the whole situation, and said, "We're not getting anywhere."

"See? I told you! Talking won't do you any good, so can't we just continue our journey?"

"You think I'm jokin'!?" questioned Cloud.

"...Alright, yes, I am a Shinra employee. But we're not entirely enemies..." Cait Sith paused for a second. "Some thing bothers me. I think it's your way of life. You don't get praised. Yet, you still risk your lives and continue on you journey. Seeing that makes me... It just makes me think about my life. I don't think I'd feel too good if things ended the way they are now."

Aeris not really in the mood to talk with Cait Sith, said, "...And so on, and so on..."

"He'll never tell the truth," stated Cloud. "Once a spy, always a spy. We can't go with someone like that. C'mon get real!!"

"...Just as I thought. Talking won't make a bit of difference. But I prepared something in case this happened. Why don't you listen to this?"

Then a voice of a little girl appeared, "Papa! Tifa!"

"Hey!" exclaimed Aeris. "That's Marlene!"

"Hey! It's the flower lady! Flower lady..." Marlene's voice faded away, and Cait Sith stated, "...So, you have to do as I say.

Cloud now angrier than before, said, "...you're the lowest..."

“I didn’t want to do this... using dirty ticks and taking hostages... But this is how it is... no compromises. So why don’t we continue on as we did?”

Neither Cloud or Aeris responded, and Cait Sith started to walk away. He then turned back and mentioned, “Oh, you didn’t seem to know this, but... The Keystone is the key to the Temple of the Ancients. Even so, you’re still going, right?”

Cloud nodded, and Cait Sith added, “I know where it is, so I’ll show you later. The Shinra have already been there, but I guess you have to deal with that.

Cait Sith wondered away, and Cloud said, “...Well, we’re stuck... We’ll have to do what he says.”

“I wonder if Marlene is all right... I wonder what happened to Mom.” added Aeris. They both made their way back to the hotel to get some rest.

Chapter 14: Temple of the Ancients

The next morning Cloud was awake early, he really didn't sleep much during the night. With this new situation at hand, he wasn't sure of what would happen now, but he knew he must continue. He went down to the lobby to see everyone waiting for him. When he arrived, Cait Sith asked, "What took you so long, Cloud?"

Cloud didn't feel like talking with the traitor, and didn't say a word. Cait Sith could feel the tension, but didn't care. Cait Sith then mentioned, "Oh yeah, about the Temple of the Ancients. I think if we take the Tiny Bronco east towards the sea, we should be able to find it."

No, one responded, and Cait Sith said, "Well then, shall we get goin'? Who's gonna go?"

Aeris more anxious to go than the rest exclaimed, "I want to go! I'm going for sure!"

Cloud then decided that he would keep his normal traveling group, and picked Tifa, and they left Gold Saucer. They went back to the Tiny Bronco, and went east as Cait Sith had said.

A short time later they found the Temple of the Ancients. They entered the area with caution, because they knew the Shinra was there. They came to a rope-bridge, and Aeris knelt down.

"This is... the Temple of the Ancients..." stated Aeris. "I... I know... I feel it... The knowledge of the Ancients...floating... You could become one with the Planet, but you're stopping it with the strength of will. For the future? For us?"

Cloud knelt next to her, and asked, "What are you saying? Do you understand?"

Aeris then stood up, and ran towards the temple. Cloud, and Tifa quickly followed her. They ran up a flight of stairs, and all of sudden Aeris stopped.

"You're uneasy..." said Aeris. "But happy?" She looked around, and said, "Because I'm here? I'm sorry... I don't understand."

She turned towards Cloud, and ran up to him. "I want to go inside!"

Then out of the temple came one of the Black Cape men, and dropped to the ground. Cloud proceeded with caution, and checked the Black Caped man. The Black cape man stood up, and said, "Black... Materia..." He then fell back to the ground. Aeris knelt next to him, and said, "Look..."

Cloud and Tifa look to what Aeris was pointing to, and Tifa said, "Number 9. Another man with a tattoo."

Then there was a green flash, followed by a blinding bright white. Then a strange force lifted the Black Caped man, and he disappeared. Cloud thought this was strange, but still went into the Temple.

When they entered they saw Tseng sitting on the floor, leaning up against the Alter. He had his hand over his chest, and his head was facing the floor.

"Hey!" exclaimed Aeris. "It's Tseng!"

Tseng then stood up, and Cloud questioned, "Tseng? Of the Turks?"

"Uh... I've been had," stated Tseng, as he fell back to the floor. "It's not the Promised Land... Sephiroth's searching for..."

"Sephiroth? He's inside!?" questioned Cloud.

“Look... for yourself...” said Tseng as he threw them the Keystone. “Damn... Letting Aeris go was the start... of my... bad luck... The President... was wrong...”

“You’re wrong,” snapped Aeris. “The Promised Land isn’t like what you imagined.” She turned away. “And, I’m not going to help. Either way, there was no way Shinra could have won.”

Aeris ran and hid in between some pillars, and Tseng said, “...Pretty harsh. Sounds like something... you’d say.” He then stood up. “The Keystone...place it... on... the altar...” He moved away from the altar, and sat down by a pillar. Cloud walked over to Aeris, and asked, “You crying?”

She turned to face Cloud, and responded, “...Tseng’s with our enemy, the Turks, but I’ve known him since we were little... There’s not a lot of people I can say that about. In fact, there are probably a handful of people in the world who really know me.”

With that said, they decided to explore the temple. Cloud walked up the altar, and said, “Let’s put the Keystone in.” He placed the Keystone in the altar, and mysteriously they floated through the floor, as if wasn’t there.

What they saw next was a large room filled with many corridors, and paths. Aeris immediately separated from them, stopped, and said, “Words... Feelings... So many of them here.”

Tifa ran up next to Aeris, and said, “What a strange place. Do you think we’re welcome here?”

Aeris then ran back to Cloud, and said, “...Cloud! I know it’s going to be tough, but... Don’t give up! We can do it!”

Cloud nodded, and they began their way through the huge maze. With so many paths, and choices, it had seemed hopeless. On top of that the creatures that lived here, didn’t enjoy their company, and tried to kill them on several occasions.

As they explored Cloud noticed a pointy hat person. He wore a light purple robe, and had a long white bread. Cloud figured that he would know how to get through the maze, and cornered him in a small room.

“Nyum...nyum,” went the creature.

Aeris ran up to him, and said, “Whew! We finally caught up to you. I’m sorry. You waited for me. Those are the spirit bodies of the Ancients. They’ve been away from their Planet for a long time to protect this Temple.”

Aeris walked over to Cloud and Tifa, and said, “Over the many years, they’ve lost the ability to talk. Actually, they didn’t need words from the beginning because there was only one objective for those left in the temple.”

Aeris then walked back the creature, and said, “Please, Talk to me.!”

The creature made sounds, and Aeris said, “No good. I don’t understand the rest. Are you afraid? Is it because Sephiroth is in the temple? Or something else?”

A minute had passed, and they decided to continue. They went back to the room that was a huge maze, and started searching again. A short time later they found another pointed hat creature and chased him.

He ran into a room that had giant boulders rolling in the middle of the path, and they had to figure out the timing to get to the Creature. After studying the boulders, they tried to cross the path, just making in to the other side. At the other side of the path, The boulders had stopped.

“Phew--- We did it!” exclaimed Aeris who was out of breath.

“Everyone all right?” asked Cloud. “That sure took a lot out of us.”

Aeris ran back down the path, turned back and exclaimed, “Oh no... Cloud. Come quick!! Hurry this way!”

Cloud and Tifa followed Aeris to a pool of purple water. Aeris was standing there, and looked to be praying. The pool began to glow, and Aeris stopped praying.

“It’s full of the knowledge of the Ancients,” stated Aeris. “No... not knowledge... consciousness... a living soul... It’s trying to say something.” She kneeled next to the pool. “I’m sorry, I don’t understand.” She then leaned toward the pool. “What? What is it?”

She stood up, and said in a confused tone, “...Danger? An evil... consciousness? ...show? You’re going to show me?”

The pool then showed a room with writing on the wall with Tseng and Elena standing there staring at the wall.

“What’s going on?” asked Cloud.

“Wait!” exclaimed Aeris. “Look! It’s showing us!”

The continued to watch, and Elena ran over to Tseng.

“Tseng, what’s this?” questioned Elena. “Can we find the Promised Land with this?”

Tseng turned to Elena, and responded, “...I wonder. Anyway, we have to report to the President.”

Elena nodded, and started to leave. She then turned back to Tseng, and said, “Be careful Tseng.”

“Yeah...” he paused and swallowed hard. “Hey Elena, how ‘bout dinner after this job is over?”

She nodded, and responded, “Th... Thank you very much. If I may be excused...” She ran off to report, and Tseng shook his head. He then walked over to the wall trying to read what was written. He then said to himself, “Is this the Promised Land? No, it can’t be...”

There was a flashing light, and Sephiroth appeared behind him. Tseng heard Sephiroth, turned around, and exclaimed “Sephiroth!!”

Sephiroth standing tall, with his sword in hand responded, “So you opened the door. Well done.”

Tseng walked towards Sephiroth, and asked, “This place... what is it?”

Sephiroth took a step toward Tseng, and stated, “A lost treasure house of knowledge. The wisdom of the Ancients...” He then turned away, and raised his arms. “I am becoming one with the Planet.”

Tseng confused, said, “One with the planet?”

Sephiroth just stood there, and it seemed that his spirit had left his body. Now a ghostly figure stood there staring at Cloud and the others. Then Sephiroth spoke, but it was as if he was talking directly to them.

“You stupid fools. You have never even thought about it. All the spirit energy of this planet. All its wisdom...knowledge... I will meld with it all. I will become one with it... It will become one with me.”

Tseng shock to hear Sephiroth’s plan, said, “...you can do that?”

“Then the words came out form his mouth, but the spirit was still watching Cloud and the others. “The way... lies here.” Sephiroth ran his sword through Tseng, and said;

“Only death awaits you all. But do not fear. For it is through death that a new spirit energy is born. Soon, you will live again as a part of me.”

The projection stopped, and Aeris asked, “Did you see it?”

“...I saw it,” responded Tifa.

“...Where is the room with the pictures on the walls?” asked Cloud.

“Almost there...” responded Aeris.

“Sephiroth is here, right?” asked Cloud.

Aeris nodded, and Cloud stated, “No matter what he thinks, it’s going to end here. I’m taking him out!”

“We’re here too, you know,” mentioned Tifa.

Cloud didn’t respond, and continued on. Tifa and Aeris followed. They went back down the path and tried to speak with the Pointy hat creature, but Aeris couldn’t make it out. They proceeded on to the next room, not knowing what lied ahead.

They entered to see a round room, with twelve doors, the numbers written over them. Then a voice came out of nowhere, “I am the Time Guardian. Ye who seek the knowledge of the Ancients. I control the time, select your path.”

The clock rotated at random, and stopped. The Time Guardian then spoke, “...it’s time... you may proceed.” They proceeded, only to find a dead end. They would continue this until they found the correct path they were looking for.

Finally they found one that took them to a room that had many doors. The doors intertwined with each other. There was only one door that led out, and that door was locked up by another pointy hat creature. They entered the room just as he had locked the door, and upon seeing them, he ran.

Aeris ran up to the door, and tried to open it. After she tried she turned to Cloud and said, “Hey! It’s locked. No good. We have to catch it!” She then ran back to Cloud and said, “You must be tired.”

Cloud feeling a little fatigue said, “Yeah.”

“Just hang in there. Someday we’ll look back at these hard times and laugh”

Cloud nodded, and began to chase the creature. In and out of doors, it had seemed like they were always one step behind. Finally Cloud figured out the creature’s pattern and caught it. The door unlocked, and they went on.

They finally made it to the room that had all the writing on the wall. “This is the room with the mural...” stated Aeris.

Cloud looked around the room, and shouted, “Where are you!? Sephiroth!!”

Then out of nowhere he appeared, with his body flashing white. “So cold,” Sephiroth said. “I am always by your side. Come.”

They proceeded down the narrow room, and found Sephiroth standing by the wall. He was facing the wall, and said, “Splendid.” He then walked towards them. “A treasure house of knowledge...”

“I don’t understand what you’re saying!” exclaimed Cloud.

Sephiroth laughed, and disappeared. Cloud went further, and found Sephiroth again looking at the wall. Sephiroth then walked up to them again. “Look well,” said Sephiroth.

“At what!?” questioned Cloud.

“At that which adds to the knowledge of... I am becoming one with the planet.” Sephiroth then did it again, and disappeared. Cloud again walked further in the room, to find Sephiroth again, but this time he was sitting on the floor, leaning up against an altar.

“...Mother... it’s almost time,” said Sephiroth. “Soon... we will become one.”

Cloud, and the others approached Sephiroth, and he stood up.

“How do you intend to become one with the planet?” asked Aeris.

“It’s simple,” responded Sephiroth swing his sword around. “Once the planet is hurt, it gathers Spirit Energy to heal the injury.” He swung his sword around again. “The amount of energy gathered depends on the size of the injury.” He then stuck his sword in the ground. “...What would happen if there was an injury that threatened the very life of the Planet? Think how much energy would be gathered!”

He pulled out his sword, and continued, “Ha ha ha. And at the center of that injury, will be me. All that boundless energy will be mine. By merging with all the energy of the planet, I will become a new life form, a new existence. Melding with the planet... I will cease to exist as I am now... Only to reborn as a ‘God’ to rule over every soul.”

Aeris couldn’t believe her ears, and asked, “An injury powerful enough to destroy the planet? Injure...the planet?”

“Be hold that mural. The Ultimate Destructive Magic... Meteor.”

“That’ll never happen!” exclaimed Cloud.

The room went white, and Sephiroth then flew off. “Wake up!!” He exclaimed, as the room turned back to normal.

Cloud looked around the room, and shouted, “Where are you!? Sephiroth!!”

Cloud then ran off, looking confused.

“Wait, Cloud,” exclaimed Aeris, and they followed him.

Cloud then stopped, and turned to the wall. He was just staring there, and it was like he was fading in and out of reality.

“Cloud!!” exclaimed Aeris.

Cloud just stood there staring at the picture of a huge Meteor. Tifa then shouted, “Hey, Cloud!”

There was a long silence, and then Cloud spoke, but his voice sounded dark, and evil. “Ha ha ha... Black Materia... Ha ha ha... Call Meteor.”

Aeris ran up to Cloud, and shouted, “Cloud!! Get a hold of yourself!”

Cloud began shaking, and placed his hand over his ears, and said, “Cloud... I’m Cloud... How Should I?”

Cloud then regained himself, and shook his head. “...I remember! I remember my way.” He walked over to Aeris, and she said, “...Cloud.”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and said, “Mm? What’s wrong? Is something wrong?”

Aeris shook her head, and responded, “...It’s nothing so don’t worry about it.” She ran over to Tifa, nodded, and added, “Right, Tifa! It’s nothing.” Tifa nodded, and Aeris ran over to Cloud.

“Sephiroth got away,” mentioned Aeris.

“..Don’t worry about it,” said Cloud. “I understand what he was saying.” Cloud then pointed to the wall, and continued. “So this must be Meteor, right?”

Aeris nodded, and Tifa asked, “Is something going to fall from the sky?”

Aeris looked at the wall, and said, "...this must be magic. Just what Sephiroth was saying." She turned back to the others. "The Ultimate Destructive Magic, Meteor. It finds small drifting planets with its magic. And then collides with them. This planet might get wiped out entirely..."

The temple began to shake violently, and Cloud questioned, "Sephiroth!?"

Then Sephiroth's voice came out of no where, "Ha ha ha... It's not me."

Then Red Dragon appeared, and it attacked them. Cloud, and the others responded quickly. They battled it out against the fierce beast, and Cloud got the final hit, running his sword through its heart.

The Red Dragon's body faded away, turning into the Bahamut Materia. Cloud picked up the materia, and asked the others, "Any sign of Sephiroth?"

"He disappeared," stated Aeris.

Cloud decided to check out the altar. They walked over to the Altar, and saw a floating model of the temple. Upon seeing this, Cloud questioned, "What is this?"

Aeris look at the Altar, and said, "...There's something written on it." She took a closer look, and read it out loud, "...B.l.a.c.k... M.a.t.e.r.i.a."

"Black Materia!!" exclaimed Cloud.

Aeris shook her head, and said, "Hey! ...Black Materia. What should we do, Cloud?"

"Take it!" responded Cloud as he tried to take the Black Materia, but as soon as he touched it the temple began to shake. Cloud removed his hands, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Wait a minute," said Aeris. "I'll ask!"

She then began to think, trying to ask. "I don't understand... What? Really!?" She then looked at Cloud, and said, "They said that the Temple itself is the Black Materia."

Cloud confused, asked, "What do they mean?"

"So, this whole building is the Black Materia?" asked Aeris.

"This huge Temple? This is the Black Materia!?" asked Cloud. "Then no one could take it."

"Hmm, it's pretty hard," said Aeris. "You see this is a model of the Temple. And inside it is a device which gets smaller each time you solve a puzzle. As the model becomes smaller you become smaller too. Until it's small enough to fit in the palm of your hand."

"So, if we solve the puzzles, the Black Materia will get smaller and smaller and we can take it out?" asked Cloud.

"Yes, but there's one thing..." said Aeris. "You can only answer the puzzles inside the Temple. So, anyone who solves the puzzle will be crushed by the Temple."

"I see..." said Cloud. "The Ancients didn't want dangerous magic to be taken out of the Temple so easily..."

There was a sight pause, and Tifa suggested, "Let's just leave it, OK?"

"No," responded Cloud. "We've got to think of a way to get it out. Because Sephiroth has lots of different flunkies. It's nothing to him to throw their lives away to get the Black Materia. This place isn't safe."

Cloud touched the model of the temple, and again the inside of the Temple shook. "So, what are we going to do?" questioned Cloud.

He began to think, and then the PHS rang. Cloud answered it, and the voice on the other end began talking. "Hi, Cloud. This is Cait Sith. I over heard the whole story! Don't forget about me."

Cloud was confused as to what Cait Sith was saying, and Cait Sith continued. "Everything you said makes perfect sense! You can use my stuffed Body for the future of the Planet."

"We can't let Sephiroth get his hands on the Black Materia," said Cloud. "And we can't let the Shinra get theirs on it either."

"But, Cloud," responded Cait Sith. "There's really nothing else you can do. Everyone, please trust me."

Cloud knowing that this would probably be the only way to get the Black Materia, said, "I guess we have no choice."

"All right then!" exclaimed Cait Sith. "Leave it to me!" There was a slight pause. "Please hurry, you've got to get out of here! I'll be waiting at the exit!"

Cloud hung up the PHS, and nodded to Tifa and Aeris. They then made their way out. When they entered the room that had the floor clock, the time was at 6 o'clock, and the Time Guardian wouldn't allow them to change it.

Being forced into a way they didn't want to go, they continued. The path took them to another door, like a back door to the temple. Cloud walked up to the door, and touched it. He immediately pulled his hand away, turned to Tifa, and Aeris. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's warm..." The room began to shake, and Cloud stated, "This isn't good..."

A Creature then morphed out of the wall, and Aeris and Tifa took a few steps back. Cloud hadn't seen the monster, and Aeris shouted, "Cloud... behind you."

Cloud turned around to see the creature, sticking out of the wall, and ran down to Tifa and Aeris. Demon's Gate then attacked them. They quickly went into action, summoning creatures to fight off the Demon's Gate.

The Demon's Gate then crushed them, knocking them off guard, but they recovered quickly, killing Demons Gate.

The door opened, and Cait Sith came through. "Sorry to keep you waiting!" exclaimed Cait Sith. "It's me!! I'll handle the rest!" Cait Sith started to leave, and added, "Well everyone... Take care of yourselves!"

"Cait Sith..." said Aeris as she lowered her head. She then ran to Cloud, and said, "Come on, Cloud... Say Something."

Cloud scratched his head, and stated, "I'm not good at this."

Cait Sith turned around, and said, "Mmm, I understand. I feel the same way too."

Aeris then had a request, "Why don't you read our fortunes?"

"Say, that's right... I haven't done it in a while, huh? I'm so excited. Right or wrong, I'm still the same 'ol me. Now, what should I predict?"

Aeris was excited that Cait Sith was going to do this, and she ran up to Cloud. "Hmm, let's see how compatible Cloud and I are!"

Tifa rolled her eyes, and was not pleased with what Aeris had said.

"That'll cost ya," responded Cait Sith. "Exactly one date!"

Aeris nodded, and Cait Sith said "Here I go!" He did his funny dance, and a piece of paper came out. He took the paper and read it. He then turned his back to them, and said, "This isn't good. I can't say it. Poor Tifa."

Tifa only got more frustrated at those words Aeris exclaimed, “No! tell me! I promise I won’t get mad!”

“Is that so? Then I’ll tell you. Looks good. You are perfect for each other! Aeris’s star and Cloud’s star! They show a great future! Cloud, I’ll be your matchmaker, preacher... I’ll do whatever you want me to! You just call me when it happens!”

Cait Sith then turn his back to them, and lowered his head. “Thank you for believing me, knowing that I was a spy. This is the final, final farewell!” He then hoped off, and Aeris said, “Be strong Cait Sith!!”

Cloud, Tifa, and Aeris left the temple, so Cait Sith could complete his task. As he was hopping along to the altar with the model temple he was talking to himself. “She told me to ‘Be strong.’ I feel so happy.” He then tripped and fell face first onto the floor. “Owww...” He shook his head, and picked himself up. “What happened?” He then moved his body, and hopped around. “I can still move more.”

Cait Sith arrived at the altar, and touched the model temple. The temple shook, and he stated, “This must be it.” He took another look around. “The Ancients sure did a great job making this place. I can protect the planet too! I’m kinda embarrassed... There’s plenty of stuffed toys like my body around, but there’s only one me! Don’t forget me even if another Cait Sith comes along. Good bye, then! I guess I’m off to save the planet...”

Cait Sith removed the model temple, and the temple began to shake. On the outside, Cloud and the others had witness a black field around the temple, and it shrank. Once the commotion had settled down, they ran back across the rope bridge.

Where the Temple of the Ancients had sat, there was now a deep hole, with some black shining thing at the bottom of it. Cloud looked down the hole, and stated, “That’s the Black Materia...” He then turned to Tifa.

“I’ll wait here,” stated Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and he, along with Aeris climbed down the hole. Once at the bottom, Cloud knelt next to the Black materia, and started to pick it up.

“As long as we have this, Sephiroth won’t be able to use Meteor,” stated Cloud. He turned to Aeris, and said, “Mmm?” He shrugged his shoulders and asked, “Can you guys use it?”

“Nope, we can’t use it right now,” responded Aeris. “You need great spiritual power to use it.”

“You mean lots of Spiritual Energy?”

“That’s right. One person’s power alone won’t do it. Somewhere special. Where there’s plenty of the planets energy...” Aeris paused for a second. “Oh yeah! The Promised Land!!”

“The Promised land!! No, but...” responded Cloud with confusion.

“Sephiroth is different. He’s not an Ancient.”

“He shouldn’t be able to find the Promised Land,” stated Cloud.

There was a blinding flash of white light, and Sephiroth appeared at the top of the giant hole. “...Ah, but I have,” he stated. Tifa started to run up to Sephiroth, like she was going to attack him.

Though Sephiroth saw her, and lifted up into the air, and stated, “I’m far superior to the Ancients. I became a traveler of the Lifestream and gained the knowledge and

wisdom of the Ancients. I also gained the knowledge and wisdom of those after the extinction of the Ancients. And soon, I will create the future.”

“I won’t let you do it!” exclaimed Aeris. “The future is not only yours!”

Sephiroth flew a little higher. “Ha, ha, ha... I wonder?” Sephiroth raised his sword, and shouted, “Wake up!” Cloud the started to shake, and he placed his hands on his ears. Sephiroth flew down to Cloud.

“Sh..shut up!” exclaimed Cloud.

Sephiroth kneeled on the ground, and said, “There, Cloud...good boy.”

Then the high pitched sound came. “The... Noise...” said Cloud as he tried to pull himself back together. The noise stopped, and he walked over to Sephiroth.

“Wa...aaa...aaa...” said Cloud as he tried to stop himself. He then handed Sephiroth the Black Materia, and Sephiroth gladly took it. Sephiroth stood up and began laughing.

“...Well done,” said Sephiroth as he flew away. Still at the bottom of the hole, Cloud had his hands over his ears, and shaking. Aeris walked up to Cloud, and asked, “Cloud, are you all right?”

“...I gave the Black Materia to Sephiroth...?” Cloud collapsed to the ground. “Wha...what did I do... tell me, Aeris.”

Aeris kneeled next to Cloud, and said in a calming tone, “Cloud...be strong, OK?”

Cloud tried to stand up, but he was still feeling ill, for his actions. “Urrrrrrgh... What have I done!?”

“Cloud... you haven’t done anything. It’s not your fault.”

Cloud stood up, and pushed Aeris to the ground. He climbed on top of her, and started beating her. While he was doing this, he said, “I...! I’m----!”

“Cloud--!!” exclaimed Tifa, and climbed down to stop him. At the same time a new Cait Sith showed up, and stated, “Oops! This looks like I came at a bad time! “I’m Cait Sith No. 2. Right pleased to meet you all!”

By this time Tifa arrived at the bottom of the hole, and tried to pull Cloud off Aeris. “Cloud, what are you doing!?”

Cloud collapsed, and passed out; and Tifa pulled him off of Aeris.

Chapter 15: The forgotten City.

Cloud was still unconscious, and was possibly dreaming. At first all he saw was a blinding white light. "Everything is white..." he said, as he tried to look around. "What did I do? I don't remember anything... My memory...since when...? If everything's a dream, don't wake me."

The white light faded away, and he saw a beautiful forest. It had seemed so peaceful here. He felt safe here, and hoped that in some way he wasn't dreaming. Then Aeris peeked from behind one of the trees. "Cloud, can you hear me?"

"Yeah, I hear you. Sorry for what happened."

She took a step away from the tree, and said, "Don't worry about it."

..."I can't help it..."

"Oh..." said Aeris as she walked back behind the tree. There was a silence that had come over the forest, and Aeris hopped out from a different tree. "Then, why don't you *really* worry about it?"

Cloud didn't respond, and Aeris added, "And let me handle Sephiroth."

She giggled, and faded away. A couple of seconds later, she walked out from behind another tree. "And Cloud, you take care of yourself." She started back toward the tree, but stopped. "So you don't have a breakdown, okay?" She went behind the tree, and again it was quite.

Aeris then floated down from the top of the trees, and so did Cloud. Once they were on the ground, Cloud looked around, and asked, "What is this place?"

Aeris placed her hands behind her back, and said, "This forest leads to the City of the Ancients... and is called the Sleeping forest. It's only a matter of time before Sephiroth uses meteor. That's why I'm going to protect it. Only a survivor of the Cetra, like me, can do it."

She started to walk away, but turned back. "The secret is just up here." She shook her head. "At least it should be... I feel it. It feels like I'm being led by something." She waved at Cloud. "Then, I'll be going now. I'll come back when it's all over."

Cloud was confused and said, "Aeris?" She ran off, and Cloud tried to chase her, but it was like he was just running in super slow motion. Aeris then disappeared from his sight, and Cloud's dream turned into a nightmare.

It started with a familiar voice, "Hmm... She's thinking of interfering? She will be a difficult one, don't you think?" Sephiroth floated down, and knelt on the ground. "We must stop that girl soon."

There was a flash of white light, and Cloud slowly awoke. He opened his eyes to find himself in the Gongaga inn. He looked around the room, to see Barret, and Tifa standing next to the bed.

"You look like you was havin' a nightmare," said Barret. "How are you feeling?"

"Don't really know," responded Cloud.

"I guess that's right. Well, don't worry too much about it," said Barret.

"You know, Cloud," said Tifa. "Aeris is gone."

"Everyone's out looking for Aeris," added Barret.

Cloud sat up, and said, "...City of the Ancients. Aeris is headed there."

"By herself!?" exclaimed Barret. "Why did she go by herself? Hey, we're goin' too."

Cloud shook his head, and said, "Only the Ancients, only Aeris can save us from Meteor..."

"Then we must go," stated Tifa. "What'll we do if something happens to Aeris? If Sephiroth finds her, she'll be in trouble."

Cloud shook his head again. "Sephiroth...already knows."

"Hey!" exclaimed Barret. "Why are you still sittin' around?"

"Let's go, Cloud," said Tifa.

Cloud placed his hands on his head, and responded, "No. I might lose it again. If Sephiroth comes near me I might..."

"Yeah, goddammit!" exclaimed Barret. "It's 'cuz of you that Sephiroth got the Black materia in the first place. It's your damn fault!"

"My fault?" questioned Cloud.

"I know you got problems... hell, we all do. But you don't even understand yourself," stated Barret. "But you gotta understand that there ain't no gettin' offa this train we're on, till we get to the end of the line."

"Cloud, we came this far..." said Tifa. "Aren't you going to settle up with Sephiroth?"

"No...I'm afraid. If this keeps up, I may go crazy! I'm afraid..."

"Just a damn jackass, that's what you are..." said Barret. "Yo, jes' think about it... How many people in this world do ya think really understand themselves? People get depressed in life because they don't know what's up. But, they go on living. They don't run away... Isn't that how it is?"

Cloud didn't respond, and Barret left. Tifa, who was concerned, said, "Cloud... you'll come with us, right? I believe in you."

She then left the room as well, and Cloud shook his head. "What... am I supposed to do? Pull out of here? Pull out? ...To where?"

In the next room, where Tifa and Barret were standing, they were having a conversation.

"Cloud..." said Tifa.

"Wait a minute, Tifa. Give him a little time. He has to decide this on his own. You believe in Cloud... right?"

Barret then walked outside, and Tifa followed. Cloud who was still sitting on the bed, was trying to figure things out in his head. "...I'm afraid to find out the truth...? But...why?"

He stood up, and was unsure of what to do next. He started by leaving the small inn, and caught up with Tifa and Barret. He exited the Inn to find Barret and Tifa standing by the entrance.

"Cloud..." said Tifa.

"Hey, how are you?" asked Barret. "I just wanna know which is it gonna be? You wanna find out about yourself? Or are you afraid to find out? Either way, you stay around here and about all you can do is worry about it. Even if you go nuts again when you find Sephiroth... If it happens, it happens. I'll smack upside you spikey white head and bring you back to normal!"

"Cloud, it'll be all right," said Tifa. "We're all with you."

"But..." said Cloud in an unsure tone.

"If it happens, it happens," repeated Barret. "Don't worry 'bout it."

Cloud crossed his arms, and tapped his foot. "... You're...right... He's right, isn't he?"

"Come on, let's go and find Aeris..." said Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and they started their search for Aeris. Cloud knew where Aeris went, but he had no idea of how to get there. He knew that they must find the Sleeping forest. He pulled out the map, and noticed that there was only a couple of places that they hadn't been to. He also remembered that Sephiroth was heading north, so he decided north was the way they should go.

They traveled north, in the Tiny Bronco, and they made landing near a giant skeleton, Bone Village. Cloud knew it would hurt to ask questions, and start poking around. He started talking to a man, who was very busy at work.

"What do you want?" asked the worker.

"Do you know where Aeris is?" asked Cloud.

The man stopped working, and said, "Are you talking about that Girl. I warned her, but she went into the Sleeping Forest anyway."

The man went back to work. Cloud knew he was on the right track, and asked the man, "Where is the City of the Ancients?"

"The City of the Ancients? Oh, you must mean the Forgotten City." The man again went back to work. Cloud did try to get some more information, out of him, but he refused to talk.

Cloud spoke with many other workers. He learned that Aeris had gone through the Sleeping Forest, and that Sephiroth had followed her. He also learned the location of the Sleeping forest, and that he needed the Lunar Harp to get through it. During some of the conversations, he learned that Aeris had found a Lunar Harp to go through the Sleeping Forest. The workers said that there could be another, if he wanted them to look for it, to talk to their boss.

Cloud walked up to the boss, to ask him about the Lunar harp, but he had already heard about it from his employees. "The Lunar Harp is somewhere in the ground here. We could excavate it for you if you want us to."

"Start diggin'" responded Cloud.

"All right! Then I'll lend you some of my staff. Show us where you want us to dig!"

Cloud hired the men, and ordered a dig, and they worked through the night, but they found nothing. Cloud wouldn't give up though, he kept ordering dig after dig. Night after night, nothing was found. After almost searching the entire site, the digging crew finally found the Lunar harp.

Now with harp in hand, they left Bone Village, and entered the Sleeping Forest. As they walked through the forest, there was a flash of green light, and they were able to continue.

A little while later they arrived at the Forgotten City. They searched high and low through the ruins, but couldn't find any sign of Aeris, or Sephiroth. They did however find a room, with a see through fish, and seaweed. Cloud thought this display was strange, but decided to get some rest, and resume their search in the morning.

They went on to find a place to rest, and entered a hive shaped building, to find some beds.

"Heh, there's a bed," stated Barret.

“Shall we take a break here?” asked Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and they took a rest.

During the night Cloud awoke, and was walking around the room. “I feel it...” said Cloud. Barret and Tifa awoke as well, and walked over to Cloud.

“Cloud, what is it?” asked Barret.

“Aeris is here... and so is Sephiroth,” responded Cloud.

“Wh, what! Sephiroth!?” exclaimed Barret.

“But how can you tell?” asked Tifa.

“...It’s not an excuse. I feel it in my soul.”

“Then, we better get up offa our lazy asses!!” exclaimed Barret.

Cloud nodded, and said, “...right. Let’s hurry and find Aeris.”

Again they searched the city. Cloud listened to his gut feeling, and he was led back to the room where the display fish was at. When they arrived in the room, the fish was gone, and replaced by a crystal spiral stair case. They climbed down the stairs, to see a beautiful underwater city.

In the center of this underwater city, Aeris was on her knees, and appeared to be praying. Cloud saw her and said, “Aeris?”

Barret then ran up to Cloud to follow him, but Cloud waved him back. Cloud walked out to where Aeris was. He cross the water, and arrived at a small stair case. He was about to go up the stairs, when he stopped, and shook his head.

Cloud stood there for a moment, and then walked up to Aeris. He then turned his back to her, and drew his sword. He then took a step away from her, and turned to face her.

He grabbed the sword with both hands and raised it above his head. Cloud now trying to fight what ever was forcing him to do this, swung the sword

“Cloud...” shouted Tifa.

“Stop it!!” shouted Barret.

Cloud snapped out of the trance, and walked backwards away. “Ugh...what are you making me do?”

He gazed upon Aeris, and she opened her eyes to see Cloud. She smiled at him, unknowing to the both of them that from above that Sephiroth was falling down towards Aeris, with sword in hand. As Cloud was gazing into her eyes, Sephiroth’s sword went through Aeris back, and out her stomach.

Aeris slumped over, and Sephiroth looked at Cloud coldly. He then slowly pulled out his sword, and Aeris’s body began to fall to the floor. Cloud moved quickly to catch Aeris, and the one Materia she had, bounced into the water, and sank to the bottom.

Aeris was dead before she fell into Cloud’s arms, Sephiroth just stood there, full of pride.

“...Aeris,” said Cloud sadly. He shook her hoping to get a response, but she just laid there lifeless. “This can’t be real!”

“Do not worry,” said Sephiroth.” Soon the girl will become part of the planet’s energy. All that is left is to go north. The ‘Promised land’ waits for me over the snowy fields. There, I will become a new being by uniting with the planet. As will this girl...”

“Shut up,” said Cloud with anger. He began to shake, and shed tears for his fallen companion. He looked at Sephiroth, and said, “The cycle of nature and your stupid plan don’t mean a thing. Aeris is gone. Aeris will no longer talk, no longer laugh, cry... or get

angry..." Cloud lowered his head onto her body. "What about us...what are *we* supposed to do? What about my pain? My fingers are tingling. My mouth is dry. My eyes are burning!"

Sephiroth looked at Cloud, and said with curiosity, "What are you saying? Are you trying to tell me you have feelings too?"

Cloud quickly stood up, and snapped, "Of Course! Who do you think I am!?"

Sephiroth began laughing, "Ha, ha, ha.... Stop acting as if you were sad. There's no need to act though you're angry either." Sephiroth then started to fly away, and added, "Because, Cloud. You are..." He then flew away, and dropped a part of Jenova.

Tifa and Barret quickly went to Cloud's side to fight Jenova -LIFE. Even though they had Aeris's death on their minds, they killed Jenova-LIFE with ease.

Then the voice that Cloud had heard in his head many times, was revealed as Jenova, and she said, "Because, you are... a puppet."

"I'm a...puppet?"

The voice stopped, and Barret walked over to Aeris. He lowered his head for a moment, and then walked over to Cloud. He placed his hand on his shoulder, looked back to Aeris, and then walked off.

Tifa ran over to Aeris, knelt down, and placed her hand on Aeris' head. She brushed her hair, and then ran off crying. Cloud walked over to Aeris, and picked up her body. He carried her back to the top, and gave her a memorial ceremony.

He carried her body out into a body of water, and said his final good bye. He then let go, and she sank to the bottom of the pond. Afterwards they went back to one of the hive shaped buildings, where Cloud gave a speech.

"Everyone, listen to me I'm Cloud, ex-Soldier, born in Nibelheim. I came to settle up with Sephiroth."

"...What's going on?" asked Tifa.

"I came here by my own free will... Or so I thought. However... To tell the truth, I'm afraid of myself... There is a part of me that I don't understand. That part that made me give the Black Materia to Sephiroth. If you hadn't stopped me. Aeris might have been..." Cloud paused. "There's something inside of me. A person who is not really me. That's why I should quit this journey. Before I do something terrible."

Cloud made a fist and started shaking his hand. "But I am going. He destroyed my hometown five years ago, killed Aeris, and is now trying to destroy the Planet. I'll never forgive... Sephiroth. I... I must go on."

Cloud lowered his fist, and continued. "I have a favor to ask of you. Will you all come with me? ...To save me from doing something terrible."

"...I dunno, man..." responded Barret.

Cloud shook his head. "I don't know how Aeris tried to save the planet from Meteor. And I guess now we'll never know. But! We still have a chance. We must get that Black Materia Back before Sephiroth uses it. Let's go."

Part Two: Holy, Meteor & the Lifestream

Chapter 01: Reality or an illusion

Cloud with a heavy heart, along with the others, decided to move on. Their mission was to get the Black Materia from Sephiroth, and possibly kill him. Knowing Sephiroth had to cross snowy fields to get to the Promised Land; that north was the direction they needed to go.

They started to leave the Forgotten City, and Tifa asked, "Sephiroth... I wonder which way he went?"

Cloud placed his hands on his head, "...ugh." He then saw a vision of Sephiroth leaving the city. He then lowered his hands and Barret asked, "Hey, you awright?" Cloud shook his head, said "Hmmm... Sephiroth said to me... head North... past the Snow Fields..."

With that in mind they followed the path that Sephiroth had took. They left the city and headed north. They first came to the Corral Valley Cave, and had to pass through it. Once they were through, they continued north, and arrived at the Icicle Inn, and small resort village.

They stocked up on supplies, and rested. The next day they were going to head north, but a villager stopped them.

"No, don't!!" exclaimed the Villager. "It's a steep downgrade, past here. It's dangerous, please don't go!"

Cloud willing to rough it, responded, "I'm still going."

"Damn, I was trying to be nice... What the? Who are those people over there? Looks like trouble!"

Cloud turned around to see Elena from the Turks. And the villager that had stopped them went into hiding. Elena immediately saw Cloud, and shouted, "There they are, hurry!!"

Then two Shinra Soldiers walked up, and responded, "Yes ma'am!!"

They ran quickly to them, and Cloud just stood there like a deer caught in the head light. It only took seconds for them to get to Cloud. Elena stopped right in front of Cloud, and shook her head.

"Cloud...huff...wheeze," said Elena as she tried to catch her Breath. "I won't let you go any further!"

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and asked, "What's down there?"

"It's a *se-cr-et*," responded Elena. "It really doesn't mater! But you really got guts doin' my boss in like that!"

"You mean Boss... Tseng? That wasn't us. Sephiroth did it."

Elena shook her head, and exclaimed, "No! Don't think you can fool me, liar!"

Cloud shook his head. "I'm not lying... It was Sephiroth."

"Don't try to act innocent. I'll never forget it!!"

Cloud scratched his head. "Oh, man..."

Elena began to tap her foot, and stated, "Looks like talking alone won't cut it. You're going to have to feel some pain!"

"Just you... and me!!" stated one of the Shinra Soldiers.

“No, I can handle him!” exclaimed Elena. “There’s no way he can avoid my punch.”

“What? Yeah...” responded one of the Shinra Soldiers.

Elena cocked her arm, and threw her best punch. Cloud quickly reacting moved out of the way, and Elena had missed. This caused Elena to slip on the ice, losing her balance, and went rolling down the dangerous path.

“Ele...Elena!” exclaimed the Shinra Soldiers as they ran after her, trying to stop her. Cloud just scratched his head, and commented, “What the...? They sure were weak for Shinras.”

With the troublesome people gone, Cloud decided to continue on their mission, and head north, and again the villager stopped them.

“Sorry I took off a while ago... It looked like there was going to be trouble. Anyhow, you’ll need a snowboard to get down that hill. Want me to teach you how to ride one?”

“No, not interested,” responded Cloud.

“All right, big-head... But don’t blame me if you get hurt.”

Cloud decided to leave, and the man yelled, “I told you, you can’t” The man drug Cloud back in to the village, and added, “You won’t make it without a snowboard and a map!!”

Cloud a little frustrated, finally decided that the man might be right, and went to get a map and a snowboard. They searched the village, and found a man who was feeling a little down.

“My boy got hurt right about the time we moved here... I never should’ve bought him a snowboard.”

Upon hearing this, Cloud thought maybe he could borrow the snowboard from the child, and walked into the child’s room.

Cloud started talking with the little boy, and the boy said, “I got hurt on my snowboard, and now I can’t go out for a while...”

Cloud tried to explain to the boy about how they need to go north, but didn’t have a snowboard. Then the boy said, “Hey, I’ll give you my snowboard.” Cloud walked over to the snowboard, and picked it up, and they left to find a map.

After exploring the around they found the map of the glacier. Cloud knew that he needed this map, and the people at the house let him take it. Now with a map, and a snowboard, there was not reason that the villager would stop them again.

They were about to leave when the villager said, “Be careful.” Cloud nodded, and left. Cloud set up the snowboard, and started down the steep hill. Cloud started down the hill, and only crashed six times, and only hit three trees.

Towards the bottom of the hill, there was a jump, and they flew through the air. They crashed, and they landed in the snow. “Ugh...” Cloud said in pain. He picked himself up, and commented, “I guess we’re still in one piece.” Cloud looked around to see Barret, and Tifa lying in the snow. “Everyone all right?” asked Cloud.

Barret sat up, and responded, “Of course.”

Tifa stood up, and added, “Yeah, somehow.”

“So where did we land?” asked Cloud. “Looks like we’ve jumped pretty far...”

“Oh yeah, we got a map, right?” said Tifa. “Let’s look at the map.”

Cloud pulled the map, and mentioned, "It sure is cold. We'll freeze if we stay here any longer." He took a look at the map, and figured out where they were. After studying the map they continued quickly, to find someplace warm.

They wandered around trying to make sense of the map, but nothing seemed to match. The snow started to fall, heavier, and heavier. A short time later, they collapsed, due to the exhaustion.

Some time later, they awoke, unknowing of their location. Cloud stood up, and a voice from the upstairs asked, "You awake?" A man then came down the stairs, and added, "You collapsed at the Great Glacier. It's a miracle you're all right."

Cloud scratched his head, and the man said, "My name is Holzoff. I've been living here for 20 years now. If you are planning to head north, you'd better listen to my story." He paused for a second. "Why don't we go to the next room, and sit down."

They walked into the next room, and Tifa, Barret, and Cloud sat on the couch. Holzoff then started. "You ever hear about those who challenged the cliff?"

"No," responded Cloud.

"There's an old legend that says something fell from the sky here a long time ago. That's what's supposed to have pushed the land up and formed this cliff. 30 years ago, Yamski and I took this cliff on to see what was on the other side. But, we weren't prepared for it. We did expect the temperature to be low but... On that cliff, there is always a biting cold wind, the cold air lowers your body temperature." He paused for a moment, and turned his back to them. "Yamski, was below me. He cut his own rope... and I didn't even notice..."

He turned back to them. "Ever since then, I've settled here... continuing to challenge the cliff, and provide warning and shelter to my fellow climbers. If you're going to climb the cliff, there'd be 2 precautions you'll need to take. First, check your route... It's hard to find because of all the snow. Second, once you get to a ledge, make sure you warm yourselves up. Understand?"

"Yes," responded Cloud.

"You must've used a lot of energy getting up here... Better get some rest before you head out."

Cloud nodded and they all got some rest. In the morning they left the shack, and walked outside. Once everyone was outside, Barret said, "You know, I've been thinkin'...?"

"What is it?" asked Cloud.

"...Seeing' a place like this, makes you realize how awesome nature is. But, if anyone ever told me to live here, I'd tell them to... you know... I tell you one thing though, if I did have to live here, I'd change things around 'n' make it better. I guess the total opposite of this would be... Midgar. When you think of it that way, Shinra don't seem so bad..."

Everyone was now shaking to stay warm, and Barret said, "Uuuuuurrrrrgh!! What the hell am I sayin'!? The Shinra, not bad!?"

Cloud had to put a stop to this, and get moving. "We'll secure the route. You come up later."

Cloud, Tifa, and Barret went ahead to secure a route. They climbed up the cliff, stopping on each ledge to warm up. They warmed up by running in place, and rubbing their arms. They did this until they reached a cave, where it was much warmer.

They made it through the cave, and found themselves back on the cliff. They continued to climb up, and stopping along the way to warm up. They would go in and out of caves, and climb the cliff until they reached the top.

When they got to the top, what they saw in the middle of the crater, was a swirling of energy, and life-stream was just gushing out. They started to climb down inside of the crater, and Cloud said, "An old crater... Something fell out of the sky and crashed down here... Leaving a scar on the planet."

"So all this energy's gathered here for the planet to heal itself?" asked Barret.

"Sephiroth took that energy and is trying to use Meteor," stated Cloud. "Next time the wound won't be so small."



They continued on, and about a minute later, they found a Black Caped man. He collapsed, and Cloud knelt next to him.

"...B, back... to ...Sep...i...roth..." said the Black caped man as he passed away. Cloud stood back up, and ran to the bottom.

They reached the bottom with ease, and Tifa commented, "The time has come to settle things with Sephiroth, huh?"

Cloud nodded, and Tifa added, "I, too, have lost many things because of Sephiroth." She paused for a second. "Let's go."

Cloud nodded again, and they continued. They traveled through the crater, hoping to reach the middle. Cloud then heard a noise, looked up. "That's!!" exclaimed Cloud as he saw an airship flying over head, with President Rufus aboard.

Aboard the airship, President Rufus was talking with his crew, well mostly with Scarlet and Heidegger.

"So, I finally found you," stated Rufus.

"Kyaa haa hah," laughed Scarlet. "This is incredible."

"This is the Promised Land the President has been searching for!!" exclaimed Heidegger.

"But, I'll be the one who gets it," stated Rufus as he ran his fingers through his hair. "Sorry old man."

Off in a corner was Rude, who was babysitting Hojo. Hojo who was laughing as well, commented, "That land is no one's. It's where the reunion will take place... They will all gather here... I wonder if we'll see... Sephiroth?"

The airship flew over head, and Cloud picked up the pace. They then came to a rock bridge, and the wind would be calm, then pick up speed. "We need to cross when the wind is calm, or we'll get swept off!" stated Cloud.

Cloud timed the wind pattern down, and crossed with no problem. They continued on the rocky path, only to see a bunch of Black Caped men, with some of them collapsing. As they walked the path, they stopped to check the fallen men, but they all were dead.

They quickly moved along, hoping that they would soon reach the center, but before they even got there, they found Sephiroth. He was standing over two of the Black

Caped men, with his sword in his hands. "This is the end...for you all of you," said Sephiroth as he killed them both.

"Sephiroth!!" exclaimed Cloud. "This is the end!"

"You're right," stated Sephiroth. "This is the end of this body usefulness." He then vanished in then air, and Cloud exclaimed, "He disappeared!?"

"He might still be nearby..." stated Tifa.

Then a voice came out of nowhere, "Our purpose is to deliver the Black materia to our master."

They all looked around, and Cloud questioned, "Our...?"

"He got away?" asked Barret.

Then the voice continued, "Those who carry Jenova's cells..."

Cloud was confused, and said, "Master...!?"

"Of course...Sephiroth," respond the hollow voice. "Heh, heh, heh..."

Sephiroth then appeared in the air, and flew at them. He knocked Cloud, Tifa, and Barret to the ground, and proudly walked away. Sephiroth then stopped turned around, and Jenova-DEATH appeared.

They quickly went to work, and defeated Jenova-DEATH. After they calmed down, Cloud who was still confused, by what had happened, said, "Jenova cells... hmm. So that's what this is all about. The Jenova reunion..."

"Not Sephiroth!?" exclaimed Tifa. "You mean all this time it wasn't Sephiroth we've been after?"

Cloud shook his head, and said, "I'll explain later. Right now, the only thing I'm thinking about is beating Sephiroth."

Tifa who was now more confused than ever, said, "But Sephiroth is..."

"He's here," stated Cloud. "The real Sephiroth is just beyond here. It looks incredibly wicked and cruel... But it's releasing a powerfully strong will from deep within this planet's wound."

Cloud then noticed something black and shiny on the ground. He walked over, and picked up the Black Materia. He walked back to the others and announced, "...The Black materia is back in our hands. Now all we have to do is defeat Sephiroth and that'll be the end of it."

Tifa wasn't sure about the Black Materia situation, and suggested, "We'd better not take the Black Materia any further. Why don't you give it to someone to hold onto?"

Cloud actually love the idea, and handed the Black Materia to Red XIII. Red XIII was shocked to see Cloud holding out the Black Materia, and said, "You want me to take the Black materia? ...all right, I understand."

"Don't give it to *anyone*," stated Cloud. "I'm counting on you."

Red XIII took the Black Materia, and Cloud announced, "We're going in first! You guys stay and keep a watch."

They went on ahead, and crossed another rock bridge. When they reached the other side, everything went white. "What is this?" asked Tifa "What happened?"

"Calm down, Tifa," said Cloud in a calming voice. "Sephiroth is near. Anything could happen."

The blinding light faded away, and they saw the town of Nibelheim. Cloud walked up and Tifa, and Barret followed. Tifa looked around, and was in total confusion. "Nibelheim..." she said in a confused tone.

Barret turned to Tifa, and asked, "Why Nibelheim? Are you high on Mako or something?"

Cloud shook his head, and stated, "This is an illusion that Sephiroth made up. He's trying to confuse us. It'll be all right. As long as we know it's an illusion, there's nothing to be afraid of. Come on, let's keep going."

Tifa turned to Cloud, and said, "Yeah, you're right..." Then she pointed to the south, and exclaimed, "Look!!"

Cloud turned around, and saw Sephiroth, with a group enter. This kinda played out like in Cloud's story. Sephiroth entered, turned to his companions, and said, "All right, let's go."

Then entered two Shinra Soldiers, and a man that looked just like Cloud, but had black hair.

"That ain't Cloud..." said Barret. "The hell is he?"

Barret, and Cloud both looked at Tifa, and she shook her head. "Stop... Sephiroth," she said.

Cloud then shrugged his shoulders, and commented, "This is so stupid..."

Sephiroth laughed, and he disappeared, along with the Shinra Soldiers, and the strange man that looked like Cloud. Cloud then walked up to Tifa, and she said, "Cloud... It's just an illusion. Don't worry about it..."

The Blinding white light had returned, and Cloud questioned, "What's... next?"

"Stop it already!!" exclaimed Tifa.

The light faded away, to revile Nibelheim in flames. "This is bad..." stated Barret. "Just like Corel."

"...This is what actually happened five years ago," stated Cloud. "But... It's probably not me that's going to come out of the Shinra mansion. He's going to try and show us another stupid illusion."

No sooner did Cloud finish what he was saying, out ran that man from the Shinra mansion. "See... didn't I tell you?" said Cloud, as the man started to explore the blazing town. And just as in Cloud's story, a man shouted, "Hey it's you! You're still sane, right?"

The look a like Cloud nodded, and the man added, "Then come over here and help me!"

"I don't want to... watch this," stated Tifa. "Cloud... don't watch."

Cloud tried not to watch, but he couldn't help it, as if it was a strange force making him watch this imposter.

"I'll check this house," stated the man to the Cloud look alike. "You check that one over there!"

Cloud then noticed that Tifa had a concerned look on her face. "...What's wrong, Tifa? I told you before, right? As long as we know it's just an illusion, there's no need to be scared."

The area when white again, and they were moved to the center of the illusionary town. "Hey, you awright!?" asked Barret to a man laying on the ground. Then he came back to reality, and turned to Cloud. "Damn! This was an illusion."

Cloud had enough of Sephiroth's game, and shouted, "Sephiroth! I know you're listening! I know what you want to say! That I wasn't in Nibelheim five years ago. That's it, isn't it?"

Sephiroth appeared, and responded, "I see you finally understand."

Cloud took a step towards Sephiroth, and stated, "What you are trying to say is that you want to confuse me, right? But... even making me see those things won't affect me. I remember it all. The heat of the fire... the pain in my body... and in my heart!"

Sephiroth shook his head, and stated, "Oh, is that so? You are just a puppet... You have no heart... and cannot feel any pain... How can there be any meaning in the memory of such a being? What I have shown you is reality. What you remember, that is the illusion."

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and walked up to Sephiroth. Sephiroth then asked, "...Do you understand?"

"I don't want to understand." Cloud paused for a moment. "But, I want to ask you one thing. Why...why are you doing this?"

Sephiroth disappeared, and reappeared by Tifa, and Barret, and they ran next to Cloud.

"Ha, ha, ha..." laughed Sephiroth. "I want to take you back to your real self. The one who gave me the Black Materia that day... Who would have ever thought a failed experiment would prove so useful? Hojo would die if he knew."

"Hojo!? What does Hojo have to do with me!?"

"Five years ago you were..." Sephiroth paused. "...constructed by Hojo, piece by piece, right after Nibelheim was burnt. A puppet made up of vibrant Jenova cells, her knowledge, and the power of Mako. An incomplete Sephiroth-clone. Not even given a number... That is your reality."

Cloud couldn't believe what he was hearing, shrugged his shoulders. He then walked over to Tifa, and she said, "Cloud... Don't listen to him..." She shook her head, and added, "Close your ear! Close your eyes!"

Cloud place his right hand on his hip, and said, "What's wrong, Tifa? I'm not affected by it... I wasn't paying attention to him."

"All that talk of Hojo constructing you is a lie," stated Tifa. "Don't we have our memories together? Being kids together, starlit nights..."

"Ha, ha, ha..." laughed Sephiroth. "Tifa... Why are you so worried and scared by those words? Hmm... Shall I show everyone here what's in your heart?"

Tifa turned away, and Sephiroth continued, "Ha, ha, ha... You look like you're not feeling well." Sephiroth then disappeared again.

"...Tifa?" asked Cloud. "Is Sephiroth right?"

Tifa was hesitant, and responded in a low tone, "Cloud..."

"Why are you so scared?" asked Cloud. "Don't worry about me. I'm all right. No, matter how confused I am. I'll never believe a word that Sephiroth says." Cloud lowered his head. "It's true that sometimes I can't figure out who I am. There's a lot of things muddled up in my memories. But, Tifa... But you said, 'Long time no see, Cloud' right? Those words will always support me. I am the one you grew up with. I'm Cloud of Nibelheim. No matter how much I lose faith in myself, that is the truth."

Cloud raised his head, and continued, "That's why you shouldn't be so scared. No, matter what anyone else says to me, It's your attitude that counts..."

Tifa turned around and shook her head. "No, that's not true, Cloud..."

"What's not? Aren't I the same Cloud you grew up with?"

“That’s not what I mean... I don’t know ho to say it... Cloud, I need some time... Just give me a little time...”

Sephiroth then appeared again, further away from them, and was standing by some stairs. “Cloud...” said Sephiroth. “Don’t blame Tifa. The ability to change one’s looks, voice, and word is the power of Jenova. Inside of you, Jenova has merged with Tifa’s memories, creating you. Out of Tifa’s memory... A boy named Cloud might’ve just been a part of then.”

Sephiroth disappeared again, and Tifa said, “Cloud... Please... don’t think right now.”

Sephiroth reappeared behind them, and laughed, “Ha, ha, ha...” Cloud and the others turned around, and Sephiroth said, “Think, Cloud! ...Cloud? Ha, ha, ha... Oh, excuse me. You never had a name...”

Cloud shook his head, and snapped, “Shut up... Sephiroth.”

Sephiroth shook his head. “You still don’t understand? Then...” He began laughing fiercely. He regained himself, and asked, “Do you remember the picture that we took be we headed for Mt. Nibel? ...Tifa, you remember, right?”

Neither Cloud or Tifa answered, and Sephiroth continued, “But, there is no way he would know.”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and Sephiroth began looking around. “Now... what happened to that picture?” Sephiroth then walked over to the dead camera man, and pulled out a glossy piece of paper, and said, “...is this it?” He turned to Cloud, and said, “...Do you want to see it? It turned out pretty good.”

“Cloud...don’t,” requested Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and stated, “I... should be in the picture. Even if I’m not in there, no worry. This is just an illusionary world Sephiroth made up.”

Cloud walked up to Sephiroth and took the picture. He looked at it to see the unknown man, Tifa, and Sephiroth.

“...Just as I thought,” said Cloud as he looked up, to see Sephiroth gone. “This picture’s a fake. The truth is in my memory... Five years ago, I came back to Nibelheim, to inspect the reactor. I was sixteen. The town hadn’t changed at all.” Cloud stopped to think, and said, “What did I do...?” he paused for a second. “Oh yeah... I saw my mom. I saw the people in the town. Yeah, I went to Tifa’s room... There, I... I played the piano! I spent the night and went to the reactor in Mt Nibel. I was excited about it. Because that was my first mission after becoming First Class in Soldier.”

There was a flash of white light, and Cloud shook his head. “...Soldier, First Class?” Cloud shook his head again. “...Soldier? When did I enter Soldier?” Cloud placed his hands on his head, and began shaking. “How did I join Soldier?” he dropped to his knees, still holding his head. “Why...why can’t I remember?” he calmed down, and sat on the ground. “I’m... I’m...” He stood up, and said, “That’s right... I didn’t have to worry about it because I was...”

The area went black, and Tifa who was concerned about Cloud, said, “...Cloud?”

Cloud had now regained himself, and said, “Let’s go, Tifa. I’m all right.”



Chapter 02: The Jenova Reunion

In other parts of the crater, Cait Sith, Yuffie, Vincent, Cid, and Red XIII were still waiting to hear from their companions. As they were standing there waiting, Red XIII said, "I wonder how Cloud and the others are..." He then looked at the Black Materia, and said, "It's hard to believe... such a small piece of materia is able to destroy the planet..."

Then everyone faded away, and the area went black, and green. Red XIII was confused, by this. "What the!?" He looked around and shouted, "Is everyone all right?" He started to search the area, but he didn't seem like he was going anywhere. "What's going on?" he shouted. "Where am I!!? Don't leave me alone!"

Tifa then came running up, and shouted, "Red XIII, you're here! I'm so glad!!"

The area went back to normal, and Red XIII turned around. "Tifa!!" he exclaimed. He ran up to her, and said, "Something is strange... Why was it so dark all of a sudden and where is everybody?"

"Everyone's waiting!" exclaimed Tifa. "Cloud's in trouble! Please come. Help us!" She then pointed down the path she came from. "Over there!"

"R, right! I'm not sure I understand... but I'll go if you want me to." Red XIII nodded and ran off.

Unusually strange, Tifa just stood there, and said to herself, "...hee hee hee... And remember..." Her body faded away to reveal it was really Sephiroth. "...the Black Materia!" He then disappeared and everyone reappeared, confused and disoriented.

Meanwhile President Rufus had arrived at the center of the crater. He was the first to enter, and looked around admiring the site. Scarlet followed him, and exclaimed, "Wow!! That's amazing!" She then walked ahead of Rufus, and Hojo entered the area

Scarlet still in an aw, exclaimed, "It's all materia!!"

"The outside is rich with Mako energy," stated Rufus. "The inside is a treasure trove of Materia. This is truly is the Promised Land."

"There is no such thing as the promised Land," stated Hojo. "It's a legend... an old wives tale... it's utterly ridiculous."

"Everything's as I imagined it to be," said Rufus. "Isn't it splendid? It is that kind of dullness that makes you a second-rate scientist."

The area began shaking, and Rufus shouted, "What's happening?"

Scarlet turned back and shouted, "It's coming from within the wall! Something's in there! It's moving!"

Behind the ice wall, a huge eye opened, and quickly closed.

"Weapon..." said Hojo. "Then it really does exist... I didn't believe in it."

"What does this mean?" asked Rufus.

Hojo turned to Rufus, and said, "...Weapon. Monster created by the planet. It appears when the planet is in danger, reducing everything to nothingness. That's what was stated in Professor Gast's report."

"I never saw that report..." stated Rufus. "Where is it?"

"Hojo pointed to his head, and responded, "Here, right here."

Rufus ran his fingers through his hair, and said, "You keep a lot of things to yourself."

The area stopped shaking, and calmed down. Scarlet then said, “Mr. President... I’ve got a bad feeling about this place...”

“Hmm...maybe we should go back to our ship now,” responded Rufus. “We need to prepare for the inspection anyway.”

There was a bright flash, and Barret, Tifa and Cloud appeared. Everyone was confused, including those that had just arrived.

“Hey!!!” exclaimed Scarlet. “Where did you come from?”

Cloud still somewhat confused, said, “...don’t know...” He then turned to face them all, and shook his head. “This place is going to get rough. Better leave things to me and get out of here while you still can!!”

Rufus ran his fingers through his hair. “Leave things to you? Hmph... I don’t know what you mean.”

Cloud turned his back to them, and lowered his head. “This is where the Reunion is happening. Where everything begins and ends.”

Tifa started to run up to Cloud. “Cloud...” she stopped because Red XIII had shown up, saying, “I’m here! I’m here to help you, Cloud!”

Cloud looked up with an evil look of intention, and walked up to Red XIII. “Thanks... Red XIII. Where’s the Black Materia?”

Tifa again shouted, “Cloud...” and Red XIII responded, “It’s safe. I’m holding onto it.”

Cloud lowered his head, and stated, “I’ll take it from here. Give me the... Black Materia.”

“You can’t hear my voice?” shouted Tifa.

“Are you all right, Cloud?” asked Red XIII.

Cloud nodded, and Red XIII said, “Then... here you go. I was a little apprehensive holding this thing.”

Red XIII held out the Black Materia, and Tifa Shouted, “No, don’t!!! Please! Stop Cloud!”

Tifa’s cries would go unheard, as Cloud placed his hand on the Black Materia. “Thanks... leave the rest to me,” said Cloud as he took the Black Materia.

Then the voice in his head said, “Come on. The Black Materia...”

“Please wait! Just a little longer!!”

Cloud walked over to the others, and said, “Everyone, thanks for everything. And...I’m sorry.” He looked at Barret. “...Sorry.” He turned to Red XIII. “...Sorry.” He turned to Tifa, and said, “Especially you, Tifa. I’m really sorry. You’ve been so good to me... I don’t know what to say...” He shook his head. “I never lived up to being ‘Cloud’. Tifa... maybe someday you’ll meet the real, ‘Cloud’.”

Tifa placed her hands over her face, and dropped to the ground crying. Hojo on the other hand was just the opposite of Tifa, he was pleased. “Ha, ha, ha... this is perfect!!! It means that my experiment was a complete success.” He began laughing for a second, and calmed back down. “What number were you?” Hojo looked at Cloud and couldn’t find his tattoo. “Huh? Where is your tattoo?”

Cloud shook his head, and stated, “Professor Hojo... I don’t have a number. You didn’t give me one because you said I was a failed experiment.”

Hojo turned his back to Cloud, and was shocked by this. “What the--? You mean only a failure made it here?”

Cloud shrugged his shoulders, and requested, "Professor... please give me a number. Please, Professor..."

Hojo turned back to Cloud and snapped, "Shut up, miserable failure..."

Cloud then lifted into the air, and flew away to the top of crater. Up there were branches of trees, and Sephiroth in a crystal pod.

"Who... was that?" asked Rufus.

"...He's a Sephiroth-clone I created after the real Sephiroth died five years ago," stated Hojo. "Jenova cells and Mako, with my knowledge and skill, have been combined with science and nature to bring him to life... I'm not wild about the failure part, but the Jenova Reunion Theory has now been proven. You see, even if Jenova's body is dismembered, it will eventually become one again. That's what is meant by Jenova's Reunion. I have been waiting for the Reunion to start. Five years have passed, and now the Clones have begun to return. I thought the clones would begin to gather at Midgar where Jenova is stored. But my predictions were not entirely correct. Jenova itself began to move away from the Shinra building. But being a genius that I am, I soon figured it out. You see it was all Sephiroth's doing. Sephiroth is not just content to diffuse his will into the Lifestream; he wants to manipulate the Clones himself."

Cloud who was listening to Hojo, said quietly, "Yes that's how it got started."

"I wonder where the clones were going, but I was never able to figure it out," stated Hojo.

"I couldn't figure it out either," said Cloud.

"The one thing that I did know was that Sephiroth was at their final destination," said Hojo.

"I wasn't pursuing Sephiroth," said Cloud. He shook his head. "I was being summoned by Sephiroth. All the anger and hatred I bore him, made it impossible for me to ever forgive him. That and what he gave me." Cloud looked around. "Sephiroth? Sephiroth? I'm here. And I brought you the Black Materia. Show yourself to me. Where are you?"

Cloud then turned around to see Sephiroth in a crystal pod. "Sephiroth... So we finally meet again." The pod dropped down, and was caught by some lower branches. The noise prompted every one to look up, and Hojo exclaimed, "Did you see it!! It's Sephiroth! So he *is* here!"

The area began shaking violently, Hojo added, "This is prefect! Both Jenova's Reunion and Sephiroth's will! They won't be diffused into the Lifestream, but gathered here! Mwa, haa, ha..."

Tifa shook her head, and asked, "What are you so happy about, Professor? You know what this means, don't you?"

Hojo just stood there in his excitement, and Tifa stated, "Cloud has the Black Materia! Sephiroth is going to summon Meteor! Every single person is going to die!"

"Whatever I say now is too little...too late," stated Rufus. "Let's evacuate."

Everyone looked at Rufus with confusion, and Rufus stated, "I want you all to come with me. There is still much more I want to hear."

Red XIII taking a desperate act, looked up, and shouted, "Cloud, NO! Stop! Please!"

Cloud struggled and tried to fight the evil within, and Tifa shouted "Cloud-----!!"

Cloud trying to resist the urge, took the Black Materia, and placed it inside the pod with Sephiroth. The Black Materia floated to the center of Sephiroth's chest, and it began to glow.

Everyone below them quickly evacuated, just as the place started to collapse onto itself. They made it back to the Airship and took off. An energy field started to emerge from the crater, and the Airship started to fly away.

They didn't go far because they stopped to watch what was coming out of the Crater. It wasn't something that they had expected, for three creatures had emerged. They were known as the monster Weapon. The First to come out of the crater was Weapon, followed by Diamond Weapon, and then Ultimate Weapon.

They all were shocked to see such creatures, and they were huge. The Airship could have been a toy model for them to play with. So the Weapons were unleashed upon the world, to protect the planet, and to destroy those who wanted to hurt the planet.

They all went their own ways, but as Ultimate Weapon flew away he created a sound wave, knocking Tifa unconscious. Barret quickly ran to her side, and watched the other Weapons fly away as well. The energy field then continued to grow and the Airship made its escape, just as well.

Chapter 03: The Execution

Sometime had passed, and Tifa was still unconscious. While she was unconscious she was having what appeared to be a dream. It started in blackness, and then she saw Cloud, sitting on the floor, with his back to her.

"Cloud..." she said. But he didn't respond. "Cloud..." she cried again. He stood up and began walking away from her. She quickly followed, but he disappeared into the darkness. "...I didn't know what to do," cried Tifa. "I was always like that..."

She followed Cloud to the train station in Sector 7. She saw Cloud sitting on the ground, by the steps that lead up to the platform to board the train. There also was a Shinra Guard standing over him, and he asked, "What's the matter?"

Cloud shook his head. "Ohhh..."

The Shinra Guard didn't know what to do, and commented, "...poor kid."

"Ooouugh..." cried Cloud.

Tifa ran up to Cloud, and the Shinra Guard walked away. "Are you all right?" she asked.

"Oo...uh...agh," was the sound he made. Tifa kneeled down next to him, and Cloud placed his hands on his head, "Uh...uh...Tifa? Tifa...?" There was a flash, and Cloud stood up, and exclaimed, "Tifa!"

Tifa feeling relieved that Cloud had come to. "Oh, Cloud."

He then cocked back his sword, and stated, "That's right. I'm Cloud."

"Is it really you, Cloud? I never thought I'd find you here!"

Cloud lowered his sword. "Yeah, it's been a while."

What happened to you? You don't look well."

"...Yeah? It's nothing. I'm okay."

Tifa turned away, and Cloud had a small breakdown. He regained control quickly, and Tifa turned back to him.

"How long has it been?" asked Tifa.

Cloud had another breakdown, shaking, and placing his hands on his head. He kept acting like he had a screw loose, or something in that nature. Again he regained himself quickly, and responded, "Five years."

Tifa was kind of confused About this, and Cloud shrugged his shoulders. "What is it?" he asked.

Tifa shook her head, and said, "...it's really been a long time." She paused, for a second. "Actually, it's been seven years. You got your wish and joined Soldier, quit after the Sephiroth incident, and now you're a mercenary... You told me a lot about what happened after you left Nibelheim... But... Something's wrong. I felt there was something strange about the things you talked about. All the things you didn't know that you should, and the other things you shouldn't know that you did... I wanted to make sure... but then I heard... you were going far away. And I didn't want that... I didn't know what to do. So, I thought I needed more time. And that's why I told you about Avalanche job. I wanted to be with you, watch you."

Then everything went white, and Tifa could hear the planet screaming in pain. The screaming faded away, and she began to regain conscious. She opened her eyes slightly, and said, "...ding..."

"Huh?" questioned Barret.

“The glare...” she said trying to focus.
 “You’ll be better soon. You’ve been asleep for a long time,” stated Barret.
 “I’m...hungry...”
 “Hey, why don’t you ask? About him.”
 Tifa’s eyes finally adjusted, and she sat up. “...Because I’m scared.”
 “Don’t worry. I don’t know what happened to Cloud either. Guess I shouldn’t tell you not to worry... None of them know if he’s all right either.”
 “He’s still... alive, right?”
 Barret nodded, and Tifa asked, “How long... was I asleep?”
 Barret placed his hands together, and tilted his head back. ‘Lessee now... Must’ve been about 7 days.”
 “What about Sephiroth?”
 Barret walked over to Tifa, and said, “You ain’t over it yet. Remember that huge light, in the Northern Cave? Since then, the crater’s been surrounded by a huge barrier of light. Everyone knows Sephiroth sleeps in that big hole, protected by the barrier. We can’t do a damn thing about it. We just gotta wait till he wakes up. An’ on topa that, some huge monster called Weapon’s been on a rampage.”
 Tifa looked at Barret, and questioned, “... Weapon?”
 “Remember that huge monster that was with Sephiroth, at the bottom of the crater?”
 Tifa nodded, and Barret continued, “Well it’s up here now. They say it’s some legendary monster from the past.”
 “Weapon... is protecting Sephiroth?”
 Barret shook his head, and said, “Dunno. But he’s up here goin’ around tearin’ shit up. Right now Rufus ‘fightin’ it. I hate to say it, but he’s got guts. We shoulda been the ones to destroy it, but we ain’t got no time...”
 Tifa stood up, and said with confusion, “Time...” She then turned to Barret, and asked, “Hey! How about Meteor?”
 Barret walked over to the windows, and pressed a button. The window shade opened to reveal Meteor heading toward the planet. Tifa was in shock to see how big Meteor was, ran over to Barret, and asked, “Do we have to give up?”
 “...Dunno,” responded Barret. The door then opened, and Rufus walked in. “I thought Cloud would show up to save you all...” said Rufus. “Professor Hojo wanted to check up on Cloud, too.”
 “What are you going to do to Cloud?” asked Tifa.
 “Sephiroth’s alter ego...” stated Rufus. He ran his fingers through his hair.
 “Meteor has been summoned... Essentially, it’s all but over now. So there’s no need for you now. No, maybe there is an important task for you...”
 Heidegger then walked into the room. “President! Preparations for the public execution are complete.”
 “Execution!?” questioned Barret. “What’re ya gonna get by executin’ us?”
 “You are to be executed for causing this situation. People are ignorant. They’ll feel better as long as someone is punished.”
 Barret took a couple of steps towards Rufus, and stated, “I take back what little praise I had for this damn jackass!”

“Well, enjoy your last moments together,” stated Rufus. He then left the room, and Heidegger stated, “I’ll tie your arms now.”

Heidegger tied their arms behind their backs, and escorted them to the gas chamber, for execution. They entered the spectator area, and Scarlet said, “Is everyone here? These are the ones who brought this madness into the world!”

Barret looked around, to see reporters, and cameras. “The hell are these people?”

“We will be broadcasting your miserable deaths live on national television,” stated Scarlet.

“Scarlet, why a public execution in this day and age?” asked a Reporter.

“With the chaos resulting from Meteor reports, we desperately need to rally public support... it’s better that we punish somebody, anybody,” stated Scarlet.

“You make me sick...” stated Tifa.

“Ha, ha, ha, ha!” laughed Scarlet. “They’ll never admit it, but everyone loves this stuff.” She paused for a second. “We’ll start with this girl.”

“If you’ve gotta do it... do me first!” exclaimed Barret.

“Camera, this way!” exclaimed Scarlet. “Make sure you get this, the audience just eats up tearful goodbyes!”

Scarlet then grabbed Tifa, and took her to the gas chamber. She then shoved her towards the chair. “What are you doing!?” asked Tifa.

Scarlet walked up to Tifa. “This is my special gas chamber. Take your time, and enjoy a slow painful death.”

A Shinra soldier walked up behind Tifa, and untied her hands. Scarlet then pushed Tifa into the chair, and they strapped her in. Once the clasps were tight, Scarlet said, “Stuck up bitch!!” She then slapped Tifa face, and they walked out of the room. Just before the Shinra Soldier left the room, he dropped the key to the chair. They closed the door, and sealed the room.

Once they were situated, Scarlet announced, “Well now, the show’s about to begin. Ha, ha, ha!”

She was about to flip the switch to turn on the gas, when the alarm started to sound. “Emergency! Emergency!” came the announcement “Weapon’s approaching! Attention all military personnel: take your positions!”

The crowd began to panic, and someone shouted, “Oh no! It’s Weapon! Run!”

Everyone ran out of the room, except for the reporter. Scarlet tried to stop them, and shouted, “Hey, hey, all of you!” But no one stopped, and Scarlet was not happy. “Damn! Why now?”

The reporter walked up to Scarlet and asked, “How does it feel now, Scarlet?”

“Hmm, so you didn’t run? I’m impressed. How do I feel? Right now...” Before she could finish her answer, the Reporter sprayed her with sleeping gas.

“Nngaaaaahhhhh!” was the sound Scarlet made as she hit the floor.

“Huh!?” questioned Barret. “Sleeping gas?”

The reporter took off his coat, to reveal Cait Sith. The Shinra Soldiers exclaimed “Weirdo!!” and they attacked him. Cait Sith. He quickly killed them and announced, “I’m here to help!”

He untied Barret’s hands, and Barret questioned, “Why you...? Ain’t you a part of Shinra?”

“Let’s just say I’m against capital punishment. Besides... I hate this broad. Come on, we gotta help Tifa. I’ll keep watch at the entrance.”

Cait Sith hopped over to the entrance, and Barret went to help Tifa. He ran up to the door, and tried to open it, but it was sealed tight. “It won’t open!” he exclaimed, pulling on the door.

Meanwhile Rufus was in the weapons control center, when Heidegger came running in. He ran up to Rufus, and said, “It’s Weapon.”

“There’s been so many attacks lately,” said Rufus. “Can we handle it?”

“I believe so. Your orders?”

“No need to ask.”

Heidegger saluted, and stated, “We’ll give it a shot from our big cannon.” He then turned around, and shouted, “Open the cannon doors!! Activate cannon. Target Weapon!!”

The crew did as instructed and activated Junon’s defenses. The defenses consisted of the buildings being protected by blast shield, and laser guns rising out of the floor. Junon was a well equipped military base, and they were ready for anything.

After the city was ready, a seaman ran up, and saluted Heidegger. “Preparations complete!”

Heidegger nodded, and exclaimed, “The cannon... Fire-----!!!!”

The Big Cannon fired, and hit in the water. The alarm stopped, and everything seemed to be fine.

“Did we get ‘em?” asked Rufus.

“Seems so...” responded Heidegger.

The alarm began sounding again, followed by an announcement. “Weapon approaching! It’s heading right toward us! Speed, 50 Knots!”

“It can’t be!” exclaimed Heidegger. “We hit dead on!”

“How about the cannon?” asked Rufus.

“It will take time to reload,” responded Heidegger

“Then use regular fire power in the mean time!”

“Yes sir! Open all artillery doors! Target: Weapon! Don’t let it land!”

They began firing at weapon, and it seemed to have no effect. Weapon rose out of the water and did even slow down. It looked like a laser light show in the night sky, and an announcement came across, “Speed, 70 Knots! Weapon, closing in!! Not good! Its attacking!”

Rufus and Heidegger backed away from the window, as Weapon approached the city. Outside though the ground support wasn’t ready to give up, and fire their rocket launchers at the giant beast. Still he was not stopping, and hit the city head on, shaking it violently, and he dove underwater.

The impact was so hard it had triggered the gas in the gas chamber. “Gas!!” exclaimed Tifa. “Barret, help!!”

“Hold your breath! Hold it as long as you can!” yelled Barret.

“Come on! I can’t hold on forever!” responded Tifa, and she took in a deep breath.

Barret still prying on the door stopped, and slammed his fist into it. “Shit!” he exclaimed. Barret then ran to Cait Sith, and stated, “The Gas Room’s probably locked from a different room!”

“Hmm, we gotta go with a different plan,” said Cait Sith. “Let’s get out of this room first.”

Barret turned back and shouted, “Tifa! I’ll help, I promise!”

They ran out of the room, and the door slammed behind them. Barret quickly reacted, and tried to open the door. “No! They locked this too!”

Then Scarlet’s voice came from the other side of the door, “Fools. Now, you can’t save the girl. Ha, ha, ha, ha!!”

Barret hit the door and yelled, “Goddammit...!!”

“OK, OK time for plan B. Lets run to the Airport!” stated Cait Sith.

“Why the airport? An’ leave Tifa there?”

“Trust me, trust me. We gotta take a chance.”

Barret not pleased with this plan; did as the Cait said, and headed towards the airport.

Though in the Gas Chamber, Tifa was about to pass out, and noticed the key. She quickly moved her feet to the key, and slid it over. She then picked up the key with her feet, and brought it to her mouth. Moving quickly she used the key to free her right arm, and then freed her left.

She stood up to see an emergency shut off switch, and pressed it. The gas stopped, and cleared out of the room. Tifa placed her hand on her knees and started breathing. After a moment she went to check the door, trying to open it. “Open it---...” she said while pulling on the door, but it wouldn’t budge.

While Tifa was trying to escape, Barret making his way to the Airport, when he was stopped by another reporter. “I know you’re in a hurry!” exclaimed the reporter. “But, please if I could have a word...”

Barret not in the mood, yelled, “Shu’up!! I’m in a hurry!”

The reporter was scared away, and stated, “Don’t make so much noise... It’s me, *me!* Yuffie!”

“The hell you doin here!?”

She did not answer right away because they were in the middle of watching Weapon rise out of the water. She then turned to Barret, and exclaimed, “I’ll explain later! Now, we gotta get to the Airport!”

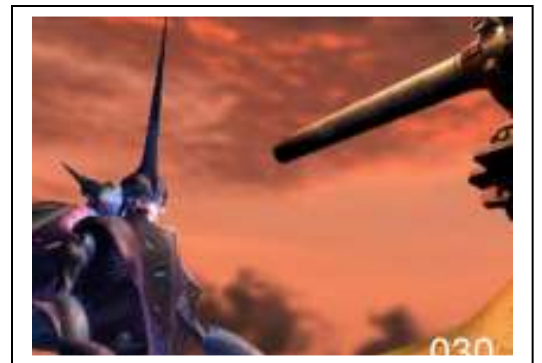
They continued onto the Airport, and arrived at the airstrip. Barret confused to as of why there were coming here looked around, only to see the Airship, and a dead end. Barret then looked at Cait Sith. “Yo! You sure this is the right way? It’s a dead end!”

“Uh oh? Did I make a wrong turn?” responded Cait Sith.

Barret now more pissed than ever, shouted, “You damn cat...! What the hell’re we gonna do now? They all be comin’ soon!” Barret then hear the sound of troops, and he cocked his gun arm. “Yo, better watch my back till the end... partner!”

Weapon then finally started his full attack on the city. He opened his mouth, and started to suck in air. As he did there was a blue glow that kept getting brighter and brighter. He then released an energy beam onto the city, hitting the gas chamber, and carving a hole in to the roof.

He then eyed up the Big Cannon, and started to suck air in again. An just like before there was a blue glow that formed in his mouth, and it got brighter, and brighter.



He was just about release the energy wave, when the Big Cannon fired, blowing off his head. Weapons body fell into the water, lifeless.

Tifa was still in the gas chamber saw the hole in the ceiling. Then she heard Scarlet's voice. "What'd you do? Hey! Open it!"

Tifa then commented to herself, "First you lock me in this weird place, and now you're telling me to come out? Make up your mind!" Tifa reassessing her situation, decided to climb out the hole in the ceiling. As she started to climb out the door to the gas Chamber open, and in ran three Shinra Soldiers, and Scarlet.

Once she made it outside, she started to climb down the exterior of the building. The Shinra Soldiers followed, and one quickly fell to his death. Tifa made it to the bottom, and began to run the only way she could; down the barrel of the Big Cannon.

She arrived at the end, hoping that no one saw her, but that hope faded away when Scarlet stated, "Our little game of hide and seek ends here."

Tifa turned around, and Scarlet continued. "The execution may have been unsuccessful, but your death by falling from here and crashing into the water below still might be pretty exciting."

Scarlet walked over to Tifa, and slapped her across the face. "Stuck up to the end!" exclaimed Scarlet.

Tifa, holding her face stated, "Quit slapping me! You old wench!!!" Tifa slapped her back, and Scarlet exclaimed, "how can you?"

Tifa slapped her again, and exclaimed, "Pay back." Tifa slapped and slapped, until Scarlet fell onto the ground.

"God I can't stand it!" exclaimed Scarlet. She stood up and walked away from Tifa, and ordered, "Take her away."

Two Shinra Soldiers ran up, and Scarlet turned to Tifa. "Now, it's time to pay up. I'll really drop you if you don't settle down! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Tifa then thought she heard Barret's voice yell, "Run..." She looked around but couldn't see him anywhere.

"Run to the end of the Cannon!!" shouted Barret.

Tifa ran to the end of the Cannon, to see the airship appear, with Barret waving. Barret then threw a rope, and Tifa jumped of the end of the Cannon, and missed the rope. She fell about ten feet, and barely got a hold of it. She climbed up, and they flew off.

Chapter 04: The Search for Cloud.

The Airship escaped easily, because the city was still in panic of Weapon, even though he was dead. Tifa finally made it aboard the airship, and Barret pulled up the rope. "You okay?" asked Barret.

She nodded and said, "My cheeks hurt a bit." She paused for a second. "Forget about that, what's all this about?"

"Well, I'll catch the details later," said Cait Sith. "In any case, the Airship, Highwind, is now yours." He hopped away, and entered the cargo area. Tifa was about to follow, but stopped when she saw Yuffie lying on the floor.

Tifa walked up to her, and Yuffie said, "Ha! Ha! ...urk!" She paused for a moment, trying not to puke. "Well... I'm glad you're safe. I'm going to stay up here a little longer."

Tifa nodded, and went inside the Highwind. As she walked in she overheard Barret yelling at Cait Sith. "Dammit! Why didn't ya tell me you could fly an airship!?" He calmed down, and added, "I thought... Tifa was gone for good."

"Sorry, but I had to do something to trick the enemy," responded Cait Sith. Barret didn't respond, and Cait Sith stated, "Come on! Everyone is waiting!"

Tifa then shouted, "Everyone? Everyone's here?" She quickly ran up to the bridge, and Cid greeted her. "Welcome to my airship-the Highwind!"

Tifa really wasn't pay attention, and began to look around. "What's wrong!?" questioned Cid. "You should be more excited than that!"

Red XIII then said, "Cid..."

Cid scratched his head, and responded, "Yeah..."

Tifa then mentioned, "Not enough crew." She then walked around the bridge, and Barret questioned, "What's the sad face for?"

Tifa however did respond, and continued to walk around, and Vincent said, "...So glad you're all right Tifa."

She nodded, and Red XIII asked, "Do you think we're strong enough without Cloud? Do you think we can save the Planet alone?"

Barret ran up, and Tifa answered, "Meteor is coming, and Weapons on the rampage... At a time like this, I don't know what I'm supposed to do..." She turned her back, and shook her head. "No idea at all..."

"Get a hold of yourself Tifa!" exclaimed Barret "C'mon, let's think about this! No way we can get offa this train we're on!"

"...If only Cloud was here, everything would be fine." She turned back to them. "Cloud would... Stand that cocky little way he did, and tell us what to do. He'd say 'Everything's under control, Tifa'."

She turned her back again, and Barret shook his head. "Tifa," he exclaimed. "When'd you become such a wimp!"

"I'm sorry Barret. I'm kind of shocked myself. I'm so depressed."

Red XIII then mentioned, "And Tifa... the reason why we all thought it was Cloud was because..."

Tifa nodded, and said, "I know. That's why I want to make sure. That's why I have to see him again."

Cid then had to add his two cents. "I want you to know that I didn't dislike him. Gotta admit he was a strange dude. Just when you thought he was cool, he'd go and do some damn fool thing. And when you thought he was smart, he'd show how stupid he was." Cid scratched his head. "Everything about him from his movement to his speech were kinda odd. Knowin' what I do now, I can see why he was that way. Well, as long as you stay alive, you just might see him again someday, so cheer up, sis."

"...I'll be able to see him someday," responded Tifa.

"If we can find out where he is, the Highwind'll get us there in no time."

Red XIII then had an idea, and said, "...Maybe. Cloud is still stuck deep in the North Crater, where the ground cracked and swallowed him up... Buried in the depths of the underground..."

"Deep within the earth... are you talking about the Lifestream?" asked Tifa.

Red XIII nodded, and stated, "The Lifestream sometime gushes out to the surface from cracks in the ocean floor. I head that such a place exists. Maybe, just maybe Cloud's..." He paused for a second. "There appears to be a small island near the Lifestream... They said that sometime Lifestream suddenly gushes out at the south island. I remember hearing about this from Seto when I was a child, but I don't remember much else... I'm sorry... Tifa."

Hearing this Tifa had a pretty good idea where to start looking. First she went to the Operations room, and selected Barret, and Vincent as travel companions. She then went to the bridge, and talked to the pilot in training.

"Eaggghh! Are we going?"

"We're going," responded Tifa.

"Eaggghh! We're off!" exclaimed the Pilot, as he flew the Highwind.

Right now there mission was simple, find Cloud. Even though there were other pressing matters, like Meteor, and the end of the world, but Tifa was now in charge, and she made this high priority.

She had the pilot fly to the south, and he did. After a while they found an island that had a village, and Tifa wanted to check it out. The pilot landed the Highwind, and they entered the village of, Mideel.

They began looking around, and a cat walked up to Tifa. She looked at the cat and said, "What's a matter? Are you all alone?" She kneeled down. "You got lost didn't you? Separated from someone you love...? Silly thing..."

She then overheard two men talking, "...guess it's been about a week now since he washed up here on shore... Poor pokey-headed young thing..."

"It was really sad... but weird," responded the other man. "He was holding this really long sword."

"I dunno. The whole thing feels unlucky to me. But the amazing thing was those weird blue eyes..." stated the first man.

This conversation had caught Tifa's attention, and said to her self, "Wha!?" She Stood up and turned to the men. "Wh...wait a minute!! What did you just say!?" She ran over to the men. "Excuse me! That young person you were just talking about..."

"Yeah... a villager found him a little ways down the coast... it was about a week ago, I think," stated one of the men.

"Yeah, poor kid... He must've drifted from somewhere pretty far away..." stated the other man.

Tifa turned to Barret, and Vincent, and said with excitement, “Cloud!! It must be!! It’s Cloud!!”

“You sure!?” questioned Barret.

“You’ve found him,” stated Vincent.

Tifa turned back to the men that were talking about Cloud, and she asked, “So where is he? Is he safe!? Where is he now...?”

One of the men pointed to a building just up a head, and stated, “Yeah... up ahead here... At the, uh, clinic...”

“He’s alive...!” exclaimed Tifa with more excitement. “Cloud... Cloud’s alive!!”

Tifa ran off toward the Clinic, and shouted, “Cloud!”

“Uh...!? Yo, Tifa!!” shouted Barret as he ran after her, followed by Vincent.

She entered the Clinic, as excited as a child on Christmas morning. She looked around try to find Cloud, and said, “Cloud!?”

The doctor turned around, and said, “Here now. The way you’re running around here, you’d think Meteor fell or something.”

“I’m sorry, but I heard that a friend of mine was being taken care of here...” stated Tifa.

“A friend..?” questioned the Doctor. He then nodded, and said, “Oh yeah...! That young fellow!? Don’t worry. Your friend is next door. But I’m afraid his condition is...”

Tifa interrupted, “Here?” she questioned as she looked through the door to her right. She nodded, and said, “Over here,” and ran into the next room.

She saw a nurse tending to Cloud, and she couldn’t see him. “Cloud...!?”

The nurse moved out of the way, and Barret and Vincent entered the clinic, to hear Tifa say, “Oh... Cloud!! I’m so glad you’re safe!”

Tifa walked over to Cloud, who was in a wheelchair, and looked into his eyes. He was non-responsive, and had no control over his body. He would pick his head up look around, and then lower it again, uncontrollably.

Tifa was so confused by his reactions, and said in a confusing tone, “Cloud...?”

“Uh...aaa...?” was the sound that came out his mouth.

Tifa walked closer to him and asked, “Wh...what’s wrong... Cloud...?”

“A... Gurk....?” responded Cloud.

“Cloud! What happened to you....!?”

“Mako poisoning...” stated the Doctor. “Quite an advanced case... It appears this young man’s been exposed to a high level of Mako Energy for a protracted period of time. He probably has no idea who or where he is now... Poor fellow, his voice doesn’t even work. He is literally miles away from us. Some place far away where no one’s ever been... All alone...”

Tifa looked at the Doctor, and exclaimed, “Doctor...!!”

“That’s bad...” stated Barret.

Tifa knelt on the floor, and said “Cloud...”

“Ahem! Let’s us excuse ourselves,” stated the Doctor. He then turned to Barret and Vincent, and said, “Listen, would you all mind... waiting outside?”

Barret walked outside the Doctor and the Nurse followed. Once they were gone Tifa began to cry, and said, “Why...? What do you want me to do? Please, Cloud... Talk to me... Tell me you see me, that you can hear me... Tell me, please...”

Tifa paused to see if Cloud would respond, but he didn't. This only made her more upset. "I came this far believing in the memories we have together... This isn't happening...! This is too cruel... Oh, Cloud...! I..." she began to cry harder, and couldn't continue.

Outside of the clinic, the others were having a conversation. "So what about him?" asked Barret. "You know... Cloud?"

"I'll say it again, he's got mako poisoning. I've never seen such a case this bad... An immense amount of Mako-drenched knowledge was put into his brain all at once... No normal human could have survived it... It's a miracle he did!"

"No, wonder..." said Barret. "After fallin' in the Lifestream an' bein' washed up here..."

"But remember, the light of hope can be found anywhere," stated the Doctor. "Listen, if you give up hope... What will happen to him?"

Barret turned his back, and said quietly, "...hope..." He then crossed his arms, and said quietly, "Hey, but honestly, man... Do I really want him to come back? What did he do for the world? What can he do for us from here on out? He may be nothing more than Sephiroth's shadow..."

"Is something wrong?" asked the Doctor.

Barret turned back, and shook his head. "No, nothin'. Nothin' at all, doc."

Tifa then walked outside, and even though she had dried her tears, they all could tell she was crying.

"You okay?" asked Barret.

Tifa nodded, and said, "Yes... I'm sorry I had you all worried. And I have something I want to tell you all..." She took in a deep breath, and walked back into the Clinic.

Everyone followed her back in, and she went back to Cloud's room. She had her back turned to them, and stated, "I don't care about anything else, only Cloud..." She turned to face them. "I... want to be by his side..."

"Yeah, that's probably best..." responded Barret. "For Cloud... an' for you..."

"Do what you wish," stated Vincent.

Tifa lowered her head, and said, "I'm sorry, everyone... At a time like this..."

"Why you apologizin'?" asked Barret. "We'll come back again an' check on ya."

"Take care of him," stated Vincent.

"Right..." responded Tifa.

Barret turned to leave, but stopped to say, "Oh, and uh, Tifa... I don't like askin' this, but... Is he really your childhood friend? And not Sephiroth's shadow?"

"Huh!? Well... that is..." Tifa shook her head, and stated, "no, I'm sure of it!"

Barret nodded, and said, "Yeah...? Okay then... Sorry for askin' that." He then turned to Vincent. "We gotta get back to the Highwind."

Vincent nodded and they left Tifa at the clinic with Cloud. Barret Still wasn't sure of what to think about Cloud, really being who Tifa said he was, or if he was just a shadow of Sephiroth.

Chapter 05: The Huge Materia

Everyone was at the high wind, not sure of what to do next. They were all sitting around in silences. Barret couldn't stand it any longer, and questioned, "What're we gonna do now! What can *we* do? Huh? Ain't there nothin' we can do? An' don' go tellin' us to wait for Cloud to get better."

"Oh," said Cait Sith. "I've got some news."

"Yeah, What!? That you a spy?" questioned Barret.

"Yeah... I've already told you I was. Both Gya ha ha and Kya ha ha, are up to something. Wanna eavesdrop?"

No one responded, and Cait Sith broadcasted the conversation.

"Now then..." said Rufus. "We're faced with two issues. 1 Destroy Meteor. 2 Remove the barrier around North Cave and defeat Sephiroth. Any ideas?"

"Gya haah hah hah!" laughed Heidegger. "We already solved the first problem! Meteor will soon be smashed to bits! The plan has already been put into motion. Namely, to collect Huge materia from each region."

"Well..." said Rufus.

Scarlet then stated, "Huge Materia is a highly density special type of materia made through a special compression process in Mako reactors. The energy extracted from it is 330 times the strength of normal materia. Ha, ha, ha! How about that!?" There was a slight pause, and she continued, "We will gather all the huge Materia together and ram it into Meteor. That will cause a huge explosion!! Reducing Meteor literally to bits."

"You're going to ram Meteor?" asked Rufus. "Do you think we have the technology to do it?"

"Don't worry about that!" exclaimed Scarlet. "More importantly, we've got to collect huge Materia from each area."

"We've already collected materia from Nibelheim," stated Heidegger. "All that's left is 'Corel' and 'Fort Condor'. I've already dispatched troops to Corel. Gya haah hah hah!!"

Cait Sith stopped the transmission, and Barret exclaimed, "Corel! What else can they do to Corel!?"

"And the huge materia..." said Red XIII "You mean the Huge materia, Don't you? I've heard about it. When, our small materia nears the larger one, something should happen. I'm certain of it. That's why we're using the power of materia in our fight..."

"Can't let Shinra get a hold of the Huge Materia!" stated Barret. "Besides, when Cloud gets back, I wanna show him this Huge materia. He's gonna be shocked."

"So, what are you saying, Barret?" questioned Cait Sith. "Even though you're always knocking him, you really want Cloud to return."

Barret turned his back to Cait Sith, and crossed his arms. He then turned back, and snapped, "I ain't sayin' nothin' 'bout nothin'. You just... shut your face!" He then nodded. "Every group's gotta have a leader. An' that's me! Or at least I wanna be... But I ain't cut out to be no leader. I never knew that till lately."

Barret looked around, and said, "An' that's what is..." Barret turned to Cid, to see him sleeping.

"...ZZZZ... Hmph?" Cid opened his eyes, and questioned, "Wha? What's goin' on?"

“You been chosen to be the new leader,” stated Barret.

Cid stretched, and said, “Pain in the ass. Forget it.”

“But for us to fight, we gotta have Highwind, and you,” stated Barret. He pointed around the room. “We need it to save the planet. An’ who’s runnin’ this ship? You! That’s why you’re our new leader. Ain’t no one else can.”

Cid looked around and scratched his head. “Hm... this ship’s gonna save the planet, huh? Ain’t that gonna be just a little tough?” Cid scratched his head. “Oh man, that went straight to my heart. I’m a man, too! Okay, I’ll do it! Everyone, follow me!”

“Awright, now here’s the first job,” stated Barret. “The Operation Room’s waiting for you!”

Cid nodded, and said, “Yeah!!” He then ran off to the Operation room, to assign his traveling group. Before he could get there Barret shouted, “Yo, Cid!” Cid turned around and Barret stated, “When you’re ready we’re headin’ for the Corel Reactor. C’mon Mr. Leader, you’d better hurry.”

Cid continued onto the Operation room. When he arrived, he decided that his group should consist of himself, Barret, and Yuffie. He mostly wanted Yuffie in the group because he wanted to keep a close eye on her; Cid didn’t trust Yuffie one bit. He also didn’t trust Cait Sith either, but felt that Vincent could handle him, being an Ex-Turk.

After that they headed towards North Corel, and arrived a short time later. Cid, and his group exited the Highwind, and entered North Corel. They immediately headed for the Reactor. They walked the railway path, and arrived at the reactor.

They were about to enter, when two Shinra Soldiers stopped them and then attacked the group. Cid and his group made quick work of the Shinra Soldiers, and killed them.

“Guess we’re safe for now...!” exclaimed Cid.

There was a train whistle, and Yuffie yelled, “Wa...wait!”

“Da—mn!” exclaimed Barret as they moved out of the way of a train leaving the reactor.

“Looks like they’re takin’ off with the Huge Materia in that train!” stated Cid.

“NO!” shouted Barret. “You damn boneheads!”

“What are ya gonna do!?” questioned Yuffie. “Huge Materia!?”

“Hey, do you know who I am?” questioned Cid. “I’m Cid – that’s who the hell I am! Now just let me handle it!”

Cid ran into the reactor, and Barret and Yuffie followed. Then another train whistle sounded, and Cid exclaimed, “Hey, hey, hey, hey---!”

Cid then drove a train out of the reactor, and Barret asked, “How can he even drive this?”

“Don’t ask me... I don’t know!” exclaimed Cid.

“What!?” questioned Barret.

Cid then placed his hands on two levers, and stated, “Don’t worry! I can handle this kinda stuff! Two levers; one on the right and one on the left...” He moved the levers, and the train picked up speed.

“I see, just alternate the two levers up and down, right!? Judging from the enemy’s speed, I’d say it’ll take about 10 minutes. We’re gonna fly!! Hold on tight!!”

Cid moved the leavers back and forth, and caught up to the other train. “All right! We’re gonna jump!!”

They jumped to the next train, and landed on the rear car. The train consisted of five cars, and the engine. They hopped from car to car battling all the way there. They finally reached the engine to see a Shinra Soldier controlling it.

“What the!” exclaimed the Shinra Soldier. “You... you guys!”

“All right—Just hand over the Huge Materia!” stated Cid.

“Sh... Whooooa---!” was the fearful sound the Shinra Soldier made as he attacked them. They quickly killed the Shinra Soldier, and Cid stated, “You got guts comin’ after me! I’ll never forget you!”

“Got no time for that now!” exclaimed Barret.

“Forget about the Huge Materia, *we’re* the ones in deep trouble!” exclaimed Yuffie.

“I *know*, already!” stated Cid. “Just shut up and keep quiet! If we keep this up, we’ll crash right into North Corel!”

Cid jumped onto the engine, and said, “Let’s see... if we alternately use the levers to accelerate... It should brake if we move the levers up or down simultaneously!”

There was only a minute left, and Cid moved the levers. The train picked up speed, and Barret shouted, “Hey, it’s not working!”

“What are you doin; accelerating!?” questioned Yuffie.

Cid again placed his hands on the levers, and stated, “Fuck! The other way!? Just watch, this time, I’ll...”

Cid pulled the levers again and the train went faster.

“Hey...HEY HEY!!” shouted Barret.

“Get serious, you OLD MAN!!” shouted Yuffie.

Cid not paying any attention to them, placed his hands on the levers. “SHI----!!” he yelled as he pulled the levers the same ways as before. There was a loud clank, and the brakes locked on the train, just stopping outside of North Corel.

Cid collected the Huge Materia, and they got off the train. They proceeded into North Corel to see a gathering of people. The people quickly surrounded them, and one person asked, “Aren’t you the ones that stopped the Shinra train? The Shinra was just about to destroy our lives again...”

“It might be full of junk, but this is the only home we got, Barret!!” stated another person.

“Of... of course! We’re all born and raised in the coal minds!!” stated Barret. “No matter how tough it gets, our hearts burn bright red like coal!”

“To hell with Meteor!” exclaimed another villager. “We’re Coal Miners, ain’t we? We’ll dig a deep tunnel and hide from Meteor!”

“That’s it!” stated the first person. He then turned to a young boy, and said, “Hey, kid! How about givin’ somethin’ to these guys fightin’ the Shinra?”

The boy walked up to Barret, and said, “I got it out of the well. Isn’t it an amazing rock!!”

The kid handed them the rock, and it turned out to be the Ultima Materia. Barret took the materia, and the kid said, “Must’ve been a horrific battle. You have scars all over your body.”

Barret didn't comment, and a villager stated, "I already talked to the Inn's owner, today you can rest for free."

Being tired from their recent mission, decided they needed some rest. In the morning they went back to the Highwind to plan out their next mission.

On the bridge of the Highwind, Cid scratched his head, and asked, "What's next? Shall we head for fort Condor?"

Everyone agreed, and they flew off to Fort Condor. Fort Condor was a unique place. It wasn't really a Fort; it was a hollowed mountain, with a Mako Reactor on top of it. On top of the mako reactor was a Giant Condor, which had a giant condor that had built a nest on top, and laid an egg. The Shinra have been trying to kill the Condor, but Animal rights people set up a base in the Mountain, giving it the name Fort Condor.

The Highwind soared quickly, and then arrived at Fort Condor. They were just outside the entrance, when the guard at the door stated, "We've been fighting the Shinra for a long time at this battlefield. Even now, we're still settled in for a long war with them. If you aren't in a hurry, would you help us fight them? Listen I don't want to push but, if you've got something else to do, why don't you finished that first?"

Cid knowing that they needed to get inside, responded, "I guess we'll help you."

"Really!? Then go on up and they'll fill you in on the details."

They entered Fort Condor, and climbed up a rope. This took them to a poorly constructed ladder, and that would take them to the third floor. On this floor there was nothing spectacular. In fact the only thing here was a man sitting at a table, with his head lying on a table.

Cid walked up to the man, and the man picked up his head. "Hmmm, now this is something, I never thought anyone would ever climb up here," stated the man. "Any minute now, this will be a battlefield against the Shinra. You'd better get down before you get involved."

"A battlefield, we can't overlook that," said Cid.

"Shinra? The hell those jackasses doing here?" questioned Barret.

"The Shinra? Here too?" said Yuffie with confusion.

"It appears you have a problem with Shinra, too," responded the man. "After all, you climbed up here. Why not listen to what I have to say for a moment?"

"All right, talk on," said Cid.

"Do you know what's at top of this mountain?" asked the Man.

"Huh? Something's up there?" asked Barret.

"Look close, old man," stated Yuffie.

"No matter how you look at it, that's a reactor," stated Cid. "And on top of it, is that Condor?"

"I see you're very perceptive. Yes, it's a reactor and a condor," stated the man. "Looks like there's a special materia up in the Mako reactor. Then came the condor, so Shinra dispatched the troops to get rid of it. Their plan is to get rid of the condor and the people on this mountain and to get the materia from the Mako Reactor. Unfortunately, we don't have the ability to fight the Shinra ourselves. That's why we have hired soldiers to help us. As our sponsor you can help us with a contribution or by fighting along side of us... What do you think? You want to join us in our fight?"

"If you go that far, what can I say," said Cid. "Well, we'll be able to do something if you leave it up to us."

“Hey! We’ll come to the rescue,” stated Barret.

“Okay, it’s settled,” stated Yuffie. “We’re gonna get the materia, right?”

After the conversation, they walked upstairs, to speak with the battle coordinator. When they arrived, and the coordinator asked, “So shall I let you in our strategy?” Cid just stood there, not responding to the question, and the coordinator said, “The enemy is targeting this mountain’s reactor and will be climbing to reach it. We must set a trap and hire soldiers to protect the place. Well, this is all we have... this village doesn’t have money. Even if we wanted to fight, our hands are tied ‘cause we’re broke. To hire one soldier, we need 400 gil. So, if we hire 20 soldiers, we must have 8000 gil. That is, we would like you to use your own money to hire these soldiers, buy the trap, set it up and give the commands. We know what we’re asking is selfish. We sent our wives and kids to another village. We are resigned to our fate. Let’s get back to square one. If the enemy penetrates this shed, you’ll have to fight them off immediately. I know it’s a one shot deal, but I’m asking for your help. Now then, is there anything you wish to ask?”

Cid grateful that the battle coordinator had finally stopped talking shook his head, and the battle coordinator asked, “Ready?”

“Okay, ready,” responded Cid.

“This is the deciding battle. The enemy numbers more than before.”

Cid really didn’t care, and started hiring troops. Cid hired 20 or so men, and set them up on the mountain. They got situated, and the Shinra troops attacked. They made their way up mountain, trying to get through the defense, but they kept failing.

Cid hired soldiers had killed the attacking army, and the battle Coordinator said with excitement, “YES! We did it! That was wonderful Thank you!! I doubt the Shinra will attack now.” He laughed, and glanced back out the window. He jumped back in shock, and shouted, “A, arrgghh!!”

Cid looked out the window, to see the condor’s egg starting to hatch. As the egg opened up the condor was covered with a fiery light. The light had only lasted a moment, and faded away. The condor fell off the reactor, dead, and a chick was on top of the reactor.

“Th, that light just now...” said the Battle Coordinator quietly. “The condor... The eggs... What!? Would you go outside and see what it was?”

Cid nodded, and walked outside to see the chick. He approached it with caution, and the chick flew away, leaving the Phoenix materia behind. Cid picked up the Materia, and went back inside.

Once he was back inside, the battle coordinator was still in shock. “Gone...” He took a moment, and requested, “Be sure to report to my father, too.”

Cid nodded, and went back to talk to the man at the table, the battle coordinator’s father. When Cid approached him, the man said, “Everyone, thanks. I really mean it. Thanks. Although there isn’t anything we can give you, we’ll make sure you can stop in and stay anytime, so be sure to drop by.” He paused for a second. “Yes, yes, and there’s one thing I forgot to tell you...”

The man pulled out the Huge Materia, and handed it to Cid. Cid confused by this, because he just stated that they had nothing to give, asked, “Huh? What’s this?”

“Damn man, it’s huge materia,” stated Barret.

“You gotta have that Materia!” exclaimed Yuffie.

Cid took the Huge Materia, and the man said, “The truth is, that is the Materia inside the reactor.”

“What the hell did we fight for?” questioned Cid.

“We weren’t protectin’ the reactor, we were protectin’ the condors,” stated the man. “When the reactor was built, they forced us to help. That’s how we knew what was inside the reactor. I knew this day would come, so after the Shinra left, I sneaked in and took the materia. I didn’t mean to fool you, but I guess that’s how it ended up. I’m really sorry.”

“Just forget about it,” responded Cid. “Anyway, we’re still alive.”

“If you put it that way... we’re really grateful,” said the man.

“So the last Huge Materia that Shinra’s after’s in the underwater reactor in Junon?” asked Cid.

“We gotta get there first and beat’em no matter what!” exclaimed Barret

“But ya know, Shinra’s probably on high alert since we always mess with’em,” stated Cid. “How ‘bout we take a break and go see the little fella for a bit?”

“You mus’ mean Cloud...” said Barret.

“Yeah, I’m worried ‘bout Tifa, she may’ve collapsed takin’ care of the guy,” responded Cid. “How ‘bout checkin’ in on’em? Down to Mideel!”

Barret and Yuffie nodded, and they left Fort Condor, and headed back to the Highwind. A course was set to check up on Tifa and Cloud, in Mideel.

Chapter 06: Cloud's Coma

They arrived back at Mideel, and went straight to the clinic. When they entered, Cid could tell by the look on the nurses' face that Cloud status hadn't change. They entered the room where Cloud was, and Tifa shook her head. She took in a deep breath, and said, "...it's no use... I don't understand a thing, Cloud. What should I do...? What if you never recover for the rest of your life?"

Then the building began to shake, and Tifa fell to the floor. "Eyaaaah!?" She screamed.

Cloud then stopped moving, and looked right at Cid. "...They're They're...coming...!!" stated Cloud.

Cid shocked to hear Cloud speak, asked, "What did you say, Cloud!"

Though it was no use Cloud had slipped away again. "Uh...aaa...?" was his response to Cid.

"Damn. What the hell's going' on!?" Cid said with confusion. He ran outside to figure out the situation. When he exited the building, Cid discovered, that the whole village was shaking, and shouted, "What's this...!? The Lifestream is gushing up from below the surface of the earth!" Cid looked around and started to hear screams from above. He looked up to see no other than Ultimate Weapon. "Damn, that's...!? This is bad...!!" he exclaimed, as Tifa ran outside. She then questioned, "Cid...!? What's wrong?"

"N' nothin'!! You and Cloud get inside quick!!" exclaimed Cid.

Tifa not sure if that was the right thing to do, said, "But I...!?"

Cid interrupted her, "Hey, don't worry about a thing. I ain't about to die that easily."

Tifa nodded, and said, "Be careful...!" She then ran inside, and Cid said, "Okay, here I go! Watch this!!"

Cid, Barret, and Yuffie ran out to the center of the city, and they prepared for combat.

"Damn!!" exclaimed Cid. "That's fuckin Weapon!! Of all the times to show up...!" He paused for a moment, and shouted, "Ok then, come on!! You bastard!"

Ultimate Weapon responded, by attacking them. The battle didn't last long, because Ultimate Weapon flew away.

"You bastard!" exclaimed Cid. "You tryin' to escape?"

The area stopped shaking, and everyone relaxed. Barret turned to Cid, and commented, "Damn, man. Just a little bit more an' I woudda smashed him..."

"Well at least the Lifestream's back to normal," stated Yuffie.

The ground began to shake again, and Cid exclaimed, "Damn, you gotta be kiddin'...!!"

The tremors got more violent, and Cid stated, "Th, This is bad...! The main stream is kickin' up!! Something' way bigger than that last one is on its way!! No good get outta here...!!"

"But what about Tifa and Cloud...!?" questioned Yuffie.

"Goddammit!!" exclaimed Cid. "You don't have time to worry about anyone other than yourself! You don't know when that stream'll blow..."

There was a small amount of Lifestream that started through the ground, and Cid exclaimed, "Whoa!! There's no time, hurry!!"

They started to run out of the Village, and Cid shouted towards the Clinic, "Tifa!! Cloud!! Get outta here!!"

Though in the clinic Tifa could not hear Cid, and she said to herself, "This is bad... The tremors are getting worse." She turned to Cloud, and said, "Wait a minute, Cloud." She ran out of the room, and exclaimed, "Doctor! Shouldn't we move him somewhere rather than stay here...?"

The doctor was calm, like the nothing was going on, "Hmmm, It might be safe to take refuge in a wide open space."

Tifa ran back into Cloud's room, and kneeled in front of him. "Don't worry about a thing, Cloud... I'll see to it that you get somewhere safe!"

Then Ultimate Weapon screamed, and the Doctor now more worried, shouted, "No! The Structure can't take it!! Hurry!"

"Yes!" exclaimed Tifa as she stood up. She ran behind the wheelchair, and said, "Ready Cloud? We're leaving now!!" She pushed him out of the clinic, and started towards the center of the village. As they ran the ground behind them fell in to the earth. Tifa ran with all of her might, but the quake wouldn't let up, and they both fell into the earth, and into the Lifestream.

Tifa and Cloud sank like rocks, and Tifa became unconscious, and started to dream. It started off in total blackness, but wasn't like a darkness that you would normally be in. It was more like emptiness, hollow. She tried to look around, but saw nothing. She was now confused, and questioned, "Wh, where am I... what's happening? I...?"

She again looked around. "Where's Cloud...!? Cloud, where are you!?" She then heard noises that sounded like an off tuned radio, set on the AM band. "Huh...what...? Who...?"

She looked around to see nothing. "Who is it...?" I can't hear..." Then the noises increased, adding a whooping sound. 'Whoop, Whoop, Whoop.' went the sound.

Tifa turned around, and exclaimed, "Wait a minute...! I don't know anything about that! No! It's not me...! I'd never do anything like that!!"

There was a crunching sound, and Tifa placed her hands over her ears. "No!" she exclaimed. "Stop it...!! Stay back!" The noise got louder, and Tifa took her hands off her ears, and started running. "Somebody... help! Please!!"

The noise got so loud that it forced her to her knees, and she placed her hands back over her ears. "Cloud, help me!!" She started spinning uncontrollability. "Eyaaaah...!!" she screamed, as she closed her eyes.

Some time had passed; the exact time was unknown to her. The noise finally had stopped, and things calmed down. Tifa opened her eyes to find herself in what appeared to be Cloud's subconscious.

"Where am I...?" she questioned. She looked around to see many different Cloud's, four to be exact. Three of them were on the ground with her, while the fourth was floating in space, holding his head, and shaking.

She looked up to the Cloud that was floating in space, and said, "Cloud!? What is it, Cloud? What is this...!?" She looked around. "Is this inside of your dreams? Or is it... you.... subconsciousness...?" She paused for a moment. "You're searching, aren't you

Cloud? Searching... for yourself... I can help too. We'll work together to try and get the real you back!" She looked around at the others Cloud's. "But... Where do we start?"

She looked at the Cloud's, One Cloud protected his must trust secret, and his feelings. The second Cloud was pondering over the promise at the well that he made to Tifa. The third Cloud was at the entrance of Nibelheim, wondering of his past there.

Tifa not sure of where to start, decided the best place was at Nibelheim memories. She walked up to Cloud, and said, "The gates of Nibelheim... Five years ago, Sephiroth passed through these gates... And... That's how it all started..."

Cloud stood up, and Tifa said, "It connects... to Nibelheim...? That's right... it's probably best to start from there...."

They both walked toward Nibelheim, and Tifa said, "Let's go have a look, Cloud. I know it's not easy... But I'll be right with you..."

Cloud and Tifa continued into Nibelheim, and Tifa said, "Cloud...look" She ran further into Nibelheim. "Here's the well... And that's Gramps' Inn, too." She then ran over to a beat up truck, which sat at the entrance of Nibelheim. "The old truck in town. It's been here since we were little kids, right?"

Cloud didn't respond, and Tifa asked, "This is the Nibelheim you remember, right?" She paused to wait for Cloud to respond, but he didn't. Tifa nodded, and said, "It's the same as my Nibelheim. That's why this place is... our Nibelheim."

She then walked up to Cloud, and he lowered his head. Tifa then placed her hand on his shoulder, and said, "Five years ago... two men from Soldier came..." She walked away, and looked into Nibelheim. "Sephiroth and a young and vibrant Soldier." She turned to Cloud. "Can you tell me again what happened?"

Cloud didn't say a word, and started to remember how it happened. He started by putting Sephiroth at the entrance of Nibelheim. Just like in Cloud's story, Sephiroth said, "How does it feel!? It's your first time back to your hometown in a long time, right."

Tifa then mentioned, "Five years ago... I saw the real Sephiroth for the very first time."

"So how does it feel!?" asked Sephiroth. "I wouldn't know because I don't have a hometown..."

"Ummm... how 'bout your parents?" asked Cloud.

"My mother is Jenova. She died right after she gave birth to me. My father..." Sephiroth began to laugh, and Tifa commented, "So this is the Great Sephiroth. But to tell you the truth I thought he was very cold."

Sephiroth calmed down, and said, "What does it matter...? All right, let's go."

"I remember, I felt a foreboding about him," said Tifa, and in walk the two Shinra shoulders, and Cloud, just like he said in his story. Tifa looked at them, shook her, and said, "No, Cloud." She turned away from him. "I've been hiding it for sometime, afraid that if I told you... something terrible might happen. But, I'm not going to hide anything anymore."

The Shinra Soldier's and Sephiroth disappeared, and Tifa took in a deep breath. She turned back to Cloud, and said, "You weren't here. Cloud did not come Nibelheim five years ago."

Cloud in more confusion lowered his head, and Tifa said, "I...waited. But, Cloud...never came. The two that were ordered here were Sephiroth and another person..."

Tifa then showed Cloud how it happened, Sephiroth appeared, and said, "All right, let's go." Then The Two Shinra soldiers, and the black hair kid walked in. Then the memory that Cloud believed in collapsed, and fade away from his mind.

"You mean that member of Soldier who came with Sephiroth wasn't... Cloud...?" questioned Cloud.

Tifa shook her head, and said, "There's nothing... I can say. You must find the answer yourself... If you can't... Then you..." She paused for a second. "Take your time, Cloud. Slowly... little by little, okay?"

Cloud now more confused than ever sat down. Tifa knew that she had to start somewhere else, and walked over to the Cloud that was sitting at the well. She walked over, and Cloud stood up. "That starry night at the well..." said Cloud in a depressed tone. "And our promise that night... What if the memory was just a lie?"

"Don't hurry, Cloud... Don't answer too quickly. Just keep checking all those small emotions and it'll come back... Slowly... little by little..." She paused for a moment. "Right... like the sky that night... the heavens were filled with stars..."

They moved towards the well, and Tifa said, "From the beginning... Ok?"

They arrived on the well, and Tifa said, "Try and remember, Cloud."

Cloud started to remember, and his younger self appeared, along with the younger Tifa.

"Right, I was wearing these Clothes," said Tifa. "That's you, too. You were so small then..." Tifa sat down, and added, "...and cute." She then looked towards Cloud. "Sephiroth once said..." she paused, and looked away. "Cloud made up his memories by listening to my stories... Did you imagine this sky? No, you remembered it. That night the stars were gorgeous. It was just Cloud and I. We talked at the well... That's why I continued to believe that you were the real Cloud." She paused for a second. "I still believe you're the real Cloud from Nibelheim... But you don't believe in yourself... These memories aren't enough."

They both walked away from the well, and Tifa said, "Cloud, what about your other memories?" She shook her head. "No, not memories. A memory is some that has to be consciously recalled, right? That's why sometimes it can be mistaken and a different thing... But it's different from a memory locked deep within your heart... That's why it must be a fake. If he could recall up that memory..." Tifa scratched her head. "That's it! What about some memory that has to do with me? I say something and you don't remember it... But you say something, and I remember it, too... Then we'll know that's our memory..." She nodded. "Talk to me. about anything important, some important memory to you..."

Tifa stopped to think for a second. "Now that you mention it, why did you want to join Soldier in the first place? I always thought it was a sudden decision you made..."

Cloud responded, "...I was devastated. ...I wanted to be noticed. I thought if I got stronger I could get someone to notice..."

"Someone to notice you...? ...who?" asked Tifa.

"Who...? ...You know who! ...You that's who."

"...Me? Why!?"

Then a younger voice came from behind Tifa. "Tifa... did you forget... about those days?"

She turned around to see the younger Cloud, and said, "Look... I..." She shook her head. "I'm sorry... But what are you talking about?"

Younger Cloud shook his head. "No...it's alright. You were having trouble back then." He then looked towards the floor. "You were so busy with you own things, it's only natural you don't remember me back then."

Tifa walked up to the younger Cloud, and with confusion, she asked, "Back then?"

Cloud nodded, and said, "It's important to me... I hate to say it but... It's a very important memory... Do you want to see it?"

Tifa nodded, and they walked over to the Cloud that was protecting he most precious memory, and he said, "...a sealed up secret...wish... Tender memories... no one can ever know..."

Cloud moved out of the way, and the younger Cloud took Tifa over to a window. "Do you know where this window goes to, Tifa?" Tifa Didn't respond, and the younger Cloud said, "Fine... I'll go."

Next thing she knew, she was inside of a house. She looked around, and questioned, "My room?"

Cloud nodded, and stated, "It was my first time there."

Tifa still confused, asked, "Was...it?"

Cloud nodded, and said, "I only used to look up at it from the outside." Cloud then remembered three young boys, and Tifa sitting on the floor crying. Then one of the boys exclaimed, "Hey look! Cloud's coming!" He turned to Tifa, and asked, "You think he wants to come in?"

The younger Tifa looked at the boy for a second, and then Tifa lowered her head to continue crying.

"Was that the first day you came into my room?" asked the older Tifa. "...That's right. We lived next door to each other. But I didn't know you that well. I've known you since we were children and always thought we were close..."

Tifa walked toward the children, and shook her head. "Now that you mention it... I don't recall you ever being in my room..."

The younger Cloud nodded, and said, "Tifa always used to be with this three-some."

The older Tifa nodded, and said, "...That's right"

"I used to think...they were all stupid."

Tifa turned to the younger Cloud, and exclaimed, "What!?"

"You were all childish, laughing at every stupid thing."

Tifa looked toward the children, and nodded. She then realized what the younger Cloud had said. She turned back to the younger Cloud, and snapped, "But, we were children, back then."

The younger Cloud turned away, and said, "...I know. I'm the one that was stupid. I really wanted to play with everyone, but I was never allowed into the group." He then turned to Tifa, and shrugged his shoulders. "Then later... I began to think I was different... That I was different form those immature kids." He turned away again. "That then... maybe..."

Then the older Cloud said, "Just maybe, they would invite me in. I thought that might happen, so I hung around..."

The younger Cloud then added, "I was so prejudiced. And... weak."

The older Cloud said, "That night I called Tifa out to the well... I thought to myself that Tifa would never come...that she hated me."

"Yeah... it was so sudden. I was... a bit surprised." Tifa turned to the younger Cloud, and said, "But... It's true that we weren't *that* close, but..." She turned away. "After you left town, I really thought about you a lot. I used to wonder how Cloud was doing. I wondered if Cloud was able to get into SOLDIER?" She turned back to the younger Cloud. "I started reading the newspapers, thinking that there might be an article about you."

The younger Cloud turned to Tifa, and said, "Thanks, Tifa. Tell him what you told me, later. He'll probably be so happy."

Tifa nodded, and exclaimed, "Ok!" She paused for a second, and looked around the room. "What happened on this day? Was it a special day?"

"This was the day..." The younger Cloud paused, and the older Cloud said, "Tifa's mother..."

"The day Mom died..." said Tifa, and the memory played out.

"I want... to see... mom..." cried the younger Tifa. She then ran out of her room, and the three boys followed her. She ran all the way to Mt. Nibel, and questioned, "...I wonder if there's anything beyond that mountain?"

"Mt. Nibel is scary," stated one of the boys. "Many people have died there."

"No one crossed that mountain alive..." stated the another Boy.

"How 'bout those that died?" asked the younger Tifa. "Did mama pass through the mountains?"

None of the boys answered, and the younger Tifa started walking up the mountain path. She turned back to them, and stated, "I'm going!" The three started to follow, but one turned back. Unknown to the younger Tifa, that the younger Cloud was following her.

When they reached the ropeway bridge, the other two boys turned back, and the next thing shown was the younger Tifa, and the Younger Cloud laying on the ground. Then the older Cloud said, "I don't remember the path I walked. Tifa missed her step. I ran to her... but didn't make it in time. Both of us fell off the cliff. Back then, I only scarred my knees but..."

Two men then walked up, and ran to their aid. One man picked up Tifa, and the other man, who was Tifa's father, shouted, "Cloud! Why'd you bring Tifa to a place like this!?" The younger Cloud didn't respond, and Tifa's Father continued to scold Cloud. "What the hell's a matter with you!? What if she dies!?"

The men walked off, and the older Cloud said, "Tifa was in a coma for seven days. We all thought she wouldn't make it. If only I could've saved her... I was so angry... Angry at myself for my weakness. Ever since then, I felt Tifa blamed me... I got out of control... I'd get into fights not even caring who it was with. That was the first time I heard about Sephiroth. If I got strong like Sephiroth then everyone might..."

The area went black, and they appeared back outside of the window. The younger Cloud was now gone, and the older Cloud continued, "If I could just get stronger... Then even Tifa would notice me..."

"So that was it..." said Tifa. "Sorry, Cloud. If I had only remembered more clearly what happened, I could have done something sooner..."

Cloud shook his head, and said, "It's not your fault, Tifa."

"But, I remember back when I was eight!" She turned away to think for a second. "That's it! Now I know!" She turned back to Cloud, and said, "You weren't created five years ago. My childhood memories weren't all made up! Hang in there Cloud! Just a little longer! You've almost found the real you!" Tifa then paused. "Let's go back to Nibelheim again...!"

They both went back to the memory of Nibelheim. They arrived quickly, and Cloud said, "The truth is right there. We almost have the answer right in the palm of our hands."

They entered Nibelheim, and Cloud quickly ran through the town. Tifa chased him, and shouted, "Cloud, wait."

Cloud stopped, and Tifa caught up to him. "Where are you going?" She asked.

Cloud stopped to think, and then responded, "...The Reactor...? To the reactor! The Mako Reactor of Five years ago!"

They continued on, and the memory flashed to the reactor. They were in the room with all the pods, and Sephiroth was standing at the door, with Jenova written over it. They watched the younger Tifa try to stab Sephiroth, but he regained his sword, and struck Tifa with it. She fell down the stairs, and Sephiroth entered the room. As the younger Tifa landed on the floor, in ran the black spikey haired person.

"Hey! It's Cloud!" exclaimed Tifa.

Cloud then said, "Za...ck... Zac...k. Zack..."

"You remembered!!" exclaimed Tifa.

Zack then chased Sephiroth into the Jenova Chamber, and Tifa said, "That's right! IT was Zack who came to Nibelheim with Sephiroth! Then, where were you, Cloud?"

Zack came flying out of the Jenova Chamber, and landed on a pod by the stairs. Tifa was somewhat confused, and asked, "Cloud... Did you... see it all?"

"I saw...everything..."

Then he showed her the memory. It showed a Shinra Soldier running in, grabbing Zack's sword, and running into the Jenova chamber. The Shinra Soldier ran up to Sephiroth, and stabbed him through his stomach.

"Aaarrgh... who... who are you?" questioned Sephiroth.

"Mom... Tifa... my town... give it back..." cried the Shinra Soldier. He pulled out the sword, and stared to walk backwards. "I had so much respect for you... I admired you..."

Tifa still confused asked, "Cloud!?"

The Shinra Soldier took off his face mask, and Tifa said, "That's what happened... You were there. You were watching me. Yeah, I remember. Hmm... so it was you."

Then the memory flashed back to Cloud riding in the van on the way to Nibelheim, with him and Zack having a conversation.

"Hey Cloud," said Zack. "If you're sick, why don't you take that mask off?"

"Yeah..."

The memory reviled that it was Cloud who was sick, and Cloud said, "Yeah... this is... me. I... never made it as a member of Soldier. I left my hometown telling everyone I was going to join, but..." Cloud paused to take in a deep breath. "I was so embarrassed... I didn't want to see anybody..."

Then the memory showed them Sephiroth, Zack, Cloud, and the Shinra Soldier entering Nibelheim. Tifa was waiting for them to arrive, but when they did, Cloud quickly covered his face, and Tifa ran away upset.

Sephiroth turned to Cloud, and asked, "How does it feel? It's your first time back to your hometown in a long time, right?"

Then the memory faded into Nibelheim on fire, and Cloud barely conscious in the town center. It showed him getting up, and the memory faded away again.

The memory faded to Cloud running out of the Jenova Chamber, after he had stabbed Sephiroth. He ran down to Tifa, and she said, "...You came... You kept your promise."

Cloud picked her up, and moved her to the side, and rested her on a pod. Then the older Tifa said, "So you did come when I was in trouble!"

"Sorry... I didn't get there fast... enough," responded Cloud.

"It's all right... Cloud."

Then Sephiroth limped out of the Jenova Chamber, and looked at Cloud. "Just like you," Sephiroth commented, and he limped down the stair holding the head of Jenova. He was about to leave the pod room, when he stopped and looked at Jenova's Head. An evil look had possessed his eyes, and he walked out of the room.

"Cloud... kill Sephiroth..." requested Zack, as his life faded away. Cloud wanting to honor Zack last request went after Sephiroth. Cloud chased him to the next room, where there was a bridge, and under the bridge was the Lifestream.

"Sephiroth!!" shouted Cloud.

Sephiroth stopped, and Cloud lunged at him. Sephiroth quickly reacted, and stabbed Cloud right through the right shoulder.

"Don't... push... your luck..." stated Sephiroth, as he lifted Cloud off the ground. Cloud shook his head, and placed both hands on the sword. He jerked himself down, and began to pull out the sword.

Sephiroth struggling to kill Cloud exclaimed, "...It can't be!"

Cloud pulled out the sword, lifted up Sephiroth, and through him against the wall. Sephiroth then fell in to the Lifestream, with the Jenova head still in hand.

The scene faded back to Cloud's subconscious, and Tifa said, "Cloud..."

"Then... this is goodbye, Tifa. Until we meet again..." stated Cloud. Then all the Cloud's, stood up, and Tifa was confused by what Cloud had said. Then all the Cloud's merge together, with the finally one that was floating in space, dropped down, and merged with the others, to form one Cloud again.

Once all the Cloud's were one, Cloud collapsed onto the floor. Tifa knelt down next to Cloud, and exclaimed, "Cloud!!"

"Uh... Ah, Uh...!" moaned Cloud. His body then flashed white, and Cloud sat up. "Uh... Tifa..."

"Oh, Cloud...! It's really you, isn't it?" asked Tifa.

"Yeah... Tifa... We finally... meet again..." responded Cloud as he stood up.

"You stupid jerk!! You had us all worried sick!!" exclaimed Tifa.

Cloud collapsed to the floor. "Krrgh...!" was the sound he made as he clutched his stomach."

Tifa again knelt next to Cloud, and placed her hand on his back. "Cloud!? Are you all right!?"

Then the sounds of the planets cries, and Cloud said, “V, voice... Their...”
“I see. We’re in the Lifestream aren’t we? Everyone’s waiting. Let’s go back, Cloud. Back to everyone...”
“Yeah, I guess so... Come, Tifa. Let’s go home...”
Their consciousness’ floated back up to their bodies, and Tifa opened her eyes slightly. Barret who was standing over Tifa say this, and asked, “Yo! You awright!? Tifa!?”
Tifa barely conscious, responded, “u...unn...?” She sat up a little. “Barret... You came back. I...” She tried to look around and questioned, “Cloud... Where is he?”
“Don’t worry ‘bout him. He’s a tough one,” responded Barret.
“Barret... I... when I was I the Lifestream I saw the real Cloud.” Tifa nodded. “I mean, I didn’t really find him. Cloud found himself on his own...”
Barret nodded, and said, “Awright, I know... I shouldn’t have doubted him.” He shook his head. “But I can’t win against you. You’re some kinda lady.”
Tifa laid back, and mentioned, “People have so many things pent up inside of themselves...” She closed her eyes. “And they can forget so many things... Strange... isn’t it...”
Tifa went unconscious, and Barret shouted, “Yo, Tifa! Snap outta it!! Tifa!?”

Chapter 07: Shinra Subs

Sometime later, Cloud and Tifa had made a full recovery. Once Cloud was well enough, he held a meeting to explain what had really happened in his past. The meeting was held in the operations room, on the Highwind. Cloud turned his back to them, and said, “Everyone... I’m sorry. I don’t know what to say...”

Don’t say anything, Cloud,” stated Red XIII. “All you’ve been doing is apologizing.”

Cloud turned around, and lowered his head. “I never was in Soldier. I made up the stories about what happened to me five years ago, about in Soldier. I left my village looking for glory, but never made it in Soldier... I was so ashamed of being so weak; then I heard this story from my friend Zack... And I created an illusion of myself made up of what I had seen in my life... And I continued to play the charade as if it were true.”

“Illusion, Huh...?” questioned Barret. “Pretty damn strong for a ‘lusion, I’d say.”

Cloud nodded, and stated, “I’m physically built like someone in Soldier. Hojo’s plan to clone Sephiroth wasn’t that difficult. It was just the same procedure they use when creating members of Soldier.” Cloud paused for a moment. “You see, someone in Soldier isn’t simply exposed to Mako energy. Their bodies are actually injected with Jenova cells... For better or worse, only the strong can enter Soldier. It has nothing to do with the Jenova Reunion. But weak people... like me, get lost in the whole thing. The combination of Jenova cells, Sephiroth’s strong will, and my own weakness are what created me. Everyone knew that. I’m ... Cloud.”

Cloud shook his head, and continued, “...the master of my own illusionary world. But I can’t remain trapped in an illusion anymore... I’m going to live my life without pretending.”

“You’re sure messed up, Cloud!” exclaimed Tifa.

“That means there ain’t no difference from before!” stated Barret.

Cloud scratched his head, and Cait Sith asked, “By the way, Cloud. What are you going to do now? Don’t tell me you’re going to leave the ship?”

Cloud turned to Cait Sith, and stated, “...I’m the reason why Meteor is falling towards us.” He paused for a second. “That’s why I have to do everything in my power to fight this thing.”

“Good!!” exclaimed Barret. “Then you’re gonna keep fightin’ to save the planet!?”

“It’s like you always told me, Barret,” responded Cloud.

Barret stopped to think of what Cloud was talking about. Then it hit him like a ton of bricks, “Oh, uh, you mean that!”

“What?” questioned Red XIII. “I don’t understand!”

Cloud and Tifa said at the same time, “There ain’t no getting’ offa this train we on!”

Barret also said at the same time, “The train we on don’t make no stops!”

At that note, everyone vacated the room, and Cloud started to follow them to the bridge. Before he could leave the room the operating director saluted him. Cloud saluted back, and the operator director said, “Cloud, I was deeply moved by your story! I’m really a weak person and so I could really understand how you fell, Cloud! No one knows when fighting will begin. But let’s get ready!”

Cloud selected the traveling group, Himself, Barret, and Tifa. He then went to the bridge, and stood up in the front. Cait Sith then briefed Cloud.

"Listen, Cloud. We're right in the middle of the mission for the Huge Materia, right? I know this's kinda outta the blue, but there's an underwater reactor at Junon. As far as I can see, that's the only one left. That's that. Let's go!"

Now that Cloud was kind of caught up, he decided that they would go to the Junon Underwater Reactor. He walked up to the Pilot in training, the trainee asked, "Wanna go?" Cloud nodded, and the trainee took them to Junon.

They arrived at Junon, and they had to figure out a way to get to the upper city. Cloud out of curiosity, decided to talk to the Shinra Soldier, who was guarding the elevator to the upper city. Cloud walked up to him, and told the Shinra Soldier that they need to go up to the upper city. At first the Shinra Soldier told them no, but Cloud was persistent, and the Shinra Soldier said, "If you want to get on the elevator that badly, give me 10 gil."

"Okay, I guess," said Cloud as he handed him the money. The Shinra Soldier took the money, and he opened the door.

"Hurry up and get!" exclaimed the Shinra Soldier, and they entered the elevator. Cloud walked up to the controls, and took them to the upper city. Once they were in the upper city, they started towards the reactor.

About half way there, Cloud stopped, and turned to Tifa, and Barret, and said, "I may be mistaken, but... Doesn't it feel like we're missing something?"

Barrett and Tifa didn't know what he was talking about, and they continued onto the underwater Reactor. As they got closer they were discovered by a bunch of Shinra Soldiers in training.

"All right!" exclaimed the commander. "Let's see how hard you trained!"

Oddly the Shinra Soldiers turned to face the other way, and the commander blew his whistle. "Attention! Charge--!!" ordered the commander, and his troops ran the other way.

"He..Hey--!!" exclaimed the commander. "That's the Underwater Reactor!! Come back!!"

The commander chased after them, and Cloud and his team were in the clear. They proceeded with caution, and walked up to an elevator that would take them further down. Cloud pushed the button to bring the elevator to them. The doors opened, and they entered to see a woman, and two Shinra Soldiers.

The doors closed and one of the Shinra Soldiers pointed his gun at them, and said to the other Shinra Soldier, "How 'bout, whoever stays alive gets to take her out?"

The other Shinra Soldier pointed his gun at Cloud, and responded, "All right, you're on!!" He paused for a moment. "But... What if both of us..."

"Whoa!! Don't even talk about that!" exclaimed the first Shinra Soldier, and they attacked them. It was a losing battle, for the Shinra Soldiers, before it had even started. Cloud, Barret, and Tifa disposed of them quickly.

They withdrew their weapons, and Cloud had the lady take them to the bottom floor. They arrived at the bottom floor, and exited the elevator. As soon as they walked out they found a Shinra Soldier sleeping. Then a dog began to bark, and another shouted, "OK! Back to work!! Back to work!!"

Another Shinra Soldier ran up, and the one that was sleeping yawned, and said, "I'm sleepy!!" He then noticed Cloud and the others. "For Junon!!" he said as they both attacked them. Cloud and the others drew their weapons, and killed the Shinra Soldiers.

They continued on through the hallways, until they found another elevator. This one was unguarded, and they had no problem using it. They arrived at the Bottom, and walked through a narrow hallway. At the end of the narrow hallway, was a steel door, which wasn't locked. They went through the door, and entered a glass tunnel.

The sight was amazing, and they had to stop for a second just to view it. They could see water life, and the sunlight coming from the top, just giving it an "aw" feeling. After a moment had passed they went on through the glass tunnel.

At the end of the tunnel, they found an underwater elevator, and Cloud pressed the button to go down. A short time later they arrived at the Underwater Reactor. This wasn't just a normal reactor, for it was also a base for the Shinra's submarines.

They continued on, and they tried not to be spotted, but that was an unrealistic part of the plan. They were quickly spotted by a Shinra Soldier, and shouted, "You, you're Cloud!!"

Cloud quickly reacted, and killed the Shinra Soldier, hopefully before he drew the attention of the others. They continued on, but Cloud's plan had failed, and two Shinra Soldiers stopped them.

"You are *not* getting this huge Materia!!" exclaimed one of the Shinra Soldiers, and they attacked them. Cloud and his team reacted quickly, and killed the Shinra Soldiers.

Hoping that it was the end of their problems, they went on to the warehouse doors, where the Huge Materia was. As they approached the door, two more Shinra Soldiers were guarding it.

"So you *were* after the Huge Materia!" stated one as they attacked them. Cloud a little frustrated at this point, had Tifa summon Bahamut. Bahamut appeared, and with one shot, killed them both.

They entered the warehouse, and a crane lifted the Huge Materia up. Cloud saw this and shouted, "The Huge Materia!"

The crane took it to the dock area, where the submarines were.

"Damn, just missed it!" exclaimed Barret.

"They're gonna take it on that submarine!" stated Tifa.

They quickly ran to the docking area, hoping to get the Huge Materia before the submarine left with it. Cloud entered the docking area, and questioned, "Did we make it!?" He then saw the huge materia being loaded onto the submarine.

Once it was loaded into the submarine, it closed the cargo doors. Cloud not paying any attention stared towards the submarine, but ran into Reno.

"What are you doing?" questioned Reno, who hadn't turned around. "Help load," he ordered. He then turned around to see Cloud and the others, and was completely shocked to see them. "Cloud!?" he questioned in a confused tone.

Barret pointed his arm gun at Reno, and stated, "We're gonna help transport the huge Materia...Reno!"

"Looks like we barely made it," commented Tifa.

"Either give it to us or else," stated Cloud. "...Which is it gonna be?"

Reno ran his fingers through his hair, and said, “Unfortunately, I don’t have time to deal with you.”

Then a cargo loading machine, called ‘Carry Armor’, came over, and Reno stated, “My priority is the Huge Materia.” Reno ran away, and Carry Armor attacked them. They drew their weapons, and fought back.

This attack took longer than the expected, and when they destroyed Carry Armor, The submarine was gone.

“Damn!” exclaimed Cloud. “The submarine!”

“Damn!” exclaimed Barret. “So they was just buyin’ time!?”

Tifa noticed another submarine, and stated, “We have to go after it!”

They ran to the other submarine, which was guarded by Shinra Soldiers. They arrived, and attacked the Shinra Soldiers, killing them. They boarded the submarine, to find yet somemore Shinra Solders, but they were disposed of.

“Come on, Cloud! Follow me!” exclaimed Barret. He then ran up to Cloud and waved his arms. Cloud gave Barret a confused look, and Barret said, “Damn, man!! ...what the? Hey you! Remember I was the leader first, man!” He turned his back to Cloud, and said, “Yo! We come a long ways since we go on that train! Lotsa things have changed! This and that.”

Barret then stopped his ranting, and they headed for the bridge. They entered the bridge to find two more Shinra Soldiers, and their cowering commander.

“NO, NO!!” said the Commander nervously “This is terrible!” He then ran over to his troops, and the one said, “We don’t have much time left! I don’t want to die!”

“There’s still so much more I’ve got to do!” exclaimed the other. “I never even got to do my special victory dance in battle!”

“All right!!” exclaimed the Commander. “Make this your first victory!! Go on, Show’em!!”

“Yes, sir,” said both of the Shinra Soldiers at the same time.

“Remember you last training. Begin!!” ordered the Commander.

“Yes, sir,” said both of the Shinra Soldiers at the same time.

Cloud noticed something familiar about this group, and then it had come back to him. He knew these people, from back when he was in Junon before. This was the group he worked with while Rufus was visiting.

The commander turned to face Cloud, and said, “I’m back! An’ now I got no regrets!!” He blew is whistle and ordered, “ATT---ACK!!”

Being that Cloud knew them, he could not bring himself to kill them, or bring them harm, and took them as prisoners. They moved out of the way, and Cloud ran up to the controls. He turned back to Tifa and Barret, and said, “Someone...please. I’m sorry I can’t take it anymore. The lack of space, the slaking, the roar of the engine...”

Cloud clutched his stomach and kneeled onto the floor. Cloud had motion sickness, and Barret snapped, “Stop you blubberin’!! How we gonna move this without you?”

Tifa walked up to the control panel, and pressed a button. The submarine began to shake, and Tifa said, “See!? Just fiddle with the controls and we’ll get somewhere!”

Cloud still not feeling well, did not move, or respond. Tifa turned to him and mentioned, “Hey Cloud? Why don’t you try piloting it? They say you don’t get motion sickness if you’re driving.”

Cloud stood up, and said, “Hey, you’re right... I *do* feel a little better driving. No sweat. Just leave everything to me.” Cloud got into pilot chair, and began to figure out how to drive the submarine. He pulled out the manual, and thumbed through it.

He placed the book down, and said, “Everything seems set... This switch...?”

Cloud pressed the switch, and the main screen came on, and he took them out of the dock.

It didn’t take him long to use to the controls, and by using the sonar he tracked down the other submarine, but it was guarded by other submarines. They began firing on Clouds sub, and they quickly pulled back.

They decided to take out the other submarines first, which they had no problem doing, and then they sank the submarine that had the Huge Materia on it.

“Phew--!” exclaimed Cloud. “We did it!! The Huge Materia should be at the Bottom of the sea by now. Let’s continue the search...”

Then a voice came over the intercom. “...All Shinra submarine units, do you read...? ...All Shinra submarine units, do you read...?”

“Hmm...? ...Must be from Shinra,” said Cloud.

“...Report, No. 2...” requested the voice.

“Is it us?” questioned Barret.

“All right, I’ll do it,” responded Cloud. He placed his hand on the intercom switch and said, “This is Shinra No. 2... Everything’s normal.”

“...Roger...” responded the voice. “Your next mission is... Return to Junon Dock... We will transport the Huge Materia from the Airport... Those without other assignments will report for guard duty... That is all. Over and out...”

“Junon Airport...” stated Cloud. “We should make it we hurry. Forget about this huge materia for now. We’re Climbing!”

“Aye, aye... CAPTAIN!” responded Tifa.

Chapter 08: Outer Space

Cloud brought the Submarine to the surface, and docked. They released their prisoners, and went to Junon's Airport to get the final Huge Materia. They arrived at the airport, to see the airplane take off.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Cloud. "The Huge Materia..."

"Let's go after it!" exclaimed Barret.

"Where are they headed?" asked Tifa.

Cloud turned to them, and said, "Rocket Town, of course."

They left the airport, and made their way back to their airship, and told the pilot to fly to Rocket Town. It only took them a few minutes to arrive, and Cloud reorganized his group. He thought it would be best to take Cid along on this particular mission since it was his hometown.

Cloud's team entered Rocket Town, and they ran up to the Shinra No. 26. When they arrived they saw Shinra Soldiers standing all over. Cloud knew that the last huge Materia was in the rocket, and they fought their way inside.

"The terrorists are here!" exclaimed a Shinra Soldier, and they attacked them.

Once they killed the guards at the bottom, Cloud and the others ran up the stairs.

"Don't let them get any further!" shouted the Commander. "Everyone ATTACK-!"

It was no good, Cloud and the others killed them and they ran up to the commander. The commander, who was more frustrated, than fearful, said, "Urrrgh, you're not going anywhere! Uh un, nowhere!"

The commander attacked, but was killed quickly. After the Commander was dead, Cid shouted, "Goddammit, what the hell do they think they're going to do to my rocket!?" He turned to Cloud and said, "I'm outta here, Cloud! I'm gonna kick those fuckin Shinra right out of my rocket!"

Cid climbed up the ladder, and Cloud and Tifa followed. They made it to the top, only to see Rude from the Turks standing there.

Rude saw them and was surprised that they have lived this long, and said in a confused tone, "...you again?" He took a step towards them. "We will eliminate everyone who gets in Shinra's way."

Rude attacked them, but the battle was sort lived, and Rude collapsed to the floor, "Ugh...gh... they got us," he said as he landed.

They entered Shinra No. 26, and another Shinra Commander was in there. "You... You!" exclaimed the Shinra Commander. "Why are you here? Rude of the Turks should've been here!!"

"Too bad," responded Cloud. He pointed out the door, and stated, "Those guys are over there."

The Commander looked out the door, and said, "Oh man... the Turks, being done in like that... But, I won't let you through!"

Before the battle would start, Cloud drew his sword, and ran it through his gut. The Commander fell to the floor in pain. "Urrrgh," he moaned while holding his stomach. Cloud withdrew his sword, and they entered the bridge.

They walked in to see the workers, and Cid questioned, "Hey! What the hell're you guys doin'!?"

The workers turned around, and one said, "Hey! Just when I thought somethin' was goin' on, you come back!"

Another worker walked up to Cid and said, "Listen to me, Captain. We're gonna launch this rocket!"

"Huh? What are you talkin' 'bout?" questioned Cid.

"We're gonna load a Materia Bomb in this and blow up Meteor," stated the Worker.

"Our rocket's gonna save the Planet!" exclaimed the first worker.

"Urrrgh," moan the Third Worker. "Man this is so COOL!!"

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Cloud.

"Shut up!!" snapped Cid. "Just shut the hell up!" Cid looked back at the workers, and asked, "How's the rocket?"

Cloud walked back to Tifa, and shrugged his shoulders. The first worker responded, "It's pretty much OK."

"But..." said the Third worker.

"We planned to run it into meteor on Auto-Pilot, but the most important device is broken," stated the second worker.

"Broken?" questioned Cid. "How's the repair goin'?"

"Shera's doin' it..." stated the third worker.

"Oh great!" exclaimed Cid. "What a bunch of wizards you guys are! She's gonna take a 100 years!" Cid laughed, but quickly calmed down. "I'll take over, so don't worry about the Auto-Pilot!"

The workers just stood there confused, and Cid shouted, "Hey, go ahead! Go tell everyone!"

"All right, Captain. Good luck," said the first worker, and they all left the rocket.

Cloud still confused, asked, "Hey, Cid! What are you doing!?"

Cid turned to face Cloud, and Cloud stated, "There are generations of knowledge and wisdom inside the Materia. We're gonna borrow their powers and save the planet from Sephiroth. There's no way that we can lose the Huge Materia. You understand that, right?"

Cid shook his head, and said, "Yeah, I understand. I understand that Materia is precious, and I also understand what you're thinking. But listen. I don't give a rat's ass whether it's science or magical power. No, I guess if I had to choose, I'd rather put my money on the power of science. Humans who used to only roam around on the ground are able to fly now! And finally, we're about to go into outer space. Science is a 'Power' created and developed by humans. And science just might be what saves this planet."

Cid paused for a second, and then continued, "I was able to earn my living thanks to science. So to me, there's nothing greater! Now quit your worrying 'bout what the Shinra's gonna do! I don't want to regret not having done something later."

Cloud placed his hand on Cid's shoulder, and said, "But, Cid..."

Cid pushed Cloud back, and shouted, "Shut the hell up!! I don't wanna hear it!!" Cid lowered his voice, and said, "Alright, time to get to work! Anyone who ain't involved, get the hell outta here!"

Then the rocket began to power up its engines, and began to shake. Everyone looked around the rocket, and Cid shouted, "What the hell...? What the hell happened!?"

Then a voice, that sound all too familiar, came across the intercom. "Hey-hey!"

Cid ran to the control panel, and pressed the intercom button. “Palmer! What the hell did ya do!?”

“They said they finished repairing the Auto-Pilot. So, I laun---ched it!” exclaimed Palmer!

“Goddamn Shera! Why’d she pick today to get fast!” exclaimed Cid. He then tried to disabled the launch, but he couldn’t stop it. “Damn! Won’t even budge! It’s completely locked up!”

“Hey-hey-hey! Almost lift off!” exclaimed Palmer.

“What the!? No Countdown!? It just don’t seem the same without it!” exclaimed Cid.”

“Hey!!! Hey-hey!!! Blast----off!” exclaimed Palmer.

The rocket engines fired up, and lifted Shinra No. 26 off the ground. At first the rocket slowly lifted off the ground, but quickly picked up speed. The launch was a success, and Shinra No. 26 made it into outer space.

Cid was ecstatic, and shocked at the same time, and he said, “I finally made it...outer space...” He then snapped out of it and started pressing buttons on the control panel. “Let’s see, how’s the course set...?”

He pulled up the course setting, and the monitor showed the rocket on a direct course for Meteor.

“You, it’s headed for collision with Meteor,” stated Cid.

“Can’t we do something?” asked Tifa. “If it goes on, we’re...”

Cid then tried to change the course. He pressed some buttons, and then hit the control panel.

“That Palmer went outta his way to lock the Auto-Pilot device,” stated Cid. “We might not be able to change the course.”

Cloud crossed his arms, and asked, “...is this the end?”

Cid turned to Cloud, and said, “Huh? What the hell’re you sayin’? You’re still young, and you give up that easily? I’m not gonna crash into Meteor.”

Cid turned back to the control panel, and pressed some buttons. “Just watch,” said Cid as he pressed another button. The monitor showed some writing. Cid read the information, and turned back to the others.

“I keep an Escape Pod on the rocket just for emergencies like this,” stated Cid. He then walked over to a different panel, and pressed some buttons. He then turned back to Cloud and Tifa, and said, “I deciphered the lock code on the Escape Pod. We’ll bail right before we crash into Meteor.”

Tifa walked over to Cid and asked, “Hey, what about the Huge Materia?”

Cid nodded, and stated, “If you want the Materia, do whatever you want! The Materia should be there after you climb that ladder.”

Cloud turned to Cid and asked, “...You sure?”

Cid shook his head, and said in a not so sure tone, “I dunno... I know what I said a minute ago. But maybe all that I really wanted was just to go into space. So, why don’t you all do whatever you think is right?”

Cloud, and the others went to the top of the rocket where the Huge Materia was located. They entered the top, and Cloud said, “I finally found the Huge Materia...”

They approached the case that the Huge materia was in, and Cid kneeled down to a control panel.

“It’s structure so that the lock can be opened if we enter the passcode from this control panel,” stated Cid. He then stood up, and Cloud was about to enter the passcode.

“Hey Cloud, you know how to use it, right?” asked Cid. “Every time it says, ‘Enter Passcode’, push one of those 1, 2, 3, 4 buttons. If you punch in the right code, it’ll unlock and you can get the Huge Materia!”

Cloud looked up at Cid and asked, “So, what order am I supposed to enter the passcode in?”

“I dunno,” responded Cid. “Just try and punch in the code randomly.”

Cloud unsure of what to enter, punched in the most obvious code, 1, 2, 3, 4, but it was incorrect. Then the computer said, “Unauthorized user identified; protection system will activate in 3 minutes.”

“Seems like you missed the code!” exclaimed Cid. “If we don’t enter the correct passcode before the Protection system activates, we won’t be able to get the Materia back!”

Cloud tried again to enter a passcode again, and punched 4, 3, 2, 1, but it was incorrect again.

“I heard there’s a passcode only the top people in Shinra know,” stated Cid. “We probably have to enter that. Try and enter some codes while I try and remember that passcode!”

Cloud punched in, 2, 3, 4, 1, but it was incorrect. Cid scratched his head, and said, “The third digit was an 2... I think.”

Cloud then tried, and punched in 4, 3, 2, 2, but that number was incorrect as well. Cloud looked at Cid, and Cid exclaimed “Hmmmmmm, I can’t remember. Give me some more time!”

Cloud then tried 1, 3, 2, 2, but again it was incorrect. The Computer announced, “2 minutes until activation of the Protection System.”

Cid then said, “The second digit wasn’t a 3. I’m sure of it!”

Cloud then punched in 2, 2, 2, 2, but that number was wrong as well. Cid still didn’t have a clue on what the passcode was, and Cloud kept trying random numbers. After 24 seconds had passed, Cid said, “I think the first digit wasn’t a 4.”

Cloud punched in 1, 4, 2, 3, but it was wrong, and Cid said, “I have a feeling you push the 1 only once.”

Cloud continued tried to enter more pass keys, and Cid said, “I’m pretty sure the last digit was a 3. No, maybe it was an 2...?”

The computer then announced, “1 minute until activation of the Protection System.”

Cloud tried 1, 4, 2, 3 but it was not correct. Cid then said, “I think the first digit wasn’t a 4.”

The time was running out, and Cloud punched in, 1, 4, 2, 2, and the computer said, “Passcode Confirmed, identified as an Authorized user, unlock.”

“Alright, Cloud!!” exclaimed Cid. “It’s unlocked!” Cid then placed his hands on his hips, and said in a cocky tone, “Yup, my great advice saved the day.”

Cloud just shook his head, and took the Huge Materia. They quickly made their way to the escape pod. They Climbed down the ladder, and left the Bridge. They made their way down another ladder, and entered a room full of tanks. They started to cross the room, when tank number 8 exploded, trapping Cid under the debris.

“Grrgh!” was the sound Cid made as he tried to free himself. “Damn my leg’s stuck in the debris. “

The smoke cleared, and Cloud finally saw Cid. “Cid!!” Cloud exclaimed as he ran to help him.

Tifa also tried to help lift the huge piece of metal. “...I can’t! It’s so heavy, I can’t lift it...” said Tifa as she tried with all her might to lift it.

“Don’t worry ‘bout me. Hurry up and go!” exclaimed Cid. “If you don’t hurry, the rocket’s gonna crash into Meteor!”

Cloud looked at Cid, and stated, “...I can’t go without my friends.”

Again they tried to lift the debris, but it wouldn’t budge.

“You bastard...!” exclaimed Cid. “No time to worry ‘bout other people!”

“I’m gonna do whatever I can,” responded Cloud.

“You’re stupid. You’re really fuckin stupid.”

They continued to try, and Cid noticed what tank had exploded. He lowered his head, and said, “Tank number 8 blew up... So tank number 8... really was malfunctioning...”

Cid tried to lift it along with the others, and said, “Shera... You were right.” Cid then lowered his head again, and said, “But... this is the end for me.”

A door from the other side of the room opened up, and in walked Shera. “Don’t say that, Cid,” Shera said.

Cid looked up, and saw her. He was confused to as of why she would be on the rocket. “Huh!? Shera!?” he questioned.

“I tagged along,” stated Shera. “I’m coming to help you.”

She walked over to the debris, and started to help lift it.

“You stupid fuckin bitch!!”

They all lifted the debris off of Cid, and he stood up. Shera walked into the next room, and stated, “The Escape Pod is this way. Please hurry.”

They moved quickly to the Escape Pod, and in a short time they arrived. Shera then turned to them and said, “Hurry. I’m going to detach the Escape pod.”

Cid looked inside the Escape Pod and asked, “Hey, Shera! Does this Pod really fly?”

She looked at Cid and responded, “It’ll be OK. I’ve been checking it till now.”

Cid scratched his head and said, “...Then I’m relieved.”

Shera started to blush, and she turned her head away so no one would notice.

“...Thanks.” Shera said, and they entered the Escape pod. They all strapped in, and the Escape pod ejected away from the rocket. The Escape pod started toward the planet, while the Rocket continued onto Meteor.

Cid was looking out the window, and said, “So this is...outer space... Man... it’s the real thing... I’m really here in outer space...” Cid then looked up towards Shinra No. 26, and said, “So long, Shinra No. 26...”

The Escape Pod entered the atmosphere, and the rocket collided with Meteor. There was a big explosion, and every thing around Meteor went bright.

Down on the planet many watched the explosion. People tried to gaze up at the explosion, but they couldn’t see anything. The light faded away, and Meteor was still there, but now with smaller fragments surrounding it.

Everyone on the planet was distraught, fearing the end was near. As for the Escape Pod, it had landed safely in the water. They set off a tracking signal, and the Highwind picked them up.



Chapter 09: The Ancient Machine

Once again aboard the Highwind, everyone was on the Bridge, and Cloud stated, "Rufus and the others plan was a failure..." Cloud shook his head, and Barret said in a depressed tone, "What a bust... But I kinda hoped it'd work."

Cait Sith lowered his head and said, "We been botherin' them as much as we can... But there ain't no other way... Wonder if we've been wrong all this time?"

Red XIII shook his head, and said, "Makes you worry, doesn't it?"

Tifa turned to Red XIII and exclaimed, "Don't worry! Think!"

"Hey!" exclaimed Cid. "The girl's right. You start worryin' and there's no stoppin' it! Things just start fallin' apart and get worse and worse."

"You're pretty damn optimistic!" exclaimed Barret. "You up to somethin'?"

Cid waved his arms, and said, "Yeah, I been thinkin' about this and that. All the time we've been up here lookin' at the planet. I been thinkin' even when we were floatin' in the ocean in that Escape Pod."

Cloud shook his head and said, "I've... been thinking too. About the universe...planet...ocean. How wide and big... No matter where I go and what I do it won't change a thing."

Cid shook his head, and said, "Maybe you're right. But, I came up with something different." He paused for a moment. "I always thought this planet was so huge. But, lookin' at it from space, I realized it's so small. We're just floatin' in the dark... kind of makes you feel powerless. On top of that it's got Sephiroth festerin' inside it like a sickness."

Cid shook his head, and said, "That's why I say this planet's still a kid. A little kid sick and trembling in the middle of this huge universe. Someone's gotta protect it. Ya follow me? That someone is us."

Tifa ran up to Cid, and said, "Cid... that's beautiful."

"Yo! Cid!" exclaimed Barret. "You even got to me! Now what? How're we gonna protect the planet from Meteor?"

Cid looked around at everyone, and then sat down. He quietly said, "...I'm still thinkin' about that."

The moment was ruined, everyone calmed down from Cid's speech, and everything went quiet. Red XIII the said, "Huh!? Do you... hear something?"

Everyone stopped to listen, and heard screams of pain coming from the planet.

"The planet's scream... or Meteor...? Is it this planet?" asked Tifa.

"Hey, how do we know that this is really the planet's scream?" asked Cloud.

"Did you forget?" asked Tifa.

Cloud nodded, and Tifa said, "Bugenhagen told us."

Cloud started to think, and said in a low tone, "Bugenhagen..."

Red XIII then said, "Let's go see Grandfather! To Cosmo Canyon! I'm sure he'll be able to tell us something that will be helpful!"

Cloud nodded his head, and thought that it wouldn't hurt anything to try. His first stop was to recover the Huge Materia from the ocean floor, and then off to Cosmo Canyon. Cloud had the Trainee pilot take them to their submarine.

Cloud reorganized his traveling group, himself, Tifa and Barret, and they left the Highwind, and entered the submarine. They submerged the submarine, and began looking

for the Huge Materia. While they were looking for the Huge Materia, they found something. Cloud looked at the sonar, and said, "It seems like a key to somewhere...It seems really old."

Cloud pressed some buttons, and the computer began to analyze the object. It only took a minute, and the computer said, "...analysis complete. Exact date of origin cannot be determined... estimate to be several thousand years old..."

"Several thousand years... Ancients?" questioned Cloud. He used the claw to reach it in, and continued his search for the Huge Materia. After roaming the bottom of the ocean, the sonar picked up the fallen submarine that had the Huge Materia on it.

"So this is the leader Sub..." said Cloud. "Damn... makes me sick just thinking about it..." Cloud pressed some button to analyze the Huge Materia. The computer finished and said, "No damage appears to have been sustained..."

Cloud felt relieved, and said, "That's good to hear." He reeled in the Huge Materia, and headed back to the Highwind. They got back to the Highwind, and went to Cosmo Canyon.

Before they arrived at Cosmo Canyon, They found Ultimate Weapon flying around. Cloud wanting to dispose of this creature before it would unleash another attack somewhere. They chased him around, and engaged in a battle in the sky.

Tifa used her Bahamut Materia's, while Barret and Cloud attacked. Only after a few minutes, Ultimate Weapon let out a hideous growl, and flew off. Cloud, Tifa, and Barret went back into the ship, and the chase continued.

The Highwind was unable to keep up, and Ultimate Weapon got away. Cloud fearing that it would attack another city, didn't give up so easily. They searched for a while, then decided that they would finish him later, and went to Cosmo Canyon.

Before they arrived at Cosmo Canyon they found Ultimate Weapon hovering over the Ancient forest. Cloud seeing this as perfect opportunity, attacked Ultimate Weapon. The battle didn't last long, because Ultimate Weapon doesn't have the ability to heal, and with Bahamut, and Neo Bahamut, brought his life to an end. Though as a last effort, Ultimate Weapon unleashed his final attack, Shadow Flare, almost killing Cloud and the others. Ultimate Weapon then fell to the planet dead.

Cloud now feeling better knowing that all the weapons were dead, went onto Cosmo Canyon. They arrived at Cosmo Canyon, and went straight to Bugenhagen. They found him in his laboratory. When they entered, Bugenhagen said, "Ho ho hooo. If you ever are in need of my wisdom, you are always welcome here."

"Yeah, that's why we came," responded Cloud.

"What to do? Have you lost your way?" asked Bugenhagen. "When that happens we each have to take a good long look at ourselves. There's always something in the deepest reaches of our hearts. Something buried, or something forgotten. Remember it... Whatever that is, must certainly be what you are all looking for..."

"That's easy enough to say," responded Cloud. "But, I can't remember a thing."

"It must be there," said Bugenhagen. "Look harder!"

"This ain't no good with just us!" exclaimed Barret. "Cloud, we gotta get some others in here."

Cloud nodded and called everyone else.

A short time later, everyone else showed up, and Bugenhagen asked, "Do you see it? What is it that you are searching for?"

“Nope,” respond Cait Sith. “Not a thing. Naw. Can’t come up with a thing.”

“Me either!” exclaimed Yuffie. “I don’t get any of this!”

Cloud was quiet said in a low tone, “I remember Aeris a lot.”

“No...not that,” said Bugenhagen. “You haven’t remembered. You haven’t forgotten. That’s not it... How would you say it... Aeris was right there all along. Right by our sides. She was so close, we couldn’t see her. What Aeris did... The words she left behind...”

“That reminds me...” said Tifa. “I was the same.”

“...As was I,” said Red XIII

“Me too,” stated Barret.

“She said she was the only one who could stop Sephiroth’s Meteor,” added Cloud.

Tifa shook her head, and said, “But, Aeris is gone.”

“Is it impossible for us to carry on... what Aeris tried to accomplish?” asked Red XIII.

“We ain’t no Ancients, if that’s what ya mean,” stated Barret.

“Why, did that girl go off to that place?” asked Cid.

No one answered right away, and then Cloud exclaimed, “That’s it!!”

“What’s it?” asked Cid.

“We don’t know about it,” responded Cloud. “What did Aeris know? Why did she face Sephiroth without running away?”

“I see...” said Red XIII. “She returned to the planet once again, correct?”

“Hmmm. Perhaps I’ll have you take me there,” said Bugenhagen.

Red XIII looked at his grandfather, and asked, “You’re going too?”

Bugenhagen looked at Red XIII, and said, “What’s so surprising about that...? Even I want to get out from time to time and see the outside world. I wonder what did it? I haven’t felt like this in ages.”

“It must be the planet,” stated Red XIII. “The planet is calling you!”

“Yeah, hoo boy, the planet calling...right,” said Cid sarcastically, and left the room.

“Ho ho hooo. Then let’s go,” said Bugenhagen.

Everyone left the room, except for Cloud, and Bugenhagen.

“Oh yeah, Bugenhagen. I have one more thing I want to ask you.” Cloud paused for a second. “We’re carrying around Huge Materia. This is pretty delicate stuff and we would like to keep it in a safe place...”

Bugenhagen pointed up, and said, “Ho ho hooo. Then we’ll put it upstairs. Now, shall we be on our way?”

Cloud nodded, and they were about to leave, when Bugenhagen said, “I’ll teach you how to work the machine. Watch carefully now.” He floated over to a lever, and said, “You just pull this here...”

The machine lifted up, and took them back to the 3D holographic projection of the universe. Bugenhagen placed the Huge Materia in the room, and said, “Ho ho hoo. Is this what you call Huge Materia...? This is really rare Materia, indeed. Materia this rare is certain to have a special consciousness enclosed in it..

Cloud inspected all the Huge Materia, and one glowed brightly. Cloud was amazed by this in said, “Huge Materia... It’s glowing strangely...”

Cloud got closer, and there was a faint growling sound.

“Is that... Bahamut...?” questioned Cloud.

The Huge materia flashed, and the ‘Bahamut,’ and the ‘Neo Bahamut’ materia started to glow brightly. The room was filled with a bright white light, but fade quickly. Once the light had returned to normal, there was a new Materia, and Cloud picked it up. The Materia turned out to be Bahamut Zero.

Cloud did check out the other Huge Materia, but nothing special happened, and Bugenhagen said, “Ho ho hooo. Good. Now, let’s leave.” They went back down, and Bugenhagen asked, “Do you remember how to use the machine down below?” Cloud nodded, and Bugenhagen added, “If you ever want to see the Materia, come here anytime.”

They left Cosmo Canyon, and returned to the Highwind. Cloud gave Bugenhagen the grand tour. After they were done, they were outside the just the Operations Room. Bugenhagen then said, “Hm, hmm, hmm! ...Smells like machinery. I love this smell. Of course, I also love the smell of nature, too...” Bugenhagen pointed up, and asked, “Hm? Is the deck there?”

Cloud nodded, and Bugenhagen said, “Then I’ll be on the deck just passing the time. I can feel the workings of the planet in the smell of the wind. I also feel the greatness of man’s wisdom and knowledge in the smell of machinery. Well, bye for now.”

Bugenhagen then floated to the deck, and Cloud went to the bridge. He told the trainee where to go and they were off to the Forgotten City. They arrived a short time later, and Cloud, Tifa, and Barret, took Bugenhagen into the Forgotten City. They arrived in a round room, which had a platform in the middle. Bugenhagen walked in and was amazed.

“This is...” Bugenhagen said as he floated around. He looked around, and floated out to the platform. “Yes...exactly...” he said as he looked over the platform.

“Are you getting something?” asked Cloud.

Bugenhagen floated around the platform and said, “...give me a moment.”

Cloud decided to walk out to the platform, and Tifa and Barret followed. When they arrived, they saw an altar, and Bugenhagen said, “The knowledge of the Ancients swirling around here is telling me one thing.” He paused for a moment. “The planet’s in a crisis... A crisis beyond human power or endless time.”

Bugenhagen then looked at the ground to read some writing on the floor. “It says, when the time come, we must search for ‘Holy’.”

“Holy?” asked Cloud.

“Holy... the ultimate White Magic. Magic that might stand against Meteor. Perhaps our last hope to save the planet from Meteor. If a soul seeking Holy reaches the planet it will appear. Ho ho hooo. Meteor, Weapon everything will disappear. Perhaps, even ourselves.”

“Even us!?” questioned Cloud.

“It is up to the planet to decide,” responded Bugenhagen. “What is the best for the planet. What is bad for the planet. All that is bad will disappear. That is all. Ho ho hooo. I wonder which we humans are?”

Cloud lowered his head in despair. He then looked at Bugenhagen and asked, “Search for Holy... How do we do it?”

“Speak to the planet,” responded Bugenhagen.” Get the White Materia... This will bond the Planet to humans.” He nodded. “Then speak to the planet. If our wish reaches the planet, the White Materia will begin to glow a pale green.”

Cloud lower his head and said, “...This is the end.” He then looked at Tifa, and said, “Aeris had the White Materia...” He then slapped his head. “But when Aeris died, it fell from the altar...” he shook his head. “That’s why...this is the end.”

“Ho ho hooo! Look at this!” exclaimed Bugenhagen. Everyone looked at the floor, and Bugenhagen said, “Ancients’ writing.”

Can you read it?” asked Cloud.

“I can’t even make it out!!” responded Bugenhagen.

“This’s no time for jokes...” stated Cloud.

“I’m not an Ancient,” stated Bugenhagen. “I can’t read this thing! I may be old, but my eyes aren’t completely bad yet. Look closely below the writing.”

Cloud took a closer look, and said, “There’s a note written in chalk...’Key’ ‘in the Music Box’.”

“It was probably written by a scientist who’s been here... He probably used all his energy to make out these two words,” stated Bugenhagen

“Key...? To what?” asked Cloud.

“I don’t know... But, it probably has something to do with our riddle,” stated Bugenhagen. “The riddle... then it must have something to do with Aeris.”

“What does it mean?” asked Cloud.

Bugenhagen pointed to the right, and said, “That Music Box over there. We’ll put the key in it.”

Cloud and the others now knew what that the key that they found on the ocean floor was; the key that they need to make the Music Box work. Bugenhagen took the key and said, “I’ll go and use the key. You all wait here. And watch closely what happens.”

He floated over to a pillar that had a place for the key, and he placed the key in it.

“Ho ho hooo!” Bugenhagen exclaimed as the pillar sank into the floor. He turned back to see a water rushing towards the platform. Cloud and the others ran out of the way, just as the platform was surrounded by a waterfall. The water didn’t cover the platform, but was flowing around it.

Bugenhagen then floated back to them, and said, “Now, go inside. Hope may be inside... Or...”

Cloud wasn’t sure about this, but he went inside. They entered slowly, and arrived back on to the platform. What they saw was amazing. There was a crystal floating above the altar, and the water that surrounding them.

“This was just a screen to project an image!” exclaimed Bugenhagen. “Look! Look at the image projected on the screen of water!”

They all looked up to the projection to see Aeris praying, and her death. It was rather painful to watch, especially for Cloud. Though he didn’t stop watching. He watched her fall to the floor, and dropped the one Materia she had. It sank to the bottom of the ocean, glowing a pale green.

“...It’s glowing,” stated Cloud.

“Ho ho hooo!! It’s a pale green!!” exclaimed Bugenhagen

“...Aeris,” said Cloud. “Aeris has already prayed for hole.” Cloud lowered his head. “...After I gave the Black Materia to Sephiroth... Aeris’ words came into my

dreams... She said, she was the only one who could stop Sephiroth... And to do that, there was a secret here..." He raised his head. "That was Holy... That's why, she had the White Materia. Aeris knew about here... and what she had to do. Aeris has left us great hope. But, it cost her, her life... her future..." he lowered his head again. "I'm sorry... Aeris. I should have figured this out sooner... You left without saying a word... It was all so sudden, so I couldn't think... That's why it took so long for me to find out... But, Aeris... I understand now." He raised his head. "Aeris... I'll do the rest."

"That's *we*!" exclaimed Barret.

"What Aeris left us..." said Tifa. "We can't waste it."

"Thank you... Aeris," said Cloud. "Aeris voice has already reached the planet. Just look at the glow of the White Materia. But... how about Holy? How come Holy isn't moving?" Cloud shook his head, and asked, "Why?"

"Something's getting in its way," stated Bugenhagen.

"...Him..." said Cloud. He's the only one that could do it... Sephiroth Where are you?"

They now knew what they had to do, the original mission, find Sephiroth. They left the projection screen, and started to head towards the Highwind. They stopped when the PHS rang. Cloud answered the PHS, "What the?"

It was Cait Sith on the other end, whispering, "Sorry, I was a little surprised."

"What Happened?"

"You remember when the Junon cannon disappeared? Actually, Rufus moved it."

"Moved it? That big thing...? Where...? Why?"

"Rufus wanted to destroy Sephiroth with it. That cannon operates on Huge Materia. But the Huge Materia has already been used in the Rocket Plan. So since the cannon's useless right now, he decided to move it. To a place where Materia... no, where Mako is gathered..."

"And, where is that!?"

Cait Sith explained the rest, and they head back to the Highwind.

Chapter 10: The Sister Ray and Hojo

Back in the City of Midgar, where the big cannon was now located, Rufus Heidegger, Scarlet, and Reeve were having a meeting. They were discussing the new Mako cannon.

“...That’s why, Reeve,” stated Rufus. “It’s your job to adjust the reactors output.”

Reeve turned away, and said, “I see...”

“Hah, hah, hah!” laughed Scarlet. “Don’t worry about adjusting it, Reeve. Once you open it all the way everything will go full speed!”

“Gya hah, hah, hah!” laughed Heidegger. “The President’s sure done it this time! If we can only defeat Sephiroth, the idea that Meteor will also disappear is based on different objectives!”

“Please remember, Mr. President...” said Scarlet. “It was my idea to fire Mako reactor power shells.”

“Will the shells really reach the far northern boarder?” asked Rufus.

“Ah, hah hah!” laughed Scarlet. “Of course! But Mr. President, please do not call it the Mako cannon. The new weapon will be called... The Sister Ray!”

By this time Cloud and the others made it back to the Highwind, but before they could enter, the ground began to shake.

“Wh, what the...!?” questioned Cloud.

Cloud entered the Highwind, and they took off. They went straight to the Bridge, and Cloud questioned, “What’s Wrong.”

“It’s a strange signal!” exclaimed one of the crew men.

“From where?” questioned Cid.

The Crew man turned to Cait Sith, and said, “It’s coming from this...person (?)”

Cait Sith threw his arms in the air, and exclaimed “Wow!” he jumped to the middle of the bridge, and exclaimed, “Hey!” The alarm flashed again.

“That was a surprise, the controls went crazy,” stated Cait Sith. “This ain’t good... Weapon came out of the sea and is heading straight for Midgar.”

“The new weapon should stop him, right?” asked Cloud.

“I don’t know if it’s ready or not...” responded Cait Sith.

“Hey!” exclaimed Barret. “What’s gonna happen to Marlene!?”

“Doncha worry none, Marlene’s in a safe place,” responded Cait Sith. “She’s with Aeris’ mama.”

Barret turned his back, and scratched his head, and Cait Sith exclaimed, “Barret!! What was that scratching just now!? As long as Marlene is safe, who cares what else happens, right?” Cait Sith lowered his head. “I been itchin’ to say this to ya fer a while now!” Cait Sith raised his head, and shouted, “When ya blew the Midgar No. 1 up, how many folks d’ya think died?”

Barret lowered his head, and said, “...that was for the life of the planet. Ya gotta expect a few casualties.”

“A few? Whaddya mean ‘a few’? What may be a few to y’all is everythin’ to them who died...” responded Cait Sith. “Protect the planet. Hah! Y’all sure sound good! Ain’t no one that’d go against ya. So ya think ya can do whatever y’all want?”

Barret turned to Cait Sith and said, “I don’t wanna hear that from no one in Shinra...”

Cait Sith turned his back and said, "...nuthin' I can do 'bout that..."

Cloud turned to them, and shook his head. "Stop it!"

"Cait Sith... Barret, he knows what he did," stated Tifa. "What we did in Midgar can't be forgotten no matter what the reason." She walked over to Barret. "Right? We haven't forgotten, right?"

Barret didn't respond, and Tifa turned to Cait Sith. "I know you. You can't quit the company because you're worried about the people in Midgar, right?"

Cait Sith didn't respond, and Tifa walked back to Cloud. "...Cloud?" she said in a confused tone.

"Ok!" exclaimed Cloud. "Let's go! We'll beat Weapon ourselves!"

"Hey Cloud..." said Cid. "You think we can win against that monster? We got a chance of winnin', right?"

"How would I know," responded Cloud. "But there's no reason for us to just let him go! We're goin' to Midgar and fighting Weapon! Come on, let's move!"

By this time Diamond Weapon was about to walk on to the shoreline of Midgar, and The Highwind quickly flew off towards Midgar. They landed just as Diamond Weapon hit land. Cloud, Tifa, and Barret ran up to Diamond Weapon, and attacked him.

Diamond Weapon let out a hideous scream, and defended himself. The battle lasted a while. Tifa tried using all three Bahamut's on Diamond Weapon, while Cloud and Barret attacked him.

Finally Diamond Weapon walked away, and Barret questioned, "Wassup, Mr. Monster? What're lookin' at?"

Cloud shook his head, and said, "No, it's...feeling something." He paused. "...Yeah, it's senses murder."

Diamond weapon continued on to Midgar, and Tifa exclaimed, "Let's go back to the Airship!"

They started back to the Airship, and the PHS rang. Cloud answered and Cait Sith exclaimed, "Oh no! Let's hurry out of here! Something big... I'm talkin' *really big's* comin'!"

Meanwhile in the Shinra Building, Rufus was waiting to hear from Heidegger. Finally Heidegger came across the intercom. "Hah, hah, hah, Mr. President, preparations for the Sister Ray are now in order."

"Hah, hah, hah!" laughed Scarlet. "Anytime is fine."

Rufus laughed, and said, "...Fire."

The Sister Ray powered up, and started drawing power from the eight mako Reactors. It had sucked up so much power that the City of Midgar went completely dark. Then it charged up, and fired a beam of energy, shattering the windows of homes, and the windows in the Shinra Building. Pieces of the tower holding the Sister Ray up, also fell off due to the sub-natural force. The Energy Beam headed towards Diamond weapon, and the Northern Crater.

At the same time Diamond Weapon opened up, and leashed and bombardment of missiles onto the City of Midgar. Cloud, and Everyone else was on the deck of the Highwind, watching the attacks.

"Which direction is it going to attack from?" asked Tifa.

"Midgar!" exclaimed Red XIII

"Marlene!!" shouted Barret.

The missiles flew around the Energy Beam, and the energy beam impact, and went right through Diamond Weapon sending him fling back, and killing him.

"Damn..." said Barret.

"It went right through Weapon..." said Red XIII.

Cloud gazed north, and stated, "I see! They're after Sephiroth! The crater on the Northern boundary!"

The energy beam crashed into the Force field surrounding the Northern Crater, and dissipated the Force Field. At Midgar Rufus was waiting impatiently for the report, went the Operator said, "Sir Weapon's been defeated!! The Barrier has disappeared!"

Rufus felt relieved to hear the news, and started to relax, but that was shortly lived.

"Sir!" exclaimed the Operator. "A mass of high density energy is heading towards Midgar!"

Rufus gazed out the window, and watched the incoming missiles. This would be the last thing Rufus would ever see, when a missile crashed into the Shinra build, destroying the floor he was on.

The attack was short lived, but devastating to the Shinra building. There was little damage to the rest of Midgar it self. Now that the Attack was over, Cloud and the others returned to the bridge.

After everyone was on the bridge, Cloud asked, "What happened to.... Sephiroth? Northern Cave... Let's go and see what happened to it."

They flew up the Northern Crater, and noticed that the Barrier was gone.

"Sephiroth's energy Barrier is gone..." stated Cloud. He turned to Cid. "Cid! Can the Airship get inside?"

"Huh? He's my student, ain't he!? Of course he can go anywhere!" exclaimed Cid.

"Right, sorry about that," responded Cloud.

Cait Sith then tuned away, and Barret questioned, "Yo! Cait Sith! Now what?"

Cait Sith waved his arms, turned back to everyone, and exclaimed, "Hold it! Scarlet! Heidegger! What's going on?"

Cait Sith let them hear in on the conversation.

"Strange," said Heidegger. "I can't reach the President!"

"Not the President. To Sister Ray!" exclaimed Cait Sith.

"Ha, ha, ha. What is it Reeve? You're speaking strangely," stated Scarlet.

"None of that matters!" exclaimed Cait Sith. "The reactor's output is increasing all by itself!"

"Ww, wait a minute. That's not wise!" exclaimed Scarlet. "It must cool for 3 hours or it won't work. Reeve, shut off the machine!"

"We can't do that!" exclaimed Cait Sith. It's inoperable!"

Then they heard a phone ring, and they heard some say, "Someone has switched the machine over to mainframe operation! We can't operate it from here."

"What about the mainframe? Who!?" questioned Cait Sith. "Hey, call the mainframe!"

There was a slight silence, and the Heidegger said, "Huh? Why are you giving orders?"

"I don't give a damn about the details!!" exclaimed Cait Sith.

They then used the intercom and called the person whoever was operating the Sister Ray.

“Ha, ha, ha...” laughed Hojo. “Just you wait, Sephiroth. I’ll give you all the Mako you want.”

“Hojo, STOP!” exclaimed Reeve. “The cannon, no, Midgar itself is in danger!”

“Ha, ha, ha... One or two Midgar’s? ...It’s a small price to pay,” responded Hojo.

“Hojo! HOJO!” shouted Reeve.

“Show me... Sephiroth,” said Hojo. “I should be near... Ha, ha, ha... Go beyond the powers of science... Before your presence, science is powerless... I hate it, but I’ll concede to it. Just... let me see it. Ha, ha, ha...”

“YO!” exclaimed Barret. “Do somethin’! Ya big cat!”

Cait Sith lowered his head, and walked towards everyone, and said, “We’re sunk. Hojo’s doing this on his own... ?...? H, huh?” Cait Sith looked around the room, and said, “I don’t like this...”

“You’re busted, Reeve!” exclaimed Barret.

“Too late tryin’ to hide it now...” said Cait Sith.

“Can’t you stop the Mako reactor?” asked Cloud.

“...We can’t stop it,” responded Cait Sith.

“You’re from Shinra, ain’t ya? So why’s it impossible!?” asked Barret.

Cait Sith lowered his head, and Cid stated, “We came a long way to get here. You better not double-cross us now!”

“I can’t make you trust me...” stated Cait Sith.

“You damn fool!” exclaimed Cid. “Don’t you understand anything I’m saying? I don’t give a damn about Shinra. If you’re a man... no, if you’re a human being, you’ll save the planet!” Don’t you even care?”

“No way!” exclaimed Cait Sith. “If we shut down the reactor, all hell will break loose!”

“Why?” questioned Cid. “Can’t you just shut off the valve?”

“Yeah, it’s easy to shut off the reactor’s pipe valves...” stated Cait Sith. “But the reactors made a path for the energy to escape from below. Once you open that, it’ll be impossible to close it until everything blasts out... And we can’t try to stop the energy from gushing out...”

“An explosion!!” exclaimed Barret.

“This blast’ll be way stronger than when the number 1 reactor blew up!” exclaimed Cait Sith.

Barret turned his back, and exclaimed, “Damn...!”

“Forget about that... the *cannon!*” exclaimed Cait Sith. “We’ve got to get to Midgar! That’s the first thing!!”

“Must stop Hojo...first.” said Cloud.

Cait Sith then reopened the conversation between Heidegger, Himself, and Scarlet.

“Looks like Cloud and the others are on their way,” stated Reeve. “Stay out of their way!”

“Ghaa, haah, hah, hah!” laughed Heidegger. “Don’t be so ludicrous! I don’t recall you giving me any orders! The Peace Preservation will give their best effort to make the enemy retreat! Because of them, I... I...!”

“This is a private matter...” stated Reeve.

“The President is dead! Now I’m doing things my way!” stated Heidegger. “Ghaa haah hah hah!”

“Ha, ha, ha.” Laughed Scarlet. “Heidegger! Now I’m going to use the new weapon!”

“Hey! Wait!!” exclaimed Cait Sith. “Cloud, everybody! Sorry... But!! But! But you’ll come, won’t you!?”

Cloud nodded, and said, “I know!”

“Hey!” exclaimed Cid to his trainee. The Trainee turned around, and Cid stated, “I’m leaving the ship in your hands!”

The Trainee nodded, and said, “I’m heading for Midgar!”

They quickly flew back to Midgar. When they arrived, the Trainee announced, “We’ve reached Midgar!”

“Even if we get there, Midgar’s under martial law!” exclaimed Barret. “There’ll be no way we could slip into the slums.”

“Looks like all transportation from the slums is cut off...” stated Tifa.

“Hey, hey, Whaddya think we have the Highwind for?” questioned Cid. “Where are we now!?”

Barret looked around, and questioned, “Huh? Where are we...?”

“If land’s no go... We’ll go by air!” exclaimed Cid.

“Okay then!” exclaimed Cloud. “We’ll parachute into Midgar!!”

Everyone ran out to the deck of the ship and Cid said, “Choose the members below. Change your party’s members?”

Cloud decided to change his traveling group to himself, Tifa, and Vincent. The reason for this is he knew that Vincent wanted a crack at Hojo. Once they were set, Cloud said, “Here we go!!”

Everyone jumped off the side of the Highwind, and parachuted down to Midgar. They landed in Midgar and Cait Sith hopped up to Cloud.

“Heidegger is going after you all,” stated Cait Sith. “That’s why it’s dangerous out there. Let’s go underground!”

Cait Sith led the way and Cloud followed to an underground access point. When Cloud arrived Cait Sith said, “This is where we go in.” He opened up the passage. “Please! Hurry and come to the Mako Cannon!”

Everyone went into the passage. They had to climb up and down ladders and vents, but they finally made it to the rail system also known as a subway. They started to go through the Subway, and about half way to the Shinra building, when they heard a voice shout, “Oh no! They’re here!”

Cloud turned around to see Elena from the Turks, and she said, “What are we going to do!? I think it’s okay for you to ignore your orders now.”

Then Reno walked up, and said, “...Elena, don’t act so weak.”

Rude also showed up and stated, “We’re Turks, Elena.”

Elena nodded, and said, “...Yes, sir. You’re right.”

“Come on, we’ve got work to do,” stated Rude.

Reno waved his arm, and said, “I’m not really up for it, but...”

“Our orders were to seek you out and...kill,” stated Elena. “Our company may be in turmoil, but an order’s an order. That’s the will and spirit of the Turks! Believe it!”

Cloud didn't respond, and they just stood there waiting for someone to throw the first punch. Elena getting a little frustrated at both parties, exclaimed, "What are you doing! Let's go!"

Cloud could see that they really were not enthused to fight, and responded, "No, let's not go!"

Elena was shock to hear this, and exclaimed, "You showing pity!? Don't take the Turks for fools!"

"Wait, Elena," said Reno.

Elena turned to Reno, and questioned, "Reno! You're not violating the order... are you!?"

"Shinra is finished," responded Reno. "It's come down to this."

Elena turned to Rude, and said, "Rude..."

Rude shook his head and Elena lowered her head.

"Elena, you were a great Turk!" exclaimed Reno.

Elena didn't respond, and Reno said to Cloud, "Farewell. If we both survive... If we can save our lives..."

Elena picked her head up, and turned to Cloud and the others. "Remember the spirit of the Turks..."

"Our mission is finished..." stated Rude, and the Turks walked away.

Cloud Tifa, and Vincent continued on to the Sister Ray. They made their way through the subway, and came to a fork in the road. Yuffie was standing to the left of the fork, and signaled them to go down that path.

They continued on until they came into another fork in the road, with Cid standing in the middle. Cloud walked up to Cid and Cid had a confused look on his face. Cid looked both ways, and said, "Which way...!? Goddamn, piece of shit cannon!"

Cloud unsure of which way to go, took the left path, and found a ladder that led to a vent. This took them back to the surface right by the Sister Ray. They stared towards the Sister Ray, and the ground began to shake. They turned around to see a giant machine.

"This can't be..." Tifa said in shock.

Cloud nor Vincent said a word, and the head opened up, and they heard, "G'yaaa, haaa, haaa!!! Here they come! G'yaaa, haaa, haaa!!! So they really showed up!"

They all knew the voice of the person. The giant robot held out his hand, to revile Heidegger, and Scarlet, both standing on the robots hand.

"You sure did treat us like dogs up to now!!" exclaimed Heidegger.

"You killed off a lot of my precious soldiers!" exclaimed Scarlet.

"G'yaaa, haaa, haaa!!!" laughed Heidegger. "But let's see how you do against anti-Weapon artillery!"

"You guys are worthless, but my proud creation is a sure thing!" exclaimed Scarlet.

The robot moved its hand back to its head, and Heidegger and Scarlet entered. The head closed, and the Robot took a step forward.

"I'll show you the destructive power of the Proud Clod!" exclaimed Scarlet, as Proud Clod attacked. Cloud and the others responded, and oddly defeated Proud Clod, with ease.

Proud Clod basically froze up. “Not that!” exclaimed Scarlet. “This is the Proud Clod...!?”

Proud Clod went into convulsions, and started to over heat.

“Whoooooa!!” exclaimed Heidegger, as Proud Clod vaporized into thin air. Cloud and the others hurried on. They ran through an alleyway, and found a dead end.

“This way, Cloud!” exclaimed Cait Sith from the top of some stairs. Cloud and the others ran up the stairs. They climb up four flights of stairs, and they found Hojo at the control panel powering up the Sister Ray.

“Hojo!” exclaimed Cloud. “Stop right there!!”

Hojo glanced back to see Cloud. “Oh... the failure,” he said as he went back to his work.

“At least remember my name! It’s Cloud!”

Hojo stopped working, and said, “Every time I see you, I...” He paused for a second. “It pains me that I had so little scientific sense...” Hojo went back to work. “I evaluated you as a failed project. But, you are the only one that succeeded as a Sephiroth-clone. Heh, heh, heh... I’m even beginning to hate myself.”

“None of that matters... just stop this nonsense!” exclaimed Cloud.

Hojo stopped working, and said, “...nonsense? Oh, this?” He turned to face them, and laughed. He calmed down and stated, “Sephiroth seems to be counting on the energy. So I’m going to lend him a hand.”

“Why!? Would you do that!?” questioned Cloud.

“Quit asking me why, you moron,” responded Hojo as he walked up to Cloud. “Hmm... actually, you might be cut out to be a scientist.” Hojo walked back to the control panel, and stated, “Energy level is at... 83%. It’s taking too long.” He started pushing buttons, trying to speed up the process. “My son is in need of power and help... That’s the only reason.”

Cloud was confused, and said, “...your son?”

“Ha, ha, ha... Although he doesn’t know,” responded Hojo. “Ha, ha, ha... HA, HA, HA...!! What will Sephiroth think when he finds out I’m his father? Always looking down on me like that. HA, HA, HA...!!”

“Sephiroth is your son!?” questioned Cloud.

Vincent looked as if he was going to say something, but didn’t.

“Ha, ha, ha... I offered the woman with my child to Professor Gast’s Jenova Project. When Sephiroth was still in the womb, we took the cells of Jenova... HA, HA, HA...!!”

“You...!” exclaimed Vincent.

“I can’t believe you’re the one who did this...” said Cloud. “The illusionary crime against Sephiroth...”

Hojo turn to them. “Heee, hee, hee, hee! No you’re wrong! It’s my desire as a scientist! Heee, hee, hee, hee!”

Vincent glared at Hojo, and stated, “I was... wrong. The one that should have slept was... You, Hojo!”

“I... was defeated by my desire to become a scientist,” said Hojo. “I lost that last time as well. I’ve injected Jenova’s cells into my own body! Heee, hee, hee! Here are... Heee, hee, hee! ...my results!!”

Hojo attacked them, and they responded. Tifa Summoned Bahamut Zero, While Vincent and Cloud attacked. After the first wave of attacks, Hojo said, “Haw... now let’s see how the Mako Juice is reacting.”

The Jenova cells mutated Hojo’s body, transforming him into something not human, called Helletic Hojo. Tifa summoned Neo Bahamut, and Bahamut, and Cloud and Vincent attacked. Helletic Hojo was killed, but the Jenova Cells wouldn’t allow him to die, and mutated again, turning him into Lifeform-Hojo NA. Vincent had enough of Hojo’s shit, and finished him off with his special skill, Hellmaster.

Lifeform-Hojo NA body became unstable, and vaporized into thin air. Everyone relaxed, and Vincent said, “Hojo... rest in peace...”

“I can’t believe Sephiroth is Hojo’s son...” said Tifa.

Chapter 11: The Final Fight

With Hojo dead, the Sister Ray was shut off now, and everyone returned to the Highwind. They all went to the bridge and Cait Sith said, "Shinra's...finished."

Cloud walked up to the window, and said, "Meteor's gonna fall in about..." Cloud pause and turned to Red XIII. Red XIII shook his head, and said, "Seven more days. That's what Grandfather said."

Cloud walked up to Red XIII and said, "Red XIII... You want you to see everyone in Cosmo Canyon again?"

Red XIII turned away, and said, "...yes." He then turned back to cloud, and Cloud nodded. Cloud then turned to Barret and asked, "You want to see Marlene, right?"

"Don't ask me that," responded Barret.

Cloud shook his head, and said, "We'll beat Sephiroth... Then, if we don't release the power of Holy in seven days... There won't be a planet to protect." Cloud shrugged his shoulders. "If we can't beat Sephiroth... It's as good as death for us. We'll just go a few days sooner than the rest who'll die from Meteor."

"Don't be thinkin' you're gonna lose before ya even fight!" exclaimed Barret.

"No!" exclaimed Cloud. He walked to the front of the bridge, and looked out the window. "What I meant was..." He turned to everyone. "What are we all fighting for? I want us all to understand that. Save the planet... for the future of the planet... Sure, that's all fine. But really, is that really how it is? For me, this is a personal feud. I want to beat Sephiroth. And settle my past. Saving the planet just happens to a part of that. I've been thinking. I think we all are fighting for ourselves. For ourselves... and that someone... something... whatever it is, that's important to us. That's what we're fighting for. That's why we keep up this battle for the planet."

Barret scratched his head, and said, "You're right... It sounds cool sayin' it's to save the planet. But I was the one who blew up that Mako Reactor... Lookin' back on it now, I can see that wasn't the right way to do things. I made a lot of friends and innocent bystanders suffer...At first, it was revenge against Shinra. For attackin' my town. But now..." he paused for a second. "Yeah. I'm fightin' for Marlene. For Marlene... For Marlene's future... Yeah... I guess I want to save the planet for Marlene's sake..."

Cloud nodded, and said, "Go and see her. Make sure you're right, and come back." He then turned to everyone, and stated, "All of you. Get off the ship and find out your reasons for yourselves. I want you to make sure. Then I want you to come back."

Cid waved his arms and said, "Maybe ain't none of us'll come back. Meteor's gonna kill us all anyway. Let's just forget any useless struggling!"

Cloud nodded, and said, "I know why I'm fighting. I'm fighting to save the planet, and that's that. But besides that, there's something personal too... A very personal memory that I have. What about you all? I want all of you to find that something within yourselves. If you don't find it, then that's ok too. You can't fight without a reason, right? So, I won't hold it against you if you don't come back."

Barret, Vincent, Yuffie, Cid, Cait Sith, Red XIII, and the crew, left the Highwind. Once they were gone, Cloud turned to Tifa, and asked, "What are you going to do, Tifa?"

"Did you forget? I'm... all alone. I don't have anywhere to go."

Cloud nodded, and they left the Highwind. They were on the ground below the Highwind, and Tifa looked around. "Everyone's gone..." she said.

“Yeah, we don’t have anywhere or anyone to go home to,” said Cloud.

Tifa looked at the ground, and said, “You’re right...” She raised her head, and ran her hand through her hair. “But... I’m sure someday... they’ll come back, don’t you think?”

Cloud crossed his arms, and lowered his head. “Hmm... I wonder...?” He shook his head. “Everyone has an irreplaceable something they’re holding on to... But this time, our opponent...”

Tifa nodded, and said, “Hmmm... But that’s all right, even if no one comes back. As long as I’m with you... As long as you’re by my side... I won’t give up even if I’m scared.”

Cloud looked at Tifa, and said, “.....Tifa.....”

“No matter how close we are... We were far apart... before this. But when we were in the Lifestream surrounded by all those screams of anguish, I thought I heard your voice...” Tifa closed her eyes and lowered her head, and started to cry a little. “...sniff... you probably don’t remember this... But deep in my heart I heard you calling my name... Or at least I thought I did...”

Cloud looked away, and said “I see...” He then nodded. “I think I’ve heard about it, too. At that time, it was Tifa’s Voice...”

Tifa opened her eyes, and raised her head. “Cloud...? Do you think the stars can hear us? Do you think they see how hard we’re fighting for them?”

Cloud shook his head, and looked up to the sky. “I dunno... But... Whether they are or not, we still have to do what we can. And believe in ourselves...” He looked towards the ground. “I’ll find the answer someday. As long I keep trying.”

Tifa nodded, and said, “Yeah... that’s right...”

“We’ve got a big battle tomorrow, we’d better get some sleep...”

“Umm. Yes, I guess you’re right...”

Cloud and Tifa rested on the ground, and slept outside through the night. The stars faded away, and twilight had set in. Cloud was awake on and off through the night, and he awoke to see the twilight.

“...It’s almost dawn...” Cloud said.

Tifa stirred around, and said, “H, huh?”

“Morning, Tifa. It’s almost dawn...” said Cloud.

Tifa opened her eyes, and stretched. “Mmm... Good morning, Cloud. Give me a little longer... Just a little bit longer...” She rested her head back on Cloud, and said, “This day will never come again... So let me have this moment...”

Cloud decided to grant her request, and let her rest a while longer. A short time had passed, and the sun was up in the sky. Tifa stood up, and looked toward the Highwind.

Cloud finally stood up, and said, “We’d better go.”

Tifa turned to Cloud, and said, “But, I still..!?”

Cloud turned to her, and shook his head. “It’s all right, Tifa. You said so yourself yesterday. At least we don’t have to go on alone.”

Tifa nodded, and said, “Yes... That’s right!”

Cloud nodded, and exclaimed, “Okay! Let’s go!”

They returned to Highwind and proceeded to the bridge. Before they got to the bridge, Tifa stopped, and commented, "The airship is too big for just the two of us. Yeah, it's a little lonely without everyone."

Cloud turned to Tifa, and said, "Don't worry. It'll be okay."

Tifa shrugged her shoulders, and Cloud started jumping up and down.

"I'll make a big enough ruckus for everyone," said Cloud. He stopped, and wiped his forehead. "Besides, I'm the pilot. No more flying around casually like before. We won't have time to feel lonely."

Then the engines started up, and the Highwind lifted off the ground.

"Huh!?" questioned Tifa.

"It's moving..." said Cloud, and they both ran up to the bridge. They arrived to see, Barret, and Cid.

"Barret! Cid!" exclaimed Cloud.

Barret turned to Tifa, and Cloud, asked, "O, oh... is that okay with you?"

Red XIII Then ran up and Cloud exclaimed, "Red XIII!"

"Why didn't you tell me!?" asked Tifa.

Red XIII turned to Cid, and said, "But, you know, Cid."

"Hey, Red XIII," said Cid. "If you butt in now, you never know what they'll say later..."

"...Were you listening?" asked Tifa. She then ran to the window, and Cloud scratched his head. Then Vincent came walking in. Cloud ran up to him and said, "Vincent!"

Vincent turned away, and brushed his clothes. "Why such a puzzled look? You didn't want me to come?"

Cloud lowered his head, and said, "No, it's just that you're always so cold. I thought you didn't care what was happening."

Vincent turned back to Cloud, and said, "Cool!? Hmm... I guess that's just how I am, sorry."

Red lights flashed, and Barret, "Well lookee-here. The Shinra Manager's come back."

Cait Sith hopped up to Cloud and lowered his head. "Uh, excuse men but..." said Cait Sith. "I wanted to come with the main group, but I couldn't get away... Some people in Midgar took me in. I know I have a stuffed animal body, but I'll work really hard!"

Barret looked around, and said, "I guess that's everyone."

Red XIII shook his head, and stated, "No, Yuffie's missing."

"She ain't gonna show up," said Barret. "Least this time she didn't steal our materia. Guess we gotta be thankful for that."

Then out of nowhere jumped Yuffie from above. She threw her rapid punches, but stopped. "How could you say that!?" she asked. "I came all the way here after being seasick as a dog! I didn't go through all that just to have you guys have the best parts to yourselves!"

Cloud turned to Yuffie, nodded, and said, "Welcome back, Yuffie."

"Gee, Cloud...that's so nice of you to say that... You sick?" questioned Yuffie. Cloud shook his head, and Yuffie said, "Well, whatever. I'm gonna be in my reserved seat in the hall... waiting...up! ...Urk!"

Cloud walked up the head of the bridge, lowered his head, and said, “Thanks everyone.”

Cloud raised his head, and Barret said, “We didn’t come back for your spikey headed ass! We came back for Marlene. Guess it’s jes’ my... whatcha call, feelings or somethin’. I, uh... I ain’t got no words now...”

Red XIII shook his head, and said, “...Although she’s not here, she left us a window of opportunity...”

“We can’t let it go like this,” said Cid.

Cloud turned away, and gazed out the window. “...Aeris,” he said quietly. “She was smiling to the end. We have to do something, or that smile will just freeze like that.” He turned to the others, and said, “Let’s all go together. Memories of Aeris...Although she should’ve returned to the planet by now, something stopped her and now she’s stuck...” He paused for a second. “We’ve got to let go of Aeris’s memory.”

Cid looked around and asked, “Ha anyone changed their mind?”

No one responded, and Cloud nodded his head, and said, “I’m counting on you, Cid.”

“Yeah, yeah...” said Cid as he looked at the steering wheel. “There are 2 levers here that’ve been buggin’ me for a while now...” Cid ran up to the steering wheel. “Let me try them out.”

Cloud nodded, and Cid said, “All right, so what should I do? You decided, Cloud.”

“This is our last battle,” stated Cloud. “Our target is the North Cave. Our enemy is... Sephiroth! So let’s move out!”

Cid pulled one of the levers, and rocket engines came out of the Highwind. The propellers fell off, and the rockets engaged into high speed.

“We’re almost to the north Cave!” exclaimed Cid. “We’re on our way, Sephiroth!”

Cid took his hands off the wheel, turned to Cloud, and exclaimed, “Man, I’m going to stick it to him!”

Cid placed his hands back onto the wheel, and the alarm began flashing. Cloud turned to Cid, and asked, “What is it, Cid?”

“Errrggh! Some incredible force!” exclaimed Cid as he was struggling with the wheel. “Losing... control...!”

Then in ran the old crew, and they helped Cid with the wheel. Cid trying to resist their help exclaimed, “Get the hell outta here, flunkies! Didn’t I tell you all to go home!?”

“Yes, sir. This is our home!!” exclaimed one of the Crew men.

“Oh man--...stop trying to act so cool,” stated Cid. “All right, you jokers! Hold me down with everything you got!! Geronimo!!”

They arrived at the North Crater. Cloud went to the Operations Room, and picked his traveling group. He went back to his normal lineup of himself, Tifa, and Barret. The Highwind hovered over the crater, and they all walk out on to the deck. There was a ladder that led down to the Crater, and they all went down.

They slid down into the crater, and climbed down. All that Cloud could see at the bottom was a glowing green light. Even though they could see the light at the bottom, the side became too steep to climb, and they had to use intertwining caves.

They went through the caves for what seemed like hours before they found a safe path to walk. After finding the correct path, it didn't take them long to find a fork in the road. Everyone regrouped here, and Cloud stated, "The road splits into two groups. We'll split into two groups."

"Which you gonna chose, Cloud?" asked Cid.

"Left," responded Cloud.

"All right," said Barret. "Then I'll go left."

Tifa looked down the paths, and said, "Than I'm going... left."

Red XIII turned to Cloud, and stated, "All right then I'll go right."

"I'm going... right," said Yuffie.

"Then I'll be heading... right," said Cait Sith.

"Then, I'll be going... left," stated Vincent.

"All right!" exclaimed Cid. "I'm heading right."

Cloud then looked at everyone, and said, "Now don't any of you die on me. Gotta get though to Sephiroth!"

Cid stated off, and stated, "I'll destroy that Sephiroth before anyone gets to him!" Cid then left.

"It's all over now. With this..." said Vincent as he pointed to his gun, and left.

"Oh man... 'Materia Hunter Yuffie' sounds like the last chapter of 'Materia Forever'," said Yuffie, and she left.

Red XIII started to leave, turned back and stated, "All life on this planet, indeed the very life of the planet is in our hands..." and he left.

"I'm so happy to have met you all, really! ...sniff..." said Cait Sith, and he left.

"This will be the end of it!" exclaimed Cloud, and he left along with Barret, and Tifa. They entered the next cavern, and stopped.

"Another fork in the road..." said Cloud.

"Cloud which way you gonna chose?" asked Barret.

"Down," responded Cloud.

"All right, I'm going up," stated Barret.

"Then I'm going down," said Tifa.

"If so, I will be going... up," said Vincent.

Vincent started to leave, turned to Barret and said, "Let's go!"

Barret walked up to Vincent, turned back and stated, "Ain't no way I'm gonna die until I stick this into that guy."

They left, and Cloud exclaimed, "Wait! Sephiroth..."

Tifa and Cloud continued on through the crater, going from cavern to cavern. Sometime later they found a cavern that had a hole in the center of the room, and a rocky path leading down. The path was kind of like stairs. Cloud waited for the others to show, but no one did. He couldn't help but to think the worst, and decided to proceed on.

Just as Tifa, and Cloud were about to go down they heard Cid shouted, "I can't let you guys go by yourselves, you'll make me worry."

Barret then showed up from the other path, and said, "Yo, we're a bit late?"

A short time later everyone had regrouped, and Cloud was now feeling somewhat relieved knowing that everyone was ok. Cloud then said, "This is the center of the planet...?"

No one said anything, and Cloud went around collecting any items that they might have found in the cave. Everyone was willing to hand over the items, except for Yuffie, who said, “Wh...what?”

“By the way Yuffie, didn’t you find something on the way?” asked Red XIII.

Yuffie shook her head. Cloud then looked at her, and she said, “Oh, all right. Here, Cloud.” She gave Cloud the Last Elixir, and said, “But I’m the one who found it, so you better give it back to me when you’re done with it!”

Cloud didn’t say anything, and now that he collected all the items he felt it was time to move out. He turned to everyone, and said, “All right everyone, let’s mosey.”

Cid shrugged his shoulders, and exclaimed, “Damn! Again! Stop sayin’ it like a wimp! Can’t you say ‘Move out!’ or somethin’?”

Cloud scratched his head, and exclaimed, “Move out!!”

Everyone nodded, and then they heard an awful growl.

“What?” questioned Barret.

“Look at the number...” said Red XIII

Everyone looked down the hole, and Cid shouted, “Fuck! They’re comin’ out in full force!”

“Cloud!” exclaimed Barret. “You go first!”

Cloud shook his head, and responded, “I’m fighting here too.”

“Shu’up!” exclaimed Barret. “It won’t do us no good wit’ everyone back here!”

“Barret’s right,” said Cid. “You take two of us with you and go first. The rest’ll catch up with ya later.”

“Is this like a practice run before the real thing?” asked Tifa.

“Yeah, a major practice run...” commented Cait Sith.

“Heh heh, I’m fine with that,” said Yuffie. (It’s probably more fun than fighting Sephiroth down there,) she thought to herself.

“Hmm, this might be fun to pass time,” stated Vincent.

The monsters started get real close, and Red XIII exclaimed, “They’re coming! They’re already on the floor next to us!”

“Cloud!” exclaimed Barret. “Hurry up and make up your mind!”

Cloud picked his normal group, Himself, Barret, and Tifa. He then turned to the others, and said, “All of you! Later!”

Cid scratched his head, and responded, “Yup! Later!”

Cloud then stared down the path. The area was surrounded by a glowing green light, which was emanating from the bottom of the hole. They hopped down fourteen rocks, fighting Iron Man’s and Zombie Dragons almost every step of the way.

They made it to the bottom. It was like an island that was surrounded by green light. They all looked around, and Cloud asked, “Where are we...?”

They heard a hissing noise, and Tifa questioned, “That!?”

Then a creature floated up to them and Cloud questioned, “Jenova...!? It’s coming.”

Cloud was right it was Jenova-SYNTHESIS. Tifa quickly cast Bahamut Zero, with Quadra magic. (This let Bahamut be summoned five times without Jenova-SYNTHESIS even getting a chance to attack them.) Jenova-SYNTHESIS then perished, and the ground began to break away.

They began falling, no more like floating towards a bright white light. They could hear the screams of the planet, and Cloud said, "Li...ght... A light... is this... is this light... Holy?"

Then there was a flash of white light, and they all appeared on rock pedestals.

"Owww..." said Cid.

In the center was a round orb, and was glowing white. It was surrounded by a rock formation.

"Cid!?" questioned Cloud.

Everyone stood up, and Cid said, "Goddammit.. So we're all here...?"

There was a flash of white light, and a green Energy ring shot out from the center. It lifted everyone up into the air.

"Uuuugh!!" exclaimed Cid.

There was another flash, and Sephiroth slowly phased into the area, right above the white orb.

"...Sephiroth!!" exclaimed Cloud.

Again a green ring shot out, and threw them backwards.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Barret. "Is this... the true power of Sephiroth?"

"My... my body..." said Cid. "I can't control my body... Uuuugh!?"

Sephiroth treated them like a yoyo. He brought them towards him, and sent out another green ring, fling them backwards.

"My front legs... my hind legs... my tail's about to tear off!!" exclaimed Red XIII.

"This is definitely not good..." commented Cait Sith. "He's way outta our league..."

"I, I don't know if I can... go on..." stated Yuffie.

Sephiroth then sent out another green ring of power causing more pain to them.

"Cloud... Cloud..." said Tifa.

"Ugh...ugh..." responded Cloud in pain.

Sephiroth didn't stop his torture there, and sent out another green ring of power. Their bodies flew back, and sent more pain through them. Cloud then noticed something, and said, "...there... It's... there..."

"Cloud...?" questioned Tifa.

"...Holy... Holy... is there... The Holy is shining... Aeris's prayer is shining...!"

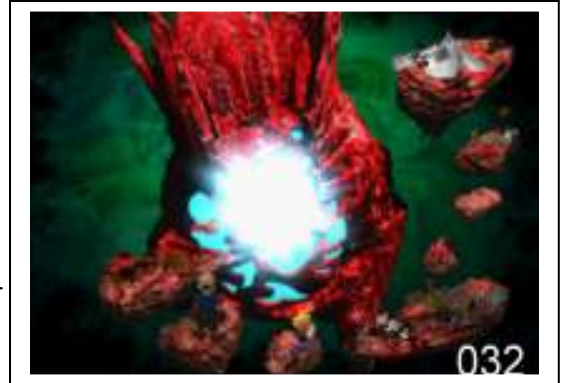
"Holy... Aeris..." said Tifa.

There was a flash of white light, but nothing happened to them.

"It's not over yet... This isn't the end yet!!" exclaimed Cloud. "Let's go, everyone...!"

Everyone tried to float to Sephiroth, but he sent out a green ring. They shot backwards, and Cid exclaimed, "This ain't nothin'!!" Then Cid broke off from the group, and Cait Sith, and Yuffie followed. "Hoo-ok...!" exclaimed Cid. "I can't be foolin' around in the bottom of this hell hole... I still have lots of stuff to do with my life!"

Vincent did the same, and Red XIII followed.



“I was frozen in time...” stated Vincent. “But now I feel as though my time is finally about to begin...! Sephiroth, now it’s your time to sleep between the ages!!”

Cloud Tifa, and Barret regrouped, and Cloud said, “Aeris’s memories... Our memories... We came... to tell you... our memories... Come Planet! Show us your answer! And Sephiroth!! To the settling of everything!!”

Sephiroth accepted their challenge, and drew them in. The battle began, with Bizarro-Sephiroth, and Vincent and Red XIII. After the first round of slapping Bizarro-Sephiroth around, Cid, Cait Sith, and Yuffie jumped in. They went round and round, and after they had enough, Cloud, Tifa, and Barret jumped in.

Tifa quickly summoned Bahamut Zero, with Quadra Magic, While Barret, and Cloud attacked. After all this pounding, Bizarro-Sephiroth fell, and started a new Battle with Safer Sephiroth.

Cloud started by healing the party from the last battle, and Barret cast regain. Safer Sephiroth in turn cast Wall, which reduces all damage by half. Tifa summoned Bahamut Zero with Quadra Magic, but that didn’t Slow Safer Sephiroth down. Safer Sephiroth responded with Shadow Flare on Tifa. Cloud and Barret both attacked as well.

Safer Sephiroth then cast Super Nova. This spell was really powerful. It summoned a small meteor, and crashed it into the sun, causing Clouds party to be annihilated.

Though the battle wasn’t over, because Cloud had the final Attack Materia, linked to the Phoenix Materia. Once Cloud was dead, the Final attack Materia summoned Phoenix, and brought them back to life, and attacked Safer Sephiroth at the same time. Tifa then summoned Bahamut Zero again with Quadra Magic.

After the unleash of Bahamut Zero, for a second time, Safer Sephiroth’s body began to break down. Light started to shoot out, and his body incinerated. Safer Sephiroth tried to stop the process, but he was unsuccessful, and he perished.



Chapter 12: The Conclusion

Everything went black, and everyone felt ground under their feet. When the light returned, they found themselves back at the top of the hole. Cloud lowered his head, and said in a low voice, "This is all we could do."

"Wait!" exclaimed Barret. "What about Holy? What's gonna happen to the Planet?"

Cloud turned to Barret, and said. "That...I don't know. Isn't the rest up the Planet?"

"...You're right," responded Tifa. "We've done all that we could do."

Cloud looked around, and said, "All right, everyone. It's no use thinking about it. We'll leave all our worries here. Let's go home proud."

Everyone nodded, and started to leave. Cloud was following behind Tifa when he saw a white light flash. Cloud stopped, and Tifa turned around and asked, "What happened?"

Cloud lowered his head, and said quietly, "...I feel it..."

"What..." questioned Tifa.

Cloud saw the light again, and he shook his head. "He is still...here."

Tifa didn't respond, and Cloud saw the light again. He placed his hands over his ears, and dropped to his knees, shaking his head. "Still..."

Everything went white, and Tifa said, "Cloud!?"

The white light faded, and Cloud said, "He's... laughing..." Then cloud passed out, and his sub consciousness went somewhere else.

"Cloud!" exclaimed Tifa, as Cloud closed his eyes.

Cloud was floating through time and space. It was like traveling through a rainbow tunnel. He then came to a clearing field with appeared to be fireflies, and he went into anther tunnel. This tunnel wasn't colorful at all, in fact it was black and white. He finally floated down to another clearing, where Sephiroth was waiting.

Cloud drew his sword, and prepared to attack. Both men just stood there staring at each other. Then it happened all at once. Cloud made the first move, and use a skill known as Omnislash.

Cloud lunged at Sephiroth, and hit him fifteen times With his Buster Sword. Sephiroth struggled to stand, and tried to react, but his body had sustained too much damage.

He leaned back, and blood was gushing from his body. He fell backwards, and his body began to brake down. Beams of light shot out from his body, and it broke up into nothing.

Cloud was standing in the blackness, when Life-stream began flowing from the ground, and surrounded Cloud. It entered his body, and healed his wounds. Cloud looking around seeing this said with confusion, "...Life-stream?"

Cloud then was surrounded by a peace full light. He looked up to see Aeris's hand coming through the light.



He reached for the hand, with a sense of peace, but the light faded away, and he came to. His eyes focused to Tifa trying to reach for Cloud screaming. The ground was shaking, and falling apart. Rocks were falling from above, and the ground that Tifa was on collapsed, and she fell. Cloud ran quickly, jumped, grabbed Tifa with one arm, and a cliff with the other.

Cloud was just hanging there, and he looked down at Tifa. "...I think I'm beginning to understand," said Cloud.

"What?" asked Tifa.

"An answer from the Planet... the Promised Land... I think I can meet her... there."

Tifa pulled herself closer to Cloud and said, "Yeah, let's go meet her."

Cloud pulled them up, and Tifa grabbed onto the side of the cliff. They both got up safely, and the green light at the bottom began to glow white. The area calmed down, and turned to Tifa, and asked, "Hey, where is everyone?"

Cloud then heard Barret's voice shout "Heeeey!" Cloud looked across the hole to see Barret waving, and everyone else.

Tifa waved back and shouted, "I'm glad you're all safe!"

Barret turned to Cid, and said, "They all seem to be safe, too. But... now what're we going to do?"

"Holy should be moving soon," stated Red XIII. "And that means this place will..."

Cid looked up and said, "Oh, Lady Luck don't fail me now..." The area began to shake, and rocks started to fall. Cid's mouth opened wide, and his cigarette fell out of his mouth.

Hidden within the falling rocks, was the Highwind. It came crashing down, landing in the hole. Everyone boarded the Highwind, and pressure began to build up. Then out from the top of the crater came a white beam of energy, it was like a water geyser.

At the top was the Highwind, be tossed around like a tinker toy. Everyone on board was being tossed around. Cid trying to pull himself to a lever that was flashing emergency. "Shit!" he exclaimed, as he pulled the lever. The Highwind extended new wings, and started up a rocket engine. They flew off to Midgar, where Meteor was about to crash into.

In the Town of Kalm, Marlene was sitting at a table, in a house, on the second floor. She then looked around the room, and said with confusion, "The flower girl?" She stood up and ran to the window. She opened the shutters, to see Meteor over Midgar, Unleashing great cyclones of destruction, along with lightning surges.

The cyclones were destroying everything, and the lightning surges were wreaking havoc on everything. The City of Midgar was turning into to ruins. Then a white light shined in the distance, and in came the power of Holy to save them all.



It soared under Meteor creating a barrier so it would not go any further, and held it there. Though everyone's hope fell quickly when Meteor broke through the Barrier, and started to consume Holy's power. As it broke through, its force of power had increased, and was creating massive sand storm.

Above in the sky, the Highwind soared, and everyone was watching the destruction of Midgar. "Wait a damn minute!" exclaimed Barret. "What's going to happen to Midgar?" He hit his fist against a ledge. "We can't let that happen!"

"I had everyone take refuge in the slums, but the way things are now..." said Cait Sith sadly.

Red XIII walked up by Cloud, and stated, "It's too late for Holy. Meteor is approaching the Planet. Holy is having the opposite effect. Forget Midgar, we've gotta worry about the Planet."

Cid flew the Highwind to a more safe distance, and everyone was feeling a sense of failure. It seemed all hope was lost, and Tifa noticed something flashing on the ground.

"What's that!?" She questioned, and everyone gazed to the ground. Then Lifestream began coming out. First in one spot, and then another, and then another.

"What the hell *is* that...?" questioned Barret.

Cloud in an aw responded, "...Lifestream."

It was an amazing sight, the Lifestream was now coming out from all over the Planet, and headed towards Meteor. Every person that was hiding in their homes in Kalm, opened their windows, and witnessed this amazing event. The Lifestream swiftly surrounded Meteor, and then engulfed it. Everything went white, and no one could see what was going on. The light faded away, and you could see Aeris's face smiling.




Unknowing what had happen to mankind, 500 years later, Red XIII is seen in the mountains with 2 pups, and they were running quickly. They arrived at the edge of a Cliff to see Midgar, all grown over with plant life, and birds flying away. Red XIII let out a roar, as did his pups, bringing an end to the story.






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Character Profiles

	<p> Name: Cloud Strife Job: Mercenary (Ex-member of SOLDIER) Age: 21 Weapon: Buster Sword Height: 5'7" Birth Date: August 19 Birthplace: Nibelheim Blood Type: AB </p> <p>Cloud is the main character in Final Fantasy VII. Originally a member of an elite force known as SOLDIER, he is now a mercenary who will take on any job. After being hired by AVALANCHE, he gradually gets caught up in a massive struggle for the life of the planet as he contends with a powerful foe and struggles with feelings he's never felt.</p>
	<p> Name: Aeris Gainsborough Job: Flower Merchant Age: 22 Weapon: Rod Height: 5'3" Birth Date: February 7 Birthplace: <i>unknown</i> Blood Type: O </p> <p>Aeris (a.k.a Aerith) is young, beautiful and somewhat mysterious. Aeris met Cloud while selling flowers on the streets of Midgar. She decided to join him soon after. Her unusual abilities enable her to use magic, but she seems more interested in the deepening love triangle between herself, Cloud and Tifa. Even though she might not appear important at first eye, Aeris is in fact a major part of the story.</p>
	<p> Name: Tifa LockHeart Job: Bar Hostess, AVALANCHE member Age: 20 Weapon: Fighting Gloves Height: 5'4" Birth Date: May 3 Birthplace: Nibelheim Blood Type: B </p> <p>Bright and Optimistic. Tifa always cheers up the others when they're down. But don't let her looks fool you; she can decimate almost any enemy with her fists. She is one of the main members of AVALANCHE. She and Cloud were childhood friends, and although she has strong feelings for him, she would never admit it.</p>

Character Profiles

 <p>A large, muscular man with a beard and a mechanical arm, holding a glowing gun-arm. The text 'BARRET WALLACE' is overlaid in a stylized font.</p>	<p> Name: Barret Wallace Job: Leader of AVALANCHE Age: 35 Weapon: Gun-Arm Height: 6'4" Birth Date: December 15 Birthplace: Corel Village Blood Type: O </p> <p>Head of the underground resistance movement, AVALANCHE, Barret is fighting the mega-conglomerate Shinra Corp. Which has monopolized Mako energy by building special reactors to suck it out of the planet. Barret depends on brute strength and his Gun-Arm to see him through. His wife died in an accident several years ago and he now lives with his daughter Marlene. Don't let his look fool you, Barret is quite intelligent.</p>
 <p>A large, red, tiger-like creature with a long tail and sharp claws, standing on a rocky outcrop. The text 'RED XIII' is overlaid in a stylized font.</p>	<p> Name: Red XIII Job: Beast (Talking Tiger) Age: 48 Weapon: Headdress Height: 3'9" Birth Date: <i>unknown</i> Birthplace: Cosmo Canyon Blood Type: <i>unknown</i> </p> <p>Just as his name implies, he is an animal with fire-red fur. But under his fierce exterior is intelligence surpassing that of any human's. His sharp claws and fangs make him good at close-range fighting, but other than that, not much is known about him. It's not even certain that "Red XIII" is his real name. A real enigma. Red XIII is perhaps one of the best characters to have in a party due to his high strength and speed.</p>
 <p>A man in a blue jacket and sunglasses, holding a large, glowing spear. He is standing next to a red and white airplane. The text 'CID HIGHWIND' is overlaid in a stylized font.</p>	<p> Name: Cid Highwind Job: Pilot Age: 32 Weapon: Spear/Lance Height: 5'8" Birth Date: February 22 Birthplace: <i>unknown</i> Blood Type: B </p> <p>Cid is a tough-talking, warm-hearted old pilot who hasn't forgotten his dreams. There's no better pilot by air or sea. He believes someday he'll fly to the ends of the universe. With his handsome spear and knowledge of machinery, he throws himself into any attack regardless of the danger.</p>

Character Profiles

 <p>A screenshot from Final Fantasy VII Remake showing Cait Sith, a small black cat-like character with a top hat, riding on the back of a large, pink, stuffed Mog. Cait Sith is holding a megaphone and shouting. The Mog is standing on a platform, and there are other characters in the background, including a Shinra soldier and a woman in a red dress.</p>	<p>Name: Cait Sith Job: Toysaurus Age: <i>unknown</i> Weapon: Megaphone Height: 3'2" Birth Date: <i>unknown</i> Birthplace: <i>unknown</i> Blood Type: <i>unknown</i></p> <p>Cait Sith rides around the back of a huge stuffed Mog he magically brought to life. Megaphone in hand, he's always shouting orders and creating dopey attacks. When his slot machine attack works, the enemy lines look like an overturned toy box. His hobby is fortune-telling, but like his personality, it's pretty unreliable. Even though Cait's personality seems care-free, there may be something of greater power and heart behind his existence</p>
 <p>A screenshot from Final Fantasy VII Remake showing Vincent Valentine, a man with long black hair and a red coat, standing on a rooftop. He is holding a gun and looking down. The background is a dark, starry sky.</p>	<p>Name: Vincent Valentine Job: Unemployed Age: 27 Weapon: Gun Height: 6' Birth Date: October 13 Birthplace: <i>unknown</i> Blood Type: A</p> <p>A mystical man, stern and uptight while at the same time dark and mysterious. His past connection with Shinra is what made him join Cloud and the others. He may seem frail at first glance, but hidden inside his body lurks a fearsome power</p>
 <p>A screenshot from Final Fantasy VII Remake showing Yuffie Kisaragi, a young girl with black hair and a black and white outfit, holding a shuriken. She is standing on a rooftop and looking towards the camera. The background is a dark, starry sky.</p>	<p>Name: Yuffie Kisaragi Job: Materia Hunter, Ninja Age: 16 Weapon: Knife, Boomerang, Origami (for throwing) Height: 5'2" Birth Date: November 20 Birthplace: Wutai Blood Type: A</p> <p>Although you'd never know it by looking at her, Yuffie comes from a long line of ninjas. She forced herself into the group just to get a "certain something". She's sneaky, arrogant and "way" too selfish. But with her super shuriken and her special skills, there isn't anyone else you'd rather have on your side in a fight</p>

Character Profiles

	<p> Name: Sephiroth Job: Top ranking SOLDIER officer Age: <i>unknown</i> Weapon: Long Sword (a.k.a The Masamune) Height: 6'1" Birth Date: <i>unknown</i> Birthplace: <i>unknown</i> Blood Type: <i>unknown</i> </p> <p> Even amongst the elite troops of SOLDIER, Sephiroth is known to be the best. His past is locked away in a confidential file held by Shinra, his giant sword, which only he can handle, has extremely destructive powers. Said to have disappeared in a battle years ago, his current whereabouts are unknown. His mysterious past and his nature makes him a deadly enemy and definitely a person not to be reckoned with </p>
	<p> Group Name: The Turks Job: Turks Ages: <i>unknown</i> Group Members: Teseng, Rufus, Elena, Rude, And Reno Birthdates: <i>unknown</i> Birthplaces: <i>unknown</i> Blood Types: <i>unknown</i> </p> <p> The Turks are Shinra's "Dirty Work" units. They are from kidnapers to Assassins. Each member has a unique personality and their intentions are not always obvious. Beware of them for they can be deadly at times, but also friendly at others. </p>



PRODUCER

HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI

DIRECTOR

YOSHINORI KITASE

MUSIC COMPOSER

NOBUO UEMATSU

MAIN PROGRAMMER

KEN NARITA

CHARACTER DESIGN &
BATTLE VISUAL DIRECTOR

TETSUYA NOMURA

ART DIRECTOR

YUSUKE NAORA

IMAGE ILLUSTRATOR

YOSHITAKA AMANO

CG SUPERVISOR

KAZUYUKI HASHIMOTO

CG MOVIE DIRECTOR

MOTONORI SAKAKIBARA

CHARACTER MODELING DIRECTOR

TOMOHIRO KAYANO

MAGIC EFFECT DIRECTOR

HIROKATSU SASAKI

SPECIAL
MAGIC EFFECT DIRECTOR

SHINTAROH TAKAI

BATTLE STAGE DIRECTOR

AKIRA FUJII

GRAPHIC OUTSIDE CONTRACTOR
ART DIRECTOR

HITOSHI SASAKI

OUTSIDE CONTRACTOR
COORDINATOR

HIROYOSHI HAMADA

ANIMATION DIRECTOR

HIDETOSHI OMORI

BATTLE PLAN DIRECTOR

YASUSHI MATSUMURA

MAP PLAN DIRECTOR

HIDETOSHI KEZUKA

MAP PLAN CO-DIRECTORS

TAKESHI ENDO

MOTOHARU TANAKA

MASATO YAGI

MAIN CHARACTER MODELER

HIROSHI ARAI

BATTLE PROGRAMMER

HIROSHI HARATA

CHARACTER PROGRAMMER

HIROSHI KAWAI

CD & MOVIE PROGRAMMER

SHUN MORIYA

SOUND PROGRAMMER

MINORU AKAO

SOUND ENGINEER

EIJI NAKAMURA

MA & RECORDING ENGINEER

KENZI NAGASHIMA

STORY BY

KAZUSHIGE NOJIMA

YOSHINORI KITASE

BASED ON THE STORY BY

HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI

TETSUYA NOMURA

FIELD SECTION

PROGRAMMER

KEIZO KOKUBO

EVENT PLANNERS

KAZUSHIGE NOJIMA

KEISUKE MATSUHARA

HIROKI CHIBA

MOTOMU TORIYAMA

JUN AKIYAMA

KAZUHIKO YOSHIOKA

HIDESHI KYONEN

KAZUHIKO AOKI

SPECIAL THANKS

TAKASHI TOKITA

MASATO KATO

MAP PLANNERS

MASARU OKA

NAOYA KAWAHIRA

SATORU TSUJI

TOSHIO KURIHARA

JUNKO IRIGUCHI

MASASHI NAKATA

RYO TSURUMAKI

CONCEPT ART BY

TETSUYA TAKAHASHI

TAKAYUKI ODACHI

BACKGROUND DESIGNERS

TAKAHARU MATSUO

MATSUZO ITAKURA

KENZO KANZAKI

KAZUYUKI IKUMORI

YUKIO NAKATANI

TAKESHI OKUI

HIROSHI MATSUYAMA

KAZUSHI URATA

YASUNORI HIGUCHI

MASAAKI HAYASHI

SUB-CHARACTER &
CHARACTER TEXTURE DESIGNER

KAZUHIRO OKAWA

ASSISTANT CHARACTER DESIGNER

FUMI NAKASHIMA

CHARACTER MODELERS

TAKANARI TAJIMA

MURASAKI IRIGUCHI

HIROYUKI HOSHINO

CHARACTER ANIMATORS

NORIHITO TAKAMI

TATSUO HEIANZAN

BATTLE SECTION

PROGRAMMERS

AKIHIRO YAMAGUCHI

KAZUMASA FUSEYA

CG PROGRAMMER

MASAHARU INOUE

PLANNERS

TAKAYOSHI NAKAZATO

GORO OHASHI

MASAHIRO KATAOKA

AKATSUGU NAKAZAWA

SPECIAL THANKS

TOSHIAKI SUZUKI

MONSTER MODELERS

KOUICHI EBE

YOSHIO YAMAKAWA

HIROTO YAMAMOTO

CHARACTER ANIMATORS

TATSUYA KANDO

KUNIHARU TAKEUCHI

GO KIKUCHI

MONSTER DESIGNERS

SHIN NAGASAWA

TETSU TSUKAMOTO

BATTLE STAGE DESIGNERS

HIDEYUKI MATSUMOTO

JUN MATSUO

KYUJI KAWASE

MASAHIDE TANAKA

2D ANIMATORS

KENICHIROU OKAMOTO

HIROYUKI YOTSUJI

MAGIC EFFECTS SECTION

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

YOUICHI TANAKA

HIROYUKI IKEDA

KUNIO ASAHARA

PROGRAMMERS

KENTAROW YASUI

SHINICHI AOYAMA

MITSUO YOSHIOKA

WORLD MAP SECTION

PLANNER

MASATO YAGI

PROGRAMMER

YASUO KUWAHARA

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

HIDEYUKI MATSUMOTO

EFFECT DESIGNER

TAKAYUKI ODACHI

CHOCOBO RACE SECTION

PROGRAMMER

KEITARO ADACHI

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

RYOTARO TAKAHASHI

PLANNER

HIROKI CHIBA

CONDOR WAR SECTION

PROGRAMMER

RYO MUTO

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

HIROYUKI YOTSUJI

PLANNER

KAZUHIKO YOSHIOKA

SUBMARINE CHASE SECTION

PROGRAMMER

SHIN-ICHI TANAKA

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

HIROYUKI YOTSUJI
TAKESHI SANDA

PLANNER

MOTOMU TORIYAMA

HIGHWAY & ROLLER COASTER SECTION

PROGRAMMER

TATSUYA YOSHINARI

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

TAKESHI SANDA

PLANNER

KEISUKE MATSUHARA

SNOWBOARD SECTION

PROGRAMMER

TADAMICHI OBINATA

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

DAIKI KOMATSU

JUN AKIYAMA

CG MOVIE SECTION

FIELD CG & MOVIE DESIGNERS

HIROYUKI HONDA
YOSHINORI MORIIZUMI
KANAKO AOKI

YUKO AKIYAMA

AYAKO KURODA

MOVIE ENGINEERS

MOTOHISA ADACHI

RYUSUKE SASAKI

BANPREST CO, LTD.

TADAO ODAKA

KOJI TANAKA

KOJI KOBAYASHI

KEIKO IMAMURA

TAKESHI YAMAZOE

KAZUTOSHI SAKAI

DAISUKE SHIGETA

BATTLE CG SUPPORT

MONSTER ANIMATORS

MASATERU SUZUKI **KENJI KADONISHI**

KOICHIROU SOEDA **YOUSUKE ASAHARA**

JUNICHI MURATA **HIROYUKI HAMADA**

REINA IKEDA **IKUYO YOSHIDA**

MARI MIYAMOTO **NOBUHIKO IMAI**

YUSUKE TANAKA **YUKIMASA NAKAUCHI**

MANABU INOKUCHI **MAKOTO YAGISHITA**

KYOUKO MURAMATSU

MONSTER MODELING

YUKI KAWAGUCHI **YOSHIHIRO TAKESHITA**

RIE MASUDA **YOSHIYUKI OKU**

KUMI KANAI **HIDEO KUBOTA**

NOKAZU SATO **TAKUYA TSUNAKAWA**

KAZUHIKO TORISHIMA **HIDEO YOSHIKURA**

TOSHIMASA TAKAHASHI **YUU KONDOH**

SOUND EFFECT

YOSHITAKA HIROTA **MITSUHIRO IWADATE**

YUICHIRO MORI **YOSHIKUNI NAKAMURA**

SEPHIROTH CHOIR

SOPRANO

MATSUE FUKUSHIMA

MINAE FUJISAKI

ALTO

KAZUKO NAKANO

SAKI ONO

TENOR

TORU Tabei

DAISUKE HARA

BASS

TOSHIZUMI SAKAI

MASASHI HAMAIZU

EXCERPTS FROM "THE CREATION"
COMPOSED BY JOSEPH HAYDN

SOPRANO

MATSUE FUKUSHIMA

TENOR

DAISUKE HARA

SYNTHESIZER

MASASHI HAMAIZU

SQUARE USA STAFF

TOOL PROGRAMMERS-LA

PAUL ASHDOWN(V.P.)

YUN-PO PAUL FAN

SHIRO KAWAI

CG DESIGNERS-LA

RON SABATINO(V.P.)

SHARON PACKER

JOSEPH BLACK

NICHOLAS HOPPE

SUZANNE BERGER

DOUG SMITH

LA UNIT-COORDINATORS

JUNICHI YANAGIHARA(S.V.P.)

SHINICHIRO KAITANI(V.P.)

RYOTA TOYAMA

CG OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS

FIELD & MOVIE SECTION

LINKS CORPORATION

HIROYUKI SESHITA KOUJI ICHIYAMA

IKUO NISHII TATSUYA EZAKI

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MICHIKO KANNO NATSUYO KOBAYASHI

KAORI SAITOH SIGEKO SOGAME

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TAK OGAWA

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MASAYOSHI OKAWA

SPECIAL THANKS

IZUMI KAWANISHI	MAKOTO TANAKA
MASAYOSHI YANAKA	YOSHIAKI NAKAYAMA
TEIJI YUTAKA	TOYOSHI OKADA
KAORU YAMANOE	
SHINSAKU KOZUMA	YUSUKE YAMAMOTO
YASUYUKI NODA	

QUALITY ASSURANCE

HIROMI MASUDA	TSUYOSHI FUSANO
YOSHIA SHIBANO	MIKI ITO
YUJI SAITO	YUKI HASEGAWA

SQUARE SOFT, INC.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR MICHAEL BASKETT

QA MANAGER JON WILLIAMS

CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER RICK THOMPSON

EXECUTIVE VP, STRATEGIC PLANNING YOSHIHIRO MARUYAMA

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ASSISTANT MARKETING ASSOCIATE KENJI MIMURA

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC.

<u>ASSOCIATE PRODUCER</u>	SETH LUISI
<u>ASSISTANT PRODUCER</u>	JEFFREY NG
<u>SENIOR PRODUCER</u>	PERRY RODGERS
<u>QA MANAGER</u>	MARK PENTEK
<u>LEAD TESTER</u>	MIKE BENTON
<u>ASST. LEAD TESTER</u>	CHRISTIAN DAVIS
<u>LICENSING MANAGER</u>	ETSUKO KOBATA
<u>BUSINESS COORDINATOR</u>	TAKU IMASAKI
<u>VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING</u>	ANDREW HOUSE
<u>DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MARKETING</u>	PETER DILLE
<u>DIRECTOR OF PR AND PROMOTIONS</u>	JEFF FOX
<u>PRODUCT MANAGER</u>	DAVID BAMBERGER

PUBLICITY PRODUCERS

SHINJI HASHIMOTO

TADASHI NOMURA

KIYOTAKA SOUSUI

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

TETSUO MIZUNO

TOMOYUKI TAKECHI

BOOK CREDITS

DIALOGUE

WRITTEN BY:

Phoenix Tamarisk

EDITED BY:

Phoenix Tamarisk

Joey Joe Joe Shabidue

Candy Crystal

BOOK PICTURES

DONE BY:

Phoenix Tamarisk

FINAL FANTASY VII WORLD MAP

PROVIDED BY:

<http://theepok.free.fr/ff7/intro.html>

Character Profiles:

PROVIDED BY:

<http://www.angelfire.com/ne/ultimatefinalfantasy/>

SPECIAL THANKS:

[Square-Enix](http://www.Square-Enix.com/)

<http://www.Square-Enix.com/>

(For making a Great Game)

[EPSXE](http://www.epsxe.com/)

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(For making a great emulator)

To anyone else that I forgot to mention.

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I enjoyed writing this Fan Fiction/Dialogue, and I feel I understand the story much better than I ever have. To those that read this, I hope you enjoy reading this, and hope you understand it. It isn't all that spectacular, but it helps those (hopefully) to understand the story better.

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To those that have a website and wish to post this story may do so. There is no need to contact me; in fact you will not be able to. The only people that have my email address are the site(s) that I have submitted this story to. The more people that have this on their websites, means that many more get to read this story. And to those that read this story, thank you for taking the time to do so.

Phoenix Tamarisk