



FINAL FANTASY VII

Chapter 9: That day, five years ago





Kalm was a small village located a few kilometers from Midgar...



Here we are!



What a road, it's so dark near Midgar.



The planet dries up wherever Shinra settles



Shall we go to the inn to talk?



Yes, it's probably best.



They took a room at the town inn. The group sat comfortably to hear what Cloud had to say to them.



Okay my dude, let's listen to your story... Tell us what's going on with this Sephiroth.



...A while back, I wanted to be like Sephiroth. That's why I joined SOLDIER. After leading a few missions with Sephiroth, we became friends.



He was your friend?



Yes, well... He's older than me and he rarely talked about himself.



So he was a war buddy...



...



We trusted each other. Until that day... After the war, it was the SOLDIER's duty to defeat all resistance to Shinra. It was five years ago, I was sixteen.



Five years earlier, in a Shinra truck....



 The rain is really pounding!

 Settle down, you keep pacing back and forth in the truck.

 I got a new Materia, I can't wait to use it.

 Like a kid.

 Are you going to explain the mission?

 Again, this is no ordinary mission.

 I joined SOLDIER so I could be like you, but by the time I became first class the war was over. No way to become a hero. That's why I embark on missions that are out of the ordinary, to assert myself a little...

 I thought you wanted me to explain the mission... We have to study an old Mako reactor, it's been reported to attract deadly creatures. It will be necessary to eliminate them, identify and remedy the problem.

 Deadly creatures... Where?

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At the old reactor in Nibelheim.

Nibelheim... That's where I'm from.

Hmm... Your hometown...

The truck stopped abruptly. The driver looked back...

Hey! Something just fell on the road!

Maybe that's one of our monsters. Come Cloud, let's check it out.



A enormous green dragon stood tall on the road, like a bad omen for our two soldier...

Okay, let's focus.

S...Sephiroth, this dragon is huge!

The dragon lunged at Cloud, with a swipe of its paw it knocked him to the ground...

Sephiroth! Do something!

Don't worry, you're safe.



With his long blade, longer than a man, he sliced off the dragon's head before anyone could even see him starting his move.

Sephiroth raised Cloud back up by healing him with his powerful materia...



At the Kalm inn, five years later...



Sephiroth's strength is supernatural. He is much stronger in reality than in all the stories you may have heard about him.

So... Where are you going with this?

I was fascinated by his way of fighting...

...

And that's when we arrived in Nibelheim.

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So how do you feel? It's been a while since you've been home, hasn't it? I would like to know... since I don't have a home...

What about your parents?

I had a mother named Jenova, she died when I was born. My father...

Sephiroth had an unhappy smile...

...Whatever...

Okay, let's go Sephiroth.

...Right, let's move.

At the Kalm inn, five years later...

Hey, wait a minute! Sephiroth's mother name, isn't it... that decapitated ghost who haunts Shinra Tower?

That's right.

Barret, I'd like to hear Cloud story, we'll ask questions later.

But Tifa, I just wanted...

Okay Cloud, continue.

Yes... The town was peaceful, everyone stayed at home, probably afraid to go out because of the monsters... But now, I imagine they were afraid of us too...

Back to Nibelheim, five years earlier...

We are leaving for the reactor tomorrow at dawn. Until then, take the opportunity to visit friends and family...

Sephiroth entered the inn. A resident of Nibelheim headed towards Cloud...

I heard the great Sephiroth was coming so I got my camera ready! Could you help me take a photo of Sephiroth with a monster?

Don't you want to take a picture of me? I'm from the area you know...

Sorry, I only take photos of heroes..



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You don't know what you're losing!

Kalm...



I wanted to go visit you Tifa, but you weren't there...



You came into my house?



Um... Yes... I even played a little something on your piano.



...



Anyway, after that, I went to visit my mother... It wasn't what Sephiroth could call "family"... My mother was alone. My father died when I was little, I don't really remember it. My mother was a strong woman, but she died a few days later.

Nibelheim.



Uh? Oh Cloud! Welcome home!



Hello Mom.



Come closer, let me look at you! You are so handsome! Is this a SOLDIER uniform?



Mom I...



You've grown up, I bet the girls won't let you go!



...Not really.



I'm worried about you, there are so many temptations in the city! I would feel better if I knew you were living with a nice girl.



I'm good, don't worry about me.



A girlfriend who's older to take care of you.



Not interested.



Are you eating well?



The company takes good care of me, I'm fine.



Oh? You guys don't cook? I didn't know how you were doing, I was worried sick!

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Cloud?

I...

You know...

You know Cloud...

Isn't that right Cloud?

I am...

I will always...

I will always be your mother.



Cloud was confused in his memories... His headache prevented him from piecing things together... The group was getting worried...

Cloud, you don't seem alright...

Let's skip this part. Let's go back to when I joined Sephiroth at the inn. That's where I met your teacher, Tifa.

Nibelheim...



Is Shinra here to get rid of the monsters?

Who are you?

I am Zangan, I travel the world teaching martial arts to children. I'm currently teaching a girl named Tifa in this town!

Did you say Tifa?

She is hardheaded that one, she will make a skilled fighter! I'd be interested about the techniques they teach in SOLDIER. Could I teach you some of mine in exchange?

I don't really have time...

Well, good luck!



Cloud went up to the first floor where Sephiroth was... He was peacefully looking at the landscape through the window...

What are you looking at?



This landscape... I feel like I know it... It's a bit as if... No, it's nothing. We're leaving early tomorrow, you should get some sleep.

Yeah, I'm exhausted.

I have hired the services of a guide who will take us to the Mako reactor. She is very young, I hope she's reliable.

The next morning, Cloud joins Sephiroth and the two guards at the village exit. He met the photographer on the way there...



Hey, do you think they would let me take a photo?

What do I know, ask him yourself!

Cloud! We leave as soon as the guide arrives!

A man arrived accompanied by a young girl. It was Tifa and her father...

You listen carefully "great" Sephiroth, if anything happens to her...!

Have a little faith.

It'll be fine dad, don't worry! I have two members SOLDIER with me! My name is Tifa, nice to meet you!

Tifa, you are the guide?!

Before your eyes is the best guide in town!

It's too dangerous, I can't involve you in this expedition!

If you protect her there will be no problem. Let's go.

Um... Mr. Sephiroth! Please let me take just one photo, as a souvenir!

Shall we all three be on it?

Smile!... Great, thank you! You'll all get a copy once I have it developed!



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From here, it gets tougher! Follow me!



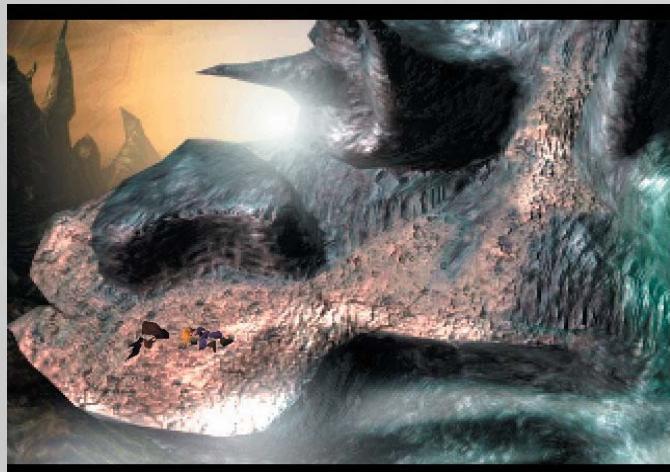
The bridge was moving a lot... Suddenly, one of the ropes broke...



Um... The bridge is going to...!!

And the bridge completely collapsed, causing the group to fall into the void..





One of the two guards was nowhere to be seen. Sephiroth healed Cloud, Tifa and the other guard.

You seem to be doing fine. Is there a way back to where we were?

We can go through these caves, they are tangled like an anthill.

Hm... Mr. Sephiroth, it looks like someone is missing...

Yes, it may not be very nice, but we don't have time for a search party. There is no going back, we have to move on, I'm sorry.

They walked for a long time, passing from one cave to another. At one point, they entered a different looking cave...

What is this..?

A mysteriously colored cave...

It must be Mako energy, this mountain contains it in abundance. This is why the reactor was built here, we must be close now!

A little further on, they arrived at a strangely ethereal well of light.

And what is that?

A natural Mako fountain, a true miracle of nature.

It's so beautiful... But, if the reactor continues to draw Mako energy, this fountain will soon run dry too!

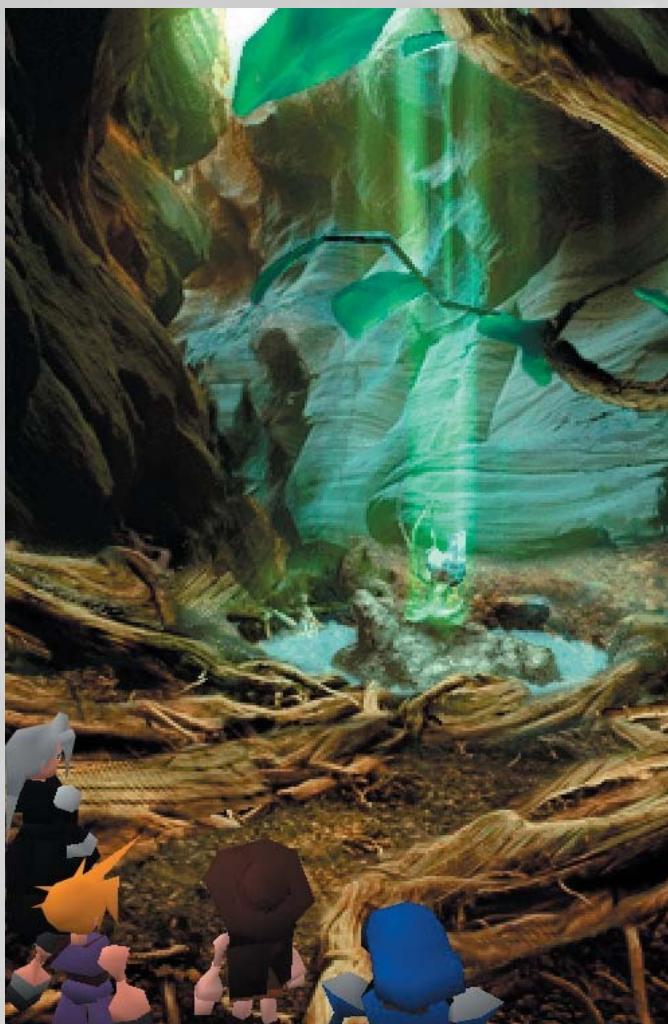
In the middle of the well of light, an odd crystallization had formed...

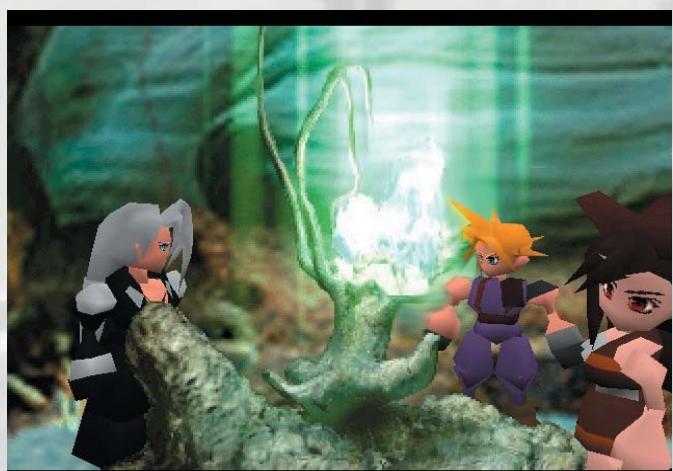
It's very rare to see materia in its natural state...

...? And how come Materia possess magical powers..?

You are a SOLDIER and you don't even know that?

I...Sorry...





The knowledge and wisdom of the Ancients is contained within the Materia. One who possesses this knowledge can easily use the powers of the planet. This knowledge, when it interacts between us and the planet, calls upon magic... or so they say.

Magic, a mysterious power...

Ha ha ha!

Did I say something funny?

A man once told me to never use such an unscientific term as "mysterious power" or "magic." I still remember how angry he was.

Who was it?

Hojo, an inexperienced scientist who was asked to take over the work from a real savant... He was full of complexes.

They resumed their long march through the mountains. They finally arrived in front of the Mako reactor. The latter had an archaic appearance, built of cracked bricks and rusty beams...

We finally made it, but we didn't take the shortest route!

Wait here Tifa.

I am going in too! I wanna see!

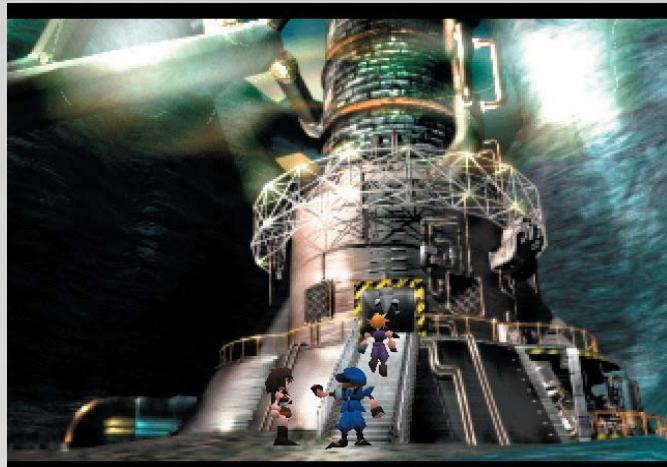
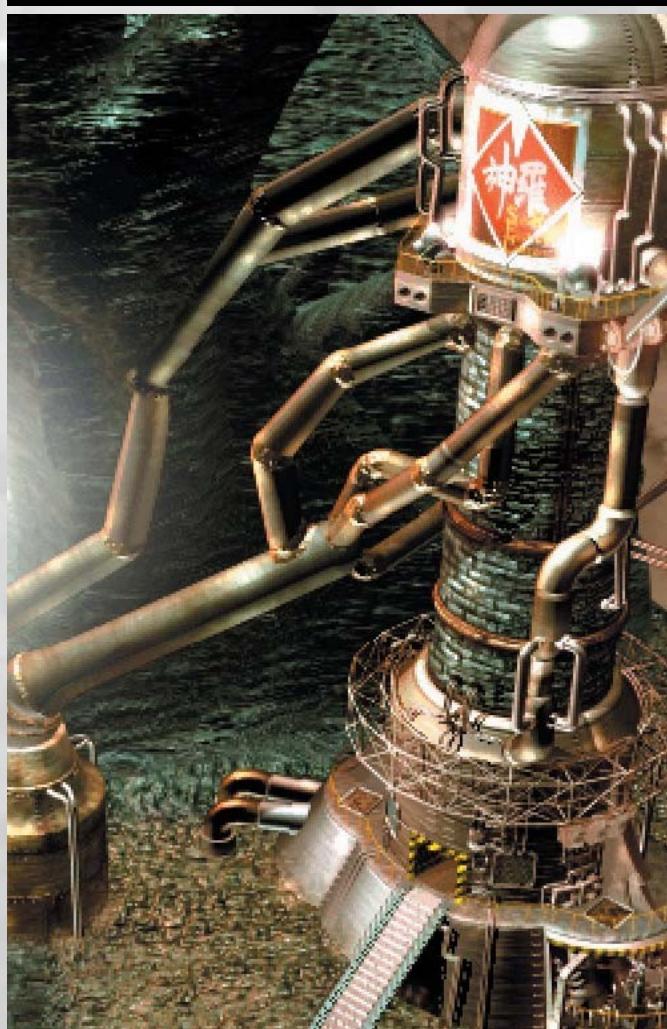
Only authorized personnel are allowed to enter. This place is home to many Shinra industrial secrets.

But...!

You, guard! Take good care of the lady.

Grrr, I wanted to get in!

The guard waved his hand negatively at Tifa, who was very disappointed to have come all this way just to be left outside. Sephiroth and Cloud entered the reactor...





The interior was filled with gears that made a clangsing noise. After a few detours, they arrived in the main room. Sephiroth stopped abruptly. At the top of the steps, was a sealed door overlooked by a sign on which "JENOVA" was written in large letters...

Behind this door... That's... Jenova? I don't think we can open it...

Sephiroth had a moment of hesitation. He pulled himself together, focusing on the mission...

Do you see these pods? ...That's the reason of the malfunction. This part is broken. Cloud, shut the valve!

Sephiroth approached the strange crack, he wondered what kind of creature could enter a reactor and cause this kind of damage...

Why is it broken...?

He looked through one of the pod window... He seemed thoughtful.

I see.... but even like that, you will never come close to Professor Gast. Cloud! This system allows Mako energy to be condensed and then trapped. That's when the problem occurs.

What's in these pods?

Careful now, Cloud... This isn't just a simple reactor... What happens to Mako energy when it is re-condensed?

It becomes Materia?

Well, normally yes. But Hojo added something else. Look, look through this window.

Cloud, horrified, saw that a man was inside, disfigured by excess Mako. He fell back to the ground.

Wh...what is that!?

Members of SOLDIER are simply sprayed with Mako. You are different, but you remain human. But this...



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Could it be some kind of monster?

Exactly. A monster created by Hojo of Shinra. Living organisms born in Mako, that's what these monsters really are!

Sephiroth grabbed his head in his hands...

Hey... Sephiroth...

N...no... Was I?

Cloud tried all he could to reason with Sephiroth, but the latter had an abrupt reflex and pushed Cloud far back.

...Was I also created like this?

He began to swing his sword at the pods, cutting several pipes in the process...

Am I like all these monsters?

Sephiroth, I don't understand, stop!

You saw it! They were all... human!

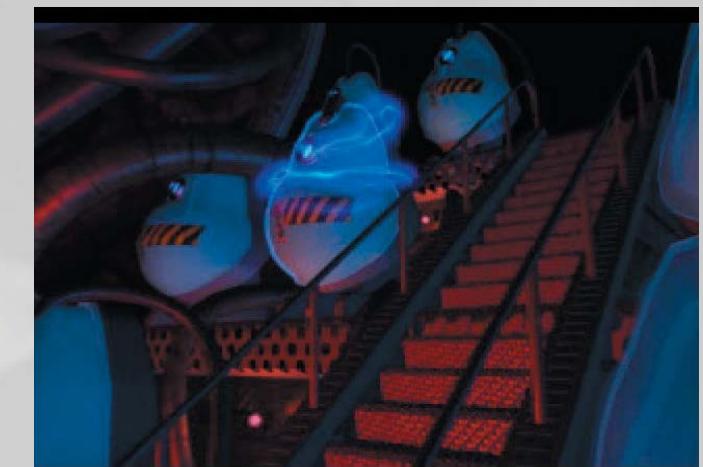
Human? No, not at all!

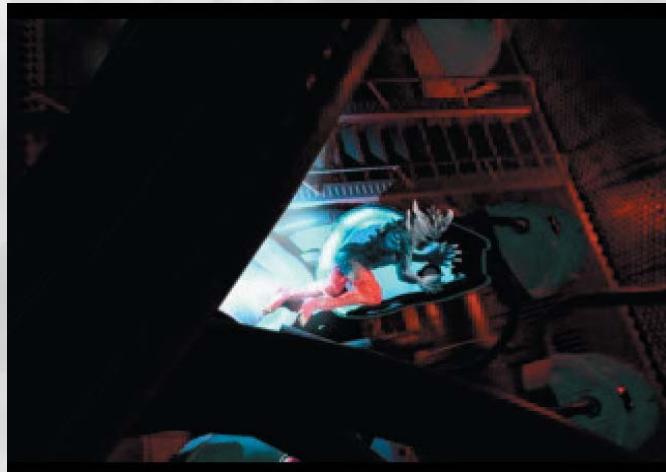
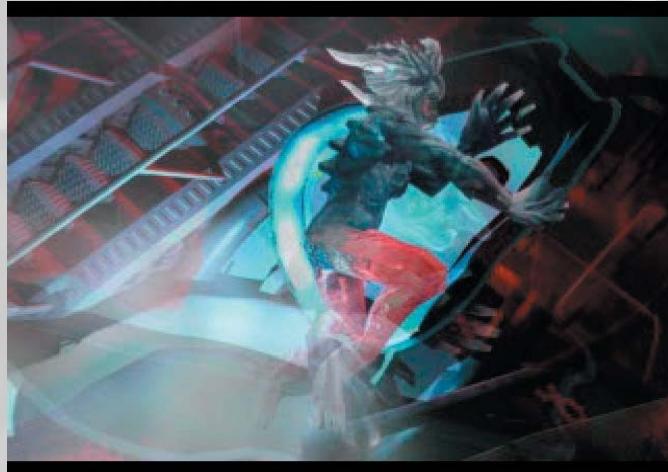
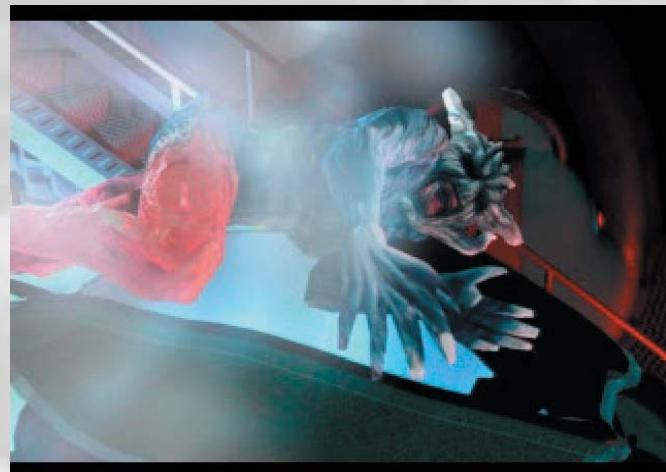
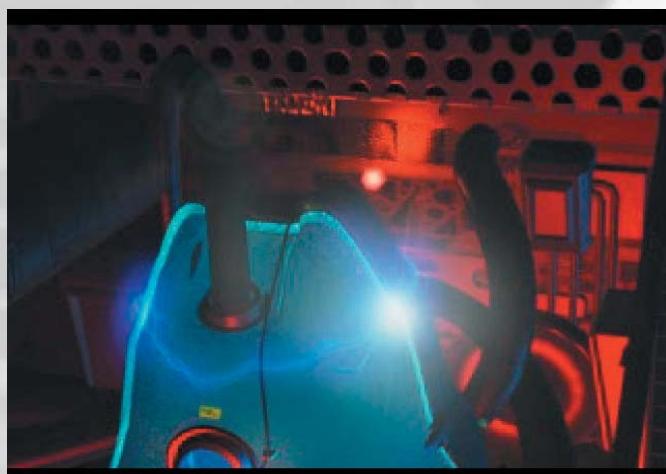
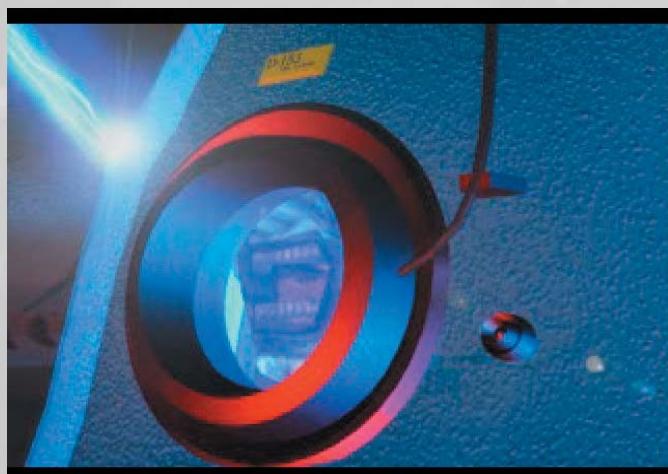
...I always knew, since I was a child... that I was different from others. Special in a way. But... not like this!

Sephiroth, explain to me! Yes you are different but... Why would you be like them? You are human!

You don't know anything about me, Cloud!

At that moment, one of the pods whose piping had been severed began to shake...





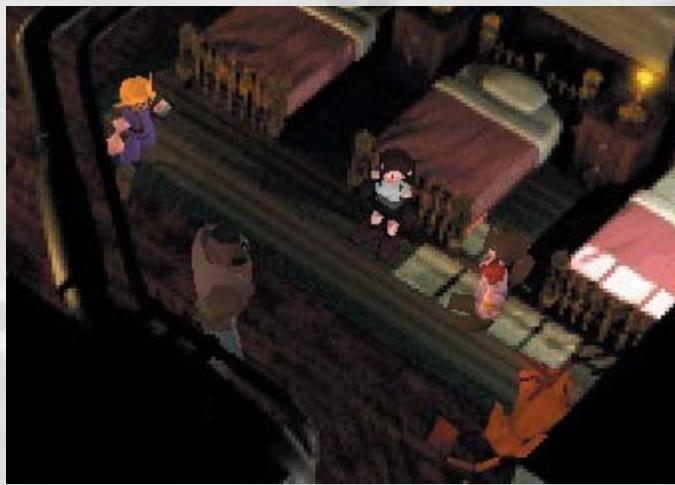
Kalm...



It was a creature incapable of moving, suffering from his condition, which came out of the pod... Sephiroth killed it after shedding a tear at the tragic scene... "Am I a human?" I didn't quite understand what Sephiroth was saying at the time. I was too captivated by Shinra doing this sort of thing.

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Damn Shinra! The more I hear about them, the more I hate them!

...Who would have suspected that the reactor contained such a secret...

I think we should listen Cloud carefully. Don't you think Barret?

Why are you asking me that...?

Tifa... You were waiting outside, then?

...Cloud... Yes, I was outside.



We returned to the village. Sephiroth locked himself in the inn, he didn't even try to speak.

Yes, I remember. After that, he vanished, everyone was looking for him...

We found it inside the largest building in Nibelheim... Shinra Manor, the villagers called it. The guards had difficulty spotting him in this large house. Finally, I found him in the cellar of the manor...



Sephiroth was going around in circles in the cellar library, reading books out loud...

 An organism that appeared to be dead was discovered in a geological stratum dating from 2000 years ago. Professor Gast named this organism Jenova.

Cloud entered without being noticed, Sephiroth continued reading...

 Jenova appeared to be an Ancient... Year X, month X, day X. Jenova project approved. Use of the Mako reactor approved...

 Sephiroth, how are you?

 You... Jenova... my mother... Professor Gast, why didn't you tell me!?

Tears in his eyes were starting to appear, Cloud moved forward but Sephiroth signaled him to stop.

 Leave me alone!

Sephiroth did not leave the cellar for several days, reading for hours, as if possessed. The basement light never went out. Finally, one day, Cloud decided to go talk to him.

 Who is it? Hmph... Traitor.

 Traitor?

 Ignorant fool. This planet belonged to the Cetras, they were nomadic people. They kept migrating, settling around the planet before leaving again... At the end of their long journey, they were to find the Promised Land and supreme happiness.

 What are you talking about?

 Silence! Those who disapproved stopped the migration and chose to lead an easier, materialistic life. That's what happened to the Cetras, the planet was in contempt, not giving anything in return.

 What does this have to do with me?

 I'm talking to you about your ancestors.

 Sephiroth...



A long time ago, a catastrophe befell this planet. Your ancestors fled, they could only survive by hiding. The planet was saved thanks to the sacrifice of the Cetras. After that, your ancestors continued to multiply. All that remains of the Cetras is contained in these texts!

What does this have to do with you?

Don't you understand? A member of the Ancients, Jenova, was found in a 2000 year old geological stratum. The Jenova project consisted of creating people with the powers of the Ancients... No, the Cetras. I was created.

Cr...created!?

Yes, I was created by Professor Gast, head of the Jenova project. A scientific genius!

How... How did he...?

But Sephiroth turned his back on Cloud, the expression on his face had changed, he got up and left the office...

Sephiroth!

Enough. I'm going to see my mother.

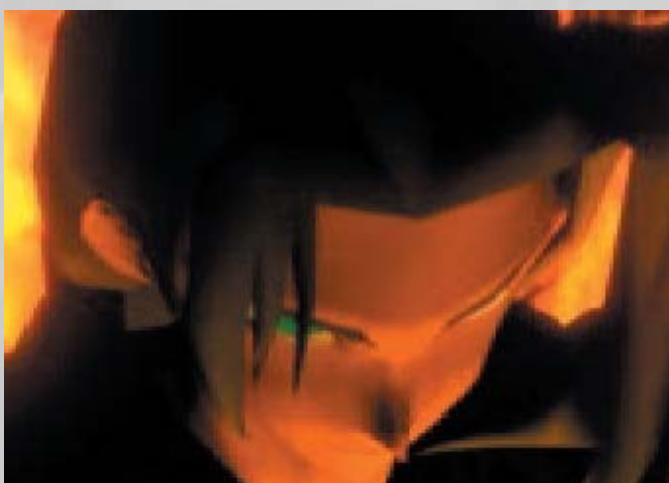
Cloud tried to catch up but Sephiroth cast a time spell on him, Cloud moved with great difficulty in unbearable slowness...

When the spell wore off, Cloud arrived too late: all of Nibelheim was on fire. Zangan was in the middle of the flames trying to save the villagers...

Ah! It's you ! You...you're not like the other one, are you...? Come and help me! I'm going to search this house and you, check this one!

Cloud headed towards his mother's house, but realised he was too late. He clenched his fists. A familiar sound of blade made him turn around. Sephiroth was killing the villagers behind him.

Sephiroth! That's enough!!



Sephiroth didn't answer Cloud, he raised his head and looked at him menacingly, then plunged into the flames towards the mountains of Nibelheim. Cloud ran with all his might to catch up with Sephiroth, but when he arrived inside the reactor, it was too late. Tifa was kneeling in front of her dead father. The Masamune, Sephiroth's weapon, was lying next to them, covered in blood.



Father... Sephiroth!? Sephiroth did this to you, didn't he? Sephiroth... SOLDIER... Reactors... Shinra... all of them! I hate you all!!



Tifa took the Masamune and entered the room with the pods. Sephiroth stood in front of the locked door of the Jenova project.



Mother, I am here to see you. Please open this door.



Tifa slowly marched forward, sword in hand, to kill Sephiroth. Alas, the latter turned around and pushed Tifa down the stairs, retrieving his sword. The door to the Jenova Project chamber opened and Sephiroth entered. Cloud came running to help Tifa.

 ...You promised... You promised you would come if I had any problem...

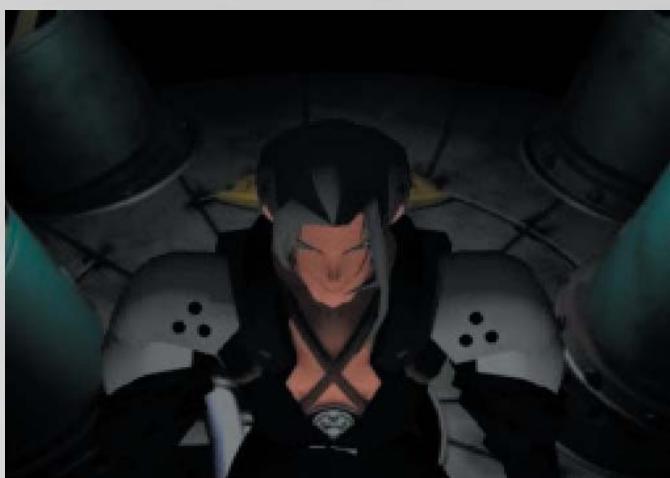
He pulled Tifa to safety and headed towards Sephiroth.



 Mother! Let's take back this world together! Let's go to the Promised Land!

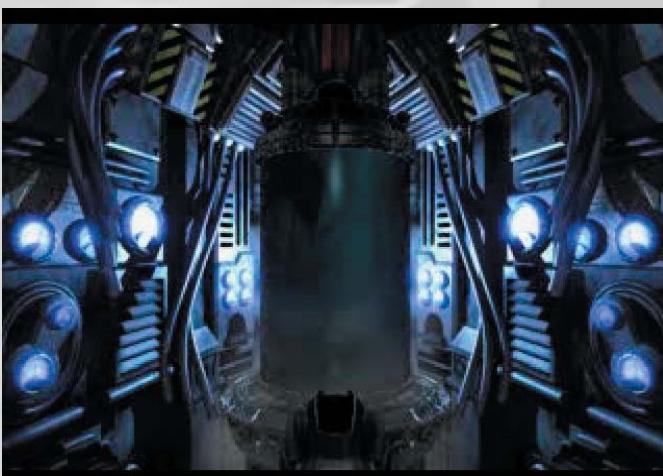
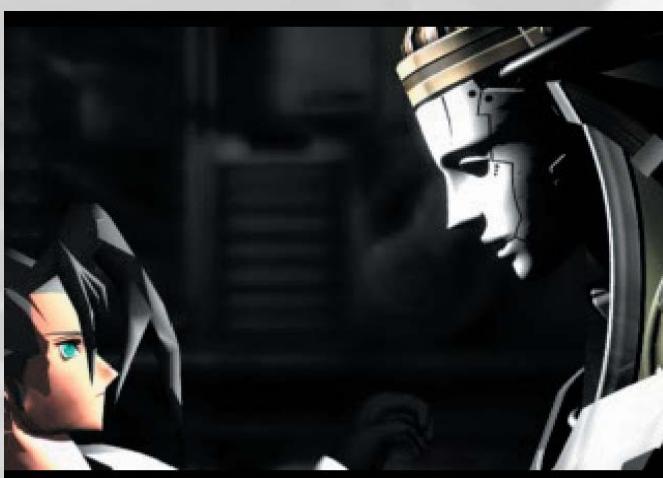
 Sephiroth... My family, my hometown! How could you do this to them?

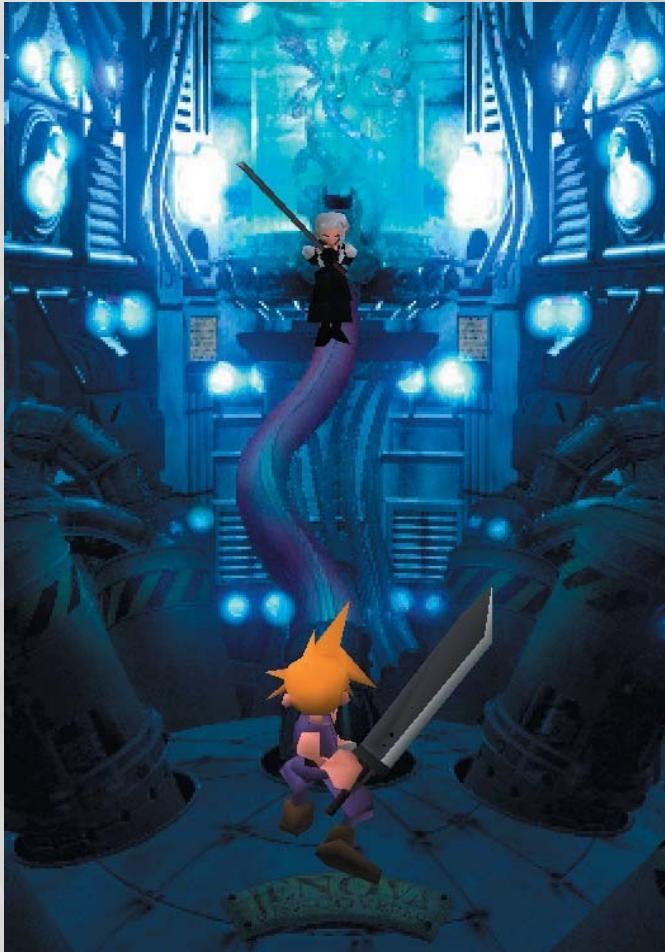
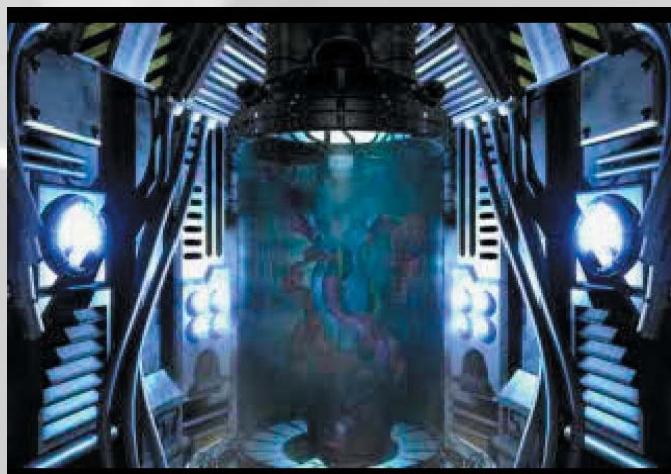
 Ha ha ha.... They are back, mother. With your powers, your knowledge and your formidable magic, you were destined to rule this planet. But... these stupid creatures are stealing it from you... Now I'm with you, so don't worry...



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Sephiroth ripped out the computer hiding the tube containing Jenova...

 You keep complaining... What about me! My family, my friends! It's the same sadness that I suffer from!

 Ha ha ha... Sadness? Why would I be sad? I am the chosen one! I can make whatever I want of this planet! I'm going to take this world back from you, stupid people, and give it back to the Cetras!

 Sephiroth, I trusted you...

Cloud took out his sword...

 No... You are no longer the Sephiroth I knew.

They both looked at each other, face to face, sword in hand, ready to confront each other in front of Jenova's body.



...And that's the end of my story.



Wait a minute! That's it?



I don't remember...



What happened to Sephiroth?



Given my strength, there's no way I could have killed him.



Officially he's dead, it appeared in the news



The newspaper belongs to Shinra, this information is not reliable...



...I want to know the truth, about what happened. I challenged Sephiroth and I'm still alive, why didn't he kill me..?



I'm also alive.



This is crazy. And Jenova was that thing in Shinra Tower?



They must've transported it to Midgar.



Sheesh! This all makes no sense!



How bad was it when Sephiroth got me?



I thought you were dead, I was really sad.



...



I... The Ancients... Cetras, Jenova, Sephiroth and me...



Let's get going, we have to find him.



What a fascinating story...



Where do we start?



A man from this village told me he saw someone unusual with a black cloak and a long sword walking through the Mythril Mine east of here.



How lucky, we'll have to cross the marshes. And better watch out for snakes!

The group left the inn and set off, chasing after Sephiroth.

