





FINAL FANTASY VII

Chapter 13: Desert prison's leader





Cloud, Aerith, and Cait Sith were leisurely walking around the Gold Saucer. But their joy was short-lived... Upon arriving at the Battle Square, a Shinra guard fell dead right in front of them.

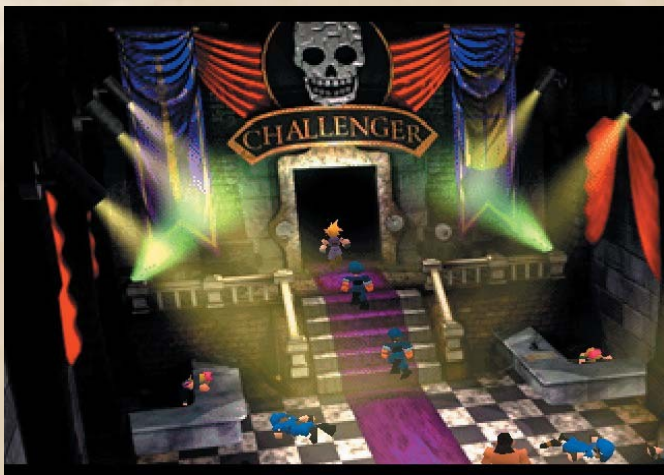


He's dead...

What happened!?

Cloud rushed towards inside the building... Corpses were scattered all over the floor...





Was it Sephiroth? No... not him... They were all killed by... Sephiroth doesn't use that kind of weapon...



Cloud, there's someone alive there!



Hey, what happened?



...A... a man with a weapon grafted on his arm....



...No way!

Someone barged in accompanied by two bodyguards, immediately surrounding Cloud, Aerith and Cait Sith... It was Dio, the Gold Saucer owner...



Watch them carefully, so they don't move! What did you guys do?



N...no, it wasn't us!



Hurry up and run! What a nightmare!

Cait Sith ran deeper into the building... Aerith hesitated for a moment before following him.



No, stop running!

Cloud froze for half a second before running to catch up with Aerith...



Catch them!

They unfortunately found themselves in the middle of the Battle Square fighting ring...



That's as far as you go.



Wait, listen...



Cloud!

Three robot guards grabbed and took them above a trapdoor on which was written "The Gates of Heaven".



Stop, listen to me for two seconds!



No point, you have to pay for your crime.

They were thrown one by one into Corel's desert...



Are you alright?



Where are we?



In the desert prison... Corel's prison...



A desert prison?



A natural prison in the desert, impossible to escape because it's surrounded by quicksand as far as the eye can see.



Hey, over there... Barret!

Barret stood, a few meters away, staring blankly. A man riddled with bullets had just died next to him.



Barret... Is he...dead?



Stay back, I'll handle it! Leave me alone...

Barret went towards a small house...



Is he your friend? He looks dangerous!



Cloud, what should we do? Barret doesn't seem to be in his normal state...



This man on the ground... also died from a gunshot, I'd like to understand...

They followed Barret into the house...



Didn't I ask you not to follow me?



Wait a second, we just want to talk! You would understand if you took the time to listen to us!



...I don't want to involve anyone in this.



Hey! Don't start like Cloud! "It's too dangerous, I can't let you do this... blah, blah, blah..."

Tifa suddenly showed up with Red XIII...



Yes, we are already involved!



Tifa! Did you two get thrown out too?



We saw you and we came running after you...



You guys...



The corpses in Battle Square were shot to death, was it you?



There... there is someone else with a gun grafted onto his arm... Four years ago.



Tell us everything Barret, we need to know!



I remember... I was returning home after witnessing the construction of the Mako reactor...

Four years ago...



Barret! Dyne! Come quickly! The town is being attacked by Shinra soldiers!



What?!

Barret and Dyne ran as fast as they could, but all they could see was flames in the distance...



No! It can't be!!



Barret, it's not over yet, we have to reach the town quickly, everyone must be waiting for us!

Shinra guards suddenly appeared...



Barret, Dyne! Help the village!

A guard savagely shot the old man...



No, old man! Aaargh!



Barret, we have to move!

They ran at full speed under a hail of bullets... Scarlet arrived on the scene...



Kya haa ha! You should quit playing and surrender! Guards, fire at will!



Watch out!

Dyne was shot in the leg and fell into the ravine, Barret caught him just in time...

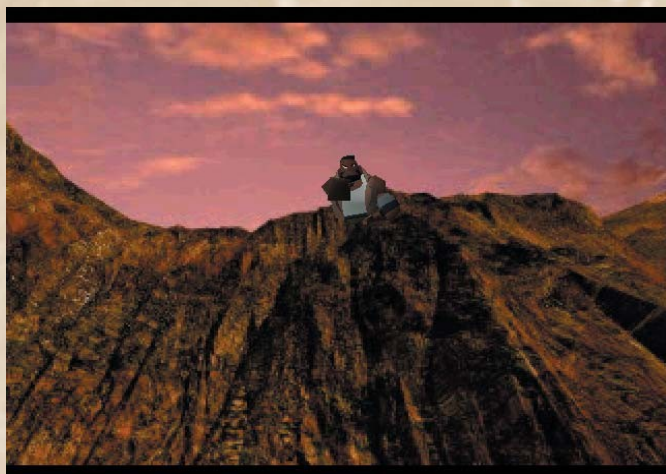
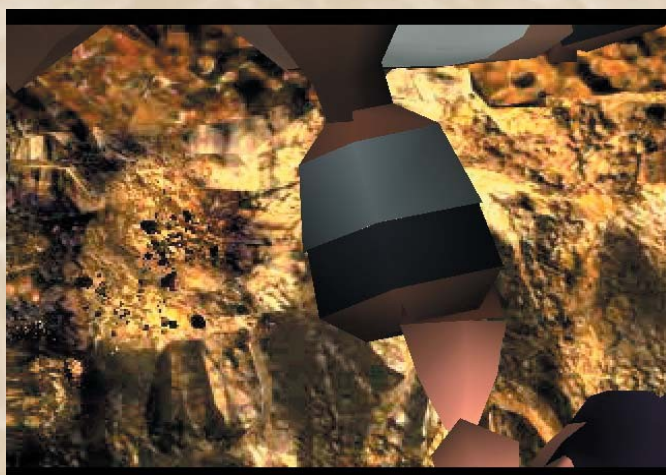


Dyne, listen to me, hang on tight!!



We have to help... Eleanor and Marlene...





Back to the desert prison...



Scarlet ordered the guards to shot. The bullets struck us right in the hand, Dyne fell into the ravine. Since then, I could no longer use my right arm. I was depressed for a while. Two years later, I had this artificial arm transplanted. I now had a new arm to take my revenge on Shinra. The doctor told me that another man had undergone the same operation, but on his left arm... I didn't dare believe that Dyne was still alive...



Yet... Dyne wasn't a bad man was he...?



That's right, he too was abused by Shinra, maybe he will join us?



I have to see Dyne and apologize to him, that's why I have to go alone.



You think I'm just gonna tell you what you'd like to hear? If you die, I won't be able sleep anymore!



Barret, that's not all, you wanted to save the planet, right?



Tifa, you should know this by now but... that wasn't my main motivation.



I think that's the case for everyone here...



Let's go see the leader of this place, the prisoners said he has a gun grafted onto his arm. It's probably Dyne.



The group set off, crossing the debris that made up the prison...





Having heard gunshots, they finally located the place where the desert prison leader was located...



Dyne... Is that you?



Here is a voice I haven't heard in years... A voice impossible to forget.



I always knew that I would see you again one day... I didn't dare believe that you were alive, but deep down, I knew it. Listen to me, Dyne, I want...

But Dyne pointed his gun arm at Barret...



...Ah...no! What's that? ...I hear her voice.



Dyne...



I hear her voice, Eleanor's voice, she begs me... not to hate you. It's because of her that I didn't track you down...



I know I was stupid, I don't expect you to forgive me. But... what are you doing here? Why kill innocent people?



Why?! Don't you have any pity? Will the dead understand? Will the people at Corel accept Shinra's excuses? I don't need a reason! I will kill anyone wearing a Shinra uniform! All they give us is artillery and stupid reasons... What's left in this world of despair and emptiness?



...Dyne...



I'll tell you why, Barret. Because I want to destroy everything! The people of this prison, this prison itself and the rest of the world! I have nothing left. Corel, Eleanor, Marlene...



Marlene! Marlene is still alive!



What?



When I got back to town... Dyne, I saw my wife die, that's where I found her... that's where I found Marlene. Let's go see her together, okay?



So... she's alive... Alright Barret, I think that means we're going to fight.



What!?



...He he he... Eleanor is all alone, I have to send Marlene to her.



Dyne, are you nuts?



Marlene certainly wants to see her mother.



Stop it Dyne, I don't want to kill you!



Oh really? You already did! The day I realized that I shouldn't have trusted you!



Stop, I don't want to fight you!



Barret...



Cloud, stay back and don't interfere! This is my problem!



Barret and Dyne stood face to face, ready to shoot. Barret didn't want to kill his friend, but he was ready to defend Marlene at all costs... Dyne pretended to draw his gun, Barret immediately pointed his machine gun at Dyne and shot a burst bullets at his arm... Dyne promptly collapsed.



He he... You did came back then... I lost something irreplaceable. I don't even remember how all this started...



Dyne... I don't know anymore either. But I'll keep fighting to protect those I love!



I told you... I want to destroy everything... Everything... This crazy world... Even me...



And Marlene? What will happen to her?



Think about it, Barret... How old was Marlene when Corel burned up? She wouldn't recognize me... And then you know... My hands are too stained to be able to take care of her.



Dyne, what are you doing?



Here, give this pendant to Marlene... It belonged to Eleanor....





I will...



...Wow... Marlene is already... 4 years old... Barret, don't ever make... Marlene cry...



Dyne, what are you doing?

Dyne was advancing towards the precipice... He looked up at the sky, smiled slightly. Barret moved forward to catch him but Dyne, with a peaceful face, let himself fall into the void.



No! Dyne!!

Barret fell to his knees, in tears...



You and me... We were the same! I don't have cleaner hands than you... I don't deserve to take care of Marlene... No!!

Barret screamed in rage, Dyne was dead and with him, the weight of Barret's sins flew away. Only hatred towards Shinra's injustice remained. A little later, the group reunited at the second in charge, Mr. Coates.



What do you want ?



I want to get out of here.



You need the boss's permission for this, and then you'll have to win a chocobo race to pay your bail.



Dyne has good reason not to be able to give us permission, but I have this instead.

Barret showed Eleanor's pendant...



Umm.... Did you kill Dyne...? You had to, otherwise you wouldn't have this... Dyne is dead then... It will be a little nicer here... He didn't really care about us...

Barret grabbed Coates by the collar...



Alright, alright. Forget I said anything!



So are you going to get us out of here?



Hey, you got it wrong. I told you, there's only one way out of here! You have to win a chocobo race at the Gold Saucer ! One person at a time even!





What!?



No, really! Even if you threaten me! I can't do anything about the rules! Alright, I'll let you go upstairs and after that you'll have to deal with Dio. Choose who will race.



Cloud, are you up to it?



Um... Yeah, sure...



You are the most talented between us for this race.



Yeah, go ahead and crush them all!



Help us get out of here...



The only thing you'll need is a manager...

A strange girl entered Coates' office...



Hi... I've been watching you since you got here...



Ester?



Cloud is it? I will be your manager.



Ester... I have nothing against it but...well so be it, I'll send you the elevator. Ester will explain the rules once you're inside.

They went up to the elevator. After a final encouragement, Cloud separated from his friends to return to the Gold Saucer...



It's not just criminals who are jockeys you know... Some play for honor, others for money... Ready to learn how to ride a chocobo?



I've been able to catch and ride my own chocobo before you know...



Oh, so I only have to teach you some tricks, right?



...Um, I guess...



It's simple: pay attention to your chocobo's mood and it'll be fine! Go all out at the end, the others always get tired at the start...



...Okay, I'll do my best...





Cloud and Ester arrived in the jockeys' preparation room...



Hey, a new guy?



Hi, Joe.



Hey, Ester, you look very elegant as usual.



Thanks. Let me introduce you to Cloud. This is Joe, one of the best chocobo jockeys.



Nice to meet you, Cloud. If you're with Ester, then you're my friend.



Cloud is a promising jockey, he knows how to catch chocobos.



Oh I see. So you probably know that black chocobos are not found in the wild...



Joe rides a black chocobo, very rare.



How long have you known each other?

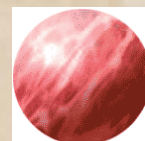


We're avoiding asking questions about the past here... Mmm, interesting. I think we'll see each other again, Cloud.



Okay, I'm going to go pick you out a good chocobo, wait here a moment.

Cloud sat at the table with the other jockeys. Nobody spoke. They were staring at each other like poker players... Cloud noticed something shiny in the corner of the room. As incredible as it seems, it was red materia! He went to grab it discreetly...



The race will start in a few moments, jockeys are asked to go to the paddock!



Hey, Cloud! I signed you up, come over here! Well, this your mount, Choco.



Waaark!



Okay, get on the starting line with the others. Joe withdrew from the race, I explained your story to him. You wouldn't have had a single chance of winning if he competed in this race.



Are black chocobos really that fast?



They are very fast but in addition, they can live in mountains and shallow waters... However there exists an even faster breed...



All jockeys are on the starting line. Ready? 3,2,1... Go!

A gunshot rang out, the six competitors began to run. Cloud was behind, everyone passed him in the first four meters...



Damn, move!



Waark!



Stay calm, that's it, calm down...

The chocobo regained some pace, he was moving forward at a good pace. A little further on, they passed a competitor whose chocobo was zigzagging on the track...



Aaargh! Go straight, you stupid beast!



Wakaaa!

Cloud thought that this one had already lost... He finally caught up with the leading pack who had become slightly tired from the start of the race... All the chocobos were running into each other. Cloud cautiously stayed behind the melee...



No! I must win the race, my honor is at stake!



Waark – aaark!

Suddenly, the purple chocobo fell from fatigue, the whole group braked abruptly. Cloud's chocobo, in an excellent mood, gracefully jumped above the whole group...



Well done Choco! We almost made it!

Just as he uttered these words, two competitors bolted like arrows, their chocobos running as hard as possible. Cloud waited a bit and as soon as they were at his level, he leaned Choco forward and took off like lightning towards the finish line.



We're almost there, Choco!



Waaark!

Cloud crossed the finish line, a crown was placed on Choco's head. Ester arrived...



Amazing! I have never seen like that ! It's almost... impossible, in fact! You wouldn't have hidden something from me?



Maybe it's because of my Materia?



You... you know how to use Materia? I get it now... Oh, yeah, Dio asked me to give you this letter...

Cloud read the letter aloud...



"My boy, if you are reading this letter it means you have won a a well deserved victory and that I won a lot of money in betting, enough to pay your bail. Ester told me about your adventure with Dyne, so you are all free. As an apology, I have prepared a small gift for you to use for your trip. Sorry I can't tell you in person, I'm a very busy man"



...A gift?

The PHS rang, it was Aerith calling Cloud...



Cloud, this is incredible! The Deputy Director came by, we now have a buggy to get out of the desert!



A what?



A buggy! He says that with this you can even drive over rivers!



Rivers?



Cloud, the letter continues, look...





"I recently saw Sephiroth, he must have a lot of fans among boys your age. In any case, he was going toward Gongaga. Since you dress like a SOLDIER, I figured you'd definitely want to meet him! Go to the southern desert to find Gongaga!"

signed:

Dio



Sephiroth...



I think this is goodbye... If you ever get your own racing chocobo, come back and see me, I'll take care of your registration and everything.



Thanks Ester. See you soon !



See you soon champion.



So Cloud, ready to go again?



I'd loved to ride one of these beasts!



Your group is great, I'll follow for a while...



Cloud, thanks for getting us out of there!



Where are we going to go now?



We're gonna find Sephiroth, heading south!

The vehicle started moving. The good mood had finally returned.

