





FINAL FANTASY VII

Chapter 4: The girl named Aerith





...Are you okay? Can you hear me?



...Yeah...



Back then, you only got away with scraped knees...



...What do you mean by "back then"?



And now? You can get up?



...What do you mean by "back then"? ...And now?



Don't worry about me. Think about yourself now. Can you move?



...I'll try.



Oh! He moved!



...Like that. Take it easy now. Step by step...



...I know.



Hello... Hello?



H-Hey... Who are you?



Hello! Welcome!

When Cloud opened his eyes, a familiar face was leaning over him... He quickly forgot the strange voice, wondering where he was...



How are you feeling? You're in the church of sector 5 slums! You crashed through the roof so suddenly, you scared me...



...I fell through the roof?



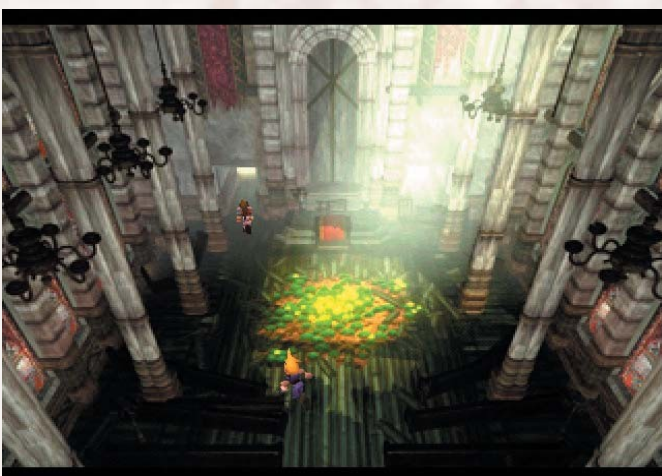
Through the roof. My flower bed broke your fall. Then I nursed you back to health.



A flower bed... Are these your flowers? I'm really sorry....



Don't worry about it. The flowers like to grow here, it's a sacred place! There aren't many flowers in Midgar. But for some strange reason, they grow easily in this church. I like this place...



...So we meet again.
You remember me?



Of course... You sell
flowers, right?



Oh! You do remember!
Thanks again for
buying my
flower...

My name
is Aerith!

Aerith
Gainsborough.
I see you have
some Materia?



*Cloud presented his sword, two green Materia
were embedded in it...*



Yes, see. Lightning and fire... You can find
them anywhere these days.



I have a very special one, but I think it's
useless...



...Useless? Maybe you just don't know how
to use it.



Nope, I know how to use Materia. This one
just doesn't do anything. But I feel safe with
it, it was my mother's...

*Aerith pointed at the Materia tied in her hair
ribbon. It was a white Materia.*





I've never seen one this color...



Funny we meet again, isn't it? Must be destiny!



I don't know about that...



Wait here. I'll quickly check if my flowers are okay. It'll just be a minute.

Aerith went to water some flowers...



By the way! We didn't introduce ourselves, what do you do for a living?



Well... My name is Cloud. I do... a bit of everything.



Mmm... You're a mercenary, right?



Yeah... I'll do anything as long as it pays. What's so funny? Why are you laughing?



Sorry... It just happens that I...

Suddenly, a man in a blue suit came into the church, surrounded by three Shinra guards...



Cloud... Ever been a bodyguard? You'll do anything as long as you get paid, was it?



...Yes that's right.



So help me get out of here and get home!



Okay, deal.



These people want to kidnap me!...

Clad turned to the man in the blue suit.



I don't know who you are but...

The strange voice muttered in Cloud's head...



...I know you...



No... I remember you!



That uniform... Indeed, I recognize it.



Oh sure... You... That suit...



...Sir, the situation looks fishy.



Reno



Shut-up! You're a Shinra spy, aren't you?



Reno! You want us to arrest him?



I haven't decided yet.



Hey! Don't fight in here, you'll trample the flowers! Cloud, let's get to the back!

Cloud and Aerith ran into the back room of the church...



So he's one of them... Mako eyes. Alright, perfect. Come on guys. Back to work, catch them! Oh, and don't step on the flowers!

But Reno didn't pay attention and stomped on the flowers as he passed by...



Hey Reno, you're stepping on them!



They're ruined...



Talk about advice...

Meanwhile, Cloud and Aerith had reached the roof beams of the church...



They're up there, get them!



Cloud... They're catching with us!



I know, don't worry.



What are we going to do?



Well we can't let them catch us can we? So there is only one thing to do...

Cloud jumped on a plank that led to the roof...



Aerith, this way! You can do it!



Alright, if you say so, I trust you...



The Ancient is getting away! Get her! Now!

The Shinra guards fired a burst of bullets. Aerith fell on the stairs...



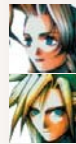
Aerith!



Careful! We don't want to kill her, do we?



The three guards were climbing the stairs...



Cloud, help me!!



I don't really want to fight...

He looked around and saw a barrel on a beam just above the guards. He swung it over, knocking them out in one fell swoop. Aerith climbed back onto the platform.



Thanks Cloud!



You're safe... Come on, over here!

They reached the church rooftop through the hole Cloud's fall from reactor 5 made. They could make their way over the slums rooftops.



Phew...They're looking for me again...



You mean this isn't the first time you've seen them?



...No.



He was a Turk.



Hmmm...?



The Turks are a special Shinra task force. They look for the best SOLDIER candidates, among other things.



With such violence? They came to kidnap me!



They deal in all kinds of shady activities. Spy work, assassination... That sort of stuff.



They are like that, huh?



But why were they after you? There has to be a reason, right?



Not really. Maybe they want to recruit me into SOLDIER...?



Could be... You're planning to enlist?



I don't think so... I mean, I don't want to hang out with that kind of people!



Alright then, let's mosey?



Cloud started jumping from roof to roof, Aerith had trouble keeping up with him...



Wait up... I said, wait! Puff... Huff... Slow... down... Don't leave me behind...



Funny... What a fine SOLDIER candidate...



Humpf, you're so mean!... So tell me Cloud. You were one... a SOLDIER?



...It's in the past now. How did you know?



Your eyes... They have that glow.



It's the mark of those who have been infused with Mako energy... The mark of a SOLDIER... But how do you know that?



...Oh, it's nothing.



Nothing huh?



Yup, nothing... Well, onward Mr. bodyguard!

Cloud and Aerith walked through the dark streets of sector 5...




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Aerith stopped in front of a big pipe...


 This is my neighborhood, my house isn't very far now. The person in there... they are very sick. They passed out nearby so we helped. Let's check on him...

They both entered the conduit. The man kept moaning on his bed.

 I'll give him another potion... Do you have anything that could help him?


 I'm not a doctor...


 Right... Did you see his tattoo? Strange isn't it? A number, number 2...


 Yeah, I wouldn't want a number tattooed, that's for sure!


They took the road again to Aerith's house... Elmyra, Aerith's mother, was waiting for her in front of the entrance...




 Mom, I'm back! This is Cloud, my bodyguard.

 Bodyguard...? Did you get in trouble again!? Is everything fine!? You're not hurt are you!?

 I'm fine. I had Cloud with me.

 Thanks Cloud.

 So, what do you want to do now?



Sector 7, is it far from here? I'd like to go back to Tifa's bar.



Is Tifa... a girl?



Yes.



A close friend?



A close friend... Yes, you can say that.



Oh, I see... Well, that's perfect. Let's see, Sector 7? I'll take you there...



You're kidding! Why would you put yourself in danger again?



I can do it.



Can you!? ...Well, I don't really know... Getting help from a girl like you...



A girl like me! What are you implying? Do you really think I'm going to sit around doing nothing now that you've said that!? Mom! I'm taking Cloud to Sector 7! I'll be back soon!



But you just... Whatever, you've always been so stubborn. But if you're going to leave, why not tomorrow? It's getting late now.



Yes, you're right mom.



Aerith, go upstairs and prepare the beds.

Aerith carried out her mother's orders. Once upstairs, Elmyra spoke to Cloud...



That gleam in your eyes... You're a soldier, aren't you?



Yes... Or rather, I was.



I don't know how to tell you but... Please stay here for the night, for Aerith. I wouldn't want her heartbroken again...

When the evening was over, Cloud and Aerith found themselves upstairs...



You have to cross Sector 6 to get to Sector 7. Sector 6 is a bit dangerous, that's why you need to rest. Good night, Cloud!



Aerith and Cloud went in their respective rooms. Cloud, alone on his bed, gradually fell asleep...



What a day...



...It's quite comfortable...



...!?



I haven't slept in a bed like that for a long time...



...Yeah, that's for sure.



Not since then.

Too tired to think, Cloud fell asleep. He dreamt of his home and mother in Nibelheim...



Look how strong you've grown. The girls must be all over you.



Not really...



I was worried about you. There's so much vice in the city. You'd better settle down somewhere calm with a girlfriend!



... I'm good.



A girlfriend older than you, who can take care of you. That would be perfect for you...



Not interested...

Cloud woke up. It was daylight.



I ended up falling asleep... Sector 7, past Sector 6. I'd better go alone.

Cloud left quietly as not to wake Aerith. He set off hoping to make the journey alone. Unexpectedly, a bit later at Sector 6 entrance Aerith emerged from around a corner.



Quite the early bird aren't you?



How do I make myself clear? It's dangerous to follow me.



Weren't you listening? You have to go through Sector 6 to reach Tifa's bar. I'll take you there!





After a journey through the debris of the slums, they finally found themselves in the playground in front Sector 7 gate...



The gate to Sector 7 is right there.



Thank you... I think this is goodbye. Are you going to be fine getting back?



Oh no! Is that all you wanted from me? To bring you to Sector 7? Almost there. Are you going to block my path now?



And where do you think your path leads to?



Nowhere! Cloud... can we take a break?

Aerith approached the slide.



I can't believe it's still here, look Cloud!

She went down the slide...



What was your rank?



My rank?



You know, in SOLDIER.



Oh, I was...

Cloud was interrupted by an abrupt flash... He shook his head and resumed his conversation.



I was first class.



Exactly like him.



Like who?



My first boyfriend.



What? Really?



Yes. I really loved him... I think.



Maybe I know him. What's his name?



I don't really want to talk about it.

The gate to Sector 7 suddenly opened, a Chocobo pulled carriage came out..



Huh? Hey, look over there... Tifa!?



Tifa? Is that her in the carriage? But where is she going? She didn't look too happy...



Where does this road lead?



Wall Market! One of the most rotten places in Midgar! Come, I'll take you there!



No way. I'm going alone, you're going home!



This place is particularly dangerous for a girl, you'll need me and I'll need you!



Fine... I give up... Let's go, no time to waste!



