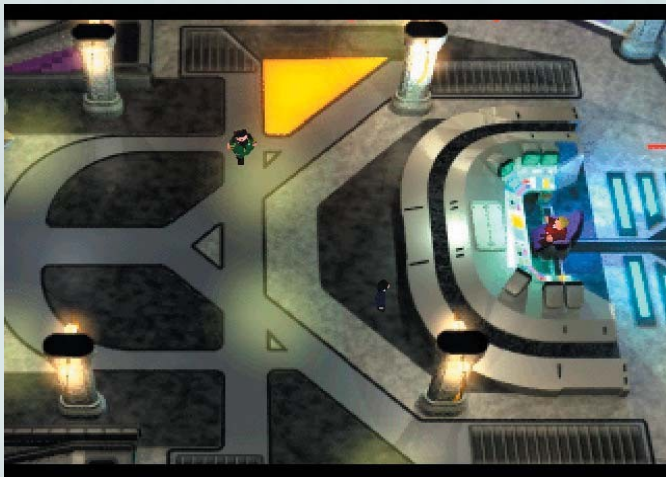


FINAL FANTASY VII

Chapter 6: Sector 7 pillar





President Shinra's office, top floor of Shinra Tower, central Midgar.



How are the preparations going?



Gya haa haa! Like clockwork, I entrusted this to the Turks.



President Shinra, are you sure you want to do this for such a small group?



What seems to be the matter Reeve, do you want to withdraw from the project?



...No. As the head of Urban Development, I participated in Midgar construction and inauguration, which is why...



Reeve, you should leave your personal problems home when you get here!



The mayor is also against...



The mayor? He sits on his hands in this building all day, you call that a mayor? Now If you'll excuse me...

Heidegger left the room, Reeve watched him leave with a concerned look...



You look tired. Why don't you take a few days off?



President, what will you decide?



We will destroy Sector 7 and blame Avalanche. We'll dispatch a rescue team afterward. Ha! Isn't it the perfect plan?

After their conversation with the Don, Cloud, Tifa and Aerith fell into the slums sewers...



Are you okay?



Yes, I am fine...



Tifa, are you hurt?

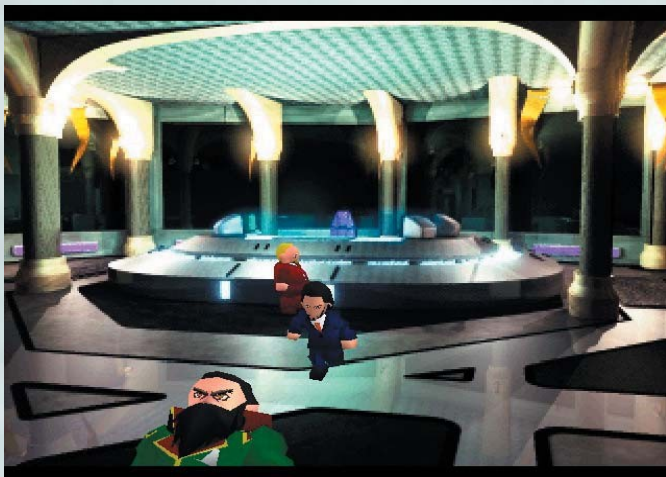
The sound of a bestial growl, accompanied by a strange crackling noise, came closer to them in the conduit...



What is this?



Oh-no, look at the water! It's rising!





Suddenly, a veritable tsunami swept over the group... An enormous monster appeared.



This must be Corneo's pet!



He won't get us!

The beast waved the chains attached at its wrists...



Cloud, we have to do something!



I not sure... If I use lightning here it might kill us! Fire will be ineffective...



I know how fight!



Tifa, no! He's way too strong!



I'll help her! Stay on your butt if you like, girls know how to fight too!



...Oh no!

The three of them rushed at the monster which was screaming with all its might...



Watch for the horns!

Tifa stunned it with a well placed punch.



Did you see that? My turn now!

Aerith made it trip with her staff...



Well, might as well finish him off...

Cloud put an end to the monster with a single swing of his sword.



Your master won't hurt you anymore, rest in peace now!



We have to hurry! Marlene... Barret... the people in the slums!



Don't give up hope yet. It's not that easy to destroy a pillar, I'm sure we'll get there in time!



Yeah, you're right. Let's go!

Without too much trouble they found their way to the surface in the train cemetery, not far from the pillar...



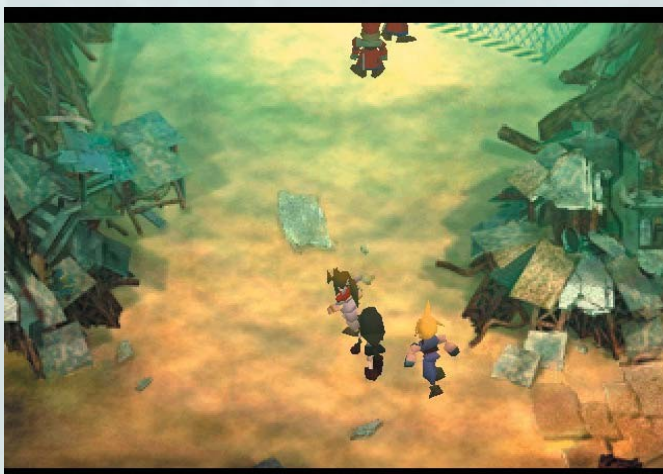
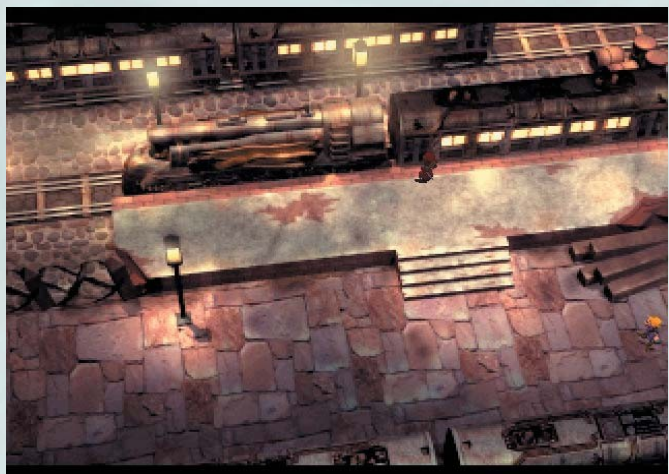
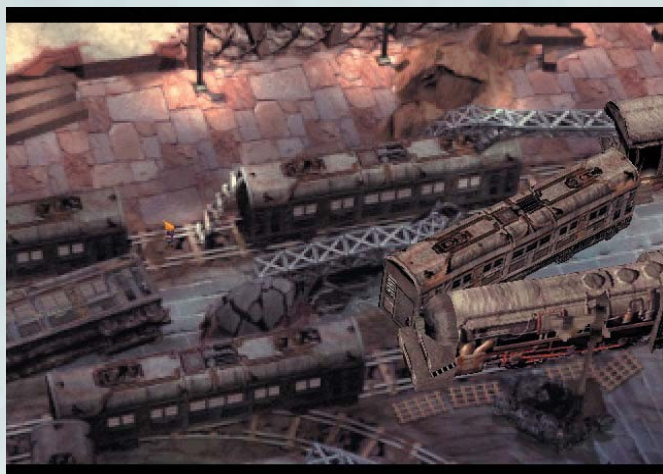
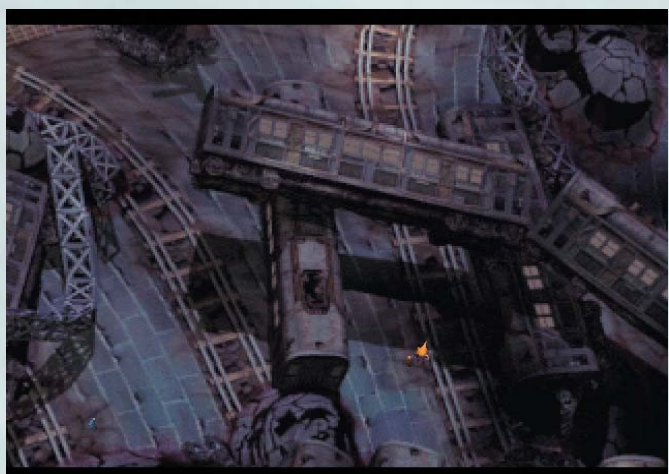
Aerith, it's my fault you got involved...



If you are about to ask me to go home, don't!



Alright, if we follow these trains, we'll be out of here!



They finally arrived at the Sector 7 station. Intrigued by a commotion, they got closer to a crowd of people. They were pointing at a silhouette at the top of the pillar, from where bursts of gunshots could be heard...



Phew! The pillar is still standing. We arrived in time!



Those gunshots up there, could that be...?



They heard a cry of pain. It was Wedge who had just fallen from the pillar!



Wedge! Are you alright?!



...Cloud...are you worried about me...? Barret is...still up there, go quickly...help him!



You take good care of him, okay?



I'll patch him up!



I...wasn't of any help...



Don't say that Wedge! Cloud, I'll go with you. Aerith, can you please do me one last favor? There is a bar back there, "Seventh Heaven". There is a little girl, Marlene...



I'll take care of her, don't worry. I'll bring her to a safe place.

Cloud and Tifa, running towards the pillar staircase, shouted at the crowd...



It's dangerous here! Everyone, get out of Sector 7!



They found Biggs at the entrance to the stairs, half dead.



Cloud!... You... came... So you do care... about the... planet?



You're hurt, don't move Biggs!



Thanks Cloud... don't worry about me... Barret is fighting... up there, go... help him!

They quickly arrived at the top of the stairs. Not far from Barret, Jessie was also on the ground...



Cloud! You are... alive... I'm happy... I get to speak to you one last time...



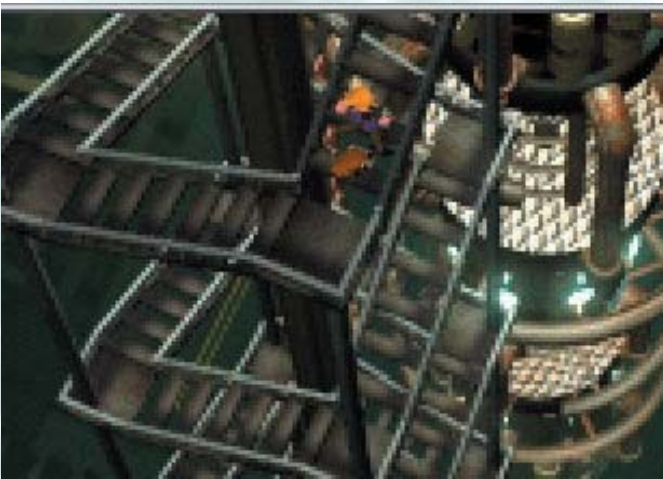
Don't say last!



Because of... us... a lot of people died... This is probably... our punishment...



Tifa! Cloud! You are here! I can't hold them much longer! They're attacking from a helicopter now...





Here they come!

On the helicopter bridge stood Reno, still displaying his disinterested look. He jumped down onto the pillar control platform.



Reno!



You're too late. When I press this button... There, mission accomplished!



We have to deactivate it, Cloud, Barret!



No one stands in the way of a Turk.



We will see about that!

Barret stretched out his arm to shoot Reno, but the latter riposted with his electro-mag rod...



Look closely at the power of the Turks!

An electric pyramid froze Barret in place. Cloud and Tifa tried to free Barret...



Well, it's going to explode soon. Farewell.

Cloud finally managed to tear Barret's strange prison apart with his sword, but Reno had already left with the helicopter.



Oh no ! It's a time bomb!



Cloud, I don't know how to stop this!



Shit! This is no ordinary time bomb!



The helicopter, it's coming back this way!



Who...who is this?



A Turk...

A man in a suit was standing on the helicopter's bridge... There appeared to be someone lying next to him...

Tseng





Good luck defusing it! It's made to detonate in the face of the first idiot who tries to interrupt the countdown...



Killing so many people is absurd, please stop this!



Ha ha ha! You think Shinra would teach a Turk how to defuse one of their bombs? Shinra is a weapon manufacturing company first and foremost!



Stop it you fool, this is madness!



You better to leave it alone... You wouldn't want anything bad to happen to our guest...

The person lying next the Turk raised his head...



Aerith!



Aren't I nice, letting you see her one last time?



What will you do with Aerith you scumbag!?



What do you think? I'm following orders, locate and retrieve the Ancient! Hasn't been easy, the president will be happy.



Tifa, don't worry! She is safe!



Aerith!



Now get out of here!



Mission success, ha ha ha! It's about to blow up. You have my thanks for staying put.

A first detonation took place above the platform. The helicopter promptly left...



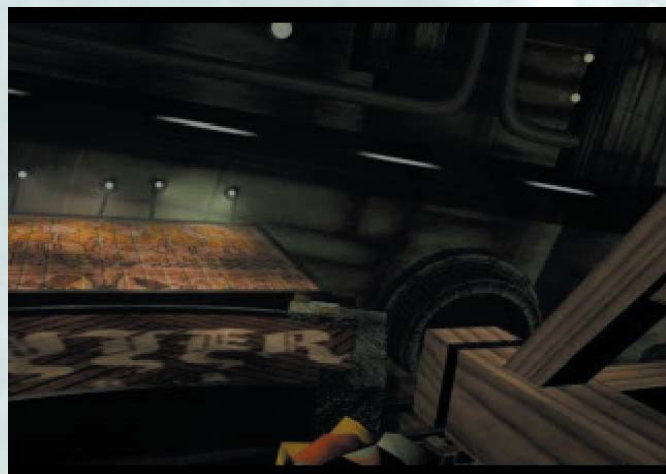
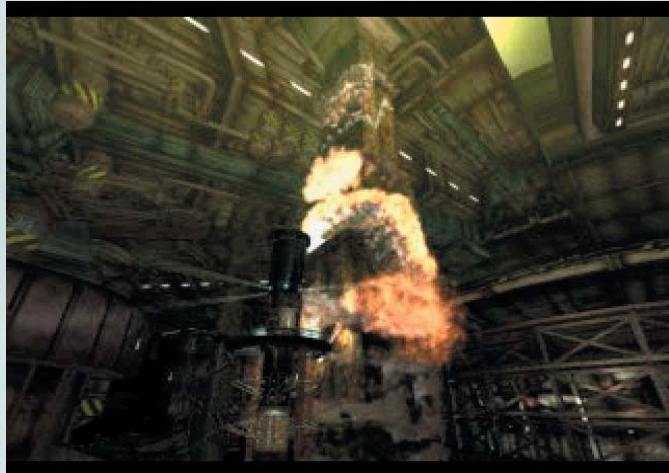


The plate is falling. Quick, we have to do something!



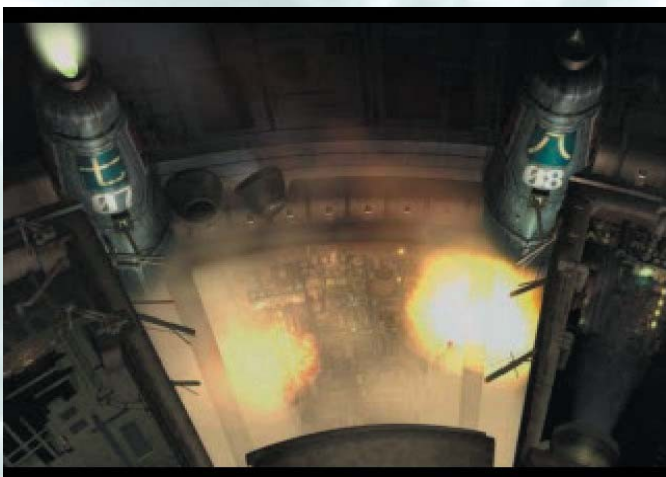
Here! Let's hang on to one of these cables!

A second explosion rang out, then a third. Sector 7 plate began its slow and horrifying descent.





A second explosion rang out, then a third. Sector 7 plate began its slow and horrifying descent.



In his office atop Shinra tower, the president watched with satisfaction as the pawns of his strategy were put into place...



Barret, Cloud and Tifa stood helpless in front of the rubble-filled Sector 7 gate.



Marlene! Marlene!!!

Cloud and Tifa remained silent, in shock from the infamy of the event.



Biggs! Wedge!! Jessie! Damn it!

Barret was shooting at the rubble in anger...



Shit shit shit! What is going on! Aaah!



Hey, Barret.



Barret...



Aaaargh!

But Barret continued to blast the rubble, as if it would spit out his lost friends.



Barret, stop... Please.



Damn it, Marlene, forgive me!



...You know... Marlene is... I think she's fine.



Huh?



Just before they left, Aerith said "Don't worry, she's safe." I think she was talking about Marlene.



You... you sure?! What about Biggs... Wedge... Jessie!



I saw all three of them at the pillar...



Don't you think I already know? ...We all fought together. I refuse to believe they are dead!



...So is everyone else in sector 7.



They ruin everything! Pulverizing an entire town just to get us... they killed so many people!



It's our fault...is that it, Barret?



No, it's that damn Shinra, it's always been Shinra!





They are destroying the planet just to establish their power and enrich themselves, they're corrupted by evil! If we don't get rid of them, they will kill the Earth too! I will fight as long as they exist!



I don't know Barret...



What? What do you don't know?



I don't know if I'll be able to...

Meanwhile, without a warning, Cloud went towards the slums, walking slowly...



Hey! Where is he going?



Cloud!

Barret and Tifa caught up with him...



Do you have an idea where Aerith could have taken Marlene? Take me there!



I do, but there is something that I would like to understand...



About what..?



I want to know more about the... the Ancients.

As soon as he said this word a voice resonated in his head, sorely aching...



Within my veins flows the blood of the Ancients, righteous heirs to the planet.

The headache went away...



Sephiroth...?



Are you okay?



Pull yourself together man!



Yeah, I'm fine... Let's go see Aerith's mother.





The three of them arrived at Aerith's house. Inside, Elmyra was already waiting for them...



Elmyra...



Cloud, it's about Aerith, isn't it?



I'm sorry. She's in Shinra hands now.



I know, they came here with her.



They came here?!



This is what Aerith wanted.



But what does Shinra want from her?



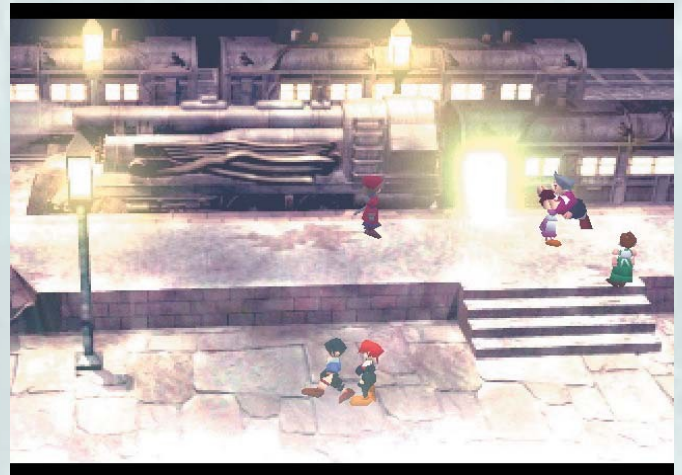
Aerith is the last of the Ancients.



What do you mean? Aren't you her mother?



I'm not her real mother... It was 15 years ago now, during the war. My husband had been sent to the front lines, in distant place called Wutai. One day, I received a letter saying that he got a leave and that he was coming back home.



Each time I went to the station, the train door closed without my husband getting out of it. A lot of people were reuniting. I thought his leave might have been revoked. But I kept coming back to the station every day...



I remember the day, a mortally wounded woman was lying on the steps with a little girl next to her... We'd see that sort of things during the war. Her last words were "Take Aerith somewhere safe..." Since my husband never came back and I didn't have any children I was feeling lonely. So I decided to accept and take her with me. We quickly became friends, she was a real chatterbox. She would talk about everything... She explained to me that they had escaped from some research facility somewhere. That her mother already returned to their planet and that she was alone... Among many other things.



To their planet?!



I didn't understand what she was talking about. I asked her if it was one in the sky, but she replied that it was this one right here. She was a very mysterious child in many ways...



But these are just kid's stories!



One day she said to me "Mom, don't cry, someone you love just died, his spirit came to see you but now he returned to the planet.". At that moment I didn't believe her. But... a few days later I received a letter informing of my husband's death...



Amazing...



We led a happy life until the day a Turk named Tseng appeared... He asked to give Aerith back, he told me that Shinra had been looking for her for a long time...



And she was in Midgar...



Yes, he said that a very special blood flowed in her veins, that his real mother a descendant of the Ancients...



This is where you learned about the existence of the Ancients...



Yes, Aerith too. Tseng said that the Ancients were to lead us to a land of supreme happiness. Aerith refused outright, but the Turk spoke to her about something strange...



He asked her if she heard voices when she was alone, Aerith reacted abruptly to the question. I pretended not to understand anything, but I knew she had mysterious powers...



Unbelievable that she managed to escape Shinra for all these years!



Yes, but Shinra needs her, I don't think they want to hurt her...



But why now...?



She brought a little girl here, she wanted to protect her from Tseng.



Marlene!... My little girl! Sorry, she's here?



Are you her father? How could you leave her alone in a bar?



Aaaargh no please! I think about it all the time! What would have happened if... What would happen to Marlene if I... Hmpf, I have no excuses... I want to be with her.... But I have to fight. No one else will, but I want to be a good father! Taking care of her all the time! Aaargh... I'm going in circles! Do you know where she is?



I understand, she's upstairs...

Barret rushed up the stairs...



I was the one to ask Aerith is to get Marlene to safety. This is my fault...



No, don't say that. That's not what Aerith believes.

Meanwhile Cloud had joined Barret upstairs...



Marlene! I'm so happy to see you again!



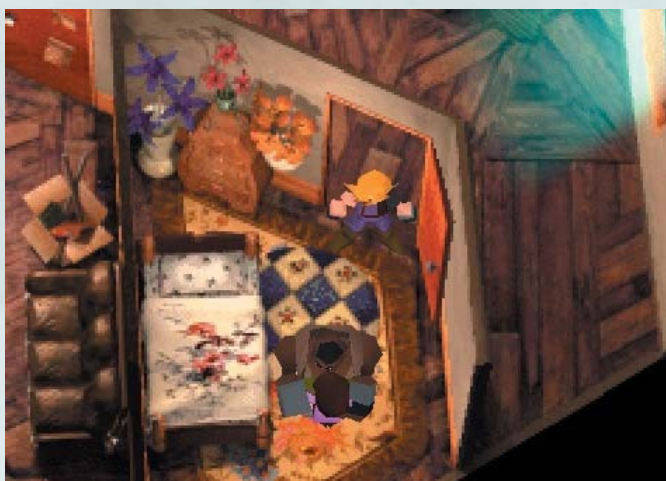
Daddy, don't cry. Hey! Your beard, it tickles!



Cloud! You're thinking of saving Aerith, right? She did so much for us!



Cloud! Guess? Guess? Aerith asked lots of questions about you! What kind of guy are you, all that... I think she likes you, Cloud!





I don't know about that, Marlene.



Dummy!



We have to do something! Cloud, let's go find Tifa.

They went back downstairs...



You're going to help Aerith, right?



Yes.



I'm coming with you.



We are going right into Shinra HQ, expect the worst.



I know, I couldn't forgive myself if we didn't try. We will have to surpass ourselves.



Elmyra, I apologize. Can you take care of Marlene while I go off fighting.



Yes, of course.



It won't be safe for us here after this, we'll have to leave Midgar. We won't be able to come back anytime soon...



I know. Just promise me you won't get killed and will come back for her.



Alright then. This is only good bye.

They set off...



How are we going to reach HQ? No more trains are going to Midgar.



I think saw cables hanging from the plate above not far from Wall Market. We might be able to climb, we should go take a look...

So they went to the Wall Market. The debris had changed the appearance of the slums somewhat. Some kids were walking not far from Don Corneo's house, Cloud's attention was grabbed by one of them...



Come on guys! From the top we can see the whole area, you are nothing but chickens!



Hey, wait! You know a way topside?



Ooh! Are you a chicken too?



No way...



Follow me then!

He took the group to what was once a small alley full of graffiti. Now it was a wall whose horizon was the summit of Midgar... Cloud, Barret and Tifa began the long climb. They reached the top of the plate with minor difficulties, not far for the Shinra Tower plaza...



