

= Aerith Gainsborough =

Aerith Gainsborough (Japanese : アリス・ゲインズボロ , Hepburn : Earisu Geinzuboru) is transliterated Aeris Gainsborough in the English releases of Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy Tactics . She is a player character in Square 's (now Square Enix) role playing video game Final Fantasy VII . She was designed by Tetsuya Nomura with influence from Yoshinori Kitase , Hironobu Sakaguchi and Yoshitaka Amano .

In Final Fantasy VII , she is a young woman who joins the eco terrorist organization AVALANCHE . As the story progresses , AVALANCHE begin to pursue the game 's antagonist Sephiroth , and the player learns that she is the last surviving Cetra , or " Ancient " , one of the planet 's oldest races . She has also appeared in the later released Compilation of Final Fantasy VII and Kingdom Hearts series .

Her voice actor is Maaya Sakamoto in Japanese . In English releases , her voice actors are singer and actress Mandy Moore in Kingdom Hearts , actress Mena Suvari in Kingdom Hearts II and Final Fantasy VII Advent Children , and actress Andrea Bowen in Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII . The character and the events surrounding her death in Final Fantasy VII have met with an overall positive reception from critics and fans .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Final Fantasy VII = = =

Aerith Gainsborough is first introduced as a flower seller , when she briefly converses with Cloud Strife , a mercenary working for the anti government group AVALANCHE , who are fleeing from the bombing of a Mako reactor . The two later meet in Aerith 's church in the Sector 5 slums , where she is faced with the possibility of capture by the Turks . Aerith asks Cloud to be her bodyguard for the cost of one date . She is eventually apprehended , but is ultimately rescued by Cloud and his allies . Aerith then joins them in the pursuit of Sephiroth , while also embarking on her own journey of self discovery .

After a failed attempt to foil Sephiroth 's theft of the Black Materia , Aerith ventures alone into the Forgotten City . Cloud and his companions give chase , eventually finding her praying at an altar . As Aerith looks up to smile at Cloud , Sephiroth appears and kills her by impaling her through the torso . Cloud carries Aerith 's body out into a lake in the Forgotten City , and releases her back to the Planet . Reeve Tuesti , the head of Shinra Urban and Development , brings the news of her death to Elmyra Gainsborough , Aerith 's adoptive mother . The party later learns the reason for Aerith being in the Forgotten City ; through her White Materia , Aerith was able to summon Holy , the only force capable of repelling the ultimate destructive magic , Meteor , which has been summoned by Sephiroth . Although Aerith successfully cast Holy before her death , it is held back by the power of Sephiroth 's will . When Sephiroth is finally defeated and Holy is released , it appears that it is too late to function as effectively as it should , as Meteor has already come too near to the Planet 's surface . While Holy clashes with Meteor , attempting to prevent its impact , the gravity of both Meteor and the Planet pulling on Holy in opposite directions weakens it . Aerith is seen praying with both hands interlocked whilst urging the lifestream to ultimately defend the planet . The Planet 's Lifestream then flows forth , intervening between Holy and Meteor , and acting as a battering ram while aiding in the destruction of Meteor .

= = = Compilation of Final Fantasy VII = = =

In Before Crisis : Final Fantasy VII , set several years prior to the events of Final Fantasy VII , Aerith becomes the target of the original incarnation of AVALANCHE , led by Elfé , who seek to prevent Shinra from acquiring the last surviving Cetra . Instead , AVALANCHE intend to use her to learn the whereabouts of the Promised Land for their own purposes , although a member of the

Turks tries to protect her .

Aerith makes several appearances in the CGI film Final Fantasy VII : Advent Children , as Cloud 's spiritual guide , urging him to move on with his life and to forgive himself for the tragedies that were beyond his control , telling him that she never blamed him for her death . During their spiritual reunion , Aerith speaks to Cloud in an open meadow laden with flowers , cheerfully and kindheartedly poking fun at how he needlessly burdens himself with the past . However , she also acknowledges his suffering and offers kind words of support . One of Aerith 's interactions with Cloud comes when each member of the original game 's party helps in Cloud 's final attack against Bahamut SIN ; she appears as the last party member to assist Cloud . She also appears in the final scene of the movie , along with Zack Fair , where she gives Cloud more words of encouragement before she and Zack walk into the light . Near the end of the film , it is discovered that water mixed with the Lifestream flows beneath the flowerbed in Aerith 's church , which manifests itself as a cure for Geostigma .

The On the Way to a Smile novella " Case of the Lifestream ? Black & White " focuses on Aerith and Sephiroth 's respective journeys through the Lifestream after the end of the game but before the events of the film . The " Black " section deals with Sephiroth , the " White " section with Aerith .

Aerith also appears in the prequel game Crisis Core : Final Fantasy VII . At the age of 16 , she meets Zack , for whom she develops feelings during his stay in Midgar . Aerith and Zack develop a romantic relationship , but Zack is killed at the end of Crisis Core after being held in a Mako chamber for four years in the Shinra Mansion basement . During those years , Aerith helped her adopted mother earn a living by growing and selling flowers , a job that results in her meeting Cloud at the beginning of Final Fantasy VII .

= = = Other appearances = = =

Aerith 's character has appeared in several games outside of the Final Fantasy VII continuity . In Final Fantasy Tactics , she appears as a flower girl ; when a group of criminals harasses her , Cloud appears and the player engages in battle with the group , letting her escape . Itadaki Street Special features a playable version of Aerith , as well as other Final Fantasy VII characters Tifa Lockhart , Cloud Strife , and Sephiroth . She also appears in Itadaki Street Portable with the same characters from Special , with the addition of Yuffie Kisaragi . While not playable , Aerith appears in the fighting game Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy as an assistant character . She is also featured in the rhythm game Theatrhythm Final Fantasy as a sub @-@ character representing Final Fantasy VII . In LittleBigPlanet 2 , Aerith is featured as a downloadable character model .

Aerith makes an appearance in the Kingdom Hearts series as a member of a group dedicated to defeating the Heartless ; the group also includes other Final Fantasy VII characters and Leon of Final Fantasy VIII . In the plot of Kingdom Hearts , Aerith suggests a method for defeating the Heartless to protagonists Donald Duck , Goofy and Sora . Throughout the game , she also gives advice to the player . She also appears in Kingdom Hearts : Chain of Memories as a perceptive figment of Sora 's memories . Aerith returns in Kingdom Hearts II , wearing a modified version of her dress from Before Crisis . She , Leon and Yuffie run a restoration committee for the town of Hollow Bastion .

Hoshi o Meguru Otome (Maiden who Travels the Planet) , a novel written by Benny Matsuyama which appears in the Final Fantasy VII Ultimania ? guide , follows Aerith 's journey through the Lifestream immediately after her death in Final Fantasy VII . Aerith is mentioned in a graffiti in the subway station early in the animated film Wreck @-@ It Ralph ; the graffiti reads " Aerith Lives " .

= = Concept and creation = =

Aerith was designed by Tetsuya Nomura , with influence from director and scenario writer Yoshinori Kitase and Hironobu Sakaguchi , whilst Yoshitaka Amano created conceptual artwork which also helped to influence her design . She has green eyes and long brown hair tied in a braid with a pink ribbon . She wears a long pink dress , a bolero jacket , and brown hiking boots . The long dress was

designed to appear ladylike and as a contrast to Tifa Lockhart 's miniskirt . During development , Aerith was supposed to be Sephiroth 's sister as both designs resembled each other , but they were made former lovers with Aerith remembering Sephiroth when meeting Cloud as both are ex @-@ SOLDIERS . Late during development , Aerith 's first love was changed to Zack Fair .

Her green eyes were meant to symbolize nature and also served as another contrast to Tifa 's brown eyes . Nomura did not change much of Aerith 's design for Advent Children , but her design was updated in Kingdom Hearts with the removal of her bolero jacket , which made her attire appear more as Amano had originally drawn her . Other changes included the addition of bracelets and a belt . Nomura modified her dress in Before Crisis , adding white and green colors , and this version was also used as the basis for her design in Kingdom Hearts II .

Aerith 's original Japanese name is Erisu , pronounced [ea?isu ?] . This was transliterated to " Aeris " in Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy Tactics , but in later products has been changed to " Aerith " . Both transliterations have basis , as the Japanese " su " (す) is used when transcribing " s " (/ s /) and " th " (/ θ /) to Japanese . However , official Japanese material uses the spelling " Aerith " , and developers have stated that " Aerith " is a near @-@ anagram of " Earth " . Prior to the game 's release , Western gaming magazines , such as the May 1996 issue of Computer and Video Games , also referred to her as " Aerith " .

In early planning stages of Final Fantasy VII , Aerith was to be one of only three protagonists ; herself , Cloud and Barret . During a phone call to Kitase , it was suggested that at some point in the game , one of the main characters should die , and after much discussion as to whether it should be Barret or Aerith , the producers chose Aerith . Nomura stated in a 2005 Electronic Gaming Monthly interview : " Cloud 's the main character , so you can 't really kill him . And Barrett ... [sic] well , that 's maybe too obvious . " While designing Final Fantasy VII , Nomura was frustrated with the " perennial cliché where the protagonist loves someone very much and so has to sacrifice himself and die in a dramatic fashion to express that love . " He found this trope appeared in both films and video games from North America and Japan , and asked " Is it right to set such an example to people ? " Kitase concluded : " In the real world things are very different . You just need to look around you . Nobody wants to die that way . People die of disease and accident . Death comes suddenly and there is no notion of good or bad . It leaves , not a dramatic feeling but great emptiness . When you lose someone you loved very much you feel this big empty space and think , ' If I had known this was coming I would have done things differently . ' These are the feelings I wanted to arouse in the players with Aerith 's death relatively early in the game . Feelings of reality and not Hollywood . "

According to Nomura , " death should be something sudden and unexpected , and Aerith 's death seemed more natural and realistic . " He said : " When I reflect on Final Fantasy VII , the fact that fans were so offended by her sudden death probably means that we were successful with her character . If fans had simply accepted her death , that would have meant she wasn 't an effective character . " From the original release of the game , rumors have circulated that Aerith can be resurrected in or that the original plan was to have her come back , but this was scrapped in development . Nomura has categorically stated that neither of these rumors were ever true ; " the world was expecting us to bring her back to life , as this is the classic convention . " A lengthy petition asking for Aerith 's revival by Japanese players was sent to Kitase , but he dismissed it , pointing out that " there are many meanings in Aerith 's death and [her revival] could never happen . "

= = Musical theme = =

A leitmotif associated with Aerith is played several times throughout Final Fantasy VII ; it is first heard during the flashback scenes with Aerith 's mother at her house , and is repeated as she is killed by Sephiroth . It was composed by famed Final Fantasy composer Nobuo Uematsu . The piece " Flowers Blooming in the Church " is based on it .

" Aerith 's Theme " is very popular among Final Fantasy fans , and has inspired an orchestral version , a piano version , and a vocal version performed by the artist Rikki (who also performed "

Suteki Da Ne " for Final Fantasy X) . A piano arrangement of the theme appears twice in Advent Children , and the track " Water " also echoes shades of the theme : the opening phrase of " Aerith 's Theme " appears just prior to the climax of the track " Divinity II " , which shortly thereafter includes as its final line the Latin phrase " Sola Dea fatum novit " (" Only the goddess knows fate ") , and is also featured during the end credits of the film . It also has been reinterpreted on the OverClocked ReMix Final Fantasy VII compilation Voices of the Lifestream . In 2013 , " Aerith 's Theme " achieved the third place in the Classic FM Hall of Fame .

= = Reception = =

Aerith has received an overall positive reception from critics . GamesTM referred to her as a " gaming legend . " RPGamer 's Stuart Hoggan opined that although Aerith " represented the token damsel in distress , " she " broke the mould in terms of personality , " possessing " an admirable pluck that was not brassy nor off @-@ putting . " In 2007 , she was included in Tom 's Games list of top 50 greatest female characters in video game history , for her death scene and the beauty of her appearance and personality . That same year , she was named the fifth best character of all time in Dengeki PlayStation 's retrospective awards feature about the original PlayStation . IGN ranked her the number two in their top Final Fantasy VII character list ? a rank higher than the game 's protagonist , Cloud Strife . GameTrailers ranked her at the top of their list of " babes who are out of your league " in 2010 . Heath Hooker of GameZone ranked Aerith as fifth on his 2012 top list of Final Fantasy characters and wrote she " has become an icon in not only the Final Fantasy series , but also in video game history . " Her relation with Cloud has also received positive response , including the two being listed in IGN 's article about the best video game romances .

Her death in Final Fantasy VII has received a great deal of attention . According to GamesTM , her death helped establish the popularity of Final Fantasy VII . Players commented on message boards and blogs about the emotional impact the scene held . Fans submitted a petition to Yoshinori Kitase requesting her return . GameSpy numbers her demise as the 10th greatest cinematic moments in video game history , while its readers voted it the second most cinematic moment . GamePro considers her death sequence to be the greatest of all gaming moments . Tom 's Games called the scene " one of the most powerful and memorable scenes of the Final Fantasy series ? or any other game , for that matter . " Edge called her death the " dramatic highpoint " of Final Fantasy VII , and suggested that reintroducing her through the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII titles " arguably undermines this great moment . " In 2005 , Electronic Gaming Monthly listed Final Fantasy VII number six in their list of ten most important games , stating that without this game , " Aeris wouldn 't have died , and gamers wouldn 't have learned how to cry . " ScrewAttack has added Aerith 's death to their top 10 " OMGWTF " moments , referring to it as one of the " touchiest moments in video game history . " In 2011 , IGN ranked her death scene at No. 1 in its list of top video game moments . In 2012 , PlayStation Magazine included it among the ten most emotional PlayStation moments .

The character is also popular among gamers , especially Japanese and fans of the Final Fantasy series . Aerith has been included in most of GameFAQs ' " Character Battle " contests , though she progressed only a few rounds each time . In 2010 , Famitsu readers voted Aerith as the 24th best video game character . In 2013 , Aerith was voted the second favorite female Final Fantasy character in an official poll by Square Enix . That same year , Complex ranked her as the seventh greatest Final Fantasy character of all time .