

= Lightning (Final Fantasy) =

Lightning (?????? , Raitoningu) is a fictional character from Square Enix 's Final Fantasy series . She first appeared as a playable character and protagonist in the role @-@ playing video game Final Fantasy XIII , in which she features as a resident of the artificial world of Cocoon . After her sister Serah is declared an enemy of Cocoon , Lightning attempts to save her : she and others are then chosen by the fal'Cie , a divided race of demigods who rule the worlds of Gran Pulse and Cocoon , to destroy Cocoon . Lightning reappears as a supporting character in Final Fantasy XIII @-@ 2 , acting as protector of the Goddess Etro . She is the sole playable character in Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII , wherein she sets out to save her world , which is destined to end in thirteen days . She has featured in other Final Fantasy games , most notably the crossover game Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy .

Lightning was created by Motomu Toriyama , the director and scenario writer of XIII , and designed by Tetsuya Nomura , a regular character artist for the Final Fantasy series . Their idea was to create a strong female protagonist who was adept at combat and less feminine than previous Final Fantasy heroines . Aspects of her early design and personality were later altered , or transferred to other characters . After XIII , Lightning 's design was revised several times to reflect her role and development in each game , particularly in Lightning Returns . Her name in Japanese , Éclair Farron (????? ? ???? , Ekur?ru Faron) , was originally a placeholder . Because of its similarity to the name of a pastry , her first name was changed to " Claire " in other countries .

Lightning has received mixed commentary from critics ? much of it relating to her cold personality , which was compared to that of Final Fantasy VII 's protagonist Cloud Strife . She was criticized for her relative absence in XIII @-@ 2 . Her role in Lightning Returns had a mixed reception : some critics saw her as underdeveloped and unlikable , while others found her better developed and more human than in previous games . Lightning later appeared on lists , compiled by video game publications , of the best characters in the Final Fantasy series and in video games as a whole . She has been received favorably in polls of public opinion by Famitsu , Square Enix , and other organizations .

= = Character design = =

Lightning was designed by regular Final Fantasy character designer Tetsuya Nomura , who had previously served as the character designer for Final Fantasy VIII and X. Nomura has said that multiple designs ? including some by staff members other than himself ? were considered for Lightning , while Toriyama has claimed that Nomura 's first draft " looked so cool and strong that there was no need for any retakes . " Because of the graphical capacities of Final Fantasy XIII 's prospective platforms , Nomura was able to include far more detail in Lightning 's design than in his previous character designs , such as her cape and facial features . This necessitated far more effort on his part . Commenting on an early form of her design , Nomura explained that she is essentially a " cool character " , in that she is serious and unforgiving . However , he could not make the character too masculine for fear of losing player empathy . Characteristics from earlier versions of the design included blond or silver hair and Asian @-@ looking facial features . Her final art was made less Asian @-@ looking than these early drafts and her hair color changed to pink , while Hope Estheim was given silver hair . Lightning 's final hair color and hairstyle were intended to reflect her femininity , and to counterbalance her athletic body . Creating her promotional CG render was fairly easy due to the amount of details available concerning her .

Lightning 's real name is Claire Farron in English and Éclair Farron (????? ? ???? , Ekur?ru Faron) in Japanese . During the early stages of production , Lightning 's real name was Averia : " Eclair " was used to keep this name secret , but it was eventually chosen as her official name . Her English name , Claire , was chosen because the name " Eclair " is closely associated with a type of pastry . The name " Lightning " was not chosen by Nomura but by other members of the development team : Nomura had wanted to abandon the tradition of naming Final Fantasy protagonists after weather events , and was surprised by the choice . Several models of Lightning 's house were constructed

for XIII but were removed due to space issues . Her weapon in XIII , the Blazefire Saber (known as Blaze Edge (??????? , Bureizu Ejji) in the Japanese version) was designed to mirror the ability of the game 's summoned monsters , the Eidolons , to transform into animal- , human- and vehicle @-@ like shapes . The game 's version of Odin , Lightning 's Eidolon and a recurring summoned monster in the Final Fantasy series , was intended to present Lightning as a knight on horseback . He was written as a father figure for Lightning . In later games in the XIII series , Odin was developed into a friend to whom Lightning could show her deeper feelings . Daisuke Watanabe , while writing the script for XIII , paid particular attention to fleshing out Lightning 's non @-@ romantic relationship with Snow Villiers and to showing her development as a person while protecting Hope .

Due to global demand and the development staff 's desire to further Lightning 's character , development began for a sequel to XIII . The game tackles the question of whether Lightning is happy after the events of XIII . Even before a sequel was greenlit , Toriyama had wanted to create a truly happy ending for the character . Lightning 's outfit in XIII @-@ 2 was designed by Isamu Kamikokuryo . He worked from a rough sketch by Nomura of how Lightning should appear . The outfit was redone several times by Kamikokuryo : a qipao and a science fiction @-@ inspired design were both discarded because they clashed with the game 's atmosphere . The final design was inspired by the valkyries of Norse mythology . The outfit was meant to reflect the environment around Lightning . It features a feather motif to represent Lightning 's light , delicate side and her growing powers . She was depicted as having transcended her human limits , making it difficult to depict her as a normal person .

Her outfit in Lightning Returns was designed by Nomura . He was told by Toriyama to create something representative of her final battle , with " strength " as the main guideline . The resultant outfit , which resembles a leather bodysuit , has spinal column patterns on its sleeves and is primarily colored red and white . Nomura later commented that he felt " a strong reaction within [himself] " while creating Lightning 's final look . Nomura 's design was Kamikokuryo 's favorite out of the many outfits created for the character . Her other outfits for the game were designed by Kamikokuryo , Toshiyuki Itahana , and Toshitaka Matsuda : many of them drew inspiration from the character designs of regular Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano . In addition to the new costumes , Lightning 's in @-@ game model was rebuilt from the ground @-@ up . Her breasts were enlarged and several of her outfits were designed to present her in a more feminine way . For the game 's epilogue , Toriyama wished for Lightning to appear in an everyday setting and normal clothes . The team considered ending the game with Lightning either meeting or speaking with her allies , but Toriyama wished the story to begin and end with her alone . He has claimed that Lightning , with her solo role in Lightning Returns , was the Final Fantasy series ' " first female protagonist " .

= = = Influences = = =

Toriyama wanted Lightning to be a type of female character previously unseen in Final Fantasy games , one with an athlete 's body and a less feminine nature . His guideline to Nomura was to make her strong , beautiful , and " like a female version of Cloud [Strife] from [Final Fantasy VII] " . Commenting on the resemblance , Toriyama stated that the similarities between the characters only extend to their cold personalities and their military backgrounds , and that otherwise " Lightning really [is] her own person . " Nomura compared the two shortly before the Japanese release of Lightning Returns , saying that he had " desired for her to be carefully developed and loved for a long time , like Cloud . " Toriyama has said that , among the characters he had been involved in creating , Lightning was his favorite female character from a video game , alongside Yuna from Final Fantasy X and Yoyo from Bahamut Lagoon .

= = = Personality = = =

In contrast to other characters in the Final Fantasy series , whose personality traits were molded to fit a story , Toriyama conceived Lightning 's basic personality before XIII 's narrative had been

finalized . She has a cold demeanor , which was meant to clash in an entertaining way with Snow 's outspokenness . Nomura commented that Lightning has " a strong element of mystery about her character " . She originally had a flirtatious aspect to her personality , which was transferred to Oerba Yun Fang when Fang was changed from male to female . For Lightning Returns , the developers wanted to portray Lightning in several different lights , in contrast to her static personalities in prior appearances . One of their highest priorities was to make Lightning a character who had lost much in her life and become deeply vulnerable as a result . Designer Yuji Abe elaborated that , because of her losses and newfound vulnerability , Lightning came across as darker , slightly numbed to her surroundings , and " like a puppet , like someone who doesn 't quite have her real self inside . " He elaborated that this effect shows " the kind of vulnerability she has , and it 's the point from which she starts to change afterward . " The decision to expand her personality in this way was originally suggested by Yoshinori Kitase , who was concerned that Lightning 's coolness in previous games had made it difficult for players to bond with her .

Across her speaking appearances , Lightning is voiced by Ali Hillis in English and Maaya Sakamoto in Japanese . Sakamoto was impressed by Lightning , whom she called " cold " and " strong " . She was asked to portray Lightning 's strength and to betray the character 's hidden vulnerabilities . She initially found it strange to voice Lightning , as she was used to gentler roles such as Aerith Gainsborough , a central character in Final Fantasy VII and its companion media . Commenting on the difficulty of balancing Lightning 's depiction as a woman and a professionally trained warrior , Kitase noted that Sakamoto 's acting helped to bring out Lightning 's femininity . Hillis was given the role of Lightning after speaking a few of the character 's lines during audition , and was then given a book about the Final Fantasy XIII universe , which she found a little " overwhelming " when she read it . One of the challenges Hillis faced was recapturing the emotion and energy of Sakamoto 's Japanese performance in the character 's English rendition . She tried to help the staff of the XIII games portray Lightning as a real person : " I think that was my main priority , to make sure that Lightning had every single layer of who she was as a person , not just a game character , but a real person with layers and history and relationships to every single character in the game ... even the Chocobo ! " Over the course of the XIII trilogy , Hillis felt that Lightning becomes " a little more sarcastic ... a little more hardened to everything that 's going on around her and ... [evolves] into a real warrior " .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Final Fantasy XIII series = = =

Lightning , along with her sister Serah , is a resident of Cocoon , an artificial world hovering above the planet Gran Pulse . Each of these regions is controlled by a sect of the fal 'Cie , a race of demigods whose two factions , the " Sanctum " population on Cocoon and the " Pulse " fal 'Cie from Gran Pulse , are hostile toward one another . In Final Fantasy XIII : Episode Zero : Promise , a novel set before the events of XIII , it is revealed that Lightning and Serah 's parents died when their children were young , and that Lightning resolved to become her sister 's protector but ended up neglecting her in the process . She grows to resent Snow 's romantic relationship with Serah and the anti @-@ government activities of his group NORA . Lightning discovers too late that Serah has been branded as a l 'Cie ? a human cursed with magical powers and a task to complete ? by the Gran Pulse fal 'Cie Anima : Lightning initially thinks that Serah is using her condition as an excuse to marry Snow . Lightning then resigns from the service as a member of the Guardian Corps and volunteers herself for the Purge , a forced relocation of citizens who have come into contact with Anima , to save her sister .

In Final Fantasy XIII , Lightning reaches Anima along with Hope , Sazh Katzroy , and Oerba Dia Vanille , three of the surviving Purge exiles . When they find Serah , she turns to crystal . Lightning and the party fight Anima and are marked as l 'Cie when PSICOM , Cocoon 's main military force , destroys Anima . Skeptical of Snow 's resolve to save her sister , Lightning abandons him and Serah

, both of whom are then rescued by Oerba Yun Fang and a rogue Cocoon military force called the Cavalry . Lightning ends up traveling with Hope . During their time together , Lightning inadvertently summons Odin , and she unknowingly supports Hope 's plan to assassinate Snow by protecting and training him . Throughout the game , Lightning struggles to deal with her nature as a l'Cie , her anger at being made Cocoon 's enemy , and her guilt at disbelieving Serah 's story . After overcoming these issues , she acknowledges Snow 's relationship with Serah and his faith that they will restore her . When they kill the Sanctum fal'Cie Orphan to save Cocoon , Lightning , Serah and the party except for Vanille and Fang are allowed to return to their normal lives : Vanille and Fang form a crystal pillar to stop Cocoon from colliding with Gran Pulse .

Final Fantasy XIII : Episode I , a short novel set immediately after XIII , shows Lightning uneasy about whether her battle is over or not . She leaves to save Fang and Vanille , but first gives her blessing to Snow and Serah 's marriage . Eventually , Lightning finds herself caught in a dark void , but she decides to keep moving forward .

In Final Fantasy XIII @-@ 2 , Lightning has disappeared , and all but Serah believe that she died with Vanille and Fang to save Cocoon . In reality , Lightning was brought to Valhalla , capital of the Goddess Etro , as a direct result of Etro 's releasing her and the others from their condition as l'Cie . These events had distorted time and erased Lightning from history after Cocoon 's fall . Hoping to atone for the deaths she caused as a l'Cie , Lightning chooses to stay in Valhalla and protect the dying Etro from Caius Ballad , an immortal man with a grudge against Etro . Lightning eventually asks Noel Kreiss and Serah to help her stop Caius from ending time , which he plans to do by releasing " chaos " , a supernatural energy controlled by Etro , into the mortal world . Serah and Noel travel forward in time to fix distortions in history caused by Caius ' interference , and Serah eventually dies when history is restored . In the DLC episode Requiem of the Goddess , Lightning is defeated by Caius and loses hope after learning of her role in Serah 's death . Lightning is comforted by Serah 's spirit , who asks not to be forgotten . Vowing to preserve Serah 's memory , Lightning turns to crystal , which prevents her from being affected when Etro 's death releases chaos .

In Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII , Lightning is revived after 500 years by the god Bhunivelze . The world is set to end in thirteen days , and Lightning is chosen as the Savior , a spiritual guide for humanity , which has ceased to age due to the influence of chaos . In return for Lightning 's help , Serah will be resurrected . Aided by Hope , Lightning frees her former allies of emotional burdens , reunites with Odin in the form of a white Chocobo , and frequently crosses paths with Lumina , the physical manifestation of Lightning 's suppressed vulnerabilities . Lightning begins to doubt her humanity , and , when she learns that Bhunivelze stole Serah 's soul and manipulated Lightning 's memories , she plans to betray him after he has finished building the new world . When the end of the world arrives , Lightning fights Bhunivelze , who wants to transform humanity into his ideal image and has been shaping Lightning as Etro 's replacement . Although she is prepared to fulfill her new role and abandon her human life , Lightning instead chooses to call for help and to accept Lumina as a part of herself . Everyone she has saved , including Serah , unites with her and defeats Bhunivelze . Lightning then witnesses the creation of a new universe , into which she goes with her allies and the souls of humanity . In the epilogue , she is seen traveling to reunite with one of her friends .

= = = Other appearances = = =

Beyond the XIII games , Lightning has appeared in several spin @-@ offs within the Final Fantasy franchise . In the fighting game Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy , Lightning is one of the warriors summoned by the goddess Cosmos . She was meant to debut in Dissidia Final Fantasy , but the idea was scrapped as Final Fantasy XIII had yet to be released and Square Enix did not want to reveal her abilities ahead of time . During Dissidia 012 , Lightning 's group is confronted by beings called Manikins , which inflict permanent death on those they defeat , thereby threatening the world 's cycle of rebirth . She leads an expedition to the portal from which the Manikins are emerging , and the group sacrifices its life to close it . Lightning has three alternate outfits in the game . She again appeared as a playable character in the 2015 sequel for arcades .

The character was featured in a series of special player events in Final Fantasy XIV : A Realm Reborn : Lightning and monsters from her world appeared in the land of Eorzea while she was in crystal stasis between XIII @-@ 2 and Lightning Returns . It is hinted that she was sent to Eorzea by Bhunivelze to hone her skills in preparation for future battles in her world . After the events were completed , Lightning met up with the player one last time , saying that she was thankful for the time spent in Eorzea . As she was summoned back to her world , she asked the player to remember her time there . Players who participated in the events received gear and outfits modeled after items , weapons and clothing from the XIII games . Lightning also plays a role as an ally in World of Final Fantasy , appearing in her Lightning Returns outfit .

In the rhythm game Theatrhythm Final Fantasy and its sequel Curtain Call , Lightning is a playable character representing the Final Fantasy XIII games . She is featured , sporting her XIII @-@ 2 design , in Final Fantasy Airborne Brigade . Lightning is a playable character in the mobile crossover games Final Fantasy : All the Bravest and Final Fantasy : Record Keeper , a powered @-@ up character form in Final Fantasy Explorers , a chibi figure in Final Fantasy in Itadaki Street Mobile , and a character card in Final Fantasy Artniks . In response to speculation about her continued role in the Final Fantasy series after Lightning Returns ' release , Kitase clarified in 2013 that she would appear in spin @-@ off titles , but that her role in the main series had ended . Outside the Final Fantasy franchise , Lightning features in a minigame in Kingdom Hearts Re : coded , was part of a collaboration between the Final Fantasy series and Puzzle & Dragons alongside other established series characters , and versions of her outfit from XIII may be worn by protagonist Aya Brea in The 3rd Birthday and a character from arcade shooter Gunslinger Stratos 2 . Maaya Sakamoto , who portrays both Aya and Lightning , voiced Aya to sound like Lightning when the outfit is equipped .

= = = In merchandise and promotion = = =

Lightning has been featured in Final Fantasy XIII @-@ themed merchandise produced by Square Enix . The two pieces directly inspired by the character are necklaces and a mild perfume called " Lightning eau de toilette " . Action figures of Lightning in her three main iterations were produced by Play Arts Kai , a company often hired to make figurines of characters and creatures from the Final Fantasy series . Cards depicting the character are available in the Final Fantasy Trading Card Game . Lightning appears in a live @-@ action PlayStation commercial titled " Michael " , alongside characters such as Nathan Drake , Kratos and Cole McGrath . An actress portrayed the character at the Final Fantasy 25th Anniversary Event during Asia Game Show 2013 . She was portrayed again in a Japanese live @-@ action / CGI TV commercial for Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII . In April 2012 , Lightning and other characters from XIII @-@ 2 were used to showcase Prada designs in a 12 @-@ page section in the male fashion magazine Arena Homme + . To promote Lightning Returns , Lightning was featured on the packaging of snacks produced by Ezaki Glico . In 2015 , she was used in a CGI advertising video by French fashion house Louis Vuitton . The video was animated by Visual Works , designed by Nomura and directed by Louis Vuitton ? s Nicolas Ghesquière .

= = Reception = =

While Final Fantasy XIII was in development , Todd Ciolek of Anime News Network was unimpressed by Lightning , whom he called a " businesslike blank " . Reviewing the finished game , Ciolek opined that Lightning is initially " far too distant and cold , as though the writers were so intent on creating a tough , competent heroine that they forgot to make her at all compelling " . However , he admitted that Lightning becomes a more appealing lead character by the game 's end . Wesley Yin @-@ Poole of VideoGamer.com simply referred to Lightning as a female version of Cloud . 1UP.com 's Jeremy Parrish commented that , barring scenes in which Lightning shows a thoughtful side , she is " your typical , sullen [Square Enix] protagonist " . Conversely , GameSpot 's Kevin VanOrd called Lightning a " likeable , strong @-@ willed beauty " . Martin Robinson of IGN UK said that Lightning " instantly endears herself " in comparison with Hope or Snow , but he found that ,

when Lightning 's backstory " gets bogged down in generic swash " , Sazh becomes the more appealing character . GamesRadar 's Carolyn Gudmundson was unenthusiastic : she opined that , while Lightning 's narrative has its merits , it " certainly isn 't above and beyond what we 'd typically expect " . She commented that this lack of originality makes Lightning " one @-@ dimensional and boring " . Gamasutra writer Christian Nutt believed that Lightning 's relationships with the cast add humanity to the narrative .

For XIII @-@ 2 , Game Informer 's Joe Juba was disappointed that Lightning had been transferred to a supporting role in favor of Serah and Hope , whom he saw as weaker characters than Lightning . Simon Parkin of Eurogamer found that the story suffers without the driving force of Lightning 's single @-@ minded determination . VanOrd was disappointed that Lightning and Caius Ballad have relatively limited screen @-@ time , since they come off as stronger characters than the protagonists .

In Lightning Returns , Juba criticized Lightning 's lack of personal growth during the narrative , and IGN 's Marty Silva felt that her increased coldness makes her " downright unlikable . " VanOrd argued that Lightning is not " interesting in and of herself " and that she had turned into " a vessel for holding and pouring plot devices " , whose stoicism makes it difficult for the player to connect with her . Parrish , writing for USGamer , stated that Lightning had become " downright apathetic " , showing " no personality whatsoever " , and that this clashed with the ability to dress her in costumes . By contrast , Parkin commented that certain side quests , such as herding sheep or retrieving a girl 's doll , helped to humanize Lightning and make her likable . Similarly , Destructoid 's Dale North found that the costumes and dialogue lighten her character : he argued that these elements make her less " flat and lifeless now , which is a big improvement . " Dave Riley of Anime News Network felt that Lightning 's stoic attitude , although out of place in XIII and XIII @-@ 2 , fit her role as a god 's servant in Lightning Returns . Tech Reviewer , in a feature about the portrayal of female characters in video games , was impressed with the character 's depth and portrayal .

In a VideoGamer.com list of the ten best Final Fantasy characters , Lightning was placed sixth ; writer Yin Poole found her interesting in her own right despite her similarities to Cloud . In 2011 , IGN ranked Lightning among the best characters in the Final Fantasy series , saying that she demonstrated that " a delicate balance can exist between strength and tenderness , even in the midst of ... incredible acrobatic feats . " Lightning was ranked eighth in a similar list by GameZone 's Heath Hooker : points of praise were her visual appearance and determination , which made her " one of the strongest female leaders of the Final Fantasy series " in Hooker 's opinion . Cheat Code Central listed her as one of the top ten " badass " women of video games for her independence , which the writer felt distanced her from previous Final Fantasy heroines . Lightning ranked second in AfterEllen 's list of the " hottest " video game characters . In Game Informer 's list of top ten heroes of 2010 , Lightning was ranked eighth and praised as the only protagonist in Final Fantasy XIII who " seemed capable of taking on the corrupt government of Cocoon " : another comment was that her " no @-@ nonsense approach to her mission makes her the game 's standout hero " . She was included in two lists by Complex , which ranked her as the 19th greatest Final Fantasy character and the 39th greatest heroine in video game history .

In 2010 , Lightning placed 34th in a Famitsu poll regarding the most popular video game character in Japan . She was voted the best @-@ liked female Final Fantasy character in a 2013 poll by Square Enix , and , in that year 's Dengeki PlayStation Awards , she was voted best video game character of the year for her appearance in Lightning Returns . She came first in a Microsoft poll to determine the most popular character of the Final Fantasy XIII games . In 2014 , readers of IGN voted her the best character in XIII . At PAX Prime 2013 , she took third place in a list , compiled by journalists and game developers , of the top female characters in western and Japanese role @-@ playing video games .