

Final Fantasy VII: Children of Jenova

Prologue: Lumina and Obscura

/I will not die like this,/ he thought as his body began to break apart.
/My consciousness has survived the Lifestream once. It will do so again. It MUST./

He struggled to maintain control, calling out the name of his mother as he did, almost praying to her to keep him alive. She didn't answer him. Perhaps Cloud had killed her as well. Or maybe she no longer cared for him. Either way, he felt as if his soul were being ripped apart. Yes, that was exactly it...he was being split.

All at once, the pain subsided, only to be replaced by a new hurt. /What...what have I done.../ He remembered the lives that he had destroyed...Tifa's father...Zack...Cloud...Aeris...untold thousands dead in Midgar because of him, and for what? And what had he done about it? Nothing. He had watched, trapped in that diseased mind, and not done a damned thing to stop the twisted intelligence that had used his body to commit these sins. He had done nothing to stop it. He was just as guilty as the other. Maybe now that part of him would finally be dissolved into the Lifestream. But he knew it would not, not this easily. His fears were confirmed when he heard the voice mocking him, a voice so much like his own, but twisted and cruel and dripping with hatred.

/You're still alive? I'm surprised. I figured you dead ever since the Nibel reactor...doesn't matter. You are no longer part of me./

"I am and you know it."

The voice laughed. /Is that so? Why am I still here? I can live on without your interference./

"I won't allow it."

/You are powerless to stop me, just as you have always been. You no longer concern me./

"I should concern you. I will not let you do this again. Neither will Cloud." Although he had no eyes to see with, his vision was returning slowly. the source of the voice couldn't have been more than a foot away from him.

/Cloud? Don't make me laugh. I own him./

"No." Sephiroth's "vision" cleared, and he found himself staring into the spirit-body eyes of the man who mocked him. "Let him go. You have no more power over him."

/He was created in my image. He is MINE./

The speaker's face was his own. The expression it wore would have chilled him to the bone if he had a body.

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Almost a year had passed since Sephiroth's defeat. Most of the world was getting back to normal very nicely, except for Midgar which had been abandoned. Some little city called Neomidgar had sprung up not too far south of the Gold Saucer, and some nut had insisted on trying to bring Shinra back into power almost immediately, but nobody paid much attention. Rocket Town (now Rocket City) in particular was getting along very well; it now had its own airstrip and did pretty good business because of it. All was quiet there that day...except in one house near the old rocket pad, where Cid Highwind was chain-smoking and slowly but surely wearing a somewhat circular path into the carpet in the living room.

"Cid, please sit down." Red XIII turned his good eye on the pacing Cid and sighed. It was no use. "I understand that you're nervous, but walking around in circles isn't going to make your son come out any faster."

"I gotta do something, Red. I can't stand it." Cid set his cigarette down in a nearby ashtray and shook his head. "Red...I'm scared to death."

Cid had very good reason to be so worked up. The doc had said Shera wasn't due for another two weeks...but apparently Cid Junior had gotten bored and decided he wanted to come out NOW. Now it seemed he had gotten nervous and decided not to come out after all...poor Shera had been in labor for something like seven hours at this point. /Goddamn, am I glad I'm never gonna have to do that,/ Cid thought as he lit another cigarette. Then he looked down at the ashtray and saw that there was a perfectly good one still smoldering away. "Shit."

"You're gonna be a great daddy, Cid-man. Now sit down!" Barret plucked the already lit smoke from the ashtray, puffed on it, pulled a face, and put it out. "You went to see Cloud and Tifa's boy, didn't ya?"

"I didn't get the chance to," Cid said, standing up again. "I couldn'ta taken Shera with me in her condition, and I didn't wanna let her outta my sight for one minute." He paced around some more.

"He's a good lookin' kid. They named him Zack after Cloud's old SOLDIER buddy." Barret chuckled. "He's gonna be a bruiser, I can already see that."

"Hey! I didn't miss anything, did I?" came a squeaky voice outside.

"What the hell..." Cid opened the front door to see a large stuffed Mog with a cat on its back standing on the step. The Mog was carrying a bouquet of flowers. "Cait Sith? What are you doing here?"

"Geez, you didn't think I'd miss THIS, did you?" Cait bounded through the door and waved at Red XIII and Barret. "I wanted to come in person, but I kinda got swamped at work. One of the turbines decided to take a crap and I got the whole crew runnin' around like an ant colony trying to get it up and running again. Lights are out all over Junon because of it."

"Turbines?" Barret asked. Cait Sith grinned.

"Yeah. Junon Hydroelectric. After we shut what Mako reactors were left down, we had to figure out some way to keep the lights on, and since we're right there on the ocean..." Cait shrugged. "I came up with the idea to build a hydro power plant, and it went over pretty good. " He puffed himself up proudly. "You're lookin' at the CEO of Junon Hydroelectric, Inc."

"That's a scary thought...a cat and a Moogles keepin' a whole city outta the dark!" Barret guffawed. Cid would have laughed along, but he was just too damn nervous.

Finally, out of the back of the house, there came the distinct ear-splitting wail of a very angry baby. Cid nearly fell down; Barret grabbed him by the arm and hauled him back to his feet, grinning.

"Your boy got a set of lungs on 'im, don't he?" Barret grinned. "About time, huh?"

"Captain..." The doctor came into the living room looking very worried. "Um...there's something you need to know before you go back and see your baby."

The color drained from Cid's face. "What?"

"Well...I don't know how to say this, but..."

"Oh, God."

"No, no, it's nothing like that. The baby is fine and so is Shera. It's just...well..." The doc wobbled a bit.

"Spit it out," Cid ordered. The doctor shrugged.

"I told you we had the baby's sex determined with a one percent margin of error...looks like your kid beat the odds on us." He drew a deep breath. "Captain, you've got yourself a baby girl."

"And? She got all her fingers and toes and stuff?"

"Like I said, she's fine."

Cid blinked. "So what's the problem?"

"Um...well, nothing, I guess...I just thought--" Any words past that were wasted. Cid leapt out of his chair and tore down the hall.

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Yes, the baby was pissed.

She lay there in Shera's arms, a little scowl creasing her little forehead. She opened her eyes just a crack and glanced around, then she regarded her daddy with a little grunt and went back to sleep.

"She's a cutie, isn't she?" Cid kissed the little bundle on the top of her little blonde head; the baby blew him a raspberry in reply. "Shit, looks like she got my attitude."

Shera laughed tiredly. "I'm not surprised. She looks just like you."

"Not quite..." Cid extracted one of the baby's feet from several layers of blanket. "Look at these itty bitty feet. Those are yours." Although neither would know till much later, the baby also had Shera's green eyes. "You know we got a problem now, right?"

"What?"

"Well, we can't exactly call her Cid Junior now, can we?"

Shera yawned and shrugged. "I don't see why not."

Cid raised one eyebrow. "You're serious?" Then he laughed. "Of course you are, you're always serious. Shera--" Cid held her hand gently. "You're not just doing this for me, are you? Are you really okay with it?"

"I think 'Cid' is a perfectly adorable name for a little girl," Shera mumbled and went to sleep.

"God, Shera...you don't know how happy I..." Cid stopped...frowned..."Hey!"

Shera smiled just a bit and patted Cid's hand, then went back to sleep.

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Six years later, almost to the day, found a fat, bearded man standing nervously in the president of Shinra's office, unable to believe the orders he'd just been given.

"You can't be serious!" he stammered.

"You heard me, Heidegger." The new president of Shinra Inc. didn't even bother to turn around and address him directly. "You have one week. I want the Turks and SOLDIER back in commission."

"The Turks are--they're AWOL. They vanished after the Meteor incident." Heidegger wibbled where he stood.

"Then hire new ones. Surely you can cull out a few decent troops from the army."

"I-I suppose so, President, but--"

"What?" the president snapped.

"But SOLDIER?" Heidegger shook his head vehemently. "It's too risky. We could end up with another Sephiroth, for God's sake!"

"We have Gast and Hojo's research. Fortunately they were smart enough to keep it in a safe place. Dr. Vail is smart enough to pick out the flaws in the original Jenova project by sifting through those files. And Sephiroth was unstable to begin with." The president paused. "Now you will take a chopper and Vail to Nibelheim, start up that reactor, and start churning out SOLDIER troops."

"But--"

"You listen to me, donkey boy." The president was livid. "Old man Shinra ran the world with money. Rufus ran it with empty threats. Believe me when I tell you that when I threaten you, I intend to follow through. You'll be cranking out SOLDIER troops by the end of the week, or I'll be donating your carcass to Vail for research. Keep arguing with me, and I won't even bother to kill you first. Clear?"

Heidegger swallowed dryly. "Yes, ma'am."

"Get your ass to work. Dismissed."

Heidegger slunk out of the office and into the elevator, and the president turned around and watched him go.

"You're as worthless as ever, Heidegger," she muttered. Finding her little rhyme amusing, she laughed rather loudly, and the distinct cackle of "Kyaa ha ha!" echoed through the office of the president.

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Author's notes:

1. Why is Scarlet now running Shinra instead of Reeve? a) Reeve-as-Prez has been done. Twice. Once in "Final Chaos 1/2" (author's name eludes me at present, gomen nasai whoever you are :)) and once in "Forgotten Messiah" by Eric Bakutis (it's on the Square.net archive, go read it, it rox). b) Once again, Shinra is the heavy, and Reeve is just too nice a guy. c) Scarlet is just too delightfully evil NOT to step up to the honored Shinra helm, and Heidegger makes such a lovely boot-licking toady. And finally, d) I like Scarlet.

2. No, Cid and Shera are not married at this point, and they won't be till well after Cid Junior is out of diapers. Deal with it.

3. H fans may recognize the name "Dr. Vail." Heh heh.

4. There is no 4. It's 2 AM. Go to bed.

--Sailor Solathei

"Ice...snacks...and--fifty gallons of BEER!? What kind of life does she lead, anyway!?" --Shinji Ikari

"Hang on to your drawers and don't piss in 'em!" --Cid Highwind

The Sailor Moon Aia homepage--

<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/1054/sma.html>

Sailor Solathei's Cid Highwind shrine (still under very heavy construction)

<http://members.xoom.com/ssolathei/cidshrine.html> and the Cid Highwind Otaku

Ring: <http://members.xoom.com/ssolathei/ring.html>