

On the Way to a Smile: The Story of Yuffie

The Forgotten City. A small lake where Aerith had lost her life and saw everyone off. Yuffie and the others had returned there once again to let her know that the fight against Sephiroth was over. They all stood silently around the lake's altar. None of them spoke but each of them were speaking to Aerith with their own words.

"Bye."

It was Vincent's low voice. By the time Yuffie turned round to face him, his red mantle was already flailing behind him. *What was with him*, thought Yuffie. *Is that the way he was going to part with us?*

"Hold it- Hooold it!!"

She cried out hurrying after him.

"How can you part with us like that? We're all war buddies you know."

Her protesting didn't stop him. She ran ahead of him and stood face to face. He looked as if he was staring at a point far into the distance. Yuffie didn't know what he was thinking or what was going through his mind but his gaze was very powerful. She stepped back immediately knowing that she couldn't stop him.

"Take care," Vincent said as he passed her. Yuffie never expected such words from him and let what just happened pass as she felt his heart for the first time.

Cloud, Tifa, Barret, Cid and Red XIII were watching them.

"Looks like he has somewhere to go," reported Yuffie as she returned to her comrades.

"To his woman probably. Time I got going too," said Cid.

"Yeah, you're right. Same for me," agreed Barret.

Everyone has someone they want to go see, thought Yuffie. She knew it but couldn't hold the thought in.

"You know... You guys sure are taking this lightly."

"That just means we know we can always meet again," said Cid as he started to walk off. Cloud and Tifa nodded. Even Red XIII agreed too. *Red XIII's just forcing himself*, thought Yuffie.

"Yeah."

As she began to feel the same way they did, she accepted what was about to happen.

"Lets go."

Cloud and Tifa began to walk off. *Yeah. Once we leave this place, it really is goodbye for us all*, thought Yuffie. *But that's fine. I'll enjoy our parting with all the energy I have.*

"Hey I know!"

Barret suddenly raised his voice. *Man, this parting's ruined. That's why I don't like the old man.* Looking over at him, she saw him removing the materia from his prosthetic arm and hand it over to Cloud.

"What do we do with this?"

"Hey wait!"

Realising she had forgotten something very important, Yuffie raised her voice. She had almost forgotten the whole purpose of her journey.

"Can I have all the- No, I mean can I just have half of all the materia? I'll bring them back to Wutai with me and keep them in safe custody. Well, I'll use them too maybe. Just a little."

The eyes of all her comrades gathered on her. She loved to be the centre of attention but this time she felt a little guilty. She continued to speak in an effort to hide that guiltiness.

"I was in the middle of hunting for materia you know. I got close to you all because I was following my instincts as a materia hunter. The materia you all had was just too tempting."

Shinra's research, technology and knowledge of the planet's life allowed them to bestow "powers" into materia Cloud and his party possessed that wasn't possible to produce naturally.

"To be honest with you all, I didn't really know what you were all after or know much about your past. Even now, I think it's the same. But I fought with you all didn't I? And it wasn't because of the materia. I just wanted to be of use, even if I wasn't much. I was thought of as a friend. Come on, think about it. How many times have I saved you all from pinches?"

After she finished, Yuffie thought, *Damn. There's no truth to that part.*

"Yeah, you helped us many times," said Tifa.

Yuffie was confused.

"It's my ideal that a child should be cheery and strong."

"Huh!?"

Yuffie was surprised and waited for Tifa to continue. But Tifa just smiled and stayed silent.

"Are you serious?" Yuffie asked without thinking.

"Mmhmm," nodded Tifa immediately.

"Eheheh."

Yuffie thought about what she just heard as she blushed. She was surprised that she just might be getting the materia with no objections.

"What do you think, Barret."

Cloud had suddenly turned round to ask him. *Why the hell are you asking Barret for?* Yuffie thought but remained silent.

"Hmmm—" mused Barret. "It's true that Yuffie's a good friend of ours. But it's a whole different matter when it comes to materia, isn't it?"

"No it isn't! It's the same. The same! I know it maybe all over after defeating Sephiroth but, I have a great dream and that's to restore Wutai. To do that, having materia is crucial."

"Restoration eh—"

This time it was Cid who piped in. *Shut up old man!* Yuffie glared at him.

"If that's what you need it for, isn't Midgar much worse off?"

"You're right."

After agreeing with Cid, Cloud fell in thought.

"Hey, Yuffie. How about this? We'll give you all the materia."

"Alright!"

"But I keep it in safe custody."

"Er—You're trying to trick *children!*"

Thinking she was being made a fool, she stood up tall in protest.

"You got it all wrong. Most of our materia are tools for fighting right? It really won't be of much use for Wutai. So we'll just share the ones that will be of use in healing and I'll keep the rest. I think I'm the one that's the most used to dangerous materia."

"It's true we don't need any tools for fighting any more but—"

"Yeah?"

"Even if we can't use them, we'll feel much more at ease with them won't we?"

"Then lets do this. You return to Wutai but if you feel uneasy without materia then contact me. We'll think about it again then."

Cloud was speaking in a gentle tone but in the end, his decision to keep the materia was conveyed to Yuffie. And just as he said, even if Wutai had a lot of materia with immeasurable destructive power, they may not be of much use. Times have changed. Even Yuffie understood that.

"Fine. You be sure to take good care of my materia."