

Gameworld

A Square-Enix/Final Fantasy Fanfiction Novel

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Gameworld emerged out of a concept created by myself and a friend conversing one day about the idea of a shared world of the Final Fantasy Games. As we toyed with the idea I began to rewrite many of the character storylines to make this world fit together a bit better. As we talked a bit more we happened upon the concept of telling the story from strangers brought to this world through a video game. Toying with that Idea I created the concept of the Outsiders, a group of four males, four females, and one Okama brought to the combined “Game World” by the summon spirits of the Final Fantasy games. Eight of the Outsiders became the main characters of the series and the final one of the outsiders became the main villain of the first saga. One of the outsiders, Rando, became the most important character due, not through planning, but through accident.

Special Thanks to:
Korenth

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Chapter 1: Into the Gameworld

A deafening boom filled the valley, lightning streaking across the sky, the heavy rain falling into the crevasse. In the valley two armies stood poised on either side, each of them ready for war, ready for death, ready to finish the long conflict once and for all. The leaders of each army, both looking no older than eighteen, held in their hands giant key shaped weapons, one held a glistening pearl and amethyst key with two large white wings extending out the back of it, the other held a dark onyx and red one with two large bat-like wings.

The rain seemed to fall harder as the man with the demonic key pointed his weapon forward commanding his army to strike. As his army rushed forward he turned and slowly walked in the opposite direction of the opposing army. As the two armies clashed, the commander with the angelic key cut his way through to where his adversary was heading and leaped at him, causing a bright flash to fill the area as the weapons connect.

Snapping back into consciousness, a young man fell out of his bed as the dream ended. Shaking his head he climbed to his feet. “Man, what a strange dream,” he said as he grabbed a bottle of tea from his mini-fridge and took a swig. As he drank the tea he heard his phone ringing. ‘Who could be calling me this early’ he thought as he quickly set the bottle down and answered his phone.

“Hey Man! I can’t believe I got through!” a voice said from the other end of the phone.

“Oh, it’s you, how have you been?” the young man said as he picked his tea back up and began to drink from it again.

“Good, I’ve been having fun. I’ve made some weird new friends!” the voice said loudly with a voice full of glee.

“Really, that’s good to hear...” the young man said with a laugh as he tossed the empty bottle into a box, “So what else is new.”

“I’ve been beta testing Final Fantasy Eternity; has your copy arrived yet?” the voice asked hurriedly.

“Yeah, I got it yesterday,” the young man said as he closed his still open fridge.

“You played it yet?” the voice asked as some clattering sounds could be heard in the background.

“No, not yet,” the young man said as he grabbed a coat from out of his closet.

“Ah, oh I gotta go. Talk to you later.” The voice said as a loud bang is heard through the phone, “Now that’s how you do it, straight between the eyes!” another voice yelled out as the young man hung up the phone with an odd expression on his face.

After setting the phone down he walked over to a bookshelf next to his tv with several game cases on it, “Might as well play it,” he said to himself as he picked up the game and looked at the case, “cool cover.”

As the game started up, the young man sat down on a small chair in his room and waited as the normal Playstation startup went through, with it eventually coming to a startup screen showing a mobius strip and the games name, Final Fantasy Eternity. After going through character creation and element, class, and weapon type selection, the screen shifted to a field of rolling hills with an endless road. In the field an old man slowly moved towards the screen.

“Welcome outsider,” The old man said as he moved closer to the screen, “We’ve been waiting for you.” He continued as his hand reached out of the screen.

“What the...” the young man said as he saw the hand emerge from the screen, reaching towards him. “What the hell!?” he yelled, startled and confused as the hand pulled him into the screen. As his feet vanished into the screen all that could be heard was a loud scream.

“Hey bro, Keep it down!” a dark haired man yelled entering the room, “What the... Hey bro where are you?” the dark haired man said as he looked around the empty room.

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In a large throne room the man from the dream with the ebon keyblade sat on a large throne, a bored expression on his face.

“Sir!” a purple octopus said as he walked into the room, “Sir!” the octopus yelled again as he hurried over to the throne. “Sir, another outsider has appeared in your world.” He said as he looked at the man from behind a clipboard.

As he heard the news a smirk appeared on the man’s face, “Excellent... which general is closest to where he appeared?” he said as he stared at the octopus with a piercing intensity.

“Umm,” the octopus said with a twinge of fear in his voice.

“Well,” the man said as he tightened his gaze.

“Sephiroth is, Lord Ganma,” the octopus said as he raised the clipboard, “But he’s already been ordered to take out those two troublemakers, the SeeD and the Ex-SOLDIER.” The octopus said as he cringed in terror.

“Ah yes,” Ganma said as he motioned with his hand as if waving off the notion of what the octopus had said, “Squall and Cloud, this is perfect.” He said with a sinister sounding chuckle, “Ultros, have Shadow send a message to Sephiroth.”

“What message sir?” The octopus Ultros said a bit confused.

“Simple,” Ganma said as he stood up towering over Ultros, “To kill the outsider and those rebels!” he roared an eerie glare in his eyes as Ultros quickly ran out of the room. With the octopus gone Ganma, the lord of Sabbath Castle, walked from the throne room into a small room hidden in the wall. In the room two large chessboards existed, one had pieces arranged in a similar manner to the young man’s dream, the other was missing several pieces and had some pieces in other places. As he stared at the board the man with the white keyblade appeared, but as he appeared Ganma waved his hand and the Keyblade changed into a demonic form.

“You will not stop me, none of you, I’ve changed what will happen, I have some of your pieces, you can’t beat me!” he ranted as he let out insane laughter at the

concept of the boards. “Especially not now, that your true power has been sealed!” He said as he continued laughing as a white castle appeared on the board.

As he looked down he saw another piece appear on the board, “All but one,” he said as he walked out of the room. As he sat back down on his throne he raised his hand causing a black spiral to appear, “Kefka,” he said as a man dressed as a jester appeared, rising from the ground. “Zemus,” he said as a swirling entity of black psychic energy emerged from the air. “Ultimecia,” he said as a woman in red with white hair shifted into existence. “Xande,” he said as a dark skin man walked in through the large doors.

“Lord Ganma,” the four of them said as they knelt to him.

“Arise my four high generals,” Ganma said as he stood up, “The time is approaching, all but the final outsider has appeared.”

“So, can we kill them yet?” Kefka asked as an evil grin overtook his face, “That Firos of Dark shall pay for what he did.” He said as he held two butterfly daggers in his hands.

“No the transporter should be punished first,” Ultimecia said as she held an eye in her hand, “Because of her my plans had to be delayed.”

“What about the Changeling, Hammer?” Xande said as he clenched his fist, “Attacking me for no reason. I would have killed her right then if it wasn’t for her surprising me.”

“No, it should be that mercenary, Zelek,” Zemus said as the man in black he controlled slammed his fist into the ground, “Pretending to be with me and then crippling my forces.”

“Enough!” Ganma yelled at his bickering Generals, “Your bickering is pointless, Kefka I want you to recruit a man known as Kuja to our side, and Ultimecia I want you to keep an eye on ‘The Land Where the Crystals Sleep’ to see if there is anyone we can recruit there, Xande, Zemus I want you to return to your lands and obtain the crystals for me. Oh and Zemus... Zelek is not to be harmed, I have plans for him.”

“For the Origin!” the five of them said as three of the four generals vanished through the spirals. As the others vanished Ultimecia walked forward as Ganma held out his hand, a note in his hand.

“The rules must be maintained,” Ganma said as he and Ultimecia exchanged papers, “Hmm... I see, that hasn’t happened yet, I hope it does soon, I’m curious as to what happens after.” He said as Ultimecia glared at him and vanished.

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The sun beat down on the desert-like plains that existed on the land surrounding the city of Midgar 100 miles in any direction. As the wind blasted the lifeless plains sparks and bolts of lightning appeared in the sky, creating a portal of electricity. As the portal grew the young man who was pulled into his television fell from the sky landing on the barren desert, looking a few years younger than before.

“Ugh,” he grunted in pain as he lay on the ground in pain. ‘I wonder where I am,’ he thought as he tried his best to look around while on the ground. As he laid on the ground he tried to remember what had happened as he regained his strength. ‘I guess that impact caused me some memory loss,’ he thought after several minutes of laying on the ground, ‘I can’t seem to recall much,’ he thought as he pushed himself up. “Well this is messed up...” he said as he rose to his knee.

“You there!” A voice yelled out as a sword was placed next to the head of the young man. “Who are you and what are you doing here?” the voice said as the young man gulped a bit.

Gathering up his courage the young man slammed his fist into the ground and spun to face the swordsman, “Tch, listen here punk...” he said trailing off as he looked at his attacker. ‘That hair, the clothes, the sword,’ he thought as he looked at the man, “C...C...Cl... Cloud Strife...” the young man said in awe as he stared at the other man. “YOU’RE CLOUD STRIFE!!!” the young man yelled as he pointed at the other man, not noticing the darker haired man that stood a few feet behind Cloud.

“Um... Yeah...” Cloud said a bit confused about the apparent teenager’s reaction.

“ YOU’RE CLOUD STRIFE” Rando said in a hyperactive voice as he poked Cloud’s arm, “TALL HAIR, WHAT GEL DO YOU USE?” he continued in his hyperactive rant as he touched Cloud’s hair, “WOW, THE COSTUME,” he smiled

as he pulled on Cloud's sleeve. As he continued his hyperactive poking and prodding of Cloud he failed to realize the annoyed look on Cloud's face from the attention and the angry look on the other man's face.

"And you are," Cloud asked, snapping Rando out of his hyperactivity.

"My name is Rando, that is all you need to know," He said as he struck a pose and a wind came out of nowhere to blow his coat around as he did so.

'Where is that wind coming from,' the dark haired man thought as he saw the coat flapping around.

"Well, why is that?" Cloud said as he pointed his sword at Rando's throat.

"Because," the Outsider laughed nervously as he gave a sheepish grin, "That's all I know." He said as he pointed at himself with his index finger, causing Cloud's eyes to go blank and the other man to face-fault at the unexpected comment from Rando.

"Forget him Cloud," the dark haired man said as Cloud lowered his sword, "He's nobody," he continued as he glared at the white haired youth.

"Who are you again?" Rando asked as he glared back at the black haired man.

"My name is Squall Leonhart." He said without blinking continuing to glare at Rando.

"Oh right, the apathetic one with girl troubles," Rando said as he winked and stuck his tongue out at Squall.

"Whatever," Squall said waving Rando off as if he were an insect, "Come on Cloud let's go." He said as he and Rando glared at each other, the electricity from the tension of anger towards each other nearly visible, causing Cloud to rub the back of his head hoping the SeeD wouldn't attack the teenager.

"Right our mission," Cloud said causing Rando to get distracted and look over at Cloud.

“Er... Mission?” Rando asked as the other two began to walk away, “Can I come along?” he asked as he followed them a bit, until Squall turned around and glared at him again.

“We don’t need the help of a hyperactive child.” Squall said calmly in a cold tone at Rando. Shocked a bit Rando lowered his head towards the ground, clenching his fists as a vein appeared on his forehead.

“FINE!!!” Rando yelled, shocking both Cloud and Squall, as well as causing them to feel a bit awkward as the youth stormed off into the distance leaving deep footprints in the sand like ground.

After walking for about half an hour Rando stumbled upon a large rocky outcropping and sat down on one of the large rocks to attempt to calm down. As the anger welled up inside him he grabbed a few small rocks and begun chucking them to calm himself.

“JERKS!!” he yelled as he tossed the last rock hitting a nearby tree and startling a cactaur standing a few inches from him on a nearby rock. “They could have at least told me where the town was before I stormed off!” he yelled at the sky as he leaned back against a larger boulder that was behind him.

“Still I wonder...” he mused to himself as he pulled a phone from his pocket and began to look it over, “When did Cloud put his phone in my pocket.” He continued as he spun the phone between his fingers.

As he continued to examine the phone it began ringing throwing a him a bit off guard. ‘CRAP!’ he thought as the cell continued to ring, ‘What do I do! Do I answer the phone or do I...’ he thought as he moved his fingers to answer the cell, ‘I guess it would be rude if I didn’t,’ he thought as he gulped.

“Um... Yello?” he answered the phone unsure of the consequences.

“Cloud?” the voice, named Aerith on the caller ID, asked probably a bit thrown off by the voice.

“No,” Rando exasperatedly said a bit worried about what the voice would think.

“Then who is this?” Aerith asked calmly with a serene sounding voice that seemed to erase Rando’s fear and caution.

“My name is Rando...” he said as he began to push himself up off the rocks.

Well then Rando,” Aerith’s voice said sweetly, “Why do you have Cloud’s phone?” she asked.

“Long story,” Rando said as he stood up in front of the rocky outcropping, “But first can I ask you a question. Could you tell me how to get to a town or something?” He asked with a bit of a laugh.

“Sure, but only if you tell me why you have Cloud’s phone.” Aerith said with her own laugh.

“It looks like we have a deal,” Rando said with a smile as he began walking.

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Far away from both the Castle Sabbath and the desert Rando had woken up in, a man with long white hair wearing black and silver clothing and armor leaned against a blossoming cherry tree.

The man sighed as he noticed something in the trees from the sound of the swaying of the branches and leaves. “What do you want mercenary?” he asked opening his eye.

“Lord Ganma wishes for you to kill a few people, Sephiroth,” a man dressed as a ninja standing on a tree branch said as he rested one of his hands on the tree.

“Which people?” Sephiroth asked as he stood up straight and looked upwards into the tree only for the mercenary to seemingly vanish.

“One of them is that SeeD troublemaker, Squall Leonhart, the second is an unknown Outsider like the one you failed to kill, you know, that Firos of Dark Heaven.” The mercenary said appearing behind Sephiroth.

“Is that all?” Sephiroth asked as he walked away from the tree.

“No,” Shadow said as he pulled a folder out of the pouch attached to his belt, “There is one more, an old friend of yours... Cloud Strife,” the mercenary said as

he handed the file to Sephiroth who, for a split second, had a look of shock and anger cross his face which Shadow noticed.

“Fine,” Sephiroth said as a dark look spread across his face, “But tell ‘*Lord*’ Ganma, that this...” he said as he began to walk away, “Is the last time I kill a friend. And if he asks again, then next time, I will *kill* him.” He continued as he walked off into the distance leaving the mercenary to go his own way.

“None of us likes the orders we are given,” Shadow said as he watched Sephiroth leave, “Those of us forced to work for him have our reasons,” he said to himself as he began to walk off in the opposite direction, ‘Sephiroth, you won’t have a chance to kill Ganma,’ he thought as he pulled a picture from his pocket and looked at it, ‘If he breaks his deal I’ll kill him myself before you even get close enough,’ he thought as he clenched his hand not holding the picture.

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“Tifa!” a woman dressed in red and pink yelled as she ran into a small bar, “Tifa are you here!” she yelled out the question as she looked around the bar.

“In the back, Aerith,” a voice came from a side room behind the bar. Following the sound from which the voice Aerith walked behind the bar and into the side room.

“Hello Tifa,” Aerith smiled as she touched the shoulder of the woman that was in the back room.

“What do you want Aerith?” Tifa asked as she stood up and turned around to face the other woman.

“I have a favor to ask of you Tifa,” Aerith said with a smile.

“No more favors Aerith,” Tifa said as she glared at her friend, “I already let you set up your flower shop here, you talked me into letting that SeeD use the second floor as a temporary home, and you talked me into joining the Midgar Protection Squad and allowing the others to use my bar as a meeting place!” Tifa said as she raised a finger each time she made a point, “No more favors.”

“All I want is for you to meet someone for me at the entrance of sector 5,” Aerith said as she gave a smile at her friend, “Please?” she asked sweetly.

“Fine,” Tifa said as the flower girl hugged her, “Last time Aerith, no more favors.” Tifa said as she once again glared at the other girl, “So who is this person?”

“Oh, right,” Aerith said as the two girls walked out of the store room, “His name is Rando,” She said as she walked over to the bar stools and sat down, “He’s an outsider.”

“LIKE GANMA!” Tifa yelled as she slammed her fist into the bar, “YOU CAN’T BE SERIOUS!” she continued yelling as she protested.

“He’s not the same as Ganma, that other outsider we’ve been hearing about is nothing like him either,” Aerith said calmly, “He’s kind and nice, but he’s confused and has no idea what is going on.” She said as she closed her eyes and clasped her hands together, “If he’s as strong as those other two outsiders, he may be able to save our world.”

“Isn’t it reckless to put our faith in one of them,” Tifa protested, “These outsiders are from another world! Why would they care to protect ours?” she said as she looked at her friend, “Think about what Ganma forced Sephiroth to do in order to keep us and Midgar safe!” she exclaimed as Aerith lowered her head sadly.

“I know Tifa,” Aerith said sadly, “But we shouldn’t blame all the outsiders for the actions of one.” She said clenching her fists to keep herself from crying.

“I’m sorry,” Tifa said as she rested her hand on her friend as she began to walk away, “I’ll go meet this Rando. Can you finish cleaning up around here for me?” She said as she walked through the door.

“Thank you Tifa,” Aerith said softly as the owner of the bar disappeared from sight.

Tifa walked through the streets of Midgar heading towards the sector 5 entrance, “Aerith is too trusting and optimistic,” Tifa said to herself as she walked, “First she believes that Sephiroth will one day return to our side, and now she believes an Outsider can help us.” She ranted to herself, not watching where she was going. As she continued ranting while walking she did not notice a red haired man as she walked right into him, knocking both of them down, “Hey!” Tifa yelled out at the man, “Watch where you’re going!”

“Why don’t you watch where your going,” the red haired man said back to her, “Or do you have problems seeing, Tifa?”he said as he held out a hand to help her up.

“Reno! What are you doing here, shouldn’t you be watching Yuffie?” Tifa asked as she got to her feet.

“Umm, yeah, about Yuffie...” Reno said as he scratched the back of his head.

“You lost track of her again!” Tifa yelled at the Turk, “I swear Reno if she breaks anything at my bar again!” She yelled raising her fist to the red haired man.

“Umm... I should go find her...” Reno said as he inched away from Tifa, “Bye!” he shouted back to her after he had gotten a ways away.

“I guess I shouldn’t be so hard on him, that girl is a handful,” she said to herself as she continued her trek to the sector 5 gate. Making it to the gate she waited as few people traveled in and out of the city. After an hour of waiting the gateway was completely empty with no one in sight.

“So where is this guy Aerith wanted me to meet?” she asked herself irritated at the amount of time she had wasted waiting. Shortly after she said that a teenager, dragging his feet looking half dead from exhaustion and dehydration slowly walked into sight.

“I finally made it...” Rando said to himself as he looked around. Due to the heat and exhaustion he couldn’t see much, but next to the gate he saw what looked like to him as large pillows, “PILLOWS!” he yelled as he jumped towards Tifa’s chest.

“PERVERT!” Tifa yelled punching the teen in the face knocking him to the ground. Infuriated she stood there for a few seconds, her fist still clenched as Rando lay unconscious on the ground mumbling about hard punching pillows.

Regaining her composure, Tifa knelt down and began poking the guy she had just punched as he continued mumbling. “I really hope this isn’t the guy Aerith wanted me to meet,” she said as she continued poking him.

Looking around she noticed that nobody else was heading towards the entrance. “Damn...” she said as she stood up. “I guess I can’t leave him here,” she said as she heaved him up and began walking down the road, his legs dragging as she walked.

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“I hope Tifa found Rando okay,” Aerith said as she wiped the counter at the flower booth that was inside the bar of 7th Heaven. As she waited she heard the bell at the door chime from the door opening, “Tifa, you’re ba... oh... it’s just you Reno...”

“Is that anyway to treat this bar’s best customer?” Reno said sarcastically as he walked up to the counter, “Have you seen Yuffie?”

“Lost track of her again?” Aerith asked with a smile as she arranged some of the flowers, “Well she isn’t here, and you should probably find her before Tifa finds out...” Aerith stopped as she saw his face, “She already knows, doesn’t she?”

“Yeah,” Reno said as he leaned backwards against the door, “Didn’t have this much trouble back before Sephiroth...” Reno stopped as he saw the sad look on Aerith’s face, “Sorry... I forgot...” Reno said as he gave a half smile, half frown.

“It’s okay,” Aerith said regaining her composure, “You should probably get back to finding Yuffie,” Aerith said as she gave him a smile.

“Yeah... seeya later!” he yelled as he headed out the door.

“YUFFIE BETTER NOT HAVE BEEN IN MY BAR RENO!” an angry voice yelled from outside.

“Well Tifa’s back now...” Aerith said as she gave a sigh of worry.

“Aerith can you get out here and help me!” Tifa yelled from outside an urgent tone in her voice. Heading outside, Aerith was surprised to see Tifa carrying an unconscious and injured young man.

“Oh, my...” Aerith said, a tone of shock and worry in her voice as she rushed to help Tifa carry the young man into the bar, “How hard did you hit him?” Aerith asked as she looked at the boy’s face.

“Not that hard,” Tifa said as she looked away from Aerith.

“I’ll ask why later, let me help you carry him,” She said as she grabbed the young mans arm. As she did so an old man’s voice entered her head an Aerith fell to the ground in a trance like state.

“Cetra, you feel it do you not,” the old man’s voice rang out in her head, “You feel the connection between my spirit and this innocent, this one I have chosen to wield my justice and fury upon those that threaten this world.”

“Who are you?!” Aerith yelled out to the old voice, “How do you know that I am of the Cetra?” Aerith asked as her mental image of herself stood in an empty void.

“I am the lord of the spirits that walks this plane among others,” the old man’s voice rang out with a loud deafening boom, but in a manner that did not sound like shouting, but rather that his voice contained a large presence, “And you Cetra are to inform this man of the state of the world, guide him with your knowledge, set him on the path.” As the voice subsided Aerith felt something poking her in the arm.

“Hey, Aerith,” Tifa said as the both held the unconscious youth, “You all right?”

“Huh...” Aerith said as she snapped back to reality, “Yeah, I’m fine, just a bit lightheaded...”

“You probably rushed out here too quickly,” Tifa said, “We better get both him and you inside as fast as we can.”

“You’re probably right,” Aerith said as she helped Tifa carry the young man up the steps and placed him in one of the seats, leaning him forward onto the table, “Tifa can you please remove his coat for me please?”

“Why?” Tifa asked a bit confused.

“Well if this is Rando then he should have Cloud’s phone in one of his pockets...” Aerith said as she sat down on one of the barstools. Looking over she saw Tifa pull the coat of the unconscious man and began to search the pockets, eventually pulling out Cloud’s cell. Tossing the phone to Aerith, Tifa walked behind the bar and leaned over it.

“Are you sure this is the guy?” Tifa asked unable to believe that this young teenager was one of the outsiders due to his weakness and the strength of the other outsiders.

“Yes, he had Cloud’s phone on him...” Aerith said as she closed her eyes, “and its hard to explain, but...” she said as she turned to Tifa, “I sense a nearly innocent presence in him...”

‘Innocent?! That pervert?!’ Tifa thought as she turned around and clenched her fist tight, as Aerith looked at her curiously. Calming down she lowered her fist and as she turned around she said, “Aerith, do you really believe we can, or even should, trust him?”

After thinking for a second, Aerith looked at Rando and smiled, “Cloud trusts him... That’s good enough for me.” Aerith said as she looked at the unconscious youth happily, as Tifa looked at her unconvinced.

“How do you know he didn’t just steal Cloud’s phone?” Tifa asked as he leaned forward over the counter.

“Because of the way he answered,” Aerith responded as she leaned backwards against the counter. As she finished speaking a low groan came from where Rando lay as he pushed himself away from the table.

“Where am I?” Rando said as he began to scratch his head as an intense pain came from his cheek, causing him to rub it at the same time, “And why does my face hurt?”

“Well...” Aerith said, getting his attention and waving at him as Tifa looked away angrily. Seeing Tifa’s angry face Rando began to think, after a short amount of time he eventually put two and two together.

“OH GOD!” Rando yelled as he fell to his knees, and knelt in front of the two women, “I’m so sorry...” Rando said apologetically as he lowered his head.

“Well...” Tifa said a bit embarrassed as a dark shadow in the window got closer and closer. Eventually the shadow fully covered Rando and the temporary silence was disrupted by a large crash as glass went flying everywhere and the foot of a fifteen year old girl made contact with the back of Rando’s head.

“Hey Tifa, Aerith, ummm... I...” Yuffie said excitedly as she scrambled to her feet.

“M... M... MY WINDOW!” Tifa yelled as she stared at the broken window, at the same time Aerith looked towards Yuffie’s feet worriedly.

“Oh, yeah... Sorry about that,” Yuffie said as she laughed nervously.

“Fourth time Yuffie!,” Tifa yelled at the young girl, “Fourth time this month you’ve broken my windows!”

“Only the fourth?” Yuffie asked jokingly as she gave a sheepish grin. As Yuffie finished speaking Tifa flipped herself over the bar and quickly moved behind the younger girl and put her in a sleeper hold. Meanwhile Aerith, still looking at the ground has grown more worried and has begun to point at the floor in an attempt to gain the attention of the others.

“This... is... not... a... joke... Yuffie...” Tifa growled into the young girls ear.

“Tifa! Yuffie!” Aerith yelled out directing their attention to the “ground” on which they stood. What they were standing on was not “ground”, but was in fact Rando who lay on the ground seemingly unconscious, his face slowly turning blue from an apparent lack of oxygen. “Could you please get off him?” Letting Yuffie out of the sleeper hold, Tifa and Yuffie stepped off Rando’s body and stood next to Aerith.

“Is he okay?” Yuffie said as she bent down and began to poke Rando repeatedly.

“Are you sure about him Aerith,” Tifa asked as she looked at the flower girl skeptically, “We’ve known him less than two hours and he’s been unconscious... twice.”

“Yes I’m sure.” Aerith said with her usual smile.

“And...” Rando’s voice cam from the floor as his hand stretched outwards, “I’m not unconscious, so can somebody please give me a hand and help me up?” he said as he struggled to push himself up, “I’m in a bit of pain and can’t seem to get up on my own.”

“Sure...” Yuffie said as she grabbed Rando’s hand and helped him up onto his feet. Still holding his hand Yuffie begins to scratch the back of her head, “Sorry about that...”

“Don’t worry about it,” Rando said as he smiled at the girl who only minutes earlier had kicked him in the back of the head, “you aren’t the first person to hit me in the head today.” He continued as he glanced over at Tifa who was whistling innocently as Aerith smiled nervously.

“Let me guess... Tifa?” Yuffie said as she chuckled a bit.

“Yeah...” Rando said as he laughed alongside her.

“I think Yuffie would like her hand back now,” Aerith said pointing out the fact that the two of them were still holding hands. Realizing this Rando pulled his hand back red from embarrassment and turned towards the two older women.

“Umm... Aerith, when we spoke earlier you said you’d tell me what’s going on when I got here...” Rando said as he took a step towards the flower girl and began to rub the back of his head, “So... What is going on here?” he asked as he looked at her questioningly.

“It’s a long story,” Aerith said as she turned away from Rando, her voice breaking.

“It’s not like I have anywhere to be...” Rando said unaware of the breaking of Aerith’s voice. Taking a few seconds Aerith regained her composure and spun around to face the outsider.

“All right...” she said with a false smile, “Take a seat at the bar and I’ll tell you everything.” As Aerith finished speaking she walked over to behind the bar, Rando sat down at the bar to hear what had happened. Seconds later Yuffie sat down next to him and smiled, causing him to blush a bit, before regaining his composure when he noticed Tifa glaring at him.

“It all began shortly after the war...” Aerith started.