**Exodus**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Teen And Up Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings, Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>Final Fantasy VII, Dissidia: Final Fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Cloud Strife, Sephiroth, Golbez (Final Fantasy IV), Zack Fair, Chaos (Dissidia: Final Fantasy), Cosmos (Dissidia: Final Fantasy), Tifa Lockhart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tags:</td>
<td>Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Friendship, Implied/Referenced Character Death, Violence, Mild Out of Characterness, Other warriors of Cosmos and Chaos may appear, Final Fantasy 7 characters may appear/mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Published: 2016-09-30 Updated: 2018-09-07 Chapters: 15/? Words: 27897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exodus**

by MoiDuh

**Summary**

In the aftermath of Advent Children Cloud finds himself transported to a new world. Now Cloud must fight in a war that he has no allegiance to or interest in.

Uploading my story from fanfiction.net
So if anyone is confused I accidently uploaded chapter 1 before the Prologue so the Prologue and chapter 1 are going up together.

Prologue

It was dark in the bar as Tifa slowly and carefully washed the countertop. She would not be opening tonight as a certain blonde warrior was returning home, after over a month’s absence. Cloud had been away delivering messages to the Northern Region and had been diverted home by a call for aid from the WRO. Denzel had intercepted a call from Cid informing them he had dropped Cloud near the Chocobo ranch and Cloud was riding Fenrir home. That had been three hours ago, meaning that Cloud should be arriving soon. That was of course if he didn’t stop in the wasteland first.

She could hear the sound of feet tearing around in the rooms above her and smiled. The children were excited. They loved when Cloud was home and while he could be detached he always had time for the children. Denzel in particular revelled in the time he could spend in Clouds presence whether it was talking his ear off about everyday occurrences or sitting quietly and basking in his pseudo father’s presence. Glancing at the clock Tifa decided that now would be the perfect time to start preparing Clouds favourite meal, even with her estimated time for detours Cloud would still have time to shower and greet the children before the food was ready.

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Stretching on her tippy toes to reach the top shelf Tifa pulled down a bottle of very expensive and very rare scotch used on occasions such as these. Occasions where Cloud had not only let her down but the children. She seethed with anger while attempting to hold back tears after informing the children that Cloud had chosen not to return home. Dinner had been subdued and it hurt her even further that she had put time and effort into the dish for Clouds sake.

“He better have a damn good excuse.” she muttered, pulling out a glass and pouring a rather generous helping of the drink. Downing the burning liquid. She huffed angrily and poured a second glass before pulling out her phone and once again dialled Clouds phone. The least he could do is answer why he had chosen to not come home. After dinner she had appeased the children’s pleas and made the journey to the church in the hope he was there. She had planned a long winded and angry speech to deliver to the blonde on arrival but had found no sign Clouds recent presence inside nor outside the ruin.

Breathing deeply to try to dispel the anger and frustration twisting her features she turned to plan B. Dialling a second number she placed the phone to her ear and prepared to listen to the likely exuberant greeting from the other end.

“HELLO!!” Tifa winced as Yuffie’s shrill greeting hurt her ears. “Hi Tifa what’s up I wasn’t expecting any calls from you tonight especially with Cloud finally returning home and you finally having the house to yourselves and the kids wanting to spend time with him cause he is never home and you were preparing a big dinner and stuff so I figured you’d be busy with the kids and then later Cloud all night if you get my drift.” Tifa clenched her fist at the reminder of the dinner and the kid’s excitement and waited patiently for Yuffie to take a breath so she could jump into the currently one-sided conversation.

“Yuffie,” she growled unable to keep her frustration out of her voice, “Where are you right now? Are you still in Kalm?” She was met with silence for a moment as Yuffie most likely gagged her tone and how to reply without angering her further.

“Well......Not exactly.” Yuffie paused and Tifa waited knowing Yuffie would take her silence as an opportunity to continue. “I may have stolen a little something something from someone who totally deserved it but they didn’t take it very well so I decided hey you know where I haven’ been in a while Junon. Sooooo I’m heading there now.”
“Where are you? Have you crossed the mountain? Are you close to the Chocobo farm?” Tifa asked quickly hoping Yuffie wasn’t closer to Junon then to where Cloud had been left off.

“Actually I passed it about twenty minutes ago. I crossed what looked like Fenrir’s tracks on a bit before that too. Wait! Let me guess Cloud was a no show.”

“No show is accurate. Yuffie I checked the church and he wasn’t there and it’s too late to check the cliff in the wastes children or no. Can you track Fenrir to try to find him or is that too big an ask of you?”

“Depends do I get something if I find our reclusive friend?”

“If you find him and slap him across the head then yes.” Tifa smiled into the phone, hearing an exclamation of glee from the other end. Briefly exchanging words of goodbyes Tifa hung up downed the second glass and waited.

Tifa stared confused at the sight in front of her. Glancing to her left she took in Yuffie’s equally confused expression tinted with worry and fear.

“And there’s no other tracks? It’s been a while they could have faded!” Tifa exclaimed her eyes beginning to fill with tears as her earlier anger dissipated into fear. Yuffie turned to her and shook her head.

“The only other marks I found is the one you can very clearly see for yourself. I searched a mile in each direction. There’s nothing.” Yuffie glanced up as the Shera entered her line of sight. Tifa glanced up briefly to witness the soon to be arrival of their friends before glancing back to the sight before her, Fenrir abandoned on its side in the middle of the open countryside and the blackened earth that spanned a perfect circle thirty feet in each direction. Glancing around the scene there was one thing missing, the most important thing, there was absolutely no sign that Cloud had been anywhere in the vicinity other than the tracks Yuffie had followed. He was gone and from what Yuffie had explained he had vanished into thin air.

A blast of wind hit Tifa from behind she turned and watched the Shera land. Her heart suddenly in her throat Tifa finally let the tears fall. Cloud was gone. He was just……gone.
Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

So I made a mistake and uploaded this chapter before the Prologue so If you are one of the 4 people who have read the story and are confused the Prologue is now in its rightful place and this chapter is now the second chapter of the story if that makes any sense to anyone. Sorry :/

So here is Chapter 1. A little information before you continue reading. I am a big fan of Final Fantasy VII and of the Final Fantasy series. This story will be AU in that while following the storylines from Crisis Core the original game and Advent Children I have made up my own vision of the Dissidia universe. I have only played the Cloud part of the game because I really hated a certain character who I will not name and could not put myself through the torture of playing with him. This means I haven’t played all of Clouds story but I have watched it on Youtube. I will do my best to keep the story of Dissidia as similar as possible with some changes made for my story to progress as I wish it to. I am also using my sisters knowledge (who has completed the game) to help guide me through how different characters arcs connected with Clouds. This is my take on how I see the story so I hope you like it.

I hope to put up a chapter once a week. These chapters are the introduction to the story so I felt they should come out together. I shut up now. Enjoy.

P.S. I don’t own anything except my overactive imagination.

Chapter 1

Blue eyes scanned the horizon from where they sat perched on a cliff edge. From this vantage point hawk like vision could see any and all visitors to his chosen area. Cloud had selected this area because of its solitude. With only one entrance he could easily protect his safe haven and would have plenty of warning of unwanted company. Less than forty minutes ago the crystal at the entrance had glowed brightly signalling the arrival of a guest. Friend or foe was the question. Cloud tensed ready to spring into action as a shadow loomed across the scorched earth. He watched as an armoured individual appeared from behind a rocky alcove relaxing as he recognised the figure. A smirk appeared on his face as he raised an arm uttering a word under his breath. Feeling power emanate from his fingertips he watched as a fireball appeared before it flew forward and struck the already scorched earth in front of his ally and only friend in this conflict. The figure barely flinched used to the game and instead raised his own arm in greeting.

“Cloud,” Golbez announced expression unreadable behind his helm, “One of this days I will use magic back, than we shall see how long you remain undefeated.” Cloud cocked his head to the side and regarded his friend carefully.

“If I didn’t attack you, you would know something was wrong and if you reacted I would know you were an imposter. We have to be careful now that the Manikins have come into play.” Cloud watched as Golbez approached and stood before him.

“Never drop your guard! A lesson which all must learn and follow.” Golbez announced guffawing before sitting beside the smaller blonde. “Although, not one we should concern ourselves with, considering the Manikins fight for us not against us.” He turned to Cloud and regarded him carefully as he waited for his reply. He enjoyed his conversations with the blonde who reminded him of someone he cared for. A darker version of said someone, but the light behind the darkness, shone just as bright, if not brighter. Not for the first time did Golbez wonder how Cloud ended up on the side of Chaos. “How is the lone warrior these days?” Golbez questioned.
“Alone and enjoying it. I did not ask to be a part of this war. I did not agree to be a part of it. I just wish to be left to my taughts.” Cloud replied, eyes set on the horizon. 
“How are your taughts? Have you found the answers you seek?”
“No not yet. I still haven’t found another way to return to my home.”
“It may take time.”
“I have had seventeen cycles of time,” Cloud growled in frustration. “I should have found something by now.”
“You have only truly looked for eight cycles do not despair, the answer may come, and you might find it quicker if you returned to the battle front.” Golbez gaged the blonde’s reaction to his statement and was surprised when he was not met with anger.
“No,” Cloud calmly stated, “I will not fight, I do not have a stake in this battle, nor have I any interest in the quarrels of gods. If they truly wanted to fight, they would do so themselves. We are nothing but pawns, the fighting will not stop until Chaos or Cosmos are defeated. Nothing will be gained by our battles.” Golbez was surprised. It had been a while since he had heard the blond speak so much. He could easily see the sense in Clouds words and would not argue. Cloud would not fight for the sake of fighting, something much stronger than words would be needed to convince the blonde he needed to re-join the conflict.

“Have you had any visitors recently?” Golbez questioned, changing the subject abruptly and getting to the true reason for his visit. Cloud glanced at him briefly.
“No. Hardly anyone comes here, and those that try barely ever make it past the hound of hell guarding my door.” Golbez nodded. Few ever made it to this area since Cloud took up residence. Those that did had only done so when the doorway was without its sentry, and those who made it past didn’t make it back. ‘There are new warriors on Cosmos’ side.” Golbez announced. “They may try to come here. They will not know of your reputation. Since your withdrawal from battle few do.”

“Are you trying to goad me into returning? You should know by now that I do not rise to taunts.”
“Just an observation and a warning. Your self-inflicted solitude may be interrupted by someone other than me. The fighting is beginning to intensify, they have learned that they need to fight to go home.”

“It cannot be the only way.” Cloud breathed, so low Golbez hardly heard.
“I must return. I trust you will stay safe.” Golbez stood and watched as Cloud did the same.
“I’ll be fine, I haven’t lost since my first cycle. I don’t plan on losing again, you should worry about yourself.”
“My response is the same as your own. I only lose once. I may visit again before this cycle ends, it depends on whether or not any of these new players are any fun to play with.” Golbez studied Cloud carefully. “When this war is over I will test myself against your strength. As the longest surviving warriors I think it would be apt. Until then my friend.”

“Done with your visit than? You didn’t stay very long.” Golbez turned at the bored and mocking tone. He scrutinised the figure in front of him with distain.
“My business is not yours to concern yourself with and neither is his.” Golbez spat. “Not all of us can spend our time being a guard dog to one who does not need guarding.” The figure before him smiled and stood straighter against the wall he was leaning on.
“I wonder why you are so keen on visiting here. Is it because you cannot visit the one you really wish to see?”
“Hardly.” Golbez replied turning on his heel and beginning his journey to the closest crystal in this area, “I enjoy his company. Something you know nothing about. He doesn’t need you pretending you’re useful. Why don’t you do something more worthy of you time? Why not wash your hair.” A frown appeared on his opponents face.
“You know nothing of how Clouds mind works.” The figure responded his tone still mocking, but
a bite had entered into it, “When he returns to the fight he will fight alongside me, not you. We shall be unstoppable together, and you will sleep with despair knowing that no one, not even the one you truly want to be with to be with, wants to be with you.” Golbez shook his head and continued his journey not stopping to glance behind him as he spoke, “You do not even try to understand. He will surprise you in the end but not me. When he re-enters this war he will fight alone.” Golbez stepped up to the crystal activating it without turning around. The sooner he was away from the silver haired warrior the better.

So as you can see if you read the chapter I have made Cloud and Golbez friendly with one another. I noticed that there was very little time spent looking at the relationships between the warriors of Chaos, be they friends or Foes, other than Cloud and Sephiroth in Dissidia games. Hopefully I didn’t make Golbez too OC. He is still an incredibly powerful warrior and villain but I wanted to explore his friendship with Cloud here. I didn’t play his game but I do know he is not completely one-sidedly evil character. Hopefully you like where this is going. Thanks for reading. I hope to have another chapter out in about a week :D
Chapter 2

So I’m apologising now if you find my upload schedule is erratic. This chapter turned out different to what I originally intended but I’m really happy with the change and I think it suits the story much better. Enjoy.
P.S. I don’t own anything except my overactive imagination.

Chapter 2

“I didn’t ask for this. I didn’t agree to be a pawn in someone else’s war.” Staring across the barren landscape Cloud closed his eyes and breathed deeply. “I said no.”

Cloud doesn’t know what made him stop. He can’t understand the sudden urge to slam on the breaks and spring from Fenrir. Yet here he stood, First Tsurugi drawn and ready to strike. Cloud surveyed the surrounding area, nothing but empty fields stretching as far as his eyes could see. The only difference in scenery was to his left, there mountains loomed in the distance, too far to be an issue. Crouching low, Cloud once again searched his surroundings. Still nothing. So why did he feel as if he was under attack. Why did it feel unnatural? It was almost as if. No! He wouldn’t go there. He wouldn’t even consider the idea. Standing slowly Cloud battled against his instincts which were currently screaming that something was seriously wrong.

Taking a deep breath Cloud rolled his shoulders, in the hope it would shake off his reservations both in continuing his journey and staying where he was. Glancing around again, he carefully swung a leg over Fenrir’s spine. It was as he was reaching for the ignition that his entire body flooded with the need to run to get out before it was too late.

“Cloud.” Cloud leapt, once again, from Fenrir’s back and crouched in a defensive position. He stared at the area behind Fenrir. Confused he glanced around the area once again. The voice had come from directly behind him. Even with his enhanced hearing he knew the differences in distance. It had echoed, almost like hers did. No. It hadn’t been her. He would not even consider the idea. Standing slowly Cloud battled against his instincts which were currently screaming that something was seriously wrong.

“Aerith?” He had to ask, had to be sure, the only other option was so much worse. The hair at the back of his neck stood up as he was met with silence. It hadn’t been her, she would have answered, or at the very least given him a sign.

“Do not fear weapon of Gaia.” Cloud reared around again confused as the voice spoke again. He didn’t understand. It wasn’t Aerith, he was sure now. The voice, while undeniably female, did not resemble that of his lost friend. He raised his guard once again. If it wasn’t her it had to be Jenova. Clouds brow furrowed in frustration. Where was the pain? The sharp stabbing, blinding, unforgivable agony that struck him whenever Jenova graced him with her presence.

“Warrior of Gaia. I need your assistance.”

“No!” Cloud didn’t hesitate to respond. “You won’t trick me again.” He declared loudly.

“I do not wish to trick you.” The voice was soft and sweet, the peaceful tone behind it made Cloud want to trust it immediately. He would not fall under it spell. He had fallen for a tone like that once and had paid dearly for it.

“What do you want?” Cloud spat glaring at the spot behind Fenrir. He couldn’t pinpoint where the voice originated from and instead chose to address the last place he heard it.

“I need a warrior, one who can turn the tides of war. Will you fight for me?”

“No!” Again Clouds response was immediate.

“I am not your enemy. The enemy wishes to eradicate peace and harmony from this world and all others. I beseech you, fight for me.” Cloud didn’t respond choosing to ignore the voice and leave this area immediately. He returned to Fenrir watching his back the entire way and this time didn’t hesitate to turn the ignition. Fenrir roared to life drowning out the continued pleas of the
disembodied voice.
“Please.” The voice cried, “I’m running out of time.”

“NO!” Cloud bellowed, his voice carrying over the sound of Fenrir’s engine. “My answer is NO!” Slamming on the accelerator Cloud aimed Fenrir towards Edge. He couldn’t take the voice home. Instead he would go to the crags of Midgar. Zack would protect him from the voice. Zack would help him block it out.

It hit him harder than any monster or enemy had ever hit him before, even Jenova’s relentless attacks from inside his own mind paled in comparison. He was thrown from Fenrir’s back as Agony exploded from every fiber of his being. He was burning. He couldn’t breathe. He could feel himself fading away. His entire body suddenly plunged into icy numbness. Screaming into the abyss Cloud felt another presence attack his mind.

“No, he is not yours to take, Warrior join me now.” The being screamed.

“No.” He gritted body protesting as the torture continued. He would not give in no matter how painful.

“Please I beg you join me.” The voice sounded distressed now. Cloud could barely comprehend. There was a roaring in his ears and the distant sound of laughter. Cloud felt the last recesses of strength leave him. Falling into the darkness he heard another voice, deep, mocking and full of amusement. It uttered one word.

“MINE.”

Cloud breathed deeply staring at the crystal which had consumed Golbez’s large figure minutes before hand. Did he have a point, was the only way to go home to fight. Eight cycles, how many more would he need to search?

“Maybe,” Cloud cocked his head at the familiar voice beside him, “the answer isn’t here. Maybe it’s outside this area.” Cloud stayed staring ahead, if he turned to face the voice it would vanish and he would once again be left alone.

“I won’t fight for them. I won’t be their puppet.” Cloud breathed.

“Then don’t. Don’t fight, do the same as you have done for the last eight cycles and only engage when people don’t heed your warning and try to fight you anyway.” The voice paused for a moment before continuing. This time a hint of laughter had entered into it.

“Either way, I think it’s time to get a better view Spikey. Maybe a beach. Think Cosmos’ warriors like to frolic in the ocean?” Cloud smirked at the teasing tone in his friend’s voice.

“If they do, than it’s a wonder there’s a war in the first place, besides the majority I have seen have been male. Something you need to tell me?” Cloud listened silently as his friend laughed boisterously. He glanced at the crystal before him, staring at it as if it would give him all the answers he needed.

“I think you’re right though. It’s time to move on, if there is another way the answer is out there. I need to find it.”

“I’m right beside you, even if you can’t always see me. I got your back, Spike.” Cloud swore he could feel a hand resting on his shoulder. He knew better. Cloud turned around, taking in the empty landscape before him.

“Thank you Zack.” Even though he couldn’t see his friend he could feel his presence nearby. Cloud turned to the crystal. There was an answer out there. He would find it. He had to find it.

This chapter was originally just going to be a flashback to Cloud being taken by Chaos. I had written the flashback first and when reading over just started writing more this is what happened. Let me know what you guys think. Thanks for reading.
Chapter 3

So here’s chapter 3. I struggled to figure out what would happen when Cloud left his hiding place. Instead I just started writing and this is what happened. I’m actually happy with how it turned out. Hopefully you’ll enjoy it.

P.S. I own nothing but my over active imagination.

Chapter 3

Green eyes widened slightly as the Crystal next to them began to glow. Taking a step back their owner watched in disbelief as Cloud strode into view. He watched as Cloud briefly glanced in his direction before turning and walking away in the opposite direction to where he stood.

“Now this is interesting.” The owner of the eyes spoke, watching the blonde’s shoulders tense before continuing to walk away, choosing to ignore his presence. Smiling lightly he followed the figure in front of him.

“I wonder what news Golbez brought that has riled you enough to leave your safe haven.” Cloud stopped walking and turned to face him.

“I don’t have time for your games, Sephiroth.”

“What games, Cloud? I just wish to know what could possibly have prompted you to return to the war.”

“I’m not,” Cloud kept his gaze focused on the ground below him refusing to make eye contact, “I’ve learned everything I can by staying here. It’s time to find somewhere new.” Cloud turned again and resumed his journey. He had barely take two steps when he felt a leather clad hand on his shoulder trying to force him to turn. Pulling his sword from its holster he did just that.

“Do not touch me, unless you want a repeat of your first cycle here.” Cloud spat the words, holding his sword between them and taking in the narrowed eyes of his opponent. The tip of First Tsurugi was against Sephiroth’s chest. His hand hovered over the mechanism which would unlock a second sword should he need it.

“I do not wish you any harm, I only wish to understand.” He watched as Cloud’s brow furrowed confused as to why Sephiroth’s Masamune had not come into play. Usually by now a fight had broken out between them. This time it seemed Sephiroth was keeping his temper at bay, despite this the sword between them did not lower. “We are on the same side, Cloud.”

“Stop that!” Cloud exclaimed, “Stop saying my name! Stop this caring act! It doesn’t suit you. I’m leaving.” Cloud took several steps backwards watching Sephiroth carefully before turning once again and following the path which would take him to one of closest crystals. He was half way there when he once again spun around this time his sword pointed at Sephiroth’s throat.

“Stop following me!” Sephiroth watched as anger flooded Cloud’s features. He cautiously watched the younger male, trying to figure out how to carefully navigate around Cloud’s bad mood. He knew that his presence brought out the blondes more feral instincts.

Sephiroth had learned early on that Cloud was not an opponent to take lightly. His first cycle here Cloud had driven his First Tsurugi through his chest before he had even fully formed, or so he had been told on numerous occasions by his amused allies. Kefka in particular loved to rub his humiliating defeat in every chance he could get. It didn’t help that Cloud had long regained his memories before Sephiroth’s arrival to the battlefield. In the beginning Sephiroth had been at a loss, trying and failing to understand the blonde’s absolute distain for him. This had led to some rather embarrassing encounters before Sephiroth himself had regained his own memories. Bit by bit, cycle after cycle Sephiroth had slowly put together the puzzle that was Cloud Strife. On regaining his memories he had quickly realised what had caused Clouds initial attack and the motivations behind it. Since then he had vowed to change their relationship. He had taught protecting the blonde and thus allowing him the solitude he craved would help to build bridges between them. Apparently he was wrong. Cloud still looked at him the same as he did the day he
had followed Golbez outside his hiding place and took in the sight of Sephiroth guarding the entrance. A look of anger, disdain and under it all fear. Studying the blonde before him Sephiroth could clearly see the hint of fear in Clouds eyes. The same eyes which still refused to meet his own. Clouds refusal to look into Sephiroth’s eyes made it even harder for Sephiroth to prove he was being sincere. Like Cloud he had spent the last eight cycles looking for answers. Answers to how to win Clouds trust and prove that he had changed. Golbez had struck home when he had said Sephiroth lacked understanding. There were many things Sephiroth didn’t understand and they all seemingly revolved around the complex blonde.

“Be direct tell him the truth.” Sephiroth frowned as the whispered words echoed in his mind. He had heard this voice before, it had visited him often during his musings over Cloud, offering insights and opinions which he had welcomed. The voice was a mystery. A mystery that had laughed at him when he had attempted to solve it. He felt as though he knew who was speaking to him, it was male and familiar. Yet every time he had tried to focus on it, tried to isolate it, the voice had dissipated as if it never existed in the first place.

Cloud was still watching him cautiously, and once again had begun to distance himself from Sephiroth. Sephiroth let him reach the crystal before he spoke again.

“I will follow you Cloud.” He watched as Cloud froze, his expression unreadable. “I wish for us to fight together, together we could defeat Cosmos and her so called warriors. Her defeat would bring you everything you have searched for.” He sighed knowing this was not what Cloud wanted to hear. “I do not understand your refusal to fight but I will follow you. I will prove that I am no longer the evil being you remember. I want you to look back to a time when you didn’t see me a soulless demon. To a time before her.” He looked to Cloud again. He was listening that much he could tell.

“Keep going.” Sephiroth heard the voice whisper.

“I cannot hear her here. I cannot feel her presence nor the crushing bitterness and anger she forced upon me. She cannot reach us here. I am not her plaything anymore, her vessel to use as she willed. I am not the one who wreaked havoc upon the earth destroying everything dear to you. Not anymore. I am only Sephiroth. The one you once idolised and wanted to fight alongside. The one who rose through the ranks of SHINRA as a hero not a villain. The one who fell victim to a devil disguising itself as an angel. The one who sees the mistakes he has made and wishes to fix them. I will do my utmost to prove to you that I have changed.” Sephiroth glanced away from the blonde, he felt as if he had gone too far. Spoken too much. He had never vocalized so much to anyone before and his speech in its self-had been a step too far outside of his comfort zone. Would Cloud see it as another trick or would he feel the sincerity behind his words.

“Do as you wish.” Sephiroth glanced back up and watched in disbelief as for the first time, since his arrival in this world, Clouds eyes met his own. “I will always view you as a monster Sephiroth. So far your actions, and your words, have done nothing to prove me that you are anything less. Your true colours will show eventually and I will end you when they do.” Sephiroth watched as Cloud took a step backwards and was consumed by the crystals glow.

“Well it’s a start.” The now amused voice breathed.

I hope you like how this story is progressing so far. I’m worried I’m moving too slow but also feel that if I move on I will go too fast and skip out things that will be important later. I struggled to write Sephiroth. He has always been my favourite villain of the Final Fantasy series partly due to the fact that he could easily be both purely evil and someone who was manipulated and twisted beyond recognition by Jenova’s influence. It’s easy to argue for both. I see him as a victim of circumstance, the same as Cloud. He is the mirror image of Cloud in the sense that he is what Cloud could easily have become. I think, or rather I hope, that I got both sides of Sephiroth across, the pure evil version and the victimised one in this chapter. I hopefully didn’t just end up making him completely OC and a laughable character. I plan on exploring his and Clouds relationship in later chapters. I still don’t know which version of Sephiroth will win out but despite this I have a
clear vision of how this story will end. It’s the middle that I still have to think out and explore in my mind, so like I said in the last chapter my updates may be erratic. Hopefully I’m making some sort of sense. Let me know what you think. Thanks for reading.
Chapter 4

Sephiroth was furious, livid, fuming, enraged. He would need to find a dictionary to help him further describe how angry he currently was. Three days. It had been three days since he followed Cloud through the crystal and by the end of day one he had been ready to strangle the blonde.

Watching the scene before him Sephiroth could feel his blood boiling. Cloud was stood over a young warrior, First Tsurugi pointed at his throat. Cloud had been speaking to warrior beneath him for the last ten minutes with no sign of actually ending their life. This had been the fourth time this happened and every single time the battles ended the same. Cloud swiftly defeated his opponent, questioned them and, infuriatingly, let them go. Clenching his fist Sephiroth stifled the urge to attack both Cloud and the nameless warrior of light.

“Do it.” Sephiroth breathed deeply, ignoring the voice that had entered his head. “Do what you were brought here to do. Kill. Destroy. Annihilate. Where is the Sephiroth of legend?” Taking another deep breath Sephiroth felt the air shimmer around him as the owner of the voice projected their image before him.

“He is exactly that. A legend. A myth that no longer exists.” Sephiroth spoke, watching as the figure before him shook as booming laughter filled his mind. The figure turned, a snarl appearing on their face as they took in the scene. “Did you bite off more than you could chew?” Sephiroth questioned, smirking as the figure turned to face him, fury clouding his features.

“Pathetic. Compassion is a weakness. It is a disease, destroying those who fall before it. It makes the strong weak and the useful useless. I will stamp out his compassion for others, erase his conscience. I will make him into a warrior that all shall fear. He will be the thing of nightmares. People will tell odes of his power at night and he will rise when the shadows are at their strongest.” The figure looked him up and down. “He will be the perfect soldier. He is a WEAPON and I will utilise him to his full potential. I will turn him into what you once were, before you adopted this idea that you are anything but a monster. A demon with no soul, no heart and no love for anyone, not even your precious ‘mother’.” Sephiroth shook with anger. His entire being itching to attack, to destroy the figure before him.

Freezing Sephiroth’s anger grew as the figure before him laughed once more. “Maybe I should remind you of who you truly are. Who you will always be. Shall I open the door? Would you like to hear her again?” Reaching forward the figure placed his index finger against Sephiroth’s forehead. “Let us in. Let the true you run free, it’s time you re-joined my war. It’s time you reminded Cloud of the failures of humanity. Unlock the cage you have forced the true Sephiroth within. Bring despair and misery. Unleash the beast.” The figure watched as Sephiroth’s pupils dilated, his iris’s glowing brightly.

“How do I regain his trust if I do exactly what I have done before?” Sephiroth questioned. His anger growing. He shook once again gritting his teeth, his skin crawling as his blood boiled with the fury within him. The figure before him laughed again, the sound boomed inside his mind echoing for several moments before dying away.

“It is not you who must regain his trust, it is he who must regain yours. He betrayed you Sephiroth turned against you and your ‘mother’, and now he doing the same to me. Teach him a lesson and then bring him home.”

“Why do you care if he fights or not. Your army is filled with the most powerful and evil creatures from many worlds. Why not ignore him as he has ignored you?” Sephiroth questioned, watching the smile grow on the figures face.

“Imagine, just imagine if you turned Gaia’s most powerful WEAPON, a WEAPON made to fight for good, to protect, into the most evil being to ever have lived. Into a demon and monster whose sole purpose is to destroy. Imagine the anarchy and confusion it would bring. I thrive in chaos, and
I strive to bring it. It is who and what I am. It is not just a name Sephiroth, I am CHAOS inside and out.” Chaos stood tall before him, his smile wider than ever, revealing his sharp fangs. “I want you to destroy Cloud’s faith in humanity in good and virtuous individuals who are anything but. Remind him why harmony is worse than Chaos. Remind him why you are the first and favourite son of Jenova. Remind of him of your power.”

Sephiroth watched as the figure before him faded away. He turned his attention back to Cloud. Chaos was right, why was he trying to appease someone who clearly hated him. Why was he trying to appease someone who was actively betraying his allies? Cloud was a traitor and needed to learn his place. He needed to be reminded that he was a warrior of Chaos and not of Cosmos. It was time to force Cloud to fight. Sephiroth smiled. His eyes glowed brightly. Listening he felt a presence enter his mind, one he had not felt since his arrival here, one that had been locked away.

“Hello ‘Mother’.” He greeted, sighing in contentment as he was bathed in the warmth of his ‘mothers’ voice. Her presence filling him with satisfaction. He watched Cloud finally turn from the warrior beneath him. He watched him re-sheath his sword and walk away. He watched the warrior stand, watched him fall into his battle position, and watched him charge Cloud. It was time to return to the war. It was time to remind the warriors of light of how pathetic and weak they truly were.

Clouds instincts warned him to turn around seconds after he had begun to walk away from the warrior of light. He turned quickly raising his sword in defence. He froze, gasping as blood spattered his face. Eyes widening Cloud took a step back creating distance between him and the bloody tip of Masamune, which was a mere inch from his throat.

“What have you done?” Cloud spoke softly, shocked at the sight before him. He watched as Sephiroth smirked, swiftly yanking his sword from the throat of the warrior between them. Reaching forward Cloud caught the warrior before they hit the ground. He trembled as he held him carefully, putting pressure on the neck wound.

“I’m sorry.” Cloud spoke. The warrior’s eyes were wide, pupils blown. Cloud watched their mouth move, attempting to form words, nothing came. Instead the warrior choked on the blood filling his throat, drowning him. Tears filled Cloud’s eyes as he attempted to soothe the warriors passing. There was no saving him. The wound was fatal. “I’m so sorry!” Cloud closed his eyes tightening his grip on the warrior’s throat he twisted up and to the side. Cloud tensed, the crack was almost deafening. He felt the warrior go limp. Glancing down he stared into the now faceless eyes. Carefully closing them Cloud felt a tear fall down his cheek. He wiped it angrily away from his face. Laying the warrior down. Cloud turned to face their killer.

“What have you done?”

Okay so I hope that worked. I struggled really hard to write this chapter. I tried on several occasions to write it and just couldn’t do it. It was really Sephiroth I struggled with and the fact that what I originally planned to write just seemed so dull and boring (Its okay if you still taught it was dull and boring). I’m slightly worried that the change in Sephiroth was too sudden and doesn’t match the Sephiroth I wrote last chapter. I tried to write from that point but I couldn’t seem to make it work. I decided to jump forward in time because I kept coming back to this image of Sephiroth watching Cloud from afar and getting angry over his actions and the imagine of Sephiroth with his sword through the throat of a warrior was one I really wanted to write. I also chose to keep the warrior nameless because I didn’t want to upset or anger anyone. I did actually choose a warrior it could be but just imagine it was another warrior taken from a random world. I got way too deep into Cloud’s mind at the end so I need to go find something happy now. I hope you liked the chapter. Let me know what you think. Thanks for reading.
Chapter 5

P.S. I don’t own anything except my overly active imagination.
Chapter 5

“Heh…guess I’m off my game.” He watched as his machinegun landed several feet away from him. This was problematic. The problem, his opponent was standing between him and his weapon. Twisting to the side avoiding a side kick aimed at his abdomen and quickly made a grab for the dagger in his boot. He had just laid a hand on its hilt when he felt something smash into his back sending him sprawling to the ground. He landed heavily on his front, gasping in shock at the unexpected blow. Twisting quickly onto his back he froze. Staring carefully at the formidable enemy above him, he cursed under his breath realising there was no easy way out of his current predicament.

“I said I just wanted to talk.” The figure before him spoke. Laguna felt the tip his opponents overly large sword briefly touch his throat before it was pulled back slightly. He shivered at the feeling of cold steel against bare skin, shaking off an image of the sword impaling his neck, he quickly returned his attention back to his enemy. He had underestimated his opponent and was paying for it. He had assumed the warrior to be new. He hadn’t seen him last cycle. This was not a warrior that had just arrived to the war. This was one who had been around for more than one cycle and certainly more than his own two.

“Well you got my attention now. Let talk.” He took in the figure before him, mentally slapping himself in the face for being so stupid. “I haven’t seen you before. How long have you been a part of the war?” He spoke quickly, surprising himself at his own question. Still it was useful information. How long had this warrior been here? Why was he only making an appearance now? Thinking back to an earlier encounter with Zidane he realised that this must be the warrior he had fought and lost to. He needed to find out just how screwed he was.

“That’s irrelevant.” The warrior spoke. Laguna once again wanted to mentally hit himself, why on earth he had taught the warrior before him would actually answer that was beyond him. “Why are you here?” Laguna raised an eyebrow that was not what he was expecting.

“Well, you hit me from behind. I fell and your sword is kind of keeping me here. Let me up and I’ll happily leave if me being here is offending you.” Laguna smiled widely at his opponent hoping warriors of Chaos had a sense of humour.

“The reason you are on the ground is because you left your back open. Never give an adversary a chance to take advantage of your blind spots. Why are you here?” Laguna huffed feeling as if he had just been scolded despite being the older of the two. He still didn’t understand the question though.

“One, my leg cramped, I didn’t leave my back open on purpose. It’s a condition and you need to accept it. Two, I don’t understand what you mean. I’m here as one of Cosmos’ warriors. Why are you here?”

“I’m looking for answers.”

“Of course you are.” Laguna wanted to throw back his head and laugh but the large sword inches from his throat had him thinking better of it. “What answers are you looking for exactly?”

“Why did you come here?” Laguna once again was left at a loss.

“Same question different wording there buddy. Care to elaborate.”

“Why did you agree?” Laguna cocked his brow, staring at the blonde before him.

“Agree? Why did I agree to what?”

“To join the war. Why did you agree to fight for Cosmos?” That’s what this was all about. Laguna once again regarded the warrior before him. Was this really a warrior of Chaos? Something was off.

“I don’t remember. I just know that it felt right. A damsel was in distress, I wanted to help.” His
answer seemed to trouble the blond before him. He watched as his brow furrowed and his shoulders had slumped so slightly Laguna almost missed it.

“This isn’t our war. Why fight in it?” Laguna was silent for a moment. The question had surprised him. Why was he fighting?

“I agreed, and it’s the only thing I can do.” The words stuck home with Laguna and from what he could see the warrior before him and also been affected. The sword was lowered and the warrior stepped back.

“It can’t be the only thing.” The words were spoken at barely a whisper but Laguna was shocked at the sadness and anger behind the words. This was a warrior of Chaos? Normally they were brutal, merciless and angry. Why did this one seem so much more human? Why did Lagunas words affect him so deeply? The warrior spoke again pulling Laguna from his thoughts only to plunge him deeper within them.

“I’m leaving. You wanted a fight, I understand that. If you still wish to fight than attack me. I will fight you but I will not kill you, and you will not defeat me. I’m leaving.”
Laguna watched the warrior leave. He couldn’t just let him walk away. Could he? Others had been met him before, he knew that from Zidane’s encounter. It had to be the same warrior. He had let both of them go, but what if next time he didn’t. He was a warrior of Chaos. This had to be a ploy of some sort. Laguna was torn. Chaos would order this warrior to kill eventually. Laguna had only seen a fraction of this warrior’s strength. He was incredibly skilled and well trained. Could he let such a formidable enemy walk away without at least trying to defeat them?

No! He couldn’t. Laguna stood. He pulled the dagger from his boot. He would hit the warrior from behind and from there try to manoeuver himself closer to his machinegun. Taking a deep breath, he attacked.

“What have you done?” Cloud cried, his eyes wide as he took in the form before him.

“I have done what you refuse to do. He was acting dishonourably attacking you from behind.”

Sephiroth looked to the figure on the ground with distain. “He was weak, he deserved to die.”

Cloud stared in disbelief before snarling and slamming his hands into Sephiroth’s chest. He pushed the older warrior back several times before slamming his fist into Sephiroth’s cheekbone.

“The only dishonourable one here is you Sephiroth,” Cloud roared, “You not only attacked him from behind you murdered him! Is that the only way you can land a kill? Attacking those who cannot see you coming?” Cloud visibly shook, anger and grief overwhelming him.

This was his fault, he had given the warrior permission to attack. He had been prepared. His guard had been up. Sephiroth had watched this happen with the last warrior too. This didn’t make any sense Sephiroth had been frustrated with him over letting warriors walk away, but why now? Why attack this warrior? Why…..Cloud froze. He glared at Sephiroth, studying him carefully. He took in the pulsing green eyes and ground his teeth in anger.

“Did Chaos order you to do this?” He gaged Sephiroth’s reaction to the question carefully. He seemed surprised. Was it because Cloud had guessed correctly or because it was a strange question to ask. Cloud knew he was right. From the moment he had passed through the crystal he had noticed it. Sephiroth would zone out at random times, his face showing pain, almost as if he was suffering a sudden migraine. Cloud knew better he had seen the effects of Chaos’ intrusion on the faces of countless of his warriors. He had also felt it himself, before he learned to block him out. It had been three days. How often had Chaos been needling away in Sephiroth’s mind? How long had he been stirring up the madness within it?

“And you said I was the ‘puppet’.” Cloud spat the word as if burned him. He watched Sephiroth stiffen before brandishing his sword.

“I am no puppet Cloud. I am merely through playing guard dog. It’s time I took control again. It’s
time you quit this act and returned to the war. I won’t tolerate this behaviour anymore Cloud. Its grating on my nerves and honestly it’s unbecoming. You’re making a mockery of yourself, of Chaos’ warriors and in turn me.” Sephiroth leaned close to Cloud and Cloud was proud of himself for standing his ground and not flinching away. “I will force your hand Cloud. Join me now and you’ll save yourself and others pain later.”

“No!” Cloud’s voice was even, despite the fury he was feeling. “I expected this of you. This is nothing. You won’t break me so easily.” Cloud turned looking to the body laying a few feet from them. “Never involve yourself in my fights again. Return to the war. Do what you do best and destroy everything in the name of another. Go!” Cloud shoved at Sephiroth again, watching him smile and pull away.

“I will go Cloud, but I will not go far. It’s time you learned your place.”

Cloud watched him leave. He could feel all his instincts screaming at him to end him. There was no point. Chaos will just bring him back. He had enjoyed it when Cloud had killed Sephiroth the first time, even tried to get Cloud to do it again. Chaos would see it as a way to anger and get under the skin of both him and Sephiroth. He would not give him the pleasure.

Slamming his fist into the ground Cloud breathed deeply trying to quell the storm raging in his mind. He would end this. He had to and then he would end Sephiroth.

So here’s the companion piece to the last chapter. The whole first part of this was supposed to be in the last chapter but I thought it took away from the shock factor at the end. I know I said I would keep the warrior nameless but.......well I didn’t. I was imagining Laguna when I wrote this and went back and added the name. I love Laguna and it really hurt to kill him off so sorry to any big Laguna fans. Hopefully it also makes clear why he attacked in the last chapter when Cloud had his back turned. Cloud gave the go ahead and was expecting it. I didn’t plan to go into in of the other characters heads. I had planned to stick to about five but I taught the conversation fit better when it wasn’t coming from Clouds point of view. Let me know what you thought of the chapter. Do you think it should all have been one chapter? Thanks for reading.
Chapter 6

P.S. I own nothing except my over active imagination.

Chapter 6

“I’m sorry.” The words were spoken softly, so softly that even Clouds advanced hearing strained to pick them up. Placing another stone on top of the pile before him Cloud turned his head slightly to listen. He sighed when, after several moments of silence, no reply had come.

“For what?” Cloud waited again carefully arranging the stones before him. When the silence continued to stretch on he moved away from his work. “Zack?” He could still feel Zack’s presence behind him meaning he was still there, he wanted to turn around but knew Zack would disappear.

“What’s wrong?”

“This is my fault.” Zack’s voice was soft and again Cloud strained to hear him. He sounded angry but Cloud could hear the sadness behind it. Having a conversation with someone you could not face was not easy. Cloud needed to rely on the tone of Zack’s voice to get a read on how he was feeling. He also needed to make subtle movements to show Zack that he was in fact listening to him. The first few times they had spoken Cloud had refused to move at all and kept his eyes closed. This had led to an endless barrage of ‘Cloud are you listening.’

“This is no one’s fault but Sephiroth’s,” shaking his head Cloud took a deep breath before continuing, “and my own, for actually hoping he would change.” He stood, feeling Zack’s eyes on him.

“He was trying….he really was. He wanted to change. He wanted to understand what he had done and why. I messed up.” The distress in Zack’s voice was clear as he spoke.

“It’s not your fault.” Clouds brow was furrowed. Why was Zack blaming himself, Sephiroth was a monster, uncontrollable and merciless, something the warrior Cloud had buried beneath the stones had learned. This world was different. Here bodies didn’t dissolve into the lifestream. Instead they continued to lay where they had fallen rotting into the earth. It was humiliating and degrading. Cloud wished it on nobody and tried not to imagine his own fate in the first cycle. He doubted anyone had buried him but he could not let the fallen warrior lay there for all to see. He had not been disgraced in death, his killer on the other hand had been dishonourable and cowardly in the methods.

It was as he was searching for more stones, and after almost twenty minutes of silence, that Zack decided to finally explain himself further.

“Chaos never let you alone.” Cloud stalled his search turning his head slightly to show he was listening. “After the second cycle I placed myself between you and him. Basically I blocked him. You were already trying, you were doing what you do with Jenova, but you could still feel his presence everywhere. I forced him out. Anytime he tried to enter your mind I deflected him. It made him pretty angry to be honest. Mostly because I was able to shield you from him but also because I was never meant to be here. I’m not a warrior of Chaos or Cosmos and should not be in their world. Cosmos lingered after Chaos grabbed you and I piggybacked her return. It was never supposed to happen. Chaos sees me as a nuisance one that’s not supposed to exist.” Zack was quiet for several seconds giving Cloud a chance to take in what he had already said.

“When Sephiroth arrived here, he was like a blank slate. I figured there was a chance he could possibly return to the Sephiroth that existed before Nibelheim, before Jenova. The only problem was Chaos. When I could, I blocked Sephiroth from him too. I spoke to him when I could trying to remind him that he wasn’t a monster.” Cloud shifted, forcing himself not to turn around to face Zack. He wasn’t angry but he knew Zack thought he was.

“Was it working?” Cloud asked softly, “Was there a chance?”

“Maybe,” Zack sounded conflicted as he spoke, “I don’t know if there is anymore. I messed up.”

“How?”
“I spent countless cycles trying to keep Chaos from both of you, but sometimes I needed to choose which one of you to protect. I chose you. Every time. I couldn’t shield you both at the same time and Chaos realised it. The second you and Sephiroth walked through the second crystal he lashed out. He made it seem like he was going for you so I jumped in between you. At the very last second he turned and entered Sephiroth’s mind.”

“I don’t blame you. It would have happened eventually. You can’t be everywhere Zack.”

“I know that. I do. I just…” Cloud listened as Zack trailed off unable to explain further.

“You feel like you failed him. It’s not your fault. Chaos is strong. After Jenova…I learned to stay alert. Never open my mind to others, except you and Aerith. Sephiroth never had that. He also has some twisted form of allegiance to Chaos because he’s his warrior. Chaos would have gotten in eventually. Sephiroth would have opened his mind to him himself. It’s not your fault.” Cloud put as much emphasis into his last sentence as he could trying to get his point across. He heard Zack sigh deeply silence reigning again.

Cloud had gathered more stones and had returned to his makeshift grave. He had just finished placing the last stone in place when Zack spoke again.

“We have a bigger problem.”

“What do you mean?”

“When Chaos speaks to Sephiroth, I can only hear Sephiroth’s part of the conversation. Sephiroth said something which has me worried. Really worried.” Cloud stood forcing himself not to turn around.

“What?”

“Hello ‘mother’.” Cloud felt his entire body tense up. He breathed deeply as he tried to think of other possible meanings of the word.

“Are you sure.”

“Positive, I’ve ran it over in my head a thousand times.”

“I thought she couldn’t reach us here. I haven’t felt her.” Cloud couldn’t resist the urge to shudder at the thought of Jenova’s presence returning to his mind.

“It’s possible that Chaos and Cosmos were keeping her out. Think about it you’re in an all-out brawl to the death with another God, why add a self-proclaimed one to the mix. Like I said before I was never meant to be here. When Cosmos felt my presence she tried to get rid of me almost immediately, and given the chance Chaos certainly wouldn’t hesitate to try. My lack of a corporal body is the only reason she couldn’t easily get rid of me. Jenova is dead, yes but she has always been tied to her body, which never dissipated into the life stream. I don’t think she can travel here as easily as I did.”

“The cells in Sephiroth and I. She could have followed those.”

“Maybe, maybe not. It might not have been enough. I don’t know. Why would she only show up now? My best guess is it’s either a trick of Chaos’ or Chaos is finally letting her out to play.”

“If she is here, things will change. She will not stand to let Chaos rule her.”

“If she’s here, yeah we’re kind of screwed.” Both were silent for several moments before Cloud spoke again.

“We need to follow Sephiroth. We won’t know if she is here until we do.” Cloud’s gaze fell on the grave of the fallen warrior at his feet. He felt Zack’s hand fall on his shoulder and cocked his head to the side.

“Got a read on him?” Zack asked. Cloud nodded.

“He’s a few miles North-West of here.”

“Let’s go then,” Cloud felt Zack push him forward. “You’ve done all you can for him.” He pushed harder and Cloud took the hint. Muttering a short mantra he had often heard at funerals in Nibelheim Cloud lead Zack towards Sephiroth’s current location.

“Well that’s mature.” Cloud smiled slightly tilting his head to acknowledge Zack’s comment. His
attention was focused on the figures before him. He watched as Sephiroth’s Masamune arched through the air before slicing through his opponents weapons. The battle lasted several more minutes, partly due to the number of opponents but mostly due to the fact that Sephiroth was using this battle to vent. It took just a few slices of Masamune to end the battle leaving only Sephiroth standing. Cloud watched as Sephiroth’s last stroke severed the head of the last remaining opponent. The force of the blow send the head flying into the air, before landing in front of Cloud.

“He really has a thing for the neck, huh.” Zack murmured. Despite the humour in Zack’s tone Cloud could hear the unease beneath it as they both stared at the head, Cloud’s head. Or rather the head of a Manikin, which had taken his form, one of six that Sephiroth had been fighting. The fight itself was rather fruitless considering the Manikins were on Chaos’ side and would not attack his warriors. Cloud watched as Sephiroth stormed away, his anger clearly unsated.

“What now? Do we follow?” Zack asked beside him.

“Yes. We follow. I’m not going to interfere I just need to know what his plan is. I need to know if she’s here.” Cloud felt Zack shift beside him staying still as Cloud began to follow Sephiroth from a safe distance. As he was passing by the shattered Manikins Cloud paused for a moment to watch as a detached arm began to make its way back to its corresponding torso before continuing on. Zack watched Cloud from a distance staring at the head before him. Sighing deeply he began to follow his blonde friend. ‘Whatever happens,’ he thought, ‘this isn’t going to end well.’

Cosmos smiled brightly as she watched the warrior before her.

“It’s time.” She breathed, this warrior had to potential to turn the tides of the war in her favour. She just had to use them correctly. Opening a path to the warrior’s world Cosmos felt the world around her blur and darken as her consciousness travelled between worlds. Extending a hand towards the warrior before her she spoke.

“Warrior, come to me.”

Sorry again about the wait for this chapter. This chapter was really clear in my head but I found it hard to actually write down on paper, mostly because it is even more dialogue based than previous chapters, and those have been really dialogue based. I hope you still like the story. Let me know what you thought of the chapter and of the story so far. Thanks for reading.
Chapter 7

P.S. I own nothing except my over active imagination.

Chapter 6

Sephiroth smiled as he felt Masamune slice through layers of skin before cracking bone. He heard the cry of pain, heard it stutter and fall silent. He jerked Masamune upwards, listening carefully for the barely audible gasp and felt the body go limp against his sword. All resistance lost, Sephiroth let gravity do the rest of the work, he watched as the warrior impaled themselves further slowly falling forward against the blade. Sephiroth watched as Masamune’s bloodied blade reappeared from within the warrior as they collapsed lifeless to the ground. Pathetic. The battle hadn’t lasted very long and Sephiroth had found no challenge with this opponent. The battle had bored him, the brutality of his own attacks had not. At least some amusement could be found from these battles, other than the ability to laugh at the incompetence of Cosmos’ warriors. It was no wonder that Chaos had held the upper hand for so long. Only a very small handful of Cosmos’ warriors posed any challenge to Chaos’ forces.

Staring at the corpse of his latest foe Sephiroth frowned. This was getting him nowhere. He had not succeeded into luring Cloud into a fight. Two weeks of attacking anyone and everyone who crossed his path, willing to fight or no and he hadn’t gained any ground in his fight with the blonde. Something both Chaos and his warriors had noticed. Several days ago Sephiroth had encountered Ultimacia, an encounter that had left him frustrated, humiliated and overall furious. The sorceress had not held back, not that Sephiroth had minced his words either. She had taken to mocking Sephiroth over his return to the war, questioning his reputation and his ability to hold his own in a fight. Sephiroth hated to admit it but her condescending tone had gotten under his skin. He didn’t care for jibes against his strength, he could very easily prove his dominance in battle. It was the taunts about Cloud which had riled him.

Ultimacia had reminded him of all his short comings when it came to Cloud, his inability to control him and his eight cycle long willingness to play ‘guard dog’. It had taken all of Sephiroth’s strength not to strike her dead right there and then, that was what she wanted him to do and Sephiroth refused to play complacent puppet. Sephiroth had been glad to be rid of her, he had been quick to remind her of her own losses and of her fractured memory. Ultimacia had been around for two cycles before Sephiroth’s arrival making her technically older than him, by this worlds standards. Unfortunately for Ultimacia a surprising loss to a new warrior, one she had engaged to begin with, had sent her right back to square one memory wise. The memory of the loss had not been lost. Not that Kefka would let her forget it anyway.

Ultimacia had been right that Sephiroth could not easily control Cloud. It was harder than he had initially believed to draw Cloud into a fight. It seemed Cloud cared little for the warriors of light, at least those he had never met before, and felt no need to interfere. He needed to find a warrior Cloud had gained an attachment to, one Cloud would try to protect. That was easier said than done. Cloud had had very little contact with the warriors of light and what little he had didn’t last very long. He had already tried to provoke Cloud by killing the other warriors he had spoken to since leaving his hiding place but Cloud hadn’t interfered. He had stayed exactly half a mile behind him and hadn’t moved to save or protect them. If he had been angered he hadn’t acted on it, the only action he had taken was to bury the bodies’ afterword. It was infuriating.

Sephiroth had spent hours thinking over his conversation with Ultimacia. Maybe his approach so far had been incorrect. During their talk Ultimacia had reminded him of Clouds attachment and friendship with a certain warrior of Chaos. One who happened to hate Sephiroth, the feeling was mutual. Would Cloud step in to save one of his own, the oldest remaining warrior in the war? Was it worth it? Sephiroth had spent days weighing up the pros and cons of killing an ‘ally’ warrior. Chaos would not be pleased. Normally Sephiroth would care little for Chaos’ feelings but the god and given him new life. How easily could he take it away again?
He turned away from the body at his feet and began his search anew. One more day. He would wait exactly twenty-four hours before attacking Golbez. He would continue forward and defeat any warrior of light that crossed his path. Twenty-four hours and Chaos’ wrath or no he would destroy a warrior of Chaos, not just to rile Cloud but to prove he was capable of doing so. Ultimecia’s words had struck home. He would prove his strength to all of the warriors of Chaos. He would remind them that despite his lengthy absence he was not an opponent to be taken lightly. He felt Cloud begin to move towards the fallen warrior and smirked. If he happened across Golbez before the day was up he would take it as a sign and destroy the warrior, revelling in doing so.

Sephiroth stared ahead of him in complete shock. Well this was an interesting turn of events. Barely a mile stood between him and where he had left his last opponent and it seemed his prayers had been answered. Several meters in front of him stood a warrior that Sephiroth had never seen in the war before, one he was certain was new to this cycle. Hidden behind an alcove of rock, the warrior could not see him yet. Sephiroth was certain the warrior would not recognise him, on the other hand Sephiroth knew exactly who they were. He could not contain the rising glee. This was too perfect. He had wanted Clouds anger, if anything this would gain a whole new level of emotion from the blonde. If Sephiroth was to take this warrior out he was sure not even Chaos, a god fuelled by anger and disorder, would be able to contain Clouds wrath. He didn’t need to think twice.

He was in the middle of approaching the warrior when he felt Cloud move. He had gotten faster at burying the bodies since the first but this was fast even for him. Cloud must have sensed Sephiroth’s glee and figured he was up to no good. He was correct. Either way Cloud was moving towards him quickly. That was fine with Sephiroth, he would finish this just in time for Cloud to arrive and witness the gory aftermath. He watched the warrior turn, regarding him carefully. He stopped several feet before them, giving them a moment to study him, he spoke, “There you are.”

Do I…Know you?” The warrior asked.

“I am your enemy that is all you need to know.” Sephiroth could feel Clouds presence bearing in on them. He smiled, raised his sword and attacked.

Thanks for reading. For those extreme Final Fantasy fans, you probably already noticed this, but for those who didn’t I took the last three lines of dialogue (the only lines of dialogue) straight out of Final Fantasy 7 Dissidia 012 Duodecim. It is from Sephiroth’s encounter with the same warrior in the game so for those who played it you probably already know who the warrior is. For everyone else all will be revealed in the next chapter. Hope you enjoyed the chapter. Thank you for reading. Let me know what you think of this chapter and the story as a whole so far. Thanks again.
Hello again. Here is chapter 8. I hope you enjoy it.
P.S. I own nothing except my overactive imagination.

Chapter 8
Roaring in anger Cloud slammed his fist over and over into a nearby rock. He could barely hear Zack pleading for him to stop. He barely felt Zack’s hands trying to grab his own. He couldn’t even feel the shooting pain spreading up his arm from his torn knuckles. The only sound and feeling he was aware of was his own heart thudding against his chest. Beating so fast Cloud swore he could feel it swelling, expanding as it rammed against his ribs in its attempts to burst from his chest. He knew he needed to stop but couldn’t, if he stopped he would have to face this. He would have to face the fact that he couldn’t stop the shaking in his limbs. The shuddering of his breath. The tears. He could barely breath, barely focus, the only thing he knew was untamed uncontrollable fury. Screaming out again Cloud put his entire weight behind his next strike.
Crack.
Gaspig in shock he fell back into Zack’s arms. He lay there breathing too fast and too loud, unable to make his body move, unable to stop the bleeding. He watched as Zack’s gloved hand entered his line of sight, taking his own softly and assessing the damage.
“Breath.” Zack whispered, as he carefully pressed his fingers along Clouds knuckles. Zack’s voice sounded distant sounding too far away for how close he truly was. He continued to watch Zack’s movements as he assessed the damaged skin. Clouds vision was blurred by tears, darkness frayed the edges of his sight. He couldn’t do this. He couldn’t be here. Shaking his head he moved to release his wrist from Zack’s grip but was stopped as Zack’s other arm pinned his own to the side of his body. Crying out in frustration, Cloud lashed out violently attempting to loosen Zack’s grip on him. Zack’s hold tightened as he tried to force Cloud to stay still, to keep him from injuring himself further. Continuing his struggles, Cloud kicked out against the rock in front of him, slamming his body back against Zack’s hoping to knock him off balance and relinquish his hold. The manoeuvre succeeded in knocking Zack of balance and Zack lost his grip on Clouds wrist, but instead of letting go as Cloud as hoped Zack pulled Cloud backwards with him, wrapping his now free arm tightly across Clouds chest. They lay there for several moments, neither speaking nor moving. Testing Zack’s hold, Cloud cried out when he couldn’t immediately break it. He began to fight again thrashing in Zack’s grip, screaming loudly as he fought.
“LET ME GO!”
“No.”
“Let me go.”
“No.” Zack’s tone was firm as he tightened his arms around Clouds torso. If Cloud truly wanted to be free Zack knew he would be free already. Cloud was in shock. He hadn’t fully processed what had happened and refused to do so. Clouds movements were already weaker, his will to fight lost.
“Leave me alone.”
“Never.”
“Zack…….please, let me go,” tears fell unhindered down Clouds cheeks as he fell still against Zack, “Please.”
Cloud sucked in a deep breath, watching Zack’s fingers resume their examination of his torn, and most likely broken knuckle. Closing his eyes Cloud focused on Zack’s voice following his instruction to breathe in and out, his breathing slowly returning to normal. A sudden numbness took
over Clouds injured hand causing Cloud to gasp and instinctually jerk his arm towards himself. Zack’s hold prevented him from doing so leading Cloud to open his eyes to find out the problem. He was met with a green glow surrounding his injured limb. Smiling lightly Cloud leant back against Zack’s chest allowing the healing magic to do its job and mend his broken joint. He was weary, he had grown tired of following Sephiroth and been on the verge of walking away. Taking a deep breath Cloud felt himself drift into sleep. What if he had walked away?

If always knowing where Sephiroth was wasn’t bad enough, the ability to tap into Sephiroth’s more intense feelings was worse. Cloud shuddered as overwhelming glee assaulted his system, damn Jenova cells. Gritting his teeth Cloud continued his task of burying the fallen warrior before him. He had taken to using a Quake materia to speed up the time it took, not out of disrespect to the fallen, but rather to ensure that he didn’t fall too far behind Sephiroth. He had barely begun covering the warrior when another stab of glee hit his system hard. It filled him with a sense of unease and he moved before he could question it. Sprinting towards Sephiroth’s location Cloud let his instincts take over and carry him to wherever he needed to be.

He had heard her cry of pain before he had seen her. He recognised it instantly, a feeling of absolute dread almost crippling him, preventing him from moving forward, terrified he was right. His need to protect winning out, he raised First Tsurugi and stepped into the path of Masamune. The sound of metal clashing rang through the air. For several seconds their weapons danced around one another before they were locked into place between Cloud and Sephiroth’s bodies. Looking up Cloud watched as Sephiroth mouth twisted into a smirk.

“Finally raising a blade against me Cloud.” Pushing backwards Cloud broke the lock and distanced himself from his opponent, keeping himself between Sephiroth and the warrior he was protecting. It was as he was preparing to attack, and as Sephiroth moved to strike, that he felt her move.

“Get out of my way! This is my battle.”

“No.” Cloud dropped his sword as he reached out to grab her as she ran past. Pushing her down on the ground he placed himself between her and Sephiroth, using his body as a shield he braced himself for the feeling of Masamune slicing through his flesh. The hit never came. Gasping Cloud turned quickly searching for his enemy but seeing nothing but empty space. Sephiroth was gone. Confused Cloud reached out with his mind. Sephiroth was not that far away but was now making his way west. Why hadn’t he taken the hit?

“I know Cosmos’ warriors are supposed to help each other out and all but don’t just takeover people’s battles.” Cloud was shaken out of his musings as the other warrior spoke, stepping up to him and staring him down.

“You were in trouble, the warrior you were fighting is not one to take lightly, besides I’m on the other side. Unfortunately.” Cloud turned ready to leave. This was too much. What was happening? Why was she here?

“Wait.” He felt her grab his arm and pull him back, “you’re a warrior of Chaos? Why save me? Why fight one of your own, your ally?”

“He’s not my ally.”

“Really? I guess comradery isn’t very strong in Chaos’s forces. I would never had predicted this though. A warrior of Chaos protecting one of Cosmos. Are all of Chaos warriors as unpredictable as you?”

“Their rather predictable actually.” Cloud watched as a smile brightened Tifa’s features. She attempted to hide it with her hand but couldn’t mask the small laugh from escaping.

“What’s your name? You seem almost familiar, like an old friend I’ve somehow forgotten.” Cloud froze unsure what to do he was about to weigh the pros and cons of revealing who he was when he found himself already speaking.

“I’m Cloud.”
“Cloud.” The smile returned. “I’m Tifa. Do we….know each other? I don’t remember much, but….from the moment I saw you I…I felt like we’ve maybe met before, and now I know your name…..does this make sense to you.”

“No I don’t know you,” Cloud watched her face fall. It hurt to lie to her but in the long run it was safer, “Maybe in another life we were friends. I have to go.”

“Oh…..Thank you. For saving me. Not that I needed saving, not yet anyway.” Cloud almost smiled, this Tifa reminded him of the Tifa before the fire, trying to prove her strength to Zack, over confident because she didn’t truly know the meaning of the word ‘monster’.

“You should find your allies.”

“Thank you. I really hope we meet again but that probably means we would have to fight…..another life…..maybe.”

“Maybe. Be safe. Goodbye.” Cloud turned and began walking away, he was almost out of sight when he heard her call out again,

“Wait…….” He kept walking. Faster now. Shaking with anger, he needed to vent.

“How do I fix this?” Cloud breathed out, opening his eyes and staring at his now healed hand, “How do I make this right?”

“You and I both know what they want Spike.”

“To win the war.” Cloud shook his head forcing himself to stay calm. “Why her? She’s powerful, there’s no if ands or buts about it but there are others that are stronger. If it were me I would have brought Vincent.”

“It’s not you though. Cosmos knows what she’s doing she learns from her mistakes and you were a mistake. Don’t get me wrong you’re one of the strongest warriors here, but that’s the problem. Cosmos asks before she takes people, it’s all a part of her twisted version of moral standing, Vincent would have said no the same as you did. When Cosmos opened the path to speak with you she drew Chaos’ attention. He noticed you for the first time and took you before Cosmos could convince you to fight. She made a mistake by making Chaos aware of you she wouldn’t make that mistake again with Vincent.”

“So she took Tifa instead? Why to win me over to her side?”

“It’s happened before. Warriors across the cycles have switched sides to save others or because of disillusionment with whichever god they fight for. When that happens the other is quick to snap them up.”

“I don’t want to fight for either of them. I’d rather kill them both first.” Cloud bolted forward quickly breaking Zack’s loose hold around him.

“Spike?” Zack’s hand squeezed his shoulder.

“That’s it.”

“What’s it? Don’t say what I think you’re going to say.”

“If I kill them then this is all over. I can protect her and go home.”

“You had to say it.” Zack collapsed backwards in exasperation watching Cloud stand and begin pacing back and forth, mumbling to himself. “I’ll just be here….waiting for you to explain your plan and for me to begin questioning your sanity.” Zack raised an eyebrow huffing as he was ignored. “Scratch that, I’m going to start questioning it now, get a head start.”

It was almost several hours later when Cloud stopped pacing. He sat next to where Zack lay and turned to stare at the now bloodied rock before him. He felt Zack sit up beside him and forced himself not to turn to look him in the eyes. He had pushed his luck today. He had actually seen Zack’s hand. Had seen a part of his friend, and he hadn’t savoured the moment because he had been too busy throwing a temper tantrum.

“I have a plan,” Cloud spoke, he heard Zack sigh and felt the urge to laugh, “Before I tell you and
before you start ‘questioning my sanity’, remember that I’m the only one who can see you. I think we’re beyond you questioning my sanity.” He heard Zack laugh and savoured the sound. If he failed this could be the last time he heard it, while living at least. No, he would win. Chaos and Cosmos where fighting for themselves. Cloud was fighting for someone else. He was going to end this war here and now. He would destroy everything in his path to save her.
But, first there was someone he needed to speak to.

Well there you go. This chapter and all the ones following are the chapters that I began this story based on. I hope you liked it. By my calculations and if all goes to plan there is about six more chapters left in this story. I hope you stick with me to the end. Let me know what you think of this chapter and of the story so far. Thanks for reading.
Isolating oneself has its downsides and Cloud was learning that lesson now. Not only was he much further from his destination than intended, having travelled a week and only just arriving, he was also unfamiliar with many new areas that had cropped up in the cycles since he had been active. This, alongside his need to approach unnoticed, had worked against his favour of arriving in a timely fashion. This world had grown since he had isolated himself, Cosmos and Chaos clearly needing to put as much distance between each other as possible as the intensity of the battle grew each cycle that passed.

A week a full week. Seven days of avoiding warriors on both sides of this war. He had met far too many for his liking in the first few days of his travels, forcing him to travel miles out of his way to avoid large gatherings from both sides. He did not need whispers of his presence in this area reaching his destination before he himself did. The element of surprise was needed here … as much of an element of surprise as could be offered in a world created and run by two equally totalitarian cosmic beings. In hindsight his mere use of the crystals could have alerted the wrong person to his objective long ago.

Despite all the worries about his intentions being found out Cloud’s journey had been eye opening and helped with his understanding of how things ran these days. He had surprisingly found the beach Zack had joking inquired about in the past. Turns out, yes, Cosmos’ forces did like to frolic in the water. They also liked to use the area as a meeting place of sorts. Seems the side of light had finally gained some level of command to help lead the forces to negligible victories. He had also learned from these astonishingly loud meetings of the disillusionment on both sides of the war.

Further whispers had reached him from his hiding places as he moved stealthy across the landscape. The latest crop of warriors wanted their memories back and were much more vocal about it more so than the warriors in the beginning had been. It seemed being on the defensive side didn’t sit well with many.

Cloud had only come face to face with one warrior since he began traversing the never-ending landscape of this world. He had carefully avoided all but one. This warrior had drawn his attention on more than one occasion, so much so that to not approach seemed the less favourable of his options. He couldn’t quite understand the actions of this strangely armoured being from afar and felt he could not continue until he did. The armoured man was clearly a warrior of light and yet he attacked them in disgraceful and dishonourable manners, speaking to them as a friend before attacking them for behind and making off with their unconscious bodies.

Cloud had approached this particular warrior as he was lifting the body of the tailed blonde creature, Cloud had encountered previously, over his shoulder. He had immediately raised his spear to Cloud but lowered it questioningly when Cloud failed to raise First Tsurugi against him. Cloud had watched patiently for a moment for the spear to be lowered before raising an eyebrow and nodding his head at the tailed boy. The answer he had received had been surprising, yet understandable. “I need to protect them.” Simple answer to a simple question, one Cloud understood far more than he wished he did. He himself was about to do something exceptionally moronic, even by his standards, for the sake of another. It seemed he was not the only one stuck in this war that saw the senseless of it.

It was in this moment, having recounted the events of his voyage that a realisation formed in Clouds mind. This area was quiet. As had the greater portion of the area he had covered in the last few days. Why? This area of all areas should be teeming with activity. Instead warriors which should have taken positions of defence were absent and his travels had gone unheeded. Cloud thought back to the fourth cycle he had been active for. This had happened before. A battle was coming. Players were making their way to the battlefield. Cloud was running out of time this cycle,
as short lived as it has been, was reaching its end.
Now, stood in front of an unusually bright crystal Cloud was debating how to proceed. He had no idea who or what would be waiting for him when he entered into this area. Would an alarm sound? Would warriors flood the area, streaming in to protect one who was clearly so much more powerful than all the warriors in this god forsaken world combined? If he was right and a battle was about to begin than this section should be relatively empty. If he was wrong, or if the battle had already ended then the moment he stepped inside he could be surrounded. He was not exactly in favour with either side of this conflict.
Taking a breath Cloud made his decision. Blind faith. What he was fighting for was worth it, he would defeat any enemy standing between him and his current goal. Reaching out he activated the crystal watched as it pulsed even brighter than before. Deep Breath. One foot in front of the other. Defences up. He stepped through.

It was bright, impossibly so. Light seared through his corneas, blinding him. Enhanced sight effected far more than a normal humans would be. He forced himself not to flinch, to not raise his hands to his eyes and cover them. The light was painful and Cloud could feel it seeping into every pore, tendrils reaching out wrapping themselves around the very fibres that made up his being. It had been a long time since he had felt this.
It was strangely exhilarating. The pain was fading and a feeling of euphoria was slowly taking over. His body hummed with the feeling, yet, it was wrong and Cloud couldn't shake the feeling that a deadly being was attempting to control him. He would not be controlled again. He would not be a puppet to creature as unnatural as Jenova. His hackles rose and he slammed his minds defences into place. He had fought and protected himself from a much more twisted and corrupt being than the one he was now in the sights of.
Cloud held his ground as his eyes met one of the two most powerful beings in this universe. They were alone. Good. This would be easier no one else to fight against. No one else to learn of his intentions.
Staring coldly into the eyes of the entity before him, Cloud summoned every ounce of conviction that he could, his voice was steel as he finally spoke. He was not leaving here until he was heard. He would get what he wanted even if he had to fight to his last breath. He would get what he desired.
“"I have a proposition for you ….

Let me know what you think, even it is just to tell me how much I suck for not uploading in so long. Thank you again to anyone who has returned from before and to those who have just discovered this story.
I own nothing except my over active imagination.

Chapter 10

Agony…
Unrelenting …
Wrenched …
Back and Forth.
Never ending.
Numb …
Weightless …
Breath.
Gasper.
In, out, in, out,
Calm.
Comprehension.
A new cycle has begun.

Eleven cycles and he had yet to get used to the feeling of reforming as the world remade itself anew. Every fibre of your being torn apart and scattered. The world folding in on itself a mirror image recreated as it reformed. Areas removed, areas added. Particles grabbed and shoved back together. Pounded and kneaded until the shape of the person they had been previously is recreated. The feeling of being trapped underwater. Drowning. Gasping for breath. Feeling returning to the body, internal organs beginning to function once again and finally…comprehension.

Understanding.

Sephiroth stood carefully, testing each muscle and joint. Stiff, but otherwise intact. Glancing around, Sephiroth took the time to get his Barings. He was not in the same area he had been when before the world reformed. Troublesome, yet, Sephiroth was thankful. Movement to a new area during the shift in cycles usually meant the area had been destroyed, no longer convenient, or too arduous a task to remake. This happened often during the shift in cycles. The topography of this world was impossible to map as it was ever changing from cycle to cycle.

Sephiroth was thankful. Lucky, he was clearly still of use to Chaos. He could feel Chaos’s abhorrent presence all around him. It had scoured this area, leaving behind a repugnant mark. In the past Sephiroth had heard of warriors disappearing from the world completely because they were in areas of the map that were deemed unimportant. The task of retrieving them from this area too time consuming and difficult for Chaos and Cosmos to bother with. Only the best warriors were saved in these instances and even then it depended on the strength their pseudo gods had left over after reforming the words.

Sephiroth did not doubt that a large number of warriors had been lost on the latest battlefield. He had been in an area which acted as the only bridge to where the battle waged. If his area had been lost…the other had been too. Quickly calculating the number of warriors that had been on the battleground, Sephiroth ran through who had been present for each side of the war and their likely hood of being reformed. Warriors always reformed in the nearest available area to where they last were. This and the next three areas following only connected to one another. This was where any reformed warriors from the collapsed grounds would materialise.

Only one god like being had touched this area. It was clear in how its presence overpowered the senses.
Chaos.
Only Chaos had been here.
The warriors of light had been decimated. 
And, a specific warrior of light had been taking part in that battle.
Sephiroth smirked, if Cloud had been enraged at the underhanded move of Cosmos by bringing that particular warrior here….There was no appeasing him now.
Cloud was going to re-enter this war… and he was going to be a force to be reckoned with. 
Things were about to get very interesting.

Cloud’s plan was both genius and idiotic. It depended purely on the desperation of others and desperate people were dangerous. Then again so was Cloud. He wasn’t the fifteen year old big eyed, skinny follower he was when Zack first met him. He was a strong, formidable, relentless leader. When he set his mind on something he would do what it takes to complete it. It scared Zack. It scared him that Cloud’s need to protect could be detrimental to his own safety. Zack was on the defensive now. Crowding Clouds being ready to protect if needed. He could only do so much as an incorporeal dead guy but he could do this. Neither Cosmos nor Chaos had been able to hurt him or even touch him. He was a brick wall that stood between them and Cloud and this was the first time in seventeen cycles he had let one speak openly with Cloud. He was not letting his guard down not now.

And yet, a continuous tug at the corner of his mind was becoming more than just irritating. It was the connection he kept open to Sephiroth. Sephiroth wanted his attention. Zack wanted to scream. Of all the times Sephiroth could have reached out to him he chose the moment where Cloud was most likely about to be turned into a pile of ash for his insolent behaviour towards the dickhead beings that reigned as gods in this hell hole of a universe.
Typical.
Just Typical.
Zack kept his focus on Cloud and the unamused deity that sat in anger on the throne before them. Zack wanted to scoff at the sight of the self-importance of the throne. We get your all powerful and decide who lives and dies but do you have to be a prick about it?
Sephiroth tugged at the connection again this time with more force. Zack faltered for a moment losing focus on Cloud and drifting for a moment into Sephiroth’s consciousness. Gasping Zack pulled himself back to Cloud watched as the god before him stood.

His consciousness stuttered, spasmed, an explosion of intense darkness clouded his vision.
Regaining his senses Zack froze in absolute terror at the sight before him. Surrounding him were warriors of Chaos. Poised to attack. Faces twisted with mania and triumph. He shouted to Cloud to warn him, to try to give him a chance to protect his back, as the warriors before him lashed out with barrage of assaults, Magic slicing through the air destroying everything in its path.
He turned as quickly as he could, with a desperate hope to see Cloud defending himself from the attacks, but, Cloud was stood calmly listening now to the being before him. Screaming out again. Zack watched Cloud turn around in shock.
Except…
It was no longer Cloud…
The overwhelming light of the throne room of the god was dulled and dimmed.
A starry night instead visible behind the new warrior…
A Familiar warrior.
A battle raged around him.
He could hear the screams. Steel striking steel. Bodies slamming into bodies and hitting the ground with enough force to shatter bone.
The smell of magic in the air was putrid. It was dark, twisted and deadly. Copper creeping into the edges to form a horrific concoction of scents.
Blood smearing the ground, arching through the air, smearing bodies and weapons alike.
And then…
Cloud was stood before him again, his back once again turned. 
Zack watched as the being before him stood from their throne. 
Zack watched a strawberry blonde warrior of light die. 
The being was stood before Cloud. 
Tifa was stood before Zack. 
Ultimcia’s fist through her chest. 
Life leaving her eyes. 
Zack roared in anger, in agony, in desperation. 
The image distorted, melting away, liquid metal, burning all it touched. 
A new cycle had begun. 

Cloud shook the offered hand before him. A deal had been struck. Tifa would be returned home. 
Safe and sound. In exchange, he would kill a god. 
He would do everything in his power to turn the tides of this war by taking it directly to its source. 
Tifa would go home. 
Tifa will be safe and happy and oblivious that any of this ever happened. 
And, he will happily die trying to win this war but he will be damned if he doesn’t take a god with him. 

The world lurched, twisted. Cloud braced himself for the feelings that would come next. 
A new cycle was beginning. 
And, If Cloud had anything to say about it. The last cycle this world would see. 
Agony… 
Unrelenting … 
Wrenched … 
Back and Forth. 
Never ending. 
Numb … 
Weightless … 
Breath. 
Gasing. 
In, out, in, out, 
Calm. 
Comprehension. 
A new cycle has begun. 
Cloud’s eighteenth cycle would be his last. 

Soooo yeah. I’m really hoping the three point of views work and get across the right idea. Certain characters know more right now than others but the one thing they all know is that a new cycle has begun. Let me know what you think, all reviews and opinions are valued. Please let me know what you thought of this chapter. Any clue as to who Cloud met with? 
Thanks for reading.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

So my laptop decided to delete this entire story off of it. I hadn't backed up (because I'm an idiot) and I have lost the final three chapters of the story. I managed to recover the next chapter after this one, but, everything else is gone. I will try to rewrite it but right now I have serious writers block as I was happy with the story as it was and it will now never be the same. Here's hoping I get motivation soon.

This is my longest chapter yet! There are some throwbacks to earlier scenes from this fiction in this chapter. See if you can spot them. A lot of answers are going to be given see if you can guess them before the explanation: D

I own nothing except my overactive imagination

Chapter 11

Thanks to his new partners intervention Cloud's travels to his next destination had been significantly shorter. Turns out the creators of this world had a lot more influence over it than even he had realised. The ability to manipulate the crystals to send warriors anywhere, other than just the connecting are, was an interesting one. One Cloud was thankful for. He did not have another seven days to waste. In addition to this it also turns out Cloud was correct in believing his approach had not gone unnoticed. Turns out it didn't matter if you were a warrior of light or chaos both gods could track any person and where they were on the playing board. This again made Cloud's search for this particular warrior much easier and quicker of which he was thankful for. Cloud was thankful this particular ally had made it through the shift in cycles.

Cloud had just pulled himself over a large crevice in the terrain when a fireball slammed into the earth centimetres from where he now stood. He smiled. He had reached his destination. Looking in the direction the fireball was most likely to have formed Cloud spotted his friend's large silhouette above him. Nodding to warrior before him Cloud made his way up to where he was situated and sat quietly beside him.

Sitting in silence with Golbez beside him was an easy feat for Cloud, too easy. Much of their friendship stemmed from the fact that neither was a big talker, except when it matter, and Cloud felt of all the people in this world he owed Golbez an explanation of what exactly he planned to do.

"I'm going to end this." Cloud's voice was quiet, solemn.

"You don't seem too happy at the idea. Why bother if it upsets you so?" Cloud turned to look at Golbez as he spoke. Golbez had taken Cloud under his wing early on and had been very protective of Cloud after his first and only loss to a group of warriors of light that had attacked him early on. Golbez and another former friends had been quick to avenge Cloud's loss and had been over protective of him ever since, despite Cloud's clear ability to defend himself as his memories reformed themselves in his mind. Cloud sighed. How did he explain this? How did he admit he had not exactly been truthful with his friend? Not for nine cycles. How did he explain his reason for dropping out of the fight?
Breathing deeply Cloud stared out into the horizon. Dawn was approaching. At Dawn he would need to go. This all ended before nightfall came again.

"Ten cycles ago...I learned something, right as the cycle shifted. For the entire next cycle I did not know how to react or what to do with this information. I was hurt. We had lost a friend, seventeen cycles worth of a friend. I hated that I could not avenge him in the way he had done for me in the past, and. And, I was afraid, afraid of letting this information spread and what its effect could be on others. So, I began to retreat, I hid away, looked over every aspect of the information I had learned and tried to make sense of how to use it to win this war with minimal loss. I couldn't. I was afraid of causing more destruction in the name of these false deity's. Until now. I know how to end all of this...I have known since his death. How to implement it was the problem. But, I have a plan. A plan to kill Cosmos and Chaos."

Cloud heard the slight hitch of breath from his friend as he admitted the truth. If it had not been for his enhanced hearing, he would not have noticed any effect the information had had on Golbez. It was clear he was intrigued. Golbez turned his head towards Cloud regarding him carefully.

"You always were very good a concealing things. I am angry you did not come to me for advice in this but I believe I would not have come to you either. You have known since his death? Nine cycles you have had this knowledge. Why only bring it to play now?"

"Cosmos made a play, brought a warrior she knew I could not fight into the battle. It finally gave me an angle to work from."

"Tell me your plan then, I will help where I can."

Cloud breathed deeply. This story was going to be a long one, he just hoped at the end Golbez could forgive him for not explaining sooner. He steeled himself, staring out into the darkness. This story needed to be finished at dawn.

"It all began ten cycles ago.....

It had taken six cycles but Cloud had acquired almost all of his lost memories, he was sure that the next cycle would return what was missing to him. Seven cycles he had been in this war and he stood undefeated for six, not many could claim the same, and those who could were thankfully on his side. Alliances got you far and Cloud was part of a powerful one, three members who stood together annihilating all that stood in their way, until recently, memories were a powerful thing, it was no wonder they were stripped of them on arrival. Memories made you weak here, they gave you hope and despair in a way that nothing else could, and Cloud often stuck in this place against his will, certainly felt the despair.

Looking up from his makeshift resting place, Cloud could see Golbez's huge form silhouetted at the mouth of their safe haven. The cave, high up in the crags of a difficult to navigate arena had been the first place Golbez had brought Cloud on his return in his second cycle. Golbez had taken him under his wing and looked after him while his memories were at their most fractured and he, at his weakest as a result. To this day Cloud is still unsure as to what made Golbez want to protect him, the same could originally be said for his other comrade, but Cloud was thankful for it all the same. Even now standing as one of Chaos' more formidable warriors Golbez refused to abandon him, even when Cloud was busy sulking over the latest so called ally that had entered the arena. Chaos had been furious at Cloud's brash anger in killing it mere seconds after it had formed. Golbez had been confused but accepted the action without question, his other comrade...well...it had been three days and the amusement had still not been lost on them.
Speaking of, Cloud watched as a fireball exploded at Golbez's feet moments before a smaller figure stepped into view. Cloud was unsurprised by the burst of magic, a greeting created by this ally many cycles ago. He looked away as the figure stopped to chat momentarily to Golbez before making their way towards where Cloud was perched. The figure stopped before Cloud looking him up and down before flouncing down beside him with a dramatic sigh.

"I'm bored," He announced, once again studying Cloud. He collapsed onto his back and proceeded to nudge Cloud with his boot, "amuse me." Cloud looked to him cocking an eyebrow before shaking his head. The figure beside him huffed and once again nudged Cloud. "Blondie, I'm bored, play with me." Cloud breathed a quiet laugh before once again shaking his head.

"I'd play but last time you didn't speak to me for two days when I won." The figure beside him shot up beside him.

"That was different, you cheated."

"How so?"

"I was cheating, and you still won, so, therefore you cheated." This time Cloud laughed openly throwing his head back and smiling brightly. Golbez turned from his musings at the front of the cave to watch him for a moment before returning to his duty.

"I'm so sorry," Cloud announced, sarcasm dripping from his tongue, "how could I beat you when you were being so honourable during out game." Cloud was surprised that despite their history, which Cloud had yet to remember that they had become such fast friends. When their past encounters in their universe had been recounted to him, he found that he could look past the former hostility, mostly from Zack, current actions and protectiveness were far more important in Clouds eyes. His ally lay down again an air of sadness about him.

"My friend, the fates are cruel, there are no dreams, no honour remains. I am sick of this world."

"We all are. We have been since the beginning." Cloud watched his friend carefully confused at the sudden change in demeanour. Silence rained for several moments before his ally sat up and gripped Clouds chin. It was then Cloud knew he was serious. It was not often that this action was repeated between them, when Cloud was injured in a fight; even if it had been only a small scrape, and, when their past encounters had been revealed to Cloud in fear of how he would react.

"Dreams of the morrow hath the shattered soul, pride is lost, wings stripped away, the end is nigh. I have a plan Pretty." Cloud shuddered at the nickname, yet another gesture left only for serious moments. The nickname had begun, or so he had been told, in their first cycle, having arrived together, and continued into the second as a way to 'ruffle Clouds feathers'. Now it was an act of fondness from the elder to the younger, again normally used when the former was worried for the latter.

"Genesis," Cloud paused, almost afraid to proceed, "what are you going to do?"

Genesis studied Cloud carefully as he fought. It was not wonder Sephiroth acknowledged the blonde, he was powerful, graceful and swift in his movements and quickly dispatched his opponent.

"You go no further than here." Genesis hated using Cloud to eliminate the forces between him and his goal but he refused to allow harm to come to him. The solid friendship that had been formed
between them had surprised Genesis. It had been unexpected but welcomed. He wondered if this was how Angeal had felt for his puppy.

Genesis watched as Cloud opened his mouth to protest before stopping himself, slumping his shoulders and looking away.

"... I don't understand. Not at all. But...please take care of yourself." Clouds voice was soft as he spoke and Genesis' face dropped, reaching forward and gripping Clouds chin gently in between his fingers.

"Oh Pretty, you do not understand the significance of those words. Do not fret. Of course...I'll come back to you. Even if you don't promise to wait. I'll return knowing you are here." He watched as Clouds eyebrows furrowed at the odd statement, hugged him close for a second and then stepped through the crystal. He would end this. If not for him, then for Cloud. He smiled at the thought that he was being selfless. His history may speak otherwise but time had changed him, loss had changed him. A single quote rang true in his mind as he prepared himself for what was to come, "men cry not for themselves, but for their comrades."

It was bright, impossibly so. Light seared through his corneas, blinding him. Enhanced sight effected far more than a normal humans would be. He forced himself not to flinch, to not raise his gloved hands to his eyes and cover them. The light was painful and Genesis could feel it seeping into every pore, tendrils reaching out wrapping themselves around the very fibres that made up his being. His goddess Minerva had felt like this, but this, this was not the same and he refused to give in. Staring down the being sat on a throne before him Genesis gripped his sword tightly, leather creaking, knuckles cracking.

"A pleasure to finally meet you, or so it shall be, when or meeting has concluded. My soul is corrupted by vengeance, hath endured torment, to find the end of this journey in my own salvation and your eternal slumber." Genesis watched at the being before him barely reacted except for a slight tilt of the chin, only enhanced sight such as his would have recognised the movement. Raising his sword and shifting into his battle stance Genesis mimicked the chin tilt, a quiet taunt to his app

"I am finished fighting this war. It is time for you to die. Legend shall speak of sacrifice at worlds end. Your time has ended, Cosmos."

Coughing weakly, Genesis choked on the blood rising from his throat. He didn't understand, how was this possible? Darkness was flickering at the edges of his vision even as Cosmos' light entered.

"How?" The words was barely a breath, having little strength within him after the blow issued by Cosmos. She was stood over him as perfect as when he first saw her. He had attacked with a ferocity that should have resulted in nothing but death, and it had, just not in his opponents. He was dying, he needed help; he wouldn't last long. Cosmos watched him, almost sadly, yet, there was smugness in her features.

"Poor soul." Her voice was melodic, memorising almost, it was no wonder so many had fallen for her charms and risen to fight for her. "You are a warrior of Chaos."

"You...you should...should be injured. I...hit...you." It hurt to speak, but Genesis needed to know, needed to understand...needed to let someone know what had happened.
"You are a warrior of Chaos." The reply was so simple and yet answered nothing. He watched as she reached forward and cupped his chin, a mockery of his gesture of endearment towards Cloud. "Join me warrior. Join me and I can save you."

"No!" Genesis was angry, furious. How dare she! How dare she mock him and expect him to turn tail and join her side. Never, he would never fight against his allies, he had learned from past mistakes. Memories hurt more when you could watch them like a film strip as they flooded your mind, the horrors of how blind he had acted ringing true.

"Why couldn't I hurt you?" He spat at her…gritting his teeth as she caressed his cheek.

"You are a warrior of Chaos."

"I know that," Genesis breathed deep hissing through the pain, "Why didn't my attacks leave a mark?"

Cosmos' brow furrowed before he features softened again.

"You are a warrior of Chaos," Genesis wanted to scream in frustration at the repeated words until he heard Cosmos continue, "No warrior of Chaos can harm me. Just as no warrior of mine can harm Chaos. Chaos cannot destroy harmony only harmony can, harmony cannot destroy Chaos only more Chaos. You are a warrior of Chaos."

Genesis felt like a thousand knives had pierced his heart at once.

He accepted his fate. Looking towards the crystal, wanting to look to where he last saw a comrade, a friend. He froze, Cloud was there, on his knees by the crystal, mouth open in shock. Genesis reached out a hand of him, staring into his eyes he spoke his last words, "Even if the morrow is barren of promises, nothing shall forestall my return."

His world dissolved as he became one with nothingness.

Tears streamed down Clouds cheeks, his mouth open in a silent scream. Every fibre of his being screaming in fury. Genesis was gone. Destroyed. His every being scattered, shattered into tiny pieces of light absorbed by the air. A tear rolled down his cheek. He wanted, desperately wanted, to reach for First Tsurugi and hack Cosmos to pieces. Make it slow, make it hurt, turn her to dust as she had done to Genesis. But he couldn't. He was a warrior of Chaos. A warrior of Chaos could not kill Cosmos. He couldn't avenge his friend. He couldn't win this war. Nobody could. It was never going to end. He stared into Cosmos' eyes as she regarded him carefully. And then, he felt it.

Agony…

Unrelenting …

Wrenched …

Back and Forth.

Never ending.

Numb …

Weightless …
Cloud sat in uncomfortable silence next to Golbez, his story finished and the knowledge he had kept for all these cycles finally in the hands of another.

"Genesis did not die in vain," Clouds voice was barely a whisper, almost afraid to speak, "I have a plan, one that will end this once and for all."

Golbez's armour clinked against itself as he shifted to look at Cloud.

"How, you said it yourself, we cannot kill Cosmos. We cannot win this war." Cloud took a deep breath, his plan was risky, he knew, but if he succeeded, even part way, they had a chance.

"I want revenge on Cosmos! For Genesis … and for … never mind. I think I have figured out a way to defeat her but please hear me out." Cloud glanced up gaging Golbez's reaction, seeing the larger figure nod he sucked in a breath and began to explain his plan. "Cosmos can only be killed by one of her warriors, and Chaos only by his, so I made a deal, one that should it succeed would make me one of Cosmos' warriors." He paused for a second catching Golbez before he responded to this revelation, he quickly jumped back into his explanation. "Cosmos, she brought someone here, from my world, someone…someone I can't…I won't see hurt. I had been searching for so many cycles for a way to win the war and in my anger it came to me. I made a deal, with Cosmos, send her home, and keep her safe…and…and I. I'll kill Chaos for her."

Golbez gripped Cloud by the shoulders, anger clear in his eyes, yet Cloud could see something hidden within their depths as Golbez stared him down, hope.

"You would betray our side of the war Cloud, for Cosmos!"

"No! Not for Cosmos, she is a means to an end, and the only way I can reach that end is to kill Chaos."

"And what exactly is this end you so desperately need to reach?" The fury in Golbez's tone was clear to Cloud, he just hoped the full explanation would make Golbez understand.

"Cosmos, dead, and every single one of us free from them both." Golbez froze, Cloud watched as comprehension d awned on his face. He waited as Golbez opened his mouth the speak before freezing, thinking through his words and then…finally,

"You are going to kill Chaos and in reward become a warrior of Cosmos and then, I assume, you plan to turn traitor and kill her too." Cloud nodded and Golbez relaxed, appeased for now. "So why tell me this? Unless you had need of my help?"

"If I fail...If I fall, there is a small chance Cosmos will bring me back anyway, she originally
wanted me as her warrior anyway, but, gather those who are trustworthy. As trustworthy as any agent of Chaos can be and...destroy him. I will do my part on the other end." Cloud glanced up through his eyelashes, afraid to look Golbez in the eye. Afraid, he would say no.

"You will not fail." Cloud's head shot up at Golbez's encouragement, "I have seen you fight, saw it the day you arrived here a spitfire with the strength of a man ten times his size. Chaos fears you, he fears that he cannot control you, he fears the reputation you have formed in this war. A word of warning. He will know."

Cloud's brow furrowed in confusion. "How?"

"You have never gone to him before, injured, angry you have stayed away. He will know that you are not coming to him for nothing. There are two possible reasons you would go to him, to bargain for the protection of the warrior from your world, or, to kill him. He will be prepared. So, be even more prepared. Is she worth it?" Cloud's head shot up,

"How?" Cloud huffed a laugh, a small smile twisting his lips, "Never mind, I know you check up on me...thank you. Thank you for looking after me. You didn't have to, but, you did anyway, so thank you."

"It has been a pleasure." Golbez placed a hand on Cloud's shoulder nodded to him. "This is where you fly the nest then. I promise I will hold true to what you have asked." Cloud breathed a sigh of relief, closing his eyes and smiling.

"How quaint."

Clouds eyes flew open at the voice, one he would know anywhere. Sephiroth. Swivelling his head round in a panic Cloud laid eyes on the abhorrent creature before him. Why was he here? Worse still, how much had he heard?

"What do you want, parasite?" Golbez spat, shielding Cloud with his larger frame. Sephiroth only smirked at the action clearly amused.

"I have some special news to deliver to my dear brother. News he most certainly wants to hear."

"I don't want to hear anything from you and I am not your brother" Cloud spat, seething in anger at the word. Sephiroth let out a quiet chuckle.

"Ah, but brother this, this is something you want to know, need to know, I am merely being a good Samaritan and passing on this juicy titbit of information."

"I don't care. I'm leaving. Thank you, Golbez. Until we meet again." Golbez nodded his farewell and Cloud turned on his heel stalking away from where Sephiroth was stood.

"Poor Tifa," Cloud Froze, his breath catching in his throat, gasping from the shock as if struck by the tail of a Nibel Dragon, "she will so sad to hear you do not care." Cloud spun on his hear, storming towards Sephiroth, drawing his sword he held it to Sephiroth's neck.

"Never speak to me of Tifa again." Sephiroth mouth twisted into a mockery of a smile. He stepped forward into the blade drawing blood in a thin line across his neck.

"Poor Cloud, I hate to be the barer of bad news." Confused Cloud's anger momentarily dissipated his face questioning.

"DON'T" Cloud's turned his head in shock, caught sight of Zack running towards them before
quickly returning his gaze to Sephiroth. The fact that he had seen Zack at all had been a shock but he would not push his luck, besides, it had happened on occasion before where he had been gifted with the sight of his friend and a much more dangerous foe was stood at the end of his blade.

"Don't tell him Seph." Zack was breathless, pleading. What was going on? Cloud stared down Sephiroth studying his expression.

"Tell me." He whispered, terrified of the answer, but needing to know. Sephiroth glanced in what Cloud presumed was Zack's direction a smug smile on his face.

Two voices reached his ears at once, one filled with sorrow, the other with satisfaction.

"NO!"

"She's dead, Destroyed, Cosmos didn't think her worthy enough to recycle."

Cloud felt the earth drop from beneath him. The arm holding the sword dropped all strength leaving his bones. Breath, coming in painful spasms. Tears filled his eyes. His hearing was muted, voices distant echoes. He did the only thing he could do in the moment. He had to get out. Had to escape…he ran.

Zack felt Cloud rush past him in a desperate bid to escape. He turned reaching out, before letting him go, he would find him later. Blinking back the angry tears obscuring his own vision he ran at Sephiroth slam his fist into his cheek.

"How could you!" He roared, furious at Sephiroth's actions, "you don't know what you have done."

Sephiroth gripped his cheek in shock, staring at Zack in confusion.

"Who are you?" A gruff voice asked from behind him, Zack turned spotting Golbez mere feet away. It took Zack a moment to realise that it was himself who had been asked the questioned and who was now being regarded carefully by the massive warrior. He breathed a small laugh,

"Right, you can see me now. Hi, I'm Zack."

So, I hope you enjoyed this chapter. There are a lot of pov's and jumps between plot points. Hopefully it wasn't too confusing. I really enjoyed putting Genesis in the story. In my mind the reason Chaos was there to grab Cloud was because he was actually on Gaia picking up Genesis and yanked Cloud out of the world for the fun. I hope I did Genesis justice, he is a sleeper favourite of mine. Did anyone guess it was him? I tried my best to include some loveless quotes. Hopefully they worked where placed. Did anyone guess Cloud's plan before it was revealed? What do you think of the bombshell Cloud dropped. What do you think of the ending? Please review and let me know what you thought. I would really appreciate it.

Thank you for reading xxx
Sorry if this is very explanation heavy. There was a lot of explaining to do.

I own nothing except my overactive imagination

Chapter 12

Sephiroth stared at Zack in shock. His cheek was smarting and beginning to bruise from where a very corporeal Zack had punched him. Impossible. Zack had been nothing but a phantom, haunting his and Cloud's minds and thoughts since their arrival here, and in Cloud's case, long before.

"Who are you?" A gruff voice asked. He heard a small laugh,

"Right, you can see me now. Hi, I'm Zack."

Sephiroth snapped into action, realisation flooding his mind, Golbez could see Zack, Zack could cause damage to others. He reached out and grabbed Zack's shoulder spinning him back around to face him.

"How?" He asked, nails sinking into the solid flesh and bone in their grip. "How?"

Zack shrugged out of his grip rubbing his shoulder, staring at it with a similar expression of surprise that Sephiroth assumed graced his own features.

"That hurt." Zack's words were breathed out so lowly that it was only thanks to Sephiroth's enhanced hearing that they even registered to him, and only the fact that he was studying him so closely did he happen to see the small smile that twisted the corner of Zack's mouth as he spoke. A smile that quickly vanished and replaced with twisted fury as Zack's focus returned to him.

"Did you enjoy that?" Zack asked pushing forward into Sephiroth's space. "Did you get your kick out of it, do you feel like such a big person now that you've driven Cloud closer to his own death." He continued to push into Sephiroth's space forcing him to take a step back as every word was spoken with another shove and spittle flew in his face. Zack was furious and Sephiroth didn't blame him. He instead shoved back, grabbing Zack's shoulders and pushing him back several feet.

"Death?" He scoffed, "we both know that as it stands I am the only warrior who could defeat Cloud in battle, don't worry yourself puppy, and don't lose that new body you have only just gained." Sephiroth watched as Zack flinched in surprise at the mention of his body, almost as if he had forgotten once again that he was solid. "How did you get that body?" Out of the corner of his eye he could see Golbez eyeing both of them carefully.

"You're Zack?" His gravelly voice caught Zack's attention and he turned to look at the imposing man. "I take it Cloud was not hallucinating when he said he could hear a man named Zack talking to him." Golbez shifted to walk around to Zack's other side studying him. "Although I haven't heard much about you since the fourth or fifth cycle Cloud was here. Where have you crawled out of?" Zack's small smile returned once again.

"It was his fourth cycle here, he remembered me, and realised what the 'voice' was. He kept me to himself after that same as back home."
"That is all well and good," Sephiroth growled, "but how are you here? Alive I mean?"

Zack rolled his eyes and threw him an angry look before settling on an expression of clear disgust.

"Cosmos."

Both Sephiroth and Golbez shared a look of surprise before Golbez opened his mouth to ask the question on both their lips, he was cut short however by Zack.

"A peace offering for Cloud. That's basically what I am." He shifted uncomfortable under their gaze. "Cosmos realised she screwed up. She was so obsessed and focused on the fact that Cloud was coming to her that she didn't stop her warriors from going to war with Chaos'. She was blindsided by their loss as she wasn't able to give them any support in the same way Chaos had. When the new cycle began she tried her best to reform Tifa but realised it was in vain so she went to plan B. Me. She reached out to me because she knew that I had seen what had happened. She was terrified Cloud would turn against her and change his mind so she asked me to deliver a message to him. I was angry too so I tried to decline and to cling to Cloud. The cycle was still forming and I needed something to hold onto so I wouldn't fall through the cracks….she didn't let me though." Zack glanced up looking regarding the sky carefully he huffed and continued. "Seventeen cycles of trying to get rid of me, of hiding between shifts in cycles and keeping my grip on Cloud so I wouldn't get lost, and the one time I could have been, she anchored me. She anchored me in the only way she knew how."

"By giving you a body?" Golbez asked. Zack frowned.

"No, it was more…complicated than that. She couldn't just generate a body out of nothing. She tried to explain it to me, something about calling on my past self in the seconds after death and merging my soul with the body past me's soul had left….I think. It made sense when she said it… kinda…I was still in shock. She healed the body and anchored my soul to it. It was strange. She full on removed me from this world, sent me back to Gaia, did her poking and prodding and dragged me back in to finish our conversation. I'm entitled to not have a clue how it worked."

"Strange doesn't even cover it." Sephiroth growled "And, if she could do all that to one who was already dead, why then was she unable to just fix Tifa?"

"I demanded that answer too. Chaos interfered. He was actively doing everything in his power to keep Cosmos out of the area. She was distracted so he reached it first and she couldn't get in in time to fix anyone before Chaos destroyed the area. And within that explanation she gave me the message she wanted me to deliver to Cloud before you," He jabbed his fist angrily into Sephiroth's chest, "ruined every chance I had of him listening to me." Sephiroth smirked at the knowledge that he had disrupted Cosmos' plans. The niggling question of what exactly Cloud was planning with Cosmos over rid this though and he steeled his features, figures curling into a fist, as a feeling of dread slipped sank into his bones.

"What was the message?" he demanded, Golbez's own face showing his own interest in that answer. Zack nodded once annoyance clear in his eyes at the demand.

"Tifa's alive." Sephiroth furrowed his brow in confusion at the words.

"Impossible," Golbez whispered. "I assume Tifa is the one Cloud is so desperate to save?" Zack nodded. "Well, you have already admitted that Cosmos was unable to save her. So why believe Cosmos in this?"

"I didn't," Zack admitted, "but there are things about this world and how it works that we can never
hope to understand, and Cosmos, she explained one of the more important aspects of this world to me. Chaos and Cosmos have created this world out of pure hatred and contempt for one another and everything we see and feel here is a manifestation of those emotions. Despite that this place has rules, thousands of them, that Cosmos and Chaos, while we may not be able to see it, both have to follow. The biggest one being that anything brought into this world leaves in the same condition that it came in." Zack glanced at the warriors before him and saw the confusion on both of their faces.

"I don't understand, how does that tell us Tifa is alive?" Golbez questioned.

"She was alive when she came in so thus can only leave alive?" Sephiroth whispered comprehension dawning. "Everything must leave as it came in. So, no matter the injuries we have the moments before we are sent back, our bodies will be as they were when they were first bought here. Which is why she sent you back to Gaia to give you life. If she did it here when everyone returned you would die again."

Zack gasped in shock. He stepped back as the revelation hit him. Sephiroth had figured out something he himself hadn't.

"D..do you think...is that...Holy Shit. I had...I hadn't even considered. I..." Zack froze in shock as the thought of what this meant began to sink in. Sephiroth watched carefully as the mix of emotions passed through Zack's face. Envious of the gift Cosmos had given him. He himself had been taken in the moments before his death at the hands of Cloud in the Northern Crater. He would return only to die seconds after, while Zack would live and be at the right hand of Cloud once again. It was Golbez who broke the silence that had fallen on them.

"Okay, so, Cosmos wanted you to let Cloud know that Tifa had been sent home, and the problem at hand is that Cloud believes, thanks to Sephiroth that she is dead, are we safe to assume that he blames Cosmos for this and that his original plan is now fuelled by vengeance? That now more than ever he wants Cosmos dead?" Zack's head flew up and panic flooded his features. The feeling of dread in Sephiroth's bones grew stronger as Golbez and Zack shared a look of pained understanding. Zack nodded.

"If I know Cloud, he's done with it all, he's not going to be as careful as before, he's lost the one thing that gave him the will to go on after all this time."

"What are you talking about?" Sephiroth demanded, afraid of the answer. Zack turned and looked him dead in the eyes.

"You have gotten everything you ever dreamed about." Sephiroth cocked an eyebrow in confusion at Zack's words. "Cloud has gone on a suicide mission to kill Chaos, so he can kill Cosmos and you have torn all sense of his self-preservation out the window." Sephiroth froze in shock as Zack continued to fill him in on the details of Genesis' 'death' and Cloud's plan. Furious he slammed his fist into the nearest solid rock. Once again he found himself a pawn to a stronger being, while Cloud had escaped and fought back. He was the puppet once again. Turning around he stared down Zack.

"If anyone will defeat Cloud it will be me. Chaos will not defeat him, but, if you are still concerned I will lead you to Chaos so that you can aid Cloud in the battle. Do not expect me to help though, even if your new body is bleeding out in the dust." Sephiroth turned on his heel and began on his way. He didn't bother to wait to see if Zack, or Golbez for that matter, were following. After a moment or two he heard footsteps fall into line behind him. Thoughts of Cloud, their rivalry, history and connection swirling in on his mind. He opened the connection between them. Cloud was distressed but not in danger, yet. The sudden invasion of Chaos' presence from Clouds end
surprised him, and if that was the reason he suddenly speed up his pace, he would not admit it to anyone.

He would choke this world with the blood of its creators. He would trigger the recycling process over and over again slamming his sword over and over into their temporally resurrected forms until nothing remained but the blood soaked ground. Tendrils of light surrounded his form. Wispy blue and white light bathed his form acting as the sole beacon of light in the darkness of his current surroundings. His fury and grief, absolute and raw, had triggered his limit. He has been pushed too far and the fact he could not take the fight right to Cosmos fuelled his wrath further. The storm that had been brewing from his need to save Tifa had arrived full force and he could not contain the frenzy, instead his every desire was to release its unequivocal savagery on those who had bought him this pain. He had felt this once before but the anger had been scattered, unfocused, confused. This time, he had a focus he knew what had caused this and hey would make them pay, only one thing standing in his way of this goal, Chaos. Every fibre of his being hummed with power, manifested through the light consuming his very figure. To those watching from afar he was a blazing white flame scorching the very earth as it travelled towards its prey, the human figure could not be discerned from the trenchant and all-encompassing aura.

Standing before a new Chrystal, this one embedded in a pit of thorns and jagged rock, Cloud felt none of his former fear, there was no need to steel himself, he was adamantine, he was his planets greatest weapon. He stepped through braced and ready for all that lay before him. It was bright, impossibly so. Light seared through his corneas and should have blinded him. Instead, his enhanced sight was barely effected as the aura generated by his turbulent emotions overpowered that of the crystal. Cloud felt the light attempting to seep into every pore it tendrils reaching out to wrap themselves around the very fibres that made up his being. There was no feeling of euphoria as his limit decimated and overcame the attack on his senses. He would not be controlled, especially not by one who had never control over him in the first place. Staring straight ahead, Cloud drew First Tsurugi, fell into his battle stance, assessed the area, and threw himself full force at the colossal being that was Chaos.

Hopefully the explanation of how Zack has returned to life was believable, even though his explanation is confused because of his own lack of understanding. I didn't want it to just be well Cosmos is a god and all powerful so duh she can bring the dead back to life, I wanted it to be a process she went through, and it was complicated one.

I also hope you enjoyed the semi-explanation of how the world works and what happens to the warriors after they 'die' it made sense to me so hope you liked it.

All reviews are appreciated.

Again my next chapter was deleted off my computer, it has left me with serious writers block on how to re-write it, hopefully this will lift soon.
Those of you who have read my account bio will know that the reason that I have not written anything in the past months is because the rest of the story was completely deleted from my computer. In fact every document, picture, video etc was deleted off my computer. I’m not even sure what happened but I had IT experts from work look it over and they were able to recover some files none of Exodus was recovered, none of my sims mods either. It has taken me months to get over the block that formed after the loss but I’m giving it a go now. I don’t know if this was as good as the originals but whatever it takes to finish the story I guess.

I’m also now storing the story on google drive so that should mean the story is backed up, my own stupidity I know.

I understand if previous readers do not want to return, as this is not the first time I’ve up and disappeared in the middle of the story.

The only promise I will make at this point is that I will finish this story. I just can’t predict when.

I do not own final fantasy, just my overactive imagination.

Death.

…

….

…..

The concept was not new to him, yet….

Shakingly he lifted his hand to wound in his chest. Pain exploded from the site of the ripped flesh and he felt his eyes roll dangerously back in their sockets.

No…..

He would not pass out, despite the pain, despite the spreading numbness running through his body,
he would not die without a fight. He needed to keep pressure on the wound.

He needed to stand, he needed to…..

There was so much blood, it oozed between his fingers, gushing out over his hand, determined to continue flowing, pouring from his body.

A low rumbling sound reached his confused mind. A sharp snapping sound caught his attention. His head lolled to the side and he watched as Chaos painfully attempted to drag his battered and bloody form to a stand against his throne. The fluid coating his ruby-red horn barely visible except for the trickling drops that plunged to the floor, coating it and the throne in the sticky fluid. Sticky blood, his……

His hand had fallen limp to the side, his fingers sticky and stained with congealing blood. His body was unable to garner the strength to keep the pressure on….what was he supposed to be putting pressure on?

A distant roar, a metallic clanging whispered at the edges of his thoughts.

Consciousness fading, the edges of his vision were dark, he felt as if he was seeing the world through shadows. Warmth blossomed in his throat, a complete juxtaposition to the icy, cold numbness that had taken hold of the rest of his being. His breath came in painful rasping gulps as he fought against what he knew was inevitable.

He could feel his life slipping away, seeping from his body as his blood slipped from the corners of his lips. Tiny scarlet rivers, curling, twisting, down his greying skin before plummeting from his neck, like a hellish waterfall, to mingle with the dirt beneath him. Feeling pressure building in his throat he tried to cough to clear the blockage. Instead a weak, wet, gurgling gasp released a fountain of blood from his lips.

Zack…..

Zack was here.

Zack was always there, and now they would be together in death.

He barely felt the brush of Zack’s palms against his cheeks, could see his lips moving, whispering….no... shouting. He watched dazed as Zack turned and spoke, roared at someone nearby, Aerith? Tifa?

He wanted to turn his head to see them to….he didn’t have the strength. Maybe, if Zack stopped cradling his head it would fall limply into the position he wanted. Zack looked to him again, his
eyes blurred with tears, why? He wanted to ask, why was Zack sad in this moment, he wasn’t in pain he couldn’t feel anything. It was okay. It was…… He had almost done it….almost...almost defeated a god.

Chaos, he had almost defeated him, had had him on his knees. He had driven him back time and time again and had lashed at him with a ferocity he had not felt since the battle over Midgar. A few well timed strikes would have left Chaos lifeless, slumped against his throne in a mockery of his former glory. Instead it had been a well struck blow from Chaos that had led to Cloud bleeding out, slowly, painfully, quietly. He had twisted in the air to avoid several lashed attempts to gore him with claws he had landed against the arm of the same throne he had imagined Chaos dead against. He had been cornered in that moment and slow, from the many blows Chaos had landed on his body, had been unable to jump aside quickly enough to avoid Chaos’ next blow.

It had been a desperate attack from Chaos’, desperate, but lethal, Cloud had known it the moment Chaos had bowed his head, like a bull charging a matador, and struck his side. Giant, razor-sharp tusks piercing his side, cutting through the soft tissue of his stomach and slicing through the silken fabric of his lung. The momentum had him slamming back into the throne as acute, excruciating agony erupted through his entire being.

He had compared it to being skewered on masamune, but as intense as the pain he had felt then had been, it did not reach the levels of anguish he felt now, nor, did it compare to the pain of his body as it was lifted from the ground and tossed, like a ragdoll to the side.

Blinking sluggishly he wondered if death here was the same as on Gaia, would he feel free, would.....

He gasped, drawing in a pained, shallow breath, choking weakly.

He heard someone scream....

He felt someone cupping his face, and a drop of something warm and damp connect with his cheek, tumbling down and merging with the rivulets of scarlett....

He wasn’t breathing anymore, not feeling anymore.

...  
....  
.....  
Death.
Let me know what you think. Hopefully this was worth the wait.

Please comment. I would really appreciate it.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

No excuses. I just suck.

Some of Golbez’s dialogue is taken from/inspired from the Dissidia games. Some of Sephiroth’s too.

Disclaimer - I do not own final fantasy, just my overactive imagination.

The putrid stench of death permeated the air. Zack, initially hopeful, felt as if his heart had been gripped in a vice as he laid eyes on the site before him.

Chaos badly injured but alive, leaning heavily against his throne.

Cloud lying on his back. A deep, torn gouge in his side. Blood pumping from the wound and a large pool of red growing beneath him, dark and sickly against his pale skin. Zack ran, his heart jumping to his throat as he slid the last few feet on his knees to Cloud’s side. From the corner or his eye he saw Golbez raise his weapon to Chaos. He didn’t care. The only thing he cared about was minutes from death before him.

The green glow of healing magic enveloped Zack’s fingers. He laid his hand lightly over Cloud’s bloody and torn side. Pushing the magic deep into the wound to knit the broken pieces back together, to replace the blood lost as it escaped from its confines and sank into the earth. He forced the magic to work faster, to work swiftly, to work carefully, to work...to work...why wasn’t it working? Zack screamed in frustration as he watched the magic touch Cloud only to splutter and disappear, wave after wave, it fizzled out, leaving no trace of the magic having ever existed. Zack knew what this was, what this meant, had seen it hundred of times on missions for Shin-Ra. When the body was too far gone, when despite every best intention and the work of some of the most powerful magic healers trying to heal, the body was no longer receptive to magic. The trauma too much and the stability needed to allow the magic to work, gone. It was at this time, out on the field, that trauma surgeons were called upon, to try to use modern medicine to save the lives of those who had slipped this far towards their final rest. The surgeons would work to patch the wounds and stabilise them enough to allow the magic to flood their systems and complete the process.

Zack didn’t have a trauma team. He had no knowledge of how to save those in Cloud’s condition. Zack knew how it felt to be in this state, having recently been momentarily re-subjected to the experience by Cosmos. He knew how it felt to drown in your own blood with wounds so numerous and so deep that you body became numb to the pain and the lack of oxygen to the brain led to confusion and shock. Their positions were reversed now. He remembered Cloud, eyes unfocused and thoughts muddled, leaning over him with his innocent and grief-stricken eyes as he watched his best friend, his brother, his protector, die. Die and be unable to do anything about it. Zack wondered if he looked like that to Cloud. He wondered if Cloud was even aware of his presence. Zack felt his breath catch in his throat, a desolate sob escaping his throat. His breathing ragged, his heart breaking. His pain so palpable that he wondered if he too would perish in the moment Cloud took his last breath. He felt so useless, his reincarnation futile, Cloud in exchange for him, it wasn’t fair. He couldn’t heal Cloud, his love for him, pure, powerful and all encompassing wasn’t enough.
He couldn’t even avenge him, couldn’t fight Chaos. He could only hope that Golbez would, he could only pray that Sephiroth was furious enough to join the fray, to gain justice for his own lost chance to defeat Cloud. Zack couldn’t help, he was a warrior of Cosmos now, he couldn’t hurt Chaos only Cosmos...Cosmos...Cosmos who had brought him back from the brink of death. Who had healed him where Gaia’s magic had failed, who could do the same for Cloud, who could heal him before he fell into the void, a nothing waiting to be recreated in the new cycle or returned home...if there was going to be a new cycle. If they could be returned home. If Cosmos won, it meant nothing. She was merely the lesser of two evils. She could not be trusted to keep her word, her promises. Zack had to try though. Cloud was moments from losing the fight to live.

“COSMOS!” He screamed as loud as he could, knowing the closer he was to Chaos the weaker she was, the harder it was to reach and communicate with her warriors, but she could always hear them, he knew she would hear him. “Please, I need you...Cloud needs you...Please!” He pleaded, sobbing loudly unable to mask the utter desperation he felt. “Cosmos! Please.” He roared and roared begging her to help. His response was deafening silence, only Golbez’s roar of anger breaking it moments later, followed by the sound of a battle. “Please...please.” he gasped taking Cloud’s face in his hands, tenderly stroking the blooded cheek as he stared into unfocused, unseeing eyes. He felt Cloud take a final, shallow, choked breath and felt his own heart stop alongside Cloud’s own. “No, no...no...no, NO!” Unable contain his anguish Zack screamed, a howling, heart-wrenching sound of absolute devastation.

Sephiroth watched the would-be-god as he painfully made his way to his feet. Golbez raised his weapon beside him. Chaos still leaning heavily against the throne looked at them both. “My warrior’s turning against me.” He laughed, deep and wet from the blood in his throat. “I should have known that one would try to kill me.” Nodding his head at Cloud as he spoke. “He has been nothing but a pathetic nuisance since the day I bought him here. He made the two of you weak too. My warriors, supposedly the most abhorrent and destructive in the universe falling on their knees over some blonde with a pretty face. Useless. He has been a disease infecting everyone he touches. Well look!” he roared pointing in Cloud’s direction. “I have found the cure.” He laughed again. “So the question is...what do the two of you plan on doing now?” His eyes roamed over the two of them taking them in, analysing them. Finally they settled on Sephiroth. Chaos smiled, all bloody razor sharp teeth. “After all Sephiroth, you wouldn’t want to hurt ‘mother’ would you.” As Chaos spoke his voice twisted into that of another. One Sephiroth knew well. One he loved. One that had been whispering in his ear since his last meeting with Chaos’ projection. The booming, manic voice of Chaos had twisted into that of Jenova. Sickly sweet, inviting and comforting. A musical laugh reached his ears. Sephiroth could clearly see Chaos speak but the voice that escaped was that of another. Anger exploded within him. How dare Chaos manipulate him. He had been played for a fool. Used as a pawn. A puppet. He could only assume it was to use him to lure Cloud into the battle. It had worked and now Cloud was as good as dead and he was in Chaos’ firing line.

A distant roar of anger pulled his attention away from the looming, bloodied form before him. Jenova’s voice disappeared and only Chaos remained. He watched the scene unfold before him almost as if he was watching through oil. Everything was blurred and wavering. His heart was throbbing in his chest, his thoughts a jumbled puzzle slowly coming together with an overwhelming conclusion. Golbez. He has never heard such a broken wrathful noise from the normally calm and poised warrior. Golbez was attacking Chaos, pushing him back, ramming him with every ounce of strength he owned. Sephiroth was surprised to see Golbez’s fury blinding him to the mistakes he was now making in battle. Sephiroth had seen and fought beside Golbez in the past, a formidable enemy, one he knew, who had protected Cloud since his arrival in this nightmarish world. His wrath was almost tangible and Chaos, weakened to near death by Cloud,
was taken by surprise and slower to defend than usual, took one of Golbez’s blow to the side.
Sephiroth watched as Chaos collapsed on one knee. He watched as Golbez prepared to strike again,
as Chaos flung out his arm; power gathering at the tips of his fingers. He watched as Golbez was
thrown backwards, landing heavily, but still on his feet. Chaos’s entire forearm was enveloped in
a thick red aura of magic aimed at Golbez, however it did not seem that anything had come from the
magic. Chaos, unperturbed, turned the magic to himself, slowly healing his numerous wounds from
both Cloud and Golbez. It wasn’t until Golbez made to attack again that both he and Sephiroth
realised what Chaos has done. Unable to garner the strength to defeat Golbez in one-on-one
conflict, or to destroy him with magic, Chaos has instead trapped him. Golbez had meet an
invisible wall which had prevented him from taking more that a step towards Chaos. Sephiroth
watched as Golbez tried to escape from his confines but was unable to. He was trapped in an
invisible box, like a mime performing for a crowd, the absurdity was not lost on Sephiroth who
breathed a small laugh at the situation he now faced.

Cloud lay defeated, dying, gone too far for Zack to heal. Chaos was near death himself, collapsed
against his throne, healing himself after Cloud’s relentless attack and Golbez attempts to avenge his
friend. Zack was unable to fight Chaos himself and Golbez was now unable to either and
Sephiroth, he had been tricked, used, manipulated. He was furious, his blood boiling. Chaos had
pretended to be Jenova and has been thoroughly convincing as the parasitic deity, but what if this
was the trick? How did Sephiroth know for sure that Jenova was always Chaos whispering in his
ear? Was it only now in this moment, knowing he was in danger of being defeated, that Chaos had
taken on the visage of Jenova. Could he truly have created such an accurate act to have played her
this entire time. He was snappd from his contemplation by the broken, forlorn howl from Zack.
He felt something fracture in his mind. A void opening and swirling like a typhoon. He felt empty,
as if a part of him had been wrenched from him against his will. A wail resounded deep in his
consciousness, a wail he knew, one he recognised, crying for his fallen brother. Jenova. The real
Jenova, grieving her lost son. Grieving Cloud. Cloud was gone. Dead. Defeated. Lost to the
nothingness beyond this world. The fracture had been his connection to Cloud. The part of them
connected by their blood, their cells, their positions as the chosen favourites of Jenova. He couldn’t
feel Cloud’s ever lingering presence, couldn’t feel his consciousness sitting in the back of his
mind. Did Cloud feel this? Had Cloud experienced this void everytime he had defeated Sephiroth
in combat? He wanted the feeling gone. It was too close to love, to fondness and endearment for
Cloud. He felt none of that for him. No, this feeling of loss was only because of the void. He could
once call upon Clouds strength and resolve and now it was gone. He didn’t care for Cloud, he
couldn’t, no he cared that he had lost a tendril of power, but he was still strong. He was still the
most powerful being in this world and any other.

“Sephiroth!” A deep, angry, choked voice bellowed. Sephiroth turned his head staring at Golbez,
he looked feeble and weak, an angry animal trapped in a cage unable to escape. Golbez slammed
his fist against the barrier holding him back.

Show me, show Chaos. Your arrogance has been eclipsed by your shadow act to Cloud. To your
enslavement to Chaos and his manipulation and tricks. Have you drowned in the battle and
forgotten your will? Destroy Chaos. You are the only one who can now.” Golbez continued to
fight against his confines, beating his fist in time to his words, emphasising to Sephiroth what he
himself knew to be truth. Casting a glance at Cloud he decided his own fate.

“The hero of prophecy as fallen, however, I did not expect it to be at any but my own hands. I have
been chained to the cycles.” His voice, little more than a whisper, rose in strength, aiming his
words at the pseudo god before him. “No more. You may be a being of chaos, but I will show you
true despair. Your tricks cannot change your fate, they have led to it.” Sephiroth felt the familiar
ache of his shoulder blade, the skin pulled taut, fighting against the protrusion that would rip its
way through the flesh. He felt the appendage grow and his skin tear, rivers of blood and exudate
dripping down his back. Nerve endings and muscles began to form, extending further no longer hindered by the confines of his flesh. He rolled his shoulders, acclimating to the new weight, the change in balance, the thrum of power within his veins. Casting the appendage from his side, he shook away the excess fluid. Eyes locking with his enemy he smirked. Extending his arm he called upon Masamune, wrapping his fingers around the hilt, his grip strong, knuckle turning white, the leather of his gloves creaking in protest. His wing flapped, dust rising from the dirt beneath him, blasted by the force of each beat. He rose steadily from the ground, gripping Masamune with his other hand, rage fuelling his actions, reaching for his limit, he broke his staring contest with Chaos for only a moment, eyes resting on Cloud’s prone and bloody corpse on last time. His wing beat faster, propelling him forward. Masamune clanged against Chaos’s own large sword. Chaos forced to stop healing himself in order to protect himself from further harm, still battered and beaten from his previous encounters. Eye to eye now, he felt the force of his blow push Chaos’ weakened form backwards. “I will bring your ruination.” Sephiroth twisted his body once more falling into a frenzy of strikes, raining down havoc on the one who claimed to have created the very notion.

Zack cradled Cloud’s lifeless form to his chest. Thick tears streamed down his face, a face smeared in the blood of his friend, his brother, the one he had sworn above all else to protect. The one he had failed. Cloud was pale, the stark red of his blood the only color against his skin. He was still warm a feeling which made Zack want to trick himself into believing that he was merely sleeping. But he couldn’t. Running his fingers through Cloud’s blood-matted hair he turned his head to the sky, hoping, praying.

“Cosmos.” He voice was broken, subdued, barely loud enough to reach his own ears. “Bring him back….bring him back, please...restart the cycle...bring him back…”

Sephiroth had defeat Chaos. Zack had watched as Sephiroth had razed the earth in his fury. Chaos had put up a strong fight but weakened by his battle with Cloud, had not healed enough. Chaos had died with Masamune through his chest, hoisted into the air, in a mockery of the first wound Sephiroth had ever inflicted upon Cloud.

Everything had been quiet after Chaos’ corpse fell to the ground. Zack, Golbez and Sephiroth just watching in silence, awed at the fact the the so-called god was dead. It had been then that things began to change. Golbez was freed from his cage and the earth began to rumble. At first they had assumed that this area, now it was no longer being protected by Chaos was about to collapse and be destroyed as a new cycle began, but, as thunder and lightning began to explode across the sky, they realised this was different.

Golbez had run to Zack in an attempt to get him and Cloud’s body to a safer area when he and Sephiroth were both thrown off their feet by an implosion that had emanated from Chaos’ form. Zack far enough away had been spared the brunt of the explosion.

The three remaining warriors had watched in shock as a gaping black vortex formed where Chaos’ body had once lay. The vortex swirled with destructive ferocity, the trio watched as clumps of earth, loose branches, the throne began to get siphoned into its depths. Sephiroth, the closest, was suddenly thrown off his feet as the expanding maelstrom reached further trying to pull everything around it into its centre. Clambering in panic, Sephiroth clawed desperately at the earth trying to ground himself. Attempting to fly out of the grip of the vortex, Sephiroth extended his wing, only to scream in agony as the gargantuan pull of the vortex wrenched his wing towards its centre, breaking the delicate bones, tearing the feathers and rendering the wing useless. Sephiroth glanced to the crystal, their only escape still standing, but for how long, his fingers tore deep gouges into the earth as he was pulled backwards, any second now and he would be pulled far enough that he would be engulfed by its inky depths. He looked to Zack who was being wrestled away from Cloud by Golbez. Realising his inevitable fate he screamed out to them.
“RUN! THE CRYSTAL! RUN!”

Golbez and Zack watched in horror as Sephiroth lost the fight against the current and disappeared into the void. Zack jolted from his stupor, realised they could get to the crystal or die, he stopped fighting and allowed Golbez to haul him to his feet. They had barely taken a step in the direction of the crystal when the vortex grew in strength, almost as if Sephiroth had given it nourishment it tore through the area faster than ever before, eating everything in its path. Golbez and Zack could both feel the pull now and Zack screamed as Cloud’s body began to move towards its centre. He made to grab Cloud but Golbez’s shoved him in the opposite direction, towards the crystal, towards safety. He wanted to fall to his knees and give up, and forced himself not to watch as Cloud too disappeared into nothingness. The were almost at the crystal when their fate was sealed. Both Zack and Golbez were fighting desperately against the pull, Golbez’s heavy armour an asset in grounding them. Nothing could prepare them for the feeling of despair as they watched the crystal crack, the glow disappearing and the power of the vortex uprooting it from the vines and the earth. Golbez and Zack were forced to dive to the ground so as to not be hit by the crystal. It was then that they knew they would die, like Sephiroth, once on the ground it was impossible to get back up, and even more so to fight against the pull. Zack screamed as he flew into the air, Golbez grabbed his hand as he flew past. Sinking his feet into the ground Golbez fought against the current but the growth of the vortex had not slowed and was engulfing everything in its path. Even if they could fight the pull in a matter of moments the black hole would reach them anyway.

Zack screamed to warn Golbez as he saw a large boulder flying towards them. Unable to protect himself Golbez was hit and Zack lost his grip on his hand. Screaming, he flew backwards. He did not know if the hit had killed Golbez or not but he was definitely not conscious, he had joined Zack in the air. They were both gonna die. Zack felt nothing as he reached the centre of the void. He saw nothing, heard nothing. All senses lost.

The vortex continued extending its reach fueled by those it had already swallowed up. Smashing through the barriers between areas it continued its destructive path into the next, and the next....

Squall and Bartz ran as fast as they could. Trying to outrun the impossible. Terra, Zidane both had already been lost. Squall did not know how many others had been consumed by the darkness. They were almost to Cosmos. If anyone could protect them it would be her. He heard Bartz cry out and turned to see him on the ground already being dragged backwards. He stopped, torn run or help. Stay and die or leave and have a chance to survive. He took a step towards Bartz.

“NO!” Bartz screamed. “Don’t come closer. Get to Cosmos! Go!..” Squall hesitated then ran. He knew he would only die too. If he got to Cosmos maybe together they could find a way to save his friends. It didn’t change the fact he felt like he had betrayed Bartz by abandoning him to the void. Diving towards the crystal he could only hope it activated in time before he too was devoured. His hopes were dashed as, on touching the crystal, nothing happened. The crystal didn’t glow and he wasn’t transported anywhere. Collapsing in shock and horror. Squall did the only thing that he could, he turned to face his fate.

To be continued...
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