

Foreigners

By Channary

Submitted: September 22, 2007

Updated: September 22, 2007

Crossover fic. FFVII and FFVIII. WIP. After Cloud fights Sephiroth, he falls into the lifestream and goes through a sort of time compression. He finds himself in an alternate dimension and another world. Comments are appreciated.

Provided by Fanart Central.

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Reminder: This happens after Advent Children and the games. But before Dirge.

#68. Foreigners

Cloud had no idea where he was. This city didn't look anything like Midgar.

"Get outta my way, punk!" A gruff voice growled, pushing the blonde to the side. Glowing blue mako eyes glared at the thick, burly man as he continued to walk down the unfamiliar street. Eventually, Cloud stopped a woman looking through magazines at a street vendor.

"Excuse me, Miss." Cloud started. She looked up from her Pet Pals magazine and turned towards him, "I'm sorry to bother you. But where exactly are we?"

The woman gave him a confused look but answered him anyway, "Oh! You must be from the country. This is Deling City."

"Deling..." Cloud said quietly. He'd never heard of this place in all his travels with Cid on the Highwind. The buildings definitely looked different than any he'd ever see before. He mumbled a quiet 'thanks' and started to walk away. Hopefully the gil he had on him would buy him a ride to someplace familiar. Or at least a hotel room so he could study his surroundings.

Luckily he happened to be in the busy part of town and right across the street was a bold neon sign stating that the tall, bustling building it was bolted to was a hotel. He made his way across the street, dodging the fast-paced, bulky tanks and walked into the brightly lit foyer.

Cloud walked up to the front desk.

"Welcome to the Deling Hotel. How may I assist you?" A cheery voice asked as he stepped up to the counter.

"Uh. How much for a room?"

"150 gil a night. You'll have access to the lounge as well." The desk clerk said. Cloud reached into his pocket and pulled out some gil.

"One night then. And is there a train station around here?" Cloud asked. The clerk stopped counting the gil and looked up at him.

"The train station is currently under construction. The nearest one is southwest of Galbadia Garden to the east." The clerk finished counting the gil and handed over a room key. Cloud took it and went

towards the elevators. As he waited for the elevators, two men came up the stairs from the lounge. The older one was talking quickly and loudly to the other.

"I used to come here all the time when I was in the army. You and your friends have no idea the sentimental value of this place." The taller brunette said to the quieter one. The two stopped behind Cloud and stood waiting for the elevators as well.

"Now, Squall. You gotta loosen up a little. Stayin' with Rinoa won't stop her from turning into a sorceress." The younger brunette, Squall, opened his mouth to speak but was brushed off by the older man, "let her hang out with the girls. She knows what's going to happen and she wants to have as much fun as she can before, well, 'IT' happens."

The elevator finally arrived and as the doors slid open, a short girl in a yellow dress and cowboy hat shouted from inside.

"Pres-"

"Ah," Laguna stopped her abruptly, glancing quickly at Cloud then back again, "it's just Laguna when we're vacationing. I'm not president on my day off."

"Oh. Right. Sorry." The girl apologized, blushing. She stepped further into the elevator allowing the three men to get inside. She looked at Cloud briefly before turning to the other two.

"Now, what did you want, Selphie?" Laguna asked, pushing the button for the 5th floor.

"Matron gave us a call about two people who showed up at the orphanage this afternoon."

"What does she want us to do about them? Were they causing trouble?"

"No. She said they seemed confused and they kept talking about a river of life or something. She said we might want to take a look." As she spoke, Cloud couldn't help but overhear and his eyes got wide.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, but are you talking about the Lifestream?" Cloud questioned the girl. She looked surprised for a second before brightening.

"Oh! Yeah, that's what she said! The Lifestream. How did you know that?"

"I might know them. Where I come from, the Lifestream is what keeps the Planet alive. It's where you go when you die."

"Where do you come from? I've never heard of the Lifestream and I've been all over the world." The elevator dinged and the doors slid open. The group exited the elevator as to not hold it up.

"I was in a city called Midgar, but I'm starting to believe that Midgar doesn't exist here." The three shook their heads.

"Well, I think Ms. Edea would appreciate it if we brought....um. Sorry, didn't catch your name."

“Strife. Cloud Strife.” Cloud nodded politely to the others. Selphie giggled.

“I’m Laguna Loire, President of Esthar. This here is Squall, savior of the world, and that there is Selphie.”

“Heh. Coincidence. I’m the savior of my world too. Twice. But were you given any descriptions of these people? There could be a slim chance it’s someone real bad.”

“Huh? Oh, not really. She just said it was a boy and a girl. Do you think you know them?”

“It could be Tifa or Yuffie. Hmm.” Suddenly another brunette boy stuck his head out of a room farther down the hall.

“Hey! You found them!” The tall, long-haired boy cried, exiting the room and walking down to the end of the hallway. He plucked the hat from Selphie's head and placed it on his own, “who’s this?”

“This is Cloud. He’s going to come with us to Matrons to identify the foreigners.” Selphie beamed at her boyfriend.

“Hey. The name’s Irvine.” He said, sticking out his hand. Cloud grasped the proffered hand and they shook briskly.

“Why don’t we get Cloud here, to his room and we all get some rest. We’ll head out to the Centra Plains in the morning.” Laguna said, almost herding the group through the hall.

“Yeah, I definitely need some rest now. Too much information.” Cloud said, holding his head as if in pain.

“What is your room number?” Selphie asked.

“Uh...” Cloud looked down at the key in his hand, “513.”

“That’s by our room!” Selphie exclaimed. She gave a warm grin at the blonde.

“Hey. Then we’ll get you at 8 tomorrow then?” They stopped in front of Clouds door and he stuck the key in, nodding.

“Yeah. Sounds good. Tomorrow then.” And he went inside.

The next morning, Cloud was showered and redressed by the time Squall came knocking on the door. The two stared at each other in silence before Cloud exited the room and closed the door behind him. They headed down to the elevators and stood in silence until the doors opened. They stepped inside and the doors closed before Squall spoke.

“Everyone should be out by the Ragnarok. We’ll have to go outside the city to reach it, though. Do you

have a weapon?"

"Not on me." Cloud said, adjusting the holster on his back absentmindedly.

"I suggest we stop by the weapon shop first then. I need to upgrade my bullets anyway." Squall said quietly. Cloud stopped by the front desk when they reached the lobby and dropped off his room key, then the two walked outside. They headed further into the city and ambled in front of the weapon shop, with Squall going in first.

Squall stepped up to the counter and started negotiating with the owner.

"I need to upgrade these and a few more of these..." Cloud was looking around at the different weapons around the shop. Some he had never seen before and couldn't quite figure out what they were used for or how.

"Do you see anything you can wield?" Squalls quiet voice asked suddenly, startling Cloud out of his reverie. There was a sword on the back wall that had caught Clouds attention.

"What about that one?" He questioned, nodding his head towards the sword.

"That needs to be fixed up some. Some jelly eyes and marlboro tentacles should do it." The shopkeeper said. Cloud met Squall gaze.

"Do you have any of those? I'll pay for the repairs but I don't have those...ingredients." Squall nodded and handed over the necessary items and the shopkeeper quickly fixed up the sword. Cloud paid the man and the two left the weapon shop. They walked to the edge of the city and out past the gates. Standing just a dozen yards or so was a large, shiny red airship. A short blonde boy was standing at the entrance ramp to the machine and he instantly perked up upon seeing Squall. He grinned and waved at the two before suddenly pointing off to the left of them. Squall turned and readied his weapon, Cloud followed suit. A group of wendigos were closing in on them as the blonde from before ran up behind them.

"Didn't (gasp) want you to (wheeze) start without me." The blonde said, clutching his side. He caught his breathe and crouched into a fighting stance. As soon as the wendigos got close enough they attacked, the first being sliced in half by Squalls gunblade, a deafening gunshot following the crunch of steel against bone. Cloud sliced easily through his charging wwendig with his new sword and turned just in time to see the other blonde boy crush the skull and vertebrae of the last monster with his fists.

"Wow. You handle that sword like a pro!" The shorter blonde exclaimed, punching the air. The tattoo on the side of his face scrunched up as he grinned. "You must be Cloud. I'm Zell, best martial artist around." A shrill whistle sounded from the airship and loud erratic barking could be heard suddenly. A girl in a blue duster stood on the ramp and she started waving at them.

"Come on, guys! We're going to be late!" The girl yelled. A dog was now racing around the three boys and barking madly. Zell went to grab him but missed and the dog ran back towards the airship, tattooed blonde hot on his heels. Squall nodded his head to Cloud and the two started walking. Upon reaching the airship and ascending the ramp, the engines rumbled to life and the door closed and locked. Cloud looked around the open cargo space, eyes drawn immediately to Zell messing around with the dog. The

girl in the blue duster was talking to Squall a few feet away and he turned towards them.

“Hi. I’m Rinoa.” She held out her hand.

“Cloud.” He took her hand and gave it a gentle squeeze, then dropped it. He recognized her name from the night before.

“So do you really think it’s your friends?” Rinoa asked suddenly. Cloud didn’t know how to answer her.

“I’m not sure. As long as it’s not a man with a really big sword, we have nothing really to worry about.” Cloud said. Selphie didn’t mention anything that sounded like the mysterious man could be Sephiroth, but having come back before there was no guarantee.

“We should get up to the top deck. While the airship is fast, it will still be a while until we get to the Centra Ruins.” Squall said. He turned towards the door and the four of them took the elevator up to the top deck. When the doors opened, Zell made a beeline for the pilot’s chair.

“And we’re off!” Zell cried, flipping a few more switches and pulling back on the steering console. There was a feeling of intense gravitational force as they lifted off of the ground and then normality. Front the front window, clouds flew past them and a distant mountain range came into view.

“Ever been on an airship before?” Irvine asked from his spot behind Zell’s chair. Cloud nodded.

The distant mountain range became closer and closer until they had passed over it. The deep blue of the ocean soon took up the whole window, melding with the lighter blue of the sky that was dotted with clouds.