

# Sense of Life

## Final Fantasy VII

Von abgemeldet

### Kapitel 2: Final Insights

#### Chapter 2: Final insights

"Hey buddy", Cloud greeted his smoking friend, leaning himself onto the frame of the front porch. The late night was chilly and brought slight goosebumps to his bare arms. Cid just nodded in reply, watching the smoke of his cigarette rise up to the starlit sky. Slowly, he sighed and placed the cigarette in the corner of his mouth.

"You know, I've kinda... been thinkin about what Tif said..." he said with his rough voice. "y'know, what she said bout Shera..."

Cloud frowned and immediately shot Cid a surprised look.

Could the grumpy old pilot have noticed what was going on around him?

Could he, for once, have put his dreams and thoughts about planes and rockets aside and realize that there were still human beings on earth?

Cid gave a small laugh at Cloud's expression, understandingly.

"Sounds quite strange, comin from me, huh?"

The younger man joined in the laughter.

"Oh ya, definitely!"

Cid took another look at his cigarette, obviously trying to focus his thoughts to express just what he was feeling.

"I guess there's really lots of things me and Shera gotta sort out. I... I know I have never shown it but I definitely owe her one..." he made a small pause and blew out a cloud of gray smoke into the pure, chilly air of the night.

"I think I really... need her. I don't know why I didn't realize it before... maybe I just ignored it..."

Cloud's eyebrows shot up, incredulously.

It surprised him that Cid had finally obtained the insight to realize what was going on between him and his assistant, that he did not try to disguise his feelings any longer.

"Ya, I guess I pretty much understand you..." Cloud replied.

It had been similar with Cloud's own feelings for Tifa. It had taken him a long time to realize that he could easily have what he had longed for all through his childhood and youth, and, with a great amount of courage, he had finally taken the step that had changed his whole life in the most positive way ever possible.

Now he did not even want to think about what might have happened if he had not dared making the deciding action.

Looking over at his friend, he could see that his mind was still disturbed, undecided about what to make out of the revelation he got.

"You should just do it. Don't think about it too much, just do it." Cloud encouraged his older friend. "Don't hesitate, or you won't be able to do it."

Even though Cloud had never been the cheering type, at least not during their search for Sephiroth, this was one of the very few occasions that he felt he needed to take on that character trait.

"Ya, thanks, pal. Shera's done a whole lot for me, and she really deserves a good life. I mean, hell! She's been able to cope with all my thickheadedness an constant swearing!"

That sentence earned a chuckle from Cloud who was still sort of surprised by Cid's final insights. Maybe a little talk with his friends was all it had ever needed.

"Okay!" Cid half-shouted and pushed himself off the frame, putting his cigarette back into the corner of his mouth, skillfully talking meanwhile nevertheless. "Then I'm gonna do it! Right now! I'm gonna take that &\$\$%)( plane and get there as fast as lightning!"

Thus, he grinned, spun around on his heel and, determinedly, marched back into the house to most likely get a few things packed up.

Cloud commented the scene with a small laugh and followed Cid inside.

Now this was most definitely a day he would have to mark in his calendar.

The grump, stubborn pilot had finally accepted the fact that even he himself had feelings and that it would be better to just let them out.

No matter what.

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Tifa stood in front of the full length mirror in her and Cloud's bedroom and closely studied her reflection on the shiny surface.

Slowly, carefully even, she ran her hands over her flat stomach and delicately traced the area that would soon swell to spend room for her unborn baby.

Even though she was not far along enough to show yet, she could feel that there was something inside of her, growing every day, every second even, making her feel happier and more complete than ever before in her entire life.

With a sigh, she rested both her hands on her stomach and smiled at her reflection. Soon, her appearance would change, even though not very gravely, yet in a way she would not want to miss.

With a dreamy look in her eyes, her imagination took over.

"Incredibly beautiful", she heard a voice from behind her, immediately recognizing it as the one that allowed her love to voice his thoughts.

Smiling, she turned her head towards him, remembering the first time he had said those words, the first time he had said that he loved her.

Cloud approached her slowly and put his arms around her waist, softly resting his hands on her stomach, right beside hers.

"Dreaming, huh?" he asked, gazing at their reflection in the mirror, tracing her stomach area carefully with his fingertips.

Tifa nodded in reply and sighed.

"Ya", her gaze focused on her reflection. "In a few weeks from now, you know, it'll be starting to show."

Cloud frowned, not knowing what she was about to tell him, as he saw no apparent

problem in that fact. It was just normal.

After a short, quiet pause, she sighed, yet smiled at the same time.

"I bet the news will be reporting about it immediately. Surely there won't be a single news show without us on it."

With a chuckle on his lips, Cloud kissed her softly on the forehead. She was definitely right about that. Even though none of them had wanted to be regarded as a hero and thus arouse public attention, they had been on the news quite often after they had defeated Sephiroth. Even when they had moved into their house in Kalm, the news had made a short notice about that. Yet, luckily, they left them be most of the time, respecting their privacy as far as possible.

"Well, it's a happy occasion, most happy indeed, so I guess there's nothing bad about that."

"Yeah, you're right", Tifa replied and turned her head to kiss him back, then redirected her gaze at the mirror.

If she was happy, why not show everybody?

Now, finally, she had almost everything she had ever longed for, and was happier than she had ever been before, she wanted to show it to the whole wide world.

Wanted to share her happiness with every single person on the entire planet.

As soon as she would be ready to do so.

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Having one of his many occasional fights with the coffeemaker, Cloud was busy trying to prepare breakfast that morning. Ever since he had learned about Tifa's pregnancy, he had been doing most of the work she had done usually, yet not because she had asked him to, but simply because he wanted to.

While she was having a - more or less yet - hard time having their child, he considered it to be at least a small relief he could give her.

Anything to help her, he thought.

Cloud smiled quietly and once again savored the silence which lay on their home. Now that Cid was in Rocket Town with Shera, the last month had been really quiet, without much fights and even just a small amount of swearing. Even Barret had reduced his now that Marlene was back from a summer camp that had been organized for all the children after the Meteor incident, just to give the kids the feelings that everything was now okay. Although it had been hard for the caring father to give away his daughter, even if it was just for a few weeks, he had finally given in to Tifa's talk that it was best for Marlene to be with some other kids and have some carefree time.

Finally, the world seemed to be in order, just the way it was supposed to be.

"Oh no, not these, too!" Cloud heard from upstairs.

Well, at least almost that way.

Cloud half grinned as he put down the coffeemaker and made his way upstairs to his and Tifa's bedroom.

And there she was, just like he had expected, in front of the full length mirror, tugging at her jeans, trying to make them fit over her swollen belly.

She looked desperate, almost like a small child that would start crying any minute because it had lost its favorite toy.

Cloud smiled and walked up to her, softly caressing her face.

"What is it, Teef? Don't fit?"

Tifa shook her head in reply, and her expression even sunk.

"No, they won't. And they're actually the biggest pair I've got!"

She sighed and, in a most ill-humored way, dropped the jeans to the ground and put her hands to her hips, shooting the mirror a striking look.

Cloud tried to suppress a chuckle as he embraced his love from behind.

Once more, like quite often lately, they were standing in front of the mirror together, observing how their child grew day by day.

Softly, Cloud caressed her swollen stomach comfortingly, trying to cheer Tifa up.

"I'm somewhat big for three months, don't you think? The doc said it would start to show around the third month, but that much?" she asked, a bit of worry swaying in her voice.

Cloud smiled at her in the mirror and rested his cheek on her shoulder.

"I think it's okay, really. Anyway, if it really worries you, then just ask the Doc about it this afternoon at the appointment."

Now Tifa smiled, even though she was not persuaded by his words, she really appreciated his consolation and felt at least a little better.

Turning around, she kissed him softly on the lips and broke their embrace. Taking a short glance at the cupboard, she pulled out a knee-long black skirt and pulled it up her long pale legs.

She shot a more or less content look at the mirror and then turned around to Cloud.

"Okay, I guess this'll have to do."

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"Am I right that this is your first ultrasound, Ms Lockheart?"

Tifa nodded in reply at the doctor as she lay down and pulled up her shirt to expose her swollen belly.

While the doctor was adjusting some instruments, Cloud took his place at Tifa's side and softly grasped her hand reassuringly. She was a little nervous and excited, probably even a bit embarrassed because of the position she was in.

The doctor turned around to face his patient, holding a tube filled with gel in his hands which were protected by thin gloves. Slowly, he unscrewed the tube and held it over Tifa's exposed belly.

"This is going to be a bit cold."

Thus, he carefully poured gel out of the tube until it covered the whole area of her belly which was to be examined.

Tifa winced and increased her pressure on Cloud's hand.

"A bit cold?" she asked with an almost pained expression on her face.

In that very moment once again, Cloud was very glad that he was not in Tifa's position. He even felt pity for her. Yet once again, admired her for her strength and stamina.

The doctor smiled at her fatherly. Many times had he done this already, and even though it were almost always the same feelings and reactions, he still enjoyed it every time, trying to give the young parents, especially the mothers, as much reassurance as they needed to cope with the totally new and unfamiliar situation and its consequences.

Then, he grabbed for rather large metallic object and gently ran it across Tifa's belly, applying a slight pressure.

Tifa turned her gaze from her belly to the black and white screen and excitedly watched as almost unrecognizable pictures appeared, apparently showing the inside of Tifa's stomach area now.

Still searching for the best view, the doctor ran the object across the area while staring intently at the screen.

Cloud's gaze jumped from his love to the monitor, back and forth, extremely excited and nervous.

Suddenly, a smile appeared on the doctor's face. Apparently, he had found what he had been looking for.

"See, there, in the upper left corner, you can see its feet, then", he traced a faint white line on the monitor with his index finger "when you follow the spine, you see the small head right here", he pointed to a bigger, gray area in the lower right corner.

Tifa let out a gasp as a few tears of joy formed in her eyes. Smiling, she looked over at Cloud, who was even more amazed at what was happening in that very moment.

"Oh", they heard the doctor and immediately turned back towards him, anxious of what he might reveal. "And here, partially hidden behind this head, is a second one."

In a most excited way, he changed the angle of his view and took a closer look.

Immediately, worry shot through Cloud's veins, not to mention that Tifa extremely intensified her pressure on Cloud's hand.

"W... What do you mean?" he pressed out. "Is anything wrong?"

He looked down at Tifa who had fresh tears glistening in her eyes, fright showing on her face.

The doctor chuckled softly before he replied.

"Oh no, please, don't worry. Nothing is wrong, except for the fact that you", he glanced at Tifa reassuringly "are not having one child, but two."

Cloud looked stunned, as did Tifa. She slowly brought her free hand up to her chest.

"Do you mean that...?"

Smiling, the doctor nodded in reply.

"Yes. Ms Lockheart, Mr. Strife, you're having twins."

Tifa gasped once more, and, overjoyed, shot a glance at Cloud, who still seemed to be stunned, totally taken aback by all the news.

Laughing, she carefully pulled him down and kissed him lovingly on the lips, being anxious not to change her position, which would destroy the image.

Obviously, Cloud was finally beginning to understand what was going on, as his face lit up and his features softened as the information sunk in.

The doctor watched the scenery with a kind smile.

"Do you want a printed copy of it?"

Tifa simply nodded, smiling brightly, as she slowly brought a hand up to her stomach. This was it finally.

This was the moment that Tifa became fully aware of what was happening.

That she became fully aware that it was not just a realistic wonderful dream, but wonderful reality.

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When Cloud and Tifa returned home, they were already awaited by little Marlene who was eager to know what the doctor had told them. Ever since she had come back from the children's camp and Tifa had explained that she and Cloud were having a baby that she would be able to baby-sit soon, she had been most excited about everything, always wanting to know what was going on. And, most of all, how long she would have to wait until the baby was there.

Right next to Marlene was Yuffie, who was about as excited and curious as the little

girl. As soon as Tifa had set a foot inside the house, the two girls were right at her ankle, shooting her questioning looks.

Cloud chuckled as he stepped inside behind Tifa and put his arms around her waist onto her belly.

"So...? 's everything okay? How does the baby look? What gender is it? Do you have a picture?" Yuffie inhaled deeply to regain some oxygen, obviously satisfied with her questions, now awaiting the answers.

Tifa giggled in response.

"Ya, everything's okay, but we didn't wanna know the gender already", she answered, turning her head to gaze at Cloud "we decided that we should keep that a surprise."

Yuffie seemed to be pondering whether the answer was satisfying for her, when Marlene spoke up and questioningly looked at Tifa.

"Aunt Tifa, why didn't you bring the baby home yet?"

Tifa and Cloud chuckled at that comment and she carefully bent down to be at the same height than the small girl.

"I'm sorry Marlene, but it will still take some time until the baby is ready to come out of here", she said, softly patting her swollen belly.

Marlene eyed the stomach curiously once again, almost as if she was deciding whether she could believe what 'Aunt Tifa' had just told her.

Yet finally, she nodded, accepting.

"Okay."

"What do you think, Tifa, should we tell them already?" Cloud asked, resting his head on her shoulder.

"Tell us what?" Yuffie asked, almost exploding out of curiosity. "What is it?"

"Ummm well..." Tifa started, grinning, being totally aware how tensed up her friend was right now. "Well... Cloud and I are not gonna have a baby..."

Now, Yuffie was totally taken aback.

What did that mean? It was more than obvious that she was having a baby, and the doctor already had confirmed on it.

How come she was still grinning? And Cloud, too?

Wait...

Yuffie's face was filled with astonishment as she quietly mouthed: "two?"

Tifa was still grinning as she nodded approvingly.

"Yup, we're gonna have twins."

Immediately, Marlene's head shot up.

"Two babies? Yippee! I must go and tell daddy about it!"

Thus, she hopped off cheerfully, sweetly calling out for Barret.

Cloud chuckled as he stepped right next to Tifa.

"I knew she was gonna like it."

Tifa giggled as Yuffie clapped her hands excitedly.

"Now that's really cool, you know?! It's really stylish nowadays to have twins!"

An awkward silence fell over the room as Cloud and Tifa looked at each other, perplex.

Suddenly, both of them began laughing, seemingly finding it amusing to think of having children the way Yuffie had just expressed.

Yuffie soon fell in to the laughter, until she remember one thing Tifa had mentioned to her earlier that week.

"So I guess", she stated, pointing at Tifa's stomach "that's the reasons why you're that big already, so you won't have to worry about that any more."

Tifa nodded, smiling, actually being relieved that it was now clear, that she did not have to be concerned anymore.

"Oh well", Yuffie threw in, maybe I said that a lil too early..."

Cloud and Tifa looked at her questioningly, wondering what had come to the young ninja's mind.

"Well, if you're that big already, just imagine what it's gonna be like about 3 or 4 months from now!"

Tifa gasped, sighing deeply, a somewhat frightened expression darkening her face as she thought about the fight she would have with her clothes then.

"Oh no!"

Yet they could not take it seriously any longer and, once again that day, started laughing hard.

Well, what was bad about laughing a lot, Tifa thought to herself.

I've got many friends, a wonderful boyfriend and more or less soon I'll give birth to our babies.

What else could I be asking for?

How could life be any better?

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Cloud put the newspaper down and shook his head, smiling to himself.

"Just like she said, it's in the news."

Barret nodded his head, throwing another look at the paper.

"Yeah, well, it's actually kind of predictable. Unfortunately so, we're some of the most famous people on this planet and an occasion like that just had to arouse their interest."

"Whose interest should which occasion arouse?" came a soft voice from the hall.

Quietly, Tifa entered the kitchen and took her place at the table, questioningly looking at Cloud and Barret.

The dark giant simply pushed the newspaper across the table in front of Tifa, and the young woman curiously took it, holding it in front of her to find out what her friends had been talking about.

While examining the front page, her eyebrow shut up and a small grin came to her face. In capital bold letters it said: NEW GENERATION OF HEROES, below that, in smaller letters it said: Tifa Lockheart pregnant.

It had a small text below it, describing when it had been discovered, and what the press thought about it. At the end, it even gave congratulations and its best wishes for the soon-to-be-parents.

Right next to the article, there was a picture of Cloud and Tifa, fairly new, most obviously having been taken just yesterday when they had returned from the doctor. It very obviously showed Tifa's swollen belly under the tight shirt, with Cloud's hand on it while they were standing right in front of the hospital entrance.

As Tifa put the newspaper down, she unconsciously placed a hand on her stomach, smiling.

"I knew it. Even though it surprises me how fast they are." Tifa commented.

The past month, she had not been to town, because she had been suffering from a slight cold, which would have been nothing serious, but Cloud had insisted that she stayed home to get totally well. Actually, there would not have been much she could have done in town anyways, Yuffie had been doing most of the shopping.

Additionally, Tifa had preferred staying at home, not just because the morning nausea had still been present, but mostly because she wanted to get used to the new situation first, before half the planet knew about it.

But now it was alright. She was more than content with the circumstances and didn't mind everybody knowing about it, she actually appreciated it, wanting to show the whole wide world how happy she was.

"I'm actually sorta surprised that they don't have the ultrasound picture." Cloud commented, gazing over at Tifa.

"Well, kid, don't say that already, they still got a whole six months for that", Barret retorted, laughing. Cloud and Tifa soon joined in.

There's much laughter in this house lately...

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"Hey, Teef! There's something in the mail for you!"

Tifa grunted and turned around once more, trying get the sheets over her eyes to shield them from the blinding sunlight.

Darn, I slept through again, Tifa noticed, cursing herself inwardly. With a deep sigh, she pushed herself up into a sitting position and ran her fingers through her thick raven hair.

There was a soft knocking at the door.

"Uh... come in", she answered, still feeling dizzy from the long sleep.

Gotta tell Cloud to wake me next time, she noted mentally.

Slowly, the door creaked open and Yuffie stuck her head inside, making sure she was welcome, before she entered the bedroom.

In her hand, she held a letter she handed Tifa, who was still in bed, rubbing sleep out of her eyes.

"What is it?" Tifa asked, implying that always curious Yuffie had already taken a look at it.

"I don't know. Just a letter, but the envelope does not say who the sender is."

"That's ok", Tifa answered, taking a closer look at the letter, trying to find any sign for who could have sent it.

Yuffie retreated to the door. "Ok, I'll leave ya alone then", she said before closing the door behind her.

Carefully, Tifa turned the letter around in her hands and opened it. It was a simple white paper, filled in a clear handwriting.

Dear Ms Lockheart,

As I want to speak to you about a most serious and urgent behalf, I will leave out all unimportant details and start straight away. You must know that I am the present student of your former martial arts teacher, Zangan. I am sure that you do remember him, yet you should not be familiar with his present state of mind and health. Lately, he has been suffering from an unknown illness which could not be cured by even the mightiest Healers on this planet. For several days now, he has been in a strong fever, and has started hallucinating.

He frequently mentioned your name, he most obviously wants you to be by his side in his last hours.

All I can do for my master is ask you to do me and him this favor and come as quickly



as possible.

Yours faithfully,  
Cyra Mindstorm

As Tifa put the letter down, thousands of memories shot through her head. Memories of her first encounter with Zangan, of her first lesson, when she had become stronger very quickly, making more progress than any other of his students.

The last time she had seen her former mentor was when she had been seriously injured by Sephiroth the night Nibelheim had burned down. He had taken care of her and saved her life. Yet from that moment on, she had never seen him again. Their only form of contact had been the seldom exchange of letters, which had slowly decreased until it had stopped completely. Probably it was just because each of them had gone their own ways in life, either more or less eventful.

But in this very moment, she dearly wished she had kept closer contact. There were still so many things she had wanted to ask him, yet as well show him. She knew he would be told if he knew of the progress she'd made.

It filled her with a deep sadness that his condition seemed to be that bad. Zangan had been a part of her life almost as long as she could remember, and it was unimaginable that he should not be there anymore.

How could such a strong warrior ever be beaten? It might have been a childish thought, but to her, he had always appeared to be completely invincible.

Nothing could harm him.

But reality had caught up with her.

Determinedly, she put the letter down and quickly got out of bed, rushing towards the bathroom.

She would for sure fulfill Zangan's wish, not that she felt it to be her duty to do so, yet she wanted to see him again. Badly.

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Tifa squeezed Cloud's hand for the last time before she made her way to her old master. Cloud, for sure, had insisted on coming with her, just in case something happened. He had become very protective over the past few months, yet she did not mind it really, but appreciated it. After all, she had to admit that she could need some help actually.

Shaking her head, she entered the small room where a young woman about the age of 17 was taking care of Zangan. It was the same person who had written her that letter: Cyra Mindstorm, his current student.

As soon as she noticed Tifa's appearance, she showed a small smile and got up, greeting her politely, speaking in a whispering voice.

"I'm really glad that you could make it, Ms Lockheart", she started, her gaze jumping between Tifa and the older man lying in bed. "Just like I wrote, he's been in a fever for a few days now, and he mentioned your name quite often. Actually, he told me a lot about you, being very proud. I know that it is his wish to see you once again, after all that time, one last time now. I think that's actually the reason why he fights death to gain a few more hours, minutes. He really needs to see you now, so that he can find his inner peace."

Tifa nodded silently, a heavy lump building inside of her throat as she slowly walked

over to the patient's bed and sat down beside it.

A deep sadness and guilt crept over Tifa as she noticed how weak Zangan, her former master looked. She had always regarded him as the strongest person on the whole planet, invincible, wise, and always there for her when she had needed him.

But now, one could see how much he had been suffering in his life, how much hurt he'd had to bear especially lately, how hard it was to fight to stay alive.

He looked like an old man, who had lived his life and was now almost ready to leave.

Almost.

The form in bed stirred, and slowly, with great effort, turned its head to take a look at the visitor.

Tifa gently took his hand into hers, smiling.

His eyes had become dim, had lost their once so sparkling shine that had always fascinated her.

Slowly, Zangan focused his eyes on the young woman, and a smile crept to his lips, softening his weary features.

He had recognized her at once.

"This must be a dream..." he stated, still smiling. "Yet a pleasing one."

Tifa nodded her head, squeezing his hand softly, leaning closer to him.

"No, it is not. I am real, Master Zangan, it's me, Tifa."

The old man's eyes regained some of their beautiful shine and the smile on his face widened.

"Thanks heavens...", he whispered as he gazed at her.

"Master Zangan, I'm... I'm sorry I didn't stay in contact with you. I should have thanked you more often, I should have been more grateful for all that you've done for me. I'm so sorry..." her voice trailed off as she looked to the side, trying to hide that single tear which was running down her pale cheek.

But Zangan shook his head, intensifying his grip on his former student's hand.

"Don't be sorry, dear. There is nothing you have to be sorry for. And it is actually me who has to be grateful. I have to thank for coming here, for fulfilling my keenest dreams. Now that I see that you are doing great", he said, shakily letting go of Tifa's hand and placing his on her swollen stomach, "now I can finally rest."

With a sigh, he lay back down in bed, yet turned around to her once more.

"But... there is one thing I have to ask you... Could you... Cloud you take care of Cyra's training? She is still young and needs guidance."

Tifa nodded. It seemed more than natural for her to fulfill that wish, somehow, she had always expected that it would have one day.

Zangan smiled once again, slowly nodding at her thankfully.

"...Thank... you..... my angel... Take ... take... care..." his voice became a mere whisper, hardly audible, as his eyelids came down and all the strength flew from his body.

He had finally found inner peace, his soul was leaving the world of tortures and pain behind, off to a better place.

From behind her, she could hear Cyra gasp as she rushed to join Tifa at her Master's side, sobbing violently.

"No... it can't be... please..." she whispered in between the sobs.

Gently, Tifa took the girl into her arms and hugged her tight. She knew that Cyra would need her from now on, it would be hard to cope with the loss, Tifa knew that out of experience.

I have to be strong now, I can't cry, I just can't, she tried as a single tear ran down her pale cheek and joined the salty stream, lone witness of deep emotions.

