

An Affair of the Heart and Soul
By Meriko

Chapter 8: Midnight Moment

Vincent awoke to a small whimpering sound in his left ear. Rising out of his usual, shallow rest, he opened his smoldering eyes and turned to find Marion lying next to him in the dark, her silhouette shivering. Propping himself up on his left elbow to peer over her shoulder, Vincent could see her arms brought up to her chest and fists clenched tightly under her chin, though she slept. Beyond her, Tifa lay curled up, slumbering peacefully. Another frightened whimper escaped Marion's throat.

Vincent glanced back over his shoulder, and saw Cloud still blissfully unconscious, snoring gracelessly. He quietly shifted closer to Marion and brought his right hand around her body to her face. Gently he brought his fingers down her cheek and across her clenched jaw. His touch soothed the sleeping girl; the muscles in her face relaxed, and as he ran his hand from her shoulder along her arm, her trembling subsided and the nightmare seemed to pass.

Vincent let his fingers curl around her loosely fisted hands with his arm cradling hers, and the curve of her back pressed up against him. Marion made a short, humming sort of noise in her throat and then visibly relaxed into the embrace. Using his left arm as a pillow, Vincent remained awake the rest of the night, breathing in the fragrance of her hair and keeping his mind carefully blank.