

My Bloody Valentine

Queen Vera

Chapter 1

I was born in Wutai. Does that surprise you? Well... with a last name like "Valentine"...

Heh...

It's my father's name. I had absolutely no want for it.. He was a Shinra executive, and was in Wutai for business when he met my mother.

Could it have been love that brought them together?

My father would usually visit us when he was in Wutai on business - which was rather infrequent. I could care less..... but my poor mother. She actually cared for that fool.

The only other time he would come around was my birthday, in an attempt to prove his fatherly love...

...love... I used to believe it was nothing more than a flowery word musicians and poets used to decorate their work... I have realized it is much more than that.. in fact, I have given up on comprehending it. Anyone who claims to understand it fully or define it in simple terms has never experienced true love themselves..

I remember my 14th birthday. My father gave me a gift that would affect me for the rest of my life: a gun. A loaded shotgun. He told me I could do whatever I wanted with it, as long as I didn't "kill anyone" .. I suppose I never realized what comedian he was.

Before he left he told me I should practice as much as I could with it, if I was going to be a success... I didn't understand what he meant.

I didn't use it too much at first. After all, my father gave it to me. I was staring out the window when I saw it: a small bird, with drab brown feathers... the most unremarkable bird I could remember seeing. Yet somehow, it caught my eye.

I got my father's gun, slowly went outside, and took aim. Now, I wasn't killing it for the plumage, or for food.. so I wonder why I did it..

I used to believe all human beings were cruel at heart, that all humans take a primal joy out of inflicting pain on other creatures.. and I knew that we were the only animals that did that.

So I took aim and pulled the trigger. The small bird struggled to lift itself from the ground in the infinitesimal moment after the gun sounded, and before the bullet tore into her chest. I looked at the bird's broken body: the dull feathers were saturated in blood, which was still seeping from the gaping hole I had made...

Perhaps because the bird was so plain; I had an easier time taking away its life..

I realized not too soon after that I was growing apart from the other kids in the village.. and I began using all my spare time practicing my marksmanship, improving my aim.. I didn't want to admit it to myself, but that gun had become my best friend.. but it had a power over me that was even stronger..

On my 18th birthday, my father gave me another present.. he offered me a job in Midgar. I couldn't believe it. All the men my age had dreams of going there, but I was the first one to actually realize it. I didn't know what to say. I already had a job in Wutai.. but how could I refuse it?

Well, as you probably figured out, I took up my father's offer..

My father knew what he was doing when he gave me that gun.. he had expected me to perfect my aim by my 18th birthday - and I didn't disappoint him. When he showed me to the higher-ups at Shinra, they were equally impressed with my ability.. at the time I had no idea why a business would need the skills of a marksman..

I had become a "Turk". The organization that was originally formed to find possible SOLDIERS.

I still didn't understand why I was appointed. Soon enough.. I would know.

The other 3 Turks were a shady bunch. (Of course, you could probably call me shady too) I didn't make much conversation with them, and whenever we got an assignment, I would focus on the task so we would get finished as soon as possible. We would escort executives, apprehend people that were wanted by the company.. all of Shinra's dirty work. I became more disgusted by the day.

As far back as I could remember, I preferred being by myself anyway...

There was a ring on my cellular phone.

"Vincent Valentine?"

"Yes... ," I waited for a response. "oh, right.. #c0176920," I already knew my code by heart..

"What is it?"

"Come see me on the 70th floor."

::Click::

Was that President Shinra himself? I found out when I made my way to the 70th floor. Sure enough, he greeted me warmly when I ascended from the staircase. I was surprised to see how young the founder and CEO of the world's largest corporation was! He smiled, I think he sensed my apprehension..

"So, you're the new addition to the Turks.. "

"Yes, sir"

"They say you're good, too. All business. No emotion involved."

"..."

I didn't know what to say to that...

"Haw ha ha!! Yep, that's you, all right. Well, enough with the chatter. I got a job for you."

Well, I was shocked to hear what the President wanted me to do. In a light, almost giddy voice he told me about all the trouble the Mayor of Midgar was going to, just to try and slow down Shinra's inevitable conquest of the planet. Boycotts, threats to expose the Turks and other sleazy corporate secrets.. It was all getting on the President's nerves.

He wanted me to ease his stress by eliminating the problem, the Mayor.. Now, I knew the company was corrupt in the highest degree.. but assassination...

I was given a briefcase, a wire, and I was off. I found myself on top of an apartment building overlooking a large crowd of people. At the center of that crowd I could see a stage and a podium..

I opened up the briefcase and took a look at the gun. I had never used anything like it before... I assembled the gun meticulously, steadied it on the tripod, and took aim through the scope.

The mayor was gesticulating wildly.. I could tell he was irritated. Through the scope I could also see a small girl in a frilly white dress behind him. It was probably his daughter... and she was oblivious as to what was going to happen..

I became drenched in nervous sweat..

My suit was tight.. stifling.

The sweat got in my eyes, and my vision was completely blurred for a second. So I squinted and wiped my eyes... I could see more clearly, but I was still unsure of my aim. I didn't want to hit the girl.. and I had no way of knowing if the scope was accurate, either.

Suddenly, noise erupted from my earphones.

"You've got to hurry up, Valentine!"

"I-I will..." I stammered out, surprised.

"You only have 5 minutes before the mayor finishes his speech."

I took a deep breath, swallowed the knot that was in my throat, and took aim again..

::Click::

I didn't hear the gunshot... but I saw the bullet hit its mark, the center of the mayor's forehead. I didn't expect that much blood, either..

Blood had splattered all over the small girl's white, frilly dress. The look of disbelief, shock, terror on that girl's face... I could see it all clearly through the gun's telescopic lense..

I felt sick.

The voice from my headphones congratulated me.

"Good job, Vincent! Now get out of there. Just leave the briefcase."

I was more than happy to get out of there. The funny thing was I didn't feel guilty.. There was just this nausea...

I went straight home to my apartment. It was lonely there, but like I said, I didn't mind it. It was a place where I could be alone with my thoughts... and at that moment I was thinking about what had happened minutes earlier..

I could care less about the Mayor's life.. but his daughter... every child deserves to have a happy life: God knows I didn't have one.

I looked over my bedroom. The walls were lined with books. The company would take care of my rent, food bills, electricity, all the necessities.. So I spent my money on books. That was about it. I enjoyed literature, but I was beginning to become more and more interested in scientific journals..

It was fascinating: Mako energy, biological experiments.. It gave me hope for the future of mankind - that one day we could become something better than what we are now; that we might be able to purge ourselves of our demons, and someday become the ideal human we have always envisioned ourselves as being.

Of course, I realized I was no better than any other human.. if not worse in many ways... I hated myself for being such a hypocrite.

I'm not sure when I fell asleep.. but that night I had a nightmare. The most vivid, disturbing nightmare I had ever experienced... I woke up in a cold sweat. I tried to erase the images of that dream from my head, I tried to tell myself it wasn't real.

I was still wondering if I was living that nightmare as I went to work that day.

Chapter 2

In between kidnappings and escort missions, I was usually found with my nose in a book. I think it further alienated me from my fellow Turks, and I couldn't care less. There was so much to learn, so much to read about.. I only wish I had known about these books while I was growing up; I would have had a longer time to absorb all this knowledge.

Naturally, once I discovered the Shinra building's library on the 62nd floor, it became my second home. Although the other rooms in the library were interesting, my favorite room by far was the scientific research library.. and since I couldn't check out the books, I would sit there in that claustrophobic cell for hours. Records of experiments.. scientists' personal observations.. I was in heaven! ...and an angel came to visit me in my heaven one day...

The door opened. It startled me, as I was absorbed in a book. I looked in the direction of the door: a woman in a lab coat stepped in hastily and began searching for a book.. I could tell she had been in this library before, as she headed directly for the book she needed. Then she noticed me staring at her..

"Hello." she smiled politely.

I had a frog in my throat, and I could feel my body tensing up as I tried to speak without embarrassing myself... 'Shit' , I thought to myself.. 'Why can't I talk to her? Can't I even manage to say hello?'

"Is something wrong?" She looked at me over the rims of her glasses.

"No, I'm fine..." I managed to say... quietly... Then all of a sudden, I got some of my courage back. "If you don't mind me asking..... um... What's your name?" I smiled awkwardly. Realizing how moronic I must have sounded and looked, I winced and faced away from her in a grimace of self-disgust.

She answered, "Lucrecia."

A new wave of pain hit me, nearly knocking me over. This was **Lucrecia!**? The assistant to Professor Gast?! I admired the thoroughness and clarity of her scientific journals. I had always thought she had a genius comparable to Gast.. I wasn't even aware they worked in the Shinra building..

"Come on, what's wrong?.." she laughed quietly, which gave me the clue she knew what was going on.. She must have guessed I was nervous because I was attracted to her.

I wanted to let her know that at least some of my gracelessness was due to being starstruck.. Of course, she was beautiful.. I wondered if I would be as awed if she were not as attractive.

--Of course not. I am, after all, just another superficial human being...

"Oh, Lucrecia!... I've read your journals, you know..and I think you're a very gifted scientist... "

"Mmm... Well, thank you.. I'm always happy to learn that our work isn't going unnoticed by the rest of the Shinra corporation." A coy grin spread across her face..

I suppose she took that as the end of the conversation and returned to her book. I didn't want to disturb her research, but at the same time I had to speak to her now, or she would finish reading and leave.. I may never see her again...

"Oh, by the way, my name is Vincent... "

"...Vincent Valentine the Turk?" She looked me over, with a startled expression.

Maybe she expected me to be colder, more professional... or maybe she was afraid of me, knowing what I have to do everyday..

I tried to put her at ease. "It's funny isn't it?... We knew each other before we even met.. "

"Yes.. I guess we did..."

"Listen..., I know you're busy right now.. but I would love to talk to you later..." I paused.. "Maybe during break hour tomorrow?"

She laughed again, to my relief.. "Are you asking me on a date? .. hmm, well, I guess the fact you're here in this library already makes you more interesting than other men I've met... "

She agreed and resumed reading... Relief swept my tense body. I tried to continue reading my book, but I was too excited.. This was the first time I approached a woman in a long time. It made me feel like a teenager.. Like I said before. I never believed in love.. I still didn't. That's why the incident was so puzzling to me. I acted like a character in a TV romance...

'It's probably from watching all the mindless shows on Shinra's television network.' I thought to myself...

I heard Lucrecia close her book and head towards the door..

"Good-bye.." I told her.. "I'll see you tomorrow, by the tree on the 61st floor. "

"Sure."

I felt like I was floating the rest of the day. I wasn't able to concentrate on anything either.. all I could think of was tomorrow.

.... and that night I didn't have a single nightmare....

Chapter 3

The 'date' the next day went pretty smoothly. We talked about Shinra's newest technology, and discussed advancements in our favorite field, science...

Of course, talking to Lucrecia humbled me enormously - she knew so much more than me. I would sit there and nod my head, trying to grasp what she was talking about. I would ask her questions which, I'm sure, were fairly stupid to her... yet she never once showed signs of annoyance. And she would answer them with such ease and clarity...

After the date we met nearly every day -- whenever I wasn't off on one of Shinra's odd jobs.

Over the course of a few weeks Lucrecia gradually opened up to me -- at least concerning the projects her and Professor Gast were working on.

...I would talk about myself once in a while. She seemed interested enough.. I know I couldn't tell her anything she didn't already know about science. I tried to get her to tell me something about herself; her past. She told me directly that she didn't want to talk about it.

I was disappointed, yet at the same time I was impressed she had the strength **not** to tell me. Most people use their pain to gain sympathy. I was even guilty of that...

So I asked her a less personal question: how she and Gast arrived in Midgar.

I had already told her my sob story about my unloving father putting me in this job I hated...

Lucrecia was more than happy to answer that question. She described the events that brought the two of them to Midgar..

Lucrecia and Gast were surveying the area surrounding a giant crater on the Northern Continent. The project wasn't going well, however, because extreme temperatures and giant glaciers were preventing them from getting close to the crater itself.

They were taking core samples of a glacier when they found living cells in the ice that gave off a strange biorhythm. Intrigued, they brought in heavier equipment to retrieve the whole organism. What they found looked human, yet its biorhythm couldn't have come from any normal person. They concluded it was an Ancient, and Gast named it Jenova, after his late wife.

Upon getting the news, President Shinra sent for them right away. The two scientists took their discovery and went to Midgar.

I'm guessing that this was the beginning of his "Promised Land" project...

Lucrecia warned me then that she would be leaving soon in order to continue the project. Startled, I asked her where she was going, when she would come back - but she refused to tell me. It was classified, and even the Turks couldn't know, she said....

In the next few days I tried to keep that news in the back of my head, and enjoy my last few opportunities I had to talk to Lucrecia. However, I think it showed in my even-more-morose than usual demeanor. I hoped Lucrecia wouldn't notice how heartbroken I was, but I'm sure she picked up on it. She was all smiles anyway, almost as if she was hiding something.

Then one day Lucrecia didn't meet me by the tree on the 61st floor... and I realized my time was up. My mind was filled with tortuous thoughts. Why didn't I tell her how I felt?

....but how did I feel? I wouldn't call it love.. perhaps it was admiration. I loved being with her, but somehow it felt so one-sided. I would talk about my own problems, but she never told me about herself.. something crucial was missing.

My head felt like it was in a vice. Was I about to cry? I hadn't cried since I was a small child... It felt as if a dam inside me was about to burst.

I had gotten pretty good at killing off my emotions. I wasn't about to lose against them now.

As if on cue, my cell phone rang, breaking me free from the atmosphere of gloom. I took it out of my coat pocket and held it to my ear...

"Vincent? I need to talk to you in my office." ..The President finished talking before I could even respond.

Wearily, I trudged towards the glass elevator. It was as if I had lost my will to work, to even move my feet. I finally arrived in the elevator and ran my keycard through the machine. It was then, in that cramped, transparent tomb, that I realized how desperately lonely I was. There was no one else in my life. My father was never in the building.. not like I wanted to talk to him anyway. My mother was by herself in Wutai.

A nauseating feeling of guilt crept across my body and I leaned against the wall.

The movement of the elevator was adding to the nausea. I looked through the glass and towards the city of Midgar. I had heard that a carsick or seasick feeling could be cured simply by looking outside.

The gray city stretched farther than I could see, even from floor 60-something. Mako was still experimental in those days, and Midgar was powered by coal. Tons of thick smoke filled the air; most of it would settle in the streets and lungs of the city. Midgar got its name from being a sort of second Earth, but it was an inferior one. A world made by a lesser God... the Shinra Corporation.

And here I was, breathing fresh oxygen with the rest of the Shinra employees. I didn't pity the people down there. Even if they were oppressed by Shinra, they had something more important. These people had something that the President's money could never buy... and I envied them...

I got off the elevator and trudged toward the President's desk.. He asked me if I got enough sleep.

"Yes." I said, with all the energy I could find at the moment.

"You've been assigned to a very important job." he actually had a serious expression on his face.

'I trust you over all the other Turks.. they're all screw ups, you're the real thing... etcetera, etcetera...' For some reason he was showering me with praise. It actually scared me.

"..besides, one of the people involved in the project said you would be perfect for the job," he added.

One of his secretaries handed me a file.

Most everything in the packet was 'classified', and blacked out with a marker. I read that all participants in the project except for the VIPs would have their record permanently removed from Shinra's database... worried, I asked the President about it.

"Is this going to be dangerous?"

He paused. "...it shouldn't be. It's going to be your job to keep things under control."

I was worried. But on the other hand, I had been on 'dangerous' assignments before, and I thought it might help me get over Lucrecia leaving.

Plus, once I finished this, all my connections to Shinra would be cut. I was still puzzled about that.

The benefits outweighed the risk, so I agreed.

I continued reading what I could from the file. I was going to escort a group of VIPs to Nibelheim and protect them, along with their work. I knew Shinra had recently 'purchased' an old mansion in that town.

Other than that, I didn't know too much about it.

...I heard a group of footsteps on the winding staircase.

"Here come the VIPs now..." a secretary said, with a sarcastic tone.

I snuck a peek at the people I'd be stuck with...

"Lucrecia??" I said out loud.

Lucrecia looked up and gestured.. she put her index finger to her mouth, so I shut up.. I guessed she didn't want the people with her to know about our frequent rendezvous during break hour.

"...Vincent." she replied as she came off the top step.

A friendly-looking man emerged from the small group and gave me a firm handshake.

"Lucrecia recommended you out of all of the Turks. I see you already know each other?" He winked at me.

"This is Professor Gast." Lucrecia told me. The man nodded.

Once again, I was starstruck. Words of admiration poured out my mouth... "It's a pleasure to meet you. I've read your work. ...you don't need me to tell you it's the most impressive I've seen.. " I had to say something to him, but I must have sounded foolish.

The other man in the group grimaced in distaste.

"Oh, and this is Hojo.." Lucrecia paused. "He's been working for Shinra, and was assigned to go with us on this project."

I shook his hand. "Hojo, huh..? I've never seen any of your work."

"That's to be expected.." he said quickly.

But I had lied. I read his work, and wasn't at all impressed by it. All of his ideas were borrowed, he never seemed to follow the scientific process... The flaws in his work were apparent. The only thing he was halfway-good at was putting other scientists' ideas to use, and badly.

Of course, I didn't have the courage to say that to his face..

President Shinra broke the silence. "Now that you're through with introductions, can you please get out of my office?"

"Of course.." I told him.

I led the trio to the balcony/helipad right outside the President's office.

"We'll meet here at dawn tomorrow, is that correct?" I asked.

"Yes," Lucrecia said. "Who's going to pilot the helicopter?"

"Well.. I am. All the Turks have to know how to fly one."

"I should have known that.." She smiled. "Well, anyway.. we all better make preparations. This is going to be a long trip.."

We all went our separate ways.. The President let me go straight home to get ready.

I looked around my apartment. I wouldn't have space to take my books.... I hoped there would be some interesting books in Nibelheim.

There would only be room for a few changes of clothes, and my smallest gun...

I went to sleep early that night.

..It would be a long way to Nibelheim from Midgar...