

## Vincent PI

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*This is the city.*

*My "the city."*

*Midgar, the city of lights. The city of dreams. The big pizza.*

*It's been six months since I moved here - packed up my life and left Nibelheim. That was the only way I could think of: to get away from HER. The self-appointed "vampire slayer". Despite repeated statements that I was not, in fact, a vampire. So here I am, living my new life in Midgar, the - well, you know.*

*Tifa Lockhart, my buxom associate, came with me on this venture. Her secret dream was to become a television star and maybe get to appear in a "Frosted Materia-O's" commercial. So when I told her I was moving here, she jumped at the opportunity. But we needed someone to carry the luggage. Someone to do all the leg work and not think to complain.*

*Not thinking was "his" specialty: Cloud Strife, Tifa's boyfriend. We told him we were going to Midgar to shop for shoes - he hasn't caught on yet. Cloud's been a bit... slow ever since his ordeals in the quest to save the Planet, and even before then I heard he was not the brightest farm boy in town.*

*Then there's myself - Vincent Valentine. I used my training from my Turk days to open up a private detective agency here in my old stomping grounds. People come to me with their problems - more often than not they leave without them. Until one day...*

### **Day One - Genesis**

The quiet, Sector Four offices of "Bloody Valentine PI" were disrupted ever so suddenly early one morning. Tifa was the first to look up from her desk at the front of the shop.

"Can I help you, miss?"

"Yes," the flustered flower girl stepped through the door and frantically made her way to Tifa's desk, "My name's Maggie, I sell flowers in the slums."

"What can we do for you, Maggie?" Tifa asked with compassion. Just then Cloud noticed someone had walked in and was sitting in a chair in front of Tifa's desk.

“There’s some pervert who keeps following me around while I try to sell my flowers. He’s a short, fat guy.” Maggie wiped a tear from her scruffy cheek. “I don’t know who else to turn to, but I can’t pay you much.”

“We’ll take the case,” Vincent’s voice was steady yet silent as he stood in the doorway to his office. He carefully made his way to the frightened girl and offered her a handkerchief, which she gratefully accepted.

Later that day, the flower girl Maggie started out on her regular route. As she made her way through the dark streets of Midgar, an obese shadowy figure skulked closely behind. Maggie bit her upper lip at the smell of anchovies, pepperoni and slim-fast shakes. He was close behind, she could easily tell.

“Hey cutie!” the fat man bubbled, “How about you and I -“ before continuing the stocky stalker rotated his hips as if to balance some invisible hoola-hoop. “Heh heh ya know?”

His bizarre dance was cut short when the portly perv was grabbed around the neck by a metallic claw. Vincent hoisted the stout shape off his feet and into the light. Tifa and Cloud were hiding in some nearby Midgar poison shrubs. When she saw Vincent had apprehended the fiend, Tifa got to her feet and approached them.

“Don Corneo?” Tifa crinkled her nose at the sight of the pudgy slumlord. “What are you doing back in Midgar?” Tifa thought for a second before amending, “...and also alive?”

“D-didn’t I ever tell you?” wheezed the heavy little criminal, “B-bumbles bounce!”

“In any event,” Vincent scowled into Corneo’s beady little eyes, “Leave this flower girl be or we will drop you from a higher distance.” The ex-Turk-turned-P.I. glared into the sweaty little face for a few minutes longer before releasing his grip, causing the portly figure to fall to the ground.

“Thank you mister Valentine,” Maggie the flower girl said as she approached her savior, “I don’t know how I can ever repay you.”

“Think no more of it, miss,” Vincent looked away, skyward, “I have spent my life trying to atone for a sin that can never be forgiven. There is no deed that I could fulfil that would ever wash the stain of eternal penance from my soul.”

“What he means is,” Tifa stepped between Maggie and her ‘champion’, “Our fee will be payment enough.” While Maggie and Tifa settled their arrangement, Vincent approached the crumpled Corneo still laying on the street, sobbing silently.

“Why, Corneo?” Vincent asked as he knelt before him.

“My pride and joy,” Corneo spoke between pathetic sobs, “My p-pet ran away. Ever since then I’ve been tryin’ to fill the void left in m-my life.”

"I think," Vincent stood up and extended a hand, "We can help you."

As Vincent helped Don Corneo to his pudgy little feet, Cloud leapt out of the shrubs and yelled, "AHA! Corneo!"

The sewers below Midgar were even more disgusting than the slums themselves. The trio held their noses as empty Shinra Fried Chocobo buckets and other pieces of trash floated past them in the horrid sludge. Rats skittered past their feet as Tifa resisted the urge to scream and vomit at the same time. Vincent passed his flashlight over every detail, searching for some clue that might lead them to Don Corneo's beloved pet.

They walked for several hours through the dark, dank sewers until they reached a large grate. In front of this grate, a huge, lumbering beast slept. Its body was black and dark blue, covered with warts and draped in chains. Two large, black horns protruded from its head which rested on the creature's front claws folded under its chin. Tifa gasped at the sight of this enormous beast.

Suddenly, its eyes opened wide. Bright yellow and hollow, the monstrosity's eyes instantly locked on these intruders. The three readied themselves for an intense battle, drawing their weapons and preparing to strike. The horror raised its head and roared. That was when they saw it was wearing a collar with a shiny tag which read "Apps 2".

Vincent and Tifa sighed with relief and lowered their weapons, just as Cloud leapt ahead and began hacking the beast to pieces. Before they knew it, the fight was over.

"So," Tifa looked up at Vincent's defeated expression, "What do we tell Don?"

## **Day Two: Resurrection**

Vincent Valentine sat silently at his desk, staring into the glass of milk set atop its coaster in front of him. Droplets of moisture ran down the side of the glass as its wholesome contents gradually reached room temperature.

"Vincent!" Tifa's voice sounded garbled through the intercom on his desk, "Don Corneo on line one."

"Tell him I'm not in," the private investigator responded into the device.

Suddenly, the front door swung open as a tall, white-haired man stormed in.

"Sephiroth!" Cloud and Tifa yelled in unison.

"I must speak with your employer immediately!" the former Planet-conqueror announced. His masamune hung at his side as the imposing figure strode past the two shocked figures and into Vincent's office. "I have a case for you, mister Valentine!"

Vincent slowly lifted his head and eyed the villain evenly, "Aren't you dead?"

"I was," Sephiroth returned an even gaze, "Hell was full, so they sent me to L.A." Vincent paused to take a drink of his milk while Tifa and Cloud gathered their courage and entered the office behind their would-be client.

"What is it you want me to accomplish?"

"Someone has stolen my latest manuscript!" Sephiroth pounded his fist on Vincent's desk. "It's my latest picture and it would have been the most brilliant piece of film in cinematic history!" Again, the former Shinra general accentuated his sentence by hammering the oak desk. "I must have it back!" One more time, his fist came down on the desk.

"Alright," Vincent raised his hand to halt Sephiroth's tirade, "I will try to locate your missing item, Mr. Sephiroth. When and where was the last time you saw it?" The investigator produced a pen and notepad from his desk and began writing.

"I was downtown," Sephiroth sat back in a chair in front of Vincent's desk, "At Finally Fantastic Studios. We were casting my latest movie - a love story about a giant rock and a guileless country space alien looking for romance." Tifa raised an eyebrow while their client continued. "I turned away to take a sip of my latte and my script vanished!" Sephiroth leapt to his feet and grabbed Vincent by the collar with both hands, "You must find it! I'll pay anything!!"

"Alright, alright," the investigator took a slow, reflective sip of his milk, "I'll see what I can do."

Sephiroth gratefully released his benefactor and was out the door, brimming with glee, before anyone could say another word. Understandably shaken, Tifa and Cloud turned to their employer.

"Tifa," Vincent got to his feet, "Check the internet for anyone who might be trying to sell the manuscript on eBay. I'll go down to 'Finally Fantastic Studios' and start there."

As Vincent strode to the door, Cloud called after him, "Hey what about me?"

"Uh," Vincent turned back slightly, "Stay here and DO NOTHING." And with that, he was gone.

A well-dressed executive producer adjusted his tie as he made his way down the hall in the offices of "Finally Fantastic Studios". The cheesy track lighting picked up the vivid red hue of the man's suit, offset by a black dress shirt and maroon necktie. Vincent ran his human hand through his greased-down hair as he nervously read the names on each door he passed. Finally, he stopped at the one which read: 'casting'.

When the private investigator peeked inside, he choked at what he saw.

Three executives sat on one side of a long, oak table while they spoke to a person sitting across from them. This strange character was a little pudgy, wore a white frilly pirate shirt, had a coffee

maker for a left leg, a hook instead of a right hand, a lobster claw instead of a left, and the upper torso and head of a cat where his/her head should be. And it was holding a giant toilet brush for a weapon.

“Perfect!” one executive cheered, “We’ll call you Prince J. Carneollo X-12!”

“You will be the lead romantic interest,” the second producer chimed in.

“For Final Fantasy 9!” the third triumphantly amended.

A cold chill ran up and down Vincent’s spine as he turned away in disgust.

The disguised PI carefully made his way down the hallway when something caught his eye - a waste basket. Vincent approached it carefully and noticed something interesting rolled up and discarded there - a manuscript entitled, “Meteor and Jenova - Hearts and Desires Athrust To Hither”.

As he carefully reached into the receptacle and flicked off an orange peeling, a voice behind him rang out, “Stop there! You!” Vincent turned to see the three executive producers and the next “star” of Final Fantasy 9 racing down the hall toward him.

“Leave THAT where you found it!” one producer chimed.

“It’s hideous!” a second agreed.

“It must not be unleashed upon the innocent!” the third concluded.

“Kahhloooo!” Prince J. announced.

Without hesitation, the dark and well-dressed detective leapt out of a nearby window to safety!

### **Day Three: I hate Mondays.**

Another sunny morning at Bloody Valentine PI found the Midgar fowl chirping happily, and inside:

“Another sunny morning and a job well done!” bubbled Tifa Lockhart as she eagerly counted the wad of Gil the team had earned on their latest assignment. While his employees celebrated, Vincent sat in his office, brooding and sipping milk. Suddenly, there was a visitor.

“Hello,” a well-dressed young man began, “I’m from the Law Offices of Domino and Hart. Our client, Don Corneo, is suing this business in the wrongful death of his beloved pet, Apps 2.”

Alarmed, Vincent got up from his desk and joined the situation out front, “What is this about?”

“Oh!” Cloud suddenly piped up from the waiting couch, “Good news! Don Corneo called yesterday while you were out and I told him about his pet Apps 2 getting hacked up in the sewer.” Vincent and Tifa stared stupefied, their jaws hung open, at the blonde-haired country boy. “He seemed okay with it!” Cloud cheerily added.

The snooty lawyer slapped a stack of lawsuit papers on Tifa’s desk and abruptly made his exit.

“Great,” Vincent rubbed his forehead, “Just great.”

Suddenly the front door burst open, “Marlene!” Barret Wallace roared as he stomped in. “Marlene’s missin’!” the burly miner hollered. “What about Marlene?!?!?!?!?”

The same well-dressed lawyer that had paid Bloody Valentine PI a visit hurried across the street and stepped into an awaiting limousine. Once inside, the sleek, black vehicle pulled away.

“I’ve delivered the papers,” the young attorney announced to a figure sitting next to him.

“I don’t want papers!” Don Corneo blubbered, “I want vengeance!”

“I think Domino and Hart can deliver that for you, sir,” the lawyer removed a photo from his briefcase. “We’re flying in some special assistance.”

Corneo looked down at the black-and-white picture in the young man’s hand, “Hey... isn’t that the ninja girl I kidnaped that time?”

With that, the counselor quickly stuffed the photo back into his leather briefcase, “Mr. Corneo - the clients of Domino and Hart have never been proven to have done any mis-doings in the past, nor will they ever be accused, stated or convicted of any mis-doings in the future!”

As the dark limo sped off, Corneo tried his best to interpret the “legalese”.

Vincent crept up the dark, twisted staircase on the trail of his latest case. Marlene Wallace had been missing for several hours, and a series of insidious clues - each more horrifyingly devious than the last - had led him here. The determined investigator readily made his way up the steps to the end: a locked door. A sharp kick removed the obstacle to Vincent’s quest and revealed a towering rooftop.

The ex-Turk made his way across the concrete structure and looked out over the sprawling city of Midgar before him. Puzzled at this seemingly dead end, he turned away to make his way back down to street level. But this peaceful end was not to be.

A rustling of fabric alerted his heightened senses. Vincent quickly turned to face the person standing on the edge of the building - Yuffie Kisaragi.

Cloud and Tifa raced down the street in Sector Four in an effort to find and warn their employer before it was too late. Yuffie was in town, this much they knew. They knew because Cloud bumped into her at the mall and told her where she could find Vincent.

"Yuffie," Vincent rubbed his eyes in an attempt to sooth the migraine forming at the front of his skull. "Listen to me very carefully."

"Uhm, like," Yuffie hopped down from the ledge, "Okay n' stuff."

"I - am not - a - vampire."

Yuffie eyed her prey for a moment, the little wheels inside her little head turning at break-neck speeds until, "That's JUST what a vampire would say!"

The ninja girl leapt into the air with her weapon raised, Vincent parried the strike with his iron claw. Yuffie countered with a barrage of throwing stars which Vincent easily avoided. The tiny steel weapons tore through the ex-Turk's cape as he nimbly moved aside.

"My cape! I got that for my birthday!"

Vincent lunged forward toward Yuffie in a vengeful rage. The self-appointed vampire slayer rolled backwards and tossed the PI away. Vincent landed evenly on his feet facing his opponent just as she withdrew a tiny crossbow and fired several wooden pencils at him. The investigator rushed forward, under the leaden barrage and snatched the crossbow out of Yuffie's hands. He quickly crushed the weapon with his iron claw and stepped away.

"Yuffie," Vincent wheezed, "Violence is never the answer."

"Like, oh yeah?!" The self-appointed slayer produced a purple orb from her pouch and inserted it into her weapon. The Barney Level 12 materia flickered to life and flashed with magical energy. Suddenly, a horrifying, giant, puffy purple dinosaur materialized in front of Vincent.

"Hyeyyoo kids! Do you love me? I love you!" the saccharine voice of the abomination of children's programming bubbled with glee. Vincent raised his Death Penalty shotgun and stuck the barrel in Barney's mouth. Without hesitation, he fired. The limp, puffy body somersaulted backwards off the rooftop and toward the street far below.

"Hello, I'm John Walsh," a well-manicured, stern-looking man announced. "Tonight on 'Midgar's Most Wanted': Barney-Killer."

A picture of the smiling purple dinosaur flashed on the screen.

"The beloved and educationally extinct character was announced dead when his limp carcass landed on a Midgar city bus, causing many commuters to be late for work."

The screen switched to an interview with one such commuter: "I was headin' ta work," an older man grumbled, "When dis big poiple ting landed on my bus! This city...!" The man shook his fist before the screen switched back to the host.

"Only \*YOU\* can help us bring this Barney Killer to justice," John Walsh proclaimed as he pointed into the camera, "As loyal viewers, it's \*YOUR\* job to make sure this fiend has his

knuckles ground into pieces of broken glass!" John took a sip of water and continued, "Cause Planet knows the Turks don't do anything..."

Suddenly, three such Turks stormed onto the stage and started whomping on John Walsh, the host of 'Midgar's Most Wanted'. Reno grabbed the camera and the program abruptly ended.

"Violence isn't the answer, eh?" Yuffie whined as she raised her Conformer into attack position.

"That was a," Vincent thought for a moment, "Necessary sin."

"Oh yeah?" she retorted, "So's yer mother!"

"What?" Vincent's moment of confusion was all the opening Yuffie needed. She lunged forward and struck the investigator, knocking him off his feet. Tifa and Cloud came out of the stairwell just in time to see Vincent tumble backwards off the rooftop.

"Vincent!" Tifa yelled. But it was too late. Their champion was gone.

Yuffie knelt at the edge of the building, shocked by this unforeseen turn of events. "I didn't... I..." her voice trailed off.

But wait! The mighty Chaos soared upwards past the edge of the building and into the dark sky above them! The limit beast roared in triumph, its leathery wings were spread wide, spanning the heavens themselves. The mighty creature folded its wings evenly and dropped to the rooftop to a kneeling position. Without further warning, Chaos faded out of sight leaving Vincent Valentine in its place.

"Aha!" Yuffie jumped to her feet, "A giant bat! That proves you're a vampire! Vampires turn into bats, ya know!" Yuffie rushed across the rooftop toward Vincent but tripped on Tifa's extended leg. The little ninja hit the tar-papered surface with an unceremonious thud, knocking her unconscious. Tifa withdrew her foot and whistled innocently.

"Now what do we do with her?" Cloud asked his employer.

Before Vincent could fathom a response, the airship Highwind roared through the clouds and descended to their position. The mighty vessel hovered just above the building as her captain stomped out onto the deck.

"Hey, Vince!" Cid Highwind yelled down, "I brought this back from the dry cleaners!" The surly pilot tossed down a bright blue shape to the PI waiting on the rooftop.

"Bedtime Bear!" Vincent cheerily announced, "I didn't think they'd ever get you ready!" The ex-Turk zealously hugged the stuffed bedtime friend.

"Hey Cid!" Tifa yelled up to the hovering craft, "Could you deliver something to Wutai for us?"

Cid nodded, and with that Cloud lifted the unconscious ninja up by the back of her shorts and tossed her into the air like a potato sack. After securing her new cargo, the Highwind thundered off into the atmosphere. Vincent and Tifa exchanged relieved glances and nodded.

Cloud wondered when they were going to finish shopping for shoes.

And that's my newest manuscript!"

Sephiroth smiled proudly at the young boy reading his latest and 'greatest' marvel: "Vincent PI".

"I don't know," the boy murmured, "Putting yourself in the story seems kinda cheezy."

"What?!" Sephiroth's eyes went wide, "That script was pure genius! It's sure to garner box office gold! All I have to do is write the bonus 'meteor scene' and we can start shopping for production studios!"

The little boy closed the screenplay booklet and folded his hands on the table in front of him. He lowered his head and spoke, "I think I'm ready to tell you my secret now."

Sephiroth arched an eyebrow in puzzlement, "Huh?"

The boy's voice was a low whisper, "I see dead people." Sephiroth scratched his head in confusion.

"What are you talking about? We got a script to finish!"

"They walk around," the boy continued in a low tone, "They don't know that they're dead. But they are. Only I can see them."

Sephiroth felt his blood run cold and he swallowed hard. Slowly, he looked down at his torso and gasped at what he saw - a huge Buster Sword was lodged into his abdomen and pierced through to the other side. His clothes were soaked with blood that pooled around his feet.

"Now that you finished your script," the boy continued, "It's time for you to go."

Suddenly Barret burst into the room and started shaking the boy, "What about Marlene?!?!?!?"

Written and directed by The Captain.