When the sky is not blue.

I heard a sigh. After listening to it closely, I finally realized that it wasn’t coming from a person in front of me. I took a deep breath. It was a deep and long one.

“It is gonna be alright, right?” I whispered to myself rather than to the guy with black clothes who stood beside me. He didn’t hear it. There was no answer. Only a grey smoke fled away from his mouth and reached the ceiling. It was the same way with his sight. He didn’t even make a glance at me.

It barked twice. Sounds of small pieces of metal travelled out of a cylinder-shaped steel which stuffed with a high velocity were echoed in my head. A hot fluid flew down through my hands, they were shaking. I was shivering. It seemed like a deja-vu. Even those pieces of metal are small, they hit a big man and push him down against the floor. They were instantly swallowed into his body, like they were eaten by a black hole.

“See? Nothing is complicated.” Arancia was another man in the carmine colored suit. He turned to me and spoke in a hoarse voice. I had thought he wore white, just a moment before I saw him in red. He brought up a cigar, packed it in his mouth.

“You take too long, unless we go back now, boss will not blame us.” Leone, the man in black clothes accused. He took a lighter out from his coat helping Arancia light up the cigar. Both of them headed to the rustic door. I quickly moved my legs, tried hard to follow their step with the same speed. I missed, and kicked hardly on one of brown fragile symbolled boxes on the floor. It was a large, dark and dirty room packed with lots of crates and other stuffs. There was a spider web hook on the wall from one side to another. There were three butterflies stuck on it. Their wings were colorless as I wasn’t enjoying watch them at all. The morning’s sunlight shone toward small holes on the wooden wall, and those were only a light source for the whole room. I heard something fell down. It was a huge antique crate. A fat and ugly, middle aged woman with a little boy hid in the corner behind. The woman’s face turned pale. She hold the little boy tight with one hand covered her mouth, sobbed uncontrollably.

“Why are some mice still here?” they seemed to be scared of us. Leone watched them and spoke.

“Let’s see who we found here,” Arancia thought a bit before he asked, “Aren’t you that dirty business man’s wife? And you, don’t tell me, his son?” he laughed.

“Please let us go, please,” the woman cried, “Of course we can give you money, tell me how much you want, sir? So please, please.” she spoke in a high toned voice, it blended with her sob. The boy was screaming out, “Daddy, daddy.” Arancia put his fingers in the ears, showed his annoyed face.

“That’s great madam, how much do you have then?” asked Leone. The woman handed a pile of money to him with a shivering left hand. Her nails were colored in red. Leone counted the money as soon as it reached him. “What’s about the one on your neck, huh?” he pointed to the heart-shaped ruby necklace on hers. The woman shook her head side by side, “Take it off,” he commanded. She had no choice but to hand it to him.

“What a nice woman,” he said while heading to the door. Arancia followed him, and called.

“Giovanni,” I shuddered a bit before moved forward, as I faced with him. A piece of muscle in my chest was pounding really hard and I can’t even stop my shaking hands. “…Clean it up,” he patted my right shoulder, whispered into my ear, and walked straight to Leone. I had no choice but to do the thing I suppose to do. Another two times, the small metals were allowed to depart.

I heard a sigh. After listened to it closely, I finally realized that it didn’t come from a person in front of me. Maybe I shouldn’t call it a ‘person’ anymore. I took a deep breath. It was a deep and long one. Exhausted, my legs couldn’t stand longer. My head was blank, and I gave a blank sight upon their empty bodies. Neither the little boy nor his mom was crying. They were silent, and everything was silent but, I heard a scream inside my head. It was dizzy. I immediately covered my mouth with the left hand as another one was busy, and it was a liquid flooded out from my stomach.

I made a last glance into that room; everything was soaked in crimson.

…

Her name was Violette Bellaire. She was a nice young girl. She is French. I am French, too. I used to have French name. I had had it when I was young. We used to be good friends. On those old days, she told me she loves her blue dress, the one that she got a month ago on her ten years old birthday party. I never seen her in it. Sometimes I saw her in cyan. She denounced me that it was not cyan with a disappointed face. And she went on about that dress. She said that it is blue. It’s blue like the sky, but the sky is not blue.

And on that greyish day, the one with the sky filled with a smoke, I had never seen Violette come out from that red house again. Then Boss adopted me. He gave me a warm cup of milk and some cookies. He said that he would become my dad. It was the first time I had a dad. We moved to Florence. There, I met Arancia and Leone. Boss said that they would be my brothers, but they never treated me well.

I headed to my favorite corner at Dolce’s café; a white round wooden seat next to the window. There was a turquoise shrub in the dilapidated pottery stuffing near an elegant table. I peeked into a lunch-menu list.

“How was the mission, Giovanni?” boss asked with his terrified voice. He abruptly entered the café for about five minutes after I arrived, and laid down on the seat beside me. It was one of the couches that arranged near the café’s window. I always turned awkward, every time we talked. He was taller than me for about a half foot. He dressed neatly in his black suit and a long coat. His hair was also combed well. He was the only person I respected.

“It’s… same as usual,” I said politely, “But boss, when will we stop doing this?”

“Stop doing what?”

“Killing people.” I answered with a loud and clear voice. Then I found that I might speak too loud. I looked around, and luckily no one seemed to hear it. Boss answered nothing, he began to read a newspaper.

“Do you know Violette Bellaire?” boss asked without any French pronunciation mistake, “She is French,” He continued smoothly while throwing a piece of photo to me. It was a woman on that photo. She had a large bright almond-shaped eyes, the hair is around her shoulders. I knew that face, I knew that name. She grew up a lot since the last time we met.

A waiter in the vest suit ran toward the bar’s counter and served a cup of expresso in front of boss. He gave a bow, and turned to me, “Will you order anything, sir?” he asked. I looked down at the menu sheet again, randomly pointed at one of the list and ordered. “This red colored coffee, um, please.”

“Excuse me, sir, did you mean Latte?” the waiter looked the way I was pointing with a curious face and asked.

“…Yes, I mean a Latte, I… actually mean that.” I assured him. He moved his busy hands, noted my order on a paper unwillingly. “What’s with Violette Bellaire?” I faced boss with no hesitation, wondered if he just wanted to introduce me a woman.

“Well, that Violette, is your next target.” boss demanded me to attain his wish while took a sip of his coffee.

“But why her?”

“That is not necessary, you don’t even need to know,” he remarked before gulped down all his coffee. Then he pulled himself up from the couch, put two Euro on the counter and left the cafe. I heard he whispered to me quietly, “…Clean it up.”

…

“N-e-e-eeeeeh!” the horses cried weirdly while I stepped out of the carriage, it inclined a bit to the side I stepped off with a creaking sound. I let my leather shoes touch the dusted ground decorated with mud and hays. There was a red roof barn on another side of the hill, blocked with a large farmland. Wheats were white and tall as their mature growth, and they were ready to harvest. I carefully stepped on a grey brick road as soon as I saw it.

“This is your first time to do a mission alone, isn’t it?” Arancia waved me while he was sitting inside the carriage. I lifted my face up and watched him giggling. “I have something to do at Bologna, you know?” he continued, “So, hurry finish it, I will pick you up around 8 o’clock.” Then the carriage left. I had not seen anyone there, either in the farm or around it. I was standing alone. Then I began to follow the grey brick road, heading to the barn.

The wind passed the fresh scent of wheat through my nose. The sun seemed to leave the sky early. I looked through the hole on the barn’s door as soon as I reached it. There was a woman inside. She was sitting on a hill of hay while energetically reading a thick book. I remembered her eyes, her hair, nose, mouth, and everything. It couldn’t be wrong, she was Violette Bellaire.

…

On that day seventeen years ago, it was a nice and sunny day. Violette told me to close my eyes and imagined of cold things; an ice-cream, a feeling when I am surrounded by snow. She said it’s called ‘blue’.

She was a kind young girl, and her smile appeared everywhere. After she had gone, everyone I knew also had gone. There was no accommodation for me anymore. I wandered along the street, slept on water pipes. I tried to survive cold, cold nights during the winter with torn pieces of cloth. I ate garbage. My body was stained with rubbishes. I starved and nearly die. However boss rescued me, and I promised to myself that day that I would follow him. I would do anything he wanted, and I would become his tool. That was why I had to. I had to do the thing that he commanded. Even it was too hard for me, even it was brutal.

…

I set my gun up quietly. Quiet as a feather falling.

“…Excuse me, are you the one who sent me the letter?” Violette was in an authentic white blouse. It was pure white. She craned her head and asked after she noticed me. Her voice destroyed the silence. I had no idea what she was talking about. I opened a heavy door, entered the barn, and hid the gun behind. “The one that asked me to come here,” She continued. Boss might be the one who planned and sent that letter.

“Ah…yes, sorry if it disturbs your time.”

“Eh…and you are,” she kept the thick book which she had been reading into a handbag. She stood up, and turned to me. “You are…Gilbert?” she unbelievably asked and looked at my face carefully. I was also shocked, too. It was a long time that I didn’t hear that name. It was a mixed feeling. I felt like I was impressed and regretted at the same time. I could not tell how I was glad she remembered me. Although it might be better if she didn’t.

“Violette, I, I…” I was not sure what I should do at that time. Her face reminded me of our old days. She watched my face. I brought my sight away from her. I turned downward. I saw her shoes, they were white and clean boots. Surprisingly, there was no mud on them at all.

“It’s a long time,” she put up her words before I finished my sentence. “But, you left me, Gilbert, you left me alone in that nursery,” she murmured, then increased her voice louder. Loud like she was screaming. “And everything was burned. Everyone was burned. They cried, Marie, Jacqueline, and teachers, they cried and ran around the nursery. I was stuck in the bathroom, I yelled, but no one helped me. I saw the teacher pushed Marie down out of his way, he tried to duck across a small hole on the wall. Then the ceiling fell over their bodies. They died. I hid in the bath tub.” She took a small break and long inhale. I didn’t understand whether she was upset or sad or scared or anything. “And on the next day, I woke up, everyone turned to black ashes. It was hard to recognize, but everyone died, but, but I didn’t find your corpse, Gilbert,” she said. A drop of water slowly formed in her eyes. It was wiped off by her hand, like it was never there, like it was always transparent. I remembered that the glorious red flame unintentionally covered the nursery. I remembered how I ran off.

“I’m sorry,” I apologized, without any excuse. “I won’t leave you again, I promise.”

“How can I trust you, Gilbert? How can I trust you if you still hide something at your back?” she asked with monotonous voice. It shocked me. I really wanted to cry. I threw a silver gun backward, into the hay stack near the barn’s door, and rushed to her.

“…Let’s escape to somewhere together, hurry, Violette, someone is going to come here and kill you.” I said while grabbing her hands and hold them tightly. The sun fell down at the same height with my eyes. Its rays passed through the opened barn’s door, and shone on a half of her face. She was astonished; her eyes opened wide, but soon she tenderly smiled.

“Oh, please… calm down. Calm down, nothing is going to kill me, alright?” she said. I knew she tried to soothe me. She might think I was insane. I knew it was not safe, Arancia was about to pick me up. I released her hands, moved backward a bit. She looked so calm, and she began, “Don’t you know why do I come here as the letter asks, even I don’t know the one who sends? …I come here to give this to that person, to you, Gilbert.” She slowly walked, and stood still in front of me. She looked into my eyes, and I looked at hers back. Her eyes were innocent. Nothing had changed, she was same as before. The same Violette I had known. She smiled to me. It was the brightest smile I had ever seen, and suddenly I felt a fluid flowed off from my chest. Red liquid flowed uncontrollably. I felt a sharp pain occurred between my ribs. She pulled a small and thin, sparkling blade out from my chest. More and more blood splashed. The pain spread to my whole body. I felt like it was going to break into two pieces. I fell down to the ground, using both hands to cover the wound.

“It’s easy, Gilbert. Human is weak, and you are even weaker.”

“B…but...why, why?” I asked because I didn’t understand her. Was that a fake smile? Even I thought it was the same one she ever gave me. I didn’t know. I didn’t want to know.

“This world has no reason, everything that we do also. And even if I don’t have any single reason to live, I have no reason to die,” she said but wasn’t looking at me. The blade was dropped down, it spun for a round then stop.

“But I really want… to help you, why, Violette, why… Aren’t we a good friend?” I didn’t want to die, “And that blue dress, I haven’t seen your blue dress.”

“You’ll never see it.”

“But, I can’t die like this, I haven’t seen it yet, I haven’t seen. Why can’t I see it?” I didn’t want to die like that.

“You’re blind!” she shouted, “You are blind, that’s why you can’t see it, that’s why you can’t understand me.” She turned her back to me, slowly walked out of the barn. Far from me every step she took. “We are not the same, Gilbert…Not at all,” she left her last words and stepped away. Till I could not capture her shadow anymore. I sweated from all the parts of my body. I crawled to the barn’s door, used my ruined feet to push myself forward. My left hand held the ground, pulled the entire body, and another hand pressed on the wound. I tried to call her, but I couldn’t even breathe well.

I reached the door, leaned out my head. I could not find Violette there, I didn’t see her anywhere. But I saw a man walked along the grey brick road. He walked to me. His black hair, his coat and the white wheat blew in the breeze. The sun set at the horizon. The sky was soaked crimson. He stopped in front of me, watched from the above. I lifted my head up. He was boss.

“B…boss, h…” I tried to speak, my voice seemed not to reach him. But I knew he would save me, like what he did seventeen years before. I would be fine.

“The world is cruel, Giovanni,” he said philosophically. “And you are too weak, because you care too much about the meaning of your life. Your ambition, Giovanni, your goal.”

“But …boss, don’t you also have your goal…?”

“…No, Giovanni, it’s just a game.” I saw his eyes, they were blank. “All of us are just rooks, and you know, the weak rook needs to be kicked out of the game,” he said while picked something out from his coat. It sparkled brightly when touched by the sun radiant. “Look at the sky,” he commanded. “Tell me what color you see.”

“…It’s…red.”

“Yes, it’s red and, how many time have you seen red today?” I didn’t say anything. I counted an innumerable amount of times I saw it. He went on, “How about blue?” My body was stunned, as my heart might stop beating. “Red sky, red coffee, red, red, red, red,” he began, and laughed. His voice broke a long silence. Then he continued, “You have had a disease in your eyes. Since you were young, I think. Unfortunately, it can’t be cured.”

“W…What are you… ta…talking…d…dad?”

“I mean,” he interrupted my question and held his gun up accurately. It sparkled silver. He pointed its tip at my head. “You can’t see blue, and you will never see it for the rest of your life, and don’t call me like that, Giovanni, it’s disgusting. You never be meant to me more than a rook.”

You lied. Tell me that you lied.

Liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar, liar…

My heart screamed, but no voice came out. I couldn’t believe. I wished all the things I had seen today were just a nightmare. Was that because I was weak and useless? Was it because I was too serious about my intent? Or it because my life had too much worth? I couldn’t just take it easy. My beloved blue, blue sky, Violette’s blue, I couldn’t see it. I would never see it.

“…Dad, will you kill me?” I asked with the hoarse voice I ever heard. I was not sure if that was my voice or not.

“Of course,” he replied without thinking. Then he moved his gun down to my head. Its muzzle was pointed on my forehead. The distance between them became zero. I tried to move, but I could not. I could not move any part of my body. It was too heavy, even my pinky was too heavy. I left my sight from boss, looked at the sky. Red sky became darker and darker. It was fast. It wasn’t taking a minute, and the sun left. The wind blew strongly, and the sound when it hit the wheat was so beautiful. I closed my eyes, listened to the last rhythm of my life. Dad didn’t let me fulfill his wishes. I didn’t want to die like that, I swore.

Roared through the darkness, it broke the long peaceful evening. Black blood splashed. It soaked the gross sky. A devil grinned. Only one gloom was moving.

I heard a sigh. After listening to it closely, I finally realized that it didn’t come from a person in front of me, and it was not a sigh. I could not stop shrieked. I took a deep breath. It was a deep and long one. I stepped on his grave. It was just a game, repeated continuously.

“Now we are the same, Violette, we are the same,” that was the last thing I heard from my own voice.