

# Black

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*Description* : Oneshot story about a hitman and his target

*Genre* : Psychological, Drama

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Black...

The color of death.

The color that devours everything.

The color of darkness.

The color that I really hate...

However, I can never get away from it.

I had to be friends with it. It's darkness that always covers my identity, covers the sight of my prey, and also covers the stains I always made when I kill my prey.

Yes, I am a hitman. I act in the dark. Splashes of blood and smells of death are my daily meal. With black clothes and knife, countless people have had their lives ended by my hands.

In the dark night which became my friend, I was getting ready to stain my black clothes red again.

This time, my target is a young lady living in an elite district. I'd already at her house, a mansion consisting of 3 floors, surrounded by a large yard and rows of shady trees. Dozens of windows around the building show how big the mansion is.

On the top floor, I saw there was only 1 room with the lights on. Based on the information I've got, the young lady's bedroom is located on the 3rd floor, while the maids and bodyguards' are all on the 2nd floor. Without a doubt, that's the room. There was no one else on the 3rd floor, because the other rooms supposed to be guests bedroom and the bedroom of her recently deceased parents. Weird coincidence wasn't it? Contract killing of a young lady whose parents had recently died, Of course, since this isn't a coincidence...

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"Welcome." A man greeted me with a smile while furrowing his brows. He pointed to the chair across from him and poured a bottle of wine into the glass in front of me. He then took another glass in front of him and poured the rest of the wine from the bottle.

"Thank you very much Sir, but I have a principle that I shouldn't drink in the middle of work," I refused gently.

"Oh-ho, for professional reason?" said the man as he gulped down the wine he had just poured.

"More or less. I just don't want any emotional factors to get in the way of work, so I don't want to add unnecessary familiarity. Ah, sorry if it seemed to offend you."

"It's okay, I'm even more convinced that you're a professional." The man chuckled and frowned, showing his wrinkles. "I also compliment your appearance, in a suit and loafers anyone would only see you as my ordinary business partner."

"So different from the 2 people I hired before. Their appearance is very sloppy and have no manners. They dared to ask for more wine I had kindly given them, and they even drank straight from the bottle." The man sighed. "Well, but this is still a business, as long as they're doing the job well, I can forgive one or two unseemly acts like that."

"So, what 'job' do you want to give me now?"

"This." The man handed me an envelope. "Your time limit is until the end of this week"

I opened the envelope and saw a photo of a young lady. I immediately knew who she is as soon as I saw the photo.

"She's... Annette Brand, the young CEO of Brand Group who was just appointed since the death of her parents in an accident, right? And your niece, at the same time."

The man furrowed his brows again and said in a rising tone. "And? you just said you won't be affected by emotional factors right?"

"No." I replied "I just thought, maybe the 'accident' of his parents wasn't actually an accident..."

"Do you know what will happen to overly curious people in this world?" The man looked at me sharply. The atmosphere in the room felt heavy. His two bodyguards looked wary of me.

I remained calm and answered slowly. "No, I'm sorry if I made a bad impression on you. I'm just curious, if you've hired someone else to have her parents died in an 'accident', why don't you use the service of the same person for their daughter? If my client has a 'discard after use' principle, I think I must turn down this job."

"Haha, so that's how it is." The heavy atmosphere in that place began to decrease, the man smiled again while waving at his bodyguards telling them to calm down.

"You don't need to worry about that. You heard my story about the 2 impudent people just now right? They're the ones I've hired. However, after the job was finished they asked for additional payment, they said because the target are well-known people. Well, in an instant I made them regret trying to blackmail me, Garret Brand."

Garrett then lit a cigar. "As long as you agree to the contract in advance without messing around, everything else will go smoothly. I have no reason to punish people who work professionally right? In the end, it's a business."

I put back the contents of the envelope, then replied, "Okay, I'll accept your contract. In about a week, I'll be done with it."

"Haha, I'm waiting for good news from you." Garret smiled as he puffed out his cigar.

Garrett Brand. My client and uncle of my target this time, Annette Brand. They are a well-known business family, namely the Brand Group, which has been engaged in various fields. The previous CEO was Annette's father, Marcell Brand, while Garrett was one of the Directors there. A few weeks ago, Marcell Brand and his wife, Celine Brand died in a car accident. According to the police report, their car failed brakes and then fell into a ravine. Later, their only daughter, Annette Brand, was appointed as the new CEO based on her father's will. With this information, I think anyone can guess what Garrett did and his motives, right? Well, but that's really none of my business. I can only say, what an unlucky woman.

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Now, I have entered the courtyard of the Mansion. It's very easy to get in there, luckily it's just an ordinary fence and not electrified.

It's quite strange too, the guard is very weak, unlike guarding CEO of a giant group. There were only 3 bodyguards outside, 2 people at the front gate and one person walking around, and he was just passing by so I didn't have to wait long to climb over the fence after he left.

I rushed to climb the 3rd floor balcony of the miss CEO's room. I hope she doesn't stay near the window. The contract asked me to camouflage it as a robbery, but I need to minimize the damage to the mansion and unrelated casualties as much as possible, because this house will still be used by the next CEO. It's obvious who he is right?

I'm lucky.

I could see through the window on the balcony. Nobody there. I think she's in the bathroom. I can break down the door easily.

Done. I can enter her room. Just need to wait for her to come out of the bathroom. I immediately opened the door.

Clack.

Ugh, I took my words back. I let my guard down because her guard was too weak. She was about to get out of the bathroom while I was still on the edge of the balcony. She would see me right away, I wouldn't have time to approach and shut her mouth. Even if I hid on the balcony, she would know right away from the swaying door.

Damn.

If she were to scream, the worst case scenario would be that I would have to kill everyone in the mansion and my pay would be reduced.

It's a gamble.

I immediately ran as fast as I could to the bathroom, hoping to immediately shut her mouth.

Her figure had already come out of the bathroom. Shit. Not enough time.

Her face was turned towards me.

"Shit, she's going to scream soon," I muttered. "Damn!"

"Who are you?"

A very calm voice came from her mouth, completely opposite from what I expected.

"Eh?" I whispered.

"Are you, thief?" The girl asked in the same calm voice as before.

"Or killer?" she asked again.

I paused, then looked at the girl.

She looks like she just took a shower. Her long, wavy gray hair still looked wet.

She was wearing a dark red bathrobe with a towel still slung over her shoulder. Her face still looked calm. There was absolutely no sign of fear, as if the one in front of her was just an old acquaintance.

"Why did you react like that? Aren't you scared or surprised?" I asked in astonishment.

"Is it weird?" the girl smiled. "I don't know who you are, you sneaked in from the balcony, you cover your face, and you carry a knife. It's obvious that you are either a thief or a murderer, right?"

It's a logical answer. But that's not what I want to ask.

"That's not what I mean. Why are you very calm, not even startled or screamed?" I asked.

"Hm... If I screamed and my scream are heard by the servants outside, you will kill them all, right?" answered the girl.

Again, a logical answer. However, that still didn't answer my question. Why could this girl be so calm when there are a stranger carrying sharp weapon in her room.

"Why?"

"How can you be so calm? Even though you might die today by this stranger in front of you!" I still feel astonished by this girl's action.

"Screaming and crying won't save my life, right? Even begging for your forgiveness isn't going to make you change your mind and just walk away, right?"

The girl walked slowly towards her bed, then sat up and turned to me.

"I can already guess it. You're hired by my uncle, right?"

I'm stunned. Once again she spat out her logical thought calmly in front of me, the one who wanted to kill her.

"...So you know?" I asked slowly.

"Yes. My father and mother also didn't actually die by an accident right?"

"...Yes."

"Was it your doing too?"

"No."

"Oh I see." The girl was silent for a moment.

I asked her again, "Since when did you suspect your uncle?"

She replied, "A long time ago. I already know that my uncle is an ambitious person . He often argued with my father about running the company. I've also heard rumors about his involvement with some shady business. My father didn't want him to get further involved with the company because of the rumours, and they had a big quarrel. My father decided to fire him soon. Then, soon after that the accident happened."

She sighed, "His hatred for our family already runs deep. Even if I say now that I will hand over all the company's assets to him, I don't think he will just let me go, right?"

The girl then lay down on her bed, clasped her hands together, and closed her eyes.

"I'm just an ordinary woman, I'm powerless against my uncle's power."

"If I have to die now, so be it."

She then opened her eyes and said to me while smiling bitterly, "Please promise me just one thing, please don't be too painful. If possible, I don't want to suffer too long before I die."

Ah.

So that's it.

She wasn't calm when dealing with me.

She already knew that she wouldn't live long, and she was ready for it.

That's not calm.

That's giving up.

Even if death comes to her.

Even if she had to die, killed, leave this world forever.

She didn't scream as soon as she saw me because she didn't want other people get involved and get killed too. She kept death away from those remaining closest people to her.

Die alone. That's all she wants right now.

Her face turned sad. Tears started dripping from her eyes. Her clasped hands were shaking. It was clear that she was actually very scared.

"I hope I can meet my father and mother in the other world soon." she muttered.

That last sentence left me speechless.

My body feels stiff.

Various things were going through my mind.

What? What am I doing???

I want to kill this innocent girl?

This pure-hearted girl who thought so much of others, even on the verge of death?

Is this what I want?

Is it for this that I become a hitman?

My mind drifted far away. Far into the past...

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"This is..?"

"This is the rest of my father's life insurance money. This is all I can give to repay you." A young girl with glasses with shoulder-length hair handed me a small envelope full of money.

"With this payment, please finish that man off! All of this happened because of him!" the girl pointed to a large supermarket across from the cafe where we were sitting. Her voice rose, full of anger.

The girl told the reason why she was so angry.

"The man who owns the supermarket is a very cruel man. Because my father refused to sell our land to him, he deliberately opened a large supermarket right across from our store. He also try to made our customers switched into his place by dirty means, such as spreading rumors that we were selling spoiled food, mixing it with formaldehyde, and so on. Even so, my father was known to be very friendly to his customers, so some customers weren't swayed by the rumors and remained loyal to shopping at our place."

"That's why, he took even more extreme measures. He hired local thugs to gather in front of our place every day and harass every customer who stopped by. Our shop windows were often smashed at night and the doors scribbled on. The police are helpless because there was no evidence. Lastly, he paid off people who deliberately caused trouble at our store by exchanging the cooking oil we sold for fake and accusing us of selling fake cooking oil. The commotion eventually resulted in my father's shop never having any more customers, and we were in huge debt."

The girl continued to tell her story while holding back her tears.

"Our shop was eventually confiscated. My father was stressed and eventually died of heart disease. My mother and I managed to pay off our debt with the rest of our savings and my father's life insurance money. Now we are going back to my mother's hometown. There is no longer any hope for us to open a business here."

"But, before leaving, I want to do at least one thing: watch that bastard died! Because of him, my father died! I won't be satisfied if I haven't seen him suffer the same fate as my father. Because of that... please...! Please avenge my father...!"

The girl couldn't hold back her tears. She took off her glasses and started crying.

"Does your mother know about this?"

"...Yes."

"This is your last money right? Is it okay for you to use it to hire a hitman like me?"



"Yes. My mother doesn't want to use the money to do business again, because for her it's like being grateful for my father's death. My mother said it's up to me what to do with this money. We will try to manage things ourselves later in mother's hometown."

I took another look at the envelope of money. An mediocre amount I think.

I took the envelope, took out half of the money that was in there, and returned the envelope to the girl.

"I only need half of it, take the rest." I said.

"Eh? Is that okay for you? Besides, I've told you that my mother wouldn't want to use it, right?" asked the girl surprised while wiping her tears.

"It's not like using this money means being grateful to your father's death. Think of this as your father's last favor for you. He enrolled himself in life insurance with the hope that when he died, the lives of the family members he left behind could be temporarily guaranteed, don't you think?"

I said again. "If you are still hesitant to use it, then at least keep it as a 'talisman' to protect both of you."

I stood up from my chair, approached the girl's chair and whispered to her, "I promise, I'll definitely kill that man. Let me bear the sin, you don't have to remember it anymore."

"Go on, and forget everything. Rise again, live happily with your mother. I guess that's what your late father wanted as well."

The girl was crying again. I gently held her shoulder, waiting for her to stop crying. In her tears, she whispered softly to me, "Thank you... Thank you...."

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I thought back on my first job. Killed a ruthless supermarket owner who brought down his rival by dirty means and resulted in the death of my client's father.

Yes. That kind of work that makes me feel alive.

Kill the bastards who can only think about money. The law is too weak to judge them. Only death suits them.

I can't remember, since when that feeling was gone.

Why did I, who used to hate such bastards, now become a hitman working for them.

Do I face the fact that money really is everything?

That it's those bastards who have money and need the services of hitman like me?

That in the end, I also have to admit the fact that idealism alone is not enough to live on?

No.

I reject that fact.

Once again, I will rise up and fight that fact.

My hatred won't go away. My idealism won't disappear.

The death of those bastards is satisfaction to me, then, now, and forever.

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"You??? Why are you here??? You're supposed to work for me right???"

Garrett's face turned pale. He knew that no one else could help him. All of his bodyguards have ended up in my hands. Now there were only the two of us in the room.

"Too bad, I get paid more for your life." I said. "Like you said. In the end, it's a business."

"Who-who hired you??? That damn woman??? How much did she give you??? I'll give you two...no, five times more!!!" That old bastard held up his 5 right fingers, hoping that I would be tempted by his persuasion.

"Well, just try to guess it. Though I think, your enemies are too many to remember one by one..." I continued advancing towards him while preparing my knife.

"And sorry, I refuse your offer. If you could pay me five times as much, you should have given it when you first hired me."

It's a lie. Clearly.

Nobody paid me for this old bastard's life.

I only killed him because of my personal hatred.

I still can't believe that I've work for assholes like him all this time.

I also vented my disgust all this time to him.

As for the payments I haven't gotten from him, I don't care one bit anymore. After all, I just need to steal some of the valuables in his stately home and disguise his death as a robbery.

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Today is Garret Brand's funeral. As befits a big business family, many people came to pay their respects.

I have a habit of attending the funerals of my victims, even if only to observe from afar.

To make sure they die? No, because I always check their deaths. I just want to see the expressions of the people they left behind. Are they sad because of their death, or are they happy with that.

Amidst the crowd, I see a young woman with long gray hair and a black dress. That woman is Annette Brand, Garret Brand's niece and the current CEO of Brand Group.

She glance a little, then walk toward me. Even though I was covered my face that time, it seems like she still recognize me, the person who almost killed her.

"Can we talk for a minute?" she ask me.

We get away from the crowd a bit. Then she start asking me, "You're the one who killed my uncle?"

"Yes." I answer.

"Why? Isn't he your client? And why'd you just walk away and not kill me?" she asked curiously.

"...I wonder why? I just feel that your uncle is the one who should die, not you." I said.

"Ha ha ha. That's very bad. I got carried away when I should always act professionally."

"So you canceled your contract with my uncle and killed him out of emotion? What emotion?" she asked again.

As usual, a very logical woman. I think she won't be satisfied before she understands the strong reason behind my action.

"...When I saw your response back then, to be honest I was surprised and confused. It's unusual for my targets to be so calm and ready to die, even thinking about not involving the people around them. I see that you are a very kind person. What kind of bastard am I if I kill someone like you without mercy."

"It's ridiculous, isn't it? A hitman is moved by the kindness of his target." I say sadly.

"I don't think it's ridiculous. Doesn't that mean that even if you're a hitman, you still haven't sealed off your conscience completely?" She deny my words.

"I'm not in a position to judge your life choices as a hitman. But at least I can say this. Be proud, you still haven't thrown away your conscience. Without a conscience, are we still worthy of being called human?"

"Is that so? Thank you for your complement."

"Then, why're you come to your victim's funeral now?" she ask again.

"Well, it's just my habit. I sometimes want to watch the expressions of people who are grieving, do they look sad or actually happy with the death of that person."

"Hmm, isn't that also a proof that you're still human? You want to strengthen yourself by making sure the people you kill are really bad people who deserve to be killed right?"

What a scary woman.

She could tell what I really feel and bury it deep in my heart in just one sentence.

"Ah then, one more thing. Thank you for not killing me at that time. Now I will live the rest of my life, as a full human being." She end our conversation. "By the way, may I know your name?"

"... Grey. Just call it that."

It's certainly dangerous to reveal the identity of a hitman to ordinary people, but I don't think I can fool her with a fake name. And it's not like she's going to reveal my identity to anyone else either. How can that be done by someone who can chat casually with the killer who was after her life a few days ago, right? That's why, at least I think it's okay if I tell her my first name.

"Grey, can we meet again someday?" she ask with a faint smile. A smile that's very different from her bitter smile back then.

"I dunno..." I say. "Even if there is, I hope it's no longer between the hitman and his future target."

"Oh, I see..? In that case, I'll try my best not to become that bastard person you hate."

"Goodbye, Gray."

She walk back into the crowd of mourners.

I also leave the place.

Our meeting is very short. However, I feel that the meeting makes a big difference in me.

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Black is darkness.

Darkness is my friend.

All this time, I walked alone in the darkness.

However, a glimmer of light has given me a direction.

Like a lighthouse.

Like a white dot in the middle of black paper.

The light illuminates me, and will never let me get lost again in the darkness.

THE END