As you step off the steel platform, frigid air assaults your senses. The crunching grass stares behind you, and the rumbling heart of the bus disappears from your ears.

Ahead, a lone figure stands in the snow. Its back is turned to you, shoulders hunched against the cold. As the vision nearby, an ancient woman waits, one hand on the rifle slung across her shoulder. The other rests on a cane. Her white hair, turned decades in one direction, flutters in the wind.

Her nose is long and hooked, a crooked chin.

"..."

"Yes."

She scoffs and raises the rifle to her eyeline.

MILLIA: "Say that again?"

"..."

MILLIA: "Silent type?"

"Yes."

BANG!

A bullet flies towards you, grazing the outside of your neck.

She laughs.

You feel a trickle of blood.

"No."

Her eyes roll as she bemoans on an exasperated sigh.

MILLIA: "Boring."

She flips the rifle back towards herself, where it settles harmlessly in her lap.

"..."

"Just scared."

MILLIA: "Smart."

"..."

MILLIA: "..."

Take a step towards her.

"What the fuck?"

BANG!

Another bullet. Cutting delicately into the skin of your cheek.

Another laugh.

Another trickle of blood.

Then silence.

She stares.

Curled lips smirk in amusement.

"..."

"..."

"This is ridiculous."

MILLIA: "You started it."

Run at her.

"If you wanted me dead, I'd be dead."

"What the fuck?"

Are you sure?

Yes

No

You press one foot down at an angle into the snow, propelling yourself forward as the woman's eyes shift from bemusement to a terrifying focus.

She tilts her scope toward you, and before you can bring your next leg forward, a bullet flies clean through your ab.

Everything.

Ends.

Try again

Her smirk gives way to laughter.

She releases the rifle and raises her hands as it falls into her lap.

MILLIA: "You got me."

"..."

You both remain unblinking, tears turning on the boundaries of your vision in some ridiculous pleasing contest.

You look gazes against the snow. Tears begin to freeze on your cheeks, your bodies give way and force your hands to wipe your eyes.

As your vision returns, the sound of splutterred laughter carries across the way. A woman's lung.

"..."

The woman stares into your soul, her eyes refusing to blink as they start to water in the snow.

Tiny teardrops freeze over wrinkled skin.

"Are you okay?"

"Are we done?"

MILLIA: "HAH! I WIN!"

She grins with childlike ambition, as one hand wipes the frozen salt from her eyes.

MILLIA: "I don't know. Are we?"

"What are you a child?"

"True."

"You're pointing a gun at me."

MILLIA: "Just a very bored old woman."

MILLIA: "Well aren't you agressive?"

MILLIA: "Correct. A Mason's, to be exact."

"You're a child."

"Fine."

"You're pointing a gun at me."

MILLIA: "Just a very bored old woman."

MILLIA: "Well aren't you agressive?"

MILLIA: "Correct. A Mason's, to be exact."

She howls with laughter, her head reeling back to the sky as she splutters for a moment before it returns.

MILLIA: "You play with fire."

The rifle remains poised, and she steadies her aim.

Her finger delicately teasing against the trigger.

She smirks.

And flips it back over her shoulder, as her lips give way to a wry smile.

MILLIA: "I'm entertained."

Old eyes slowly scan you.

Your face

Your body

Your posture.

Your response.

MILLIA: "Where are you from?"

"Moscow."

"Where are you from?"

"None of your business."

Her gaze converges on yours, she's intrigued.

MILLIA: "And before that?"

She squirts, digging deeper for a moment.

MILLIA: "Well. Okay then."

"Not Moscow."

"None of your business."

"Where are you from?"

She scoffs.

MILLIA: "Well I suppose you're not lying at least."

She squirts, digging deeper for a moment.

MILLIA: "Well. Okay then."

MILLIA: "Moscow nowadays. Born in Bila Tserkva. But who knows what we'll be calling either of those a year from now."

Her eyes slightly soften. The rifle lies harmlessly in her lap.

MILLIA: "You must be cold. I'll start a fire.

After a moment of warmess, the woman's shifting demeanor seems genuine.

You help her gather firewood, but as you reach for a bundle of kindling a thin red envelope catches your eye amidst the shrubbery.

You know that this was meant for you.

You open it and familiar handwriting sends warmth wrapping round your body.

LETTER: I met a girl with a brimstone heart. Fire in her veins that rushed to kindle dead eyes. She was looking for someone. Filled with hatred, she was ready to burn the world down. I didn't know if I was in love or just scared. Years after I've met some dead or dying. She reminded me of you, in a way. I asked her if she'd seen you. She said no. It stung. She wanted to be kind, I think. I think she'd forgotten how.

MILLIA: "Letter from a lover?"

The numbers in each letter reveal which bus the player should be catching next.

"Yes."

"No."

"..."

She smiles, gently.

She smiles, curiously.

She smiles, solemnly.

MILLIA: "You should burn it."

"Why?"

"Can't."

"I know."

MILLIA: "If you're feeling sheepishness, don't bother. They're worth burning. Memories, their burn."

MILLIA: "I'm sure you do. Take the time to memorise."

As you sit in silence against the coming night, the woman cradles the fire, eyeing off the letter in your hands with unbridled curiosity.

After some time, her eyes turn back to the flame. She seems lost in the sight, some strange nostalgia gripping at her mind.

For a second you think you see a tear, but she catches your stare with a smirk and a wiped eye before you can look closer.

"Why didn't you let me?"

MILLIA: "I've killed hundreds for a country that's about to implode anyway.

"It's no fun anymore. Nothing to be won."

"No grand prize."

"No medal."

"No accolades."

"Just a world wasting away on shriveled ambition."

Her eyes rise to laze on the horizon.

MILLIA: "Besides. You seemed harmless enough."

"Do you like music?"

"We should sleep."

MILLIA: "I adore it"

You gently root your backpack towards the ground, pulling delicate red tinsel to your chin.

MILLIA: "True. I'll keep first watch."

QUIET MINIGAME: Success

*Here, the player starts a small quiet minigame. Depending on what has been assigned an instrument (Millia has the Trombone) and has a paired duet with the protagonist's viola. The protagonist plays a random note, whether they "succeed" or "fail"*

QUIET MINIGAME: Failure

As you raise a bow to match with string, you can't help but feel a little more alive.

Matching your melody, the woman plays her own.

A once dull brass sheen reflects moon and flame into the sky above.

At first, it feels like a rising challenge, but you both settle into an uncanny unity.

The bonfire dances in your wake. Tiny ripples of sound from the woman to you and you to her, each carving a path through the fire.

Smoke ebbs and flows as it rises into the open air.

You play long into the night. But eventually, weariness slow draw you back to reality.

As the music comes to a close and your eyes give way to sleep, you turn your attention to the fire, letter dangling in your lap.

As you raise a bow to matchstring, your arm curves against cold wind. You press forward, but the chill freezes you. The sound is naught but a screech.

MILLIA: "I appreciate the sentiment, but now's the time for rest."

As your eyes give way to sleep, you turn your attention to the fire, letter dangling in your lap.

Burn the letter.

Keep the letter.

You take one last glance.

Breathe.

Then press the paper into the fire.

It burns a little brighter, and you feel a little warmer as your eyes succumb to the night.

You press the letter to your chest. Holding it tightly in place against the winter winds.

There's a cold chill that swaps you to sleep against the warmth of the fire.

You wake before the birds, your eyes pressing open against the weight of the world.

Beside you, the sleeping woman's rifle lies loose. There should be a bus arriving soon.

Take the rifle.

Leave the rifle.

You tread carefully on fresh snow, setting your way longside the first bindself.

She mumbles.

You freeze.

You wait.

You hear the rumbling of an engine in the distance.

Your hands stretch out against the dying night, pulling the rifle towards you.

She sleeps.

You turn towards the coming bus.

You consider the thought.

And let it pass.

In the distance, an engine rumbles on approach.

You turn back to the roadside and press on into morning.

You step up onto steel stairwell.

Behind the shivering glass.

And disappear into the white horizon.